The Effects of Politicians' Emotional Displays on Citizens

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Abstract

Politics is filled with emotions, coloring our political attitudes and behavior. Most research focuses on how political rhetoric elicits emotions. However, not much scientific work has payed attention to the role of nonverbal communication, while visual information is processed much faster and people don't always pay attention to the exact content politician's are communicating. Hence, the persuasive power of politicians' nonverbal communication is still rather unexplored. Do politicians' emotional expressions also trigger emotions in us? In the several studies proposed, I use the theoretical framework of emotional mimicry to examine (1) the extent to which politicians' emotional displays transfer to citizens, (2) how partisanship moderates this emotional contagion, (3) which emotions are most contagious, and (4) for whom these emotional displays are most persuasive.

1 Introduction

Over the past decade, politicians have increasingly started to rely on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and even Instagram to connect with their voters. For example, for Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, also called the "Selfie Prime Minister", Instagram has played an important role in gaining political support (Proudfoot, 2016, Lalancette and Raynauld, 2017). With the rise of these new media platforms, political communication has become more visual and focused on individual politicians. This highly personalized visual communication has shifted voters' attention to politicians' appearance, personality, emotions, posture, and other nonverbal cues, and is likely to influence voters' electoral behavior. Despite the growing importance, the role of visual political communication has received little scientific attention. Of the few existing studies, most of the work has focused on how framing of the mediated leadership images affects political support (Lalancette and Raynauld, 2017; Aaldering et al., 2018). Furthermore a body of literature exist focusing on how politicians' appearance, such as their perceived attractiveness, competence and trustworthiness, influences political success. However, almost no research has looked at the emotional aspect of this visual, personalized political communication.

The changed media landscape has led to an increased accessibility to politicians emotional state, shared through pictures and video's in social media. Most of the existing research on politicians' emotional appeals look at verbal statements. However, besides the increased availability, these nonverbal emotional appeals are important for several reasons. First of all, many politicians use emotions strategically to appeal to voters and undergo extensive media training in order to express the right proportion of emotions in public. This is furthermore important, since people pay a lot of attention to the emotions politicians express. Politicians are often praised for showing the right emotional expressions and using the appropriate tone of voice, but are also criticized numerous of times for being 'too emotional' or 'too cold' (Cillizza, 2008). Moreover, emotional politicians receive more attention on social media. For example, Shah and colleagues (2016) show

that the presence of emotional nonverbal communication such as facial expressions and gestures of politicians during a debate, predict the volume and (to a lesser extent) the valence of viewers' reactions on twitter. Finally, the emotional aspect of visual political communication is important because visual information is processed faster than text and as Casas and Webb Williams (2018) argue: *"One of the main reasons why images are such powerful form of communication is because they trigger stronger emotional reactions than their potential textual counterfactual"* (Casas and Webb Williams, 2018, p.4).

Since emotional visual communication is so politically relevant, the present research aims to better understand *when* and *how* emotional nonverbal communication of politicians affect citizens. The first proposed study will examine whether politicians' emotional facial expressions can trigger emotional reactions in citizens. Research shows that citizens' own emotional experiences influence a range of political behaviors, such as political engagement (Brader, 2005; Huddy et al., 2007), political participation both online and offline (Jones et al., 2012; Valentino et al., 2011; Weber, 2012), information seeking (Valentino et al., 2008; Huddy et al., 2007), and voting behavior (Brader, 2005). However, it is less clear how these emotions are triggered. Theories from psychology will be used to study the mechanism in which emotions can transfer from one person to the next, namely through the process of emotional contagion and mimicry. I argue that these emotional attachments with politicians can enhance emotional contagion when emotions are displayed by a politician you support, but can cause a reactive, defensive emotional response when displayed by a politician you oppose. The first study will furthermore research whether it matters which emotion is expressed and how this interacts with partisanship. Do we all get excited from happy politicians? Or is enthusiasm only triggered by the politician we identify with?

The second proposed study will examine whether people use the emotional nonverbal cues of politicians as a way to inform themselves how to evaluate certain political information. Furthermore, a third study will examine whether individual differences such as political sophistication and need for affect moderate citizens' reaction in response to emotional displays of politicians. Finally, the fourth study will broaden the context

by looking at audience effects. Do people respond differently to emotional displays when other people are present? To sum up, the following questions are addressed in the present research project:

- Do the emotional expressions of politicians elicit emotions in citizens?

