

## **The Emotional Underpinnings of Citizens' Populist Attitudes**

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*Work in progress*

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Paper to be presented at the 2016 Annual Meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology, Warsaw, July 13-16.

## **Introduction**

In 2008 about 20% of the Spanish citizens reported politics make them feel mostly “irritated”. Four years later, the percentage had doubled and in 2012, after four years of severe economic recession and a string of corruption scandals, 40% reported such affect when thinking about what politics make them feel (CIS Barometers). It is hard not to connect this mood with the rise of the political protests called the 15M or the “Indignados” (the indignant) that took place in 2011. Indeed, previous analyses of the 15M have emphasized the role of emotions (Alvarez, Garcia, Moreno, & Schweitzer, 2015) and have found that moral outrage and anger were prevalent emotions motivating these protests (Likki, 2012; Perugorria & Tejerina, 2013). This process of social mobilization is at the root of the upsurge of a left-wing political party called Podemos. Podemos was created in January 2014 by a group of academics that had actively participated in the 15M and were familiar with the works of Mouffe and Laclau and with Latin American experiences of populism. Podemos soon displayed a populist discourse emphasizing the opposition between the chaste and the people (Gomez-Reino & Llamazares 2016). Only a few months after its creation, Podemos obtained 8% of the popular vote in the EP elections of 2014 and (together with different proximate territorial organizations) over 20% of the vote in the General elections held in 2015. Understanding the birth and rise of a populist party like Podemos requires considering the role of negative affect and particularly of anger.

Only a few months after, following the failed dull attempts to form government, elections were called again. Polls where consistently predicting an excellent result of Podemos, which would overcome the Socialist party and become the main left-wing opposition party. Spanish citizens were called to vote on June 26, only 48 hours after the result of the Brexit referendum was known. On June 24 the Spanish stock market IBEX fell 12%. While the consequences of the Brexit were still to be fully seen and felt, the result of this referendum against the view of the British and European political establishments, promoted by a right wing populist party, came as a shock of uncertainty. While we do not have data that reflect the emotional reaction of Spanish citizens to this event only a few hours before voting, one can expect that Brexit may have triggered

feelings of fear. Participation in the June 2016 elections fell almost 4 percentage points to respect to December 2015, the Popular Party increased its number of votes and seats, and Podemos felt short of their own expectations losing over one million voters. While this electoral result may of course be due to many alternative explanations (a demobilization of a younger electorate unhappy with the failed negotiations, the political campaign, the agreement between Podemos and the communist United Left to mention a few), one may also consider to what extent fear may have demobilised would be Podemos voters and mobilize PP supporters.

These two examples taken from the Spanish case underline the importance that emotions may have to promote or undermine populist attitudes and, as a consequence, to influence citizens' vote choices. Their effect is not likely to be linear and systematic, but contingent on political circumstances and individual characteristics.

Indeed, scholarship accounts have often depicted populist movements as highly emotionally charged episodes. The anxiety provoked by far-reaching societal change, for example, has been recurrently associated with populist upsurge. Similarly, anger against the establishment became a hallmark of the anti-austerity protests with strong populist tone in the wake of the economic crisis, such as those featured by the Spanish and Greek indignados. However, despite these and analogous widespread characterizations, the alleged link between populism and citizens' emotions has hardly been subject of scientific scrutiny in the burgeoning literature on populism.

This paper explores the dynamic between citizens' emotions and populist attitudes at the mass level, operationalized as individuals' endorsement of the tenets of a thin-ideology that sees politics as a Manichean struggle between the corrupt politicians and the pure people. Drawing on data from an online panel survey from Spain, it examines how three discrete negative emotions elicited by the economic crisis—anger, fear, and sadness—are related to voters' expression of populist attitudes. We start by reviewing research in the origins and consequences of emotional reactions. Next, we present our hypotheses regarding the relationship between emotional reactions to the crisis and populism. Following the description of the data and methods to be used, we then report the results of the empirical analysis.

