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Pride and Compassion: How Emotional Strategies Target Audiences in Political Communication?

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Abstract: The paper discusses appeals to pride and compassion as emotional strategies for mobilization in political communication, developing the Emotional Rescue Model of enthusiasm, anger, and fear. Exploring general results of brain activity, facial expressions, cognitive responses, attitude change, and prosocial behavior, it examines how compelling pride-related and compassion-related narratives are. Moreover, it considers the possibilities of targeting emotional content to specific audiences, verifying how results correspond with participants' empathy, political preferences, and attitudes toward collective remembrance. The paper explores age, gender, and election attendance as other possible factors correlated with the outcomes of manipulation. In conclusion, it suggested that appeals to pride should target supporters of the cause, but compassionate narratives can address non-supporters and undecided recipients.

Keywords: pride; compassion; empathy; political preferences; collective remembrance

INTRODUCTION

Political communication involves signaling emotions, sharing opinions, and integrating them into committing relations between politicians and their supporters. Thus, it provides opportunities to disseminate information, express public feelings, and present intents (Jensen, 2018). Emotions regulate political communication as they increase social mobilization and provide a tool for targeting audiences (Kazlauskaitė & Salmela, 2022). Stronger emotions promote the effectiveness of simplified arguments, reducing and adding bias to information assessment and helping populist movements utilize anger, shame, disappointment, resentment, and pride as instruments of political influence (Verbalyte et al., 2022). Salmela and von Scheve (2017) identify two main strategies, how populists successfully target vulnerable audiences, transforming anxiety and repressed shame into

hatred toward *enemies* and reframing negative emotions into hubristic pride and collective narcissism (p. 587).

Populists reduce emotional communication to negativity and hostility, engaging their audiences in politics of anger (Rico et al., 2017). Their persuasion is rooted in expressive dynamics combining anger and promise—the first strategy moderates conflictive appeals, while the second emotion facilitates advocative statements (Wirz, 2018). Wildmann (2021) proves that populist and non-populist political communication have distinct emotional dynamics. Populists appeal to anger, fear, disgust, and sadness, while democratic politicians prefer joy, enthusiasm, pride, and hope (p. 176). However, social media made non-populists more dependent on anger, disgust, and fear as they mimic adversaries with emotionality and framing (Jäger, 2020).

Does this mean society cannot prevent further political radicalization because stronger emotions in communication serve populist agendas? Vafeiadis and Xiao (2021) argue that the emotional dynamics of storytelling might be utilized to counter fake news on social media. Anger and hostility are over-represented in political debates because people consider them to mobilize and activate targeted audiences (Wollebæk et al., 2019). In this paper, we consider non-antagonistic emotions as an alternative and discuss if addressing them might influence recipients and inspire mobilization. We believe non-populist appeals to emotions are not limited to mirroring populist narratives in that, as Wawrzyński (2017) suggests, stronger emotions might also strengthen democratic societies and promote prosocial behaviors although the act of doing so should not, as Kazlauskaitė (2022) argues involve the white-washing of wrongdoings.

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND THE EMOTIONAL RESCUE MODEL

The manner in which recipients react to a political narrative does not merely result from emotional valence. Coping with political stimuli depends on emotional regulation strategies and vulnerability to a call for action in the narrative, differentiating strong reciprocators from passive citizens. People with more robust political opinions tend to respond with more anger than fear and more aggressive than defensive behavior (Mackie et al., 2000), yet the sense of being in control seems to be a differentiating factor of the response (Moody-Adams, 2017).

The distinctions between emotional responses to distress alter strategies of political storytelling. In the Emotional Rescue Model, Groenendyk and Banks (2014) describe two separate routes to collective action. They observe that **anger** increases participation, and **enthusiasm** affects political behavior and cognitive processes. Moreover, they write that **fear** is a strategy for demobilization, which targets undecided voters and opponents, whereas reciprocators have anxious

concerns that transform into rituals of anger (p. 360). Anger and fear are two sides of the same coin.