- Does it matter which emotion is expressed?

- Do people use politicians' emotional expressions as form of information?

- Who is triggered by politicians' emotional displays?

- How does the presence of others influence citizens' reaction to politicians' emotional displays?

The remaining of this paper will first start with the theoretical framework of study 1. Psychological theories regarding emotional contagion and the existing literature concerning emotional displays of politicians will be discussed. Second, the hypotheses of Study 1 are formulated and more general hypotheses and research questions of the other proposed studies are mentioned. Finally, the paper will end with the research design of Study 1.

2 Emotions, mimicry, and contagion

During social interactions, people have a tendency to 'catch' the other persons' emotions, i.e. displaying and experiencing the same emotions as they observe in their interaction partner. To explain this phenomena, psychologists have proposed the theory of *Emotional Contagion*, suggesting that *"when people perceive an emotion in others, they automatically mimic this emotion, and the bodily feedback derived from this mimicry also leads them to feel that emotion"* (Hatfield et al., 1993). Emotions are considered of consisting of two components, an unconscious physiological reaction and a conscious subjective emotional experience (LeDoux and Pine, 2016; Russell and Feldman Barrett, 1999)). According the emotional contagion theory, people automatically mimic the emotions (e.g. facial expressions, postures, vocalizations, and movements) observed in others during social

interactions. Second, this mimicry induces a physiological response, that then lastly, induces the emotional experience in the observer, reaching the full circle of emotional contagion.

Traditionally, mimicry is seen as a form of behavioral or motor mimicry, which is based on the *perception-behavior link* (Chartrand and Bargh, 1999). Chartrand and Bargh (1999) theorize that perception and action share common representational systems. Therefore, the perception of another's behavior (e.g. a facial expression, body posture, mannerism) increases the likelihood for the perceiver to behave in a similar way, also called the chameleon-effect (Lakin et al., 2003) or the *Matched Motor Hypothesis* (Hess and Fischer, 2013). This notion is consistent with recent neuroscience research showing that the same neurons (mirror neurons) are activated when an action is performed and when the same action is observed (Hess and Fischer, 2013). According to this line of research, the primary function of this imitation is to enhance affiliation and promote social bonding. Lakin et al. (2003) refer to mimicry as 'social glue', binding individuals together. Furthermore, this process is seen as an unconscious phenomenon that does not depend on the observers' or expressers' interpersonal goals (Chartrand and Bargh, 1999). According to Dimberg et al. (2002), mimicry is an unconscious and automatic process that is difficult if not impossible to suppress (Dimberg et al., 2002).

Many studies provided empirical evidence for the Matched Motor Hypothesis perspective. However, some scholars find that mimicry only occurs under certain social circumstances, which is in contrast with the Matched Motor Hypothesis' assumption that emotional mimicry is independent of interpersonal goals. Several studies demonstrate that having a positive attitude towards the expresser is necessary for mimicry to take place (Hess and Fischer, 2013). Due to these findings, other theories have been formulated that take into account the social context. For example, Wang and Hamilton (2012) claim that mimicry is a 'strategy for social advantage'. This theory posits that people show more mimicry towards those who are important for their social welfare. For example, participants are more likely to mimic people in powerful or high status positions, ingroup members, and attractive people (Wang and Hamilton, 2012). According

to this theory, mimicry is an unconscious top-down process, meaning that the automatic mimicking behavior is subtly controlled by a person's social goals and the social context (Wang and Hamilton, 2012).

2.1 The Emotional Mimicry in Social Context Model

Another theory also perceives mimicry as a top down process, but specifically focuses on *emotional mimicry*, also called the *'Emotional Mimicry in Social Context'* model (Bourgeois and Hess, 2008; Hess and Fischer, 2013). They argue that emotional mimicry is different from non-emotional mimicry, in that emotions carry meaning and are ways of communication, whereas imitating behaviors such as foot tapping (Chartrand and Bargh, 1999) are not (unless they can be interpreted as emotional signals such as nervousness). The theory has two key assumptions. The first assumption implies that people only mimic emotions if there is a minimal form of affiliation between the expresser and observer. Second, mimicry is not a response to specific facial expressions per se, but rather a response to the interpretation of that emotional signal.