## **The Distinct Antecedents and Consequences of Discrete Negative Emotions**

Most extant work on the influence of emotions on political judgment and behavior has been largely guided by the theory of affective intelligence advanced by Marcus and MacKuen (1993; Marcus, Neuman, & MacKuen, 2000). The theory conceives emotions as structured along the dimensions of enthusiasm and anxiety, which connected with the disposition system and the surveillance system, respectively. Feelings of enthusiasm are triggered by situations in which personal goals are being met. They reinforce individuals' existing preferences and encourage them to follow habitual patterns of behavior. In contrast, feelings of anxiety are activated when personal goals are under threat or have already been frustrated. As a result, normal routines are interrupted, reliance on predispositions is relaxed, and attention is diverted toward contemporaneous information. Emotions thus serve an adaptive function, as they adjust cognitive processing and behaviors according to the environmental requirements.

Affective intelligence belongs to the family of dimensional theories of emotions, as it distinguishes two orthogonal dimensions on the basis of their valence. The disposition system concerns positively-valenced emotions, encompassing affective states of enthusiasm with varying degrees of arousal, such as happiness, hope, gratitude, and pride. In contrast, the surveillance system is defined by negative emotions with varying degrees of anxiety, like sadness, fear, anger, and shame. This approach acknowledges the fact that emotional experiences with the same valence tend to correlate, i.e. feelings of anger, fear, or sadness appear to co-occur when their levels are measured across individuals and situations.

The case can be made, however, that there might exist relevant differences as to the antecedents and consequences of distinct emotions within the same valence dimension. Not all individuals react equally to identical negative stimuli, and their different reactions are likely produce different effects on preferences and behavior. Indeed, the original theory of affective intelligence has been revised in later developments to integrate a new dimension of emotions, aversion, tapping feelings of anger, disgust, contempt, and hatred (MacKuen, Wolak, Keele, & Marcus, 2010; Marcus et al., 2000). Like anxiety, aversion comprises a set of “negative” affective states—i.e., it is brought about by goal-inconsistent event—yet it is nonetheless aligned with the disposition

system, like enthusiasm. This is so because aversion is triggered in situations of known, recurrent threat, while anxiety arises in conditions of possible but uncertain risk. Because the disagreeable event being confronted is already familiar, states of aversion promote commitment to one's predispositions and reliance on learned strategies, rather than the reconsideration of previous convictions and the search of new information, which are typically encouraged when anxiety is evoked.

Other theoretical approaches allow to finer-grained discrimination among negative (or positive) emotions. In particular, cognitive appraisal theories have much contributed to the understanding of the origins and consequences of discrete emotions (Frijda, Kuipers, & ter Schure, 1989; Lazarus, 1991; Roseman, 1996; Smith & 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 the situation. The assumption is that cognition and affect do not constitute separate systems, as posited by early psychological paradigms, but are intimately interrelated. Thus how people appraise the environment in connection with their personal goals ultimately determines which particular emotion is aroused.

Although scholars have not reached an agreement on the list of appraisal dimensions that explain the emergence of the most recurrent distinct emotions, a number of themes are invariably present in their proposals. For example, in one of the earliest attempts, Smith and Ellsworth (1985) included six dimensions (pleasantness, anticipated effort, certainty, attentional activity, responsibility, and control) that account for 15 positive and negative emotions. Lazarus (1991) identified three primary appraisals (goal relevance, goal congruency, and type of ego involvement) and three secondary appraisals (blame or credit, coping potential, and future expectations) to predict ten emotions. And Roseman et al. (1996) were able to differentiate 17 different emotions from seven components (unexpectedness, situational state, motivational state, probability, control potential, and agency).

Not all dimensions are relevant to distinguish between any pair of emotions. In the case at hand, anger, fear, and sadness may be distinguished on the basis of three main dimensions: *certainty*, concerning whether the (negative) event is certain to happen or not; *responsibility*, which refers to whether the situation is caused by some identifiable

actor or by circumstances beyond anyone's control; and *efficacy*, regarding one's ability to influence the event.