The emotional communication of political leaders explores primary human reactions to threats. There are, however, two parallel systems to address the issue—the defensive survival circuit produces physiological responses, and the cognitive circuit creates conscious fearful feelings (LeDoux, 2015). The human surveillance system controls attention, cognitive and sensory processing, decision-making, and behavior, making individuals ready to act but cautious and anticipatory until they make strategic choices (Groenendyk & Banks, 2014, p. 362).

To freeze or avoid are the initial options in flight-or-flight responses (Webster et al., 2016). Politicians assume that the public reacts to a crisis with shock, apathy, or panic (Wester, 2011, pp. 210–211), but the effect of fear is far less controllable. Scheller (2019) notes that "when political actors can evoke people's fears, people's reliance on partisan habits decreases, and they become more open to new information" (p. 601).

Groenendyk and Banks (2014) explain that "in contrast to fear, anger and enthusiasm should facilitate collective action because they encourage reliance on heuristic processes" (p. 362). But what are the effects of these strategies? Positivity indicates emotional comfort, safety, and pleasant conditions and, as Fredrickson (2001, p. 224) explains, it fosters curiosity and transforms "people for the better, giving them better lives in the future". Furthermore, positivity may broaden attention, increase creativity, reduce stress, and promote human development (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005). Studies indicate that enthusiasm influences cognition, attitudes, openness, behavior, emotional regulation and resilience, social relations, and brain activity (Fredrickson, 2013).

Anger represents a willingness to act against the threat, even if it may cause some risks. Luxon (2016) notes that "anger in politics arises from the exquisitely clear conviction that something is wrong and that the existing order – the politics, the culture, the morals of the moment – must change for its inhabitants" (p. 155). The stimulating effect of anger reduces cognitive effort and risk avoidance because it promotes biased cherry-picking for confirmation of existing opinions, but while fear increases information-seeking, anger promotes close-mindedness (Weeks, 2015, p. 702). Furthermore, Hasell and Weeks (2016) contend anger motivates anti-social and risk-seeking behaviors, inspires moral judgments, increases hostility and distrust, and encourages radicalizations and violent confrontations.

The fear, enthusiasm, and anger model addresses passions involved in political communication strategies. The model explains how populist appeals to emotions might change political preferences, increase polarization, and radicalize society with prejudice, conspiracy theories, and emotional negativity (Wirz et al., 2018; Landau et al., 2009). However, it reduces emotional communication to

mobilization and demobilization strategies most popular in campaigning. We believe that political appeals to emotions regulate storytelling and provide an instrument for a commitment of targeted audiences. Thus, we argue for considering other motivational circuits related to prosocial behavior and broadening the Emotional Rescue Model with other emotions: (authentic) pride and compassion.

Like enthusiasm, **pride** is positive emotion; however, it relates to encouragement rather than playfulness (Hu et al., 2019, p. 5), and increased activity in the medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC) as a self-relevant emotion (Van Cappellen & Rimé, 2014). Moreover, pride is related to networks responsible for empathy, reward, emotion regulation, and self-awareness, including the ventrolateral prefrontal cortex (vLPFC), dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (dLPFC), posterior superior temporal gyrus (STG), temporoparietal junction, insula, striatum, and left temporal lobe (Tracy et al., 2020). Kong et al. (2018) show that neuroscience could differentiate authentic pride, associated with accomplishment and confidence, from hubristic pride, constituted by arrogance and narcissism, because the former is associated with the activity of the posterior STG, while the latter associates with the left orbitofrontal cortex and posterior cingulate cortex.

How do recipients respond to appeals to pride, which influences cognition and attention, openness, creativity, and prosocial behavior? Pride increases memorization, learning abilities, and engagement and improves perceptions of a discussed topic (Amran & Bakar, 2020), as well as mediating attitude change, creating a positive loop between preferences, behaviors, and pride and promoting coherent actions (Adams et al., 2020). Appeals to pride reduce stress and thus, they encourage prosocial behavior, reducing aggressiveness, violence, and hostility (Sandi & Haller, 2015, p. 299).