The first assumption has already been posited by Lakin et al. (2003). They argued that the function of facial mimicry has evolved from a form of communication, to a mechanism of signaling affiliation to enhance social coordination between interaction partners and thereby improving survival chances. Emotions with a more affiliative character (such as happiness and sadness and fear to a lesser extent) are therefore more likely to be mimicked, compared to low affiliative emotions (such as anger and disgust) (Hess and Fischer, 2013). Bourgeois and Hess (2008) furthermore argue that displays of affiliation should preferentially only be shown to ingroup members or others with whom one wants to cooperate. They especially argue that mimicking outgroup behaviors would be costly, since it may allow competitors or outgroup members to access resources that one does not want to share. Based on this line of reasoning, Hess and Fischer (2013) propose the 'Emotional Mimicry in Social Context model'. They distinguish between two types of reactions to facial displays: a mimicry response (in situations of affiliation) and a reactive response (e.g. smiling when you see an outgroup member in pain; when no form

6

of affiliation between interaction partners exist; Preston & de Waal, 2003).

The second assumption of this model presumes that mimicry is not just a 'motor reaction', but rather an appraisal of the social context. For example, showing a neutral face with no emotional expressions, can still elicit mimicry if the perceiver receives information about the emotional state of that person. Moreover, listening to an audio of emotional language can also lead to mimicry, because the perceiver interprets the target's emotional state. Hess and Fischer (2013) therefore assume (same as the STORM theory) that emotional mimicry is a top-down process. Emotional expressions are thus interpreted and paired with other relevant social cues to derive affiliative intent, which consequently influences the level of mimicry (Fischer and Hess, 2017).

A considerable amount of experimental studies have examined the role of affiliation, as proposed by the STROM and Emotional Mimicry in Social Context model. Although some results are inconsistent, most of these studies indeed confirm that mimicry varies as a function of the social context (Wang and Hamilton, 2012; Hess and Fischer, 2013; van der Schalk et al., 2011). For example, in one of the only studies using politicians as social context, Bourgeois and Hess (2008) showed displays of two Quebecan political leaders (Bouchard and Charest of the 1998 election) considered equally charismatic and good communicators. The presented stimuli consisted of short videos of happy and angry expressions taken from a pre-electoral debate. The results showed that participants only mimicked the angry expressions of the ingroup politician. Furthermore, participants smiled equally in response to both politicians' happiness displays.

3   Politicians' Facial Displays

Only a few political scientist have looked at the effect of politicians' emotional displays. Pioneering research on this particular subject comes from (as referred to in the literature as) "the Dartmouth Group" (Stewart and Ford Dowe, 2013). This group of scholars (from Dartmouth College) have conducted several studies examining how facial displays of political leaders affect citizen's emotions and political beliefs. Their studies consist of

short videos (around 30 – 70 seconds) of television coverage of well-known politicians, each displaying a different emotion or a neutral expression, and physiological and self-report measures of emotional reaction. The Dartmouth group scholars have identified three types of emotional displays in politicians: happiness/reassurance (HR), anger/threat (AT), and fear/evasion (FE; e.g. Sullivan and Masters (1998). The categories are composite terms reflecting the emotion that is being expressed and the social signal that is communicated (Bucy and Grabe, 2008). These three categories are based on primate and human ethology research, which suggests that different displays are associated with distinct roles in social hierarchy. More specifically, leaders need to signal both dominance to maintain the social order (anger and fear), and affiliation to strengthen their alliances (happiness, Stewart et al., 2009; Bucy and Grabe, 2008). Later scholars have elaborated the emotion categories by adding a fourth, sadness/appeasement (Stewart et al., 2009). However, some argue that displays of sadness are incompatible with leadership, since it signals submission. Only in cases of showing empathy (e.g. as response to a natural disaster or terrorist attack), sadness is deemed appropriate (Price and Sloman, 1987).

