

# Populism

Seminar: "How do I lie with statistics?"

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Ulrich Köthe

Ayşegül Peközsoy

Heidelberg University

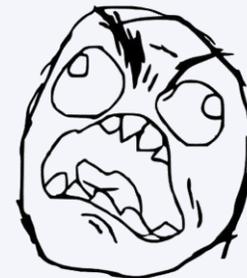


# populism

*noun*

*/'pɒpjəlɪzəm/*

a type of politics that claims to represent the opinions and wishes of ordinary people

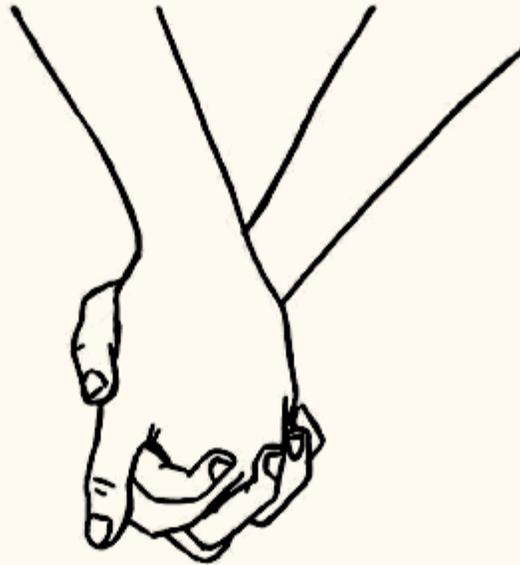


# “The Emotional Underpinnings of Populism: How **Anger** and **Fear** Affect Populist Attitudes”



by Guillem Rico, Marc Guinjoan and Eva Anduiza

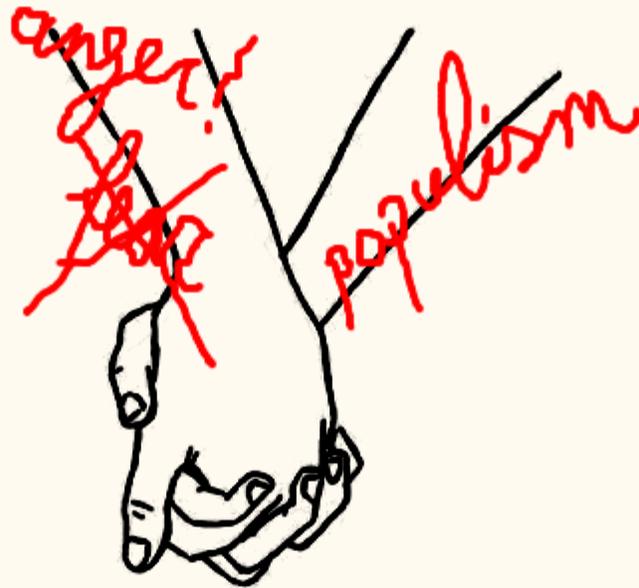
- Which negative emotion fuels people's support for populism?
- Is it fear or anger?



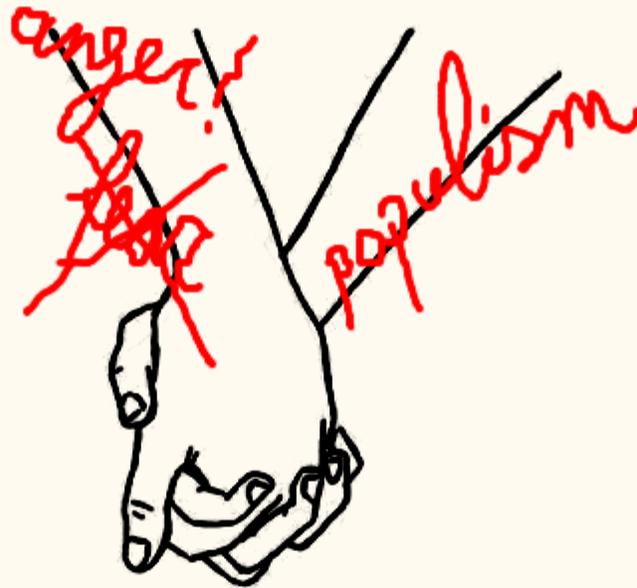
- Which negative emotion fuels people's support for populism?
- Is it fear or anger?



- Which negative emotion fuels people's support for populism?
- Is it fear or anger?



