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**Half a Loaf Isn't Better than no Bread:  
Austerity-related Grievances and Emotions as Triggers of Protest in Spain**

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**Abstract:**

During the Great Recession, demonstrations have become more visible throughout Europe. But what are the effects of the economic recession on citizens' propensity to demonstrate? Is unemployment the main reason to protest? What are exactly the pathways that connect crisis-related grievances with protest? This research tests the effects of 30 grievances related to austerity measures on Spaniards' propensity to demonstrate. We use panel data to trace those effects over time, building factors to capture the multi-dimensionality of the crisis. Moreover, we dig into the mechanisms that link grievances to protest activities emphasizing the mediating role of emotions. We find that grievances deriving from unemployment do foster protest activities, but also that a worsening in one's financial situation and working conditions triggers participation in demonstrations. We also show that grievances trigger negative emotions, and that while anger fosters the effects of grievances on protest activities, anxiety hampers some of these effects.

**Keywords:** Demonstrations, Protest, Grievances, Emotions, Crisis, Austerity, Spain

**Introduction:**

In Southern European countries, as in other parts of the world, the Great Recession raises important political questions. The crisis has fostered expressions of political dissatisfaction that have become blatant with the emergence of new political formations such as the Movimento Cinque Stelle in Italy, Syriza in Greece or, more recently, Podemos in Spain. Most of these examples, however, were preceded by numerous and intense demonstrations in the street carried out by citizens. Perhaps one of the most well documented examples of social mobilization is the *Indignados* Movement in Spain. This social movement, spurred by the implementation of austerity measures, reached a broad spectrum of the population in Spain, which raises questions related to the drivers of protest activities. For a start, has the economic crisis dragged people to the streets? What are the most outrageous aspects of the economic crisis, the ones triggering protest? And what are the intervening mechanisms?

Protest in times of economic crisis is a form of “collective defiance” that can be used by citizens to express their dissatisfaction with the economic and the political division of power (Piven and Cloward 1979). In this research, we propose to address their motivations by studying the participation of Spaniards in demonstrations during the Great Recession. Unlike previous research (Bagguley 1992; Clark 1985; Richards 2009), we posit that the austerity measures implemented by two subsequent governments have resulted in a series of financial and work-related grievances that exceed the question of unemployment. We argue that the Great Recession and the related austerity measures have triggered grievances among the whole population, resulting in an encompassing drive of citizens into the streets. We also aim at understanding how grievances contribute to protest activities by unraveling the causal mechanisms between both phenomena. On this respect, we propose that emotions mediate the effects of grievances on protest, which will ultimately determine the final impact on the probabilities to take to the street.

Summing up, our research contributes to a series of ongoing discussions about the political consequences of the crisis by offering a detailed analysis of what drives citizens to the streets and, more specifically, by explaining how grievances and emotions foster protest activities. We argue that the crisis fostered participation in demonstrations through a wide set of grievances, which expand the domain of the negative effects of the crisis beyond unemployment, the economic phenomenon that has gotten most of the academic attention so far. Moreover, we advance that the effects of these grievances are in some cases mediated by emotions, mainly anger. Our results contribute to a better understanding of the mechanisms related to the strain or breakdown theories (Buechler 2004; Useem 1998) and to the literature on role of emotions in social movement participation (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001; Jasper 2011).

We first discuss the literature on living conditions and protest activities in Spain. Then we present the research on grievances and their effects on participation in demonstrations, discussing why grievances may play a specific role in the context of a crisis. Next, we move on to a discussion of the plausible mediating effects of emotions, and the implications that this has for the distinction between expressive and instrumental participation. In the research design section we present our dataset, estimation models and the operationalization of our dependent and independent variables. Next, we present and discuss our empirical findings. We conclude with a confrontation of our findings to the existing research and blind spots in the study of grievances, emotions, and protest.

### **The Great Recession in Spain**

Spain is an ideal case to study the connections between economic recession and its social and political consequences. First, Spain is interesting because it is enduring a severe economic crisis

since 2008. Second, Spanish citizens have massively taken to the street to express their dissatisfaction with the on-going crisis. In other words, Spain allows us to analyze whether grievances resulting from the economic crisis can lead concerned individuals to engage in politics. A quick outline of the Spanish economic crisis shows how a malfunctioning financial and economic system dramatically affected and transformed the lives of citizens. Without being exhaustive, the mention of some major events may help introducing the sources of the grievances which are our main interest.

In 2008, the collapse of the real estate bubble caused a rise in housing prices and halted the construction sector, which greatly contributed to the prosperity of the Spanish economy. Thus, thousands of construction workers went unemployed, cutting sharply their expenses and being unable to pay their own mortgages (Febrero and Uxò 2013). Moreover, courts evicted individuals unable to fulfill their mortgages. The Spanish law makes individuals responsible of the debt they acquired with the bank – interest and late fees included, as the property has suffered a substantial devaluation since the mortgage was granted. Hence, individuals – who cannot be declared bankrupt in Spain – found themselves homeless and still in debt with their bank. Banks also experienced trouble in dealing with so many unpaid debts.

Not only Spaniards were confronted to losses of jobs and houses, but they also had to pay the cost of this economic mismanagement by seeing their welfare state dismantled and their labor market further liberalized. In fact, two subsequent Spanish governments – the socialists between 2004 and 2011, and the conservatives since November 2011 – have dealt with the crisis implementing austerity measures which included two dimensions: cuts in public spending and reforms of the labor market (Dellepiane and Hardiman 2012; Kennedy 2012; Martín and Urquizu-Sancho 2012). On the one hand, they adopted policies that drastically reduced social

spending for the elderly, families, students, unemployed, disabled people, and poor citizens in general. On the other hand, they implemented consequent reforms of the labor market that reduced insiders' protection and worsened outsiders' living standards. These austerity measures were related to the bailout on Spanish banks by the European Central Bank in 2012. The bailout arrived in exchange for a commitment to trimming the budget deficit to 3.6 percent of the GDP, which entails serious welfare cutbacks. At the same time, unemployment rates jumped from 8 percent in 2007 to 26 percent in 2012. For citizens under 25 years old, these figures are far worse: unemployment among the youngest reached 50 percent in 2012 and 57 percent in 2013.

