
This is the **accepted version** of the journal article:

Rico, Guillem; Guinjoan, Marc; Anduiza Perea, Eva. «The Emotional Underpinnings of Populism: how Anger and Fear Affect Populist Attitudes». *Swiss political science review*, Vol. 23 (2017), p. 444-461. DOI 10.1111/spsr.12261

This version is available at <https://ddd.uab.cat/record/259037>

under the terms of the  ^{IN} COPYRIGHT license

The Emotional Underpinnings of Populism: How Anger and Fear Affect Populist Attitudes

Guillem Rico, Marc Guinjoan, Eva Anduiza

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Abstract

Popular accounts of populist movements often point to negative emotions as a key motivating factor underlying their support. However, little systematic research has been devoted to examining differences in how distinct negative emotions affect levels of populism among voters. In this paper, we attempt to fill this gap by focusing on the influence of the two emotions most frequently connected to populism in political commentary: fear and anger. Informed by appraisal theories of emotions, we hypothesize that populist attitudes are driven by feelings of anger, rather than fear. We explored this issue by using a three-wave online panel survey of Spanish citizens between 2014 and 2016. In line with expectations, the empirical analysis reveals that anger expressed over the economic crisis is consistently associated with variations in support for populism both between individuals and over time, whereas no significant effects emerge for expressions of fear. We discuss the implications of these findings for understanding the nature of populist support and the relationship between emotions and politics.

This paper has been accepted for publication at the *Swiss Political Science Review*. We acknowledge funding from the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (CSO2014-52950).

Introduction

Populism is often depicted as being characterized by emotion (Fieschi 2004). Indeed, in recent times there has been a tendency in political commentary to link support for populist movements to the expression of particular negative feelings (cf. Müller 2016). Anxiety provoked by far-reaching societal change, for example, has been recurrently associated with populist upsurges. Similarly, anger against the establishment has become a hallmark of anti-austerity protests with strong populist tones seen in the wake of the recent global economic crisis, including those held by Spanish and Greek Indignados. Perhaps most notably, the recurrent image of the “losers of globalization,” who would vote out of fear and rage, has infused both journalistic and scholarly accounts of support for Donald Trump, Brexit, and the radical right, while expressions such as “economic anxiety,” “cultural resentment,” and “angry white men” have become common currency in popular narratives of populism.

What role do emotions play in explaining people’s support for populism? Is it fear, anger, or both that matter? Despite the mentioned and analogous widespread characterizations of populism, the alleged link between populism and citizens’ emotions has barely been subject to systematic empirical scrutiny in the burgeoning literature on populism, which rarely delves into the analysis of affective reactions, least of all into the distinct influence of discrete emotions (cf. Demertzis 2006). Research has shown that discrete emotions, even if equally valenced (i.e., equally positive or negative), can exert distinct effects on how individuals process information, form judgments, and react to situations, events, and objects (cf. Brader and Markus 2013). Arguably, fear and anger are the emotions most frequently connected to the spread of populism. However, fear and anger are too often used interchangeably, as if to denote the prominence of strong, undifferentiated negative affect, but without scrutinizing the role of specific emotional reactions.

In this paper, we attempt to fill this gap by assessing the distinct influence of feelings of fear and anger on citizens’ adoption of populist attitudes. We contend that anger, not fear, is the key emotion behind support for populism. Our argument largely builds upon appraisal theories of emotions (Lazarus 1991). Appraisal theories argue that differences in the assessment of events give rise to distinct discrete emotions that, in turn, color

judgments in a manner consistent with the emotion's underlying appraisal pattern (e.g., Lerner and Keltner 2000, 2001). Anger is linked to the perception that a frustrating event is certain, externally caused, and unfair, whereas fear relates to appraisals of uncertainty, situational control, and low efficacy. Keeping these differences in mind, we expect populism—a Manichean ideology that conceives politics as the antagonistic struggle between the benevolent people and the evil elite (Mudde 2004)—to be more appealing to angry citizens than to anxious citizens. Our hypothesis derives from the idea that the defining components of populism—chiefly, the external attribution of blame and its fierce moral and confrontational outlook—strongly resonate anger's underlying appraisals, which makes populism particularly well-suited to express that emotion. By contrast, we expect fear, whose appraisal pattern is at odds with the populist worldview, to not exert the positive effect on populist attitudes usually ascribed to it.

Our empirical analysis draws on data from an online panel survey conducted in Spain between 2014 and 2016. The Spanish case serves as a relevant scenario to test the intuitions that lie at the core of this paper. Spain ranked among the European countries hit hardest by the Great Recession. As a major threat to people's well-being, the economic crisis became a source of strong, mostly negative feelings among citizens. At roughly the same time, the country witnessed the rise of the Indignados movement, a process of political protests with a markedly populist rhetoric that eventually served to engender the populist radical left party Podemos.

Our panel survey allows us to examine how citizens' emotional reactions to the economic crisis influences their support for populism. We do not seek to establish a relationship between the financial crisis and populism, nor between economic hardship and emotions, for these questions are beyond the scope of our study (cf. Davou and Demertzis 2014). Instead, our aim is to assess the distinct effects of discrete emotions elicited by the same event. Our findings support the hypothesis that populist attitudes are driven by feelings of anger, but not fear.

In what follows, we first review research on the origins and consequences of discrete emotions. Next, we elaborate our hypotheses regarding the influence of anger and fear on populist attitudes. Following a description of the data and methods used, we report

the results of our empirical analysis. The concluding section discusses the implications of our findings.

The Distinct Antecedents and Consequences of Anger and Fear

Most scholarly work on the influence of emotions on political judgment and behavior has been largely guided by the theory of affective intelligence advanced by Marcus et al. (2000; 1993). This theory conceives emotions as being structured along the dimensions of enthusiasm and anxiety, which in turn are associated with the disposition system and the surveillance system, respectively. The theory of affective intelligence thus belongs to the family of dimensional theories of emotions, for it distinguishes two orthogonal dimensions on the basis of their valence. This approach acknowledges that emotional experiences with the same valence tend to correlate, i.e. that feelings of anger and fear appear to co-occur when their levels are measured across individuals and situations.