- Which negative emotion fuels people's support for populism?
- It must be anger



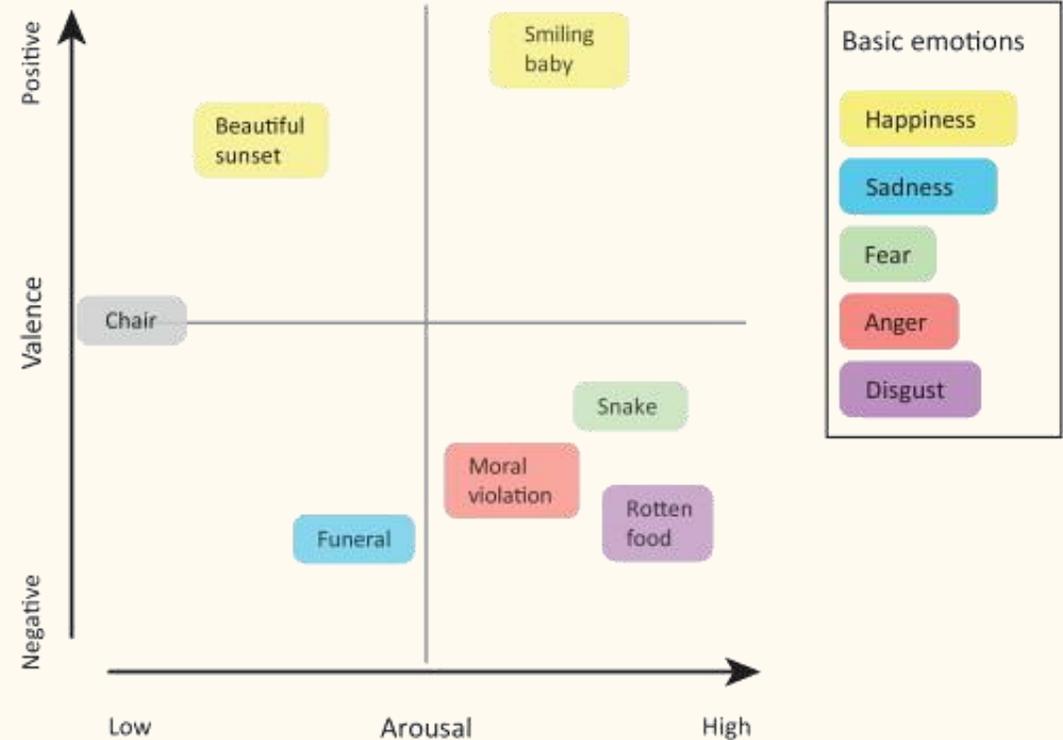
- Arguments based on the **appraisal theories** of Lazarus, Smith & Ellsworth and Roseman

- Arguments based on the appraisal theories of Lazarus, Smith & Ellsworth and Roseman



differences in assessment of events create distinct discrete emotions that in turn, affect people's judgment.

- Guided by the theory of **affective intelligence**, a dimensional theory of emotions
- Two orthogonal dimensions: **valence** and **arousal**
- Emotions with the same valence tend to correlate



TRENDS in Cognitive Sciences

Lazarus, Smith & Ellsworth and Roseman's proposal:

Emotions can be distinguished on the basis of **three dimensions**

- **Certainty:** "Omg, is this (negative event) really happening rn?"
- **Responsibility:** "Who did this!?"
- **Efficacy:** "Could I have done something about it?"

## Anger

- A definite threat to personal rewards
- As a consequence of deliberate or negligent behavior
- By an external agent (“I have been wronged!”)

## Fear

- Uncertain threat
- Result of uncontrollable circumstances, no specific agent can be blamed
- “Dunno what to do”

## Anger

- A definite threat to personal rewards
- As a consequence of deliberate or negligent behavior
- By an external agent (“I have been wronged!”)

