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Ideological identification, type of threat, and differences in how anger and fear

relate to anti-immigrant and populist attitudes

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Abstract

Following calls for a clear analytical distinction between populism and the specific ideological projects to which it is attached, the present paper examines how populist and anti-immigrant attitudes relate to feelings of fear and anger about perceived threats facing the country. It posits that, while the association of these two discrete negative emotions with anti-immigration attitudes should be related to individuals' ideological identification and the type of threat, populist attitudes, by virtue of their ubiquitous character, should be strongly associated with feelings of anger regardless of ideology or threat type. Drawing on data from an online survey in Spain, I find that anti-immigration attitudes are associated with anger among right-wing individuals and with fear among those on the center and the left, and more strongly associated with emotions linked to cultural threats. By contrast, results indicate that populist attitudes go hand in hand with feelings of anger across ideological groups and type of threat.

Keywords: populism, nativism, emotions, ideology, Spain

Introduction

The rise of populist politics during the last few decades has attracted a lot of public and scholarly interest, giving rise to an important literary genre around a traditionally elusive phenomenon (see Verbalyte et al. in this Special Issue, Part One). Following remarkable advancements in conceptual clarification, a growing consensus has emerged on a minimal definition of populism as a "thin" ideology or a type of discourse pitting the people against the elite (Hawkins, 2009; Mudde, 2004; Stavrakakis, 2017). However, there remains a widespread tendency to associate populism with nativism or ethnic nationalism, as typically expressed by the radical right in terms of exclusionary stances against immigrants and other cultural minorities. Indeed, this conflation is likely explained by the prevalence—particularly in the European context—of populist radical right parties that combine nativist positions with an anti-establishment rhetoric. Yet populism cannot be reduced to these right-wing exclusionary forms, because populism may be articulated in disparate ways across the political spectrum. Nor can the radical right be reduced to the populist elements of its discourse, because it is nativism, rather than populism, what constitutes the radical right's core ideological and rhetorical feature (Mudde, 2007; Rydgren, 2007). Indeed, anti-immigrant sentiment has been found to be the single most important and consistent predictor of radical right support (Arzheimer, 2018).

Some scholars have hence warned about the dangers of terminological confusion and an overemphasis of the populist dimension of party discourses primarily characterized by their nativism (Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017; Rooduijn, 2019; Rydgren, 2017; Stavrakakis et al., 2017). Although both populism and nativism claim to represent and speak in the name of the people, they do so from fundamentally different perspectives. While

populism is constructed around a vertical, down/up opposition pitting the ordinary people against an illegitimate elite, nativism focuses on a horizontal, in/out opposition between members and non-members of the nation or dominant ethno-cultural group (Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017). A nuanced understanding of the specificities of the appeal of these distinct logics of antagonism thus calls for measuring and analyzing them separately, in order to avoid confounding elements of one with elements of the other.

Along these lines, the present contribution to the Triple Special Issue "The Emotional Side of Populist Support: Key Affective Mechanisms at Test" examines differences in how citizens' populist and nativist (anti-immigration) attitudes are related to key discrete emotions. Although both populism and the radical right are often associated with high affectivity in public discourse, research has just started to explore the emotional dimension of these phenomena. The analysis focuses on the relationship between each of these attitudinal domains and feelings of anger and fear about the problems that individuals identify as the most important facing the country. Building on insights from the study of discrete emotions in politics, I argue that the association of fear and anger with anti-immigration attitudes will vary systematically with individuals' political predispositions and the specific type of threat linked with their emotional reactions. By contrast, I expect that populist attitudes will be strongly associated with anger and largely unconnected to fear, and that this pattern will be generally impervious to both voters' predispositions and type of perceived threat.

The empirical analyses rely on data from a nationally representative survey in Spain, a country where left-wing populism first emerged but that has recently experienced an extraordinary rise of the radical right. Results largely confirm the posited patterns. The

relationship between anger and anti-immigrant attitudes varies with individuals' ideological identification, being highest for those on the right and null for those on the left. Fear in turn is associated with increased outgroup intolerance among those on the center and the left, but not among those on the right. I also find evidence that emotions about cultural threats are more strongly associated with anti-immigrant sentiments. Conversely, populist attitudes are found to go hand in hand with feelings of anger irrespective of ideological identification or type of threat.

Anger, fear, and the diverse nature of political attitudes

Fear and anger have been the primary focus of research into emotions in politics. The two dominant approaches in the field, appraisal theories and the theory of affective intelligence, establish a distinction between them and make similar predictions about the conditions in which they arise and their respective effects. According to appraisal theories, key to the emergence of anger or fear are appraisals of certainty, responsibility, and personal efficacy (Lazarus, 1991; Roseman, 1996; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). People feel anger when they are certain about a demeaning offense and blame some external agent for it but still feel able to cope with the situation. Fear arises in conditions of a highly uncertain threat evoked by uncontrollable circumstances and is accompanied by low self-perceived ability. Similarly, affective intelligence theory contends that fear is experienced in response to novel, unfamiliar stimuli, whereas anger develops in the presence of familiar threats involving normative violations (Marcus et al., 2000, 2019). Anger, in sum, would be governed by a sense of grievance and injustice; fear, by contrast, would belong to the domain of uncertainty and unexpectedness (Marcus, 2021).

The behavioral tendencies linked with each of these emotions follow naturally from the above characterization. Perceived unfairness prompts angry individuals to engage with the source of their anger, eliciting a need to respond against the offensive agent in order to restore justice. Anger thus promotes aggressive and retaliatory reactions. On the other hand, the uncertain threat giving rise to fear leads people to avoid risks and seek security, hence promoting support for protective and precautionary measures, conciliation and compromise (Huddy et al., 2007; Lerner et al., 2003; Lerner & Keltner, 2001; MacKuen et al., 2010; Skitka et al., 2006). Affective intelligence theory particularly emphasizes the argument that emotions regulate information processing and the role of prior convictions. In this view, fear increases attentiveness to contemporary information and encourages cognitive effort and careful deliberation, freeing individuals from previously learned routines of thought and opening them to new considerations. Conversely, anger correlates with reliance on predispositions, superficial processing, and motivated reasoning (MacKuen et al., 2010; Marcus et al., 2000; see also Huddy et al., 2007; Suhay & Erisen, 2018; Tiedens & Linton, 2001; Valentino et al., 2008).