The Dartmouth scholars rely on the perspective of psychologist Paul Ekman, assuming that people are able to show distinct emotional expressions that can be easily recognized by the recipient. Indeed, in their experiments, participants accurately recognized the three types of expressive displays (happiness/reassurance, anger/threat, fear/evasion). More importantly, the three types of displays evoked distinct emotional reactions in participants, both self-reported and physiological responses (EMG and SCR) (Lanzetta et al., 1985; McHugo et al., 1985; Mchugo et al., 1991). With these findings, the Dartmouth group were one of the first to demonstrate that politicians' emotional expressions can trigger emotions in citizens.

The Dartmouth group furthermore examined the moderating role of citizens' prior attitudes (composed of political ideology, party identification, and candidate evaluations). In two studies, participants watched several displays of president Reagan (Lanzetta et al., 1985; McHugo et al., 1985)). Supporters of Reagan reported stronger emotional responses, while Reagan's opponents reported more counter-empathy (e.g. negative response to pos-

itive display). Interestingly, the physiological responses were congruent with the displays and not affected by participants' prior attitudes. The scholars suggest that people cognitively adjust their self-reported response to fit their prior beliefs, while the physiological response is probably a more direct motor reaction. However, in contrast to their earlier findings, in a later study Mchugo et al. (1991) find that prior attitudes significantly affects both participants' physiological and self-report emotional responses. Supporters of Reagan had more positive and less negative emotional reactions when watching Reagan's happiness display, compared to Reagan's opponents. For the anger displays, supporters reported higher anxiety than opponents did (no effects on facial muscle activity was found). A later study of Sullivan (1996) replicated these results in both the US and France, showing that supporters in general report more positive emotions to positive displays, and more negative emotions to negative displays (no physiological data). However, some other studies do not corroborate these results and find no or only small effects of party identification (Sullivan and Masters, 1998; Gabriel and Masch, 2017).

Finally, the Dartmouth group has focused on whether politicians' emotional displays affect the evaluations of the political candidates presented. Sullivan and Masters (1998) show that viewers' emotional response to positive facial displays of politicians increased post exposure attitude ratings of the political candidates. This effect was only found for the happiness/reassurance displays. Other scholars partly replicate this finding in Germany. Gabriel and Masch (2017) show that the effect of the emotional display depends on the political leader. Participants' ratings of Merkel increased after positive displays and decreased after negative displays, whereas ratings of Gysi increased after all displays (negative, positive and neutral). However, it should be noted that in general, Gabriel and Masch find that most participants were mostly unaffected or reported very small reactions to the emotional displays.

4 Study 1: Does emotional attachment with a politician enhance emotional contagion?

The Dartmouth group and later scholars have demonstrated that in some cases, politicians' emotional displays elicit emotional responses in citizens and alter their attitudes. However, we do not know *how* and *when* these emotional expressions of politicians elicit the associated emotion in citizens. I turn to theories from psychology to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying processes of this affect transfer, i.e. emotional contagion. Hence, the first study investigates whether people mimic the facial expressions of politicians and whether people also are triggered by these emotional displays, i.e. whether people actually experience the emotions expressed by politicians themselves. I argue that the emotional reaction in response to emotional politicians, depends on citizens' emotional attachment with the politician. However, before turning to this proposition, I will first test the debated assumption of the role of social context in the mimicry literature.

4.1 Mimicry: automatic response or context dependent?

In order to investigate how the political context influences affect transfer of emotional expressions more specifically, I first need to establish whether social context actually influences mimicry, or whether mimicry is an automatic process independent of one's affiliation intentions. As mentioned previously, traditionally scholars perceive mimicry as a biological predisposition to mimic facial expressions, an unconscious automatic process that is based on the close link between perception and behavior (Chartrand and Bargh, 1999). However, this *Matched Motor Hypothesis* has recently become subject of increased scrutiny (Hess and Fischer, 2013). Several scholars demonstrate that mimicry only occurs under certain circumstances, i.e. when a motivation to affiliate is present (as described in the *Emotional Mimicry in Social Context model* of Hess and Fischer, 2013). These affiliation intentions arise for example when someone is perceived as attractive, a member of our in-group, or of high social status (Van Leeuwen et al., 2009; Bourgeois and Hess, 2008; Cheng and Chartrand, 2003). Hence, I will start with a conceptual replication of

previous research and tests whether mimicry is automatic (hypothesis 1a: *Matched Motor Hypothesis*) or dependent on the social context (hypothesis 1b: *Emotional Mimicry in Social Context model*). The social context will be operationalized by looking at the difference in mimicry response to an emotional display of an in-party politician versus an out-party politician, leading to the following competing hypotheses:

> *Hypothesis 1a: All emotional displays elicit mimicry*

> *Hypothesis 1b: The emotional displays of in-party politicians elicit more mimicry compared to the emotional displays of out-party politicians*

4.2   Citizens' Emotional Attachment with Politicians

Although the body of literature concerning mimicry of ordinary faces has been quite established (e.g. Seibt et al., 2015), the mimicry effect might differ in the political realm. Politicians are well-known figures, who are associated with a range of political issues, beliefs, and events, that alone could already provoke an emotional reaction. According to a number of scholars – building on Abelson's (1963) '*hot cognition hypothesis*' – political concepts such as political issues, parties, and leaders, are stored in our memory with affective tags. Whenever such a concept becomes consciously accessible, the related affective tags are automatically retrieved, coloring subsequent cognitive processing (Lodge and Taber, 2005, 2013; Redlawsk, 2006). More specifically, Cassino and Lodge (2007) find that exposure to political candidates automatically activates these affective tags, without any 'cognitive mediation'. When studying whether politicians' emotinal expressions are contagious, it is therefore important to distinguish between an activation of affective tags, elicited by mere exposure with a politician, and emotional contagion, elicited by the emotional expression of that politician. To do this, citizens' emotional reaction in response to *neutral* expressions of politicians (which would activate the affective tags) are compared to their emotional reaction in response to the *emotional* expressions of politicians (which would elicit emotional contagion on top of the activated affective tags). This leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Emotional displays trigger more emotional reaction compared to neutral displays of politicians. [1]

How people evaluate and feel towards political elites is a debated issue in political science. Two school of thoughts exist, one (the 'revisionists') arguing that the nature of partisanship is a (dispassionate) process of an ongoing evaluation of party performance and issue position (Downs, 1957; Fiorina, Morris, 1981; Garzia, 2013). The other school of thought, starting with *The American Voter* (Campbell et al., 1960), suggests that partisanship is an affective bond, developed through socialization in childhood and resulting in a sense of belonging, in which the party's identity is incorporated into one's self-concept. More contemporary scholars extend this work by using the psychological framework of *Social Identity Theory* (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Bankert et al., 2017; Huddy et al., 2018). According to this research, identification with a certain party or politician involves an affective dimension, such as feelings of belonging, commitment, and attachment to the political party. The scholars find evidence for this, so called *expressive partisanship*, in both the US and Europe (Bankert et al., 2017; Huddy et al., 2018). Expressive partisanship has been found to lead to high motivations to protect one's partisan identity, resulting in biased perceptions, information processing and decision making in politics (e.g. Taber and Lodge, 2006; Johnston, 2006). Following the expressive partisanship account, one could expect those with high partisan identification to show higher levels of mimicry in response to their in-party politicians' emotional expressions:

Hypothesis 3: Partisan identification increases the emotional reaction in response to the emotional displays of in-party politicians

Moreover, what happens when an opposing politician displays an emotion? Are we tempted by their smile? Or do our negative feelings towards the out-party politician prevent emotional contagion? Recently, several political scientist have started to focus on 'negative partisanship' (Abramowitz and Webster, 2018; Medeiros and Noël, 2014).

