

**From Specific Worries to Generalized Anger: The Emotional Dynamics of Right-Wing
Political Populism**

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Abstract

Right-wing populist parties have transformed the political landscape across many advanced, democratic economies. Their continued strength has been linked to an increasing sense of both economic and cultural insecurity, driven by the conjunction of economic deregulation, globalization, and increased socio-cultural competition. However, socioeconomic factors alone do not fully capture the dynamics of populist activation and support. In this chapter, we argue that emotional processes are a fundamental component that underpins support for right-wing populist parties. We argue that one ignored mechanism of “ressentiment” explains how support for right-wing populists can transform specific and targeted negative emotions, such as insecurity and worries, into generalized anger and resentment. We furthermore propose that this generalized anger does not only create a new political identity of shared grievance, it also furthers political polarization and leads to further strengthening of a newly found right-wing populist lifeworld.

Keywords: populism, Germany, emotions, resentment, anger, anxiety

Introduction

The success of right-wing populist (RRP) parties in Europe and across the globe has spurred research in a range of social science disciplines. This research aims at understanding a broad spectrum of questions related to the success of right-wing populist parties, such as: Who is the populist right? What is their agenda? What are their strategies? Who votes populist? And why? Amongst the different conceptual and theoretical approaches at addressing these questions, the role of emotions has recently attracted increasing attention. This is certainly because emotions are said to be an essential element of populist discourse, but also because emotions have become increasingly important in the analysis of political phenomena more generally. Regarding populism, and in particular right-wing populism, two strands of research are especially noteworthy.

First, scholars have started to investigate the association between emotions and right-wing populism from a ‘demand’ side and looked at the emotions of the electorate as predictors of support for populist movements and right-wing populist parties (e.g. Cramer, 2016; Hochschild, 2016; Rico et al., 2017). This research is based on long-standing empirical insights into the motivating forces of feelings and emotions and their relationship with cognition and political decision-making. Some have argued that there exists a more or less direct relationship between certain emotions and populist electoral outcomes, for example through processes of frame resonance (e.g., Bonikowski, 2017). In particular, emotions such as anger, fear, resentment, shame and pride are supposed to be dominant in certain parts of the electorate and that these emotions tend to motivate populist support (e.g., Betz, 2002). Others have suggested that it is much less these (and other) emotions in general that predict right-wing populist support, but rather emotions that have specific targets, in particular events and circumstance perceived as threats to one’s well-being (e.g., Marx, 2020; Rico et al., 2017). Not anger, fear or resentment in general are likely motivators of right-wing support, but the

specific intentional directedness of these (and other) emotions. In this perspective, the targets of emotions closely correspond to salient political cleavages, in particular those addressed by right-wing populists. This includes economic downturn, immigration, crime, and welfare.

Second, research has investigated the ‘supply’ side of right-wing populism, which typically includes political strategies, arguments, discourse, and rhetoric. Populism, from this vantage point, is also often defined as a ‘political style’. Although emotions are essential ingredients of politics as such, populism is supposed to be characterized by a political style that is highly ‘emotionalized’, specifically geared towards eliciting emotions amongst the electorate, and in that capacity is also suspected to stand in opposition to the exchange of facts and arguments. To further define the populist political style with regard to emotions, scholars have investigated speeches, interviews, party manifestos, and campaigns and uncovered a broad range of linguistic and visual devices that express, represent and elicit emotions (e.g., Breeze, 2019; Matthes & Schmuck, 2017; Wodak, 2015; Wirz, 2018). Populist parties use these strategies with the goal of systematically altering, even if only in the short run, the emotions of the electorate in a way that is conducive to political mobilization, soliciting support and votes.

Looking at these two perspectives, it is evident that the distinction is mainly an analytical one. Emotions that stimulate right-wing populist support might be prevalent in a population for individual (e.g., personality, gender, age), structural (e.g., occupation, status, income), and cultural (e.g., lifestyles, cultural consumptions) reasons. Likewise, exposure to populist discourse might generate these emotions or amplify/attenuate existing ones. Although there is ample research on emotions from a demand- and supply-side perspective, no existing studies have yet systematically looked at the role of general emotions vs. emotions aimed at specific targets nor looked into the dynamic nature of emotions and right-wing support. The present chapter fills this void. Based on