The argument put forward in this paper is that how fear and anger relate to nativism and populism will vary with the degree to which they are connected to core political predispositions and the extent they are perceived to be relevant to deal with the source of threat. Extensive research has shown that conservatism consistently predicts hostility toward immigrants, ethnic minorities, and other disadvantaged groups (see Jost et al., 2009). Likewise, citizens often perceive right-wing exclusionary policies as more appropriate to handle immigration and other identity issues (e.g. Lucassen & Lubbers, 2012). Individuals' predispositions and the type of threat should therefore be connected with how anti-immigration attitudes relate to these two emotional reactions. Contrarily,

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populism is "innate to a belief in democracy" (Hawkins & Littvay, 2019, p. 22). Given the ideological ubiquity and ever-present relevance of the populist narrative, its association with these two emotions should be basically unrelated to citizens' political predispositions and the type of perceived threat. The next two sections present the arguments that support these expectations, considering each attitudinal domain in turn.

Emotions' contingent association with anti-immigration attitudes

It has been frequently noted that fear lies at the core of outgroup prejudice. This notion can be traced back to received wisdom that feelings of threat are conducive to authoritarianism and conservatism in general (Adorno et al., 1950)—an idea that has been supported by extensive research. As succinctly conveyed by Jost et al. (2017, pp. 344–345) in a comprehensive meta-analysis, "it seems to be a remarkable fact of social and political psychology that subjective feelings and objective exposure to fearful and threatening stimuli contribute to observable 'conservative shifts' more often than not."

This approach has been criticized for reducing perceived threat to feelings of fear, hence failing to differentiate between discrete negative emotions associated with threatening circumstances—particularly between fear and anger (Lambert et al., 2010; Marcus, 2021; Marcus et al., 2019). Indeed, it has been suggested that, once distinct emotional reactions to threat are considered, it is rather anger which—due to its connection with the approach motivational system (Carver & Harmon-Jones, 2009) and aggressive and punitive tendencies in particular (Huddy et al., 2007; Lerner et al., 2003; Skitka et al., 2006)—is more likely to align with right-wing shifts (Eadeh & Chang, 2020; Vasilopoulos et al., 2018). A number of studies indicate that anger is more strongly related to outgroup

intolerance and prejudice than fear when their effects are estimated simultaneously. For instance, anger appears to uniquely affect attitudes toward race and immigration in the US, where it has been found to be the main emotional driver of whites' racial resentment (e.g., Banks & Valentino, 2012). Likewise, studies of intergroup emotions show that the role of intergroup anger outweighs that of other negative emotions when explaining support for confrontational, aggressive, and ultimately violent collective action against outgroups (e.g., Mackie et al., 2000).

Research on discrete emotions nonetheless argues that the consequences of distinct affective reactions should be highly contingent on individuals' "political predispositions", i.e. learned affective and generally automatic responses to political symbols that powerfully influence the evaluation of attitude objects based on their symbolic meaning (Sears, 1993). This point has been most emphatically developed within the theory of affective intelligence, which provides a framework to understand how anger and fear might moderate the role that political predispositions play in judgment and decision making (Marcus et al., 2000, 2019). From this perspective, anger is expected to reinforce individuals' reliance on previously learned habits, thus increasing the alignment of attitudes and behaviors with core political predispositions such as partisanship or ideological identification. Fear, on the other hand, is expected to turn individuals from habitual patterns of thought and to enhance attentiveness to contemporary information and a more systematic consideration of alternatives, which might lead to updating beliefs and overcome the impact of enduring predispositions.

This pattern has been confirmed by several lines of evidence, including studies on negative outgroup attitudes and related behaviors. Banks and Valentino (2012) found that

experimentally-induced anger increased opposition to racially redistributive policies among whites high on symbolic racism. Banks (2014) showed that anger enhanced the effects of whites' racial predispositions on preferences for health care reform (generally perceived to benefit blacks), boosting opposition among racial conservatives while enhancing support among racial liberals. Levels of ethnocentrism were similarly activated by anger with regard to whites' opinions about racial and immigration policies, with fear, by contrast, causing the least ethnocentric to be less supportive (Banks, 2016). Along these lines, Vasilopoulos et al. (2018) showed that feelings of anger after the January 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in Paris were associated with authoritarian policy preferences among far-right citizens, while feelings of fear were so among left-wing citizens.

There is thus considerable evidence that the link between political predispositions and prejudice is stronger when anger is high and weaker when fear is high. One key predisposition to political judgment and behavior is ideological identification, understood as individuals' affective attachment to ideological categories, such as "left" vs. "right" (Ellis & Stimson, 2012; Brandt et al., 2019). Symbolic, identity-based ideology has been found to be a powerful predictor of attitudes toward immigration, with right-wingers being more prone to hold negative views of immigrants (Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010). Consequently, the association between right-wing identification and anti-immigration attitudes should be stronger for those who show greater anger and weaker for those who show greater fear. The implication, for our purposes, is that *both* anger and fear may be related to anti-immigration attitudes, based on people's ideological identification. Specifically, I expect that the more individuals identify with the right, the *more* strongly anti-immigration attitudes will relate to anger (H1) and the *less* strongly to fear (H2).