Anger is likely to arouse if a threat to personal rewards is certain to occur or has already materialized as a consequence of the deliberate or negligent behavior by an external agent in control, and hence blameworthy, but is accompanied by the sense that one has some capacity to deal with the situation. Contrarily, fear is caused by a highly uncertain threat and, as a consequence of the very uncertainty about the likelihood and nature of the danger being faced, is usually linked to appraisals of situational control (the perception that the situation is the result of the circumstances and no specific agent can be blamed for it) and low efficacy (the individual has no clear idea of how the threat can be prevented).<sup>1</sup> Also sadness is associated with situational control and low coping potential, but, unlike fear, is characterized by the certainty of an irrevocable loss and the person's inability to restore the harm (Lazarus, 1991).

Do these distinct appraisal patterns translate into different responses to negative stimuli? A large body of research suggests that they do, and effects are also visible in the political realm, even if some findings remain inconsistent across studies and differences between "similar" but discrete emotions are in some cases hardly discernable (Angie, Connelly, Waples, & Kligyte, 2011; Brader & Marcus, 2013). Much of the research on this field has focused on the contrast between anger and fear—or the more encompassing aversion and anxiety—as their respective patterns of appraisal are opposite from one another on the aforementioned key dimensions.

The fact that anger entails a harm or offense that is perceived as unfair and depreciating and that there is certainty about who is to blame, along with the sense that one has nonetheless control over the situation and the risks are low, typically triggers a behavioral approach. Anger motivates to take action against the responsible agent, promoting a corrective response. The style of the angry citizen is confrontational rather than deliberative, such that new considerations are forestalled in favor of prior

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<sup>1</sup> Although some authors have indicated important differences between the two, the terms of anxiety and fear are often used interchangeably, as are anger and the more encompassing aversion.

convictions. Accordingly, anger has been found to boost political participation (Valentino, Brader, Groenendyk, Gregorowicz, & Hutchings, 2011; Valentino, Gregorowicz, & Groenendyk, 2009; Weber, 2013) and protest (van Troost, van Stekelenburg, & Klandermans, 2013), foster support for punitive and aggressive policies (Cassese & Weber, 2011; Gault & Sabini, 2000; Huddy, Feldman, & Cassese, 2007; Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, & Fischhoff, 2003; Petersen, 2010), and heighten superficial information processing and reliance on prior convictions (Huddy et al., 2007; MacKuen et al., 2010).

In contrast, the sense of uncertainty governing states of fear usually translates into increased vigilance, information search, and more attentive and systematic processing in judgments, 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 found it to promote citizens' political learning and a more careful and less automatic processing of information in decision-making (Brader, 2006; Huddy et al., 2007; MacKuen et al., 2010; Marcus et al., 2000) and enhance support for precautionary and protective measures (Lerner et al., 2003; Nabi, 2003).

Unlike anger and fear, sadness is a low-arousal emotion, which might explain why its political implications have received little attention to date (Brader & Marcus, 2013). Given the similarity of their appraisal patterns, the effects of sadness appear to closely parallel those of fear as to the enhancement of reflection, effortful information processing, behavioral withdrawal, and support for compassionate policies, particularly when compared against anger, although results tend to be not as clear-cut and are sometimes inconsistent across studies (Small & Lerner, 2008; Weber, 2013). One distinctive feature of sadness reported in some analyses is that it motivates individuals to change the circumstances, which may result in a preference for high-reward decisions, even if they entail higher risk (Lerner, Small, & Loewenstein, 2004; Raghunathan & Pham, 1999).

An important strand of research in emotions extends the influence affective states on judgments and decisions beyond the specific situations that have elicited them and onto normatively irrelevant domains. Scholars have thus found that *incidental* emotions may

influence subsequent behaviors even when these are unrelated to the source of the affective state (Forgas, 1995; Schwarz & Clore, 1983). Further, research within the Appraisal Tendency Framework contends that emotions not only arise from cognitive appraisals but also prompt the interpretation of future events in line with patterns of appraisal that characterize the emotions (Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 2001). That is, emotions give rise to an implicit predisposition, or appraisal tendency, such that people feeling a particular emotion tend to perceive (unrelated) situations in terms of the appraisals matching those of the emotions: “angry people will view negative events as predictably caused by, and under the control of, other individuals. In contrast, fear involves low certainty and a low sense of control, which are likely to produce a perception of negative events as unpredictable and situationally determined” (Lerner, Li, Valdesolo, & Kassam, 2015, p. 807).

