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Reactionary Politics and Resentful Affect in Populist Times

Editors

Tereza Capelos, Stavroula Chrona, Mikko Salmela and Cristiano Bee

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Reactionary Politics and Resentful Affect in Populist Times

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Editorial

Reactionary Politics and Resentful Affect in Populist Times

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Abstract
This thematic issue brings together ten articles from political psychology, political sociology, philosophy, history, public policy, media studies, and electoral studies, which examine reactionary politics and resentful affect in populist times.

Keywords
affect; emotions; populism; radicalism; reactionism; resentment

Issue
This editorial is part of the issue “Reactionary Politics and Resentful Affect in Populist Times” edited by Tereza Capelos (University of Birmingham, UK), Stavroula Chrona (King’s College London, UK), Mikko Salmela (University of Helsinki, Finland / University of Copenhagen, Denmark), and Cristiano Bee (Oxford Brookes University, UK).

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This thematic issue examines reactionary politics and resentful affect in populist times. It brings together ten articles on research agendas from political psychology, political sociology, philosophy, history, public policy, media studies, and electoral studies, which discuss extensively a particular set of interrelated puzzles of grievance politics: the distrust and disillusionment expressed towards institutions of democracy, the reluctance or diminished capacity to engage with facts, the increase in the prevalence of anti-immigration, anti-science and anti-elite sentiments, the rise in spiteful and intolerant antagonisms. These orientations and affects towards governments and politics coincide with the rise of populist parties around the globe, and the strengthened traction of nationalist, authoritarian, and extremist discourses in mainstream and fringe political actors and movements. There can be no doubt that these conditions generate significant agitations with profound political, social, psychological, and cultural consequences, which urgently need solutions.

We focus on “reactionism” as a lasting and insistent cluster orientation that consolidates cognitive, affective and motivational drivers of populist support. It has become apparent to us through our own research that at the core of conflicts and challenges for democratic politics lie contrasting and incompatible ways of making sense of the world, which in turn rest on a divide involving attitudes towards change (Wolfe, 1923). Reactionism, like radicalism seeks to urgently uproot the status quo. It is distinguished from conservatism which seeks to preserve the status quo, or progressivism and retrogressivism which harbour the desire for gradual and orderly reform (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018). Uncompromising reactionism and revolutionary radicalism share disaffection with the present but their realities collide as they gaze in opposite directions: the reactionary orientation towards the restoration of an often idealised past, and the radical orientation towards the establishment of a different, imagined future. These orientations, often in interaction with each other, are candidates for anomic and violent political engagement founded on grievances, disaffection and anti-social stances towards others in society.

We focus on “resentful affect” in order to understand the frustrated, vengeful and bitter emotions of

populist politics, which in our view extend beyond binary analyses of political emotionality of angry vs. afraid citizens (Capelos et al., 2017). Our research on the political affectivity of reactionary grievance politics finds it to be frustrated *and* aggressive, anxious *and* spiteful, sour *and* bitter, perpetuating vindictiveness *and* self-victimization (Bee & Chrona, 2017; Capelos & Chrona, 2018; Capelos & Demertzis, 2018). These seemingly contradictory affective experiences we identify here as "resentful affect" contain resentment expressed as moral anger at unfairness or injustice, as well as the under-explored psychological experience of *ressentiment* (written in italics throughout this thematic issue and the field more broadly, to denote the technical term introduced by Nietzsche [1885/1961] and elaborated by Scheler [1915/1961]). *Ressentiment* is marked by the unconscious transformation of envy, shame, or inefficacious anger of powerless and frustrated individuals into vindictiveness and hatred, compensating for a chronic perceived inferiority and deficiency to attain what one values or desires. The "individual of *ressentiment*" alters the value of what is desired to undesirable, and the value of the self from inferior to a morally superior victim. Its conviction of moral victimhood is preserved through social-sharing practices with like-minded peers with long-term anti-social implications. *Ressentiment* can be manifested in animus politics as its outcome emotions of hatred, vindictiveness and resentment, and also scapegoating, vengeance, and intolerance (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018; Salmela, 2019; Salmela & von Scheve, 2017, 2018).

The original articles hosted here investigate further the conceptual and empirical puzzles arising from reactionary and resentful politics. They offer in-depth understanding of the individual and collective dynamics of resentful reaction, focusing on the convictions, sympathies, loyalties, and beliefs that feed it, the *ressentimentful* emotional mechanism that delivers it, the values that motivate it, and the emotions it stirs up. They investigate the role of personality and group attachments in explaining reactionary anti-stances. They shed light on reciprocal processes of reactionary radicalization and resentful affectivity. They trace social media campaigns in framing issues that resonate with citizens' worries and frustrations; they analyse the function of symbols in giving meaning, purpose, and passion to group identities. They highlight the importance of economic hardship and cultural and political contexts in generating or appeasing grievances. And together they interrogate the social, political, and psychological function of resentful reaction for democratic politics, tackling theoretical and empirical questions that are as challenging as they are important.

The thematic issue begins with the article by Mikko Salmela and Tereza Capelos (2021) titled "*Ressentiment*: A Complex Emotion or an Emotional Mechanism of Psychic Defenses?" An analytical philosopher (Salmela) and a political psychologist (Capelos) recognize *ressentiment* as the affective driver of reactionism, Islamic fundamentalism, and radicalism and join forces to tackle the puzzle many scholars have grappled with: what is *ressentiment*. They examine theoretical accounts from philosophy, sociology, psychoanalysis, and political psychology, and break new ground theorising *ressentiment* as an emotional mechanism triggered by envy, shame, or inefficacious anger, which produces resentment, indignation, and hatred through a four-stage process that involves idiosyncratic defences determined by individuals' ego strength. Their theoretical model specifically explores individual and social level processes. Intraindividually, the emotional mechanism of *ressentiment* reinforces a morally superior sense of victimhood and expedites two parallel transvaluation processes which change what was once desired to undesirable and rotten, and one's inferior self to being a morally superior victim. Social sharing with like-minded peers consolidates the other-directed negative emotions, values, and identities in *ressentiment* through shallow twinship bonds giving rise to destructive and vengeful collective behaviours.

In "Islamist and Nativist Reactionary Radicalization in Europe," Ayhan Kaya (2021) makes a strong contribution to understanding co-radicalization by emphasising the defensive and reactionary response of Islamist youth and right-wing nativist-populist Europe youth, suffering from social, economic, and political forms of exclusion, subordination, alienation, humiliation, and isolation. Kaya adopts an interdisciplinary perspective joining insights from politics, anthropology, psychology, and geography to extend our understanding of co-radicalization through interviews of young people in Belgium, France, Germany, and the Netherlands. He finds the drivers of radicalization between the two groups to be similar, highlighting deprivations that span across political, socio-economic, and psychological conditions. In this project funded by the European Research Council (ERC), Kaya explains that reactionary Islamist and right-wing populist-nativist groups are best understood as defensive movements of individuals pressurised by modernization and globalization. Their co-radicalization is in essence a product of the identity politics of neoliberalism giving rise to Islamophobia, nativism, and religio-political and ethno-cultural polarizations.

In "Reimagining the Medieval: The Utility of Ethnonational Symbols for Reactionary Transnational Social Movements" Matthew Godwin and Elisabeth Trischler (2021) bring the perspective of historical analysis to the examination of ethnonational symbols as strategic framing devices used by reactionary movements in Europe. Focusing on the Identitarians and the Defence Leagues, Godwin and Trischler analyse images and narratives that feature knights and the crusades and show how "radical nostalgia" of the medieval period sits at the core of their reimagination of a lost "golden age" of a Christian Europe. Their research highlights the value of ethnonational symbols derived from the medieval period for identity construction and identity promotion. This reactionary "political medievalism" is urgent, nativist,

and xenophobic. It is constructed on a "us against them" struggle, mobilizes against "threats" by assigning blame, and legitimizes the use of violence against multiculturalism and Islam. The moralization of the objective of these reactionary movements invites research on their *ressentimentful* affective character.

In "Double *Ressentiment*: The Political Communication of Kulturkampf in Hungary," Balázs Kiss (2021) employs qualitative content analysis to examine *ressentiment* as an affective style that dominates the social media discourses of the culture war between opposing political camps in Hungary. The affective style of *ressentiment* refers to the inclination to interpret events as a recurrent unjust and inevitable injury from the position of the helpless victim. As the identity of the victim is redefined to a moral martyr through the emotional mechanism of *ressentiment*, comparison with others who seem "better-off" feeds envy and incubates aversions. Without doubt, the value of this article extends beyond understanding Orbanism and Hungarian politics: It offers political communication insights on the way emotions, and in particular *ressentimentful* impotent vengeance, hatred, fear, and powerlessness, can be employed by opposing actors to manage citizens' responses to politics. Transvaluation, scapegoating, blame externalization, and vindictive moral superiority define the two-way interactions between opposing political communities that Kiss aptly calls "double-*ressentiment*."

Karen Celis, Louise Knops, Virginie Van Ingelgom, and Soetkin Verhaegen (2021) examine the implications of expressing resentment for the "crisis of representative democracy," in their article titled "Resentment and coping with the democratic dilemma." Using data from four focus groups conducted in Belgium with members of the Yellow Vests and Youth for Climate movements, as well as individuals from socially disadvantaged positions, the authors identify strong feelings of anger, fear, disappointment, and unfairness, but also feelings of empowerment, enthusiasm, and hope in discussions involving representative democracy. The objects of this resentful affectivity varied as citizens directed their anger, disappointment, perceptions of unfairness, and hope in different ways when they discussed elections, politicians, policy implementation, and the democratic system overall. Celis and her colleagues listen very competently to the "heart" of representative democracy and identify its complex affective profile. The "democratic dilemma" highlighted by the authors involves recognizing frustrations and grievances while maintaining hope and sustaining democratic values and ideals. The authors do not rush to easy answers, recognizing the complexity of their puzzle. They suggest future studies could explore further shifts "within resentful affectivity," to gain understanding on the distinctions between resentment and *ressentiment* as some citizens remain within, and others go beyond democratic boundaries in their political engagement.

Sabrina Jasmin Mayer and Christoph Giang Nguyen (2021) examine the mechanism that connects reactionary political orientations, personality predisposition to narcissistic rivalry, anger, and support for radical right populist parties (RRP) in their contribution titled "Angry Reactionary Narcissists? Anger Activates the Link Between Narcissism and Right-Populist Party Support." They hypothesise that narcissistic rivalry, a maladaptive path of grandiose narcissism, motivates voting for the RRP party *Alternative für Deutschland* and that this effect is mediated by reactionary political orientations and activated by anger. They test this hypothesis through mediation analysis of GESIS panel data from Germany. The authors find that indicators of reactionary political orientations predict RRP support. Moreover, high levels of generalized anger are needed to activate the relationship between narcissistic rivalry, reactionary values, and RRP support. These findings raise interesting questions about the role of anger and might explain why only some people show support for RRP. As the authors note, the relationship between narcissistic rivalry, reactionary orientations, and political preferences begs for further investigation.

Gavin Brent Sullivan (2021) introduces the framework of affective practice in his analysis of political reactionism in England. In his article "Political Reactionism as Affective Practice: UKIP Supporters and Non-Voters in Pre-Brexit England" the author examines how the *ressentimentful* affective features of reactionary political stances are created, shared or suppressed, facilitated, mobilised, and transformed in everyday actions. Using reflexive thematic analysis of interview data with UKIP voters and non-voters, Sullivan finds evidence of *ressentiment* (shame, transvaluation, victimhood, a sense of loss, powerlessness) and reactionism (desire for change backwards, nostalgia, opposition to the status quo). He also notes that expressions of anger were used to conceal shame or proneness to humiliation during discussions of anti-political stances. Sullivan's study urges us to pay attention to emotions used in conversation that cover painful feelings, and invites us to engage more with rich data collection methodologies that examine emotional activity and practices on the left and the right of the ideological spectrum.

Diogo Ferrari (2021) tackles the question of why populist parties find support for their ideas among the electorate, in his article "Perceptions, Resentment, Economic Distress, and Support for Right-Wing Populist Parties in Europe." Ferrari focuses on micro-level effects of household-level economic conditions, and notes that low and middle-income populations are more vulnerable to economic distress. This in turn increases their resentment (measured here as dissatisfaction with democracy), and their threat assessment of immigration, which then increases the likelihood of voting for populist parties. Using European Social Survey (ESS) data across 18 countries, Ferrari shows that voting for right-wing populist parties is predicted by changes in household income, while accounting for the mediation effect of an index measuring economic and cultural threat and

satisfaction with democracy. This article draws attention to the micro-level hardships that can attract voters to solutions offered by right wing populists, adding to literature that favours macro level economic or cultural explanations. Improving families' finances and alleviating economic hardships, shows Ferrari, could be an effective measure to curb the rise of populism.

In "Feeling Left Behind by Political Decisionmakers: Anti-Establishment Sentiment in Contemporary Democracies," Luigi Droste (2021) deals with the pressing puzzle of what drives populist and reactionary discontent in democratic societies. Using survey data from 20 contemporary democracies from two International Social Survey Program (ISSP) waves, Droste uses a multilevel hybrid model that allows for individual and country level effects and longitudinal components. Droste finds differences between counties and individuals: Anti-establishment attitudes are more widespread among publics in countries exposed to higher levels of public corruption and increasing levels of income inequality, and also among citizens that are younger and in lower ranks of society. Moreover, citizens who experience discontent show increased support for anti-elite parties and make use of online options to express their opinions. Recognizing the lack of affect measures in cross-country comparative datasets, Droste concludes with an important question: Is the political action of those "feeling left behind" resentful or *ressentimentful* in its core?

Maximilian Conrad (2021) focuses on "Post-Truth Politics, Digital Media and the Politicization of the Global Compact for Migration." Acknowledging the important role of social media as vehicles of disinformation, Conrad investigates the debate over the *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* (GCM) in Germany, Austria, and Sweden. Using process-tracing, the author analyses the frames used by right-wing populist actors, how they were received by the public, and describes the ways in which they generated communicative power against the GCM, making it a salient issue across national public spheres and political institutions. The study showcases the crucial role of digital and social media for the politicization of issues capitalised upon by right-wing populist actors for political gain. It closes with the invitation to engage seriously with the complexities and impacts of digital engagement that generate resentment and fear and challenge deliberative democracy in post-truth politics.

If *animus* and *caritas* are the two sides of our human condition, reconciling them can be our perennial struggle for democratic politics. The above articles forward new theory, survey the field, complement each other by employing qualitative and quantitative methodologies, and collectively deliver research that seeks to make constructive contributions to this pressing puzzle: If the reactionary orientation obstructs innovation in favour of renovation and harbours bitter and vengeful affects, can its needs be reconciled within the framework of democratic politics that seeks growth and development, and what are the avenues for positive, constructive engagement with reactionary minds and hearts? We feel privileged to work with our colleagues on investigating this puzzle and to deliver this thematic issue. We recognize there is still a long way to go and hope this thematic issue offers valuable knowledge, new insights, and opportunities for further interdisciplinary research and collaborative work.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Ressentiment: A Complex Emotion or an Emotional Mechanism of Psychic Defences?

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Abstract
Ressentiment is central for understanding the psychological foundations of reactionary politics, right-wing populism, Islamic fundamentalism, and radicalism. In this article we theorise *ressentiment* as an emotional mechanism which, reinforcing a morally superior sense of victimhood, expedites two parallel transvaluation processes: What was once desired or valued, yet unattainable, is reassessed as something undesirable and rotten, and one's own self from being inferior, a loser, is reassessed as being noble and superior. We establish negative emotions of envy, shame, and inefficacious anger as the main triggers of *ressentiment*, with their associated feelings of inferiority and impotence, which target the vulnerable self. We identify the outcomes of *ressentiment* as other-directed negative emotions of resentment, indignation, and hatred, reinforced and validated by social sharing. We map the psychological structure of *ressentiment* in four stages, each employing idiosyncratic defences that depend on the ego-strength of the individual to deliver the transvaluation of the self and its values, and finally detail how social sharing consolidates the outcome emotions, values, and identities in *ressentiment* through shallow twinship bonds with like-minded peers. Our interdisciplinary theoretical account integrates classic philosophical scholarship of *ressentiment* and its contemporary proponents in philosophy and sociology, which highlight envy as the prime driver of *ressentiment*; it also considers the sociological approaches that focus on the repression and transmutation of shame and its social consequences, as well as the psychoanalytic scholarship on psychic defences and political psychology models on the emotionality of decision-making. We conclude the article by elaborating the political implications of *ressentiment* as the emotional mechanism of grievance politics.

Keywords
emotional mechanism; philosophy; political psychology; psychic defences; psychoanalysis; reactionism; resentment; ressentiment; sociology

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Reactionary Politics and Resentful Affect in Populist Times" edited by Tereza Capelos (University of Birmingham, UK), Stavroula Chrona (King's College London, UK), Mikko Salmela (University of Helsinki, Finland / University of Copenhagen, Denmark), and Cristiano Bee (Oxford Brookes University, UK).

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1. Introduction

Aesop's fable of the fox and the grapes tells of a fox's frustrated and repeated failures to reach the grapes it covets, and ends with the fox's scornful belittling of the sour grapes. The technical term "*ressentiment*" was introduced by Nietzsche (1885/1961) and elaborated by Scheler (1915/1961) to capture this insulating and compensatory psychological phenomenon that is distinguished from resentment. Despite its relevance for understanding backlash and reactionary politics, not much attention has been paid to its psychological profile.

In this article, we theorise *ressentiment* as an emotional mechanism, identify its psychological properties,

outline its function for individuals and collectives, and consider its implications for democratic politics. We start from the premise that *ressentiment* is witnessed among the powerless, disprivileged, and weak—including those who experience their situation as precarious or vulnerable, however well positioned. We identify its main function is to manage frustration through expediting two parallel transvaluation processes: What was desired/valued, yet unattainable, is reassessed as undesirable and rotten; and one's own self from being inferior, a loser, is reassessed as being noble and superior. We explain how *ressentiment* employs effective (but eventually maladaptive) defences helping individuals resist their insecurities and flaws without acknowledging or resolving them. We also elaborate that the gains from *ressentiment* are evidenced in internal and external relations. Internally, the mental pain of facing one's perceived inferiority and impotence is evaded, and the *ressentimentful* individual feels righteous anger, resentment, and hatred. In external relations, the "improved new self" is validated and maintained through social sharing with like-minded peers. The residual frustration, never fully repressed, targets external objects (the establishment, political elites, immigrants, media) perceived as hostile, bad or inferior, and delivers rejection, vilification, and blame.

Ressentiment is identified as the affective driver of reactionism, both on the political right and left (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018; Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018; Capelos et al., 2021; Sullivan, 2021). *Ressentiment* and its bitter outcome emotions—resentment and hatred—are featured in studies of right-wing populism (Betz, 2005; Celis et al., 2021; Ferrari, 2021; Hoggett et al., 2013; Kiss, 2021; Mishra, 2017; Salmela & von Scheve, 2017), Islamic and other forms of fundamentalism, fanaticism, extremism, and radicalism (Griffin, 2012; Katsafanas, in press; Kaya, 2021; Langman & Morris, 2003; Mishra, 2017; Posłuszna & Posłuszny, 2015), and have recently been linked to narcissism and cynicism (Capelos et al., 2021; Demertzis, 2020; Mayer & Nguyen, 2021).

Scholars of *ressentiment* agree it begins with negative emotions and feelings targeting the vulnerable self. The transvaluation of the self and its values allows the projection of negative emotions towards generic "all-bad'' others. However, there are several open questions about *ressentiment*, namely: (1) Is it a complex emotion composed of other discrete emotions (Demertzis, 2020; Rodax et al., 2021; TenHouten, 2018), an emotional mechanism, a process which transforms certain discrete emotions into others, or does it involve both? (2) Which emotions constitute the feeling of *ressentiment*, or drive it, and which emotions are its outcomes? (3) What are its stages and how do they engage with psychic defences? (4) How does social sharing consolidate its outcome emotions, values, and identities?

We make theoretical headway towards a conceptualization of *ressentiment* integrating seemingly independent but complementary approaches: The classic philosophical tradition (Nietzsche, 1885/1961; Scheler, 1915/1961) with its contemporary proponents in philosophy and sociology (Aeschbach, 2017; Demertzis, 2020; Elster, 1999; TenHouten, 2018; Ure, 2014) highlight envy as the prime driver of *ressentiment*; sociological approaches (Scheff, 1994; Turner, 2007) focus on the repression and transmutation of shame and its social consequences; political psychology studies operationalise *ressentiment* as the affective driver of political reactionism (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018); insights from psychoanalytical works elaborate on the workings of psychic defences (Bion, 1957; A. Freud, 1936; S. Freud, 1894; Klein, 1958, 1959; Kohut, 1984; Laing, 1961; Winnicott, 1971).

We begin with the nature of *ressentiment* as a complex emotion/sentiment, or an emotional mechanism (Section 2). We substantiate our definition of *ressentiment* as an emotional mechanism by identifying the emotions that are its drivers and its outcomes (Section 3). Following psychoanalytical studies on defences, we map out its four key stages (Section 4). We elaborate on social sharing and its consolidating but socially maladaptive function for the identity, emotions, and values of the *ressentimentful* individual (Section 5). In conclusion we discuss the implications of our contribution in understanding reactionary politics.

2. *Ressentiment*: A Complex Emotion or an Emotional Mechanism?