existing theories and research on emotions and right-wing populist support, we investigate whether emotions generally and emotions with specific targets predict right-wing populist support, and whether support for right-wing parties in turn increases the likelihood to experience general emotions as well as emotions with specific targets. Our empirical analysis is motivated by both, existing theory and pragmatic considerations. We focus on two emotions that have been shown to be associated with political mobilization very generally, and with right-wing support more specifically, namely anger and fear. For these emotions, longitudinal data are available that allow for the testing of our hypotheses of the dynamic nature of emotions and right-wing support. Regarding specific targets, we look at worries, understood as specific emotional orientations, about prominent political issues and cleavages in right-wing politics and discourse: immigration, crime, employment, and the economy, contrasting them with worries less commonly associated with right-wing populism.

Emotions and Right-Wing Political Populism

Emotions as predictors of right-wing populist support

In this section, we review existing research on those emotions that are presumed to motivate support for radical right-wing populism and also discuss some of these emotions as intergroup emotions. Existing research has identified two main clusters of negative emotions behind the rise of right-wing populist parties and movements: feelings of fear associated with insecurity, powerlessness, and *déclassement* on the one hand, and anger, resentment, indignation, and hate, on the other.

Feelings of fear, insecurity, and powerlessness can be understood as closely tied to social structural and cultural changes in Western societies, such as modernization, globalization, and economic deregulation, that have increased economic precariousness, thus creating opportunities

for fears of losing social status and established living standards and of becoming part of a stigmatized group, such as the unemployed. So far, low- or medium-skilled blue-collar, predominantly male workers whose traditional jobs in industries, construction, transportation and utilities were on the decline for a long time suffered most from these structural changes. However, the same fears can also affect skilled middle-class employees who can anticipate being the next in line. Indeed, threats of precarization or *déclassement* seem to be more important politically than actual *déclassement*, for the electorate of the populist right does not only consist of those most negatively affected by globalization and individualization, such as the long-term unemployed, those on welfare benefits (Eatwell, 2003; Mudde, 2007) and more generally those with lower educational and class backgrounds (Rooduijn, 2018). Instead, the voters of the new right-wing parties “can be characterized as the second-to-last fifth of postmodern society, a stratum which is rather secure but objectively can still lose something” as Minkenberg (2000, p. 187) has observed.

Along with economic precariousness, fear and insecurity in contemporary market societies encompass existential, cultural, physical, and environmental forms of uncertainty (e.g., Bauman, 2001; Flecker et al., 2007; Furedi, 2007; Kinnvall, 2013). ‘Islamic’ terrorism or cultural invasion are further sources of fear that motivate support for right-wing populist parties advocating cultural protectionism and restrictions on immigration and decisions on refugee status (e.g., Kinnvall, 2013; Mols & Jetten, 2016) Also, feelings of fear and injustice about old age in light of the dismantling of the welfare system are salient. These fears often go hand in hand with an ideology of welfare chauvinism that requires that “in times of scarce resources there would have to be a guarantee that immigrants were not to profit at the expense of the majority population of the social welfare state” (Flecker et al., 2007, p. 57).

Economic changes and increasing strains on labor with their implications for status and living standards are also sources of anger and resentment in contemporary societies (Cramer, 2016; Hochschild, 2016; Flecker et al. 2007; Rackow et al., 2012). With individualized careers and risks, employees become more and more “entrepreneurs of the self” (Foucault, 2008) who compete with each other about various resources and recognition. Accordingly, those who are perceived to avoid work or live off the work of others, are held responsible for creating conditions of increased competition and become targets of anger, resentment, indignation, and hate. Such people include politicians and top managers on high and secure income, welfare recipients and refugees “looked after by the state,” and the long-term unemployed who “avoid work,” but also at groups perceived to be different from ‘us’ – ethnic, cultural, political, and sexual minorities – and therefore threats to security, national identity, traditional institutions, gender roles, etc. (see e.g. Wodak, 2015; Brubaker, 2017; Inglehart & Norris, 2019). The predicament of immigrants is especially grave, for if they are employed, they are accused of ‘stealing’ jobs, whereas if they stay out of the labor force, they are resented for avoiding work or abusing welfare state benefits. With this kind of double bind, right-wing populists can present themselves and their clientele as victims in either case.