An additional factor likely affecting the correlates of emotional reactions is the type of threat with which they are connected. Any given emotion may be associated with a myriad of threats, each type of threat potentially speaking to a different set of political issues. Even if there is an extensive body of research about the attitudinal links of different types of threat, extant studies rarely address the role of specific emotions evoked by those threats (Lambert et al., 2019). Likewise, research on specific emotions usually focuses on a limited set of threats—such as terrorist attacks, economic crises, or immigration flows—so systematic empirical analyses that allow comparisons of discrete emotions across kinds of threat are lacking.

It is reasonable to think that attitudes toward immigrants will be more sensitive to emotional reactions to relevant threats. The radical right has championed opposition to immigration in many European countries, decidedly contributing to heightened public attention and politicization of immigration issues over the past three decades (Grande et al., 2019). Comparative research on issue ownership shows that whereas matters related to social welfare tend to be associated with left-wing parties, immigration and law-and-order issues are consistently associated with right-wing parties (Seeberg, 2017). However, such connections go beyond specific parties' reputations for dealing with certain problems. As argued by Lambert et al. (2019), they also reflect facets of ideologies themselves. According to the Ideology-Affordance model (Lambert et al., 2019; Eadeh & Chang, 2020; see also Lambert et al., 2010), threat enhances political beliefs to the extent that these beliefs are seen as allowing to solve the problem at hand. Some types of threat (e.g., terrorism, war) will make certain aspects of right-wing ideology more attractive, whereas others (health care, environment, corporate fraud) will increase the appeal of facets of left-wing ideology (Lambert et al., 2019; Eadeh & Chang, 2020;

Brandt et al., 2021). The link between perceived threat and political attitudes should therefore be context-specific: threat promotes certain ideological beliefs "provided that they are relevant to the problem needed to be 'fixed'" (Lambert et al., 2019, p. 150). Along these lines, comparative research has found that cultural (or symbolic) threats to identity are more closely related to ethnic prejudice and support for the radical right than economic threats to material resources and well-being (Ivarsflaten, 2008; Lucassen & Lubbers, 2012; Schmuck & Matthes, 2017). Based on these premises, I expect that anti-immigration attitudes will be more strongly associated with emotions linked with cultural threats than by emotions linked with non-cultural threats (H3).

Populist attitudes and the case for anger

There is a manifest affinity between anger's appraisal pattern and action tendencies, on the one hand, and the narrative conveyed by populist ideations, on the other. The identification of an external culprit, fundamental to the elicitation of anger, is characteristic of populism's blame-shifting rhetoric (Vasilopoulou et al., 2014). Recent evidence demonstrates that when individuals are encouraged to consider political issues in dispositional terms—attributing responsibility to actors with agency—rather than situationally—blaming impersonal forces beyond anyone's control—, they are more likely to endorse populist attitudes (Busby et al., 2019; see also Hameleers et al., 2017). Moreover, the attribution of responsibility in populist discourse typically carries a moral judgment, which is also central to the experience of anger. Even if the nature of social grievances varies greatly depending on the host ideology, all manifestations of populism are precisely built around the denunciation of the unresponsiveness of the established elite to people's demands (Panizza, 2005). The moral distinction between the "good people"

and the "corrupt elite" thus resonates strongly with anger's appraisal of unfair, illegitimate offense (Lazarus, 1991) and the related perception of norm violation (MacKuen et al., 2010; Marcus et al., 2000). Further parallelism can be found between populism's adversarial and polarizing style—grounded in the very division of society between two antagonistic camps—and anger's confrontational action tendencies. This aggressive style does not fit the motives of individuals experiencing fear, who are more likely to put their trust on recognized expertise in order to reduce uncertainty, rather than turning to unfamiliar candidates and policies with unclear consequences (Albertson & Gadarian, 2015; Huddy et al., 2005). Extant research provides evidence in support of the posited alignment between populist attitudes and anger (see Erisen in this Special Issue, Part One; Filsinger, Part Two), with a null or much weaker connection to fear (Gaffney et al., 2018; Rico et al., 2017, 2020). I therefore expect that populist attitudes will be primarily associated with anger (H4).

Given the ideological ubiquity of populist rhetoric, there are few reasons to think that the prevalence of anger for the endorsement of populist attitudes should vary based on people's left-right identification. One of populism's major strengths lies in its ability to articulate and unite a great variety of disparate grievances under a common, evocative discourse drawing an antagonistic division between the good people and the corrupt elite. This is feasible to the extent that the core elements of this framing, the people and the elite, serve as "empty signifiers" whose specific contents are provided by different constituencies in line with their particular demands and general ideological orientations (Laclau, 2005; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013). Similarly, the effects of emotional reactions on populist attitudes should not depend on the type of threat eliciting them. As noted above, threats enhance ideological beliefs to the point that they afford to address

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the problem at hand—that is, in so far as they are "relevant to the problem needed to be 'fixed'" (Lambert et al., 2019, p. 150). At least in the context of political issues, it is hard not to picture a narrative blaming an elite for mistreating the benevolent people. Populism is potentially relevant to "fix" any societal problem perceived as an injustice. Therefore, I expect that the association between emotions and populist attitudes will be unrelated to either individuals' ideological identification (H5) or the type of threat (H6).

Method

The analysis draws on an online survey of 3,031 Spanish adults conducted by Qualtrics in September-October of 2018 using quota sampling to approximately match Spain's population statistics in terms of sex, age, and education.[1] In recent times, Spain has seen the emergence of two relevant populist parties on opposite sides of the political spectrum: the radical left *Podemos* and the radical right *Vox*. Whereas *Vox*'s discourse features prototypical anti-immigrant, authoritarian, and nationalist elements (Mendes & Dennison, 2021; Turnbull-Dugarte, 2019), *Podemos*'s focus on the expansion of welfare and political rights confers its message a highly inclusionary character (Font et al., 2021). Hence anti-establishment rhetoric is not restricted to a specific political party but exhibits different ideological flavors.[2] This prevents populist attitudes from becoming cognitively associated with anti-immigration attitudes in voters' minds, which would obscure the empirical distinction between them (Bonikowski & Zhang, 2023).