### **Emotions of Crisis and Populist Attitudes**

Although populism has been a highly contested concept, a growing consensus appears to have recently emerged around an ideational definition and a minimal set of core features. These have been succinctly conveyed by Mudde (2004, p. 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”. Along this path, Stanley (2008, p. 102) further decomposes populism into four “distinct but interrelated” constitutive elements: (1) the existence of two homogeneous groups, the people and the elite; (2) the praise of the people and the denigration of the elite; (3) the antagonistic relationship between the people and the elite; and (4) the idea of popular sovereignty.

Accordingly, populism is conceived of as a Manichean view that sees politics as the struggle between the worthy people’s commonsense and the harmful, self-serving power elite—a view that is deeply suspicious of any constitutional restraints to the democratic principle and hence advocates for the absolute primacy of popular sovereignty.



A moment's reflection should reveal a number of connections between populism, thus defined, and anger's core theme, pattern of appraisals, and related tendencies—but not with those of fear or sadness. First, we have seen that blame attribution is central for the emergence anger. Feeling anger for the economic crisis entails that there is 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. For example, Conover and Feldman (1986) find that feelings of anger and disgust toward national economic conditions can be clearly differentiated from those of fear and uneasiness. Their results show that these distinct emotions have disparate effects on presidential performance evaluations, such that feelings of anger/disgust tend to have higher an influence on evaluations than feelings of fear/uneasiness. They suggest that causal attributions play an important in explaining both the structure and the distinct consequences of people's emotional reactions to the economy: the angry perceive the economy as controllable and hold the government accountable, whereas the fearful do not. More pertinently, Steenbergen and Ellis (2006) show that aversion (which includes anger) toward the president is influenced by evaluations of the president's leadership, but only for those voters who believe that the economy is controllable, and hence the executive can be held responsible for its state. Likewise, Wagner (2014) argues that whether it is the possible to identify the responsible of the threat and whether it is possible to make it accountable will be the determinant of the type of emotion that eventually arouses. He demonstrates that British voters were more likely to experience anger rather than fear if they attributed the responsibility for the financial crisis to an external actor, particularly if such actor is an institution that is accountable to them.

Blame attribution is also remarkably present in populist attitudes. Populism typically emerges as a result of the perceived *unresponsiveness* of the political system to frustrated popular demands (Panizza, 2005). The responsibility is clearly placed on “the elite”, which is a conveniently vague term that nonetheless identifies a definitely external actor in charge of the situation. The reference to a homogeneous elite thus conveys the idea of an external agent who is seen as responsible for a certain harm.

Second, both anger and populism are concerned not only with the responsibility for a negative event but also with the legitimacy of the event. That is, the causal attribution is

accompanied with a normative judgment. Crucial for the arousal of anger is that the outcome is perceived as unfair and unjust, something that should not have happened on moral grounds, and as a demeaning offense against one's self-esteem (Lazarus, 1991). Consistently, Steenbergen and Ellis (2006) found that moral considerations are a primary driver of aversion toward president Clinton, and Capelos (2013) demonstrates that anger, compared to anxiety, is distinctively elicited by low-integrity candidates. Anger, as noted by Petersen (2010), pertains to the domain of morality and rule violation, while fear operates in the domain of hazards; intentionality is particularly relevant for the moral domain. Morality also pervades populist discourse: the corruption of the elite is set in contrast to the benevolence of the people, their relationship defined as antagonistic. Indeed, populism has been accurately described as "a Manichaeic outlook that identifies Good with a unified will of the people and Evil with a conspiring minority" (Hawkins, 2010, p. 15) which can be ultimately understood as "a way of interpreting the moral basis or legitimacy of a political system" (p. 8).