In this context of growing unemployment, worsening of workers' situation, and welfare cutbacks protest has grown tremendously in Spain. The most well-known example is the Indignados movement, which emerged after the Spanish socialist government approved a labor market reform, an intellectual property protection law, and the first of a series of spending cuts due to the economic crisis. From May 15th 2011 (hence the movement's nickname, 15M) and throughout the summer, a series of massive demonstrations, campsites, building occupations, and marches took place under the slogan "Real democracy now, we are not merchandise for bankers and politicians". On October 15th 2011, a series of protests all over the world were called for, managing to mobilize only in Spain more than a million people. The movement survived thereafter in the form of hundreds of neighborhood assemblies. It seems also to be the origin of more recent Spanish protest initiatives such as "surround the congress" in September and October 2012, and even of the new party Podemos (we can), founded early in 2014, and which won five seats in the 2014 European Elections.

The on-going mobilization can also be seen through the "tides", platforms for social mobilization that periodically organize demonstrations and other social protests against specific consequences

of the austerity measures mentioned above like the privatization of public education (green tide), healthcare (white), or the water (blue). According to official data provided by the Home Office, the number of demonstrations in Spain jumped from 8,760 during 2008 – the year the crisis officially started, to 24320 the following year. As displayed in figure 1, the number of demonstrations has spectacularly grown since, reaching 44,852 demonstrations in 2013. This graph suggests that it is not just about the economic downturn, but also probably about its political management, as the greatest bump is observed between 2011 and 2012, paralleled to a change in government and apparently unrelated to a loss of purchasing power. It is also striking to see the extent to which the evolution of unemployment rates and that of the demonstrations (in thousands) have run parallel since 2006. But, what is the exact role of the economic downturn, unemployment, and the policies that followed it in this rise of protest? To what extent working and living conditions worsening have spurred Spaniards to protest and by what means?

[Figure 1]

### **Theoretical framework**

The Great Recession can be understood as a critical juncture in which on-going socio-economic transformations are accelerated. Induced by the neo-liberal model, the crisis accelerated reforms that did not create new employments and increasingly precarized working conditions, while at the same time reducing social protection. All these transformations imply both structural transformations and a sudden shock, which both trigger grievances (Bergstrand 2014). Grievances, defined “as a sense of indignation about the way authorities are treating a social or political problem” (Klandermans, van der Toorn and van Stekelenburg 2008: 993), have re-emerged in the field of social movements studies after almost thirty years of being considered trivial (Buechler 2004; Opp 1988; Useem 1998). Snow and al. (1998) rescued the idea that rapid

social changes affected individuals' ordinary life and posit that drastic changes in living conditions spur discontent and result in political mobilization. Structural social transformations induced by the Great Recession may cause threats that drive people to take political actions aiming to prevent the losses due to such transformations (Dyke and Soule 2002), perhaps also to defend or regain specific social rights. The sudden fall in well-being and the increased financial strain may result in a feeling of unfair deprivation – a potential source of grievances. These grievances could, in turn, trigger social unrest and political disruption. But what are exactly these grievances and what are the pathways to protest?

#### *The many ways of crisis-related grievances*

Let us focus more closely on the effects of unemployment. There is a growing interest for the effects of this aspect of the economic crisis on political participation. Undoubtedly, unemployment is a major life transition that may affect individuals' identity; besides triggering helplessness, disappointment and risk of social exclusion (Hammer 2000; Jahoda, Lazarsfeld and Zeisel 2002 [1932]; Paugam 2006). Nevertheless, empirical research finds mixed and inconclusive evidences of unemployment's effects on participation. Unemployment has been found to boost protest (Bagguley 1992; Clark 1985; Richards 2009), but also political apathy (Gallego 2007; Parry, Moyser and Day 1992). Importantly, the effects of unemployment vary depending on the context (Baglioni et al. 2008; della Porta 2008; Giugni 2008). This justifies a closer look on this adversity factor. First, because in times of crisis, there are other grievances related to work and financial strain that might be as important as unemployment, but which have hardly gotten any scholar attention. Second, because the aforementioned mixed results for the effects of unemployment on participation may be due to the omission of a missing unknown mediating those effects.



Regarding the other overlooked grievances stemming from the economic crisis, we consider that purchasing power loss and financial difficulties are also widespread among workers due to the Great Recession, and not only found among unemployed persons. While becoming unemployed will be consistent with the drastic losses approach, according to which a sudden decline in one's personal financial situation is certainly a source of grievances (Piven and Cloward 1979); this is not the only pathway by which a citizen would become aggrieved. Relative deprivation causes grievances related not to threats to basic living conditions, but rather to an unfair worsening of one's situation (Klandermans, van der Toorn and van Stekelenburg 2008). In the Spanish case, citizens who maintained their employment are nevertheless confronted to their inability to pay their mortgage, while others have seen their wages fall or experienced reduction in their social benefits. Thus, we expect that grievances related to financial strain will foster protest similarly to the experience of unemployment. In addition, the labor market reforms implemented as part of the austerity measures implied easier dismissal of workers – hence, more perceived job insecurity – as well as the loss of rights, privileges, and income for workers, resulting in an overall worsening of their working conditions that may also drive protest.

Summing up, we propose to test the effects of specific measures of relative deprivation and associated grievances, beyond unemployment and financial strain, on protest activities. We expect that in addition to unemployment-related grievances and financial strain, grievances derived from worsening in working conditions foster protest among Spaniards during the Great Recession. More specifically, we hypothesize that grievances related to the worsening of working conditions have a strong impact on protest since they do not entail urgent needs – i.e. hunger or homelessness – that may compromise the basic resources needed for political action (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995).

- Hypothesis 1: Aggrieved Spaniards protest more than those who do not report grievances resulting from the economic crisis.
- Hypothesis 2: The Great Recession has had wider effects than unemployment. Financial strain and, especially, the worsening of working conditions should also have positive effects on protest.

#### *Emotions as mediators of grievances*

As for the potential mediation effects conditioning the final impact of grievances, we know that grievances are often not enough to give rise to protest (Gamson 1992; Van Stekelenburg, Klandermans and Van Dijk 2011). A possibility is that they operate thorough emotions (Buechler 2004). Indeed, these pleasant or unpleasant feelings of avoidance or fight (Berkowitz and Harmon-Jones 2004; Russell 2003) are related to political participation. More precisely, positive emotions are believed to foster action, whereas negative emotions, such as anxiety, are related to the surveillance system – which prepares the individual for unknown threats – and hinder action (Steenbergen and Ellis 2006). Anger is a special negative emotion which appears when people are confronted to obstacles that impede the attainment of rewards (Brader and Marcus 2013). It has received much attention (see Jasper 2014; van Doorn, Zeelenberg and Breugelmans 2014 for literature reviews) and belongs, such as enthusiasm, to the disposition system-related emotions, which drive action (Berkowitz and Harmon-Jones, 2004).