Arguably, however, relevant differences in the antecedents and consequences of distinct emotions within the same valence dimension exist. Not all individuals react equally to identical negative stimuli, and their different reactions can produce different effects on their preferences and behavior. Indeed, the original theory of affective intelligence was revised to integrate another dimension of emotions—namely, aversion, which taps into negative feelings of anger, disgust, contempt, and hatred—that is nevertheless aligned, as is enthusiasm, with the disposition system (MacKuen et al. 2010; Marcus et al. 2000).

Other theoretical approaches allow a finer-grained differentiation of negative (or positive) emotions. In particular, cognitive appraisal theories have greatly contributed to the understanding of the origins and consequences of discrete emotions (Frijda et al. 1989; Lazarus 1991; Roseman 1996; Smith and Ellsworth 1985). The basic tenet of appraisal theories is that people's reactions to stimuli depend to a large extent on the conscious and preconscious interpretations that each individual makes of a situation. The assumption is that cognition and affect do not constitute separate systems, as posited by early psychological paradigms, but are intimately interrelated. Thus, the way

in which people appraise the environment in connection with their personal goals ultimately determines which particular emotion is aroused.

Although scholars have not reached consensus regarding the list of appraisal dimensions that explain the emergence of the most recurrent discrete emotions, several themes recur in their proposals (Lazarus 1991; Smith and Ellsworth 1985; Roseman et al. 1996). Not all dimensions, however, are relevant for distinguishing any given pair of emotions. In the case at hand, anger and fear can be distinguished on the basis of three dimensions: certainty, which concerns whether the (negative) event is certain to happen or not; responsibility, which refers to whether the situation is caused by an identifiable actor or circumstances beyond anyone's control; and efficacy, which accounts for one's ability to influence the event.

Anger is likely to arise if a threat to personal rewards is certain to occur or has already materialized as a consequence of deliberate or negligent behavior by an external agent in control and thus worthy of blame. However, anger is also accompanied by the sense that one has some capacity to address the situation. Crucially, for our argument, anger is a moral emotion; it is heightened by the perception that an event is unfair or illegitimate, which constitutes a demeaning offense against one's self-esteem (Lazarus 1991; cf. Smith and Ellsworth 1985; Weiss et al. 1999). By contrast, fear is caused by a highly uncertain threat. As a consequence of the very uncertainty of the likelihood and nature of the danger faced, fear is usually linked to appraisals of no situational control—that is, the perception that the situation is the result of circumstances and that no specific agent can be blamed for it—and low efficacy—meaning that the individual has no clear idea of how the threat can be prevented.¹

Previous literature suggests that those distinct appraisal patterns translate into different responses to negative stimuli, even if some findings across studies are inconsistent and differences between similar but discrete emotions are sometimes hardly discernable (Angie et al. 2011; Brader and Marcus 2013). The idea that anger entails a harm or offense perceived to be unfair and deprecating and that there is certainty about whom is

¹ Although some authors have indicated important differences between them, the terms *anxiety* and *fear* are often used interchangeably, as are *anger* and the broader *aversion*.

to blame, along with the sense that one nevertheless has some control over the situation and that the risks are low, typically warrants a behavioral reaction. Anger motivates a person to take action against the responsible agent, thereby promoting a corrective response. More specifically, the reaction of the angry citizen is confrontational, not deliberative, such that new considerations are forestalled in favor of prior convictions. Accordingly, anger has been found to boost political participation (Valentino et al. 2009; Valentino et al. 2011; Weber 2013) and protest (van Troost et al. 2013), foster support for punitive and aggressive policies (Cassese and Weber 2011; Gault and Sabini 2000; Huddy et al. 2007; Lerner et al. 2003; Petersen 2010), and heighten superficial information processing and reliance on prior convictions (Huddy et al. 2007; MacKuen et al. 2010).

By contrast, the sense of uncertainty that governs states of fear usually translates into increased vigilance, information search, and more attentive, systematic processing in judgment making, all in an effort to avoid harm and reduce uncertainty. Fearful individuals tend to favor conciliation, prevention, protection, and other risk-averse behaviors. Research on the political consequences of fear has shown that fear promotes citizens' political learning, encourages a more careful, less automatic processing of information in decision making (Brader 2006; Huddy et al. 2007; MacKuen et al. 2010; Marcus et al. 2000), and enhances support for precautionary and protective measures (Albertson and Gadarian 2015; Lerner et al. 2003; Nabi 2003).

A large body of research has extended the influence of emotion from the style of thought to its content. Emotions not only regulate, but also inform judgment, both within and beyond the specific situations that elicit them (e.g., Forgas 1995; Schwarz and Clore 1983; for a review, see Isbell and Lair 2013). Similarly, discrete emotions evoke judgments in a way consistent with the emotion's core appraisal themes (Keltner et al. 1993; Lerner and Keltner 2000, 2001; Small et al. 2006). This dynamic implies that emotions not only arise from cognitive appraisals, but also prompt interpretations of events, even unrelated ones, in line with the patterns of appraisal that characterize those emotions. People who feel angry are thus more likely to attribute blame to others and judge others' actions as being unfair, while people who feel afraid are more likely to perceive negative events as being unpredictable and determined by circumstances

beyond anyone's control. In that light, discrete emotions can color judgment. Therein lies the key to understanding their role in the activation of populist attitudes.

Emotions and Populism

Although populism remains a highly contested concept, a growing consensus appears to have recently emerged around an ideational definition and minimal set of core features. Both have been succinctly articulated by Mudde (2004: 543), who defines *populism* as a “thin-centered ideology” that “considers society to be separated into two relatively homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people.” In a similar direction, Stanley (2008: 102) conceives populism as having four “distinct but interrelated” constitutive elements: (1) the existence of two homogeneous groups, the people and the elite; (2) praise of the people and denigration of the elite; (3) an antagonistic relationship between the people and the elite; and (4) the idea of popular sovereignty. Accordingly, populism is conceived of as a Manichean outlook that views politics as the struggle between the worthy people's common sense and the harmful, self-serving power elite—a view that is deeply suspicious of any constitutional restraints to the democratic principle and that therefore advocates the absolute primacy of popular sovereignty.