The categorization of *ressentiment* is an important question. Nietzsche and Scheler provide insightful suggestions on its nature: Nietzsche (1885/1961) tells us how *ressentiment* functions in a "man of *ressentiment*" and introduces transvaluation of the self and values as its core, driven by emotions of envy, humiliation, and inefficacious anger; Scheler (1961, p. 4) calls it "a self-poisoning of the mind which has quite definite causes and consequences." It is both a psychological "mechanism" relating to the transvaluation of desired but unattainable objects (Scheler, 1961, p. 65) and a "lasting mental attitude, caused by the systematic repression of certain emotions and affects" (Scheler, 1961, p. 4). For Scheler, the "*ressentiment* attitude" consists of "envy, the impulse to detract, malice, and secret vindictiveness…[that] have become fixed attitudes, detached from all determinate objects" (Scheler, 1961, p. 24). Such affective attitudes are interpreted as "sentiments" by Aeschbach (2017), who characterizes the latter as deeply rooted dispositions whose manifestations are emotions requiring a specific coherence and stability in the emotional episodes a subject is likely to feel. Yet both Nietzsche and Scheler understand *ressentiment* first and foremost as a psychological mechanism. Research in philosophy and social sciences has followed Scheler in identifying these two elements—psychological mechanism(s), and a sentiment-like pattern of certain emotions and attitudes—emphasizing either, or sometimes, similarly to Scheler, both (Aeschbach, 2017; Demertzis, 2020; Elster, 1999; Salmela & von Scheve, 2017).

Aeschbach (2017, p. 45) asks "whether or not *ressentiment* constitutes an emotion, a sentiment, a mechanism, or a psychological process of its own." Building on Scheler, he sees *ressentiment* as a temporally extended phenomenon with different sequences and therefore dissimilar to emotions:

> The POR [person of *ressentiment*] first values something she cannot get which triggers a crushing experience and, in response to this first stage, she harbours hostile emotions directed against her existing or imagined rivals. A feeling of inferiority, although very characteristic, is not necessary; the fox for example is simply frustrated or experiences an unpleasant feeling of impotence. What is common to all cases however, and thus a necessary condition, is that the man of *ressentiment* eventually alters the value of what he cannot get or realise. We call this *mechanism* the reevaluation process and claim that it is a defining part of *ressentiment*. (Aeschbach, 2017, p. 93, italics by the author)

Aeschbach characterizes *ressentiment* as a *reevaluation mechanism.* At its core is the transvaluation of desired but unattainable objects, whose unattainability gives rise to unpleasant feelings of inferiority and impotence damaging the person's self-worth. Relating to value changes of this kind, Aeschbach (2017, p. 69) suggests "*ressentiment* is the very mechanism that transmutes envy into moral emotions such as resentment and indignation." Yet he also suggests *ressentiment* is an enduring "sentiment characterised by a series of object-specific dispositions that consolidate into a character trait [the vice of *ressentiment*] as the phenomenon progresses" (Aeschbach, 2017, p. 50).

As a sentiment, the manifestations of *ressentiment* are "hostile emotions (revenge, envy) as well as blaming attitudes (resentment, indignation)" that Aeschbach calls "*ressentiment*-emotions" (Aeschbach, 2017, p. 55). In this way, Aeschbach's analysis replicates Scheler's original view about *ressentiment* as a sentiment *and* a psychological mechanism. We agree an adequate account of *ressentiment* must include both elements, but their mutual relationship needs to be clarified in greater detail.

Demertzis (2020), following Scheler, approaches *ressentiment* as a "cluster emotion" or a "complex sentiment." He defines it as such:

> An unpleasant complex moral sentiment with no specific addressees, experienced by inferior individuals including a chronic reliving of repressed and endless vengefulness, hostility, hatred, envy, and resentment due to the powerlessness of the subject in expressing them, and resulting, at the level of moral values, in the disavowal of what is unconsciously desired. (Demertzis, 2020, p. 132)

Emotions of this kind are constituents of *ressentiment* for Demertzis. Yet *ressentiment* is something else, for it develops only when "anger, envy, hostility, hatred and/or resentment… are incorporated and mutated into *ressentiment* insofar as the transvaluation process is put into motion initiated by the subject's incapacity to act out" (Demertzis, 2020, p. 136). Transvaluation has a crucial role in the development of *ressentiment* whose core meaning it constitutes for Demertzis. Yet even if the transvaluation is carried out by defences, their involvement does not turn *ressentiment* into a mechanism. Quite the contrary, Demertzis argues "the transvaluation process is in itself a configuration of defence mechanisms and therefore it seems to me that it confers no added value by dropping *ressentiment* out from the list of emotions" (Demertzis, 2020, p. 133). The logic of this argument is that since *ressentiment* is brought about by psychological mechanisms, it cannot be a mechanism itself. However, this is a non sequitur. This view of *ressentiment* as a complex or cluster emotion generates more questions than answers.

First, it leaves the relationship between *ressentiment* and its constituent emotions unexplained. In what sense are emotions such as anger, envy, hostility, hatred, and resentment constituents of *ressentiment* if they must be incorporated and mutated in order to become *ressentiment*? Once incorporated and mutated by repression and transvaluation, what is left of the emotions that constitute *ressentiment*? If these emotions lose their discrete identities and are amalgamated into *ressentiment* that is something different, the other emotions appear to be *ingredients* of *ressentiment* rather than its constituents. Alternatively, those emotions can be *manifestations* of *ressentiment* if the latter is understood as a sentiment, a higher-order affective attitude that manifests as thematically related emotions and attitudes, as Aeschbach (2017) suggests. However, this interpretation leaves the incorporation and mutation of the emotions that manifest *ressentiment* in Demertzis' view redundant or mysterious. What is the function of these processes if the emotions supposed to undergo those processes in becoming *ressentiment* remain its manifestations?

Problems with *ressentiment* as a complex emotion are also evident in TenHouten (2018). He argues that *ressentiment* and resentment are two forms of the same "tertiary-level" emotion, "whose primary emotional components are anger, surprise, and disgust, and whose secondary emotional components are contempt, shock, and outrage" (TenHouten, 2018, p. 6). Resentment is an active and forceful emotion, whereas *ressentiment* is its passive and helpless shadow. This distinction between resentment and *ressentiment* is consistent with Nietzsche and Scheler, but also in tension with the view that resentment and *ressentiment* are ultimately the same "tertiary emotion" with the same constituent emotions. A widely accepted philosophical criterion is that discrete emotions have a distinct "formal object" (Kenny, 1963) or "core relational theme" (Lazarus, 1991)—an

evaluative property or content that particular instances of the same emotion type ascribe to the intentional object of emotion, an event, situation, person, etc. For instance, the formal object of fear is the evaluative property of "being dangerous" that particular instances of fear ascribe to their targets. If resentment and *ressentiment* are forms of the same emotion, they should have the same formal object or core relational theme. Yet, there is a wide agreement among researchers of *ressentiment* that whatever it is, it differs from resentment, usually understood as moral anger at injustice (e.g., Aeschbach, 2017; Demertzis, 2020; Meltzler & Musolf, 2002; Ure, 2014). The involvement of transvaluation and the defences carrying it out in *ressentiment* (but not in resentment) make it conceptually difficult to defend a view of *ressentiment* and resentment as two forms of the same emotion. This difference renders problematic TenHouten's view that *ressentiment* and resentment have the same constituent emotions: anger, disgust, and surprise. This is a speculative view leaving the roles of disgust and surprise unclear.

With the above concerns in mind, we make the following propositions: *Ressentiment* is best understood as a psychological mechanism that produces and reinforces a sentiment—a disposition to have certain thematically related emotions and attitudes. Emotional mechanisms have four conditions: (1) emotional dissonance; (2) reappraisal; (3) change in the emotional response; and (4) disposition of the emotional outcome to be collectivized (Salmela & Salice, 2020). We extend this account analysing the functioning of reappraisal in terms of psychodynamic defences transmuting the self and its values. The proposed view integrates the two main elements of *ressentiment* in extant literature providing a causal account of their mutual relationship. It explains the dynamic character of *ressentiment* better than the other views whose insights it also incorporates.

Agreeing with other scholars, we identify the axis of *ressentiment* as victimhood (Aeschbach, 2017; Hoggett, 2018; Katsafanas, in press; Nietzsche, 1885/1961; Rodax et al., 2021; Ure, 2014). A powerless sense of victimhood may belong to inefficacious anger and envy where the individual feels deprived, depleted, and inferior. An analogous powerless victim position also belongs to shame, in which the subject attacks the self. This attack on the self, if enduring, is so painful that the victimizer needs to be externalized. To evade mental pain emerging from negative feelings targeting the self, in *ressentiment* the self-reproaching victim position is transformed into a morally superior victim position providing justification for the other-directed moral emotions of resentment, indignation and hatred, as well as a foundation for the formation of collective identities of victimhood.

Breaking with other scholars who see *ressentiment* as an objectless emotion, not specifically about something or someone (Demertzis, 2020), we identify two objects of *ressentiment*: (1) the self, elevated from low to high; and (2) the value of what one wants to have (desired object in envy and anger) or to be (aspired roles or identities in shame) reversed to undesired and unwanted. Aeschbach (2017, p. 94) calls value change of this kind a "strong *ressentiment*," as distinct from the "weak *ressentiment*" that merely denounces the value of an unattainable particular object (such as particular sweet grapes), without leading to a reversal in values. He also observes, following Poellner (2011), that transvaluation allows the subject to feel moral superiority, instead of feeling inferior and impotent. However, neither Poellner nor Aeschbach see the self as an object of *ressentiment* besides values, as we do.

We also identify two objectives of *ressentiment*: (1) to change the self and its values (through transvaluation); and (2) to maintain the "new self" and "new values" and emotions through social sharing. Although attention has been provided to achieving transvaluation through defences (see Demertzis, 2020, p. 138), the second objective is novel and under-theorised. The powerless self in *ressentiment* comes to feel superior and powerful. This constitutes a reversal where the self changes from worthless and incapable to pious and elevated. This change requires the employment of defences and goes beyond the improvement of self-esteem by *ressentiment* on which previous philosophical research focuses (Aeschbach, 2017). We argue the self is transmuted in *ressentiment*: With transvaluation, an individual's identity becomes disconnected from one's sense of who one is, generating a "fragmented self," broken in two: an old (painful) self, tucked away, and a new (elevated) self, accepted as the "all-good" self. This outcome is similar to what Winnicott (1965, p.140) describes as a "false-self." Through social sharing, this "new self" is maintained and reinforced. Thus, we argue, the core objectives of *ressentiment* are to change its very subject and maintain its change.

If *ressentiment* involves repression, reaction formation, splitting, regression, and denial (e.g., Aeschbach, 2017; Demertzis, 2020; Hoggett, 2018; Scheler, 1961), it is worth focusing on how psychic defences are employed throughout this mechanism, how they relate to the thoughts and feelings serving as triggers, the evaluations of the self, prior to and after its transvaluation, the transmutation of its values, the maintenance of the "new self," as well as to *ressentiment* outcomes. It helps to introduce a few key properties of defences. They are internal, complex, and (mostly) unconscious regulatory processes of resisting/defending against mental frustrations, stress, and conflict; they alter perceptions of the self, the other(s), thoughts, and feelings (A. Freud, 1936; Vaillant, 1994). Psychologists agree that any mental function (cognition, affect, and conation) can be used defensively, and everyone needs and uses defensive manoeuvres against mental pain at particular times (Kernberg, 1976; Vaillant, 1994). We argue that defences provide the analytical framework to consider *ressentiment* as an emotional mechanism available to all individuals without pathologizing or stigmatizing its use.

Our systematic analysis of defences expands on scholars who see their value in relation to *ressentiment* and provides a framework that unpacks their function within this emotional mechanism.

Finally, our model theorises four stages of *ressentiment.* First, the "triggering stage" involves the negative emotions with feelings of inferiority and/or impotence as affective drivers of *ressentiment.* Experienced as repeated assaults on the individual's self-esteem, they compromise ego-strength and lead to diminished capacity for adaptive psychic resistance. Second, the "initiating stage" involves failed adaptive defences and regression, followed by the adoption of partially adaptive or maladaptive defences prior and en route to transvaluation. Third, the "advancing stage" involves maladaptive defences delivering the transvaluation of the self and the values. The outcomes of this stage are the sentiments of "general negativism" (Scheler, 1961, p. 21) manifesting as emotions of resentment, indignation, and hatred, and as an anti-stance of rejection towards objects perceived as injurious or insulting, and the "new values" and a "new self" as a precarious identity. Fourth, the "consolidating stage" involves defences strengthening the transvaluation and the fragmentation of the self through social sharing, preventing relapse to the "old self" and the "old values" while bringing its outcomes into the political sphere.

3. Affective Drivers and Outcomes of *Ressentiment*

Viewing *ressentiment* as a psychological mechanism we distinguish between affects and emotions that are its triggers and outcomes, building a causal argument into the affective elements of *ressentiment.* Previous accounts suffer this shortcoming, beginning with Scheler's view of its elicitors:

> Revenge, envy, the impulse to detract, spite, *Schadenfreude*, and malice lead to *ressentiment* only if there occurs neither a moral self-conquest (such as genuine forgiveness in the case of revenge) nor an act, or some other adequate expression of emotion (such as verbal abuse or shaking one's fist), and if this restraint is caused by a pronounced awareness of impotence. (Scheler, 1961, p. 6)

Importantly, revenge and the impulse to detract are not emotions but rather action tendencies of other emotions—anger and envy, respectively. Scheler observes the desire to revenge is "preceded by an attack or an injury" with the "accompanying emotions of anger and rage" whose immediate reactive impulse is "temporarily or at least momentarily checked and restrained" due to "the reflection that an immediate reaction would lead to defeat, and by a concomitant pronounced feeling of 'inability' and 'impotence' " (Scheler, 1961, p. 5). Elsewhere he writes: "There is a particularly violent tension when revenge, hatred, envy, and their effects are coupled with impotence. Under the impact of that tension, these affects assume the form of *ressentiment*" (Scheler, 1961, p. 20).

Scheler thinks *ressentiment* emerges whenever the subject of a negative emotion is incapable of either acting on the emotion or even expressing it, thereby "discharging'' the emotion. The situations in which inability of this kind leads to *ressentiment* are "lasting situations which are felt to be 'injurious' but beyond one's control—in other words, the more the injury is experienced as a destiny" (Scheler, 1961, p. 8). Scheler also observes that "this psychological dynamite will spread with the *discrepancy* between the political, constitutional, or traditional status of a group and its *factual* power" (Scheler, 1961, p. 7), when members of a social group or class experience a status loss in society. Salmela and von Scheve (2017) note that the threat of a status loss can trigger the same psychological processes as an actual loss. From this perspective, experiences of impotence and inferiority resulting from emotions felt as injuries or insults are perhaps more important drivers of *ressentiment* than the identity of particular emotions to which these feelings associate.

Even so, it seems some emotions fit this role better than others. Scheler highlights two sources of *ressentiment*: the desire for revenge on the one hand, and envy, jealousy, and competitive urge on the other. We have already observed revenge is an action tendency of anger rather than an independent emotion. More specifically, Scheler speaks of an inefficacious anger whose action tendency of revenge must be repressed, with ensuing feelings of impotence and powerlessness. Envy and jealousy involve these feelings as part of their phenomenology, as they are experienced when another person has something we covet (envy), or threatens to rob us from something we possess (jealousy). Scheler specifies that envy "leads to *ressentiment* when the coveted values are such as cannot be acquired and lie in the sphere in which we compare ourselves to others" (Scheler, 1961, p. 9). He observes that constant comparisons elicit and reinforce "oppressive feelings of inferiority" exacerbated by the "system of free competition" in society. Therefore:

> *Ressentiment* must be strongest in a society like ours, where approximately equal rights (political and otherwise) or formal social equality, publicly recognized, go hand in hand with wide factual differences in power, property, and education. While each has the "right" to compare himself with everyone else, he cannot do so in fact. (Scheler, 1961, pp. 7–8).

Even if Scheler wrote these words over a century ago, his analysis strikes one as surprisingly timely. The contemporary liberal "rhetoric of rising" promises success to everyone who, with an equal chance, works hard to develop one's skills and talents. However, not everyone can win, and individuals can blame only themselves if they lose in the competition for meritorious positions, with resulting

feelings of humiliation and resentment (Sandel, 2020)—two emotions that we recognize as a driver and an outcome of *ressentiment*.

Another possible driver of *ressentiment* along with envy is shame (Salmela & von Scheve, 2017). Shame is felt when the subject fails to live up to, or even minimally exemplify in behaviour, an important personal value often shared with others as a core constituent of a valued identity, such as a parent or partner or professional (Deonna et al., 2012; Salmela, 2019). Importantly, whereas in envy it is possible to denounce the value of a particular object without denouncing the value itself, thus engaging in only "weak *ressentiment*," shame by default comes with "strong *ressentiment*" because the only way to avoid it is to change one's values. Similar to envy, shame involves feelings of impotence, inferiority, and powerlessness. Moreover, shame is a stigmatized emotion in Western cultures where it is framed as deviant, despised, socially undesirable, and therefore inexpressible, associated with weakness, inferiority, defeat, and low status (Lewis, 1995; Walker, 2014). Due to the painfulness of shame and its strongly negative implications on the self, we are motivated to avoid and repress it, with the consequence it turns into anger (Lewis, 1971; Scheff, 1994; Turner, 2007). Finally, shame is another key emotion besides envy in competitive, meritocratic societies. "When individuals cannot meet expectations in encounters lodged in key institutional domains or are negatively sanctioned in these encounters, it is likely that they will experience shame" (Turner, 2007, p. 517). Turner argues shame felt in different institutional domains crops up and intensifies, increasing the pressure towards repression.

Having identified envy, shame, and inefficacious anger (and their adjacent feelings of impotence, inferiority and powerlessness that hurt the vulnerable self) as the affective drivers of *ressentiment,* the next question is which emotions are its outcomes. Scheler thinks *ressentiment* does not change the type of a repressed emotion so much as its intentionality from a locally focused emotion into a globally dispersed affective attitude. His example is conscious hatred of a particular person that through repression turns into a general negativism:

> [A repressed emotion] becomes more and more detached from any particular reason and at length even from any particular individual. First it may come to bear on any of my enemy's qualities, activities, or judgments and on any person, relation, object, or situation which is connected with him in any way at all. The impulse "radiates" in all directions. At last it may detach itself even from the man who has injured or oppressed me. Then it turns into a negative attitude towards certain apparent traits and qualities, no matter where or in whom they are found….When the repression is complete, the result is a general negativism—a sudden, violent, seemingly unsystematic and unfounded rejection of things, situations, or natural objects whose loose connection with the original cause of the hatred can only be discovered by a complicated analysis. (Scheler, 1961, p. 21)

We suggest "general negativism" here is best understood as a sentiment manifesting as other-directed negative emotions such as anger and hatred as well as an anti-stance of rejection towards various things and objects perceived as insulting or injurious. The dissociation of qualities from the original objects of emotion and their re-association with other objects after repression explains how Scheler is able to talk about anger and hatred both as drivers of *ressentiment* and as its outcomes.

There are reasons to believe anger and hatred are, similarly to resentment and indignation, more often outcomes of *ressentiment* than its drivers. None of these emotions—inefficacious anger excluded—involves the feelings of impotence, powerlessness and inferiority we have identified as central to the phenomenology of the drivers of *ressentiment.* By contrast, they involve the perspective of moral superiority or righteousness, even when the subject is incapable of removing the felt "injury" or "injustice" by acting on and/or expressing the emotion, as is the case in hatred (see Aeschbach, 2017). There is evidence that hatred emerges through consecutive instances of anger in which the subject perceives he or she is not capable of influencing the insulting behaviour of the target of emotion which in hatred is appraised as immoral, malicious, and incapable of change (Fischer et al., 2018; Halperin, 2008; Salice, 2020; Szanto, 2019). Aeschbach (2017, pp. 146–153) observes that blaming others allows the person of *ressentiment* to discharge and express the repressed hostile emotions, especially envy, in the form of moral emotions, resentment and indignation, which also counterbalance a damaged sense of self-worth with positive feelings of moral superiority.

Yet the new values of a person of *ressentiment* rest on self-deception, which maintains a tension and the need to reinforce the new values and the associated emotions, again and again. Scheler and his philosophical interpreters typically explain this tension by adopting a realist view of values as objectively existing qualities perceivable by an intuitive faculty these theorists call "value feeling" (*Wertfühlen*). Irrespective of whether a mental act of this kind is possible, and whether there are mind-independent values in the first place, we suggest an alternative explanation to the tension and vacillation in the emotions of a person of *ressentiment,* drawing from psychoanalytic theorizing on defences while detailing the mechanism of *ressentiment* across four stages.

4. The four Stages of *Ressentiment*: Psychic Economy and Defences

In our model, the triggering, initiating, advancing, and consolidating stages of *ressentiment* have idiosyncratic

duration and contain specific defences depending on an individual's psychic capacities. We approach defences as a toolset individuals employ to deal with mental pain. The combination of defensive coping strategies individuals adopt is idiosyncratic and depends on their levels of ego-strength and identity integration at that particular time in their lives (Cramer, 1991).