Other emotions are also relevant for the study of political participation (Brader and Marcus 2013; Sabucedo and Vilas 2014; Valentino et al. 2011). Anxiety, for instance, often happens along with anger, as contemporary reactions to a given situation (Brader and Marcus 2013). Anxiety is triggered by threatening events, such as the economic crisis and the associated risks of unemployment or financial difficulties. Nevertheless, and unlike anger, anxiety is part of the

inhibition system and hinders action (Marcus 2000). Therefore, we argue that anxiety may mediate the effects of grievances on protest in the sense of suppressing those effects.

- Hypothesis 3: The effects of grievances on participation in demonstrations are mediated by emotions

- Hypothesis 4: Negative emotions resulting from grievances can either foster or hinder participation in demonstrations. Anger fosters protest while anxiety works as a suppressor and hinders protest.

In figure 2, we summarize the overall theoretical framework that we construct in order to explain Spaniards broad protest activities during the crisis. Grievances may directly feed into protest, however since it is often not enough to foster participation we also propose an indirect path. This indirect path captures the mediating role of emotions. We posit that grievances foster negative emotions and that anger turns these grievances into protest whereas anxiety hinders protest activities.

[Figure 2]

## **Data and Methods**

*Survey data and operationalization of the main variables.*

In order to clarify the effects of the crisis on protest, we need to control for attendance at demonstrations prior to the crisis. In other words, we must distinguish protest that is crisis-driven from protest as usual; and, thus, differentiate those that have taken to the streets because of crisis-related grievances from those who already have a high propensity to protest before the crisis. With the aim of taking into account this previous propensity, we use a unique five-wave

panel survey that allows us to follow the evolution of Spaniards' protest between 2010 and 2013. This is the study CIS 2855, a survey conducted during a period of 28 months (see appendix 1 for more detail).<sup>1</sup> Respondents were selected from an online survey pool set up by the active recruitment of potential respondents active in mainstream commercial websites in Spain. The sample consists of Spanish citizens aged 16 to 45 years old who have an Internet access. Originally, the survey was designed to examine attitudinal change among 'young' people who are theoretically open to social change. This subpopulation most severely endured the economic consequences of the crisis, hence, this is an ideal database to test the effects of changes in economic and labor conditions on protest behavior.

The survey included in all the five waves a question related to participation in demonstrations during the previous six months. Given the lack of more specific questions about marches, sits-in, building occupations, etc. we take this question on demonstrations as a proxy for other forms of protest, hence, this is our dependent variable. Since panel waves are six months apart from each other, each question on political activity covers the time past since the previous wave.

With regard to the main independent variable (grievances), the fifth wave of the survey included a battery of 30 items asking for the perverse effects of the economic crisis (see appendix 2 presenting all the items). Among these items, 18 were referred only to workers, while the rest targeted the whole sample. The items asked only to workers allow us to uncover the not-so-well-known effects of the crisis. The question wording for these indicators of crisis effects asked whether the respondent had endured or suffered any of the mentioned effects "in the course of the last two years", thus referring to the period starting with the beginning of the study (wave 1). Some of these "crisis indicators" are: a pay drop; worsening of working conditions; loss of status (i.e. being overqualified for the work); loss of purchasing power; a reduction in living quality

(less holiday, less leisure...); or having asked help from family members.

In order to understand the underpinnings of the economic crisis, and also to handle a reasonable number of independent variables, we perform two exploratory factor analyses – one with the items asked to the whole sample including also unemployed (N=1757) and one with the battery of items only asked to workers (N=1042).

The rotated factor matrix on the first set of grievances (see Appendix 3), asked to the whole sample, identifies three underlying dimensions of the detrimental effects of the crisis:

- F1: Loss of purchasing power
- F2: Unemployment<sup>ii</sup>
- F3: Geographical mobility

The second factor analysis performed only on workers distinguishes 5 factors named as follows (see appendix 4 for each indicator's factor loadings):

- F1: Dissatisfaction with working conditions
- F2: Loss of status and rights
- F3: Risk of losing one's job
- F4: Workload
- F5: Loss of purchasing power

We saved all these factors and use them as predictors in the subsequent estimations of protest. As of note, the mean of all these factors is zero, and the standard deviation is one. Thus, all the regression coefficients pointing to their effect are comparable.

As for the mediating variables, the questionnaire asked for the emotional effects of the crisis including anger and anxiety.<sup>iii</sup> For each emotion, the respondent could select whether she felt the emotion “not at all” (1), “a little” (2), “somewhat” (3), “pretty” (4), and “a lot” (5). These questions were posed after the aforementioned battery of items regarding the negative effects of the crisis. Hence, they can be interpreted as emotional reactions recalling other – economic, social, work-related – prejudicial effects of the economic recession. As the individual could “feel” these emotions at the same time, it is important to take both into account in the explanatory models.

The survey also included several relevant controls that we consider in our analyses, such as gender, age, education, or political interest (see appendix 5 for the descriptive statistics of all variables). But, more importantly, it also allows including a lagged measure of protest – whether or not individuals have taken part in demonstrations as measured in time 1. This enables us to control for individuals’ initial propensity to take part in those protests, which is equivalent to estimate the impact of the consequences of the Great Recession in the evolution of protest between time 1 and time 5 controlling for all time-invariant individual variables.<sup>iv</sup>

#### *Estimation techniques*

The empirical evidence that we use to test our hypotheses rely on a series of estimations of the individuals’ propensity to demonstrate measured in time 5, this is, at the end of our study. It is noteworthy that the indicators of the economic crisis were just asked once, at the end of the panel study. This impedes any fixed effects estimation, as these indicators do not vary over time. However, the wording of such indicators (explicitly asking for the occurrence of those events during the two previous years, hence, since the beginning of the study) and the fact that the dependent variable is measured at each panel wave, allow for the introduction of a time

dimension in the analyses. We consider two sets of estimations determined by the respondents of each set of crisis indicators: the whole sample and workers only. In each case, we introduce emotions after the grievances factors, always including a set of basic controls, to test whether their presence demean the effect of the crisis indicators. Thus, pointing to mediation effects, according to Baron and Kenny causal step approach (1986).<sup>v</sup> These estimations aim at putting to empirical test hypotheses 1, 2, and 3.