A moment's reflection should reveal numerous connections between populism, as defined above, and the core theme of anger, its pattern of appraisals, and related tendencies, but not between populism and fear. Such alignment should make populist attitudes particularly appealing to people who feel anger, as compared to people who feel fear. Because the populist worldview strongly resonates with the basic elements of anger, populist ideas appear to be exceptionally suited to the expression of anger and to fulfilling the specific motivations that it triggers. By contrast, populist attitudes should remain unaffected by fear, because the populist worldview is at odds with the appraisal and behavioral tendencies that characterize that emotion.

First, blame attribution is central to the emergence of anger. For example, feeling anger about the country's economy entails certainty about the controllability of the economy

and that responsibility can be ascribed to a particular external agent. Several works have provided empirical evidence in support of this assumption. Conover and Feldman (1986) found that feelings of anger and disgust toward national economic conditions have a higher influence on evaluations of presidential performance than feelings of fear and uneasiness. By extension, they suggested that causal attributions play an important role in explaining both the structure and distinct consequences of people's emotional reactions to the economy; angry people perceive the economy as being controllable and hold the government accountable, whereas fearful ones do not. More recently, Steenbergen and Ellis (2006) showed that aversion toward the president is influenced by evaluations of the president's leadership, but only for voters who believe that the economy is controllable and who therefore hold the leader responsible for its situation. Likewise, Wagner (2014) demonstrated that British voters were more likely to experience anger than fear if they attributed responsibility for the financial crisis to an external actor, particularly if that actor was an institution accountable to them.

Attribution of responsibility is also notably present in populist movements, the discourse of which is dominated by blame-shifting rhetoric (Vasilopoulou et al. 2014). As Hameleers et al. (2016: 2) put it, "populism is inherently about attributing blame to others while absolving the people of responsibility." Populism typically emerges as a result of the perceived unresponsiveness of the political system to frustrated popular demands (Panizza 2005). Responsibility is attributed to the establishment, which is characterized as a unified bloc in opposition to the like-minded people, thereby conveniently conveying the picture of an external actor that prevents the in-group from attaining its goals. Similar to anger, populism therefore entails a causal interpretation, by which an outside agent is blamed for the obstruction to the achievement of one's goals.

Second, anger and populism are both concerned not only with responsibility for a negative event, but also with its legitimacy, meaning that causal attribution is accompanied by a normative judgment. As mentioned, a crucial condition for anger to arise is that an outcome is perceived to be unfair and unjust and frustrate the reception of rewards that people perceive to be legitimately theirs. The negative event should not have occurred on moral grounds—indeed, could have not happened—since the experience of anger implies that the people blamed are perceived to be in control of

their actions and capable of having acted otherwise. In support, Steenbergen and Ellis (2006) found moral considerations to be a primary driver of US citizens' aversion to President Bill Clinton, while Capelos (2013) demonstrated that anger, not anxiety, is distinctively elicited by low-integrity candidates. Whereas fear, as Petersen (2010) has shown, operates in the domain of hazards, anger pertains to the domain of morality and rule violation, in which intentionality is particularly relevant.

Morality also pervades populist discourse, in which the wickedness of the elite is set in contrast to the benevolence of the people and the relationship between the people and the elite defined in antagonistic terms. Indeed, populism has been described as “a Manichaeic outlook that identifies Good with a unified will of the people and Evil with a conspiring minority,” which can ultimately be understood as “a way of interpreting the moral basis or legitimacy of a political system” (Hawkins 2010: 8, 15). In being intrinsic to anger, moral evaluations constitute a key component of the populist belief system.

Third, in its Manichean inclination to split society into two antagonistic camps, populism is inherently adversarial and polarizing, thereby providing a perfect fit for the action tendency of anger. Compared to fear, which tends to make people more risk-averse, cautious, and open to compromise, anger typically encourages an aggressive and confrontational response (MacKuen et al. 2010). In the prelude to the Brexit vote, for example, feelings of anger among British voters were found to be associated with support for leaving the European Union, whereas feelings of anxiety correlated with support for the renegotiation of the country's relationship with the EU (Vasilopoulou and Wagner 2017).

Lastly, and somewhat more speculatively, anger's characteristic consequences on cognitive processing might be viewed as being more likely to promote populist attitudes. Fear enhances deep, thoughtful processing of contemporaneous information, which can prompt a more nuanced, less categorical outlook than is typical of populist discourse. In support, research has shown that, in an effort to reduce heightened levels of uncertainty, anxiety urges people to put their trust in experts (Albertson and Gadarian 2015), which is at odds with populism's suspicion of elitism and admiration of ordinary people's common sense. By contrast, anger prompts individuals to follow more

superficial considerations and stereotypes. Available comparative survey data indicate that populist ideas are widespread among citizens in European and American democracies (Anduiza and Rico 2016; Hawkins and Riding, 2010). As Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2017: 99) have posited, such views “are often latent, i.e., lying dormant or hidden until circumstances are suitable for their development or manifestation.” By triggering individuals’ reliance on pre-existing beliefs, anger—particularly when elicited by public issues—could thus be a factor in the activation of those latent, widely disseminated attitudes toward politics.

The ideological ubiquity of populist discourse allows it to be embraced by angry voters regardless of their political orientation. As a thin ideology lacking any true programmatic content, populism necessarily appears attached to full-fledged host ideologies from any side on the left–right ideological spectrum. The core ideas of populism—the people, the elite, the general will—are vague enough to accommodate significantly different interpretations, thereby allowing people with opposite ideological orientations to embrace an equally populist discourse (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017).