Finally, populist attitudes also resonate anger's characteristic consequences on cognitive processing and action tendencies. Populism's simplistic worldview is more likely to result from superficial consideration and reliance on first impressions than from the deep, thoughtful processing of contemporaneous information associated with fear and sadness, which would most often lead to a more nuanced and less categorical outlook. Populism's confrontational rhetoric likewise suggests the influence of feelings of anger, typically leading to an aggressive response, rather than those of fear or sadness, which would more likely promote avoidance, resignation, or acceptance.

Indeed, the understanding of anger conveyed by appraisal theories is reminiscent of certain characterizations of populist upsurge, and most evidently of Betz's notion of *ressentiment*. In examining the conditions that explain the emergence of populist radical-right parties, he notes that populist politicians mobilize mainly by appealing to the emotions triggered by grievances: "Populist rhetoric is designed to tap feelings of *ressentiment* and exploit them politically" (Betz, 2002, p. 198). Like anger, Betz's depiction of popular *ressentiment* involves an intense sense of frustration, an illegitimate harm, the identification of a responsible agent, and the desire to retaliate, and is defined by the author as the most important factor accounting for the recent success of the populist radical-right movements in contemporary democracies.

In sum, we expect anger toward the economic crisis to heighten individuals' populist attitudes. In contrast, we expect fear and sadness to have a null or even negative effect.

### **Empirical Strategy**

Our data come from a 7-wave online panel survey of young and middle-aged Spanish residents. The sample was selected from an online pool set up through active recruitment of potential subjects in commercial online services and websites. Quotas were used to ensure a balanced representation in terms of gender, education, size of municipality, and region. Specifically, our analysis focuses on the waves consecutively conducted in May of 2014, 2015, and 2016—the ones for which all the 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 the respondents participated in all three occasions and 28 percent did in any two occasions, while 34 percent are observed only once (average  $T = 2$ ).

As for the dependent variable, our interest lies in measuring individual levels 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 but attached to full-fledged ideologies on either side of the left-right spectrum. A direct measure of populist attitudes helps us to better discern the correlates of populism from those of other ideological features that might occur with it, while also allowing us to capture more nuanced variations in individuals' degree of populism that would be masked by using a measure of vote choice.

Following the growing agreement around the definition of populism, in recent years several indicators have been suggested to measure populist attitudes at the individual level (Elchardus & Spruyt, 2014; Rooduijn, 2014; Stanley, 2011). We adopted the six-item measure proposed by Akkerman et al. (2014), itself developed from previous efforts by Hawkins and colleagues (Hawkins & Riding, 2010; Hawkins, Riding, &

Mudde, 2012). The six statements, displayed in Table 1, are designed to tap the core ideas that make up the populist discourse, namely, people-centrism, anti-elitism, the antagonism between the people and the elite, and the primacy of popular sovereignty. Respondents' agreement with each of the statements was measured using a seven-point scale running from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The internal consistency of the resulting composite scale (the average score across all items) is good, ranging from 0.71 in 2014 to 0.81 in 2016.

To measure emotional reactions to the crisis, respondents were asked to report how much, on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "very much" to "not at all", the situation of economic crisis made them feel anxiety, rage, impotence, fear, and sadness. The average levels displayed in Table 2 indicate that all these emotions were the most widely felt over the whole period, but rage and impotence consistently obtained the highest scores while anxiety and fear obtained the lowest, sadness staying in between the two clusters. The average pairwise correlations between the expressed emotions across waves (2013 through 2016), shown in Table 3, indicate that, while all the items are positively correlated, those between rage and impotence, 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 combining the rage and impotence items, and a scale of fear combining the fear and anxiety items. Our measure of sadness relies solely on its own item.