We complement the analyses of the indirect effects of emotions by means of two Structural Equation Model (SEM), which allow us modeling several dependent variables (propensity to demonstrate and emotions) at the same time. We rely on these SEM models to overcome the limitations of the causal step approach, namely being too strict to detect partial mediation, being unable to quantify the intervening effect of emotions, underestimating indirect effects when one of its constituent paths is zero (Hayes 2009) or conceal significant total or direct effects in the presence of suppression variables (Rucker et al. 2011), which is our expectation for anxiety. In these models we limit the amount of variables for the sake of identifiability, so only the grievances that have been proved relevant in previous logistic estimations are tested, and controls are limited to a lagged dependent variable, which gauges all time-invariant individual characteristics that could be related to the propensity to demonstrate.

### **Estimating participation in protest activities**

#### *Hypothesis 1 and 2*

We start with the effects of grievances on the probability to demonstrate between 2010 and 2013. In table 1, we present the result of a series of logistic regressions estimating such effects. Let us

first look at column 1 and 3 presenting the effects of grievances, the first column considers the whole sample, while the third considers only workers. Unsurprisingly, interest in politics and the lagged dependent variable contribute in predicting protest – they both have a positive effect which appears to be statistically significant. Similarly, having taken part in protests before increases the probability that an individual participates in protest by 33 percent. More interestingly, two factors prove relevant for engaging in such activities. When individuals refer having lost purchasing power over the last two years, we observe that they are more prone to demonstrate. When they refer having experienced unemployment – either personally or in their close networks of relatives and friends, they also are more prone to demonstrate, all else kept equal.

When we compare this basic model with the one including grievances that only affect workers, some differences arise. On the lagged dependent variable and political interest, the effects are similar, we also detect statistically significant, positive effects on the probabilities of demonstrating. This time, workers are 39 percent more likely to demonstrate if they did it before; which means workers’ tendency to demonstrate is slightly more determined by their past participation and that among the whole population some groups of citizens have been newly dragged to the streets. Looking more specifically to the crisis-related grievances, we find that only three of the five “crisis” factors have an impact on the propensity to demonstrate, in all cases positive. In order of importance, experiencing an increase of workload, losing status and rights in one’s job, and feeling that one’s job is at risk boost the probabilities of demonstrating, all else kept equal.

[Table 1 about here]



We are also interested in estimating the contribution of these factors to the participation of Spaniards in demonstrations. We observe that, for the whole sample, going from minimal to maximal on loss of purchasing power boosts the probabilities of demonstrating by 17 percent, while going from minimum to maximum effects of unemployment causes an increase in the probabilities of protesting of 21 percent, all the other variables in the model kept equal and at their actual values. Unemployment contributes to protest, but so does financial strain. Moving on to working conditions and focusing on workers, we find that moving from minimal to maximal workload increases the probability of demonstrating by 35 percent. Similarly, for status and rights at work, we find that moving from the lowest loss of status and rights to the highest increases the probability of demonstrating by 28 percent, and going from minimal to maximal risk of losing the job increases the probabilities of demonstrating by 20 percent, but the probabilities that this coefficient is actually 0 are 10 percent.

When comparing the substantial effects of the grievances tested in model 1 and 3, we see that, as anticipated in hypothesis 2, unemployment is not the only grievance that drives protest. Furthermore, we find that some of the work-related grievances included in our analyses proved to have even more leverage than unemployment on the probability to demonstrate. In particular, grievances related to an increase in the workload or a loss of status and rights at work importantly contribute to workers participation in protest. Indeed, these two grievances respectively increase participation by 35 and 28 percent whereas unemployment increased it by 21 percent. This means that aggrieved workers are more likely to get involved in demonstrations than average citizens suffering from economic deprivation. Thus, we show that different types of grievances lead to participating in street demonstrations. Importantly, not only grievances related to having lost or perceiving a high risk of losing one's job are conducive to protest activities, losses in terms of working conditions also foster participation in protest activities.

### *Hypotheses 3 and 4*

Next, we move to the mediating role of emotions, introduced in columns 2 and 4. First, we observe that anxiety does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance. For now, we will focus on anger and return to anxiety in the SEM analysis. Regarding anger, we find that it has a considerable positive effect that appears to be statistically significant in model 2 and also in model 4 at a 10 percent level. We calculated predicted probabilities to measure the substantial contribution of anger in predicting participation in a demonstration in wave 5. The probability of demonstrating is of 14 percent for those Spaniards who feel no anger, while it rises to 42 percent for those who are very angry. Conversely, for workers, going from no anger at all to maximum anger increases the chances of participating in demonstrations from 20 to 40 percent.

Regarding mediation, in model 2, we see that the factors capturing a loss of purchasing power and unemployment are no longer statistically significant, and that the coefficient is reduced by half for the former and by one third for the latter. This finding is consistent with total mediation. Second, in model 4 including workers only, we detect that the coefficients of the three aforementioned crisis factors decrease, but the mediating role of emotions appears more limited when analyzing workers only. We find a tiny mediation effect of anger for the loss of status and rights at work, and a small mediation effect for workload. The effect is more convincing for the risk of losing one's job, in this case the coefficient is reduced by almost one third and losses statistical significance (however it was only significant at the 10 percent level in the first place). So far, the role of emotions as mediators between grievances and participation in demonstrations is not clear, we seem to have two different tendencies for the whole sample and for workers only.