The understanding of anger in light of appraisal theories is reminiscent of certain characterizations of the populist upsurge, and most evidently of the role that Hans-Georg Betz has ascribed to *ressentiment*. In examining the conditions that explain the emergence of populist radical-right parties, Betz has argued that populist politicians mobilize primarily by appealing to emotions triggered by grievances: “Populist rhetoric is designed to tap feelings of *ressentiment* and exploit them politically” (Betz 2002: 198). Betz’s depiction of popular resentment, in stark resemblance to that of anger, involves an intense sense of frustration, illegitimate harm, the identification of a responsible agent, and a desire to retaliate. Resentment, in that conventional interpretation, is largely equivalent to moral anger: an “emotional opposition to unequal and unjust situations,” which entails legitimate blame attribution and promotes action against the offender (Demertzis 2006: 105).²

² The term has been given diverse meanings in the relevant literature. The use of the French form, *ressentiment*, typically accompanies Nietzschean-like interpretations, in which resentment accompanies resignation and passivity, compared to the feeling of efficacy and retaliatory action implied in the generic use of the word (cf. Demertzis 2006).

Altogether, the described dynamics give rise to our expectation that citizens' support for populism is driven by feelings of anger instead of fear. In particular, we expect that increases in anger elicited by the economic crisis will result in increases in populist attitudes. By contrast, we expect that populist attitudes will remain unaffected by variations in expressed levels of fear for the crisis when the influence of anger is taken into account.

Data and methods

Our data come from an online panel survey of young and middle-aged Spanish residents. The sample was selected from an online pool formed via the active recruitment of potential participants by using commercial online services and websites. Quotas were used to ensure a balanced representation of participants in terms of gender, education, size of home municipality, and region. Specifically, our analysis focuses on the waves conducted consecutively in May 2014, May 2015, and May 2016—the ones for which all required measurements were included in the questionnaires. Overall, the three waves yield a sample of 1,529 respondents. The panel is unbalanced due to attrition and wave nonresponse; 38 percent of respondents participated on all three occasions, 28 percent on two occasions, and 34 percent only once (average $T = 2$).

Our dependent variable is a measure of the individual's degree of populism, independent of support for particular populist parties. As implied in the conceptualization posited above, populism is ideologically ubiquitous in nature, meaning that it is rarely manifested in isolation and typically attached to fully fledged ideologies on either side of the left–right ideological spectrum. A direct measure of populist attitudes helps us to better distinguish the correlates of populism from those of other ideological features that might occur with it, as well as to capture more nuanced variations in individuals' degree of populism that would otherwise be masked by using a measure of vote choice.

Following growing consensus about the definition of *populism*, several indicators have been suggested for measuring populist attitudes at the individual level (Elchardus and

Spruyt 2016; Rooduijn 2014; Stanley 2011). We adopted the 6-item measure proposed by Akkerman et al. (2014) that partly draws on previous work by Hawkins and colleagues (Hawkins et al. 2012; Hawkins and Riding 2010). The six items, shown in Table 1, are designed to capture the core ideas that form populist discourse: people-centrism, anti-elitism, antagonism between the people and the elite, and the primacy of popular sovereignty. Respondents' agreement with each of the statements was measured using a 7-point scale, running from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The internal consistency of the resulting composite scale (i.e., average score across all items) is good, ranging from 0.71 in 2014 to 0.81 in 2016.

[Table 1 about here.]

To measure emotional reactions to the crisis, respondents were asked to report on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "not at all" to "very much" the degree to which the economic crisis made them feel anxiety, rage, powerlessness, and fear.³ As displayed in Table 2, the average levels indicate that though all of those emotions are felt widely during the entire period, rage and powerlessness consistently obtain the highest scores, whereas anxiety and fear consistently obtain the lowest. The average pairwise correlations between the expressed emotions across waves (2013–2016), shown in Table 3, indicate that, although all items are positively correlated, those between rage and powerlessness, on the one hand, and between fear and anxiety, on the other, clearly stand out. Based on these results, as well as on the semantic content of the terms, we constructed a scale of anger that combines the rage and powerlessness items and a scale of fear that combines the fear and anxiety items.⁴

³ Respondents were also asked about their feelings of sadness, which was not considered in our analysis because it refers to a discrete emotion distinct from fear and anger. Including sadness as an independent variable in the models below does not substantially affect the results for anger and fear. Estimates are available from the authors upon request.

⁴ Given that, despite correlational evidence, powerlessness has rarely been used as a measure of anger in the literature, we replicated our analyses using rage as the sole indicator of anger. The results, displayed in Table A2 of the supplemental appendix, show that both the between- and within-person effects of anger (i.e., rage) remain positive and statistically significant. Other conclusions are substantially unaffected by this alternative operationalization of anger.

[Tables 2 and 3 about here.]

In addition to emotional reactions, our models include controls for respondents' gender, age, education (less than secondary, first level of secondary, second level of secondary, university), employment status (unemployed), and income (coded in deciles of national income distribution). To account for the markedly leftist leaning of the populist movement in Spain, ideological orientation is also added as a predictor, using a measure of self-placement on an 11-point left–right scale. The last control variable support for Podemos, operationalized as a dummy variable that identifies respondents who mention the party as the one to which they generally feel closest.⁵

A fixed effects model is generally the preferred choice for analyzing panel data (Allison 2009). Fixed effects estimators control for unobserved individual, time-invariant heterogeneity that could correlate with the explanatory variable and use only within-person variation to estimate the effects of the independent variables. That is, they assess the association between changes in the explanatory variable and changes in the outcome variable within individuals, thereby controlling for permanent characteristics that vary across them. Consequently, fixed effects estimators avoid the (often unrealistic) random effects assumption that the observed predictors in the model do not correlate with unobserved time-constant heterogeneity. However, they do so at the cost of ignoring all between-person variation.

To estimate the effects of stable characteristics, we use a within-between random effects model to analyze the populist attitudes indicator, given its several advantages over conventional fixed and random effects models (Bell and Jones 2015). The within–between random effects model uses variation both within and between individuals to estimate the coefficients of independent variables, yet unlike the conventional random effects approach, simultaneously estimates separate within- and between-person effects instead of producing a weighted average of the two. That end is accomplished by including person-specific means of time-varying predictors (representing between-

⁵ See Table A1 in the supplemental appendix for the basic descriptive statistics of all variables included in our analyses. Note that, given the short span of the panel data analyzed (2014–2016), within-person variation is smaller than that observed across individuals, particularly regarding some control variables, which makes the estimation of within-person effects less precise.

person effects) and individual deviations from them (representing their within-person effects), along with any time-constant predictors, in a random effects model:

$$y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(x_{it} - \bar{x}_i) + \beta_2\bar{x}_i + \beta_3z_i + v_i + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

in which subscript i denotes individuals and t denotes occasions, y_{it} is the dependent variable, x_{it} is a series of time-varying independent variables, z_i is a series of time-constant independent variables that vary only among individuals, β_1 represents within-person effects, and both β_2 and β_3 represent between-person effects.