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[1]When I mention 'emotional reaction' in a hypothesis, this includes both physiological responses (mimicry and arousal) and self-reported emotions

They argue that besides having a positive emotional attachment with one's in-party, people can also experience strong negative emotions regarding certain political elites. This negative partisanship is a significant predictor of vote choice (Medeiros and Noël, 2014) and also strongly affects polarization Iyengar et al. (2012). When relating this research to emotional contagion processes, one can expect negative partisanship to impede mimicry in response to an out-party politicians' emotional display. According to the Emotional Mimicry as Social Context model (Hess and Fischer, 2013), a minimal form of positive affiliation is necessary to induce mimicry. However, when there is no form of affiliation between the observer and the expresser, Hess and Fischer (2013) posit that congruent mimicry will not occur and the observer will instead be more likely to experience a reactive emotional response (e.g. getting angry while seeing your out-party politician laugh). To test whether negative partisanship indeed inhibits mimicry, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 4: Negative partisanship decreases citizens' mimicry and increases reactive emotional reactions in response to emotional displays of out-party politicians

This reactive response does not necessarily imply that people experience an emotion that is different from the one that is displayed. The difference in reactive emotional response versus emotional contagion is that the former involves experiencing an emotion *towards* someone, while the latter concerns the experience of an emotion *with* someone. For example, seeing an out-party politician show anger can make you angry as well. This angry reaction can be caused by emotional contagion, but can also be triggered by one's negative attitudes and feelings towards the politician (i.e. negative partisanship).

4.3   What is the effect of the distinct emotions displayed?

The present research will furthermore examine whether different emotions have distinct effects. For example, do displays of happiness elicit more emotional reactions compared to other more negative emotions? Due to the lower prevalence of emotional expressions of

fear and sadness in politicians, Study 1 will focus on displays of happiness and anger. As the Dartmouth group studies suggested, politicians' emotional expressions communicate a certain signal. Happiness displays signal reassurance and social bonding, whereas anger communicates signs of dominance (Stewart et al., 2009). Hess and Fischer (2013) furthermore suggest that happiness (and to a lesser extent fear and sadness) is an emotional expression signaling affiliative intentions, whereas anger signals the opposite. They argue that mimicking happiness displays is of low 'social costs', since it only signals friendly intentions. Anger, in contrast, communicates dominance, which could turn out costly when targeted at a high status individual, who could perceive this expression as a threat to their status (Tiedens and Fragale, 2003). Bourgeois and Hess (2008) show that these 'low cost' emotions are more likely to be mimicked regardless of the social context, whereas 'high cost' emotions are only mimicked when coming from an in-group. Following these lines of research, one could expect mimicry levels to vary depending on the emotion expressed, leading to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: Happiness displays are mimicked more than anger displays.

Hypothesis 6: Angry displays from in-party politicians are mimicked more compared to angry displays from the out-party politicians

5   Who is triggered by politicians' emotional displays?

Besides the impact of the political context, mimicry levels can also be moderated by individual differences. Hence, one of the overarching questions of this research project is for *whom* these emotional displays of politicians are most emotionally provocative. I focus on two individual differences: need for affect and political sophistication. These individual moderators will be studied in two ways. The first study will examine whether people's mimicry response and emotional reaction to politician's emotional displays, are moderated by these two characteristics. Are some people more easily triggered by politicians' displays of emotion compared to others? The second proposed study, will focus on politicians'

emotional expressions as a form of information, and more specifically, whether individual differences exist in how much people rely on politicians' emotional expressions when evaluating political information.

5.1 Need for Affect

Research in psychology has demonstrated that people differ in the way they process information. Two individual characteristics that are of particular interest when it comes to processing emotional information, are Need for Cognition (NFC) and Need for Affect (NFA). Individuals with a strong need for cognition have a high motivation to understand incoming information and enjoy effortful thinking (Cacioppo and Petty, 1982). Need for affect reflects a tendency to enjoy the experience of strong emotions and to rely on these feelings when evaluating information (Maio and Esses, 2001). Haddock et al. (2008) found that people with high need for affect are more likely to be persuaded by emotional messages, whereas individuals with a strong need for cognition are more influenced by cognitive (factual) messages. Furthermore, Arceneaux et al. (2013, p.26) state that; *"Because these individuals tend to enjoy experiencing strong emotions, their attitudes tend to possess a stronger affective basis, and their emotional responses to information play a more important role in guiding the formation of attitudes"* (Huskinson and Haddock, 2004). In their studies, Arceneaux et al. (2013, 2017) found that individuals high on need for affect, are more likely to follow party cues and engage in motivated reasoning to counter-ague negative information regarding their in-party. Following this line of reasoning, two hypotheses can be formulated:

> *Hypothesis 7: People with high need for affect show a stronger emotional reaction in response to politicians' emotional displays*