On the other hand, **compassion** seems to be an alternative to appeals to fear and anger and because it develops sadness, it might like fear be associated with low arousal but increased cognitive processing and openness to new arguments. However, like anger, compassion does not reduce activity, overcoming the negative effect of low arousal on political engagement and willingness to act (de León & Trilling, 2021). This dualism is deeply rooted in compassion as it includes concerns for the suffering or the need of another person, feeling moved and touched, a desire to alleviate the suffering, a judgment about an antecedent, and activation of neural circuits of social affiliation, caregiving, and motivation. Compassion bridges emotional negativity with positivity by transforming stressful experiences into prosocial and protective behavior (Goetz & Simon-Thomas, 2017).

Feeling compassionate integrates empathy-related networks and cognitive reappraisal in a motivational strategy. Empathy activates the amygdala, hypothalamus, ventral striatum/ nucleus accumbens, globus pallidus, anterior insula, anterior cingulate cortex (ACC), and ventromedial prefrontal cortex (vMPFC)

and simultaneously reappraisal involves the supramarginal gyrus, temporoparietal gyrus, temporoparietal junction, middle and superior temporal gyrus, inferior frontal and middle frontal gyrus (Chierchia & Singer, 2017). The former network is responsible for planning positive reactions to distress, while the latter reduces emotional negativity (Klimecki et al., 2013), resulting in the prosocial behaviors of helping and charity (Weng et al., 2013). In their meta-analysis, Kim et al. (2020) suggest that the compassion-related network in the human brain should be limited to the anterior insula, ACC, the basal ganglia, thalamus, midbrain periaqueductal regions, and inferior, medial and middle frontal gyri.

How do recipients respond to appeals to compassion, bearing in mind as Bloom (2017, p. 28) argues it improves responsiveness, promotes inclusiveness and openness, fosters attitude change, and provides a cognitive transformation of negative feelings into altruism?. Compassion influences attention regulation, working memory, impulse control, motivation, and engagement. Moreover, appeals to compassion increase prosocial behavior as a response to the suffering of others in the form of emotional regulation, preventing emphatic distress or fatigue (Stevens & Taber, 2021; Singer & Klimecki, 2014).

Table 1. Responses to emotional appeals on cognitive, attitude, and behavioral levels.

Appeals to	Cognitive response	Attitude change	Behavior
anger	decreased	limited	antisocial
enthusiasm	rather increased	possible	rather prosocial
fear	increased	very probable	avoidant
pride	rather increased	possible	prosocial
compassion	increased	very probable	prosocial

Source: Authors

We believe that the developed model of emotional strategies might be used to improve the targeting of political communication (Clifford, 2019) and so we focused our research on between-group differences in responding to emotional storytelling in politicized conditions. Investigating appeals to pride, we expected activation of the superior temporal gyrus (STG) associated with the inspiration of authentic pride. We also predicted that pride would promote (1) better memorization of presented information, (2) a change of attitudes toward a subject of appeal, and (3) influence prosocial behavior. Moreover, we anticipated loop-effect consolidation of the narrative's influence on recipients. Considering the appeals to compassion, we assumed activation of the compassion-related network, as Kim et al. (2020) discuss. We also predicted that compassion would increase (1) memorization of presented information, (2) positive attitude change, and (3) prosocial behavior. Moreover, we considered that negative emotions would have

a more substantial impact on the audiences as negativity tend to be perceived as more robust than pleasant experiences.

METHODS AND THE DESIGN OF EXPERIMENTS

In the experimental study, we wanted to test how appeals to nonviolent emotions influence recipients of political narratives and verify if engagement may be achieved without emotional radicalization (van Stekelenburg, 2017, p. 938). We tested whether pride and compassion can be used in the instrumentalization of passions to prevent indifference and promote empathetic responsiveness, as Crawford (2014) discusses in her paper on the role of fear in politics. Thus, we designed experiments on associations between the emotional dynamics of political narratives and their influence on audiences, exploring the effects of the logic of emotional intensification in controlled terms.