As far as our key independent variables are concerned, this specification allows us to separate the impact of transient emotional reactions to the crisis from that of more enduring emotions, whether they are lasting sentiments about the crisis or general affective traits, understood as tendencies or personal dispositions to experience particular emotional states (Ben-Ze'ev 2001; Scherer 2005). Therefore, to a certain extent, using the within-between estimation method with panel data mirrors the classic distinction between emotional states and emotional traits. The within-person effects of our emotional scales could be thought to have captured such short-lived episodes (i.e., states), which are unusual deviations from one's typical affective tendencies, whereas between-person effects could be interpreted as showing the influence of more enduring individual differences in average levels of affectivity (i.e., traits), due to either the development of persistent sentiments toward the economic situation or a chronic disposition to react in a certain affective manner. Our theoretical expectations apply equally to transient emotional states and more enduring emotional dispositions. That is, we expect anger to increase levels of populism both within and between individuals, yet no such positive effect for differences in fear across individuals or over time.

Results

Table 4 presents the results of the within-between random effects models of populist attitudes. The dependent variable—the scale of populist attitudes—is coded from 1 (lowest level of populism) to 7 (highest populism). All independent variables except age (in years) were rescaled to range from 0 to 1. As mentioned, between-person effects

represent the estimated effects of average values of the independent variables for each individual, whereas within-person effects represent deviations from those average values for each observation of each individual. This allows us to assess the overall effects of being more or less angry, or fearful, as an individual (i.e., between-person effects) and the effects of changing levels of anger or fear in the same person over time (i.e., within-person effects).

[Table 4 about here.]

The results of Model 1, which includes only the sociodemographic controls and left-right self-placement, show that age has a positive effect between individuals, but not within them, thereby indicating that *being* older is associated with higher levels of populism, but that *becoming* older does not have a significant effect, at least not in the relatively brief span of our panel. Being more educated is associated with lower levels of populism when examined across individuals, although within-person increases in attained education have a positive effect on populist attitudes. Being on the left of the ideological spectrum accompanies higher levels of populism. In fact, this variable has the largest coefficient in this baseline model. Yet, within-person changes in ideological self-placement do not significantly affect levels of populism. Lastly, income and unemployment appear to be unrelated to differences in populist attitudes both across and within individuals.⁶ Such results suggest a limited influence of citizens' economic position and objective measures of deprivation upon populist attitudes, much in line with recent research on the topic (Anduiza and Rico 2016; Elchardus and Spruyt 2016).

Model 2 adds emotional reactions to the crisis. The results show that, in line with our expectations, feelings of anger are consistently positively associated with populist attitudes. The within effect indicates that, controlling for the effects of all time-constant differences between individuals, increases in an individual's level of anger are

⁶ The estimated within-person effects of certain sociodemographic variables require an idiosyncratic interpretation. Given that age changes in nearly the same way for all respondents, the corresponding within coefficient basically captures the average effect of the passage of time (i.e., a trend effect). As for education, most of the change occurs among younger respondents in college at the time of the survey; consequently, the within effect of education most likely reflects that this group was highly involved in the Indignados movement and showed strong and increasing support for Podemos.

associated with increases in levels of populism. The between effect is also statistically significant and substantially stronger: those who have a persistent tendency to experience higher levels of anger tend to display higher levels of populist attitudes as well. As also expected, feelings of fear do not positively relate to support for populism, considering neither within- nor between-person variation. Indeed, the between estimate, albeit non-significant, is negative, which would rather indicate that voters with higher average levels of fear tend to score slightly lower on the populist attitudes scale.

Lastly, Model 3 includes support for Podemos as a predictor of populist attitudes. Some works suggest that pre-existing partisan preferences may induce emotional reactions (e.g., Ladd and Lenz 2008). Arguably, such endogeneity is therefore likely to affect emotions toward partisan actors themselves, more than those elicited by separate if not totally unrelated objects or events, such as the economic crisis. However, this additional control, which taps into voters' sympathy for the most prominent populist actor in Spain, provides a strong robustness check of the influence of emotions on individual populist attitudes. As shown in Table 4, estimates indicate that Podemos supporters tend to be significantly more populist than other voters, but that between-person changes in support for Podemos over time are unrelated to levels of populism. Conclusions regarding the influence of emotions prove robust to the inclusion of this additional control. Both the between- and within-person effects of anger remain largely unaffected when support for Podemos is taken into account. Changes in the estimated effects of fear are also negligible, since they remain undistinguishable from zero. The most noticeable difference is a decrease in the between-person coefficient for left–right ideological self-placement, which suggests that its effects are partly mediated by partisan preferences.

Discussion

This paper examined how individual levels of populist attitudes are related to emotional reactions to the economic crisis. Following insights gleaned from recent research on emotions, particularly in light of cognitive appraisal theories, we hypothesized that discrete negative emotions toward the economic crisis would have differentiated effects on populist attitudes. We have argued that populism is intimately linked to the appraisal

pattern of anger, as well as its cognitive and behavioral consequences, and is thus more likely to appeal to angry citizens than to anxious ones. In line with expectations, the empirical analysis showed that populist attitudes are indeed influenced by feelings of anger. Differences in the average tendency to experience anger are positively associated with individual levels of populism, and also within-person deviations from typical states of anger are consequential for populist attitudes. By contrast, populist attitudes remain unaffected by the experience of fear across individuals as well as within individuals over time.