Most studies that capitalize on negative emotions as motives for supporting right-wing populist parties or movements discuss these emotions in a rather general manner, without going into detail regarding specific emotions and their interrelations (e.g. Betz 1994; Berezin 2009). However, some theorists have suggested ways of connecting the two types of negative emotions behind right-wing populist support, fear- and anger-type, into an overarching mechanism (Salmela & von Scheve 2017; 2018; Nussbaum 2018). The connection operates through attributions of responsibility or blame for various worries, insecurities, and fears. If one blames oneself for insecurities at work or in other, increasingly competitive areas of social life, one tends to feel actual

or anticipated shame about these insecurities in addition to or instead of fear. Self-blame is supported by the neoliberal view that individuals are responsible for their success and exchange value in both labor market and social life, whatever conditions. If shame is further repressed, as it often is due to its painfulness and negative implications on the self, it is capable of transforming into anger, resentment, or hate through the emotional mechanism of resentment (Salmela & von Scheve, 2017, 2018). However, fears and insecurities are also capable of transforming directly into anger through another mechanism, namely blaming others for those insecurities. Thus, Martha Nussbaum (2018) argues that fear impairs our capacity of deliberative thinking, especially on complex problems and their causes, thereby urging us to pin blame on others and to conduct witch-hunts on those scapegoats. Fear also feeds anger's focus on payback, since vulnerable people think that getting back at wrongdoers is a way of re-establishing lost control and dignity.

In all forms of anger, both direct and transformed, experiencing and expressing anger together with others is an important way of reinforcing this emotion and its action tendencies. The collectivization of anger requires its interpretation as group-based, that is, its being based on the concerns of a group rather than on merely personal concerns. Intergroup emotions have been suggested to be particularly relevant in contexts involving conflict, competition, social comparison or cleavages regarding culture and identity (e.g., Halperin et al., 2011). They seem to be most frequently aimed at outgroups that are perceived as threats, for example anger and resentment regarding immigrants, homosexuals or religious minorities. But intergroup emotions are likewise directed at the ingroup, for instance in cases of pride and love. In this sense, right-wing populist parties and movements often engage in strategies of making religious or nationalist identities salient in a particular context and/or of discursively attributing emotions to their supporters. Claims such as 'We as the German people feel offended by certain religious practices of the Muslim

population' are a case at hand that combines both the making salient of a group identity and the attribution of a corresponding emotion to the ingroup.

Emotions and the populist political style

Understanding the importance of emotions for the success of populist parties can also be investigated from a supply side perspective, that is by looking at various behaviors of populist parties and actors and their associations with emotions. This strategy emphasizes political actors' practices of articulating and representing emotions in discourse (by linguistic and non-linguistic means) as well as communications that are specifically geared towards eliciting emotions in the electorate. Analytically, this perspective is rooted in conceptions of political populism emphasizing discourse, communication, and political style over beliefs and ideologies. Understanding populism from this vantage point prioritizes what populist politicians *do* and *say* over what they think and believe. Needless to say, both are intimately related, but the ways in which political beliefs and ideologies are communicated and performed certainly makes a difference in how they are received and interpreted and how they resonate with an audience.

The existing literature sometimes distinguishes between works that focus on 'discourse' and those that capitalize on 'style'. The discourse perspective on populism is historically tied to the Essex school of discourse analysis and closely linked to the works of Ernesto Laclau (2005). Discourse in this tradition is not limited to the production of text, but encompasses the entire spectrum of the social construction of meaning that is constitutive for society (Laclau, 1980; Stavrakakis, 2004). Importantly, discourse is not somehow 'added' to politics and society, but is the very essence of both, it is constitutive of political subjects, processes, and polities. Populism from this discourse-centered view is more about the forms than the contents of politics, and the characteristic form of populism, according to Laclau (2005), is the pitting of the people against

some “power bloc”, where both remain “empty signifiers”, “symbolic vessels filled with particular content depending on the specifics of the political context within which they are invoked and the cultural toolbox at work” (Aslanidis, 2016, p. 98). Populism in this view amounts to an “anti-status quo discourse that simplifies the political space by symbolically dividing society between ‘the people’ (as the ‘underdogs’) and its ‘other’” (Panizza, 2005, p. 3). Although the discourse approach to populism is sometimes read as an overarching theory of the political, it has informed countless empirical studies that often combine political theory with insights and methods from linguistics and communication sciences (Aalberg et al., 2017; de Vreese et al., 2018). These empirical studies focus on elements of populism that are also extensively accounted for in ideological definitions of populism, such as references to ‘the people’, attacks on a ‘corrupt elite’ and the discursive construction of various outgroups and minorities (de Vreese et al., 2018, p. 427).