> *Hypothesis 8: People with high need for affect rely more on politicians' emotional expressions when evaluating political information*

5.2   Political Sophistication

Differences in political sophistication have been found to alter how people respond to political messages. Taber and Lodge (2006) demonstrate that especially people with high political sophistication are more easily triggered by political information. They theorize that political sophisticates are more likely to develop affective tags regarding political objects, which would lead to stronger affective responses to politics compared to the less sophisticates, leading to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 9: Political sophisticates show stronger emotional reactions in response the politicians' emotional displays compared to the less sophisticates

For the less politically sophisticated individuals, politicians' emotional expressions might be a valuable source of information on how to think and feel regarding certain issues without having to spend much effort on understanding complex political arguments.Emotional expressions can provide valuable information about how people perceive a certain situation, their opinions, and gives a reflection of someones' inner state. Emotional expressions can therefore be regarded as a form of social information (Van Kleef et al., 2010; Kleef et al., 2014). Moreover, the emotional expressions of politicians communicates how they feel and think about certain political matters. This emotional information can easily be detected and interpreted, compared to some of the complex (verbal) arguments politicians are making. Hence, the following is expected:

Hypothesis 10: The less political sophisticates rely more on the emotional expressions of politicians as form of information compared to high political sophisticates

6   The broader social context: the effect of social presence

Political communication does not happen in total isolation. How people in our surroundings think and respond to political information can have a profound influence on how

16

individuals process and evaluate this information. For example, Klar (2014) found that people discussing politics in a homogeneous group engaged in more motivated reasoning and polarization, compared to people in a heterogeneous group. Besides some evidence from political science literature, research in mimicry also demonstrates that even the mere presence of others can have an impact on how people respond to incoming information from the environment. For instance, the perceived presence of other people intensifies smiling in response to pleasant stimuli (also called the 'sociality effect', Fridlund, 1991; Philipp et al., 2012). This sociality effect on smiling is strongest when a social other is present, yet the implied presence of social others, such as knowing that a friend is viewing the same material in another room, is sufficient to elicit exaggerated expressions to positive stimuli (Fridlund, 1991; Hess et al., 1995). However, how people respond to emotional political messages in a crowd is a largely unexplored area. The last proposed study will therefore broaden the social context and investigate whether the presence of others, either online or offline, affects how people respond to emotional displays of politicians. Several research questions that could be addressed in this study include: (1) *Does the presence of others increase individuals' emotional reaction in response to emotional displays of politicians?* (2) *And is this only the case for positive emotions (as the sociality effect predicts) or also for negative emotions?* and (3) *What happens when the emotions of others are congruent or incongruent with the emotion displayed by the politician?*

7 Research Design Study 1

Design & Procedure

Study 1 has a 3 (type of display: neutral, happy and angry) by 2 (source: in-party politician versus out-party politician) within subject design. Each condition will have displays of 3 politicians (either falling under the category of in-party or out-party), leading to a total of 27 displays. Before the experiment starts, participants are asked to answer a pretest to determine the participants' political in-party and out-party, to measure demographics and the moderator variables (party identification, political ideology, and emotional em-

pathy). After this, EMG and SCR electrodes are placed on the participants' face and hands respectively (see measurement). Participants are then randomly presented with the conditions. Between the conditions, participants are given a bogus task (TBD, e.g. cognitive reflection task) to ensure engagement during each of the blocks.

Each display will be preceded by a blank screen with a fixation cross. The fixation screen will be presented for 3 s, followed by the display, presented for 6-8 s. After each display, participants are asked to report to what extent they experience certain discrete emotions (see measurement). At the end of each condition, the emotional displays of each politician are presented again, combined with three self-report questions (see Reactive Response).