The results thus provide evidence supporting the hypothesis that populist attitudes, as far as emotions are concerned, are driven by feelings of anger instead of fear. This finding lends further support to the assertion that discrete emotions of the same valence can have rather distinct consequences, not only on how citizens process political information, but also on how they perceive political reality.

The empirical evidence provided in this paper does not intend to serve as a basis for strong causal claims. Even if fixed effects estimation provides a stringent test, the causal role of emotions can hardly be demonstrated with survey data alone. If the posited sequence were to hold, then anger elicited by appraisals of responsibility and illegitimate harm would enhance populist attitudes. However, we cannot rule out the possibility that populist attitudes themselves fuel anger over the crisis by conveying interpretations of economic events in terms of unfairness and external responsibility. Populist politicians' emphasis on those very themes can likewise contribute to amplify feelings of anger and resentment among their followers (Moffitt 2015). The relationship is most likely reciprocal, just as the performance of populist parties results from the interplay of demand- and supply-side factors (e.g., Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017; van Kessel 2013). Populism can trigger anger, yet angry citizens appear to be more receptive to populist discourse. In any event, what our findings more clearly establish is that, regardless of the direction of causality, the emotion that appears to be involved in the relationship is anger, not fear. Future research should inquire into how and under what conditions these two elements affect each other.

The analysis that we have presented suffers from some limitations in terms of generalizability. First, we should consider how the strong left-wing position of the party

with the most distinct populist profile in Spain (i.e., Podemos) could have affected our findings and our ability to extend them to other ideological varieties of populism. Indeed, in our results, individuals on the left were consistently more populist than those on the right, even if changes in one's ideological orientation over time did not affect individual levels of populism. That the movement from which the party originated (i.e., Indignados, 'the outraged') has a highly emotional connotation that is clearly closer to the anger domain also warrants consideration. Furthermore, the finding that feelings of fear elicited by the economic crisis were unrelated to populism does not necessarily imply that fear toward other objects (e.g., terrorism, immigration, the preservation of a specific identity) could boost populism as well.

However, as mentioned at the outset of the paper, our argument has addressed the nature of emotions, not their objects. Our theoretical framework leads us to expect that anger will be connected with right-wing populism in the same manner that it does with left-wing populism, via the emphasis on appraisals of blame and injustice. Previous work has considered resentment in connection to the populist radical right (Betz 1993) and anti-welfare populism (Hoggett et al. 2013). Voters' anger has also been associated with recent right-wing populist episodes such as Brexit (Vasilopoulou and Wagner 2017) and Trump's election victory (Oliver and Rahn 2016). Thus, although our data do not encourage inferences beyond the Spanish case, our interpretation of the results regarding the primacy of anger is consistent with other expressions of populism, and our expectations are by no means confined to the Podemos phenomenon and other left-wing populist movements.

Indeed, we have argued that a chief asset of our study, compared to most research on populist support, is its direct examination of populist attitudes, which afford the clearer isolation of populism from other ideological features to which it appears attached. Anxiety could be related not to populism but precisely to contingent ideological aspects that often accompany it, including nativism or authoritarianism in the case of the populist radical right (Mudde 2007). Along those lines, susceptibility to experiencing fear has been associated with political conservatism, since defending the status quo serves to reduce fear and uncertainty (Jost et al. 2003).

Moving forward, the results of our study have likely implications for the persistence of populism. On the one hand, our findings do not support the oft-heard claims that anxiety is a crucial determinant in populist support. On the other, given the cognitive and behavioral consequences of anger, expectations include that populist individuals are less likely to engage in effortful information processing, more likely to be politically active, and more willing to support risky, unconventional, and eventually radical policies. Angry citizens might be less likely to carefully scrutinize populist parties and candidates, meaning that efforts to combat fake news and so-called “post-truth” politics might not easily resonate with them. Instead, fighting against situations perceived to be unfair or morally outrageous could help to diminish the emotional state most fertile for populism.

References

- Akkerman, A., C. Mudde and A. Zaslove (2014). How Populist Are the People? Measuring Populist Attitudes in Voters. *Comparative Political Studies* 47(9): 1324–53.
- Albertson, B. and S. K. Gadarian (2015). *Anxious Politics: Democratic Citizenship in a Threatening World*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Allison, P. D. (2009). *Fixed Effects Regression Models*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- (2014). *Problems with the Hybrid Method*. 2 September 2014. Statistical Horizons. <http://statisticalhorizons.com/problems-with-the-hybrid-method> (accessed 29 September 2016).
- Anduiza, E. and G. Rico (2016). *Economic Correlates of Populist Attitudes: An Analysis of Nine European Countries in the Aftermath of the Great Recession*. Paper presented at the Team Populism Conference “Explaining Populism”, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, 28-30 January 2016. https://populism.byu.edu/App_Data/Publications/livewhat_pop_4byu.pdf (accessed 25 May 2017).
- Angie, A. D., S. Connelly, E. P. Waples and V. Kligyte (2011). The influence of discrete emotions on judgement and decision-making: A meta-analytic review. *Cognition & Emotion* 25(8): 1393–422.
- Bell, A. and K. Jones (2015). Explaining Fixed Effects: Random Effects Modeling of Time-Series Cross-Sectional and Panel Data. *Political Science Research and Methods* 3(1): 133–153.