Ego-strength refers to one's psychic capacity to transcend impulsive action, develop self-control and self-reflection, overcome one's illusions, cope with stress and resolve conflicts (Carveth, 2018; A. Freud, 1936). Because ego-strength helps individuals maintain a cohesive sense of self-identity, it is directly linked to identity integration. Lack of ego-strength (i.e., ego-deficit) can display as self-deception, difficulty with reality testing, lack of cohesive identity, and emotion dysregulation (Erikson, 1959; A. Freud, 1936; Vaillant, 1993). It follows that the defences individuals adopt have a psychic cost expended in order to sustain them, or these defences break down; furthermore, individuals' efforts to sustain particular defences can overtime compromise ego-strength (A. Freud, 1936; S. Freud, 1894). High ego-strength is associated with the deployment of adaptive (mature, high order) defences which promote self-realization. These are the "good mental coping habits" (like creativity, humour, altruism, and sublimation) enhancing psychosocial development. Although individuals cope the best they can, some coping habits can be destructive. Maladaptive (immature, low order) defences are the "bad mental coping habits" which provide comfort through self-deception and distortion of reality, can turn the individual against itself, and can be socially unacceptable (Cramer, 1991; Erikson, 1959; A. Freud, 1936; Klein, 1958; Vaillant, 1993). The above invites us to consider the psychic economy of *ressentiment* by focusing on the ego-strength capacities of individuals, and identify the defences which can fend off *ressentiment* and those which advance it.

The *triggering stage* involves repeated experiences of deprivation, loss, and failure resulting in frustration. But these do not necessarily lead to *ressentiment*. We argue individuals have the psychic capacity to manage frustrations and negative emotions through adaptive defences when their ego-strength is high. Sublimation, humour, altruism, and suppression are (mostly) conscious processes regularly employed by individuals to alleviate suffering by deflecting stress and mitigating unresolved conflicts (Cramer, 2015). Because these defences strengthen the emotional integrity of the individual and are liberating from mental pain, they are associated with adaptive functioning. We expect the self-reproaching feelings of inferiority or impotence to not be pronounced, the frustrating event to not be perceived primarily as an attack to the self, and *ressentiment* to be fended off, when frustration and mental suffering can be sublimated, temporarily suppressed, or addressed with humour.

The *initiating stage* starts with failing to deal with conflict-generating realities, either because ego-strength is depleted and adaptive defences break down, or because an underdeveloped self cannot deploy adaptive defences in the first place. The first step is a psychic regression, a return to a vulnerable psychological state. According to A. Freud (1936) when individuals regress, mental pain takes the form of anxiety, depression, fear, anger, envy, shame, pining. We note that envy, shame, and inefficacious anger, the emotional foundations of the victimhood axis, present repeated failures as attacks to the self, making the possibility of a positive outcome untenable. We argue that in the initiating stage defences aim to mentally bypass the negative affects by distorting facts and reality. Individuals engage in *ressentiment* *not* because of a pathological need or malevolence, but because they seek to rid themselves from the emotional pain caused by feelings of impotence and inferiority, and the embarrassing thoughts of the self as unworthy. In essence, *ressentiment* aims at ending this *repetition of failure* and its associated feelings through transvaluating. In this stage, we identify affective and cognitive defensive manoeuvres whereby the individual (1) dislocates negative affects from cognitions and evaluations that feed those affects (through repression of affect and isolation/dissociation), and (2) reattaches these affects to other cognitions and evaluations (through displacement/substitution and reaction formation/reversal).

"Dislocation defences" in *ressentiment* involve the repression of affect and the dissociation of cognitions. Repression targets emotions, preventing from making conscious the disturbing feelings attached to frustrating thoughts (memories, wishes, ideas). Repression requires ego-strength to be maintained and when it breaks down, "the return of the repressed" manifests as generalised anxiety, dysfunctional behaviour or somatization (A. Freud, 1936). Scheler (1961, p. 49) argues that *ressentiment* contains the repression of the vindictiveness and the repression of the imagination of vengeance, while Demertzis (2020) notes the repression of the object of desire (p. 127), and the repression of negative emotions (p. 133). Dissociation/isolation targets cognitive elements, whereby the individual isolates frustrations in one aspect of their life or the self, leaving other aspects relatively unscathed (Freud, 1936). The value of dissociation is acknowledged in *ressentiment* (Demertzis, 2020). By placing the thoughts of one's inability to attain a goal in separate mental compartments not allowed to meet, the *ressentimentful* individual expends ego-strength to avoid dealing with mental pain.

"Reattachment defences" in *ressentiment* involve displacement and reaction formation. Displacement (substitution) of affect redirects negative affect to a more acceptable object, either outward towards an external object (generating anger), or inward towards the self (generating shame) when it is not possible to displace outward. The original object is substituted outward with an external object or substituted inward with the self (A. Freud, 1936). Several scholars highlight the impotence and weakness of those who turn their negative

affect, related to their repeated failure, towards a weaker target (Aeschbach, 2017; Demertzis, 2020; Nietzsche, 1961; Scheler, 1961; Ure, 2014). We make a distinction here between this short-lived displacement of negative affect at available surrogate objects experienced in this initiating stage of *ressentiment* vs. the chronic and vengeful resentment at *any* scapegoats perceived as fundamentally evil and/or persecutory, present at the advancing stage of *ressentiment.* This, we think corresponds to the "weak vs. strong *ressentiment*" distinction by Aeschbach (2017).

Reaction formation, another reattachment defence, blends the repression of the original rejected affect or desire, with the exaggeration of its direct opposite. The individual no longer feels anxious, but confident; it is not uncertain, but certain; it is not weak, but strong. The value of reaction formation in *ressentiment* is already acknowledged (Demertzis, 2020), however we note a crucial point: Its exaggerated affective opposition can be expressed as *intense antipathy* towards the coveted and unattainable object (in envy) or one's valued identity (in shame), but also as *intense preoccupation* with this object or identity, to overcompensate for hatred towards it. We argue this less appreciated function of reaction formation noted by Freud (1936) is the reason behind the almost obsessive preoccupation of the *ressentimentful* individual with victimhood: The original rejected emotions (anxiety, feelings of impotence, powerlessness, worthlessness) are repressed but persist unconsciously, and exaggeration is accompanied by compulsive preoccupation with the unattainable object or identity. While reaction formation aims at the disavowal of the desired object or valued identity, it actually feeds feelings of injury and worthlessness.

Rationalization is another defensive manoeuvre and involves the cognitive distortion of facts to make a failure less threatening. In *ressentiment*, the fox explains its failure to reach the grapes because the ground is too soft, or the vine too high. The grapes' value is not altered yet, but the rationale of the failure is comfortably reinterpreted. This defence is achieved by inventing seemingly plausible reasons why something happened, and in *ressentiment* it can create a cycle of self-deception, not addressing the original problem, but mitigating its frustration (Aeschbach, 2017, p. 161).

The short-term advantage of these largely unconscious and partially adaptive defences is that they find side ways to deal with conflict and mental pain. Their long-term cost is that they compromise individuals' capacity to adapt to reality (S. Freud, 1894). We argue that these defences can delay the advancement of *ressentiment* for individuals with sufficient ego-strength, if adopted short-term. If adopted long-term, these defences can turn maladaptive and erode ego-strength further, because they do not allow individuals to see the issues they face. This is where we identify the transition between the initiating stage that displays as "weak *ressentiment*," and the advancing stage that displays as "strong *ressentiment*." For as long as partially adaptive defences can be sustained as "temporary fixes," making use of ego-strength capacities, the mechanism of *ressentiment* remains initiating. The mental pain, temporarily evaded, periodically returns compromising the individual's ego-strength. Our developing argument is that when ego-strength is *eventually* depleted, these defences collapse, and *ressentiment* moves to its next stage.

The *advancing stage* of *ressentiment* engages the transvaluation, offering a long-lasting, even chronic, way around the frustrating conflicts. The "old self" is denied (imagine the fox claiming it was never a weak/impotent fox; rather it renounced its pursuit on its own free will); what was valued in the coveted object or one's identity is denied (the grapes were always sour, only losers want these grapes); the "new self" and the "new values" are now "all good" and those perceived as responsible for the failures of the "old self" are "all bad." These are signs that the *ressentimentful* individual has lost the ability to engage with internal and external objects as "whole" (having both good *and* bad aspects). The *ressentimentful* individual holds the firm belief these "spiteful others" are aggressive, hostile, and vengeful, they feel hatred, destructive envy, and anger. In response the *ressentimentful* individual feels a strong sense of injustice and hypervigilance in its morally elevated victimhood.

In the above, we identify the denial of facts, splitting, and projection, defences which are considered developmentally simple and cognitively undemanding (A. Freud, 1936). When ego-strength is weak or depleted, it is possible to sustain defences which require fewer psychic resources (Klein, 1958). The denial of facts (to be distinguished from repression of affect) is a simple psychic manoeuvre involving the negation of a fact by employing a fantasy. Splitting (Klein, 1959) involves the simplification of reality into all-bad and all-good objects. Adaptive and developmentally essential in infancy, splitting is problematic in adult life which presupposes the recognition the world and the self are not "only good" or "only bad" (Klein, 1958). Simply put, as one matures, one gradually learns to engage with objects as whole (having both good *and* bad aspects) and tolerate the ambivalent feelings (e.g., love and hatred) one experiences when relating to others. The *ressentimenful* individual, we argue, splits the world into "only good" or "only bad" parts, failing to relate to itself and to others as whole objects. In this stage, we also see projection as responsible for the persecutory anxiety of the *ressentimentful* individual*,* which is deeper than the temporary venting of one's anger by blaming weak targets (the displacement defence in the initiating stage). Studies in psychology outline the key feature of projection: All the bad and painful for the self is projected out (Bion, 1957; Klein, 1959). When the bad parts of the *ressentimentful* self are seen in "the other," the *ressentimentful* individuals feel they are not hateful or hostile; the "others" are.

As the *advancing stage* completes, we see the first stage of "ego-fragmentation": The *ressentimentful*

individual is isolated from its sense of self, its original values, and the conflict-generating reality. The employed maladaptive defences impair one's ability to relate to one's self and the world by compromising reality testing. Thus, we argue, *ressentiment* offers a solution, not a resolution: The individual has no other means of dealing with its already compromised vision of psychic reality but avoiding it, unable to confront it, or resolve it. The originally impotent self is replaced by an "all-good new self" and what was valued in the unattainable object or one's valued identity is compensated by new values. Whereas in the *initiating stage* partially-adaptive defences provide temporary solutions, in the *advancing stage*, through transvaluation, we see the radical and long-lasting distortion of an inconvenient and painful reality.

Ressentiment is not complete until the *consolidating stage*, whereby "ego-fragmentation" and the outcomes of transvaluation are sustained through social interactions with peer-others. We note that such social interactions have a dual function: They regenerate psychic capacities through validation and confirmation, providing resistance to the return of the repressed, and offer recurrent opportunities to displace old and new envy and frustrations onto enemy-others. Adding to scholars who see social sharing as the opportunity to validate substituted values (Latif et al., 2018; Posłuszna & Posłuszny, 2015; Salmela & von Scheve, 2017), we stress that social sharing also, and primarily, validates the "new self" through mirroring and idealizing in the interactions with peer-others.

Studies in psychology identify idealization and mirroring as two central needs towards psychic development (Kohut, 1984; Winnicott, 1971) and note how relationships with peers serve as an "identity kit" in social interactions (Laing, 1961, p. 70). We see important parallels when the *ressentimentful* individual comes in contact with peer-others: Mirroring provides recognition and reinforces the superficial "new self" feeling pride rather than shame, satisfaction rather than disappointment, being somebody rather than nobody, counting for something rather than nothing. We argue that, in this stage, defences of introjection and projection are in a steady feedback loop, reinforcing the establishment of the "new self" and maintaining "ego-fragmentation."

With introjection, the idealised "all-good" peer-others are taken in the "new self" in an illusion of superiority. We argue that the *ressentimentful* individual, unable to have a realistic appreciation of the peers and the self seen as "part-good, part-bad," feels depleted in self-comparison with the "all-good" peers. We use the concept of "unconscious envy" borrowing from Klein (1958). We theorise that the *ressentimentful* individual, perceiving the peers as "all-good" providers of "goodness" by association, experiences anxiety of not being "as good" as them.

Furthermore, this "all-good, all-bad" comes in moral terms and reinforces the identity of *righteous* victimhood experienced in *ressentiment* (Hoggett, 2018). However, we suggest an identity based on victimhood is *hollow* insofar as it is founded on the precarious "new self." Therefore, when the sharing of a collective identity of victimhood stops, the *ressentimentful* individual loses the mirrors giving it a reference point and experiences the mental pain of feeling again worthless and alone.

5. Beyond the Self: The Political Implications of Bonding Through *Ressentiment*

Social sharing of the transformed values and emotions reinforces them providing a sense of warrant or objectivity (Smith et al., 2007). It also facilitates the emergence of other shared emotions such as group pride and feelings of togetherness, supporting social cohesion and solidarity within the group bonded by *ressentiment.* To share an emotion, its intentional target typically has to be generalized. Thus, resentment, anger, or hatred emerging from *ressentiment*, target groups whose members are perceived to possess common negative characteristics, or target individuals (political leaders, celebrities) associated with such groups. Scheler observes negative attitudes towards traits and qualities are detached from their original targets and become attached to targets of negative attitudes wherever they are found. Scheler also recognizes the importance of social sharing in *ressentiment*. However, it is Nietzsche who emphasizes the role of social sharing most among both classic and contemporary theorists of *ressentiment* (yet see Katsafanas, in press):

> All the sick and sickly strive instinctively for a herd-organization, out of a longing to shake off dull lethargy and the feeling of weakness: the ascetic priest senses this instinct and promotes it; wherever there are herds, it is the instinct of weakness that has willed the herd and the cleverness of the priests that has organized it. For it should not be overlooked: the strong are as naturally inclined to strive to be apart as the weak are to strive to be together. (Nietzsche, 1885/1961, pp. 100–101)

Nietzsche argues the ascetic priests regulate the emotions of the *ressentimentful* individuals. Priests direct hatred and vengefulness towards "the rich, the noble and powerful," claiming "you are eternally wicked, cruel, lustful, insatiate, godless, you will also be eternally wretched, cursed and damned!" (Nietzsche, 1885/1961, p. 17). Priests also make the weak and suffering individuals blame themselves for their condition by inventing *sin* as an explanation for their suffering and *guilt* as an emotional antidote to sin. This way, priests are invaluable regulators of the emotions emerging from *ressentiment*.

We see structurally similar dynamics in contemporary reactionary political movements driven by *ressentiment*: blaming scapegoats such as political and cultural elites, immigrants, refugees, the long-term unemployed, for the victimization of the ingroup; turning

ressentiment-mediated moral emotions of anger, resentment, and hatred towards these groups; the influence and suggestion of charismatic leaders whose affective rhetoric effectively contributes to their supporters' emotion regulation (Kazlauskaite & Salmela, 2021; Salmela & von Scheve, 2017). Sharing of other-directed negative emotions in social interaction reinforces *and* validates these emotions. It also gives rise to positive collective emotions such as pride and moral righteousness about shared victim identities of those united in anger and resentment (Turner, 2007). Shared moral emotions are empowering, and remaining feelings of inferiority and powerlessness can be refashioned as manifestations of moral victimhood. When collective pride comes with prejudice and hostility towards outgroups, it qualifies as hubristic (Sullivan & Day, 2019), and promotes collective narcissism (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). This link between collective narcissism and *ressentiment* is explored in Capelos et al. (2021).

A similar dynamic applies to hatred emerging from repressed inefficacious anger: the interpretation of hatred as group-based allows its sharing. This may explain why hatred tends to generalize to groups even if it would originate from individual-level anger. Collectivization of hatred is so common, several authors have argued it to be the paradigmatic type of hatred (see, e.g., Szanto, 2019). Moreover, shared hatred reinforces the collective identity of victimhood and the associated feelings of togetherness, rendering the experience of shared hatred predominantly, if not entirely, pleasant. In the contemporary world, emotional sharing may occur offline and online as social media offers venues for cultivating collective anger, hatred and positive collective emotions about shared social identities.

6. Conclusions

We have argued *ressentiment* is an emotional mechanism centred on victimhood and has two objects: the self and the unattainable object or one's valued identity. The function of *ressentiment* is the evasion of mental pain emerging from negative feelings targeting the vulnerable self through transvaluation of the self from inferior, failing, a loser, into a noble, pious, and superior victim, and of an unattainable object or valued identity into an undesired one. In these transvaluations, *ressentiment* employs largely idiosyncratic defences depending on the individual's ego-strength. *Ressentiment* is driven by envy, shame, and inefficacious anger, with their associated feelings of inferiority and impotence. With a transvaluation these negative emotions are projected towards "all-bad'' others in the form of resentment, indignation, and hatred, and are reinforced and validated by social sharing and introjection of "all-good" peers.

We understand the combination of defences in *ressentiment* as a "corkscrew," its helix gripping into the layers of an injured and poorly integrated self. A response to real frustrations and unbearable suffering, *ressentiment* has a high cost for the individual in the long run as it does not provide actual fulfilment through resolution of the original problems. The *ressentimentful* individual cannot tolerate frustrations, maintain hope, bear delays in gratification, acknowledge the disjunction between reality and self-deception, recognize oneself and others as both good and bad, and avoid despairing. The corkscrew of *ressentiment* produces individuals whose psychology brings to mind the words of Laing (1961, p. 133): "With no real future of their own, they may be in that supreme despair which is, as Kierkegaard says, not to know they are in despair."

We end by elaborating the political implications of *ressentiment*. This emotional mechanism constitutes the affective core of *reactionism*, a long-lasting political orientation bundling anti-preferences, resentful affect, and the desire to break away from the present and reinstate a status quo ante (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018; Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018), what Bauman (2017) called "Retrotopia." *Ressentiment* is key for understanding reaction: It transforms citizens' conventional right or left political orientations to backward-oriented values, which can be expressed as anti-preferences, intolerance towards outgroups and minorities, and dormant support for illegal and violent actions (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018; Capelos et al., 2017; Godwin & Trischler, 2021; Mayer & Nguyen, 2021; Sullivan, 2021).

Besides motivating hostility towards outgroups (Kiss, 2021; Sullivan, 2021), *ressentiment* constitutes a volatile basis for ingroup dynamics. The *ressentimentful* individual has hollow peer relationships, seeking peers' recognition of the "new self" while defensively suspecting them. Since the desire for recognition is important, the suspicion remains latent and unconscious, to avoid being torn between opposite motives. Still the suspicion is there, corroding the twinship bond of *ressentiment*. We see its manifestations in reactionist political movements whose interpersonal bonds flare up into bitter feuds between fractions whose members accuse each other as traitors of the common cause. The ease in which these abrupt and violent rifts emerge indicates the latent suspicion of others is dormant. Gronfeldt et al. (2021) highlight the propensity of collective narcissists to sacrifice in-group members to defend the image of their group, and Szanto (in press) identifies phenomena of "fraternity-terror" and internal threat in fanatics' groups. These findings beg further exploration and can be illuminated by the systematic understanding of the emotional mechanism of *ressentiment* in the context of grievance politics.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Islamist and Nativist Reactionary Radicalisation in Europe

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Abstract

In this article, the term "radicalisation" is discussed as a process that appears to be a defensive and reactionary response of various individuals suffering from social, economic, and political forms of exclusion, subordination, alienation, humiliation, and isolation. To that effect, the article challenges the mainstream understanding of radicalisation. In doing so, the work concentrates on the elaboration of reactionary radicalisation processes of self-identified Muslim youth and self-identified native youth residing in Europe. The main reason behind the selection of these two groups is the assumption that both groups are co-radicalizing each other in the contemporary world that is defined by the ascendance of a civilizational political discourse since the war in the Balkans in the 1990s. Based on the findings of in-depth interviews conducted with youngsters from both groups in Belgium, France, Germany, and the Netherlands, the work demonstrates that the main drivers of the radicalisation processes of these two groups cannot be explicated through the reproduction of civilizational, cultural, and religious differences. Instead, the drivers of radicalisation for both groups are very identical as they are both socio-economically, politically, and psychologically deprived of certain elements constrained by the flows of globalization and dominant forms of neo-liberal governance.

Keywords

asabiyya; deprivation; honour; Islamophobia; justice; nativism; populism; radicalisation

Issue

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1. Introduction

In this article, the term "radicalisation" will be discussed from an interdisciplinary perspective as a process that appears to be a defensive and reactionary response of various individuals suffering from the detrimental effects of modernisation and globalisation such as social, economic, and political forms of exclusion, subordination, alienation, and isolation. Following the theoretical interventions from within sociology, politics, anthropology, geography and psychology, the article will challenge the mainstream understanding of radicalisation. In doing so, referring to the three-fold classification of radicalisation by Craig Calhoun, the article will concentrate on the elaboration of reactionary radicalisation processes of Islamic youth and right-wing populist native youth residing in Europe. The work will also rely on the theoretical interventions of Charles Tilly on the three forms of collective mobilization with a particular focus on a defensive form of mobilization, which is likely to be more explanatory for the Islamist and nativist youth mobilisation in contemporary Europe. Last but not least, the article will also benefit from the works of various psychology scholars such as Gordon W. Allport and Henri Tajfel who tend to put the emphasis on socio-economic characteristics to understand the root causes of radicalisation. In parallel with the former perspectives in sociology and politics, this strand of psychology draws attention to socio-economic deprivation and grievance as the main drivers of radicalisation of both youth groups (Maskaliūnaitė, 2015).