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[1] Twelve cases were dropped because of missing data on one or more of the variables used in the analyses.

[2] Populist and anti-immigration attitudes are only weakly correlated in the present study ($r = 0.10$).

Anti-immigration attitudes were assessed using three bipolar items, each capturing a specific dimension (cultural, economic, welfare) of immigration. For each item, respondents were first asked to choose between opposite statements (e.g., "Immigrants have a negative [vs. positive] impact on the economy;" see Online Appendix A for question wording). Respondents were then asked how much (very much, somewhat, a little) they agreed with the chosen option. The answers to each of these pairs of questions were combined to obtain six-point scales, with higher scores denoting stronger anti-immigrant attitudes ($\alpha = 0.68$).

Populist attitudes were measured using six items taken from Castanho Silva et al.'s (2019) survey instrument. Three of the items are designed to capture anti-elitism (e.g., "The government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves"). The other three items tap people-centrism (e.g., "Politicians should always listen closely to the problems of the people"). Responses were provided on five-point Likert scales ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" ($\alpha = 0.69$).

Affective reactions were assessed with respect to the respondents' perceived most important problem. Asking about the feelings elicited by what each individual respondent considers to be the main issue in the country allows variation in threat type while also keeping the stimulus similarly "threatening" across the sample. Respondents were provided a list of 13 problems (see Figure 1), selected based on results of the open-ended "most important problem" questions regularly included in the monthly polls of the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* at the time the study was fielded.[3] Emotions about the

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[3] This question also included an open-ended option that allowed to name some "Other problem." Only 0.8 percent of the sample selected such option.

selected problem were measured on five-point scales ranging from "not at all" to "very much." An overall score of anger was created combining the responses to the *enfado* (anger) and *rabia* (rage) items ($\alpha = 0.81$), while overall fear combined *miedo* (fear) and *ansiedad* (anxiety) ($\alpha = 0.69$).

The "most important problem" question was also used to identify the type of threat perceived by respondents. Given that some of the options were picked by relatively small number of participants, individual problems were grouped into five grand categories: economic (unemployment, precarious work, the economy), cultural (immigration, Spanish-Catalan relations), welfare (pensions, health, education, housing), political corruption, and a residual category with the remaining issues. This variable was then entered into the statistical models as a series of dummy variables, with economic problems as the reference category.

Ideological identification has proved to be a key psychological anchor of Spanish voters' political attitudes and behaviors (Fraile & Hernández, 2020; Gunther & Montero, 2001). Left-right self-placement was used to gauge this core political predisposition. Participants were asked to position themselves on a scale from 0 ("left") to 10 ("right"). To allow for nonlinear relationships, responses were grouped into five categories: far-left (0 to 2 on the original scale), center-left (3-4), center (5), center-right (6-7), and far right (8-10). These are included in the analyses as dummy variables, with the center as the baseline category.

The models include controls for age, sex, and level of education (less than secondary, secondary, or tertiary). All variables except age (in years) were rescaled to range from 0

to 1. Descriptive statistics for the variables used in the analyses are reported in Table B1 of the Online Appendix.

To examine the similarities and dissimilarities between the emotional correlates of anti-immigration attitudes and populist attitudes, I ran a series of OLS models with the same specifications for each outcome variable. The first group of models assesses the average (unconditional) association between emotional reactions and the two attitudes. Next, the relationships are allowed to vary across ideological groups and types of perceived threat by including separate interaction terms between left-right self-placement and the most important problem, on the one hand, and each of anger and fear, on the other. To ease the interpretation of the interaction models, I plot the marginal effects of anger and fear across ideological identification and type of threat (Brambor et al., 2006).

Results

Figure 1 presents the results of the most important problem question along with the average levels of anger and fear evoked by each of them. Political corruption was the most frequently mentioned problem (26.6%), followed by unemployment (18.6%), precarious work (14.2%), the relationship between Catalonia and Spain (10.2%), and the economy (7.8%). Next came immigration (4.6%), which was nearly at par with gender-based violence (4.3%). Interestingly, feelings of anger stand out as more prevalent than feelings of fear across all problems. This may be due to the wording of the question, which asks about "the most important problem *in Spain*", conferring it an impersonal social character that might have encouraged the expression of anger over fear. Indeed, research on intergroup threat finds that group threats are more likely to lead to anger,

while individual threats are more likely to lead to fear (Stephan et al., 2009). Also noteworthy is the fact that levels of expressed fear are more variable across problems than those of anger, with gender-based violence and unemployment showing the highest scores, the lowest being for corruption and the Catalan crisis. Overall, the anger lead over fear tends to be larger for cultural and especially political (i.e. corruption) issues, compared to economic and welfare issues.

[Figure 1]

Table 1 shows the unconditional relationship of anger and fear with anti-immigrant and populist attitudes. Both anger and fear are positively associated with anti-immigration attitudes. These relationships persist after adjusting for left-right self-placement and type of threat, but the link with anger increases substantially compared to that of fear. As expected, anger shows a strong positive association with populist attitudes, while fear shows a weak negative association that becomes statistically insignificant once ideology and threat type are controlled for (H4). As for other predictors, anti-immigrant attitudes are more prevalent among right-wing respondents and those who mention cultural issues as the most important problem, as well as among the older and less educated. Left-wing respondents, those who mention political corruption, and older respondents are more likely to endorse populist attitudes. Somewhat surprisingly, women are slightly more prone to express both anti-immigration and populist attitudes.