Taking issue with the conceptual extension of the notion of ‘discourse’ (as an ‘all or nothing’ concept) and the overlapping of the discourse approach with ideology- and strategy-centered understandings of populism, Benjamin Moffit (2016) suggests conceiving of populism primarily as a political *style*. The concept of style much more than discourse refers to the *performative* aspects of politics. As Moffit and Simon Tormey (2014) argue, it captures “the repertoires of performance that are used to create political relations” (p. 387). The key aim of this approach thus is to establish how “performative repertoires of populist leaders and their followers interact, and how this affects their relationship” (Moffit & Tormey 2014, p. 388), using conceptual tools mostly stemming from dramaturgical approaches to politics, for instance performativity, actors, audiences, stages, scripts, etc. (Moffit & Tormey 2014 , p. 390).

With respect to emotions, both approaches consistently emphasize, theoretically and empirically, elevated levels of (in particular negative) emotionality in populist discourse and style

as compared to traditional politics. Politicians very generally not only articulate ideas, goals and strategies to attain these goals, but also circumscribe and promote ways to feel about political issues and cleavages. Ruth Breeze (2019) notes that “politicians who can embody and express feelings that resonate with large sectors of the electorate, or who know how to carry voters with them on an affective level, are often highly successful” compared to those who do not have these capabilities (p. 27). Rhetorically, the populist style is supposed to be characterized by an increased appeal to pathos rather than to facts, and it is supposed to include above-average levels of dramatization, colloquial language, and ‘bad manners’, all of which contribute to emotional arousal (see Ekström et al., 2018).

More specific analyses of emotions in populist politics revolve around the prototypical ideological and discursive elements of populism, in particular references to the people, the elite, and various outgroups. Two emotions feature particularly prominently in populist discourse, specifically when it comes to pitting ‘the people’ against corrupt elites and outgroups and minorities: anger and fear (see Schmuck & Hameleers, 2020; Breeze, 2019). A central element of anger in populist discourse is blame attribution. Populist messages are characterized by blaming elites and minorities for various wrongs and undesirable developments in society. By creating the impression that elites and minorities are actively implicated in bringing about these wrongs, populist discourse attributes responsibility to these groups and relieves ‘the people’ from responsibility. Identifying agents that are held responsible for one’s mischief and suffering is intimately related to anger and resentment directed towards groups that are held responsible (e.g., Hameleers et al., 2017, p. 871; Wirz, 2018). Amongst other things, this is because anger requires the impression of some form of agency and controllability on the side of the blamed parties (Rico et al., 2017, p. 448).

Fear, on the other hand, is typically related to perceived threat or danger that involves some level of uncertainty. As with anger, populist messages referring to fear typically include assertions that some valued good is at stake, such as economic welfare, cultural integrity, or safety. In fear appeals, however, there is only a limited potential for controlling the threat and the outcome typically remains uncertain. Populist messages have been shown to appeal to fear by constructing various threats to ‘the people’, in particular those related to salient political cleavages, such as immigration, economic downturn, security, or culture. Existing research has in fact shown that populist communications characteristically rely on a range of fear appeals related to these threats. Jörg Matthes and Desirée Schmuck (2017), for example, have demonstrated that populist advertising strengthens intergroup anxiety. Frank Mols and Jolanda Jetten (2016) have shown that populist leaders are apt at discursively creating threats and thereby evoke fear. Looking at 40 international elections. Alessandro Nai (2018) shows that populist campaigns contain significantly more fear appeals compared to non-populist campaigns. Likewise, Breeze (2019) in an analysis of UKIP and Labour press releases in early 2017 shows that fear messages are more prominent in UKIP compared to Labour discourse. Finally, Ruth Wodak (2015) has devoted a book-length analysis to populist discourse and its potential to create fear.