This article claims that it is conceivable to perceive the rise of both Islamist and right-wing nativist-populist forms of expressions among some youth groups in Europe as a radical stance against different manifestations of modernisation and globalisation. The term "Islamist" is used in the text to address those youngsters

with Muslim background, who are becoming politically more engaged in identifying themselves with Islam in the age of growing anti-Muslim racism. In this regard, Islamism becomes for these youngsters more than merely a "religion" in the narrow sense of theological belief, private prayer, and ritual worship, and also serves as a reactionary way of life with guidance for political, economic, and social behaviour. To that effect, Islamism of such young individuals is differentiated from the ideology of those participants in violent extremist and terrorist groups (i.e., Al-Qaeda, ISIS). The term "nativist" is used throughout the text to refer to those self-identified native youngsters who are explicitly expressing their feelings of socio-economic, spatial, and nostalgic deprivation caused by ongoing deindustrialisation, unemployment, poverty, and diversity. In this sense, the term does not include those who are engaged in white supremacist extremist groups (i.e., Identitarian Movement, Combat-18, and the Soldiers of Odin). The main premise of the article is that self-identified young Muslims manifest their reactionary radicalisation by revitalizing the 14th-century Khaldunian notion of *asabiyya* based on the instrumentalisation of honour, generating unconventional forms of political participation and resisting intersectional forms of discrimination while self-identified native youngsters are more likely to become nostalgic, nationalist, Islamophobic, and anti-multiculturalist. Such a premise does not of course exclude the probability that both groups might also be influenced by other ideological and societal drivers.

The article will elaborate reactionary radicalism from both theoretical and empirical findings driven from the ongoing research, which is designed to give a more nuanced explanation of radicalisation with a focus on both migrant-origin young people who identify themselves as Muslim (hereafter, "Muslims") and young people who self-identify as natives in certain European cities in which extreme-right is particularly strong (hereafter, "natives"). Brussels, Cologne, Berlin, Paris, and Amsterdam were chosen to interview Turkish and Moroccan-origin youths while Aalst, Lyon, Dresden, and Rotterdam were cities selected to interview right-wing native youths. In each city, around 20 interviews were conducted with each group of youngsters in native languages by native researchers working under the supervision of the author, the principal investigator. The total number of interviews conducted in these cities in the first round of the fieldwork in 2020 was 160. The former group of cities was chosen because of the relatively high-number of Muslim-origin residents, while the latter was chosen because of their remoteness to the political centres. By asking a set of open-ended questions inquiring about demographic and socio-economic aspects of everyday life, interaction with members of the neighbourhood, conventional and non-conventional forms of political participation, multiculturalism, diversity, mobility, spatial elements, and globalisation, the purpose of the interviews was to understand the root causes of their reactionary nativist or Islamist radicalisation. Based on the theoretical and empirical findings of the same research, the article provides a comparative account on reactionism in Europe by focusing on the case of radicalised youth, and how radicalising Muslim and native youth groups mutually feed of each other. Since the interview questions specifically focused on demographic, socio-economic, environmental, and local aspects of everyday life without falling into the culturalist trap, it is assumed that the results of this study can be broadly applicable to many different types of young people or situations.

The main reason behind the selection of Muslim youth and native youth residing in Europe is the fact that some segments of both groups are co-radicalising each other in the contemporary world since September 11, 2001 (Obaidi et al., 2018). The term co-radicalisation is mostly used in psychology literature, and it is derived from the observation that intergroup hostility generates intergroup conflict, or increases existing ones, through ideological extremization (Pyszczynski et al., 2008). These intergroup conflicts that are currently experienced at symbolic level through the media have a propensity to perpetuate themselves through cycles of reciprocal threat, violence and/or extremization (Kunst et al., 2016). The work assumes that the main drivers of the radicalisation processes of these two groups cannot be explicated through the reproduction of civilisational, cultural, and religious discourses. Instead, the drivers of radicalisation in both groups are very identical as they are socio-economically, politically, and psychologically deprived of certain elements constrained by the flows of globalization and dominant forms of neo-liberal governance.

2. History of the Term Radicalisation

Though the term "radicalisation" is mostly associated with Islamist and white-supremacist groups nowadays, it has been in circulation for several centuries. Let us take a look at the history of the term now. Defining radicalisation has been problematic within social sciences. Radicalisation implies a direct support or enactment of radical behaviour and therefore begs the question: How does one define radical behaviour? As social sciences have grown ever more interest in understanding and explaining contextual and societal nuances cross-culturally, what appears to be radical or core truth becomes very difficult to answer.

The term "radical" comes from the Latin word of *radix* (root) while the term "radicalisation" literally means the process of "going back to the roots." "Radical" refers to roots of plants, words, or numbers. Early modern thinkers used the term "radical" when they talked about foundations, fundaments, or first principles (Calhoun, 2011). The mainstream definition of "radicalism," such as the one given in the Oxford dictionary, sees it as "the beliefs or actions of people who

advocate thorough or complete political or social reform" (Radicalism, n.d.). The term "radical" was already used in the 18th century, and it is often linked to the Enlightenment and the French and American revolutions of that period. The term became more popular in 19th century only, when it often referred to a political agenda advocating thorough social and political reform. In this sense, radicalism comprised of secularism, pro-democratic components, pluralist, and even equalitarian demands such as egalitarian citizenship and universal suffrage (Bötticher, 2017; Maskaliūnaitė, 2015, p. 13). Afterwards, an association between radicalisation and left-wing violence was maintained in the second half of the 20th century, throughout the 1960s, to designate civil rights activists and rioters of the May 68 uprisings. It is only from the years 2000 and especially 2010 that the word "radicalisation" started to change in its current meaning as a process leading to violent action in general, especially with regards to Islamist terrorism (Khosrokhavar, 2014).

Referring to the work of Huyssen (1995) that is discussing the age of amnesia, some scholars such as Kansteiner (2002, pp. 192–193) and Lowenthal (2015), draw our attention to the fact that collective memory may quickly pass into oblivion without shaping the historical imagination of any individual or social group. Nowadays, for many, "the past that antedates their own lived experiences is dead and gone and therefore irrelevant. They assume the past to be a foreign country disconnected from their own country, the present" (Lowenthal, 2015, p. 592). Thus, in such an internet age, it becomes pertinent for many individuals to forget about the earlier facts, debates, events, and concepts which antedates their own lived experiences. It is highly likely that many individuals have disremembered that there were also radicals before who made the world a better, more democratic, and more pluralist place. It should be because of this forgetfulness, many political opponents of radicals tend to portray them as violent revolutionaries as a first attempt to psychologize political opposition for status-quo maintaining purposes (Sartori, 1984).

This brief historical and conceptual overview is expected to lead us to make two points. First, the historicity of the notion of radicalisation seems to be entangled with concerns of denouncing threats to the status quo and political ideologies that might cause change in any kind. The plasticity of this notion combined with this strong system justification feature might paradoxically inform us more about the characteristics of groups that use this notion and those of their targets. This may lead us to the second point. Seen through these lenses, the post-September 11 use of the term "radicalisation" to designate almost exclusively violent political actions stemming from Jihadist groups such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda might indicate that the past left-wing utopias have now lost to Islamism being perceived by individuals as the only viable counter-hegemonic utopia in the age of globalization.

3. Social, Economic and Political Root-Causes of Radical Mobilisation

As Gurr (1969) pointed out earlier angry people rebel. Some youngsters become increasingly angry and radicalised as a result of a variety of root causes. No consensus emerged on the root causes of radicalisation. Competing narratives co-existed from its inception between socio-economic and political marginalization and grievances on the one hand and ideological motivations on the other hand. In the aftermath of September 11, the term radicalisation became intertwined with "recruitment" by extremists, who try to persuade these angry individuals to join their war (Coolsaet, 2019). Those who recruit these angry individuals may be both Islamist extremists (e.g., ISIS, Al Qaeda, and Boko Haram) and white-supremacist extremists (e.g., Identitarian Movement, Combat-18, and the Soldiers of Odin; CEP, 2019). In the meantime, some other terms, such as "self-radicalisation," "flash radicalisation," and "instant radicalisation," were also added into the vocabulary of radicalisation since it appeared that one could also develop into a violent extremist through kinship and friendship networks (Coolsaet, 2019). Such a vocabulary can be extended even more. However, one needs to benefit from an interdisciplinary perspective to understand the root causes of radicalisation without causing a confusion with regard to the meanings of the terms such as radicalisation, extremism, and terrorism. This confusion can be resolved by analysing the socio-economic, political, spatial, and psychological drivers of radicalisation. To that effect, some earlier interventions made in the disciplines of sociology, politics, anthropology, geography, and psychology could be beneficial in understanding the root-causes of radicalisation as well as the ways in which radicalising individuals mobilise themselves.

Focusing on the early 19th century social movements, Calhoun (2011) makes a three-fold classification of radicalism: philosophical radicalism, tactical radicalism, and reactionary radicalism. *Philosophical radicalism of theorists* was about penetrating to the roots of society with rational and analytical programs to understand the structural transformation of the public sphere. *Tactical radicalism of activists* was mainly about their search for immediate change that required the use of violence and other extreme actions to achieve it. Finally, *reactionary radicalism of those* suffering from the detrimental effects of modernization was more about their quest for saving what they valued in communities and cultural traditions from eradication by capitalism. These categories are not mutually exclusive. Following this line of thinking, the leaders of the Reformation were radicals as they claimed to take back what was essential to Christianity from the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church. In philosophy, René Descartes was radical in his attempt to analyse knowledge by thinking through its elementary conditions anew. In everyday life, there were also radical individuals

who challenged hierarchical order by judging basic matters for them—guided by their divine inner light, senses, and reason (Calhoun, 2011).

Radicalism cannot be understood as a stable ideological position. Ideas that are radical at some point could be liberal or even conservative for another. Liberals and democrats of the 19th century were the radicals of their age. It is no longer possible to call them as such. The 1968 generation was also radical in the sense that they challenged the patriarchal socio-political order. The radicals of the 1968 generation were different from the radicals of the 19th century. Similarly, the radicals of the present are also very different from the former ones. Departing from the theory of social movements, Calhoun (2011) claims that the defence of tradition by nationalist, nativist, populist, and/or religious groups has also become a radical stance today. He even continues to suggest that this sort of populism and conservatism "has been important to struggles for democracy, for inclusion in the conditions under which workers and small proprietors live" (Calhoun, 2011, p. 250).

Charles Tilly's explanation of collective action is also instrumental for social scientists to better understand the distinctive characteristics of mobilization at present time, and radical mobilisation in this case. He makes distinctions among three different forms of mobilization: *defensive*, *offensive*, and *preparatory*. *Defensive mobilization* is often bottom-up. A threat from outside such as globalism, capitalism, or injustice, induces the members of a group to pool their resources to fight of the enemy. Tilly classifies the radical food riots, tax rebellions, invasions of fields, and draft resistance in contemporary Europe as defensive forms of mobilization. One could also list nativist and Islamist youth mobilizations in the same cluster. *Offensive mobilization* is often top-down. This could be a political alliance between bourgeois and artisans to produce the Great Reform Bill of 1832 that introduced radical changes to electoral system of England and Wales (Tilly, 1977, p. 34). One could also argue that the new political alliances organized by some European right-wing populist parties among various social groups such as working-class groups, precarious groups, women, and LGBTI groups that generate a growing stream of Islamophobic sentiments, may also fall into this category (Kaya, 2019). Eventually, the last category of mobilization according to Tilly (1977) is *preparatory mobilization*, which is also a top-down one. In this kind of mobilization, the group pools resources in anticipation of future opportunities and threats. For instance, labour unions store some money to cushion hardships that may appear in the future in the form of unemployment, or loss of wages during a strike. This is a kind of proactive mobilization planned for future threats. Accordingly, one could argue that PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident), established first in Dresden, can be named as preparatory form of mobilization as they seek to protect the Occident from the Muslim "invasion" (Kaya, 2019).

There is also a strand of research in psychology which relies on socio-economic characteristics to understand the root causes of radicalisation. According to this strand, the main driver of radicalisation is the perception of *grievance*—conflicting identities, injustice, oppression, or socio-economic exclusion, for example—which can make people receptive to extremist ideas. Taarnby (2005) theorized that marginalization, alienation, and discrimination could be possible precursors to radicalisation as they already lack the sense of self-worth that is afforded by social connectedness. Global injustice has become more and more visible in the last three decades through the modern networks of communication. Civil war or deep-rooted conflicts, invasion and occupation by foreign military forces, economic underdevelopment, bad governance and corruption penetrating the state at all levels, rapid modernization, de-industrialization and technological developments such as the rise of internet and social media are all different kinds of factors which have fostered existing socio-economic inequalities (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2008). On top of marginalization and economic deprivation, lack of political opportunities is often added to such a list as well as social exclusion, disaffection of a religious/ethnic minority, wrongful foreign policy, etc. (Maskaliūnaitė, 2015, p. 20). Socio-economic grievances felt by various individuals may also feed in the competition of different social groups in a way that leads to the construction of group identification in the form of "in-groups" and "out-groups" (Allport, 1954; Tajfel, 1981).

4. Islamic Radicalisation: The Revival of Honour as a Response to Global Injustice

This section will elaborate the peculiarities of religious radicalisation with an emphasis on the ways in which some self-identified Muslim youngsters react to the perils of modernisation and globalisation. Religious and ethno-cultural resurgence may be interpreted as a symptom of existing structural social, economic, political, and psychological problems such as unemployment, racism, xenophobia, exclusion, assimilation, alienation, and anomie. Scientific data uncover that migrant-origin groups tend to affiliate themselves with politics of identity, ethnicity, religiosity, honour, culture, and sometimes violence in order to tackle such structural constraints (Clifford, 1987; Kaya, 2012).

Since the Gulf War in the early 1990s Islam has become a political instrument for many people in the world to be employed as a self-defence mechanism against different ills such as humiliation, subordination, exclusion, discrimination, injustice, and racism. Religion seems to be winning ground in the absence of a global leftist movement. De Certeau (1984, p. 183) reminds us of the discursive similarities between left and religion: left offering a *different future*, religion offering a *different world*, and both offering solidarity. Though the left and Islam both promise a different world to their adherents,

they radically differ from each other in the sense that the former offers a world that is not yet to come, and the latter offers a world that was already experienced in the past. To put it differently, the left offers a prospective world while Islam offers a retrospective one.

Some segments of the Muslim-origin youth in the West go through a crisis of home. While immigrants who are more integrated do not experience a great loss of significance as a result of discrimination, their less integrated peers suffer from isolation, alienation, and loss of significance (Lyons-Padilla et al., 2015). Lately, many young self-identified Muslims do not feel that they belong to their countries of settlement where they are bound to question whether they are accepted or not by the majority societies (Lyons-Padilla et al., 2015). During such critical junctures, aversion to the context in the country of settlement seems stronger than attraction to Syria, Palestine, Yemen, or the Middle East in general. In this sense, joining an organization or an association might offer a sense of belonging and purpose, and the promise of recognition and status for already marginalized Muslim youth who feel betwixt and between the positions constrained by social-economic, political, and legal arrangements alienating them from their country of settlement. As already discussed by van Gennep (1908) and Turner (1974) in different contexts, this kind of rite of passage might amplify liminal phase of being stateless and homeless as a sort of disaffiliation, after which a combative oath is taken in the form of re-grouping that clears the way for a reconstitution and re-affiliation of community of brotherhood (*ihkwaniyya*), or *umma* in a new re-imagined home called *Sham* (Levant, extending from the Antakya region of Turkey, through Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, and round to the Sinai peninsula in Egypt). For instance, such emblematic rituals in Syria foster newly found social bondage and self-identification (Alloul, 2019, p. 228). Under such circumstances, Syria or other Muslim countries under perceived siege, such as Palestine, Afghanistan, and Iraq, become a highly symbolic counter-space, or "consequential geography" for staging actual politics against a former home in Europe (Alloul, 2019, p. 229).

4.1. Unconventional Forms of Political Participation

Most of our self-identified Muslim interlocutors have often underlined their engagement in street demonstrations organised to show solidarity with their Muslim peers suffering in Palestine, Syria, Afghanistan, and Xinjiang Uyghur region of China. Almost all the Muslim youngsters interviewed, both men and women, have expressed their reluctance to join unconventional forms of political participation such as street demonstrations with only one exception. There were a small minority expressing their support for some street demonstrations organised by some native groups such as Yellow Vests demonstrations in France and Black Lives Matter demonstrations all over Europe. If the street demonstrations are about showing solidarity with the Muslims in the other parts of the world, then there is the strong tendency to actively take part in such demonstrations. The statement made by a 30-year-old-Moroccan male is exemplary in this sense. He said the following when asked what he thinks about taking part in street demonstrations:

> Before, there were more demonstrations, particularly on strictly political issues, linked to international news. When I was younger, I remember taking part in demonstrations for Palestine….We already felt that it was useless, but it allowed us to show our number, to show that there were many of us who were revolted by what was happening in Palestine. It allowed us to shout, to express our anger. (Interview conducted in Paris, 6 September 2020)

Islam is no longer simply a religion, but also a counter hegemonic global political movement, which prompts many Muslims to stand up for justice and against tyranny—whether in Palestine, Syria, Kashmir, Iraq, or Lebanon. They are more likely to set up a link between such perceived tyranny in remote Muslim lands and their countries of settlement that are somehow thought to be responsible for the subordination of their Muslim peers.

Radicalisation of Muslim-origin youngsters is a reaction to the ways in which they perceive to be subordinated by their countries of settlement, because radicalisation might provide them with an opportunity to build an imagined home away from the one that has become indifferent and alienating. Hence, Craig Calhoun's notion of reactionary radicalism fits very well into the ways in which the self-identified young Muslims in our research universe have expressed their discontent against the detrimental effects of globalisation and modernisation (Calhoun, 2011). Radicalisation then becomes a regime of justification and an alternative form of politics generated by some self-identified Muslim youth to protect themselves from day-to-day discrimination. In this sense, self-identified young Muslims generate a defensive form of mobilisation with the members of their communities (Tilly, 1977). They believe that speaking from the margins might be a more efficient strategy to be heard by the ones in the centre who have lost the ability to listen to the peripheral ones. As Young (2004, p. 5) pointed out it is not that "they" do not know how to speak (politics), "but rather that the dominant would not listen."

4.2. Resisting Intersectional Forms of Discrimination

Self-identified Muslim youngsters may use different symbols to hold onto while expressing their discontent against various forms of discrimination in everyday life such as anti-Muslim racism, or different manifestations of Islamophobia or anti-Muslim racism. Headscarf has increasingly become a symbol of resistance that is being employed by some young female Muslims to demonstrate their resistance and reaction against the increasing

manifestations of Islamophobia in everyday life. Muslim women are often victims of stereotyping, since their religious beliefs are seen as the only defining element of their identity in those European states where Islam is not the religion of the majority of the population. Unfortunately, media contribute to this phenomenon by reporting on Muslim women mainly as victims of so-called "tribal matters," "honour crimes," and "blood feuds" in relation to their clothing.

Self-identified Muslim women's clothing has continuously been linked with fundamentalism as a radical and undemocratic interpretation of Islam, which has in turn been linked with radicalisation and potential terrorism. Political debate and legislative action concerning Muslim women in Europe is mostly concentrated on the issues of the headscarf, and even more the integral veil, instead of focusing on non-discrimination and equal opportunities. The following testimony of a 22-year-old Muslim woman with Turkish origin in Berlin said the following when asked if she is interested in politics in everyday life:

> The discussion [is mostly] about whether the headscarf is being forcefully worn. Well, there are maybe some women who are forced to wear a headscarf. This occurs within a minority, but nobody talks to the majority [of Muslims who wear the headscarf by their own choice]. It is never about what we want. It's only about representing us as a target. If one doesn't talk to us, then one can't know what we want. This is because many Muslims are not interested in politics….Sometimes I get the impression that wearing a headscarf you are only allowed to take the low-skilled jobs, but not the high-skilled ones. That's a paradox. (Interview conducted in Berlin, 30 June 2020)

Our interlocutor addresses at the intersectionality of social divisions of class, gender, religion, and ethnicity (Crenshaw, 1991) in the case of different professions: The headscarf is not a problem if the woman at stake is working as cleaner, or taking care of children in a nursery, but it becomes an impediment in professions which require high skills. Like many other Muslim women, she believes that her individual freedom is restricted under the disguise of individual liberty imposed by the majority society. It is decided for her that she needs to be liberated from the headscarf which keeps her from "doing things." The paradox is that it is not the headscarf that keeps her from doing things, but a dominant regime of representation that is deemed to know better. In such a context, headscarf might become a symbol of resistance for Muslim women to demonstrate their discomfort by appropriating a symbol that is denied and rejected by the members of majority society.

Issues of intersectional discrimination among Muslim women and men have become even more complicated during the height of populism. Supporters of right-wing populist parties in Europe often share the same motivation: to stop foreign infiltration of Europe and resist globalization, which brings with it international mobility, diversity, multiculturalism, trade, and deindustrialization. The perceived infiltrators are mainly those Muslims who are believed to be "stoning their women," "raping European women," "molesting children," and "drug-trafficking". Self-identified young Muslim men are also subject to a set of intersectional discrimination in everyday life. For instance, the sexual assaults committed by immigrant men in Cologne on the 2016 New Year's Eve have fuelled different forms of discrimination that young Muslim men in Europe have been experiencing (Kaya, 2019). In addition to multiple forms of discrimination in the labour market, education, politics, and elsewhere, since then young Muslim men are being perceived by many as potential rapists and terrorists. It is a fact that competition between social groups over scarce resources creates tensions that encourage prejudices among individuals, who have a fundamental need to perceive their own in-group as superior to competing out-groups (Allport, 1954; Tajfel, 1981). A 30-year-old Moroccan male youngster from The Hague said the following when asked about his opinion on multiculturalism and diversity in the Netherlands:

> Multiculturalism is part of the Dutch identity. A lot of people are nowadays nostalgic and they are longing for a time of "how it used to be." But then you have to go far back, migration has always been a part of the Netherlands, it is not a new phenomenon. With every new wave of migrants, you need a few generations before they are truly settled in, look at the difference between us and our parents….The problem is that the Netherlands is polarized, and it is the extremes that dominate the debate. It is always us versus them. (Interview in The Hague, 10 September 2020)

Many self-identified Muslim youngsters that we interviewed have stated that the existing societal and political polarisation appears to be motivated by a broader authoritarian outlook entailing nostalgia for traditional ways of doing things. These youngsters also perceive that many European citizens see Muslims as signifiers of vast social changes that have disrupted more traditional ways of life since the post-war period. In a similar vein, scientific studies also demonstrate that these changes produce some uncertainty and disquiet in the eyes of many Europeans in ways that threaten the established concepts of nation, identity, culture, and tradition, as well as the constitutive social hierarchies for many individuals (Gest et al., 2017). Resorting to the past and becoming nostalgic, in this sense, is a compensatory and reflective code of conduct to mediate the tension between tradition and change in a globalizing world.