Stimuli

According to the mimicry literature, dynamic displays of emotional expressions (compared to static pictures) elicit the strongest mimicry response (Weyers et al., 2006; Rymarczyk et al., 2011, Sato et al., 2008). Hence, the present study will use innovative techniques (e.g. Face2Face or X2Face software) to manipulate politicians' facial expressions in a 6-8 seconds display. Stimuli for the 8 biggest parties in the Netherlands will be created. Of these parties, only two have female party leaders. Since woman are underrepresented in politics, have different display rules and experience different stereotypes when it comes to showing emotions, compared to male leaders (Adams et al., 2015; Aaldering et al., 2018), the results of the study will be done with and without the female politicians. A pilot study with a non-Dutch sample will be conducted to test the created stimuli on several dimensions: (1) whether people experience them as being realistic, (2) recognize the emotion displayed, (3) the intensity of the emotion displayed, and (4) are asked to rate the facial appearance of the politicians (e.g. attractiveness, trustworthiness, competence).

7.0.1 Survey Measures

Propensity to vote. To determine participants' in-party, participants indicate their propensity to vote for each party in parliament on a slider ranging from 1 ('I will certainly never vote for his party') to 10 ('I will certainly vote for this party at some time') (following van der Eijk et al., 2006).

Partisan identification. To assess how much people identity with a certain party, the Partisan Identity Scale of Bankert et al. (2017) is used, consisting of 8 items with a 5 point Likert scale (ranging from 1 "totally disagree" to 5 "totally agree"). Example items are "*When I meet someone who supports this party, I feel connected*" and "*When I speak about this party, I refer to them as 'my party'*".

Negative Partisan Identification Negative party identification is not necessarily opposite of positive identification, therefore a measure of negative partisanship is included (TBD, e.g. sympathy or thermometer question).

Party Leader Evaluation. In some cases, people might experience a discrepancy between the identification with a party and with the politician leading the party. To control for this ambivalence, a measure of party leader evaluation is included, or existing data is used (e.g. thermometer questions from panal data).

Need for Affect The complete 26 item Need for Affect (NFA) battery of Maio and Esses (2001) will be used, including items like "*I find strong emotions overwhelming and therefore try to avoid them*" and "*I like to dwell on my emotions*".

Political Sophistication TBD.

Measurement of the Emotional Response

Mimicry. Participants' mimicry response will be measured in two ways: with electromyography (EMG), measuring the zygomaticus ('smiling' response) and corrugator muscle ('frowning' response), and with an automated facial coding software package (e.g. iMotion or FaceReader). For the latter, participants facial expressions will be recorded by camera's during the experiment. Using both measures is advantageous since automated analysis can pick up emotional reactions besides the smiling and frowning responses

recorded with the EMG electrodes, whereas the EMG electrodes are able to measure muscle activity that is invisible to the eye (Seibt et al., 2015).

Skin Conductance Response. To assess whether participants get aroused by the displays of politicians (as both the hot cognition hypothesis and the emotional contagion theory would suggest), electrodermal activity is measured. [NOTE: I will do a bit more research on this, to determine whether I want to measure skin conductance response or level]

Self-reported Emotions. TBD. After the presentation of each display, participants' experience of several discrete emotions are measured (TBD: anger, happiness, sadness, fear). For each emotion category, two to three items are used (e.g. 'happy', 'cheerful', 'amused' for happiness), according to Izard, Dougherty, Bloxom, Kotsch, 1974. Participants are asked to indicate to which extent they felt each of these emotions on a scale from 1 ("not at all") to 5("very intense"). Other contender is a similar measure of Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2015.

Reactive Response. The reactive response will be measured in two ways. First, I will assess whether participants show a counter-mimicry response, i.e. incongruent facial expressions (e.g. smiling in response to an angry display). Second, participants could experience a reactive response while showing congruent facial expressions. For example, a participant could show an angry response to an angry display of an out-party politician. In this case, the participants' anger is not a sign of mimicry, but rather a reactive response. Drimalla et al. (2019) demonstrate that the level of state empathy (i.e. how much participants could feel with the emotional people displayed in a picture) predicts mimicry, but not the reactive response. Furthermore, other studies show that the perception of the appropriateness and sincerity of the politicians' emotional display has previously been found to moderate participants direction and level of affective physiological response (Bucy and Bradley, 2004). To distinguish the reactive response, this study therefore includes three items in which participants will be asked how much they perceived the emotional display to be (1) appropriate, (2) sincere, and (3) how much they could emphatize with the display. Lower scores on these items would indicate that the

emotional response measured by EMG and face coding does not represent mimicry, but rather a defensive or reactive response.

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