In order to offer a more detailed insight on the direct and indirect effects of our crisis factors, we

have estimated two structural equation models, one for each of our samples (everyone aged 16 to 45 years old and workers only). These models correspond in fact with the diagram displayed in Figure 1. For the sake of parsimony, we have only kept in the model the grievances that have proven significant in predicting protest in Table 1. Also, we consider only one control: protests undertaken in wave 1, as this variable accounts for the effect of any time-invariant variable, such as sex or education.<sup>vi</sup>

Figure 3 displays the structural equation model (SEM) results for the first of these estimations for the whole sample; from where we can derive the direct and indirect effects of the factors summarizing the adverse effects of the economic recession. Coefficients are standardized effects, this is, they reflect how many standard deviations the dependent variable will change with an increase of one standard deviation in the independent variables. First, we see that the two grievance factors affect the two emotions. Loss of purchasing power and unemployment increase anxiety and anger. Interestingly, the strongest effect appears on anxiety – for the loss of purchasing power, the coefficient is .39 on anxiety and only .27 on anger. Similar differences are observed for unemployment (.24 and .13, respectively). Second, we see that only anger fosters participation in demonstrations (.10), while anxiety has no effect on it (.01, non-significant). This suggests that when grievances feed into anxiety, their effect does not translate into protest.

**Comentat [UW1]:** I have erased "supression" here because its effect is not significant plus the coeff is positive, so no supression.

Third, we see that unemployment appears to have a direct effect on participation in demonstrations. In the regression presented in table 1, we found that when emotions were introduced, the factor capturing unemployment was no longer statistically significant. Here, we still can find a small direct effect (.07), which is statistically significant. In addition, on the basis of SEM coefficients, we can calculate direct and indirect effects (not shown but available upon demand), which reveal that only a small portion of the total effect of unemployment on protest is

mediated by emotions (.02). On the contrary, we find that the small effect of loss of purchasing power on demonstration (.03) is fully mediated, which complements the results of the estimation displayed in table 1: this mediation happens through anger.

[ Figure 3 about here]

Figure 4 presents the same analysis for workers only. First, we see again that the factors capturing grievances contribute to both emotions and, as in the previous SEM estimation, we find that loss of status and rights, as well as risk of losing one's job, foster anxiety more than it does for anger. Workload is the only factor that fosters anger (.04) more than anxiety (.01). Second, anger again contributes to participation in demonstration (.14) and anxiety suppresses it (-.02), this time significantly. Yet, the effect of anxiety on protest is much weaker than that of anger.

Third, considering the direct and indirect effects of the grievances, we see that changes in the workload have the strongest direct effect (.04), which is not as strong as the effect of unemployment observed above for the whole sample (.07). After the results of the estimations shown in table 1, we would expect this effect to be higher. Moreover, the effect of workload is totally direct and definitely smaller than that of unemployment. The other two factors have weaker direct and total effects. We observe a small mediation effect for the risk of losing one's job (the indirect effect being .02) and for the loss of status and right (.01 for the indirect effect). What may be important to note here is the suppressor effect of anxiety may be stronger for workers than for the whole population.

These SEM estimations show how grievances derived from a worsening of one's financial

**Comentat [UW2]:** The double comparison was hard to follow.

**Comentat [j3]:** Can I do this comparison across models since it is all standardized in std deviations?  
YES.

**Comentat [UW4]:** is not that you are not right, is that it sounds pessimistic.

**Comentat [j5]:** Do you have any good argument for this? What we said about capacity to change or not the situation?  
NICE!

situation, employment prospects, or working conditions result in emotions that, in turn, either foster or inhibit protest action. Indeed, anger appears as the strongest predictor of participation in demonstrations, whereas anxiety hinders participation. Grievances, in turn, have some direct effects on protest, in particular those associated with unemployment, yet the effects of grievances are also partially mediated by emotions which complexifies the relationship between grievances and protest.

[Figure 4 about here]

## Discussion and conclusion

The remarkable expansion of protest activities in Spain in the last few years seem related to the economic recession the country still struggles with. But it is still to be proven what pathways connect the economic downturn to the evolution of protest. In this research, we take a step forward the literature concerned with the effects of employment status and economic deprivation on political participation. Much attention has been paid to the effects of unemployment on protest activities, while grievances derived from working conditions have received limited attention. More specifically, we argued here that in times of crisis grievances raise not only in relations to unemployment and the risk thereof, but also in relation to financial strain and working conditions and that these grievances contribute to the high participation in protest activities observed in Spain.

We adopted a novel approach in measuring the prejudicial effects of the crisis, constructing factors that capture grievances associated with unemployment, financial strain, and working conditions. As for methodology, we adopted a longitudinal perspective that minimizes the risk of

**Comentat [A6]:** I think I would put this aspect more at center stage. IN fact, the last paragraph of the conclusion suggests that this is also what you are more interested in.

finding plausible conclusions for the effect of the crisis grievances on protest that may be however due to omitted variables bias: we included in our analyses a lagged dependent variable. This allowed us to see the effect of such grievances on the evolution of protest during the time span covered by the survey (two years).

Our results confirm our two first hypotheses: grievances related to crisis do foster protest, and these grievances are way more diverse than the dangers and perks related to losing one's job. Indeed, financial strain has a non-negligible engaging potential and suffering deteriorations in the working conditions is a powerful driver for protest. Importantly, grievances such as loss of status and rights in the working environment or an increase in workload exhibit a greater impact on the propensity to protest than unemployment itself. Workers protested because they were aggrieved about the increase in workload and the associated economic sacrifices that the crisis imposed on them. Hence, keeping one's job but being otherwise affected by the economic recession and the austerity measures does not spare individuals from taking to the streets: half a loaf is definitely no better than no bread when it comes to protest. Also, and contrary to previous findings on the effects of personal economic situation for politics (Kinder and Kiewiet 1979; Rosenstone 1982), we show that a worsening of one's personal economic situation fosters protest. This is relevant because the effects of the economic deprivations seem not far less important than the fact of becoming unemployed, which means that the Great Recession has dragged people to the streets for reasons that may be related to the policies that followed the economic downturn and that are alien to unemployment.

We also addressed the role of emotions with regard the link between grievances and protest. Our empirical evidence proves that emotions mediate the effects of grievances on the propensity to protest, which confirms our third hypothesis. The effect of anger on protest corresponds to previous findings (see Brader and Marcus 2013 for a literature review; Jasper 2014), but

complements them by offering some interesting insights. Not only anger exerts this mediation role, fostering the “engaging” effects of the crisis; but also anxiety does, in this case playing a suppressor role between grievances and protest. Our analyses revealed that anger considerably mediates different factors capturing grievances, but that this mediating effect is much weaker for workload. If we focus on workers, we find that grievances related to the working conditions hinder the probability to demonstrate when mediated by anxiety. One would say that only those who have an employment to lose actually fear losing it and, in consequence, refrain from protest. Yet this effect is weaker than the engaging one that operates through anger. Anxiety slightly acts as a suppressor in very specific cases.