4.3. In the Guidance of Honour in Times of Crisis

Individuals are more likely to use the languages that they know best to express their concerns in everyday life

such as poverty, exclusion, unemployment, humiliation, and racism. If they are not into the language of deliberative democracy, they are more likely to use the languages they think they know the best, such as religion, culture, ethnicity, past, and even violence. In an age of insecurity, uncertainty, and anomy, disenfranchised individuals may become more engaged in the protection of their *honour*, which, they believe, is the only thing left. Referring to Khaldun (1969), a 14th century sociologist in North Africa, Ahmed (2003) claims that Muslims tend to reify honour in the collapse of the Khaldunian notion of *asabiyya*, an Arabic word meaning group loyalty, social cohesion, or solidarity. *Asabiyya* is the cement that brings individuals together through a shared language, culture, and code of behaviour. There is a direct negative correlation between *asabiyya* and the resurgence of honour. The collapse of *asabiyya* on a global scale makes Muslims to regenerate *honour*. *Asabiyya* dissolves for the following reasons: massive urbanization, a population explosion, intense demographic changes, large scale migrations, gap between rich and poor, the widespread corruption and mismanagement of rulers, rampant materialism coupled with the low premium on education, the crisis of identity, and ideas and images which challenge traditional values and customs (Ahmed, 2003).

Revitalizing honour serves at least a dual purpose for the diasporic communities. Firstly, it is a way of coming to terms with the present without being seen to criticise the existing status quo. Secondly, it also helps to recuperate a sense of the self not dependent on criteria handed down by others. In-depth interviews with self-identified Muslim youngsters with both Turkish and Moroccan origin have revealed that they all assign Islam a great task guiding them in search of being a better person in the world, which is identified with chaos, insecurity, instability, and polarisation. Islam provides them with a set of values that make it possible for them to find meaning and stability. A 25-year-old Moroccan woman in The Hague, the Netherlands, said the following when she was asked what the role of religion was in her life:

> Religion means everything to me. It makes me who I am and the way I grow every day. I reflect on myself every day: What have I done today that I could have done better? I am patient, I know how to deal with setbacks. I know how to be loving, I take care of the poor and vulnerable. It teaches me how to live in peace, it is leading for every decision I make. It is important to be fair and just. (Interview in The Hague, 20 August 2020)

Islam gives guidance to many Muslim youngsters. This was one of the most recurring tropes that we encountered everywhere when we interviewed Muslims. Islam as a religion restores the *Asabiyya*, social cohesion, in the eyes of our interlocutors, and it offers each of them a set of values that might help them navigate in the everyday life that is full of intersectional forms of discrimination, racism, inequality, and injustice. Values refer to lasting priorities, aspirations, and wishes, and they inspire attitudes and behaviour. Values are useful concepts when we seek to understand consistent patterns of social, political, and cultural preferences (Merino et al., 2021). To that effect, this is a kind of search for certainty in the age of endemic uncertainties brought about by globalization may prompt some young Muslims to revitalise honour and purity. Essentialisation and revival of honour and purity leaves no room for the recognition of difference. The search for certainty operates on an individual level irrespective of being in majority, or in minority. Hence, the temptation not to recognize ethno-cultural and religious differences has become a frequent act among individuals of any kind complaining about the destabilizing effects of globalizing uncertainties.

5. Right-Wing Nativist Radicalisation: The Revival of the Populist Nativism as a Response to Neo-Liberal Governance

On the other side of the same coin, one could also observe similar acts of radicalisation performed by right-wing populist youth on the basis of anti-multiculturalism, Islamophobia, anti-globalism, and Euroscepticism. Right-wing populist parties and movements often exploit the issue of migration, especially the migration of Muslims, and portray it as a threat to the welfare and the social, cultural, and even ethnic features of a nation (Ferrari, 2021). Populist leaders also tend to blame a soft approach to migration for some major problems in society such as unemployment, violence, crime, insecurity, drug trafficking, and human trafficking. This tendency is reinforced by a racist, xenophobic, and demeaning discourse. Public figures like Geert Wilders in the Netherlands have spoken of a "foreign infiltration" of immigrants, especially Muslims, in their countries. Wilders even predicted the coming of *Eurabia*, a mythological future continent that will replace modern Europe (Greenfield, 2013), where children from Norway to Naples will learn to recite the Koran at school, while their mothers stay at home wearing *burqas*.

Right-wing populism is a response to and a rejection of the order imposed by neoliberal elites, an order that fails to use the resources of the democratic nation-state to harness global processes for local needs and desires (Mouffe, 2018). Such populism results from deep-rooted structural disparities and general disadvantage that mainstream political parties have so far actively contributed to in their neoliberal governance. Anthropological approaches mostly understand populism as "the moods and sensibilities of the disenfranchised who face the disjuncture between everyday lives that seem to become extremely anomic and uncontainable and the wider public power projects that are out of their reach and suspected of serving their ongoing disenfranchisement" (Boyer, 2016; Kalb, 2011, p. 14).

As Rodrigues-Pose (2018, pp. 196–198), a geographer, put it:

> Populism as a political force has taken hold in many of the so-called spaces that do not matter, in numbers that are creating a systemic risk. As in developing countries, the rise of populism in the developed world is fuelled by political resentment and has a distinct geography. Populist votes have been heavily concentrated in territories that have suffered long-term declines and reflect an increasing urban/regional divide.

It is not a surprise then to see that right-wing populism has become a recurring phenomenon in remote places such as Dresden, Rotterdam, Lyon, and Aalst, as well as rural and mountainous places that do not matter anymore for the neo-liberal political parties in the centre that are heavily engaged in the flows of globalization such as international trade, migration, foreign direct investment, and urbanization. The feelings of being left behind in those remote places that "no longer matter" in the eyes of the political centre may sometimes lead to what one might call "spatial deprivation."

5.1. Socio-Economic, Spatial and Nostalgic Deprivation in Remote Places

Youth in remote places which "no longer matter" tend to become more appealed to the anti-systemic parties such as right-wing populists because of their growing socio-economic disadvantages. However, socio-economic deprivation is not the only factor explaining populism's appeal. There are also some cultural and memory factors that play an essential role. Many people nowadays experience what Gest et al. (2017) call "nostalgic deprivation," which refers to an existential feeling of loss triggered by the dissolution of established notions of identity, culture, nation, and heritage in the age of globalisation (Godwin & Trischler, 2021). A growing number of people is now longing for job security, stability, belonging, a sense of future, and also solidarity among workers (Muehlebach & Shoshan, 2012, p. 318). Similarly, those who live in the areas left behind may also become dissidents against the neo-liberal political centre (Droste, 2021). Those having witnessed long periods of decline, migration, and brain drain, those that have seen better times and remember them with nostalgia, and those that have been repeatedly told that the future lays elsewhere have used the ballot box as their weapon. Their sons and daughters are not different from their parents. Those who could not go elsewhere for education or work are not left with many options to find a compensatory form of control in everyday life such as ethno-national radicalism, populism, nativism, and sometimes white supremacism if not religion. Different forms of deprivation have been prevalent among the native youngsters who live in socio-economically deprived remote places. A 23-year-old male youngster interviewed in Dresden made the following statement when asked about the current economic state of his family:

> After 2005, my father was unemployed twice within ten years. After the reunification he had to go to the KVP [*Kasernierte Volkspolizei*, Barracked People's Police] for a couple of months. The tavern he used to work for was closed. Then he went to the police. He became a cook for the kitchen of the riot police. The kitchen there was privatized in 2006, and after two years around 2007 and 2008 it was closed. He was unemployed for a year. The municipality did a public-private partnership for a prison kitchen, part of the business was tendered privately. A sub-contractor was in charge of the kitchen….He was working in that kitchen for five years between 2009 and 2014….Instead of a 25-year lasting work contract and pension money, he was unemployed again after four and a half years. (Interview in Dresden, 10 November 2020)

Such feelings of socio-economic, spatial and nostalgic deprivation that one could see in an extract taken from the interview often find channels of communication with the outside world through the fear of Islam, migration and diversity, that is highly promoted by right-wing populist parties and movements in Europe.

5.2. Islamophobia and Anti-Migrant Sentiments

The fear of Islam and migration is prevalent among the radicalising native youngsters that we have interviewed. A 25-year-old native male youngster in Rotterdam said the following when asked about his opinion on the current state of migration in the Netherlands:

> I think we should take care of war victims from Syria, but as soon as it is safe in Syria they should return. I think that is solidarity, you host them in times of war and then they have to go back. But now we are immediately giving these refugees passports and priority on the housing market while there is a huge housing shortage in the Netherlands. I am not a racist but my own people first. Moreover, we do not have the capacity in the Netherlands to receive so many people….The problem is that we have a huge shortage of housing and that refugees also get prioritized for housing. (Interview in Rotterdam, 29 October 2020)

Populism as a reactionary form of radicalisation is not a disease or irrational anomaly, as it is often portrayed, but as the symptom of structural constraints that have been disregarded by mainstream liberal political parties in power in the last three decades. Populism is a systemic problem with deep structural causes. Populist parties' voters are dissatisfied with and distrustful of

mainstream elites, who are perceived as cosmopolitan, and they are hostile to immigration and growing ethno-cultural and religious diversity. While some of these groups feel economically insecure, their hostility springs from a combination of social-economic, spatial, and nostalgic deprivation resulting from their belief that immigrants and ethno-cultural and religious minority groups are threatening societal and national security (Reynié, 2016). In other words, the anxieties driving support for these parties are rooted not solely in socio-economic grievances but in cultural fears and a (cultivated) sense of cultural threat coming from globalisation, immigration, multiculturalism, and diversity, which have been stocked by liberals too. Such fear of social-economic, spatial, and nostalgic deprivation is likely to bring about a form of reactionary radicalisation (Calhoun, 2011) among self-identified native youth residing in remote places, who demonstrate the need to generate a defensive form of political mobilisation in alliance with their peers in organised populist parties and social movements (Tilly, 1977).

At the very heart of the rise of right-wing populist nativism lies a disconnection between politicians and their electorates. Right-wing populist parties have gained greater public support in the last decade in the mist of two global crises: the financial and the refugee crises. The former, combined with neoliberal governance, has created socio-economic deprivation for some Europeans, while the latter has triggered nostalgic feeling that established notions of identity, nation, culture, tradition, and collective memory are endangered by immigration. The populist moment has both strengthened many of the former far-right-wing parties or created new ones (Kaya, 2019).

5.3. *"Lost in Diversity"*

Right-wing populists often construct a racialised enemy. They feed on a culturally constructed antagonism between the "pure people" and "the corrupt elite" and other "enemies." In Europe, right-wing populists define "the people" largely in ethno-religious terms while more or less openly rejecting the principle of equality. Despite national variations, populist parties are characterised by: their opposition to immigration and Islam; a concern for the protection of national culture and European civilisation; adamant criticisms of globalisation, multiculturalism, the EU, representative democracy, and mainstream political parties; and the exploitation of a discourse of essentialised cultural difference, which is often conflated with religious and national difference (Mudde, 2004). Our native interlocutors in remote places have often laid blame on Islam for different kinds of ills that they have experienced in everyday life. In other words, Islam becomes an easy target, or a scapegoat, that is being addressed by many of our interlocutors as an epitome of all kinds of maladies resulting from globalisation, unemployment, mobility, diversity, anomy, deindustrialisation, depopulation, and ambiguity. A 20-year-old native male youngster in Oldenbroek in the Netherlands said the following when asked to talk about himself in general:

> When I was 14 years old I "accidently" signed up as a member for the SGP [Reformed Political Party, an Orthodox Calvinist party] youth party….I am particularly proud of two events I organized. One was a debate about the refugee crisis in 2015, the whole room was packed with people, I led the debate and afterwards a lot of new members signed up for our party. The other event I organized was in 2018, a debate about the danger of Islam in our society, I called it: "Is the Islam a threat for the Netherlands"? During the debate there was a lot of security and police because we received threats from several Muslims. (Interview in Oldenbroek, 17 September 2020)

Picking up the refugees and Islam has certainly brought popularity and fame to this youngster, who also talked a lot about the detrimental effects of globalisation on his traditional community. His resentment against social change resulting from the flows of globalisation finds tune in his Islamophobic statements. It is a fact that the global financial crisis and the refugee crisis of the last decade have accelerated and magnified the appeal of right-wing populism in Europe. However, it would be wrong to reduce the reasons for the populist surge to these two crises. They have played a role, but they are at best catalysts, not causes. After all, if "resentment" and "reaction" as sociological concepts posit that losers in the competition over scarce resources respond in frustration with diffuse emotions of anger, fear, and hatred (Allport, 1954; Tajfel, 1981), then there are other processes that may well have contributed to generate such resentment and reaction, such as de-industrialization, rising unemployment, growing ethno-cultural diversity, terrorist attacks in the aftermath of September 11, and so on (Della Porta & LaFree, 2012).

6. Conclusion

In this article, we have seen that the notion of radicalisation is not clear, while its use by politicians and state authorities unambiguously targets political opponents advocating changes in the system. Mostly, radicalisation as a rhetorical tool allows neo-liberal forms of governmentality to push their economic reforms, to downplay the challenging aspects of radical groups against their ideological hegemony and to do so by gathering majority support. The downside of this strategy, however, is the rise of Islamist radicalisation and right-wing populist-nativist radicalisation as a consequence.

Neoliberalism, which hides a corporate agenda behind discourses advocating for the dismantlement of the welfare state, leads to progressive social isolation

and alienation of the individual. This in turn, leads individuals to seek empowerment, and precisely, it is argued, through identity politics. Thus, it is concluded that the discourse surrounding radicalisation can partly explain the parallel rise of reactionary forms of Islamist and right-wing populist radicalisation to express discontent with the current social, economic and political climate, because it allows to push further security and police related policies within societies while rendering salient divisive ethno-religious and ethno-cultural identity topics in the public sphere. The interviews conducted with both self-identified Muslims and self-identified natives demonstrated that radicalisation is the end of a causal chain involving factors such as social-economic, spatial, and nostalgic forms of deprivation. However, one should also be reminded that they might be other powerful arguments raised in psychology to underline that radicalisation cannot be reducible to a causal explanation relying on structural factors, but it could also be explained through emotions and group belonging dynamics.

Based on the theoretical interventions by Craic Calhoun, Charles Tilly, Andrés Rodrigues-Pose, Victor W. Turner, Gordon W. Allport, and Henri Tajfel, as well as on the empirical data driven from an ongoing field research conducted in several European cities, this article concludes that the defence of religion, tradition, culture, and past by religious, nationalist, nativist, or populist groups has become a radical stance today. This radical stance can be interpreted as a reactionary form of resistance against the perils of modernisation and globalisation experienced by both self-identified Muslim and self-identified native youth groups in Europe. As the channels of communication between these two groups are rather limited, or even non-existent, they cannot refrain themselves from co-radicalising each other on the basis of religio-political and ethno-cultural differences since September 11. This article suggests that both Islamist revival and right-wing populism can be regarded as outcries of those who feel pressurised by the perils of modernisation and globalisation. Then, one could also assess these protests as struggles for democracy, rather than threats to democracy.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

Reimagining the Medieval: The Utility of Ethnonational Symbols for Reactionary Transnational Social Movements

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Abstract
Scholars have explored the rise of far-right reactionary political parties in Europe over the last decade. However, social movements reflecting similar political orientations have rarely been conceptualized as "reactionary." To better understand the political orientations of reactionary transnational social movements such as the Identitarians and the Defence Leagues, we explore how and why ethnonational symbols derived from the medieval period are utilized by adherents. This interdisciplinary investigation argues that, through processes of mediated political medievalism, ethnonational symbols are used as strategic framing devices to reimagine an idealized "golden age" of distinct European nations, to assign blame for the erosion of ethnonational identity through multiculturalism, immigration and "Islamization," to establish an intergenerational struggle against the supposed incursion of Islam in Europe, and to proscribe and justify the use of violence as a means of re-establishing the primacy of European nations.

Keywords
crusades; Defence League; ethnonational symbols; Identitarians; medievalism; reactionary movements

Issue
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1. Introduction

The rise of reactionary politics in European countries in recent decades has led scholars to consider the origins, orientations, and success of nationalistic, far-right, populist political parties (Grindheim, 2019; Rooduijn, 2015; Wodak, 2015). In parallel, scholars have also charted the mobilization of non-party political far-right social movements such as the English Defence League in Great Britain and Génération Identitaire in France (Busher, 2016; Eatwell & Goodwin, 2010; Guenther et al., 2020; Zúquete, 2018). A range of grievances common to both far-right parties and social movements include the loss of national attachments and ethnocultures through processes of multiculturalism, the threat to majority populations by immigration, and a perceived threat to "Indigenous" nations by Islam (Bernsand, 2013; Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018; Kassimeris & Jackson, 2015).

In addition to these common grievances, many reactionary social movements in Europe evince the use of images and narratives drawn from the medieval period (Koch, 2017). At the heart of this inquiry is the question: What does the appropriation of themes from the medieval past tell us about the grievances, objectives, and strategies of reactionary social movements? By conceptualizing far-right, transnational social movements as "reactionary" movements, we consider their use of "radical nostalgia" to construct ethnonational symbols as strategic framing devices. Focused on the appropriation of symbols derived from the medieval period with an emphasis on the crusades, we explore the Identitarians and the Defence Leagues in Europe.

The former announced its existence in France in 2012 as Génération Identitaire through a protest located at a site associated with the 732 CE Battle of Tours (Simpson & Druxes, 2015, p. 177). Similarly, the inaugural appearance of the English Defence League in England in 2009 on St. George's Day was organized in part by an activist dubbing himself Paul "The Lionheart" Ray (Busher, 2016, p. 4). From the outset, both transnational social movements have strategically framed reactionary political orientations through utilizing ethnonational symbols. Originating in a radically nostalgic interpretation of the medieval period, particularly those associated with the crusades, the Identitarians and Defence Leagues reimagine a lost "golden age" of both ethnonational distinctiveness as well as European mobilization against an external "other." Some examples of these themes are depicted below, such as a crusader knight in prayer (Figure 2) and a mythologized crusading knight chasing away an observably Muslim mother (Figure 3).

This interdisciplinary inquiry unfolds in three phases. The first section reviews the conceptual and empirical literature on the Identitarians and Defence Leagues. While accepting the conceptual framework of earlier scholarship, we argue firstly that these social movements should also be considered "reactionary," especially through their radically nostalgic reimagining of the medieval period. Secondly, despite their ethnic nativism, the Identitarians and Defence Leagues should also be considered "transnational" social movements. This section then presents the analytical framework, arguing that an ethnosymbolic approach best suits consideration of how these movements operationalize "medievalism" to construct ethnonational symbols derived from a radically nostalgic reimagining of the medieval period. It then adopts a strategic framing lens to explore the utility of ethnonational symbols, with a focus on problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendations.

The second section presents a range of images and narratives drawn from public content of the Identitarians and the Defence Leagues, in which they utilize appropriated symbols from the medieval period online and at demonstrations. The historical context from which these symbols are derived is provided with a focus on medieval encounters in which a predominately Christian Europe is engaged in single or prolonged confrontation with Islamic powers.

The final section discusses the utility of ethnonational symbols derived from the medieval period for reactionary social movements: Firstly, ethnonational symbols frame core, interrelated problems for adherents, including the perceived loss of "native" European nations and cultures, attributed casually to the European Union's support for multicultural civic nationalism; concomitant increases in non-European immigration and in particular the immigration of Muslims. Secondly, ethnonational symbols create a moral framework of "us vs. them," civilizational struggle against anti-nativist and non-European forces, illustrating the existential consequences of this struggle and establishing a sense of urgency. Finally, ethnonational symbols have prescriptive utility by surreptitiously conveying the need to expel immigrants, including through the use of violence.

2. Reimagining the Medieval: Reactionary Transnational Social Movements and Medievalism

This section conceptualizes and explores the Identitarians and the Defence Leagues, arguing that they are reactionary, transnational social movements. Secondly, we present a theoretical framework grounded in ethnosymbolism as a means of explaining the utility of ethnonational symbols for reactionary social movements, medievalism as the process by which symbols are constructed, and how they are ultimately employed as strategic framing devices.

2.1. Defining the Identitarians and Defence Leagues

Scholars have extensively explored a range of domestic and transnational far-right social movements in Europe, such as CasaPound, in Italy, Pegida, which was founded in Germany, and Soldiers of Odin, which emerged in Scandinavia (Caiani, 2019; Castelli Gattinara & Froio, 2014). In addition to transnational cooperation, many of these movements exhibit reactionary and radically nostalgic orientations. However, this inquiry focuses its attention on the Identarian and Defence League far-right social movements as a consequence of their ubiquitous and foundational use of ethnonational symbolism derived from the medieval period.