We established different emotional dynamics of the same story using emotionalized language and compared it with a neutral narrative (Kazlauskaitė, 2022, p. 702). We used the Nencki Affective Word List (Riegel et al., 2015) that measures phrases associated with pride and compassion. The list enabled us to edit three parallel versions of a story about a hero of the Polish anti-communist movement, which ends with an evaluation of Poland's political transformations in the 1990s. The story narrated by a professional actress was recorded and edited into six paragraphs (each approximately 30-seconds long) with alternative conclusions (each 6–10 seconds long) providing experimental manipulation. The objective was to mimic informative communication. Thus, while the alternative conclusions covered 22.5% of the story, they were included in the common thread as separation might have influenced the audience's attention. Participants were randomly assigned to individually watch one of the three versions, which we worded: neutrally for the control group, positively for the pride-related group, and negatively for the compassion-related group.

Subject characteristics. There were no exclusion criteria for consensual adults in the general study, while medical and psychological contraindications were listed as exclusion criteria for the fMRI study in the recruitment survey (CAWI). We recruited 364 participants and randomly assigned them to each of the three groups pride-related (n=121), compassion-related (n=122), and control group (n=121). Each group in the fMRI study comprised 25 people. Our sample was predominated by young adults (age in years: 18–64, M=28.7, SD=8.48) and women (222 females, 141 males, and one undisclosed). The randomization procedure was effective as there were not any significant differences between participants in the control and experimental groups on the tested variables.

Table 2. The most relevant for emotional dynamics of phrasing options for the endings of each paragraph.

Paragraph	Pride-Related Narrative	Compassion-Related Narrative	Neutral Narrative
Anti-communist movement in Poland	heroes, honest optimism, courage, talent, victory	caring for Poland, concerned, the future of the exhausted nation	structure, different people, showing a vision of Poland
Description of the hero	good and sincere, defeating communists	lonely widower, melancholia	the man, objections against communists
Involvement of the hero	successful ideas, guaranteeing security and peace	lack of reward, experiencing despair and disappointment	everyday work, operating under a permanent control
Achievements of the hero	accomplishments, inspiration, hope	difficulties, sacrifices, nameless oppositionist	organization, objectives, plans
Assessment of the hero	the only hope, dreams, free Poland	the lost chance, another dissatisfaction,	method, despite flaws, common goals
Assessment of Poland's democratization	the most important goals achieved, pride, hope for the future	forgotten objectives, failure, injustices	partially successful, some achievements, some failures

Source: Authors, based on the Nencki Affective Word List (Riegel et al., 2015)

Experimental procedure. Participants completed questionnaires in Polish (CAWI) on attitudes toward collective remembrance, empathy, and political preferences. Responses were standardized and measured from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Participants were invited to the lab at least one week after completing the first stage, where they separately watched, in silence, the 3-minute-long recordings of the narrative. Later, we asked them to complete the second set of questionnaires. It included a self-report on interest, engagement, and experienced emotions (also used as a manipulation check), the test of information presented in shared parts of the story (six questions, one per paragraph), and the retest of attitudes toward collective remembrance (to observe an attitude change). Finally, to measure their prosocial behavior, participants were informed that they could voluntarily donate any amount of their reward (0–100) to support a foundation caring for former anti-communist activists – participants selected their choice secretly from the experimenter.

For each of the three groups, 30 participants were randomly selected from the recruited to be video recorded during the experiment to provide a resource for coding their emotional behavior (Ekman & Friesen, 2003). However, in the fMRI study, participants listened to the recording of the narrative with headphones inside the scanner, followed by a resting state analysis; besides the different delivery of stimulation, we used the same experimental procedure as in the general experiment.