Emotions and right-wing populism: A dynamic relationship

Based on the research reviewed so far, it seems obvious that emotions are associated with right-wing populism in two analytically distinct ways. First, and from a demand side perspective, emotions that are prevalent in an electorate for reasons other than political discourse and campaigning - in particular reasons related to social status and inequality - render citizens receptive to populist ideologies and messages and make them likely to engage with and support them. Second, and from a supply side perspective, populist discourse is specifically geared towards

tapping into these emotions, that is to acknowledge, amplify, attenuate, or change them, and towards eliciting other, not necessarily already present emotions in the electorate. Existing research suggests two candidate emotions that are particularly relevant from both perspectives, anger and fear. These emotions are likely to play a role in general terms as well as regarding specific objects or domains of emotions, mostly those that are salient in populist discourse. One can therefore assume that citizens who experience anger and fear more frequently than others are more likely to vote for right-wing populist parties. Regarding specific objects or domains of these negative emotions, it seems likely that domains in which the self (and self-blame) is particularly present (e.g., immigration, crime, employment, health) are more relevant predictors of right-wing populist support than issues that are less focused on the self (e.g., climate, the environment, the economy). Looking at the effects of populist discourse, we would equally assume that it generally increases the experience of anger and fear since populist discourse is known to exacerbate concerns and threats and to attribute blame to outgroups. With regard to specific domains or objects, we would assume that populist discourse increases negative emotions in those domains that are particularly salient within discourse, such as immigration and crime.

Method and Data

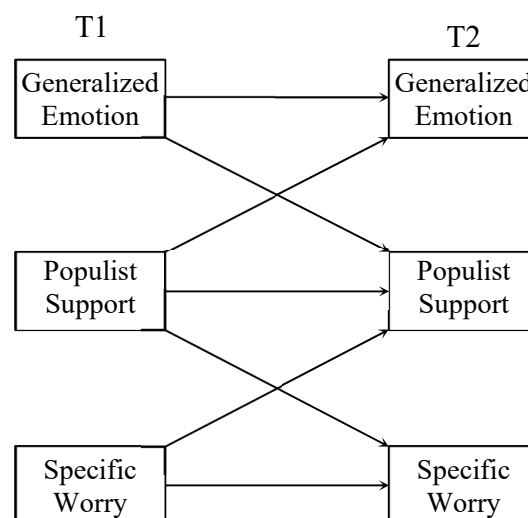
To investigate the assumptions outlined above, we use data from a representative survey of the German population, the Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP; Giesselmann et al., 2019). Aside from a broad spectrum of sociodemographic indicators and voting behavior, the SOEP also includes questions pertaining to the frequency of the experience of fear and anger as well as items assessing a range of specific worries, which we interpret as domain-specific negative emotions.

Analytical Strategy

We have argued that the relationship between specific worries, generalized negative emotions (in particular anger and fear) and right-wing populist support is likely going to be dynamic. To estimate these complex relationships, we require a model that can estimate the sequential order of voters' worries, emotions, and their support for political parties simultaneously. We do this by employing an autoregressive, cross-lagged panel (CLP) model with respondent-level random intercepts (RI). CLP models use structural equation modeling to simultaneously estimate the relationship between two or more variables over time, considering both the overtime dynamics within each variable, and the relationship between them (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Simplified cross-lagged, autoregressive model between generalized emotions, specific worries, and support for (right-wing) populist parties.



Note. Simplified generalized model of generalized emotion, populist support, and specific worries in a cross-lagged, autoregressive panel setting.

The traditional CLP model, however, may exhibit bias in cross-lagged regression models if the stability of the measured constructs is trait-like and time invariant (Hamaker et al., 2015). Given strong evidence that emotional predispositions, propensity to worry, and support for right-wing populist parties are, at least in part, based on stable personality traits, this assumption is likely violated here. To address this issue, all models also include a random-intercept, calculating the within-person mean for each respondent's level of anger, fear, and populist support. This approach introduces the logic of multi-level modeling into the structural equation framework and allows for a more explicit modeling of the variance at both the within-person and the between-person level. Moreover, this approach assumes temporal invariance of cross-lagged and autoregressive paths over time, and therefore follows the logic of a change score or within-effects pooled model, automatically controlling for unobserved, invariant respondent traits. An additional benefit of this technique is the added ease of interpreting the model results. Coefficients now represent the within-person, carry-over effect, where a cross lagged parameter now indicates "the degree by which deviations from an individual's expected score [on a given variable] can be predicted from preceding deviations from ones expected score [of a different variable], also accounting for individual-differences and wave-to-wave group differences" (Hamaker et al., 2015).