[Table 1]

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Figure 2 shows how anger and fear are connected to anti-immigration and populist attitudes across ideological groups, as estimated by the interaction models in Table C1 of the Online Appendix. The joint tests for the interactions indicate that the relationship between anti-immigration attitudes and each of the emotions varies significantly across left-right self-placement, Anger: $F(4, 2996) = 5.66$, $p < 0.001$; Fear: $F(4, 2996) = 3.01$, $p = 0.017$. As shown in Figure 2, the association with anger increases gradually as respondents move toward the right end of the continuum. The model predicts that, among respondents on the far right, those with the highest levels of anger will score 0.334 points more in anti-immigration attitudes than those with the lowest anger. Among respondents on the center and far left, by contrast, differences associated with varying levels anger are not statistically different from zero. Conversely, the relationship between prejudice and fear is positive and significant on the center and the center left—if not on the far left—but negative and marginally significant ($p = 0.068$) on the far right. These results are thus mostly consistent with the prediction that intolerance's alignment with right-wing identity would increase with anger and decrease with fear. As expected, feelings of anger show a stronger correlation with anti-immigration attitudes among those who, given their ideological identification, are more prone to be prejudiced (H1), whereas feelings of fear do (albeit to a lower extent) among those less so predisposed (H2).

[Figure 2]

On the other hand, the association between anger and populist attitudes is positive and statistically significant irrespective of respondents' left-right placement, the interaction not being statistically significant, $F(4, 2996) = 0.18$, $p = 0.949$. The relationship is substantive and equally strong across all ideological groups. Compared to respondents

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expressing no anger, those with the greatest level of anger score on average between 0.213 and 0.246 points higher on the anti-immigration scale. Conversely, from left to right the association between fear and populism is not significantly different from zero. The test of the interaction points to slight differences across the ideological spectrum, $F(4, 2996) = 2.50$, $p = 0.040$, and indeed there appears to be a small gradient in the relationship, from positive on the left to negative on the right. However, the pattern is far from consistent, and the associations are weak and not statistically significant. In any event, populist attitudes' association with anger clearly outweighs in size that with fear. Results thus support the expectation of a strong link between anger and populism irrespective of ideological identification (H5).

Figure 3 shows the association between emotional reactions and the two attitudes across types of perceived threat, as estimated by the interaction models in Table C2. The joint test indicates that the relationship between anger and anti-immigration attitudes varies significantly with threat type, $F(4, 2996) = 2.72$, $p < 0.05$. As expected, anger's relationship with negative attitudes toward immigrants is largest for respondents who mention cultural issues as the most important problem. Further, although the terms of the interaction between fear and main perceived problem are not jointly significant, $F(4, 2996) = 1.33$, $p = 0.254$, the marginal effects plot reveals a significant association for those who mention cultural threats. To a lesser extent, outgroup intolerance also appears to be associated with anger—but not fear—when elicited by economic issues. Thus, although some of the estimates are associated with considerable uncertainty, the evidence points in the direction of a relatively stronger and more consistent connection between

anti-immigrant attitudes and emotional reactions to cultural threats, as compared to emotions evoked by non-cultural threats (H3).[4]

[Figure 3]

On the other hand, the estimates shown in Figure 3 provide ample support for the notion that populist attitudes are primarily related to anger irrespective of the type of threat. They also suggest that the relationship varies substantially across issues, $F(4, 2996) = 6.45$, $p < 0.001$, with culturally-related anger being less strongly—albeit still significantly—associated with populism than anger about other problems, particularly welfare. Conversely, the relationship with fear is indistinguishably insignificant, no matter which problem evokes it, $F(4, 2996) = 0.53$, $p = 0.717$. Results thus lend strong support for the expectation that the endorsement of populist beliefs would be associated with feelings of anger independently of the kind of perceived threat (H6).

Discussion

Following recent calls to more clearly distinguish populism from the ideological discourses with which populism is frequently combined, this paper attempted to examine

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[4] A more direct test of H3 is provided by replicating the model with threat type operationalized as a dummy variable comparing cultural threats (coded as 1) with the whole set of other, non-cultural, threats (0). This model yields a positive and significant interaction between anger and threat type (B = 0.152, SE = 0.053, $p < 0.01$), confirming that anger evoked by cultural threats is more strongly associated with anti-immigrant attitudes than anger evoked by non-cultural threats. The interaction with fear is also positive but smaller and only marginally significant (B = 0.091, SE = 0.047, $p = 0.052$).

how fear and anger relate to populist and nativist attitudes. Taken together, the analyses support the underlying supposition that these attitudinal domains indeed feature rather distinct affective patterns, at least as far as these two emotions are concerned.

Consistent with affective intelligence theory, results showed that the way anti-immigration attitudes are associated with anger and fear varies consistently with individuals' ideological identification. Anger was unrelated to anti-immigration attitudes among respondents on the left but strongly related to them among those on the right. By contrast, fear was unrelated to intolerance on the far right but positively linked to it among respondents on the center and the center left. The findings thus suggest two ways by which these emotions are associated with heightened anti-immigration attitudes: feelings of anger correlate with negative views of immigrants among those who are already more inclined to oppose them given their ideological identity, while feelings of fear correlate with immigrant animosity among those less predisposed. The pattern of variations by threat type was also largely supportive of expectations. Compared with emotions evoked by other problems, culturally-based anger and fear were more strongly associated with anti-immigration attitudes, even if differences across kinds of threat were generally small and subject to considerable uncertainty.

Turning to populist attitudes, the analyses corroborated the prevalence of anger over fear, irrespective of ideological identification or type of threat. Populism was found to be as connected with feelings of anger on the left as on the right, just as it was unrelated to feelings of fear. This same pattern was observed across types of threat, although it was surprising to find that the association was somewhat weaker when anger was elicited by cultural issues. This might be due in part to the fact that such threats establish hostility

primarily toward a horizontally-defined outgroup of "dangerous others" (e.g., immigrants, Catalans/Spaniards), which is not as overtly connected to the vertical antagonism emphasized in populist narratives.