Anger is also:

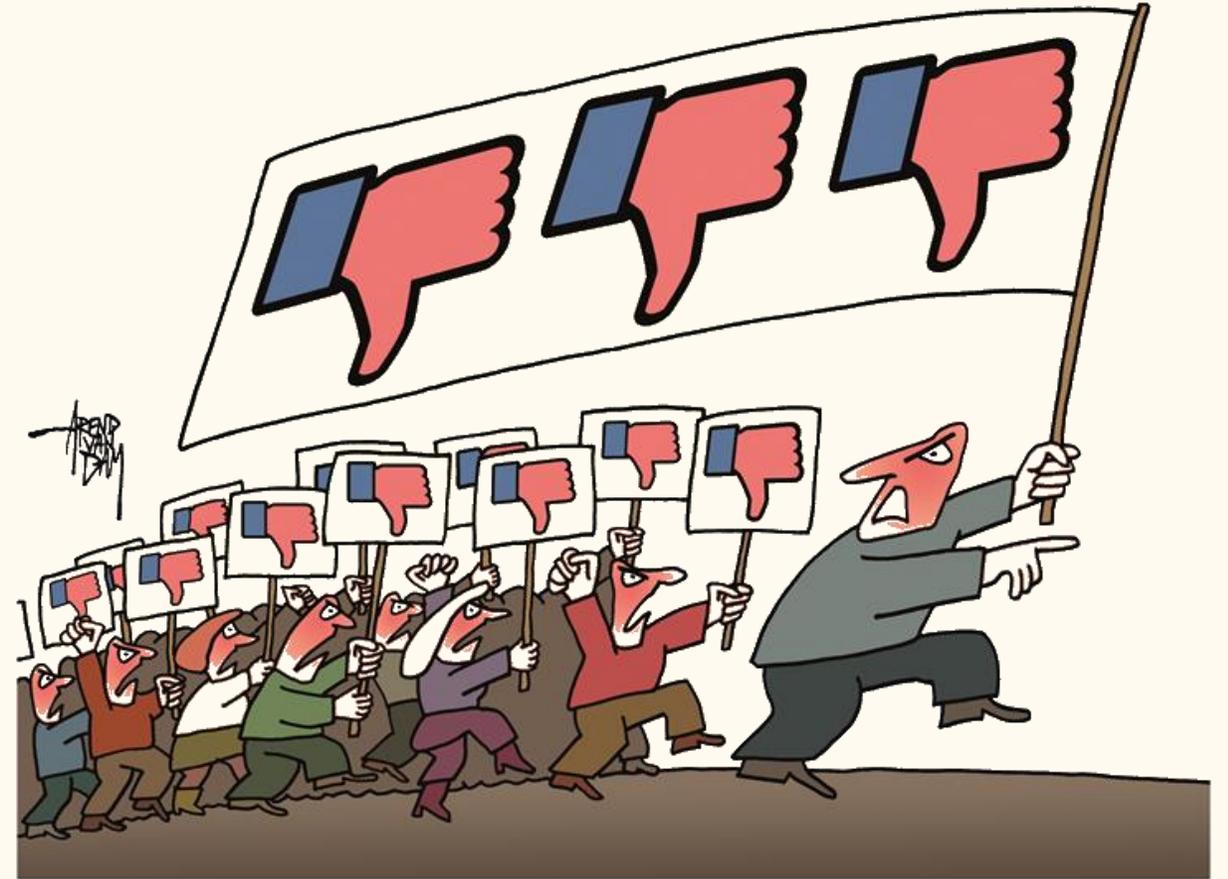
- Accompanied by a sense that one has the capacity to address the situation
- A moral emotion, triggered by unfairness

## Fear

- Uncertain threat
- Result of uncontrollable circumstances, no specific agent can be blamed
- “Dunno what to do”

The reaction of the **angry citizen** is:

- Confrontational
- In favour of prior convictions

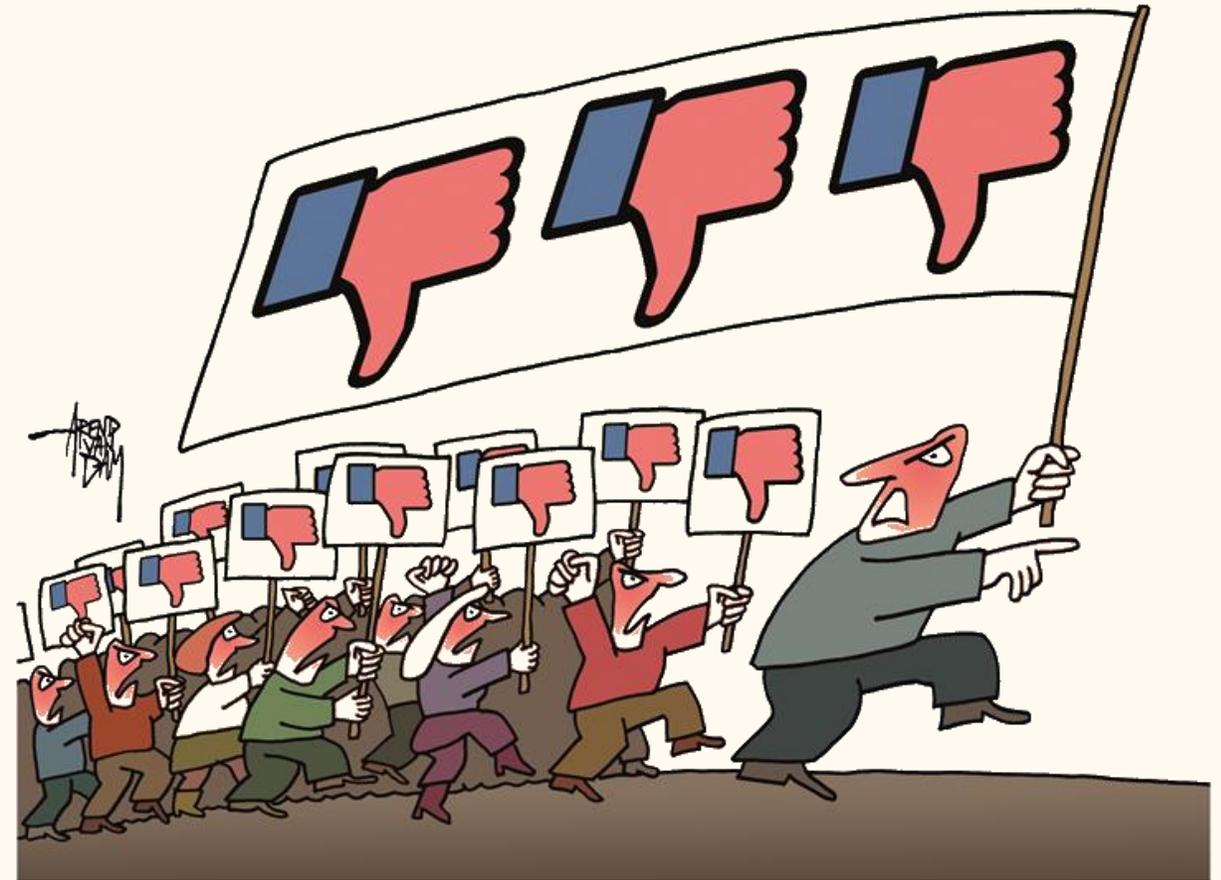


The reaction of the **angry citizen** is:

- Confrontational
- In favour of prior convictions

Anger has been found to boost:

- Political participation and protest
- Support for aggressive policies
- Superficial information processing
- Reliance on prior convictions

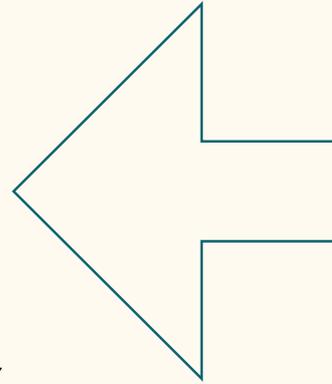


The sense of uncertainty of the **fearful** translates into:

- Increased vigilance
- Information search
- More attentive, systematic processing in judgment making
- Favoring conciliation
- Risk-averse behaviors

The sense of uncertainty of the **fearful** translates into:

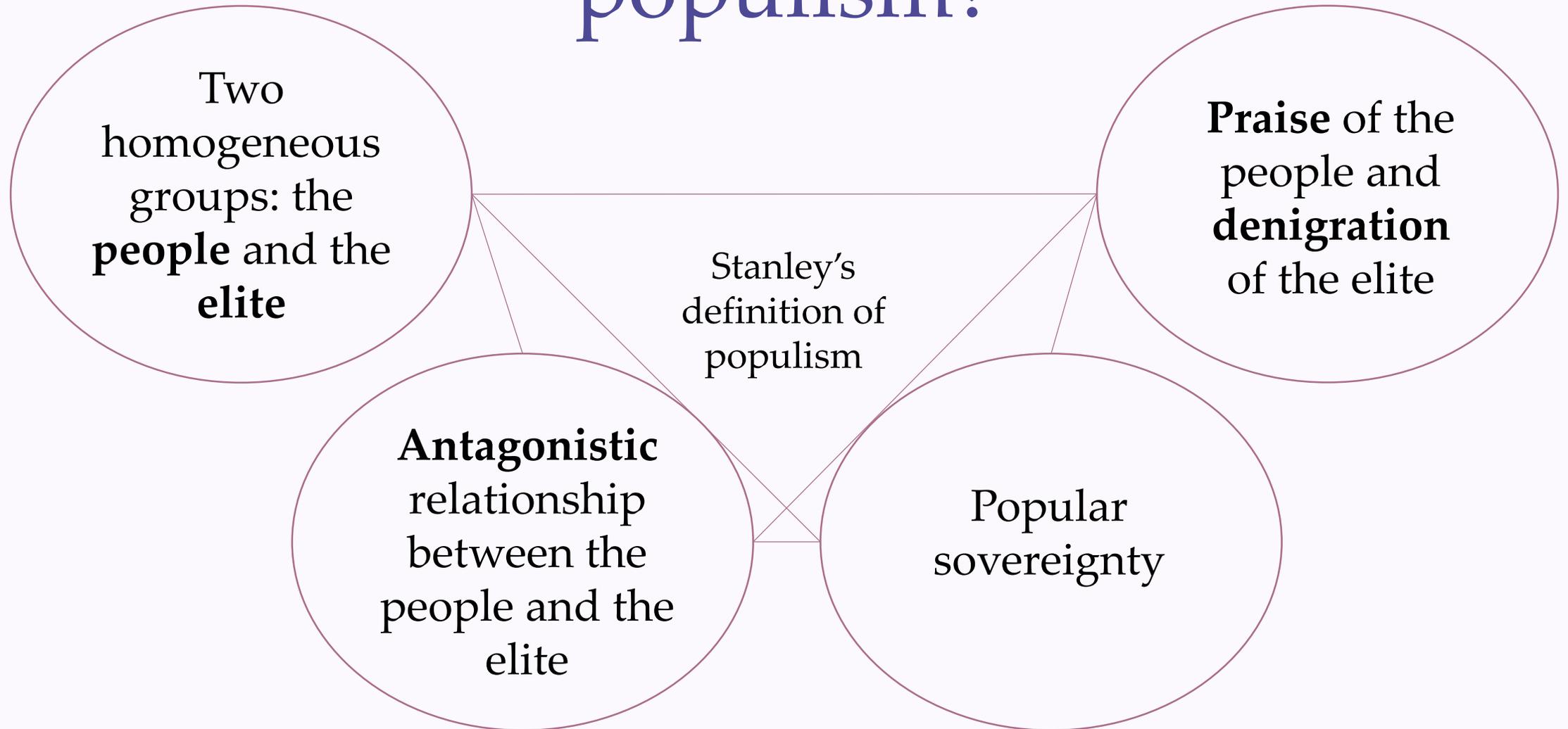
- Increased vigilance
- Information search
- More attentive, systematic processing in judgment making
- Favoring conciliation
- Risk-averse behaviors



Research has shown that:

- Fear promotes citizens' political learning
- Encourages a more careful, less automatic processing of information in decision making.

# So how do these emotions relate to populism?



## Anger

## Populism definition



- A definite threat to personal rewards
- As a consequence of deliberate or negligent behavior
- By an external agent (“I have been wronged!”)

- Two homogeneous groups: the **people** and the **elite**
- **Praise** of the people and **denigration** of the elite
- **Antagonistic** relationship between the people and the elite
- Popular sovereignty



## Anger

- A definite threat to personal rewards
- As a consequence of deliberate or negligent behavior
- By an external agent (“I have been wronged!”)

## Populism definition

- Two homogeneous groups: the **people** and the **elite**
- **Praise** of the people and **denigration** of the elite
- **Antagonistic** relationship between the people and the elite
- Popular sovereignty

## Three Dimensions of Populism:

- Threat to well-being of the country/oneself
- As a consequence of bad policy/corruption which is perceived to be unfair, unjust and morally wrong
- By the elite, usually the government

- Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser: **populist views** often lie **dormant** until circumstances are suitable for their development



- The ideological ubiquity of populist discourse allows it to be embraced by angry voters regardless of their political orientation.
- These dynamics support the authors' expectation that citizens' populist tendencies are driven by anger, not fear.