Measurement. The study explored three dependent variables in the general experiment. The cognitive effect was observed in the memorization test of

presented information (0–6 points, multiple-choice close-ended questions). The attitude change was measured as a difference between the test and retest of attitudes toward collective remembrance (22–110 points, 5-point Likert Scale with four reversed questions). The prosocial behavior was observed as a decision to donate any amount from the reward (0–1), while the amount was also recorded (0–100 PLN). In the facial expression study, we automatically coded emotional signals, arousal, and valence (rate: 1/10s) in addition to three dependent variables by applying FaceReader 8.1. The system is based on the Facial Action Coding System, recognizing human emotions with 88% accuracy (Lewinski, 2015). In the fMRI study, we analyzed participants' brain activity using Discovery MR750 3T System and FLS FEAT v. 6.0 for data processing and analysis. It covered the auditory experimental stimulation and the resting state analysis. In this paper, we applied basic statistics to describe the results, analysis of variances for between-group differences, and Pearson correlation coefficient for associations between variables to standardize them with results acquired in the fMRI FLS FEAT analysis.

Moreover, we controlled additional factors relevant to targeting audiences with political communication – demographics included age, gender, education, and voting behavior. We asked participants about their interest in history, and – besides using it to measure an attitude change – we considered the initial result in the questionnaire on collective remembrance as a measure of attitudes to public commemoration. We controlled empathy and political preferences to understand profiling appeals to emotions better. The first questionnaire measured Empathic Concern (EC), Personal Distress (PD), and Perspective Taking (PT) (Kaźmierczak et al., 2007). The second questionnaire assessed religious fundamentalism, xenophobia, acceptance of capitalism, and anti-interventionism as a reflection of political affiliation in Poland (Czarnek et al., 2017).

GENERAL RESULTS

In the fMRI study, the compassion-related narrative was the most effective in incitement of brain activity, producing the most significant in-group similarities. The version activated (posterior and anterior) middle and superior temporal gyri, left temporal pole, left planum temporale, right middle frontal gyrus, right inferior frontal gyrus, and the right precentral gyrus. In the pride-related condition, brain activity was lower and limited to the posterior middle temporal gyrus, right (posterior) superior temporal gyrus, left planum temporale, and left Heschel's gyrus (primary auditory cortex). In the control group, brain activity was close to the effects of appeals to pride. Nevertheless, in-group similarities were reduced

– the story activated left (posterior) middle temporal gyrus, posterior and anterior superior temporal gyrus, left planum polare, and left Heschel's gyrus.

The results suggest that the compassionate narrative successfully stimulated the compassion-related and reappraisal-related networks; these effects were missing in other groups. Appeals to negative emotions caused shared activity in three significant brain areas – pars opercularis processing emotional dynamics of speech (Patel et al., 2018), dLPFC responsible for emotional regulation (Li et al., 2021); and temporal pole involved in threat recognition and empathetic responsiveness (Herlin et al., 2021). It proves that compassionate reappraisal might be an effective strategy in even brief political communication; thus, compassion may be an alternative to appeals to fear or anger as a public response to distress.

All groups experienced authentic pride as posterior STG was activated in three conditions (Kong et al., 2018). The area's highest *local maxima* (Z) in the control group ranged from Z=3.24 to 2.95. Appeals to pride in a narrative were slightly more powerful, variating from 3.27 to 3.17, while a compassionate story caused the most potent effect with activation of posterior STG between 4.48 to 3.85. We did not observe neuroactivity specific to experiencing hubristic pride or narcissism in any condition. However, significant stimulation of dLPFC occurred only in the compassion-related group, which suggests a more profound empathetic response to feelings of pride (Tracy et al., 2020).

In the study of facial expressions, we noticed relevant differences between the experimental groups, yet, in general, emotional signaling tended to represent negative feelings. In the control group, the average valence reached – .1129; in the pride-related group, the result was similar, – .1243, but in the compassion-related group, emotional negativity was more visible on the faces of participants, reaching – .1901. The neutral story inspired the highest arousal (31.43%), more robust than in pride-related (26.73%) and compassion-related (27.27%) groups. It means that the emotional versions of the story had a more calmative influence on recipients.