In addition to emotional reactions, our model also takes into account a number of variables that might be conditioning the experience of negative emotions toward the crisis. First, we consider the individuals' vulnerability to the consequences of economic hardship, as operationalized by their position in the socioeconomic structure in terms of education (less than secondary, first level of secondary, second level of secondary, university), employment status (unemployed), and income (coded in deciles of the national income distribution). Next, we consider respondents' personal experience of the crisis, which may be taken as a measure of economic grievances. Respondents were asked the extent to which, on a six-point scale from "not at all" to "completely", they had reduced the money allocated to staple foods, clothes and shoes, recreational activities, holidays, and savings. The responses to these five items were averaged to create a composite index of reduced consumption. We also include respondents'

perceptions of the national economy, as measured by combining three different assessments of the state of the country’s economic situation. Specifically, we averaged respondents’ evaluation of the current state of the economy (coded on a five-point scale running from “very bad” to “very good”) and one-year retrospective and prospective evaluations (worse, same, better). Finally, our model also controls for respondents’ gender, age, and self-placement on an 11-point left-right scale.

Given the longitudinal structure of the data, we use a within-between random effects model, which has some advantages over the alternative fixed-effects and conventional random-effects models (Bell & Jones, 2015). In the panel context, fixed-effects estimators control for unobserved individual, time-invariant heterogeneity that may be correlated 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, thus controlling for permanent characteristics that vary across individuals. Thus fixed-effects estimators avoid the (often unrealistic) random-effects assumption that the observed predictors in the model are uncorrelated with the unobserved time-constant heterogeneity, but do so at the cost of ignoring all between-person variation. The within-between random effects model uses variation occurring both within and between individuals to estimate the coefficients of the independent variables but, unlike the conventional random-effects approach, it simultaneously estimates separate within- and between-person effects, rather than producing a weighted average of the two. This is accomplished by including the person-specific means of time-varying predictors (representing their between effects) and the individual deviations from these (representing their within effects), along with any time-constant predictors, in a random-effects model:

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

Here, subscript  $i$  denotes individuals and  $t$  denotes occasions,  $y_{it}$  is the dependent variable,  $x_{it}$  is a series of time-varying independent variables, and  $z_i$  is a series of time-constant independent variables that only vary between individuals.  $\beta_1$  represent within effects, while  $\beta_2$  and  $\beta_3$  represent between effects.

As long 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, be they lasting sentiments toward the crisis or general affective traits, understood as tendencies or dispositions rooted in personality to experience particular emotional states (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001). "Typical" or "hot" emotions are characteristically brief, intense, instable, and specific. The within effects of our emotional scales may be thought as capturing such transient episodes, unusual deviations from one's typical affective state, while between effects can be interpreted as the influence of more persistent individual differences in their feelings toward the economic crisis, due either to the development of specific sentiments toward it or to a longstanding disposition to react in a certain affective manner.

## Results

Table 4 contains the results of the within-between random effects estimations. 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) have been rescaled to range from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 1. As noted above, between effects represent the estimated effects of average values of the independent variables for each individual, while within effects represent deviations from these average values for each observation of each individual. This allows to assess the overall effect of being more or less angry, fearful, or sad, as an individual (between effects), and the effect of changing levels of anger, anxiety, or sadness along time within the same individual (within effects).

The results of model 1, which includes only the control variables, show that age has a positive effect both within individuals and between individuals, indicating that both *becoming* older and *being* older increase the levels of populism, although the former effect clearly outweighs the latter. Similarly, a within-person increase in the attained level of education has a positive effect on support for populism, but being more educated does not have a significant effect. The within effect of reducing consumption is not significant, but the between effect is positive and statistically significant: for a given individual, having further financial difficulties does not affect populist attitudes,

but individuals with more difficulties on average tend to display higher levels of populism. Both within- and between-person effects of perceptions of the national economy are negative and significant, even if the between effect more than doubles the within effect. Citizens who have more negative views about the economic situation show more support for populism; but holding constant their average assessment, becoming more critical also helps increase populist attitudes. Finally, being on the left of the ideological spectrum comes with higher levels of populism. This, in fact, is the variable with the largest coefficient in our model. Yet, within-person changes in ideological self-placement do not significantly affect levels of populism. These results are substantively in line with those of other studies, in that the effects of the economy are mainly driven by sociotropic evaluations, followed far behind by the personal experience of the crisis (Rico & Anduiza, 2016). In this case, however, positions of economic vulnerability like income and unemployment have no significant effect on populism.