In simpler terms: The cross-lagged coefficients can tell us how becoming more worried about a specific issue at T1 increases a respondent's support for RRP parties at T2, while controlling for their general propensity to be worried about this issue, their general support for RRP parties, and the direct effect of an increase in populist party support at time T1. The same logic applies to the relationship between generalized emotions anger and fear and RRP party support. Moreover, these models also control for the direct relationship between generalized emotions and specific worries.

Data and Measures

Opting for the SOEP as our main data source is motivated by the broad range of relevant indicators included in the SOEP and by the German political context. Germany had long avoided the emergence of a (nationally) successful right-wing populist party. This changed, with the emergence of the Alternative for Germany (AfD). Although initially founded in 2013 to protest against bailouts in the Eurozone, increasing radicalization following a party split in 2014, and a close link to anti-immigration protests in 2015, have seen them gaining increasing public prominence and electoral support. They were the third strongest party in the 2018 national election and will likely remain a fixture of an increasingly fragmented German political party system. Despite its early technocratic and Eurosceptic roots, the AfD has therefore become a firmly entrenched right-wing populist party in the German party system.

Support for the AfD thus serves as our measure of *right-wing populist support*. Specifically, support is measured through the combination of two variables: Feelings of party affiliation and the strength of that affiliation. The SOEP asks respondents if they feel close to a specific party, and if so, how strong this feeling of closeness is on a Likert-Scale ranging between 1 and 5. The dependent variables are built through a combination of those two variables, where 0 indicates no feelings of affiliation and 5 indicates a very strong sense of affiliation.¹ To measure *generalized emotions*, we rely on the SOEP's measure of generalized anger and fear. Specifically, the SOEP asks respondents how frequently they experience anger and fear, ranging from 1 (very rarely) to 5 (very often). To measure specific worries, we rely on a battery of items that ask respondents to rate how concerned they are over specific topics, with possible answers ranging between 1(not at all) and 3 (very much). We differentiate between issue areas that are commonly

¹ To check the robustness of these models, we also replicated these models for center-right CDU, the social democratic SPD, the Green party, and the market-liberal FDP. None of these parties show comparable relationships.

associated with the AfD such as crime, immigration, their own or general economic conditions, ‘neutral’ areas such as health, as well as anti-AfD areas, such as environmental protection or the fight against xenophobia. To facilitate this comparison of effect sizes, all variables have been rescaled to range between 0 and 1.

The RI-CLP automatically control for time-invariant respondent characteristics such as education, gender, or age. Nevertheless, since the SOEP is collected annually, including controls for changes in respondents’ socioeconomic conditions could be important. However, including additional controls not only reduces model fit considerably, it also does not change the main results. All models therefore only use respondents’ generalized emotions, specific worries and support for the AfD.

Since the AfD was only founded in 2013, items measuring attitudes towards the AfD only become informative in the last five available waves, covering the years between 2014 and 2018. However, even given this relatively constricted timeframe, the extensive coverage of the SOEP allows us to measure the relationship between affect and populism among 14887 unique respondents.

Results

Table 1 summarizes results of eight CLP models predicting AfD-support from anger, fear, and specific worries. Coefficient estimates indicate the autoregressive paths to AfD support and from AfD support, respectively. Empty cells indicate that no significant relationships were found.

Table 1.

CLP model regressing AfD support on specific worries and fear and anger

<i>Specific Worry</i>	Determinants of AfD Support			Effects of AfD support			Sum. Stat.	
	Worry	Anger	Fear	Worry	Anger	Fear	RMSEA	P
Immigration	0.013 ***	0.005 *	-	0.114 ***	0.033 **	-	0.033	0
Crime	0.011 ***	0.006 **	-	0.133 ***	0.039 **	-	0.031	0
Own Econ.	0.009 ***	0.005 *	-	0.074 ***	0.041 ***	-	0.03	0
General Econ.	0.01 ***	0.006 **	-	0.1 ***	0.042 ***	0.024 *	0.03	0
Health	-	0.006 **	-	-	0.044 ***	0.023 *	0.031	0
Environment	-0.009 ***	0.006 **	-	-0.101 ***	0.047 ***	0.025 *	0.031	0
Climate	-0.006 **	0.006 **	-	-0.078 ***	0.042 ***	0.026 *	0.03	0
Xenophobia	-	0.006 **	-	-0.032 *	0.043 ***	0.026 *	0.031	0

Looking at the determinants of AfD support shows that worries about immigration, crime, one's own economic condition, and the general economy lead to subsequent increases in support for the AfD, even when anger and fear are taken into account. As expected, worries about the environment and the climate have negative effects for AfD-support while health and xenophobia show no meaningful association. Generalized anger increases support for the AfD, even when controlled for any specific worry, whereas generalized fear does not predict AfD-support.