- Ben-Ze'ev, A. (2001). *The Subtlety of Emotions*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Betz, H.-G. (1993). The New Politics of Resentment: Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe. *Comparative Politics* 25(4): 413.
- (2002). Conditions Favouring the Success and Failure of Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties in Contemporary Democracies. In Mény, Y. and Y. Surel (eds.). *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*. New York: Palgrave, (197–213).
- Brader, T. (2006). *Campaigning for hearts and minds: How emotional appeals in political ads work*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- and G. E. Marcus (2013). Emotion and Political Psychology. In Huddy, L. et al. (eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology: Second Edition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (165–204).
- Capelos, T. (2013). Understanding Anxiety and Aversion: The Origins and Consequences of Affectivity in Political Campaigns. In Demertzis, N. (ed.). *Emotions in Politics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan (39–59).
- Cassese, E. and C. Weber (2011). Emotion, Attribution, and Attitudes toward Crime. *Journal of Integrated Social Sciences* 2(1): 63–97.
- Conover, P. J. and S. Feldman (1986). Emotional Reactions to the Economy: I'm Mad as Hell and I'm not Going to Take it Anymore. *American Journal of Political Science* 30(1): 50–78.
- Davou, B. and N. Demertzis (2014). Feeling the Greek Financial Crisis. In Demertzis, N. (ed.). *Emotions in Politics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan (93–123).
- Demertzis, N. (2006). Emotions and Populism. In Clarke, S. et al. (eds.). *Emotion, Politics and Society*. London: Palgrave Macmillan (103–22).
- Elchardus, M. and B. Spruyt (2016). Populism, Persistent Republicanism and Declinism: An Empirical Analysis of Populism as a Thin Ideology. *Government and Opposition* 51(1): 111–133.
- Forgas, J. P. (1995). Mood and Judgment: The Affect Infusion Model (AIM). *Psychological Bulletin* 117(1): 39–66.
- Frijda, N. H., P. Kuipers and E. ter Schure (1989). Relations Among Emotion, Appraisal, and Emotional Action Readiness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 57(2): 212–28.
- Gault, B. A. and J. Sabini (2000). The Roles of Empathy, Anger, and Gender in Predicting Attitudes toward Punitive, Reparative, and Preventative Public Policies. *Cognition & Emotion* 14(4): 495–520.
- Gómez-Reino, M. and I. Llamazares (2016). *From Working-Class Anticapitalism to Populism: Theoretical Developments and Political Choices in the Birth of Podemos*. Paper presented at the Team Populism Conference “Explaining Populism”, January 2016.

- Hameleers, M., L. Bos and C. H. de Vreese (2016). “They Did It” The Effects of Emotionalized Blame Attribution in Populist Communication. *Communication Research*, prepublished online.
- Hawkins, K. A. (2010). *Venezuela’s Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- and S. Riding (2010). *Populist Attitudes and Their Correlates among Citizens: Survey Evidence from the Americas*. ECPR Workshop “Disassembling Populism (and Putting It Back Together Again): Collaborative Empirical Research on Interactions among Populism’s Attributes”, Muenster, March 2010.
- , ——— and C. Mudde (2012). *Measuring Populist Attitudes*. Working Paper, Committee on Concepts and Methods, International Political Science Association.
- Hoggett, P., H. Wilkinson and P. Beedell (2013). Fairness and the Politics of Resentment. *Journal of Social Policy* 42(3): 567–585.
- Huddy, L., S. Feldman and E. Cassese (2007). On the Distinct Political Effects of Anxiety and Anger. In Neuman, W. R. et al. (eds.). *The Affect Effect: Dynamics of Emotion in Political Thinking and Behavior*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, (202–30).
- Isbell, L. M. and E. C. Lair (2013). Moods, Emotions, and Evaluations as Information. In Carlston, D. E. (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of Social Cognition*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, p. 435–462.
- Jost, J. T., J. Glaser, A. W. Kruglanski and F. J. Sulloway (2003). Political conservatism as motivated social cognition. *Psychological Bulletin* 129(3): 339–75.
- Ladd, J. M. and G. S. Lenz (2008). Reassessing the Role of Anxiety in Vote Choice. *Political Psychology* 29(2): 275–296.
- Lazarus, R. S. (1991). *Emotion and Adaptation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lerner, J. S., R. M. Gonzalez, D. A. Small and B. Fischhoff (2003). Effects of Fear and Anger on Perceived Risks of Terrorism: A National Field Experiment. *Psychological Science* 14(2): 144–50.
- and D. Keltner (2000). Beyond Valence: Toward a Model of Emotion-Specific Influences on Judgement and Choice. *Cognition & Emotion* 14(4): 473–93.
- and ——— (2001). Fear, Anger, and Risk. *Journal of personality and social psychology* 81(1): 146.
- , Y. Li, P. Valdesolo and K. S. Kassam (2015). Emotion and Decision Making. *Annual Review of Psychology* 66(1): 799–823.
- MacKuen, M., J. Wolak, L. Keele and G. E. Marcus (2010). Civic Engagements: Resolute Partisanship or Reflective Deliberation. *American Journal of Political Science* 54(2): 440–58.

- Marcus, G. E. and M. B. MacKuen (1993). Anxiety, Enthusiasm, and the Vote: The Emotional Underpinnings of Learning and Involvement During Presidential Campaigns. *American Political Science Review* 87: 672–85.
- Marcus, G. E., W. R. Neuman and M. MacKuen (2000). *Affective Intelligence and Political Judgment*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Moffitt, B. (2015). How to Perform Crisis: A Model for Understanding the Key Role of Crisis in Contemporary Populism. *Government and Opposition* 50(2): 189–217.
- Mudde, C. (2004). The Populist Zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition* 39(4): 542–63.
- and C. Rovira Kaltwasser (2017). *Populism: a very short introduction*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Müller, J.-W. (2016). *What Is Populism?* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Nabi, R. L. (2003). Exploring the Framing Effects of Emotion Do Discrete Emotions Differentially Influence Information Accessibility, Information Seeking, and Policy Preference? *Communication Research* 30(2): 224–47.
- Oliver, J. E. and W. M. Rahn (2016). Rise of the Trumpenvolk: Populism in the 2016 Election. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 667(1): 189–206.
- Panizza, F. (2005). Introduction: Populism and the mirror of democracy. In Panizza, F. (ed.). *Populism and the mirror of democracy*. London; New York: Verso, (1–31).
- Petersen, M. B. (2010). Distinct Emotions, Distinct Domains: Anger, Anxiety and Perceptions of Intentionality. *Journal of Politics* 72(2): 357–365.
- Rooduijn, M. (2014). Vox Populismus: A Populist Radical Right Attitude Among The Public? *Nations and Nationalism* 20(1): 80–92.
- Roseman, I. J. (1996). Appraisal Determinants of Emotions: Constructing a More Accurate and Comprehensive Theory. *Cognition and Emotion* 10(3): 241–78.
- Scherer, K. R. (2005). What are emotions? And how can they be measured? *Social Science Information* 44(4): 695–729.
- Schwarz, N. and G. L. Clore (1983). Mood, Misattribution, and Judgments of Well-Being: Informative and Directive Functions of Affective States. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 45(3): 513–23.
- Small, D. A. and J. S. Lerner (2008). Emotional Policy: Personal Sadness and Anger Shape Judgments about a Welfare Case. *Political Psychology* 29(2): 149–68.