Sadness was the most represented emotion in facial expressions, with averages of 10.90% in the control group, 12.89% in the pride-related group, and 16.82% in the compassion-related group, corresponding with results of the fMRI, which suggested similar differences in processing emotions. Pride significantly reduced signals of anger – 2.91% compared to 4.66% in the control group and 4.50% in the compassion-related group, while the neutral story lowered disgust – 0.72% compared to 1.65% for appeals to pride and 1.80% for compassion. Smiling differed among conditions – in the control group, signals of happiness had the highest average of 2.44%, slightly higher than in the pride-related group (2.03%) and more robust than in the compassion-related group (0.88%), where smiling was instead associated with regulating anger than experiencing happiness. Moreover, in the control group, the intensity of emotional expressions

was stable over time, and it promoted increasing neutrality; however, in both experimental groups, the trend was the opposite: following paragraphs stimulated more signals of emotions – sadness in the pride-related and anger in the compassion-related narrative.

In the general experiment, regarding the combined influence of emotional strategy (*memorization* x *attitude change* x *behavior*), we observed that watching short recordings with parallel versions of the same story resulted in different outcomes (ANOVA, $F=3.528$, $p<.05$). Thus, the results demonstrate that even three minutes of political storytelling may influence the audience, its motivations or preferences. The compassion-related narrative was the most effective strategy – participants scored slightly better on the memorization test (4.51 points, 75%) than in the control group (4.31 points, 72%) and the pride-related group (4.33 points, 72%). It significantly influenced attitude change, promoting increased support for collective remembrance (+8.5%, compared to +4.5% in the control group and +4.3 in the pride-related group) among the highest share of participants (74%, compared to approx. 60% in other groups). Considering prosocial behavior, between-group differences in the presence of donation were insignificant (65% in the control group, 62% in the pride-related group, and 66% in the compassion-related group), but appeals to compassion augmented the average amount of contribution (24.10 PLN, compared to 19.18 and 20.65). The results correspond with recent findings on the mediating role of empathy and compassion in charity (Kumar & Chakrabarti, 2021).

In their self-reports, participants suggested that the compassionate story was more engaging and exciting than the parallel versions. At the same time, appeals to pride promoted the assessment of a story as easy to comprehend (but not increasing memorization as we noticed in the previous paragraph). Participants considered the pride-related narrative more positive and reported the highest arousal of happiness and pride. Negative emotions were assessed as more robust in the compassion-related condition; at the same time, in the study of facial expression, we noticed similar levels of anger in the control group and disgust in the pride-related group. Thus, it shows that the conscious processing of emotions and emotional self-awareness might not cover all unconsciously experienced feelings, which mirrors some remarks on the nature of emotions presented by Barrett (2017, pp. 25–41).

TARGETING AUDIENCES WITH PRIDE AND COMPASSION

In this paper, we started with emotional strategies in populist communication; then suggested that politicians may find appeals to emotions that promote the nonviolent mobilization of recipients outside the ERM. We focused on authentic pride and compassion, as past studies indicated that they might match our criteria: political mobilization without radicalization and polarization. We wanted to test if political appeals to emotions might be effective if we resign from anger, contempt, and disgust (van Stekelenburg, 2017). The general results proved that it is possible in experimental conditions due to the short presentation of a three-minute-long recording. We observed different neuroactivity and distinct timelines for facial expressions, noticing differences in cognitive response, attitude change, and behavior.

How can we use the findings in targeting political communication? We need to search for factors that may differentiate participants and their responses. Considering memorization appeals to pride targeted better male and older participants and active voters, appeals to compassion were more successful among educated recipients. At the same time, the neutral story supported cognitive response in male and educated participants and active voters. We may notice that a gender bias in memorization was missing only in the compassion-related group. Some information was better learned in a particular condition – the control group better memorized the narrator's opinion on the primary failure of democratization, the pride-related group was best at recalling the hero's name and achievements, and the compassion-related group memorized the hero's age and motivations. In both emotional conditions, participants better remembered the suggested inspirations of the anti-communist movement.