# Data and Methods

- Online panel surveys of young and middle-aged Spanish residents
- 2014-2016
- Commercial online services and websites
- Quotas for balanced representation
- 1529 respondents
- Unbalanced due to attrition and wave nonresponse
- 38 percent of respondents participated on all three occasions, 28 percent on two occasions, and 34 percent only once

# Historical Background



# Historical Background



- Indignados (“The Outraged”) Movement, an anti-austerity movement
- started in 2011 with spontaneous protests
- high unemployment rates, 4,910,200 unemployed in March 2011
- welfare cuts
- Spanish politicians and corruption
- Capitalism and banks
- Podemos (“We can”) founded in January 2014 by political scientist Pablo Iglesias



Table 1: Measurement of Populist Attitudes

	2014	2015	2016
The politicians in the Spanish parliament need to follow the will of the people	5.7	5.5	5.7
The people, and not politicians, should make our most important policy decisions	5.4	5.1	5.2
The political differences between the elite and the people are larger than the differences among the people	4.8	5.0	5.0
I would rather be represented by a citizen than by a specialized politician	4.8	4.7	4.6
Elected officials talk too much and take too little action	5.9	5.9	6.0
What people call “compromise” in politics is really just selling out on one’s principles	4.0	4.2	4.4
<i>Populist attitudes scale</i>	<i>5.1</i>	<i>5.0</i>	<i>5.1</i>
(N)	(1’071)	(1’014)	(1’040)

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

Table 2: Emotional Reactions to the Economic Crisis

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

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

Table 3: Average Correlations between Emotions

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

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

Table 4: Within-between Random Effects Models of Populist Attitudes

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

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

<sup>+</sup>  $p < 0.1$ , \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$

### Within-between Random Effects Model

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

$i$  : individuals

$t$  : occasions

$y_{it}$  : dependent variable

$x_{it}$  : time-varying independent variables

$z_i$  : time-constant independent variables

$\beta_1$  : within-person effects

$\beta_2, \beta_3$  : between-person effects

# Discussion



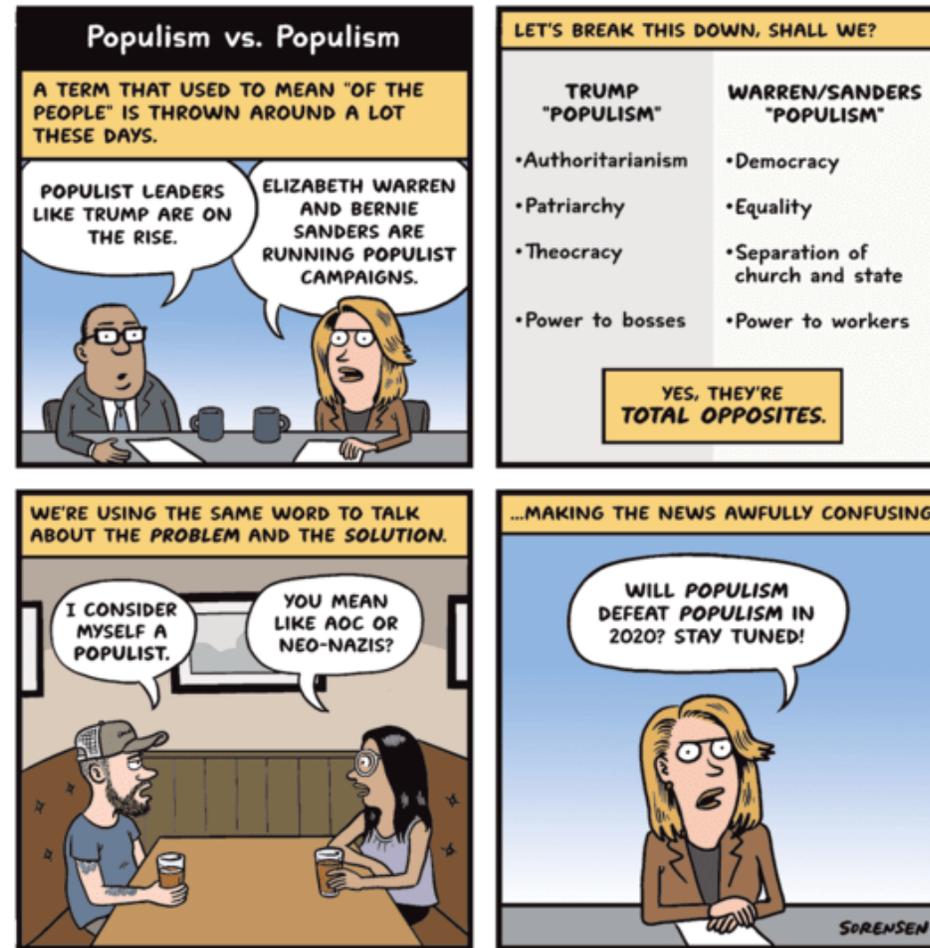
- Results provide evidence supporting the hypothesis that populist attitudes, as far as emotions are concerned, are driven by feelings of anger instead of fear
- Don't serve as a basis for strong causal claims
- However, we cannot rule out the possibility that populist attitudes themselves fuel anger over the crisis by conveying interpretations of economic events in terms of unfairness and external responsibility.
- Populism can trigger anger, yet angry citizens appear to be more receptive to populist discourse.