- , ——— and B. Fischhoff (2006). Emotion Priming and Attributions for Terrorism: Americans' Reactions in a National Field Experiment. *Political Psychology* 27(2): 289–98.
- Smith, C. A. and P. C. Ellsworth (1985). Patterns of Cognitive Appraisal in Emotion. *Journal of personality and social psychology* 48(4): 813.
- Stanley, B. (2008). The Thin Ideology of Populism. *Journal of Political Ideologies* 13(1): 95–110.
- (2011). Populism, Nationalism, or National Populism? An Analysis of Slovak Voting Behaviour at the 2010 Parliamentary Election. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 44(4): 257–70.
- Steenbergen, M. R. and C. Ellis (2006). Fear and Loathing in American Elections: Context, Traits, and Negative Candidate Affect. In: D. P. Redlawsk (ed.). *Feeling Politics: Emotion in Political Information Processing*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 109–33.
- Valentino, N. A., T. Brader, E. W. Groenendyk, K. Gregorowicz and V. L. Hutchings (2011). Election Night's Alright for Fighting: The Role of Emotions in Political Participation. *The Journal of Politics* 73(1): 156–70.
- , K. Gregorowicz and E. W. Groenendyk (2009). Efficacy, Emotions and the Habit of Participation. *Political Behavior* 31(3): 307–30.
- van Kessel, S. (2013). A Matter of Supply and Demand: The Electoral Performance of Populist Parties in Three European Countries. *Government and Opposition* 48(02): 175–99.
- van Troost, D., J. van Stekelenburg and B. Klandermans (2014). Emotions of Protest. In: N. Demertzis (ed.). *Emotions in Politics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, (186–203).
- Vasilopoulou, S., D. Halikiopoulou and T. Exadaktylos (2014). Greece in Crisis: Austerity, Populism and the Politics of Blame. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 52(2): 388–402.
- and M. Wagner (2017). Fear, Anger and Enthusiasm about the European Union: Effects of Emotional Reactions on Public Preferences towards European Integration. *European Union Politics*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1177/1465116517698048
- Wagner, M. (2014). Fear and Anger in Great Britain: Blame Assignment and Emotional Reactions to the Financial Crisis. *Political Behavior* 36(3): 683–703.
- Weber, C. (2013). Emotions, Campaigns, and Political Participation. *Political Research Quarterly* 66(2): 414–28.
- Weiss, H. M., K. Suckow and R. Cropanzano (1999). Effects of Justice Conditions on Discrete Emotions. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 84(5): 786–94.

Willsher, K. (2017). "A new page has been turned": Macron eschews triumphalism in victory speech. *The Guardian* 8 May.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/08/a-new-page-has-been-turned-macron-eschews-triumphalism-in-victory-address>.

Table 1. Measurement of populist attitudes

	2014	2015	2016
The politicians in the Spanish parliament need to follow the will of the people	5,7	5,5	5,7
The people, and not politicians, should make our most important policy decisions	5,4	5,1	5,2
The political differences between the elite and the people are larger than the differences among the people	4,8	5,0	5,0
I would rather be represented by a citizen than by a specialized politician	4,8	4,7	4,6
Elected officials talk too much and take too little action	5,9	5,9	6,0
What people call “compromise” in politics is really just selling out on one’s principles	4,0	4,2	4,4
<i>Populist attitudes scale</i>	<i>5,1</i>	<i>5,0</i>	<i>5,1</i>
(N)	(1,071)	(1,014)	(1,040)

Note: Average scores as measured on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Table 2. Emotional reactions to the economic crisis

	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rage	4.2	4.0	4.0	4.0
Powerlessness	4.2	4.1	4.1	4.0
Fear	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.4
Anxiety	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.3
(N)	(1,757)	(1,071)	(1,014)	(1,040)

Note: Average scores as measured on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much).

Table 3. Average correlations between emotions

	Rage	Powerlessness	Fear
Powerlessness	0.71		
Fear	0.44	0.53	
Anxiety	0.48	0.52	0.65

Note: Average Pearson's correlation coefficients across four waves between 2013 and 2016.

Table 4. Within-Between Random Effects Models of Populist Attitudes

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Between	Within	Between	Within	Between	Within
Anger			1.37**	0.52**	1.34**	0.52**
			(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Fear			-0.16	0.00	-0.17	0.00
			(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Female	0.06		-0.02		0.01	
	(0.05)		(0.05)		(0.05)	
Age	0.01**	0.02	0.01*	0.02	0.01*	0.02
	(0.00)	(0.02)	(0.00)	(0.02)	(0.00)	(0.02)
Education	-0.15*	0.54*	-0.12 ⁺	0.50*	-0.12*	0.50*
	(0.07)	(0.21)	(0.06)	(0.21)	(0.06)	(0.21)
Unemployed	0.10	0.10	0.05	0.09	0.06	0.09
	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)
Income	-0.08	-0.03	0.09	0.01	0.08	0.01
	(0.15)	(0.16)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)
Left-right	-1.40**	-0.18	-1.07**	-0.13	-0.85**	-0.13
	(0.14)	(0.18)	(0.14)	(0.18)	(0.14)	(0.18)
Podemos supporter					0.47**	0.01
					(0.08)	(0.06)
Constant	5.40**		4.41**		4.25**	
	(0.15)		(0.17)		(0.17)	
Observations / individuals	3,100 / 1,524		3,100 / 1,524		3,100 / 1,524	
Variance components						
Individual	0.54		0.49		0.47	
Residual	0.48		0.47		0.47	
χ^2 (df)	129.57** (11)		295.66** (15)		334.01** (17)	

Unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

⁺ $p < .1$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$