Our findings about direct and indirect effects of the economic crisis show that the pathway from grievances to protest is not always fully mediated by emotions (see, for instance, unemployment or workload). Although an avenue for further research, this relates to the well-known distinction between rational, instrumental participation explained out of individuals’ resources (Verba and Nie 1972) and disaffected participation, focused in expressing discontent (Gurr 1970). From our point of view, whenever grievances are not mediated by emotions, we may be closer to instrumental goals in as much as protesters seek redress for concrete grievances through protest. This is probably the case for increases in workload, which seems to be a more concrete grievance for which people want to see changes, while the risk of losing one’s job is a more blurred situations in which citizens would tend more to express their concerns than to pursue tangible demands.

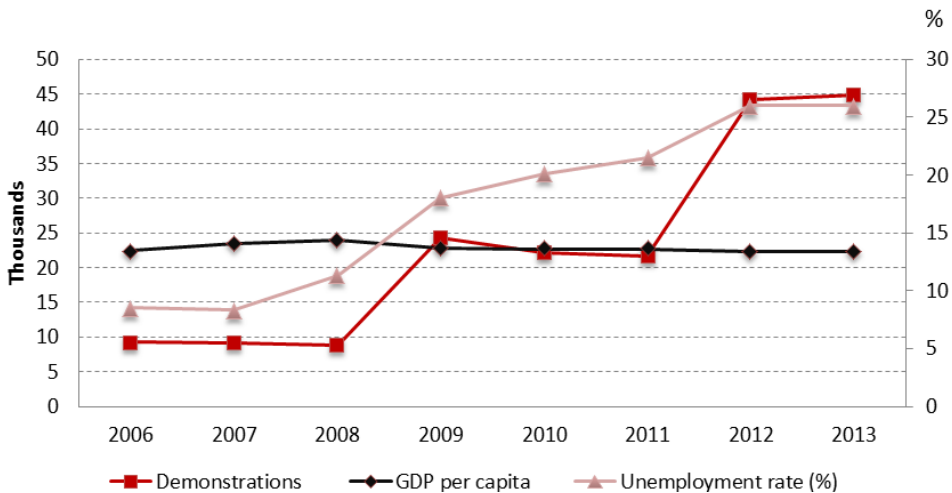
What are the more general conclusions that we can draw from our study? In the shadow of the Great Recession, southern European countries have experienced an increase in protest activities and citizens have punished the established political elites – mainstream political parties – at

election times. Spain is no exception with these regards and our research contributes in understanding how the economic crisis moves into politics. Citizens can be dissatisfied with their working conditions. To some extent, they may also be ready to cope with a limited purchase power or threat to their job, but the greatest trigger of protest is, according to our results, being touched by unemployment, both directly and indirectly –having a relative or acquaintance who is or has recently being unemployed-, a loss of status, rights, and privileges at work as well as an increase in the workload due to companies' adjustments to the crisis. The two last factors are more related to labor reforms implemented as part of the austerity measures recommended by the European Commission and other supranational institutions. Frustrated expectations related to work, like workers feeling overqualified or having to accept to be paid in black or to work more for the same amount of money, seem to be a powerful trigger for protest. Therefore, further precarization of the job market “insiders” may result in further protests, which may join those already affected by unemployment and a massive loss of purchasing power. According to Piven and Cloward (1979), poor people have only their disruptive power to convince political elites to take in their demands. Will deprived people's dissatisfaction turn into mass, perhaps violent, protest as more people face a worsening of their working conditions? We cannot tell, but we have shown that worsening of work-related rights makes people angry and willing to protest.



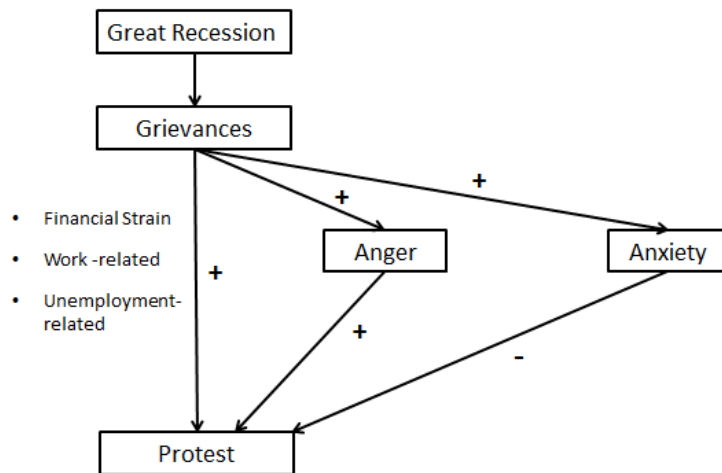


Figure 1: Evolution demonstrations and economic indicators in Spain 2006-2013



Source: Elaborated by the authors with official data provided by Home Office (ministerio del interior) for demonstrations, including both legal and ilegal demonstrations: [www.interior.gob.es](http://www.interior.gob.es). Economic indicators provided by the INE (Instituto Nacional de Estadística) [www.ine.es](http://www.ine.es). Demonstrations and GDP per capita are expressed in thousands (of Euros for GDP).

Figure 2: Theoretical expectations: Direct and indirect effects of grievances on protest



**Table 1. Logistic estimation of the probabilities of demonstrate**

	Whole sample		Workers only	
	basic	emotions as mediators	basic	emotions as mediators
Demonstrations wave 1	1.68** (.21)	1.69** (.22)	1.88** (.27)	1.95** (.29)
Woman	.13 (.18)	.01 (.18)	.32 (.25)	.10 (.26)
Age	.00 (.01)	-.00 (.01)	-.01 (.02)	-.01 (.02)
Education	.06 (.05)	.06 (.05)	.07 (.06)	.09 (.07)
Interest	.50** (.11)	.49** (.11)	.49** (.15)	.47** (.15)
F1: Loss of purchasing power	.18* (.09)	.09 (.10)		
F2: Unemployment	.22* (.09)	.14 (.09)		
F3: Geographical mobility	.04 (.09)	.05 (.09)		
F1: Dissat. working conditions			-.07 (.11)	-.01 (.11)
F2: Loss of status and rights			.26* (.12)	.25* (.11)
F3: Risk of losing the job			.22+ (.11)	.16 (.12)
F4: Workload			.41** (.12)	.36** (.13)
F5: Loss of purchasing power			.16 (.12)	.12 (.12)
Anxiety		.11 (.08)		.19 (.11)
Anger		.37** (.11)		.26+ (.14)
Constant	-2.24** (.55)	-4.00** (.73)	-2.20* (.93)	-3.89** (1.15)
Pseudo R-Squared	.136	.155	.187	.204
Obs.	727	727	423	423