The Identitarian movement began in France in the 1960s as a reaction against the intellectual liberal-left, describing its orientation as the "new right." It has predominated on continental Europe and continues to be driven principally by a reaction to liberal internationalism, global homogenization, and a vehement opposition to immigration (Zúquete, 2018, p. 7). Strongest in Italy and France, groups such as CasaPound in Italy and Génération Identitaire in France oppose the liberal-left establishment and neo-conservatives, declaring themselves the "true right" mobilized against borderless capitalism. The Identitarians defend the "right to difference" and believe that sentiments of belonging to humanity are mediated through culture; as a consequence, they are determined to revitalize ethnonational, primordial traditions. The modern incarnation of the Identitarian movement was founded as Génération Identitaire in France in 2012, surfacing as a youth division of the Bloc Identitaire (Richards, 2019).

Since the early 2010s, the Identitarians began to coordinate transnationally to establish more permanent networks and to share tactics. In Fulda, in 2014, a gathering of adherents committed to creating local teams and to coordinate specific regions (Simpson & Druxes, 2015, p. 184). Across Europe, tens of thousands are believed

to belong to Identitarian chapters in countries such as Germany, Austria, Belgium, and Italy. Local Identitarian movements are oriented toward the ethnonational identity of their territory, such as CasaPound in Italy and the Flemish Schild & Vrienden (Maly, 2018). Identitarians across Europe meet once annually to learn combat techniques and plan common campaigns. They share similar signs and symbols, including using the handshake of Roman legionnaires (Durie, 2019). In recent years, the Identitarians have coordinated transnational campaigns, including the 2017 Defend Europe boats mission in the Mediterranean and the 2016 Summer of Resistance demonstrations in Paris, Vienna, and Berlin (Nissen, 2020).

The English Defence League was formed in Luton in 2009 and has mobilized members principally around contempt for Islam. It emerged from anti-Jihad movements and from football hooliganism, and its first demonstration was held in response to protests orchestrated against the return of British troops from the Middle East (Busher, 2016, p. 5; Jackson & Feldman, 2011, p. 8). Despite having a stronger inclination toward violence as a mobilizing force than the Identitarians, Defence Leagues adherents similarly assert their disavowal of biological racism in favor of an emphasis on protecting culture, an antipathy to "liberal elites," and a deeply held paranoia of an imperialist Islam which they believe is threatening to replace the majority population of European states (Meleagrou-Hitchens & Brun, 2013; Morrow & Meadowcroft, 2019). Like the Identitarians, the Defence Leagues also subscribe to the view that these forces will result in an existential civilizational conflict.

The transnational Defence League network (or European Defence League) emerged in the late 2000s/ early 2010s as an outgrowth of the creation of the English Defence League (Elliott, 2017, p. 157). Following a false-start in Amsterdam in 2010, the Defence League was reconstituted at a counter-Jihad rally of Defence Leagues in Denmark, with representatives drawn from Defence Leagues in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, UK, Germany, Russia, and elsewhere (Hope Not Hate, n.d.). In addition to common objectives, Defence Leagues have established networks that share information and strategies. Like the Identitarians, they also share similar strategic frames including the adoption of ethnonational symbols appropriated from the medieval period.

The Identitarians and Defence Leagues have mobilized thousands across Europe in opposition to immigration and Islam and have been variously defined as far-right extremists, fascists, and radicals (Castelli Gattinara & Pirro, 2019; Kassimeris & Jackson, 2015; Mattheis & Winter, 2019; Meleagrou-Hitchens & Brun, 2013; Richards, 2019). The constituent national entities of the Identitarian movement and the Defence League have been described as "nativist," which Castelli Gattinara and Pirro (2019) term "a radical and exclusionary form of nationalism" (p. 1). Nativism describes the exclusionary "us vs. them" boundary created by these movements, emphasizing local attachments and a paramount identification with nations composed of narratives of linguistic and cultural inheritance (Olsson, 2009, p. 113). The Identitarians and Defence Leagues espouse a kind of "cultural nationalism" where they advance that experience is mediated principally through culture, that culture emerges from the traditions of nations, and that the loss of culture erodes their ethnonationalist view of identity (Meleagrou-Hitchens & Brun, 2013, p. 25; Muis & Immerzeel, 2017). Despite efforts to avoid being described as racist, this orientation is a form of "ethnic" nationalism rather than "civic" nationalism, whereby adherents emphasize the unique origins, history, and cultures of nations, and employ symbolic mythmaking to develop exclusive, ethnonationalist identities (Kaufmann, 2019). For these groups, nativist ethnic nationalism creates in-group and out-group dichotomies bounded by identity, especially ethnic, cultural, and ancestral markers (Conversi, 2009, p. 82; Ford, 2010, p. 148; Mudde, 2007).

These nativist ethnonationalist orientations have given rise to a number of political objectives. Firstly, their nativist orientations oppose civic nationalism and the EU's effort to create a multicultural pan-European identity referred to as "supranationalism" (Karolewski, 2009, p. 66; Kuzio, 2009, p. 14; Zúquete, 2015). Reactionary far-right social movements consider this liberal project a "back door" to mass immigration and the consequent destruction of European nations (Meleagrou-Hitchens & Brun, 2013, p. 42). Secondly, despite purporting to espouse a non-hierarchical nationalism, they are aggressively anti-immigration. The Identitarians and Defence Leagues adhere to a paranoia that the "Indigenous" population of Europe is being superseded in a "great replacement" whereby non-majority Europeans, particularly Muslims, will become the demographic majority through both migration and higher birthrates (Meleagrou-Hitchens & Brun, 2013, p. 49; Nissen, 2020; Pilkington, 2016, p. 135; Richards, 2019). In response, they advocate "remigration": the expulsion of all those not of European ethnicity from Europe (Ebner, 2019). Finally, bound up in their hostility to immigration is Islamophobia and their opposition to the "Islamification" of Europe (see Kaya, 2021, for more on Islamophobia and right-wing nativism). Paranoia against Islam is infused with baseless accusations, such as a predilection for pedophilia and a conspiratorial belief that a monolithic imperialist Islam is seeking to conquer the West (Jackson & Feldman, 2011, p. 9; Koch, 2017; Nissen, 2020; Pilkington, 2016, p. 135).

These political orientations are manifested in direct action campaigns such as those against the building of Mosques, the immigration of refugees, and the provision of Halal meats (Caiani, 2019; Meleagrou-Hitchens & Brun, 2013, pp. 38, 59). However, far-right social movement mobilization of the Identitarians and Defence Leagues are also concerned with more paradigmatic change for which ethnonational symbolism is particularly

consequential. Firstly, the above grievances are elevated by adherents to a continent-wide, generational, civilizational struggle whereby "Europeans" are in an existential conflict with external, primarily Islamic forces (Caiani & Weisskircher, 2019; Meleagrou-Hitchens & Brun, 2013, p. 2; Nissen, 2020). As argued below, this "clash of civilizations" frame is encapsulated by the Identitarians and Defence Leagues through the use of ethnonational symbols drawn from the medieval period, particularly those from the crusades, when European powers fought extensively with Islamic forces. Secondly, an overarching belief amongst far-right social movement adherents is that distinct European nations existed in a mythologized "golden age," where they were territorially bounded and "pure" without dilution through significant interrelations with other nations (Nissen, 2020). Identitarian and Defence League adherents resent the emergence of multicultural societies which they argue have eroded national cultures and is abetted through parallel forces of immigration and Islamization. As a part of this "grand narrative," adherents furthermore idealize a return to a mythologized period when nations were not only distinct, but also united in their collective opposition to the supposed loss of their civilization. Mobilization around these themes can be conceptualized as a form of "radical nostalgia."

Radical nostalgia has been recently discussed by Kenny (2017) in the context of far-right populism in Europe, where adherents recollect past times or "enchanted places" and utilize a "selective deployment of the national past" (pp. 256–261). They cite Freeden to argue that radical nostalgists seek "to establish a kind of temporal sovereignty which is depicted as the source of an exclusive national-cultural tradition" (Freeden as cited in Kenny, 2017, p. 257). As argued below, the Identitarians and Defence Leagues are motivated by a desire to halt multiculturalism, immigration, and the presence of Islam in Europe with a view to returning to a radically nostalgic imagining of a mythologized past where European nations were distinct and "pure," but were nevertheless united in collective opposition to the incursion of external, primarily non-European, forces. Radical nostalgia aligns with the aforementioned perception that identity can only be maintained through cultural manifestations of a shared ethnic past and that it is this shared history that not only defines the nation, but excludes others from membership.

The above political orientations of the Identitarians and Defence Leagues has often led them to be defined as "far-right" (Castelli Gattinara & Pirro, 2019; Kassimeris & Jackson, 2015; Richards, 2019). Given the radically nostalgic orientation of the Identitarians and Defence League described above, an equally apt conceptualization of these movements is to describe them as "reactionary." Reactionism is defined by Capelos and Katsanidou (2018) as a political orientation that combines "resentful affectivity with the forceful desire to return to the past" (p. 1272), manifested as opposition to the European Union, cosmopolitanism, and immigration. Reactionism is characterized by sentiments of anger, fear, betrayal, and perceived injustice, along with the aforementioned "radical nostalgia" as noted above (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018; Kenny, 2017). The construction of ethnonational symbols derived from the medieval past captures this desire amongst reactionary far-right social movement adherents to give primacy to shared histories, and to mobilize against threats to its re-establishment.

The radically nostalgic and reactionary orientations of the Identitarians and Defence Leagues also has explanatory value for their transnational mobilization. Scholars have recently discussed the Identitarians, Defence League, and other non-party political far-right movements as transnational social movements. The literature on social movements has historically been more often concerned with left-wing movements, but scholars have recently applied this lens to movements on the right, particularly in their mobilization toward paradigmatic change, a disinclination toward primarily electoral politics, and their usage of strategic frames (Blee & Creasap, 2010; Caiani & della Porta, 2018; Caiani & Weisskircher, 2019). Furthermore, scholars have alighted on the increasingly transnational orientation of reactionary far-right social movements (Schlembach, 2011; Zúquete, 2015). This is especially the case in Europe where they are organizing across borders through shared tactics, resources, and strategic frames (Caiani, 2019). Despite having a primarily "national" focus, most far-right organizations are active beyond borders (Caiani, 2018, p. 570). In addition to anti-immigration and anti-Islam movements such as Pegida, Soldiers of Odin, and the formation of the European Counter-Jihad Movement, the Identitarians and European Defence League have been active transnationally for years.

In spite of their aforementioned localized form of nativism, these reactionary far-right social movements acknowledge a civilizational "European" identity, with shared histories and cultural lineages which underpins their organization as transnational movements (Bernsand, 2013). This strategy is both functional and ideational. In the former respect, reactionary movements like the Identitarians and Defence League share aims and tactics, as discussed above. Ideationally, their transnationality recreates a radically nostalgic, medieval, "golden age" whereby distinctive, European nations coalesced in violent, civilizational confrontation with incursionary, Islamic forces (Simpson & Druxes, 2015, p. 183). The following section argues that this complex "grand narrative" is encapsulated by reactionary far-right social movements through the use of ethnonational symbols appropriated from the medieval period and employed as strategic frames.

2.2. Reactionary Transnational Social Movements, Ethnonational Symbols, and Strategic Framing

The Identitarians and Defence Leagues are less concerned with impacting elected politics and more with

mobilizing adherents around reimagining the world as it once was and how it now ought to be (Busher, 2016, p. 8). Symbolism is integral to their ideal world fabrication as symbols represent "group life," confer membership on adherents as "badges of identity" that demarcate boundaries; they maintain unity and infuse commitment to a common cause (Klatch, 1988). The creation of ethnonational symbols is best discussed through the lens of ethnosymbolism as advanced by Smith (2009). We further argue that ethnational symbols created by these social movements are constructed through a process referred to as "mediated political medievalism" and that these radically nostalgic ethnonational symbols are ultimately then employed as strategic framing devices.

The ethnosymbolism approach involves analyzing collective identities through symbolic resources made up of traditions, myths, symbols, and other subjective factors (Smith, 2009, p. 16). It firstly argues that repertoires of symbols serve to sharpen distinctions between members and non-members and thusly construct ideational, "us vs. them" boundaries. Secondly, shared memories, traditions, and symbols establish intergenerational continuity and function to establish "grand narratives" nostalgically anchored in an exemplary period or "golden age." Thirdly, symbols are the means by which these collective identities assert a common ethnicity, as well as a transnational common cause which unites distinct nations. Finally, ethnosymbolism advances that the re-appropriation of the ethnic past is important to understanding the creation of ethnonational boundaries in the present (Smith, 2009, p. 39).

This approach suits the analysis of reactionary transnational social movements' creation of ethnonational symbols derived from the medieval period, as through them they operationalize radically nostalgic, newly constructed worlds, establish intergenerational continuity, mobilize members through assertions of ethnic identity, and establish in-group and out-group boundaries. The Identitarians and Defence Leagues construct ethnonational symbols sourced from the medieval period through a process referred to as "medievalism," whereby symbols or narratives originating in the medieval period are used in contemporary contexts (Elliott, 2017, p. 6). This definition creates a dichotomy between myth and reality, with this difference being crucial to our understanding of the adoption of medieval symbolism by social movements as it represents the myth or "gap" where groups alter or simplify the historic time and place for their political purposes in what Elliott refers to as "mediated political medievalism" (Elliott, 2017, p. 10; Livingstone, 2017).

Medievalism functions as the process of converting "symbolic religiosity," which is the consumption of religious symbols for secular purposes, into ethnonational symbols. This is relevant as many of the narratives and symbols appropriated from the medieval period had deeply religious connotations in the period, particularly those from the crusades. Elliott (2017) argues contemporary political entrepreneurs, such as the Identitarians and the Defence Leagues, undertake a three-stage medievalism process: Firstly, they select and appropriate medieval objects and symbols, such as a statue of Joan of Arc or the cross of St. George; secondly, through repetition they "flatten" these symbols and insert new meaning laden with their ideology; finally, they couple these symbols with their ethnonationalist ideology. Through medievalism, formerly religious, medieval symbols are transformed into contemporary ethnonational symbols.

Medievalism as a process of secularization is not new. Tyerman (1998, pp. 101, 105) argues that the Protestant Reformation produced a "secularization of the Holy War" and saw the significant losses as a sign of religious impurity. Historiography of the 17th and 18th centuries, such as Maimbourg's *History of the Crusades* (1675) or Schoeplin's *De Scaris Galliae Regum in Orientum Expeditionibus* (1726), added to this "secularization" of the crusades because it focused on the heroic actions of individuals, creating national rather than religious usages.

The 19th century witnessed another turn in historiographic focus toward "romantic nostalgia and supremacist ideology" (Tyerman, 1998, p. 117). Examples of this can be seen in William Hillary, an English Knight of Malta, who called for a new crusade in 1840. In the same decade, forgeries of individuals' lineage to crusaders were produced en masse, and in 1895 when a re-enactment of the procession at Clermont marked its 800th anniversary (Tyerman, 1998, pp. 117–118). We can see the idealization of individuals with Frederick Barbarossa as a hero in German propaganda or Keiser Wilhelm II's 1898 visit to Jerusalem and Damascus being portrayed as a pilgrim and holy warrior (Tyerman, 1998, p. 121).

A more recent example from the European far-right is the intense mythologizing undertaken by the German Nazi party in the 1920s to 1940s. Nazi identity entrepreneurs liberally appropriated the mythologizing of the medieval period, as seen in the poster of Nazi leader Adolf Hitler appearing as a knight (Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Der Bannerträger* (The standard bearer), ca. 1935. Source: The US Holocaust Memorial Museum (n.d.).

What remains to be elucidated is how ethnonational symbols function as strategic framing devices. Social movement scholars considering far-right mobilization have employed framing as a means of analyzing their transnational strategies. Framing refers to how movement entrepreneurs summarize and simplify complex ideas, grievances, and objectives with a view to aggregating support, compel action and demobilize opponents (Caiani, 2019; Nissen, 2020; see Kiss, 2021, for more on political communication and mobilization). Guenther et al. (2020) consider the use of strategic framing to achieve four ends: to define the problem identified by adherents, to assign causal attribution for the problem, to establish how this problem is morally evaluated and finally, to assign a treatment aimed at solving the problem. As argued in the final section, the Identitarians and Defence Leagues employ ethnonational symbols as convenient strategic framing devices to achieve the above aims, with those drawn from the medieval period common to both movements.

3. Radical Nostalgia and the Medieval Period: Origins of Reactionary Social Movement Ethnonational Symbols

The Identitarians and Defence Leagues appropriate narratives and motifs from the medieval period to create unifying ethnonational symbols which establish a radically nostalgic interpretation of Europe's past and idealize a mythologized "golden age" to which their adherents seek a "return." There are many instances of the usage of ethnonational symbols in both movements and while they draw on a wide range of geographical and temporal contexts, the below homes in on the usage of symbols originating from the crusader period. This period is selected because of the ubiquity of these themes in reactionary social movement public content and the demonstrable "us vs. them" dichotomy between European and Islamic powers. Some examples of these themes are a crusader knight in prayer (Figure 2) and a mythologized crusading knight chasing away an observably Muslim mother (Figure 3).

Figure 2. "I am not racist, I am anti-Islam." Source: The Spanish Defence League (2015).

Figure 3. Generation Identity stickers appeared in an Essex town. Source: Sharman and Dearden (2019).

The term "crusades" is used to refer to a series of expeditions to the East beginning in 1095 aimed at regaining the Holy Land from Muslim control. For traditional historians, the crusades ended after the 1291 fall of Acre—the final major Christian stronghold. However, some historians include the Reconquista period in Spain in the late medieval period. Reactionary far-right social movements draw on this period in their ethnonational symbolism (Figure 4).

Figure 4. A sticker of the German Identitarian Movement reading "Europe, Youth, Reconquista," alongside a sticker advertising the neo-Nazi martial arts group White Rex. Source: FOIA Research (n.d.).

The First Crusade was launched by Pope Urban II in his sermon at the Council of Clermont (27 November 1095) which called for military support to liberate Christian pilgrimage sites in the Holy Land from Muslim control (Folda, 2008, p. 15). Those who "took up the cross"

were encouraged by the remission of sins, plenary indulgences, and the hope of ascension to heaven. This was an odd kind of pilgrimage because it was also a war, and therefore, mainly young healthy laymen were encouraged to participate (Riley-Smith, 1987, pp. 6–9). The Identitarians use this event and Pope Urban II's famous words "Deus Vult" (God wills it) as exemplified by Martin Sellner, leader of the Identitäre Bewegung Österreichs (Austria's Identitarian Movement), in his tweet: "To all Christians: Chase away your lousy cardinals and bishops and do something! #remigration." This tweet was accompanied by an image of Pope Urban II, captioned: "'Defend Europe' and 'Deus Vult,' or God wills it, the rallying cry of the First Crusade" (Zúquete, 2020).

The symbol of the cross linked the two functions of pilgrimage and holy war (Tyerman, 1998, p. 79). As Urban II's speech demonstrates, the cross was associated with the crusades from its beginning and was inscribed with various meanings: a badge of penance, a contractual agreement, fiscal and legal immunities, and a talisman (Tyerman, 1998, pp. 22, 76). The cross most often portrayed on crusader imagery is that of St. George: a red cross on a white background, which became a prolific aesthetic used within crusader imagery from the late medieval period onwards. The predominant organizing symbol of the English Defence League is the cross of St. George as seen online (Figure 5), at demonstrations (Figure 6), and as English Defence League adherents sing patriotic songs like "Keep St. George in My Heart."

St. George's role as a military saint stems from a legend in which he aided Godfrey of Bouillon during the siege of Antioch (21 October 1097–2 June 1098). Dwindling supplies and harsh weather led many crusaders to desert the cause by early 1098 (Riley-Smith, 1987, p. 29). Adhemar of Le Puy, a principal leader in the battle, felt their lack of luck was due to a lack of piety so he ordered his knights to fast for three days, lead a procession, and affix a cross to their garments (Frankopan, 2016, p. 157). After this, according to legend, an army on horseback led by St. George, St. Demetrius, and St. Mercurius miraculously assisted in defeating the Turks (Riley-Smith, 1987, pp. 30–31). St. George's intervention occurred again at the 1177 Battle of Montgisard (Rogers, 2010, p. 211). These examples demonstrate the connection between piety and war where the favour of God was necessary to achieve victory.

Following a harrowing journey from Europe to the Levant, many viewed the success of the crusade as a miraculous gift from God, stimulating legends and heroic tales, such as St. George's assistance but also the discovery of relics like the Holy Lance and True Cross (Riley-Smith, 1987, p. 85). These relics were carried into battle and served as powerful unifying and galvanizing symbols. For example, while carrying the relic of the True Cross the crusaders went undefeated 31 times until its loss at the 1187 Battle of Hattin (Folda, 2008, p. 18; Murray, 1998, pp. 232–238). By overcoming the odds of a very arduous journey and a number of battles, these relics, as well as the above-mentioned cross of St. George, processions, and other pious acts, became symbols of God's favor. Furthermore, they became the rightful justification of their actions through the will and favor of God, symbolizing within the ideology, the "us vs. them" dichotomy where the Christian crusaders were viewed as the legitimate heirs to the land, saving it from an evil enemy. These concepts were described in, for example, Bernard of Clairvaux's (1090–1153) *Liber ad milites templi de laude novæ militiæ* (ca. 1120–1136) which demonstrates that the justification of violence undergirded the crusades from the outset. This treatise adheres to arguments put forth by St. Augustine: that although God's commandment states "thou shall not kill," there are exceptions to this rule (Dods, 2014, Book 1, Chapter 21). Bernard uses one of these exceptions, that God commands the death because of injustice done to Him, in order to justify the crusades.