Model 2 adds the emotional reactions to the crisis. The between individual effects show that, as expected, individuals that have a persistent tendency to experience higher levels of anger appear to have also higher levels of populist attitudes. Conversely, individuals with higher average levels of anxiety tend to have lower levels of populism. The expected effects of anger and anxiety are largely confirmed as regards average differences between individuals. Contrary to our expectations, sadness shows a small positive effect, which is only at significant at the  $p < 0.1$  level.

The within-person effects refer to the effect of changing levels of expressed emotions over the levels of populist attitudes within individuals. This is a harder test in terms of causality. In this case we see that, again as expected, an increase in the level of anger produces an increase in the levels of populism. Fear has an effect in the expected negative direction but it is not significant, while sadness has a positive nonsignificant effect.

The effects of emotions between individuals and within individuals are consistent. While between effects are larger than within effects, the effects are in the same direction. Both differences in anger between individuals and changes in anger within individuals have a positive significant effect on populist attitudes. Fear has the opposite

effect, which seems to be significant only across individuals. Sadness marginally increases populism also between and within individuals, and as fear only has a significant effect across individuals.

Much of the effect of the control variables remains after the inclusion of emotional reactions. Importantly, although emotions appear to capture some of the influence of the “more cognitive” assessments of the economy, both reported personal financial difficulties and evaluations of the country’s economy retain a sizeable influence on populist attitudes, according to the estimates in model 2. This suggests that emotional reactions do not merely mediate the influence of valence assessments but have an independent effect, which most certainly carries the effect of related appraisals.

## **Conclusion**

This paper examined how individual levels of populist attitudes are related to their emotional reactions to the economic crisis. Following the insights from recent research in emotions, and particularly cognitive appraisal theories, we hypothesized that discrete negative emotions toward the economic crisis would have differentiated effects on populist attitudes. In line with our expectations, the empirical analysis showed that populist attitudes are dominated by anger. Differences in the average tendency to experience anger are consistently associated with individual levels of populism, and within-person deviations from typical states of anger are also consequential. Feelings of fear, in contrast, exert a negative and more moderate between-person effect. People with a disposition to experience fear toward the economic crisis are on average more likely to display higher levels of populism, but intra-individual changes in fear are not significantly related to populism.



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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
Impotency	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
Sadness	3.9	3.8	3.8	3.8
(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	Impotency	Fear	Anxiety
Impotency	0.71			
Fear	0.44	0.53		
Anxiety	0.48	0.52	0.65	
Sadness	0.51	0.53	0.54	0.47

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

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

	(1)		(2)	
	Within effects	Between effects	Within effects	Between effects
Female		0.015 (0.046)		-0.019 (0.046)
Age (years)	0.029 <sup>+</sup> (0.016)	0.006 <sup>+</sup> (0.003)	0.032* (0.016)	0.005 (0.003)
Education	0.539* (0.213)	-0.073 (0.065)	0.497* (0.212)	-0.082 (0.063)
Unemployed	0.069 (0.065)	-0.009 (0.074)	0.071 (0.064)	0.002 (0.072)
Income	0.011 (0.156)	0.166 (0.157)	0.033 (0.155)	0.152 (0.154)
Reduced consumption	0.188 (0.117)	0.395** (0.112)	0.095 (0.120)	0.214 <sup>+</sup> (0.122)
Country economy	-0.309* (0.122)	-0.882** (0.116)	-0.260* (0.122)	-0.662** (0.117)
Left-right placement	-0.170 (0.183)	-1.038** (0.142)	-0.126 (0.182)	-0.848** (0.141)
Anger			0.462** (0.129)	1.071** (0.150)
Fear			-0.064 (0.127)	-0.407** (0.137)
Sadness			0.127 (0.098)	0.240 <sup>+</sup> (0.126)
Constant		5.434** (0.167)		4.695** (0.184)
Observations / individuals		3,100 / 1,524		3,100 / 1,524

Unstandardized correlation coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses.

<sup>+</sup>  $p < .1$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$