Overall, the present study underscored the analytical value of differentiating populism from nativism, highlighting important variations in how they relate to anger and fear (for similar approaches, see Abadi et al. in this Special Issue, Part One; Lindholm et al., Part Two). These distinct patterns may easily go overlooked when the analysis is focused on voters' support for far right parties, because in their public discourse the down/up antagonism becomes entangled with, and subordinated to, an in/out distinction where the people are defined primarily in exclusionary terms (Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017). Indeed, the pattern found here for anti-immigration attitudes is largely consistent with the findings reported in studies examining the role of fear and anger in support of right-wing populist parties (e.g., Vasilopoulos et al., 2019) and authoritarian policies (Marcus et al., 2019; Vasilopoulos et al., 2018).

Obviously, the present study suffers from several limitations. Because it relies on cross-sectional observational data, the results provide no evidence for a causal link between emotions and attitudes. Claims about the direction of causality between these phenomena as well as about the potential role of ideological identification and type of threat will require experimental and longitudinal designs. Future research should also explore the generalizability of the present results to other contexts, particularly those where, unlike in the Spanish case, the radical right does not coexist with relevant left-wing populist forces, hence bundling anti-elite discourse with ethno-nationalism (Bonikowski & Zhang, 2023). Likewise, one further progression of this work would be to go beyond anger and

fear, exploring the relationship of nativist and populist attitudes with a wider range of discrete emotions.

An additional shortcoming was the measurement of threat, for at least two reasons. First, while inquiring about emotional reactions to whatever respondents consider to be the country's most important problem has certain advantages over questions focusing on single events, this strategy allows only gross categorizations of threat. Any single issue might encompass different dimensions at the same time. Besides having a cultural component, immigration also has an economic side, a welfare side, and a security side. Hence, distinctions based on this kind of data are necessarily arbitrary and imperfect. Second, the survey question restricted answers to national (and consequently politicized) issues, which are more likely to be ascribed to political elites as well as shaped by them, leaving out more personal considerations. As noted, this might have facilitated the expression of anger over fear. These caveats must be borne in mind when interpreting the present study's results concerning threat types and should also encourage further efforts to identify different kinds of threats and to assess variations in their relationship with political attitudes.

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Table 1

Association of Anger and Fear with Anti-Immigration and Populist Attitudes

	(1) Anti-immigration	(2) Anti-immigration	(3) Populism	(4) Populism
Anger	0.081***	0.122***	0.264***	0.235***
	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.013)	(0.014)
Fear	0.059**	0.058**	-0.022*	-0.006
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.011)	(0.012)
Ideology (ref. Center)				
Far left		-0.144***		0.033***
		(0.013)		(0.008)
Center left		-0.104***		0.004
		(0.012)		(0.008)
Center right		0.036*		-0.026**
		(0.014)		(0.009)
Far right		0.083***		-0.018
		(0.015)		(0.010)
Main problem (ref. Economic)				
Cultural		0.080***		-0.006
		(0.014)		(0.009)
Corruption		-0.000		0.023**
		(0.012)		(0.007)
Welfare		-0.006		-0.026**
		(0.016)		(0.010)
Other		-0.057***		-0.021*
		(0.017)		(0.010)
Female	0.017	0.025**	0.025***	0.023***
	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Age	0.003***	0.003***	0.002***	0.002***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Education (ref. Lower)				
Secondary	-0.048***	-0.048***	0.000	0.000
	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Higher	-0.063***	-0.065***	-0.001	0.001
	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Constant	0.409***	0.412***	0.500***	0.514***
	(0.024)	(0.025)	(0.014)	(0.015)
Observations	3,019	3,019	3,019	3,019

Note. Unstandardized OLS regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 1