Standard errors in parentheses

+  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

**Table 2. Standardized Total, Direct and Indirect Effects. Whole sample**

	Demons- trations W1	Unem- ployment	Loss of purchasin g power	Anger	Anxiety
<b>Total</b>					
Anger	.	.13	.27	.	.
Anxiety	.	.25	.39	.	.
Demonstrations W5	.58	.01	.03	.1	<i>.01</i>
<b>Direct</b>					
Anger	.	.10	.27	.	.
Anxiety	.	.25	.39	.	.
Demonstrations W5	.58	.07	-.002	.1	<i>.01</i>
<b>Indirect</b>					
Anger	.	.	.	.	.
Anxiety	.	.	.	.	.
Demonstrations W5	.	.02	.03	.	.

Non- significant coefficients are italicized.

**Table 3. Standardized Total, Direct and Indirect Effects. Only workers**

	Demonstrations w1	Work load	Risk losing job	Loss status & rights	Anger	Anxiety
<b>Total</b>						
Anger	.	.04	.14	.1	.	.
Anxiety	.	.01	.21	.16	.	.
Demonstrations W5	.27	.04	.02	.03	.14	-.02
<b>Direct</b>						
Anger	.	.04	.14	.1	.	.
Anxiety	.	.01	.21	.16	.	.
Demonstrations W5	.27	.04	.01	.02	.14	-.02
<b>Indirect</b>						
Anger	.	.	.	.	.	.
Anxiety	.	.	.	.	.	.
Demonstrations W5	.	.01	.02	.01	.	.

Appendix I. Survey sample

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5
Main sample	2100	1813	1514	1322	912
Refreshment wave, low studies	-	620	465	395	381
Recovery of participants who dropped in previous waves					464
Total N	2100	2433	1979	1717	1757
Fieldwork dates	Nov. 17 – Dec.10, 2010	May 11 - 25, 2011	Nov. 9-18, 2011.	May 11-30, 2012.	May 17- June 4, 2013. - Refreshment and recovery: 16-27 October 2013.

Appendix II. Descriptive statistics for the effects of the crisis in the 2 last years (2010-2013)

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
1. Pay drop	1042	.568	.496	0	1
2. Over qualification	1042	.223	.416	0	1
3. Extra hours	1042	.425	.495	0	1
4. Less hours	1042	.138	.345	0	1
5. Second job	1042	.200	.400	0	1
6. Increase of work load	1042	.639	.480	0	1
7. Worsening of Job environment	1042	.574	.495	0	1
8. Instable job	1042	.594	.491	0	1
9. Worse schedules	1042	.377	.485	0	1
10. Company has being firing	1042	.523	.500	0	1
11. Pay in black	1042	.155	.362	0	1
12. Company has experienced economic difficulties	1042	2.791	.940	1	4
13. Not likely to loss job in the 12 next months	1042	2.692	.741	1	4
14. Satisfaction with: work load	1042	3.642	2.400	0	10
15. Satisfaction with: working conditions	1042	3.515	2.480	0	10
16. Satisfaction with: salary	1042	3.295	2.614	0	10
17. Satisfaction with: work tasks	1042	4.349	2.420	0	10
18. Satisfaction with: perspectives for career advancement	1042	3.512	2.635	0	10
19. Months unemployed in the last 2 years	1757	6.428	9.143	0	24
20. Difficulty meeting mortgage/rent payment	1757	1.794	1.079	1	4
21. Amount of acquaintances/relatives unemployed	1757	2.496	.715	1	4
22. Had reduced budget for: leisure	1757	4.098	1.448	1	6
23. Had reduced budget for: food	1757	2.692	1.289	1	6
24. Had reduced budget for: clothes	1757	3.678	1.397	1	6
25. Had reduced budget for: holiday	1757	4.231	1.642	1	6
26. Had reduced budget for: savings	1757	4.053	1.714	1	6
27. Had needed help from my family	1757	.359	.480	0	1
28. Had to move	1757	.087	.282	0	1
29. Had to emigrate to a foreign country	1757	.031	.174	0	1
30. Considered emigrating	1757	.363	.481	0	1

Note: the first 18 questions were asked only to those working in wave 5.



Appendix III. Rotated factor loadings (pattern matrix) and unique variances (question on the effects of the crisis during the last 2 years asked to all respondents)

	Factor 1 Loss of purchasing power	Factor 2 Unemploy- ment	Factor 3 Geogra- phical mobility	Unique- ness
Months unemployed in the last 2 years		.67		.48
Difficulty meeting mortgage/rent payment	.59			.51
Amount of acquaintances/relatives unemployed		.54		.62
Had reduced budget for: leisure	.82			.30
Had reduced budget for: food	.75			.41
Had reduced budget for: clothes	.82			.29
Had reduced budget for: holiday	.82			.27
Had reduced budget for: savings	.77			.39
Had needed help from my family	.50			.54
Had to move			.73	.42
Had to emigrate to a foreign country			.75	.42
Considered emigrating		.76		.38

Note: Loadings lower than .4 have been left in blank. Principal components method. Varimax rotation applied.