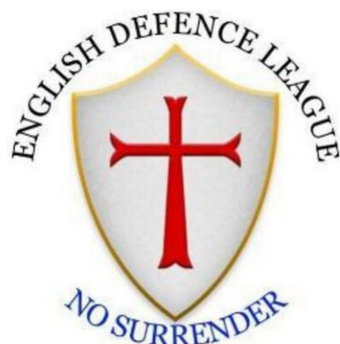

Figure 5. English Defence League Twitter profile photo depicting the crusader cross of St. George, April 11 2021. Source: EDL Huddersfield (n.d.).

Figure 6. English Defence League Essex Division banner. Source: J. Busher (personal communication).

Furthermore, according to Bernard, God wills the war because its enemy is evil incarnate, as is seen in his comment that the crusader does not kill man, he kills evil: "not homicide…but malicide" (Leclercq & Rochais, 1963, Chapter 4; see also Gazzoli, 2015). This distinction of casting Muslims into the category of evil and distinguishing between homicide and malicide justifies their killing and sets up an "us vs. them" dichotomy. Rather than advocate violence outright, the Identitarians and Defence Leagues, through the adoption of ethnonational symbols, draw on the crusades as both advocating the use of violence and legitimizing its usage.

One common reference is that of the crusading English King Richard the Lionheart who was one of the crusader knights to place himself under the protection of St. George. Richard I played a key role in the Siege of Acre (August 1189–July 1191), which was described as "the great set-piece of the Third Crusade" (McGlynn, 2018). Acre was important strategically because it was a port city. The siege went on for months and casualties were severe for both sides (Lock, 2006, p. 151). Philip II and Richard I offered their support in April and June 1191 and by July, Richard I accepted the city's second proposal of surrender which included money, ships, stores, a prisoner exchange, and the return of the True Cross relic (Lock, 2006, p. 154). Saladin failed to deliver some prisoners of rank and Richard I retaliated by ordering the massacre of approximately 3000 Muslim hostages including wives and children (Lock, 2006, p. 77; Riley-Smith, 1987, p. 116).

During the crusades, a number of military orders were formed or expanded to ensure the safe passage of pilgrims, like the Knights Templar, a group formed in 1119 by Hugh de Payens, Godfrey de Saint Omer, and other knights. The templar knights, in their white mantles with the symbol of St. George's Cross on them, policed pilgrimage routes and managed robust economic infrastructure throughout Christendom until Pope Clement V disbanded the order in 1312.

Highly romanticized in literature, film, and television, the Knights Templar feature prominently in reactionary social movement imagery and narratives. With close connections to the English Defence League and Britain First, Knights Templar International was founded in 2015 by long-time far-right activist Jim Dowson (Figure 7; Cox & Meisel, 2018). Aimed at allowing far-right sympathizers to support anti-Islam, anti-immigrant, and anti-liberal globalist efforts, it is believed to have thousands of paying members globally (Cox & Meisel, 2018).

Images and historic narratives from the crusades have been selectively employed by reactionary social movements in Europe. Additionally, these movements have drawn on prominent individuals as well as battles against Muslim commanders from the Early and Late medieval periods, where symbolic narratives are also appropriated. Prominent references include the figure of Charles Martel, who defeated Muslim Umayyad forces led by Abdul Rahman Al Ghafiqi at the 732 Battle of Tours and battles between European kingdoms and the Ottoman Empire in the Late Middle Ages, such as the 1543 Siege of Nice (Braouezec, 2016; Richards, 2019; Zúquete, 2018).

It is outside this inquiry's scope to address the many inaccuracies and simplifications by reactionary movements utilizing these ethnonational symbols, such as the well-documented esteem between Richard I and his Muslim rival Saladin, or the fact that the Ottomans were in alliance with France at the Siege of Nice. What is evident by these selections is the preference for events and narratives where Europeans, primarily Christians, are in violent confrontation with Eastern forces which are predominately Muslim. The final section discusses why these historic motifs and narratives are appropriated by reactionary social movements as ethnonational symbols.

Figure 7. Jim Dowson has spoken in videos of an impending clash between Christians and Muslims, 1 May 2018. Source: Cox and Meisel (2018).

4. The Medieval Reimagined: The Utility of Ethnonational Symbols for Reactionary Social Movements

The Identitarians and Defence Leagues are reactionary transnational social movements which have adopted ethnonational symbols derived from radically nostalgic interpretations of the medieval world, which encapsulates and simplifies strategic framing objectives: firstly, through recalling a "golden age" of distinct, ethnonational European identities, which in their view has now been lost; secondly, by identifying multiculturalism, immigration, and the concomitant Islamization of Europe as the explanation for the erosion of this ideal world; thirdly, ethnonational symbols create a moral framework arguing that the transnational battle against Islam in the medieval period continues contemporaneously, but is now ethnonational rather than religious; and finally, that these forces should be expelled from Europe and that violence is a justifiable response to achieve these aims. The below considers each of these strategic frames in turn.

Firstly, the use of ethnonational symbols derived from the medieval period stems from a radically nostalgic interpretation of the medieval period. Reactionary social movements believe that distinct nations existed in their purest form during this period and mobilize to "reinforce" the ethnonational cultures specific to their territorialized nations. For instance, Génération Identitaire draws on distinctly French associations, such as the late medieval Military Commander Joan of Arc and the early medieval King Charles Martel (Elliott, 2017, p. 1; Simpson & Druxes, 2015, p. 177). In parallel, the English Defence League recalls the mythology of the crusades through figures such as Richard I and the myths of St. George. These ethnonational symbols nostalgically recall "golden ages" for these particular national identifications and are representative statements of belonging, as they construct national myths believed to uniquely define these nations. They are also inherently exclusionary, ensuring only those who claim derivation from these nations are admitted to membership.

Secondly, ethnonational symbols apportion causal blame to the sources of the perceived loss of this "golden age" and the erosion of ethnonational attachments: multiculturalism and the immigration of Muslims. The ideology of the Identitarians and Defence Leagues advances that multiculturalism is leading to an erosion of ethnonational cultures. For instance, rather than accept the European Union's construction of a continent-wide civic nationalism, reactionary transnational social movements are crafting a counter transnational identity based on pre-modern notions of distinct nations united by an overarching Christian identity. For adherents, the crusades are a period which embodies this continent-wide identity and offers a compelling foil and alternative world through which to oppose civic nationalism. This ethnonational European civilization is exclusionary, such that immigrants, especially Muslim immigrants, are not able to become members.

Furthermore, the Identitarians and Defence Leagues adhere to a paranoid belief that an imperialistic Islam is attempting to conquer Europe through immigration and conversion. Despite the temporal and geographic variation in the recollection of medieval myths by adherents, one nearly universal narrative is evident, that of a predominantly united Christian Europe in a violent, existential battle against Islam. Key battles, discussed above, are recalled to delineate the boundaries of this "us vs. them" civilizational struggle. They are also employed to indicate intergenerational inheritance, whereby the mobilization of contemporary ethnonationalists view themselves as inheritors of an ongoing battle against Islam in Europe. Finally, references to these dramatic battles framed as existential to European Christian civilization also convey a sense of urgency, indicating that without immediate violent resistance to defend Europe, both the wider European civilization as well as distinct ethnonations will be destroyed.

Thirdly, the construction of ethnonational symbols derived from radically nostalgic interpretations of the medieval period moralizes the objectives of reactionary social movements. The crusades were conceived as a "moral" struggle, where distinct ethnic nations were mobilized together as Christians in common cause against a perceived threat from Islam. As noted above, Christian symbols were employed by crusader leaders to encapsulate moral justification. Symbols were imbued with intense religious meaning and as primary indications of allegiance. Through the process of mediated political medievalism, reactionary transnational movements have converted these religious symbols into unifying ethnonational symbols. This moral framework allows for their transnational, "European" movements to retain nativist attachments, but which are nevertheless united transnationally.

Finally, ethnonational symbols derived from the medieval period prescribe and justify a violent approach to returning to the idealized world envisioned by reactionary social movements. A hallmark of these movements is their effort to obfuscate their political ideology to render their movements and their views more palatable to individuals outside extremism (Guenther et al., 2020). Despite purporting to be non-violent, the Identitarians and Defence Leagues undertake military-style training and expect to engage in violent confrontation during demonstrations. Rather than call for violence directly, they use ethnonational symbols from the crusades to legitimize violence.

5. Conclusion

Alongside the rise of reactionary political parties in Europe in the first two decades of the 2000s, reactionary transnational social movements have also emerged and prominent amongst them are the Defence Leagues

and the Identitarians. These movements emphasize nativist, local attachments but have united transnationally around opposition to multiculturalism, immigration, and Islam. Espousing ethnonational philosophies, they have reimagined a radically nostalgic mythologized "golden age" of distinct nations, they advocate an end to immigration, and oppose the perceived Islamization of Europe.

Medieval symbols drawn from the crusades reference heroic figures such as St. George, Richard I, and the Knights Templar, as well as key battles such as the Siege of Antioch and the Siege of Acre. Once principally Christian symbols imbued with religiosity, these themes have been reconstructed through mediated political medievalism and are now employed as ethnonational symbols by the Identitarians and the Defence Leagues. Ethnonational symbols encapsulate the philosophies and political objectives of the Identitarians and the Defence Leagues in a manner that obfuscates their xenophobic, violent intentions.

The construction of ethnonational symbols derived from the medieval period reimagines ideal worlds through delineating an "us vs. them" boundary between members of distinct "European" nations and non-members, recalls and simultaneously establishes an intergenerational, transnational struggle against the perceived incursion of Islam, and advances a solution to the erosion of ethnonational identities by expelling, including through violence, Muslims from Europe.

This article's limitations have left open a number of possible avenues for further research. Firstly, a more thorough consideration of political economy factors in driving mobilization is needed. As touched on by Caiani (2019) and Muis and Immerzeel (2017), these grievances have become more consequential since the 2009 economic crisis. Additional research emphasizing economic grievances may better elucidate the anti-semitic nature of these movements in Europe, where literature on the subject in the US is more advanced (Blee & Creasap, 2010). Secondly, further theorizing is required to explicate on the multi-layered attachments within far-right reactionary movements, which variously espouse forms of nativist attachments to the ethnonation, a transnational "European" nativism (including beyond the European continent), and attachments to specific localities. Finally, exploration of the other historical contexts recalled by far-right adherents is required, including the use of ethnonational symbols derived from the early and late medieval period emphasizing other Christian-Islamic encounters, such as battles between the Ottoman Empire and European forces.

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Article

Double *Ressentiment*: The Political Communication of *Kulturkampf* in Hungary

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Abstract
Emotions have always been invested in politics. Politicians and politically biased public intellectuals manage citizens' emotions for various purposes: to alienate them from the rival political camp and to make them participate in elections or in politics in general. *Ressentiment* is an affective style of great political potential and it is present throughout democratic European societies. By analysing the discourses of the culture war between the political camps in Hungary since 2018, this article presents the components, drivers, mechanisms, and some typical outcomes of *ressentiment* on the levels of the individual and the political communities. It argues that in political communication both political sides are trying to appeal to the citizens' *ressentiment*. Both camps use communicative means to incite, channel, and reorient *ressentiment* by, e.g., scapegoating, identity work, and transvaluation to attract citizens, stabilize their own support, and nudge followers towards specific political activities.

Keywords
identity work; political communication; political psychology; ressentiment; victimization

Issue
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1. Introduction

Political communication has always been used to manage emotions. Plato underlined the dangers of demagoguery, Aristotle, in turn, advised on how to influence emotions, reasoning that "the emotions are all those affections which cause men to change their opinion in regard to their judgements" (Aristotle, 1990, 1378a). Recently, particularly since the reception of Damasio's works (1994) by the social sciences, political science and political communication studies have extensively scrutinized the links between emotions and politics (e.g., Braud, 1996; Demertzis, 2013). A great number of projects dealt with the incitement of fear (e.g., Mack, 2004; Wodak, 2015), anger (Hochschild, 2016; Mishra, 2017), and hope (Brader, 2006) by parties and politicians, particularly during campaigns. A remarkable characteristic of the research so far is the dominance of studies on basic or primary emotions (TenHouten, 2007) such as fear, anger, or joy. Some have studied secondary emotions, such as hatred or hope, but more complex emotions or affective states in politics are seldom analysed (e.g., Capelos & Demertzis, 2018; Ciulla, 2020; Hoggett, 2018; Hoggett et al., 2013; Salmela & von Scheve, 2017, 2018; TenHouten, 2018; Wimberly, 2018).

The present article deals with the political communications management of one of the most complex affective mechanisms: *ressentiment*. *Ressentiment* is a subjectively unpleasant emotional state, a specific affective style that makes people inclined to focus on painful developments and also to feel powerless to repair them. In a therapeutic culture (Aubry & Travis, 2015; Illouz, 2008) where not only hearts are managed but selves are also outsourced (Hochschild, 1983, 2012), it is hardly

surprising that citizens also turn to professional political communicators for healing (Sointu & Hill, 2020). Plato thought that politics is for the soul what gymnastics and medicine are for the body (Plato, 1967, 464b), and Goethe warned against turning society into a hospital where citizens are sick-nurses to each other (Scheler, 1912/2018, p. 54). Particularly under the conditions where social media make interaction and two-way political communication between professional communicators and citizens a part of everyday politics, citizens may look for public figures who perceptibly empathize with them, who help them alleviate frustration and discontent by offering explanations, enemies to blame, values to follow, and ways of action to gain relief. Sometimes professional communicators play the therapeutic role unconsciously: They offer metaphors and narratives, their own authentic or fake emotions and, on being favourably received, they deploy them recurrently not knowing that the favourable reception springs from deep-seated *ressentiment* present among the citizens.

This article, therefore, analyses which components of the political communications processes in the public sphere lend themselves to public communicators (politicians, journalists, and further actors such as commenting citizens) to allow them to take advantage of the *ressentiment* that is likely present in the emotional realm of the audience. Consciously or unconsciously, political communicators incite, appease, or orient; in short: They manage the emotions of audiences as well as the mechanisms covered by the concept of *ressentiment*. The article will present the discourses and issues offered by communicators that help citizens alleviate the unpleasant feelings stemming from *ressentiment*, by, e.g., externalizing the urges that they feel threatened, by giving objects to their hatred, and by transforming *ressentiment*'s components (which would make them politically passive) into anger whereby they may turn towards participation in politics (Ost, 2004).

The article also claims that *ressentiment* can multiply in a society; one may speak, therefore, about double *ressentiment* too. Since *ressentiment* may arise from perceived injuries in various fields, specific groups of political communicators may try to represent and manage the emotions of specific groups of citizens with specific *ressentiments* based on the perceived hurts and powerlessness in respective fields. As the article will show, some political communicators may take advantage of *ressentiment* springing from recurrent political failure, while others handle impotent revenge due to felt cultural inferiority.

The article presents the political communication targeted at *ressentiment* using the case of *Kulturkampf* in Hungary in the period from 2018 to 2020. Although the concept of *Kulturkampf* originally covered the struggle between state and church in Germany in the second half of the 19th century (Clark & Kaiser, 2009), today it signifies any cultural fight between political forces. Recently it has been applied to label the conflict between the American Democrats and Republicans on moral and cultural issues, such as abortion or gay marriage (Chapman, 2010), the conflict between Labour and the mainstream press in the UK (Curran et al., 2019), and it has also been used in France (Brustier, 2013) and Spain (Ibañez, 2020) and applied to Occidentalism, regarding the future of the West and its enemies. *Kulturkampf*, or at least cultural threat, in parallel with economic difficulties, seems to have played a special role in the rise of populist parties throughout Europe (Ferrari, 2021).

I proceed by reviewing research on *ressentiment*: How the concept has been used to understand politics. In the third section, I describe the political context in Hungary including the historical experiences that make the presence of *ressentiment* in the country probable. I then introduce the theoretical framework offered by the concept to detect the components of the political communication efforts that may appeal to *ressentiment*. Subsequently, I describe the sources and methods used to collect and analyse the data. Then, I explicate the empirical results, that is, the political communications methods that may have proved useful to manage the citizens' *ressentiment*. Finally, I discuss these findings.

2. *Ressentiment* from Culture to Political Sentiment

Although the concept of *ressentiment* had been used previously (van Tuinen, 2020), the most important source of its modern version is Nietzsche (1887/1994) who put it into the centre of the European culture defining it as the psychic foundation of Christianity, the morality of the slaves, and a characteristic of the weak and impotent. Scheler (1912/2018) considered *ressentiment* the almost inevitable effect of the discrepancy between the ideology and the reality of democracy. Democratic ideology makes people believe that everybody is equal, and some have more power and fortune only because they are more gifted. One may, however, have the experience that worthless people climb high in the economic and political hierarchy, without any mechanism to redress such undeserved success, which fills one with resentment and, if the feeling is recurrent, with *ressentiment*.

The concept has proved to have great potential in explaining movements and revolutions in history (Burrin, 2007; Ferro, 2007) as well as more specific issues (e.g., Ball, 1964), one of them being populism (Fassin, 2017; Fleury, 2020). The connection had been foreseen by Sennett (1974/1986), but the real renaissance began with the strengthening of the new forces later called populists and especially after the middle of 2016, that is, in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum and Donald Trump's victory in the US.

Salmela and von Scheve (2017, 2018) found fear, insecurity, disappointment, and distrust lead to *ressentiment*, and they defined envy, hatred and, in the case of right-wing populism, also shame as its drivers and outcomes. With shame included and leaning on Scheff's theory of shame/anger (Scheff, 1990, 1994), the approach

was able to explain how shameful citizens move from negative and therefore rather discouraging emotions to anger, that is, the emotional background of action—crucial in politics. Salmela and Capelos (2021), in turn, define *ressentiment* as the affective core of reactionism, which leads towards nostalgic political activities against outgroups and minorities. Capelos and Demertzis (2018) focused specifically on populist and reactionary political behaviour and the role *ressentiment* played there. They defined *ressentiment* as the combination of anger or anxiety with low political efficacy, the perception of powerlessness.

A special part of the literature is about the ways politicians have tried to elicit or take advantage of *ressentiment* among the people. Wimberly (2018) claims that Donald Trump was efficient in offering citizens ways to vent their *ressentiment* onto the professional class. With professionals being mediators between the people and the elites, citizens may have felt Trump more authentic than the rest of the politicians, being a person who turned against professionals just as they were happy to do. Kelly (2020) theorizes that *ressentiment* explains the apparent contradiction in Donald Trump's communication between toughness and self-victimization, and Dolgert (2016) revaluates the political potential of *ressentiment* and suggests that the political left also should manage the affect in its own interest. Dolgert's approach is specifically relevant for the present research because it is based on the idea of parallel or double *ressentiment*: Communicators belonging to different political camps may manage the same *ressentiment* among citizens to reach their own goals.

3. The Political Context in Hungary

The concept of *ressentiment* has been used by historians to shed light on Hungary's past. It was applied to explain antisemitism in the 19th and 20th centuries: Unable to adjust to the requirements of capitalism and seeing Jews get rich and advance socially, Christian Hungarians felt *ressentiment* and nurtured hatred against the prospering minority (Szabó, 1981). *Ressentiment* has also proven fruitful in understanding the regime prior to 1990 (Majtényi, 2012). János Kádár, the leader of the country from 1956 to 1988, was the politician of *ressentiment* because he was constructed as embodying the impotent vengefulness against the Russian oppression.

Just as in the case of France in the 18th century (Greenfeld, 1992) or Poland recently (Kazlauskaite & Salmela, in press), since 1990, a significant proportion of Hungarians may have felt *ressentiment* due to the country persistently lagging behind Western Europe. That frustration explains the disparaging of western values in general and the so-called European values in particular: The less one is successful in realizing them, the more one might appreciate the specific national values instead of facing failure and drifting towards shame and self-loathing. *Ressentiment*, hence, seems to be persistent in the Hungarian mentality either because of the Christian culture, or because of the inherent tension between equality and undeserved prosperity by some in democracy, or because of the perceived recurrent failure to come up to the West's standards.

Still, the summer of 2018 can definitely be regarded as the beginning of a new phase in the Hungarian *ressentiment* and its management. By 2018, Viktor Orbán had won all the parliamentary, local, and European elections since the autumn of 2006, reaching, e.g., a two-thirds majority in the parliament, and according to the opinion polls, his party (Fidesz) had been the most popular for twelve years. As early as 2009, he foresaw the radical transformation of culture if the political and economic transformations his future parliamentary majority was to implement proved successful. In 2010, he started to restructure the regime (Körösényi et al., 2020) on the premise that the liberal democracy built on the implicit negotiations within the elite had failed politically as well as economically. It failed politically in 2006 when unprecedented riots took place in Budapest because of a leaked secret speech in which the Socialist Prime Minister of the period from 2004 to 2009 confessed that his government had been lying to the citizens instead of governing the country; and liberal democratic regime had failed economically even before the world crisis of 2008 which then aggravated the difficulties. Since politics and economics are in interaction with culture, according to Orbán, a new political and economic system should result in a new cultural atmosphere and situation including a rearranged system of cultural institutions more favourable to the political right. Practically, indeed, the governance of the political right restructured the political system and regime during the first period from 2010 to 2014 and finished the economic transformation by the end of the second period from 2014 to 2018. The three parliamentary electoral victories in a row seemed to have grounded the implementation of Orbán's vision regarding culture.