What's wrong with this  
paper?

# What is Populism

Jan-Werner Müller

# Is Everyone a Populist?



# Pluralism

# Pluralism

Pluralism is the recognition and affirmation of diversity within a political body, which permits the peaceful coexistence of different interests, convictions, and lifestyles

“In addition to being antielitist, populists are always antipluralist. Populists claim that they, and they alone, represent the people.”

We are the people.  
Who are you?

The only important thing is the unification of the people—because the other people don't mean anything.



So what was wrong with  
that paper again?



“

Democracy requires pluralism and the recognition that we need to find fair terms of living together as free, equal, but also irreducibly diverse citizens

**“The people can only appear in the plural.”**

Jürgen Habermas

Populism is not limited to **harmless campaign rhetoric** or a mere protest that burns out as soon as a populist wins power

It poses a real danger against democracy ”



# Populists can govern as populists

- Hijack the state apparatus
- Corruption
- “Mass clientelism”

# How does this differ from **authoritarianism**?

- **Justification** by claiming that **they alone represent the people**;
- This allows populists to admit their practices quite openly. It also explains why revelations of **corruption rarely seem to hurt** populist leaders
- The danger is populism—a degraded form of democracy that promises to make good on democracy's highest ideals

# But who are these “real people”?

- Populists actually rely on a symbolic representation of the “real people”
- “The people themselves” is a fictional entity outside existing democratic procedures, a homogeneous and morally unified body

**But don't populists often demand more referenda?**

# But don't populists often demand more referenda?

- Yes.
- A referendum isn't meant to start an open-ended process of deliberation
- Serves to validate what the populist leader has already discerned to be the genuine popular interest

# Conclusion

## Seven Theses on Populism

1. Populism is neither the authentic part of modern democratic politics nor a kind of pathology caused by irrational citizens. It is the permanent shadow of representative politics.

2. Not everyone who criticizes elites is a populist. In addition to being antielitist, populists are antipluralist. They claim that they and they alone represent the people.

3. It can often seem that populists claim to represent the common good as willed by the people. On closer inspection, it turns out that what matters for populists is a symbolic representation of the “real people” from which the correct policy is then deduced. This renders the political position of a populist immune to empirical refutation. Populists can always play off the “real people” or “silent majority” against elected representatives and the official outcome of a vote.

4. While populists often call for referenda, such exercises are not about initiating open-ended processes of democratic will-formation among citizens. Populists simply wish to be confirmed in what they have already determined the will of the real people to be. Populism is not a path to more participation in politics.

5. Populists can govern, and they will engage in occupying the state, mass clientelism and corruption, and the suppression of anything like a critical civil society. These practices find an explicit moral justification in the populist political imagination and hence can be admitted openly. Populists can also write constitutions; these will be partisan or “exclusive” constitutions designed to keep populists in power.

6. Populists should be criticized for what they are—a real danger to democracy. But that does not mean that one should not engage them in political debate. Talking with populists is not the same as talking like populists. One can take the problems they raise seriously without accepting the ways in which they frame these problems.

7. Populism is not a corrective to liberal democracy in the sense of bringing politics “closer to the people” or even reasserting popular sovereignty, as is sometimes claimed. But it can be useful in making it clear that parts of the population really are unrepresented.

# Literature

- Rico et al. (2017): "The Emotional Underpinnings of Populism: How Anger and Fear Affect Populist Attitudes"
- Akkerman, A., C. Mudde and A. Zaslove (2014): "How Populist Are the People? Measuring Populist Attitudes in Voters"
- Stanley, B. (2008): "The Thin Ideology of Populism"
- Jan-Werner Müller (2016): "What is Populism?"

Suggested further reading:

- Ece Temelkuran (2019): "How to Lose a Country: The 7 Steps from Democracy to Dictatorship"