Attitude change was more successful in the compassion-related group, but the effect was correlated with engagement and interest in the story, not the audience's demographics. In the pride-related group, females, more educated and less interested in history participants, experienced greater attitude change. In the control group, it was associated with a lower level of education and decreased electoral participation.

In the compassion-related group, prosocial behavior was not influenced by discussed factors. In contrast, the effect in the pride-related group was associated with reported engagement, but it also targeted females and active voters more successfully. The presence of donations in the control group was linked to similar factors, mirroring the gender bias in the memorization results. The compassionate narrative targeted female and male participants, but the appeals to pride and the neutral story strengthened memorization among men and decreased their prosocial mobilization.

Age was irrelevant in responding to the narrative in the control and compassion-related groups. However, it increased memorization (r=.199, p<.05; PCC) and the value of donations (r=.289, p<.01) in the pride-related group. In that condition, the interest in history also influenced the amount of prosocial behavior (r=.194 p<.05). It proves that appeals to pride have some limitations in effectively influencing audiences; however, they are highly successful when efficiently targeted. In that group, the strongest predictor of the influence was self-reported pride – pride-related narratives work with recipients who endorse this emotion due to political communication.

Empathic Concern. The first emotional component of empathy promoted attitude change (r=.241, p<.01) in the control group, increasing reported compassion. The pride-related group responded with better memorization (r=.196, p<.05). Only the compassion-related group correlated with declared engagement, interest in the narrative, and experienced pride. The results suggest sympathy and altruism are not essential in political communication (Feldman Hall et al., 2015).

Personal Distress. The second emotional component of empathy also correlated with memorization (r=.309, p<.01) in the pride-related group, while it was irrelevant in the control group. However, it influenced the effectiveness of appeals to compassion, increasing attitude change in the group (r=.191, p<.05). We observed that a self-focused, aversive response to other's feelings influences political communication only when it appeals to emotions; however, it has no significant impact on prosocial behavior to alleviate own distress (Eisenberg & Eggum, 2009). Personal distress influenced emotional expressions, as it reduced signals of sadness (r=-.611, p<.01) in the control group and promoted happiness and smiling in the pride-related group (r=.307, p<.10).

Perspective Taking. The cognitive component of empathy was not correlated with dependent variables in the general experiment. However, we observed that PT reduced facial expressions of sadness (r=-.307, p<.10) and promoted positivity in valence (r=.357, p<.10) in the pride-related group and slightly increased arousal (r=.339, p<.10) in the compassion-related group. It shows that empathy may influence the unconscious processing of emotions and affect emotional valence or arousal.

Religious fundamentalism. Conservative participants preferred emotional narratives, claiming more experienced pride, happiness, and compassion in the pride-related condition and more happiness and pride in the compassion-related group. Moreover, appeals to pride increased the neutrality of expression in religious participants (r=.507, p<.01), reducing their signaling of emotions and arousal (r=-.335, p<.10), which suggests a calmative effect of the presented narrative consistent with their preferences.

Xenophobia. Nationalist participants experienced negative attitude change after watching the pride-related recording (r=-.180, p<.05) and reported experiencing

more sadness (r=.203, p<.05). They found it harder to comprehend (r=.184, p<.05), probably because positive assessment of Poland's transformation was not meeting their expectations. In the compassion-related group, xenophobia correlated with reported happiness (r=.186, p<.05). The study of facial expressions showed that nationalist participants were less aroused (r=-.537, p<.01) and less angry (r=-.316, p<.10) when assigned to the pride-related group. The result proves that appeals to nonviolent emotions may be considered to prevent nationalist radicalization and successfully reduce expressions of anger and arousal.