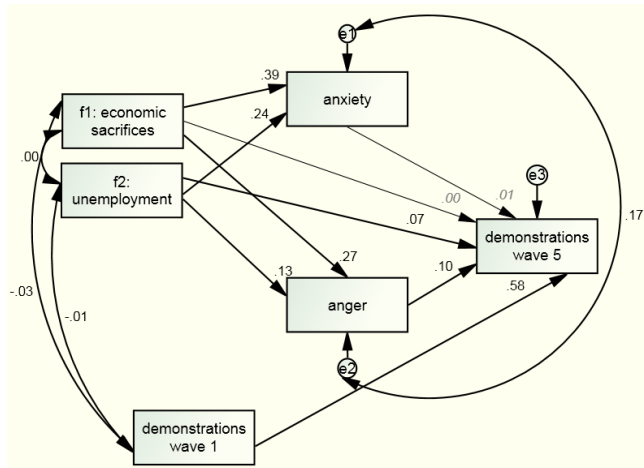
Appendix IV. Rotated factor loadings (pattern matrix) and unique variances (question on the effect of the crisis during the last 2 years asked to employed respondents only)

	Factor 1 Dissatisfaction with working conditions	Factor 2 Loss of status & rights	Factor 3 Risk of losing one's job	Factor 4 Workload	Factor 5 Loss of purchasing power	Uniqueness
Pay drop					.76	.30
Over qualification		.68				.50
Extra hours		.41		.56		.48
Less hours		.41			.46	.48
Second job		.66				.54
Increase of work load				.75		.39
Worsening of Job environment			.46			.52
Instable job			.66			.42
Worse schedules		.54				.49
Company has being firing			.69			.44
Pay in black		.68				.52
Company has experienced economic difficulties			.49		.53	.47
Not likely to loss job in the 12 next months			-.62			.33
Satisfaction with: workload	.74					.35
Satisfaction with: working conditions	.81					.25
Satisfaction with: salary	.76				-.43	.23
Satisfaction with: work tasks	.84					.28
Satisfaction with: perspectives for career advancement	.80					.28

Note: Loadings lower than .4 have been left in blank. Principal components method. Varimax rotation applied.

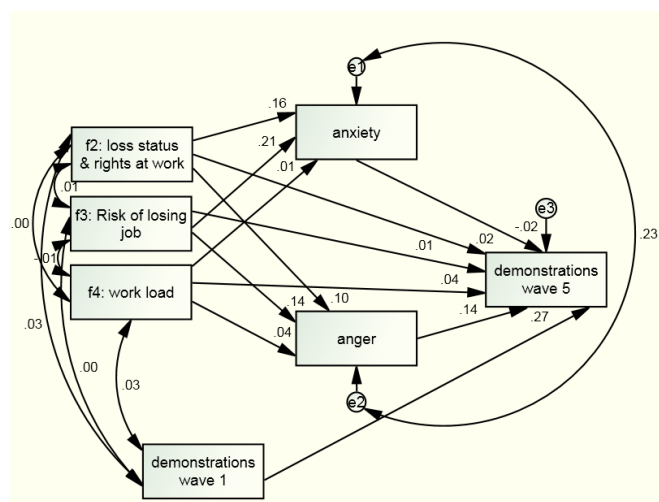
Most of these indicators are dichotomous, the value 1 signaling when the individual refers having experienced this adverse phenomenon in the last two years versus not having experienced it. Some items allow for gradation. For instance, the respondents could answer to what extent their companies have experienced economic difficulties, or a have had a hard time for meeting their mortgage/rent payments. The answers range from 1 (no difficulties) to 4 (lots of difficulties). The likelihood of losing one's job answers rank from 1 (I will surely lose it) to 4 (I am sure I won't lose it). The battery on satisfaction with working conditions explicitly refers to the extent to which the respondent is more or less satisfied than two years ago. Lower values indicate less satisfaction than two years ago, higher values indicate more satisfaction. The question on the amount of time unemployed in the last 2 years indicate time being unemployed and is measured in months, therefore 24 is the maximum value. As for the question on unemployment among acquaintances and relatives, it refers to the amount of people currently unemployed. The answer options are: 1 (none), 2 (a few), 3 (many), and 4 (all of them). With regards the battery of items tapping the reduction in budget, the response options rank from 1 (I haven't reduced my budget in this respect) to 6 (I have reduced my budget in this respect a great deal)

**Appendix V: SEM estimation of the probabilities of demonstrating (whole sample, Standardized regression weights)**



Chi-square: 19.3\*\*\*, df: 2, RMSEA: .016. CFI:.999. Grey, italic parameters are not significant.

**Appendix VI: SEM estimation of the probabilities of demonstrating (workers only, standardized regression weights)**



Chi-square: 145.3\*\*\*, df=2, Rmsea: .014 CFI:.991

## Appendix VII. Descriptive statistics of the main variables

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Participation scale (w5)	1757	2.	1.62	0	6
Participation scale (w1)	2100	1.79	1.52	0	6
Woman	1717	.48	.5	0	1
Age	1757	34.58	7.23	18	51
Education	1757	7.14	2.81	1	11
Anxiety	1757	3.41	1.18	1	5
Anger	1757	4.17	.97	1	5
Impotence	1757	4.20	.98	1	5
Fear	1757	3.59	1.17	1	5
Sadness	1757	3.93	1.09	1	5

Note:

All variables (except the lagged scale of participation, measured in wave 1) have been measured in wave 5.

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<sup>ii</sup> This factor includes months unemployed in the last 2 years, amount of acquaintances/relatives unemployed and the fact of considering emigrating.

<sup>iii</sup> The exact wording of this question was: “Would you say that the economic crisis causes you...” followed by the battery of emotions and intensities.

<sup>iv</sup> Note that the inclusion of a lagged dependent variable in our models considerably reduces the number of observations available. Due to the structure of our data, 845 individuals included in wave 5 entered the study in wave 2, so we do not have data for their probabilities to demonstrate in wave 1. As they have missing values for the lagged dependent variable, they are automatically excluded from our analyses.

<sup>v</sup> Mediation is detected when an independent variable X significantly affects the mediator M, X significantly affects the dependent variable Y when M is absent, M has a significant unique effect on Y, and that the effect of X on Y diminishes (partial mediation) or disappears (full mediation) when M is present (Baron and Kenny 1986).

<sup>vi</sup> The standardized weights of these models are shown in the appendix. The errors of the two Emotions have been estimated as they are measured in the same battery of questions and we expect some similarities. The models have been estimated using generalized least squares method, and the missing data have been treated using multiple Bayesian imputation. Finally, the model fit in both cases is excellent, with a root mean square of error approximation (RMSEA) lower than .05 and a comparative fit index

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(CFI) close to 1. This means that our model reproduce the original data matrix with accuracy Browne, Michael W, and Robert Cudeck. 1993. "Alternative Ways of Assessing Model Fit." Pp. 136–62 in *Testing Structural Equation Models*, edited by Kenneth A. Bollen and J. Scott Long. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, Steiger, JH. 1989. *Causal Modeling: A Supplementary Module for SYSTAT and SYGRAPH*. Evanston, IL: Systat.