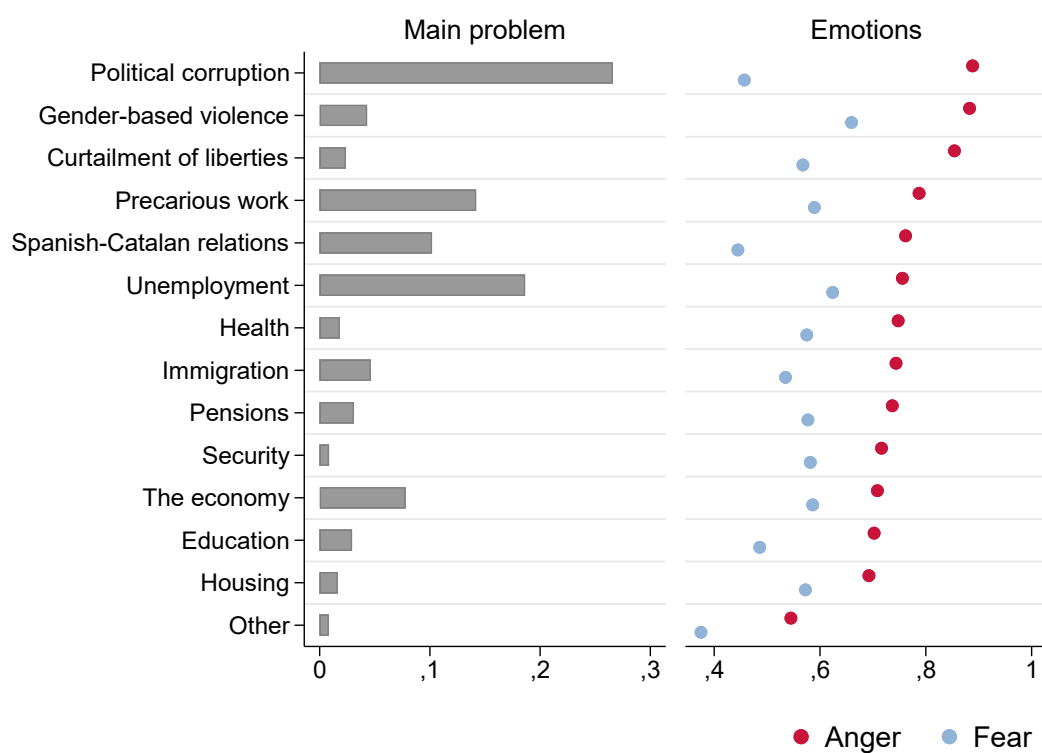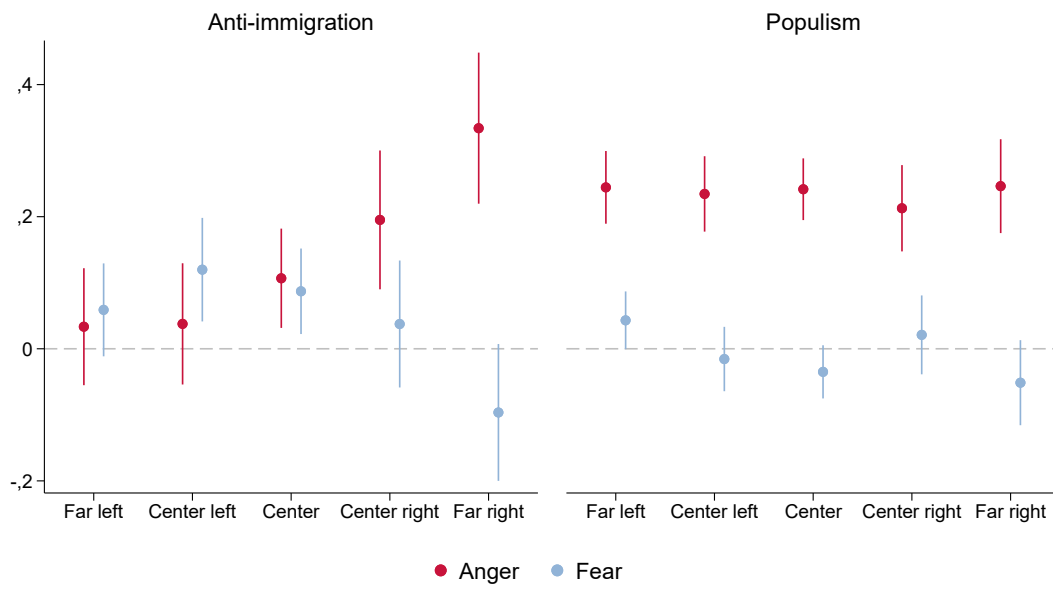*Perceived Threat (Most Important Problem) and Associated Levels of Anger and Fear*

Figure 2

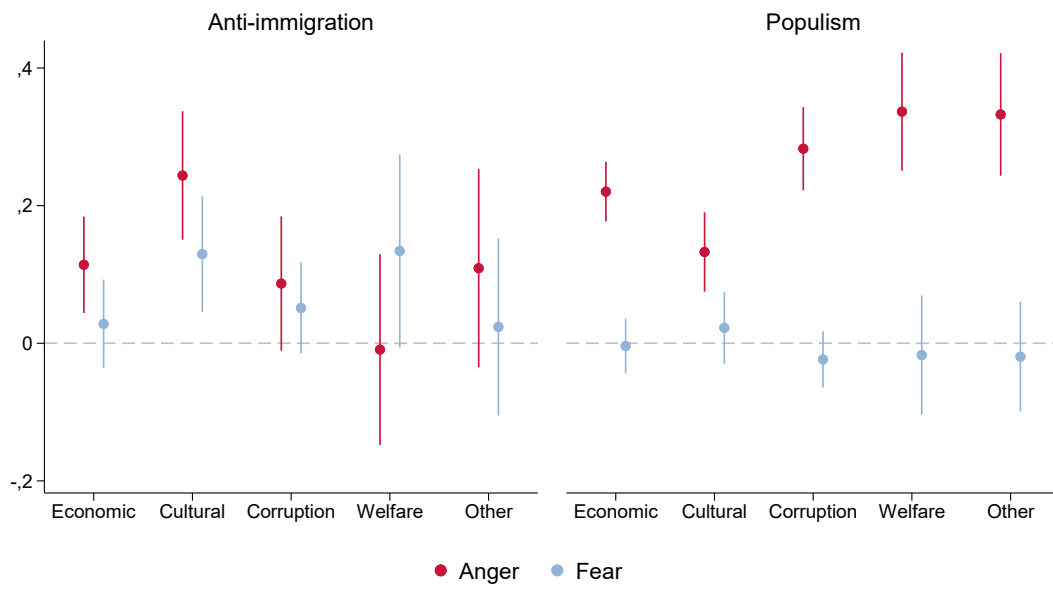*Association between Attitudes and Emotions by Ideological Identification*

Note. Predicted marginal effects with 95% CI, as estimated in Table C1.

Figure 3

Association between Attitudes and Emotions by Type of Threat

Note. Predicted marginal effects with 95% CI, as estimated in Table C2.

Online Appendix

Ideological identification, type of threat, and differences in how anger and fear relate to anti-immigrant and populist attitudes

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A. Question Wording

Anti-immigration attitudes

Which of these two statements comes closer to your own opinion?

- "Immigrants have a negative impact on the economy" vs. "Immigrants have a positive impact on the economy"
- "It is very important for coexistence that immigrants adopt the culture and customs of the countries where they arrive" vs. "It is not at all important for coexistence that immigrants adopt the culture and customs of the countries where they arrive"
- "Spanish citizens should have priority over immigrants in accessing social benefits and services such as health, education, and housing" vs. "Immigrants should have equal access to social benefits and services such as health, education, and housing"

How much do you agree with this statement? Very much, Somewhat, A little.

Populist attitudes

To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree.