Acceptance of capitalism and anti-interventionism. The economic orientation of political preferences was somewhat irrelevant to responses to emotional communication. A more liberal approach to state involvement in the economy reduced memorization in the pride-related group (r=.294, p<.01), increasing interest in the presented narrative (r=.180, p<.05). In the compassion-related condition, it lessened reported pride (r=-.294, p<.01). The acceptance of capitalism correlated with reduced expressions of anger (r=-.444, p<.05) in the pride-related group proving that optimistic storytelling may have a calmative influence of that audience.

Support for collective remembrance and interest in history. In general, participants who scored high in the collective remembrance tended to experience weaker attitude change than participants less interested in the issue. It confirms the results of our previous research, which suggested the instability of high support for collective remembrance over time (Wawrzyński & Schattkowsky, 2015). However, the negative effect was more substantial when participants were assigned to watch emotional stories. Moreover, in the pride-related group, the donated amount in prosocial behavior was correlated with the support for collective remembrance (r=.275, p<.01). It supports the previous conclusion that appeals to pride require adequate targeting of recipients.

Interest in history was correlated with the support for collective remembrance; thus, it is not surprising that it also influenced prosocial behavior (r=.194, p<.05) in the pride-related condition, but the effect was weaker. Besides that, it had no other relevant impact on observed variables: memorization, attitude change, or facial signaling; thus, unexpectedly, it cannot be applied in targeting recipients of a history-related political narrative (Gallego & Oberski, 2011).

CONCLUSION

The results suggest that compassion and pride can be successfully applied as emotional strategies for political mobilization. We argue that emotional positivity may be proliferated in appeals to pride, hope, or harmony. The human brain is wired to overcome the biological limitations of the flight-or-fight response

system; therefore, humans can transform negativity and distress into caring and empathetic responsiveness. Political communication provides nurturing conditions for compassionate narratives, as seen in the results of our experiments.

The study delivers new arguments to support the hypothesis on the over-representation of anger and hostility in political communication, even if there are effective emotional alternatives that also increase the mobilization of audiences (Wollebæk et al., 2019). Among female participants, appeals to pride and optimistic choice of wording proved to be highly efficient in promoting prosocial behavior. The same effect of pride was present when participants expressed more support for collective remembrance. Compassionate storytelling overcame a gender bias in responding to the narrative and, in general, would help to collect 25% more donations than in the control group. Appeals to compassion targeted participants with lower support for public commemoration almost as successfully as appeals to pride influenced its strong supporters – in the first group, the average donation reached 26.22 PLN. In the second, it was 26.71 PLN.

The experimental design helped us to understand what may differentiate recipients' responses to political communication. The fMRI study showed that compassionate narratives activate the compassion-related and the reappraisal-related networks in the brain, while – in general – the network related to processing authentic pride was stimulated by addressing national history in all groups. In the study of facial expressions, we noticed that mobilization was associated in the control group with more anger signals, but in the compassion-related group, prosocial behavior correlated with decreased expression of this emotion.

The limited size and scope of the study, its experimental design, and the context of manipulation should be considered when generalizing the results. We believe that our findings may lead to the following suggestions – appeals to pride should target specific audiences which support a promoted political cause, but addressing compassion is also effective when targeting non-supporters and undecided recipients. Among the radicalized participants, the compassion-related and the pride-related narratives were more efficient in promoting prosocial behavior with only one exception – the neutral story inspired donations among the highest share of subjects high in xenophobia. However, almost 4/5 of radical anti-capitalists contributed in the compassion-related group, and 3/4 of religious fundamentals did so in the pride-related condition – far more than in the general sample.

Considering all analyzed levels, we assume that emotional dynamics influence the possible results of political persuasion and its impact on audiences. The results suggest that the effectiveness of emotional appeals is not limited to populist communication but can be adopted in democratic and nonviolent storytelling. Therefore, we endorse further replications that benefit our understanding of emotional mobilization in political communication.

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