Looking at the effects of AfD support, these relationships appears to be recursive. Becoming more supportive of the AfD is associated with subsequent increases in worries about immigration, crime, one's own economic condition, and the general economy as well as with increases in generalized anger. Becoming more supportive of the AfD is also associated with less worries about the environment, the climate, and xenophobia. Notably, across the different models,

the consequences of AfD-support for worries and emotions are considerably larger than their role in mobilizing support. Generalized fear does not appear to play a role, neither as a driver nor a consequence of AfD-support.

The results in Table 1 indicate four key findings: First, there is a clear and recursive relationship between generalized anger and support for the AfD. Individuals who become more angry also become more supportive of the AfD, even when time-invariant respondent characteristics are taken into account. In other words, generalized anger does not only drive support for the AfD, it is also driven by it.

Second, there is a clear relationship between specific worries in areas commonly associated with the AfD, such as crime and immigration, but also more general concerns about both general and personal economic conditions. In all cases, becoming more worried about these issues leads to increased support for the AfD, and this increase is substantially larger than the effects of generalized anger. Conversely, worries over xenophobia, the climate and the environment, in which the AfD traditionally has taken a very skeptical and dismissive stance, are associated with reduced support for the AfD.

Third, the AfD does little to reduce both anger or worries about specific policy areas, and instead appears to amplify them. Becoming more supportive of the AfD also leads to increased concerns over immigration, crime, and economic conditions, and also increases overall generalized anger. More importantly, this effect is considerably larger (six to ten times the coefficient estimate) than the relationship running from worries and anger to AfD support, suggesting a much more pronounced effect from AfD support to worries and anger than the other way around.

Finally, the relationship between generalized fear and support for the AfD appears to be an artifact of not controlling for more specific concerns. While both right-wing populist party

communications in general, and AfD communications in particular, have been associated with a more ‘fearful’ style, this does not seem to correspond to subsequent increases in generalized fear once we control for more specific worries.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter, we have investigated the dynamic relationship between emotions and populist right-wing support, based on two theoretical perspectives. On the one hand, we have discussed theories that explore how *generalized* negative emotions, such as anger or fear, drive support for right-wing populist parties. On the other hand, we have identified theories that focus on more specific, *targeted* negative emotions, such as worries or blame. We have discussed both of these perspectives from a demand and supply perspective, emphasizing the dynamic relationship between generalized negative emotions, specific worries, and populist right-wing support. In consequence we have investigated whether generalized fear and anger as well as worries in a number of policy domains motivate support for a populist right-wing party and whether support for such a party in turn changes these worries and emotions.

To test these theories empirically, we have used structural equation modeling and panel data from Germany to explore the temporal relationship between generalized negative emotions, specifically targeted worries, and support for a right-wing populist party, namely the AfD. Using this data, we have shown that taking an explicitly temporal perspective is an important step to reconciling, and expanding, the existing literature on emotions and populist right-wing support. While we do replicate the finding that generalized emotions, particularly anger, increase subsequent support for right-wing populist parties, this effect is comparably smaller than the effects of populist right-wing support on ensuing negative emotions. In other words, it is not so much generalized anger (let alone fear) that drives voters to support the AfD, but rather that voters

express more anger once they have become supportive of the AfD. The findings for specific worries in domains commonly associated with populist right-wing parties, such as immigration or crime, are similarly complex. While specific worries do significantly increase AfD-support, this support subsequently also increases these worries. In other words, populist right-wing parties do not just benefit from previously existing specific worries, they also nourish and bolster these worries, probably through their specific style and discourse, creating a feedback loop of negative emotionality.

In general, then, taking an explicitly temporal perspective on the relationship between specific and generalized negative emotions and populist right-wing party support demonstrates the complex role that these parties play in the emotional lives of their supporters. Particularly the mechanisms that lead to the ‘translation’ of specific worries into more generalized anger should be explored in greater depth.

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