- "The government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves" (Anti-elitism 1)
- "Government officials use their power to try to improve people's lives" (Anti-elitism 2, reversed)
- "Quite a few of the people running the government are crooked" (Anti-elitism 3)
- "Politicians should always listen closely to the problems of the people" (People-centrism 1)
- "Politicians don't have to spend time among ordinary people to do a good job" (People-centrism 2, reversed)

- "The will of the people should be the highest principle in this country's politics" (People-centrism 3)

Perceived threat

What do you think is the most important problem in Spain today? (Options in randomized order)
- Unemployment
- Political corruption
- The relationship between Catalonia and Spain
- Education
- Health
- Precarious work
- Immigration
- Pensions
- Gender-based violence
- Curtailment of liberties
- Housing
- Public safety
- The economy
- Other (please specify)

Emotions

To what extent this problem (selected option) makes you feel…? Very much, Much, Somewhat, A little, Not at all.
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Fear
- Rage

B. Descriptive statistics

Table B1

Descriptive statistics of the variables used in the analyses

Variable	*M*	*SD*	Min.	Max.	Observations
Anti-immigration	0.610	0.264	0	1	3,019
Populism	0.776	0.165	0,083	1	3,019
Anger	0.794	0.229	0	1	3,019
Fear	0.540	0.265	0	1	3,019
Ideology			0	1	
Far left	0.220	0.414	0	1	3,019
Center-left	0.233	0.423	0	1	3,019
Center (ref.)	0.283	0.450	0	1	3,019
Center-right	0.147	0.355	0	1	3,019
Far right	0.117	0.322	0	1	3,019
Main problem					
Economic (ref.)	0.406	0.491	0	1	3,019
Cultural	0.148	0.356	0	1	3,019
Corruption	0.266	0.442	0	1	3,019
Welfare	0.095	0.294	0	1	3,019
Other	0.084	0.277	0	1	3,019
Female	0.492	0.500	0	1	3,019
Age	41.141	12.097	18	65	3,019
Education					
Lower (ref.)	0.276	0.447	0	1	3,019
Secondary	0.362	0.481	0	1	3,019
Higher	0.362	0.481	0	1	3,019

C. Interaction models

Table C1

Interaction between Emotions and Ideological Identification

	Anti-immigration		Populism	
	b	*SE*	*b*	*SE*
Anger	0.107**	(0.038)	0.242***	(0.024)
Fear	0.087**	(0.033)	-0.035	(0.021)
Ideology (ref. Center)				
Far left	-0.067	(0.047)	-0.013	(0.030)
Center left	-0.065	(0.046)	-0.001	(0.029)
Center right	-0.004	(0.052)	-0.034	(0.032)
Far right	0.006	(0.053)	-0.012	(0.033)
Interaction Ideology × Anger				
Far left × Anger	-0.073	(0.058)	0.003	(0.036)
Center left × Anger	-0.069	(0.059)	-0.007	(0.037)
Center right × Anger	0.088	(0.065)	-0.029	(0.040)
Far right × Anger	0.227**	(0.069)	0.005	(0.043)
Interaction Ideology × Fear				
Far left × Fear	-0.028	(0.048)	0.078**	(0.030)
Center left × Fear	0.033	(0.051)	0.019	(0.031)
Center right × Fear	-0.050	(0.058)	0.056	(0.036)
Far right × Fear	-0.183**	(0.062)	-0.016	(0.038)
Main problem (ref. Economic)				
Cultural	0.078***	(0.014)	-0.005	(0.009)
Corruption	0.005	(0.012)	0.023**	(0.007)
Welfare	-0.006	(0.016)	-0.025*	(0.010)
Other	-0.054**	(0.017)	-0.021*	(0.011)
Female	0.026**	(0.009)	0.023***	(0.006)
Age	0.003***	(0.000)	0.002***	(0.000)
Education (ref. Lower)				
Secondary	-0.047***	(0.011)	0.000	(0.007)
Higher	-0.064***	(0.011)	0.001	(0.007)
Constant	0.405***	(0.034)	0.524***	(0.021)
Observations	3,019		3,019	

Note. Unstandardized OLS regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses.

$^{*} p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$, $^{***} p < 0.001$

Table C2

Interaction between Emotions and Threat Type

	Anti-immigration		Populism	
	b	*SE*	*b*	*SE*
Anger	0.117**	(0.036)	0.216***	(0.022)
Fear	0.025	(0.033)	-0.004	(0.020)
Main problem (ref. Economic)				
Cultural	-0.072	(0.045)	0.046	(0.028)
Corruption	0.007	(0.050)	-0.023	(0.031)
Welfare	0.025	(0.053)	-0.105**	(0.033)
Other	-0.049	(0.061)	-0.108**	(0.038)
Interaction Threat × Anger				
Cultural × Anger	0.130*	(0.059)	-0.085*	(0.037)
Corruption × Anger	-0.026	(0.061)	0.065	(0.038)
Welfare × Anger	-0.129	(0.079)	0.122*	(0.049)
Other × Anger	-0.010	(0.081)	0.119*	(0.050)
Interaction Threat × Fear				
Cultural × Fear	0.106*	(0.054)	0.026	(0.033)
Corruption × Fear	0.026	(0.047)	-0.021	(0.029)
Welfare × Fear	0.108	(0.078)	-0.017	(0.049)
Other × Fear	0.000	(0.073)	-0.016	(0.045)
Ideology (ref. Center)				
Far left	-0.144***	(0.013)	0.034***	(0.008)
Center left	-0.104***	(0.012)	0.004	(0.008)
Center right	0.033*	(0.014)	-0.024**	(0.009)
Far right	0.080***	(0.015)	-0.015	(0.010)
Female	0.027**	(0.009)	0.021***	(0.006)
Age	0.003***	(0.000)	0.002***	(0.000)
Education (ref. Lower)				
Secondary	-0.049***	(0.011)	-0.000	(0.007)
Higher	-0.066***	(0.011)	0.001	(0.007)
Constant	0.437***	(0.030)	0.528***	(0.019)
Observations	3,019		3,019	

Note. Unstandardized OLS regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$