The 2009 plans were repeated and confirmed in the prime minister's speech of late July 2018. Viktor Orbán announced that the government should be crowned by the transformation of culture. The speech was reflected upon by a great number of articles and media programmes and a series of legislative steps and personnel reshuffling in the realm of culture followed. The reactions on both political sides after the speech labelled the debates as part of an age-long cultural war, and frequently used the noun *Kulturkampf* and its Hungarian version *kultúrharc*.

The call by Orbán and the expansion of the political right in culture was highly appreciated in the prime minister's camp but, even as late as 2020, by when the government's appointees had occupied the leading positions, the right-wing journalists and public intellectuals still complained about the continuing cultural hegemony of the liberals and the political left. The latter, in turn, claimed that, quite to the contrary, it was the political

right which dominated culture, although the country had one single cultural elite, which always came from the political left; the political right, therefore, had neither real culture, nor valuable artists, and, moreover, the rightist politicians were culturally backward. Thus, the left and the liberals should rule politics as well because only they are progressive and European enough to adjust to international tendencies.

Each elite, hence, accused the other of undeservedly keeping culture in general and cultural policy occupied. The favourable reception by the audiences, and, therefore, the systematic repetitions of conspicuous contradictions, mutual accusations, self-victimization, hatred, and relentlessness by both sides indicate that the communicators were successfully targeting audiences presumably overwhelmed by some deep-seated emotional state. What one sees is not only the incitement of grievance, anger, fear, envy, or hatred separately but the political management of a complex constellation of emotions that nurtures an enduring conflict. The recurrent character of the elites' emotional management efforts and the specific emotions they focused on implied that what was invested is entrenched *ressentiment*.

4. Analytical Framework

In the following, first I define the hypothesis for the analysis. Second, I outline a specific definition of *ressentiment*, its components and effects, that is, I introduce the terminology necessary to test the hypothesis. Since the research aimed at clarifying emotion management, in this part I will also introduce the possible ways and means political communicators can apply to incite, appease, or channel emotions stemming from *ressentiment*.

4.1. The Hypothesis

As the works by Nietzsche, Scheler, and recent scholars (Hungarian historians included) suggest, in societies permeated by Christian culture and democratic ideology, and which are lagging behind, *ressentiment* is pervasive and confirmed regularly by emotional episodes that make it generic. Although so far theories have defined single *ressentiments* that single subjects or social groups maintain towards another person or group, it is relevant to study where and in what social spheres such episodes take place: Unfolding in a specific social realm, they may contribute to the *ressentiment* nurtured by a specific group or segment of the people towards specific others. Accordingly, the hypothesis of double *ressentiment* is as follows:

> The political communication on *Kulturkampf* takes advantage of specific *ressentiments* two political communities have towards each other and feed on experiences in separate spheres.

The hypothesis suggests that both groups may suffer from impotent revengefulness and, moreover, they may feel hurt by the other, either in the same or in different fields.

4.2. Definitions

To test the hypothesis, I define the main concepts: *ressentiment*, its drivers and outcomes in the public sphere, and the ways in which political communication studies can detect them.

4.2.1. *Ressentiment* as an Affective Style

In this research, *ressentiment* is an affective style. Although originally defined within neuroscience (Davidson, 1998), the concept of affective style recently has been broadened to cover sensitivities and specific emotional responses (Hofmann & Kashdan, 2010; Nielsen, 2018). Accordingly, one finds an affective style when the subject is inclined, sometimes obsessively, to notice specific developments in the environment and to respond in a specific way to them. *Ressentiment* is the affective style of impotent vengefulness: the *recurrent* perception of *injustice* which the subject is *unable to retaliate,* and the incapability leads to an unpleasant general sentiment with specific effects. Each component is crucial.

The experience of injury is *recurrent*. In contradistinction to a single occurrence, where the intentional object (the actor behind the attack), the formal object (the moral content of the injury), and the focus (its victim; Helm, 2001, p. 34), are clear, in the cases where the perception of injustice is recurrent, the sentiment loses its objects and focus and, with time, only the memories and the impression of the inevitability of injustice and impotence remain. The objectless character of *ressentiment* (Hoggett et al., 2013) is favourable for professional political communicators because they can manage the unpleasant feelings by blaming strategically chosen figures, delineating the moral stakes—and indeed, they are able to define their victim at will.

It is *injustice* that is experienced. Injustice is a moral experience offending not only the subject but also the group that they feel they belong to. The victim's identity is, therefore, open to redefinition: The subject may extend personal hurt to the group he/she identifies with or may self-victimize by identification with a suffering group. In several cases, the feeling of injustice stems from comparison with others who should be on the same level but who seem better off. This component opens opportunities for the political communicators: They may reinterpret developments for the followers as unjust and define the group that is the victim thereof. In case they want to arouse *ressentiment*, they may obsessively put forward comparisons between various social groups so that the target group go through a further negative emotional episode.

Incapability of retaliation, if enduring, may lead to passivity. *Ressentiment* is directly linked to the experience that coping is useless, it must be postponed, sometimes even the expression of resentment is forbidden by feeling rules and expression norms (Hochschild, 1983). Passivity is unfavourable for the politicians who usually want to make citizens act: They want participation in elections, demonstrations, and politics in general. On the one hand, politicians are, therefore, interested in transforming the repressed urges into anger or hope to mobilize the people. On the other hand, the activities should be carried out at a specific place and time and, hence, deferment (inherent in *ressentiment*) is useful for them. They may, in turn, be interested in letting people incubate aversions in their emotional realm until the day of action.

4.2.2. The Outcomes of *Ressentiment*

That was the core of *ressentiment*, which has specific outcomes. They depend on the subject's personality and the societal conditions around them. However various the effects may be, they have a mechanism in common: the protection of the positive image of the self. Powerlessness and failure are painful for the subject to admit because shame and self-loathing may develop; the defence mechanisms of repression and denial come into play to protect the self. While several mechanisms may occur, when presenting the results below I focus on three: externalization, self-victimization as identity work, and transvaluation.

Externalization by blaming. One tries to believe that something or someone else is responsible for one's failures. Either the arrangement of the world or some specific person or group is behind injustice. If one feels shame, it is because others make one do so and not because one has done something shameful. If one is outperformed by others, it is because others have means that one is denied. Such means against which no one can compete is that provided by a conspiracy: The enemies collaborate behind the scenes whereas the subject can only act alone.

With the personalization of politics (Bennett, 2012), blaming people, instead of impersonal entities such as parties, the government, or governance as a whole, is taken for granted. The tendency is an effect and factor of the moralization of politics: People, rather than structures, are made morally responsible for political developments. Even if structures are blameworthy, they can be moralized because they serve the interests of specific groups, whereby they are personalized.

Self-victimization as identity work. The subjects may try to protect themself by transforming their identity, commonly through self-victimization: One constructs oneself or one's group as the victim. If there are perpetrators to blame, the subject must be their victim. Sometimes the subject develops such a strong identity as a victim that any improvement in the world becomes unacceptable because that would weaken the subject's victimization. Improvements are, hence, perceived as deceptions, parts of some master plan, which will ultimately deteriorate the subject's situation even more. The professional communicators may reframe the positive developments so that the audience feel that they can see through them.

Transvaluation. Possibly the most sophisticated and complicated mechanism is the revaluation of values. The subject is unable to live up to the values such as the power and reputation they cherish. That failure is unbearable, and one of the solutions is to replace the values with ones according to which the subject can be or seems to be successful. The new values come either from the future, far beyond the present era, a usual solution on the political left, or from the past, leading to a specific complex emotion: nostalgia, a usual solution on the political right. By transvaluation, the subjects attain moral superiority, hence, they feel entitled to judge and criticise the previously superior rivals on moral grounds, a position of power. In politics, transvaluation works either by underrating the values of the previously envied rival camp, or by overrating values of the own political community, or both.

5. Method and Sources

So far *ressentiment* research has used two main methods: surveys and deductive qualitative content analysis. The former consists of querying citizens about the most important emotional components of *ressentiment* (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018). León et al. (1988) asked for opinions regarding 34 statements. Most of the studies, however, followed the qualitative method: First, they gave a definition of *ressentiment* and then looked for the components in the texts produced by the actors (Hoggett et al., 2013; Wimberly, 2018).

I also used the latter method. Since *ressentiment* is accompanied by self-deception, denial, and repression, those who appeal to *ressentiment* may do so unconsciously; therefore, it is unlikely that the sentiment and the political communications efforts to manage it can be discerned directly, in contradistinction to primary emotions, such as joy, anger, or fear. I tried to find the traces of the components and typical consequences of *ressentiment* in the public utterances collected.

I used a snowball procedure to collect the data. First, I gathered the articles containing words *Kulturkampf* and its Hungarian version *kultúrharc* published between the end of July 2018 and December 2020 on the most visited and/or politically most relevant media portals: *24.hu*, *168ora.hu*, *444.hu, hvg.hu*, *Index.hu*, *magyarnemzet.hu*, *magyaridok.hu*, *Mandiner.hu*, *nepszava.hu*, and *Origo.hu*. Second, I processed the articles and television shows the pieces cited, thereby the corpus also covered data from the period before the middle of July 2018. The collection contained 296 pieces. The processing consisted of searching for the components of *ressentiment* and for the

communications means that have the most potential in managing emotions stemming from *ressentiment* presumably present among the targeted audience, the citizens in the political community of the political therapist.

6. Results

The objective of the research was to detect and present communicative means that may manage citizens' *ressentiment*. I will, therefore, detail the political communication of *Kulturkampf* according to the structure introduced in the analytical framework section above.

6.1. Hardening the Core

We saw the core of *ressentiment*: a recurrent perception of injustice and powerlessness. The political communicator may be interested in inciting and maintaining the affective state so that the audience should hoard and incubate the necessary quantum of grievance that can be transformed into anger and, hence, action in due course. To do that, the communicator may appeal to any of the three main components, as follows.

6.1.1. Recurrent Character

The theme of the leftist cultural dictatorship is recurrent in the right-wing public sphere. In 2016, a journalist very close to the prime minister, Zsolt Bayer, wrote a 39-piece long series of articles on the issue in the main daily paper of the political right under the title "Intolerable," which suggested that the double standard used on behalf of the leftists and liberals in general, and of people with a Jewish background in particular, was not to be tolerated anymore. Another leading journalist on the right, Árpád Szakács, prepared 15 pieces on the topic in the same daily paper in 2017 and 2018 under the heading "Whose cultural dictatorship is it?" In 2019, the two series were published in a separate volume (Bayer & Szakács, 2019). A poet and writer, Dénes János Orbán, also wrote a six-piece long series under the title "Marginalia to *Kulturkampf*" in 2018. A right-leaning historian, Márton Békés, published a 400-page long book with the title "Cultural Warfare" (Békés, 2020) on the inevitability of culture war if the political right wants to win elections in the future.

The greater part of the articles coming from the cultural left responded to the rightist criticisms and accusations, and that was what made them serial, but some dealt independently with the tendencies in the sphere of culture. In 2017 and 2018, several articles on the issue of finances in culture were raised by a respected literary critic (Reményi, 2017) who dwelt on the rightist advancement in literature and arts. The leading daily paper of the political left, *Népszava*, has been using the tag *Kulturkampf* since 2014 but only one article was tagged before the middle of 2018 whereas 31 were tagged after that time. Another tag, *Kultúrharc*, shows similar numbers: a single article before our period, whereas 52 occurred during the following two and a half years.

It is highly unlikely that these series would have been written if they had not resonated with their audiences.

6.1.2. Injustice

The rightist and the leftist article series mentioned above are hardly more than complaints about the unfair treatment by the other side. The right laments the double standard and the wide international visibility and reputation of the left-leaning artists and the much more generous finances they get even now when rightist appointees distribute sources, which demonstrates the persistent and unbreakable left-liberal hegemony in culture. A poet and journalist compares the reception of two poets respected by the political right with the one of the writers close to the left:

> The two exceptionally great poets' reception by the liberal side amounts practically to zero. If anyone wants to deny it, he ought to present and compare the bibliography of works on Esterházy and Nádas with the ones on Faludy and Kányádi, and add the comparative lists of the university master theses as well….It is a bad argument to say that the opportunities are equal because the national camp has had exceptionally great sums for years, which it should have used much better; the issue does not depend on money, rather on mentality, the attitude of the people should be changed. (Orbán, 2018)

The left-leaning and liberal authors also monitor the support the leftist organisations obtain vis-a-vis the rightist ones and they also find the other camp undeservedly better off particularly when comparing cultural performances. Both sides eagerly calculate how much they have lost to their counterparts in terms of money and influence.

6.1.3. Powerlessness

Communicators on the cultural left often mention the two-third majority of the right-wing coalition in the parliament and the aggressive way in which the right prefers to use its power both in legislation and personnel changes in culture. A left-leaning author, Gergely Péterfy, wrote on Orbán's regime:

> The regime… is establishing its own network of institutions where revolutionary ideology is compulsory and where a class of clowns has been made aristocracy. In that parallel universe of the regime, which is the network of academies, universities, research institutes and journals that suffocate the institutions of democratic and European traditions by their abundance of money, suspends the validity of discourses

> the normal part of the world has been indulged in. (Péterfy, 2017)

As shown in the quotation in Section 6.1.2, the rightist public figures claim that the huge influence of the left-liberals stems from the communist era, which now is backed by European and US support. They say that the indoctrination by the Marxist and later by the postmodern cultural elites, coming practically from the same circles, has had such a persistent influence on the mentality and attitude of the audience that it is an almost impossible mission for the cultural right to make changes in the short term.

6.2. Repression and Outcomes

Ressentiment leads to specific changes in the emotional realm. The subjects do not want to admit responsibility, rather deny or repress any acknowledgement of any blame they may share for causing their own unpleasant experience. The subjects, therefore, protects their self-image by specific defence mechanisms. Here, I am presenting three directions the mechanisms can take: externalization, self-victimization as identity work, and transvaluation.

6.2.1. Externalization by Blaming

Both camps name the people responsible for the deterioration of culture in Hungary. They are painted as demonic figures coming from the cultural elites; they have, therefore, betrayed high culture in general, and art in particular, by joining political groups. For the left, all the rightists participating in *Kulturkampf* are guilty because they have the government behind them, thereby they let the government have a say in the development of culture. The right considers the canon makers of the cultural left are to blame for excluding their favoured great artists. Even if their parties are not powerful politically, the cultural elite has inherited authority and domestic and international networks from the past, whereby it has a huge influence.

In rightist public communication, the political and cultural left systematically tries to put the political and cultural right to shame. In the autumn of 2020, well-known artists from Cate Blanchett to Robert Wilson declared solidarity with the cause of the students who were revolting against the government's measures to re-establish the University of Theatre and Film Arts Budapest and the plans to appoint new principals mainly from among the right-leaning artists. Meanwhile, the rightist journalists explained this international protestation as being the result of a conspiracy on the left to destroy Hungary's image and to shame and humiliate the country abroad. The leftist communication, in turn, interpreted the case of the University as an explicitly political move by the government against cultural values. Although the new appointees in charge of the University used to be great artists in the past, the leftist discourse says, they lost their talent when they joined the efforts of the government and Viktor Orbán personally and accepted the task of conducting a rightist occupation of culture.

6.2.2. Identity Work: Self-Victimization

A left-leaning journalist and writer wrote an indignant article against the generous scholarship a government-financed public institution granted to writers and poets from both political camps:

> Last time I was shocked by the story of the Térey scholarship. Lay persons may appreciate the idea: Let's support the Hungarian writers with a major grant for period that is long enough to produce a great work. But the real purpose is again to divide, divide the Hungarian literature in this case, to spoil the so far credible voices, to demonstrate that the champions of morality also go after the fat bit. (Karafiáth, 2020)

The writer was unable to accept that anything favourable could happen. Positive developments are but traps to compromise the artists critical towards the governance of the political right.

The communicators on the political right also insist on their identity as a victim. Although their political parties have won every parliamentary, local, and European election since the middle of 2006—and even though Fidesz, the large right-leaning party, has been the most popular according to opinion polls since that time—they still recurrently write about the right's bleak future, given the leftist and liberal cultural hegemony. There is a conspicuous self-contradiction in the discourse: They simultaneously claim that it is impossible to win in politics without cultural hegemony, and they boast of their victories since 2010. It is hardly possible to avoid the conclusion that they lay claim to the identity of the victim and that of the victor at the same time.

6.2.3. Transvaluation

The two camps have a specific transvaluation discourse in common: Both claim that the other exerts political power in the culture at the expense of authentic artistic worth.

The cultural right accuses the rival party of ignoring and excluding great achievements several authors outside the canon produced. The discourse explains that since the cultural canon is based on political power and not on merit, political power is necessary to change the situation otherwise the old canon and canon makers would maintain a false hierarchy. This is indeed transvaluation: The cultural right perceives injustice from the side of the canon, wants to be appreciated by the canon makers, but being unable to reach that, it judges the canon wrong, not worth trying to get into. Sometimes the latter disparagement takes the form of underrating works

by leftist artists as meaningless and unenjoyable for the Hungarian people, which is not surprising because the so-called Europeanness and liberalism on the base of which they are produced have become outdated and irrelevant:

> When you have to work according to the regulations of political correctness, you will think it over whether to write erotic love poems or whether you are allowed to let your humour show, and whether you are free to choose topic at all. It is far from easy to write and live foreseeing that if you make a mistake, if you meddle with something delicate, you will be excommunicated and financial and publication opportunities will shrink for you. (Orbán, 2018)

The other camp also insists on the principle of meritocracy and denies the existence of any canon or political consideration in judging works. The left-leaning communicators point at the politically motivated invasion by the government's appointees and favourites in culture, which threatens the sphere with bad art gaining ground. A cameraman says in an interview: "This regime thinks talents can be appointed. In contradistinction to them, although knowing that talents were not loyal, Kádár and his staff gave them some space." (Kardos, 2020). Still, from time to time, even left-leaning public intellectuals admit that there is a canon, a rather questionable one (Kőbányai, 2018), and that the canon makers have had a long-standing alliance with politicians of the late socialist and liberal parties.

7. Conclusion

Although I have had space to present only a couple of components and outcomes of *ressentiment*, it was not difficult to find communicative means that could be traced back to, and which capitalize on, the affective style. One could see the obsessive sensitivities towards the signs of injustice, the discourses on powerlessness, and the outcomes of *ressentiment*: transvaluation, self-contradiction, self-victimization, and scapegoating. The recurrent deployment of these means can be explained by their efficiency, which, in turn, verifies the premise of the hypothesis of the research: The political communication on *Kulturkampf* took advantage of the *ressentiment* present among the citizens.

The hypothesis also foresaw the existence of double *ressentiment*, that is, the possibility that two political communities have *ressentiment* towards each other at the same time. Indeed, the research could detect the components of *ressentiment* and means to manage it in the activities of both political camps. A great part of their communicative efforts was invested in the emotional episodes that maintained and oriented the affective processes feeding *ressentiment* and the outcomes of the impotent revenge were directed towards the other camp.

Following Nietzsche or Scheler and supported by the research on *Kulturkampf,* one may conclude that *ressentiment* offers a plausible analytical framework to study a considerable part of political communication processes in Hungary and presumably in other democratic European countries facing a culture war. *Ressentiment* is a psychological resource politicians and public communicators can rely on to mobilize citizens for a specific purpose. Being indeterminate regarding objects and focus, it opens a large space for politicians to manoeuvre. In the framework of a special political therapy, they can offer threats and hopes, ways of deferment and outburst, conspiracies of scapegoats, and the sharing of victimhood. This is a therapy also in the sense that the success depends on the personalities and sensitivities of the citizens and their groups: Some accept threats that face them as explanation for their discontent; some need the scapegoats on which to project their frustration; others find relief in self-victimization; and further groups consider their bad feelings legitimate and only to be acted upon when they are informed that others are also hurt. There are many combinations that exist within this collection, all of which are capable of appealing and uniting citizens in one single political community: an in-group based on *ressentiment*.

More specifically, in the Hungarian case, one can see twofold *ressentiment* in another sense as well. Both camps nurtured *ressentiment* in two fields, but each focussed mainly on one of them: The political right concentrated on culture whereas the political left on party politics. Rightist communicators tried to manage the citizens' *ressentiment* by raising cultural injuries and grievance, whereas the cultural left did the same alluding to the political deficiencies of the ruling right as reflected by an un-European eagerness to occupy culture. Each invested in the other field as well. The cultural left foresaw oppression and the deterioration of culture due to the political preponderance of the right, whereas right-leaning communicators repeated that the cultural hegemony of the political left and liberals might result in their political prevalence in the long run.

We, hence, see a twofold double *ressentiment*: There are two fields where communicative means can be used to manage *ressentiment*, and there are two political communities in Hungary, just as in some other countries, which are receptive to specific efforts of affect management. One may conclude that in cases where a political force is in power for a prolonged period, and particularly if it has a huge majority which causes recurrent frustration amongst the rest of the political elite and its voters, coupled with the urge to avoid facing failure and not to attribute it to the losing side's weakness, its elite and audience may survive the hard times by finding superiority in some non-political realm, such as, in this case, culture.

The research and the article have limitations. The first being that only one country and one case served to test the hypothesis. More cases would have resulted

in more nuanced knowledge on the political communication of *Kulturkampf* and its use in managing *ressentiment*. Secondly, triangulation through the analysis of citizens' reception would increase the validity and generalizability of the analytical framework. Thirdly, on another level of analysis, the prototypical indicator nouns and narratives used to detect the components of *ressentiment* could be broadened according to a more comprehensive approach to, and definition of, *ressentiment*.

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Article

Resentment and Coping With the Democratic Dilemma

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Abstract

Resentment is a complex, multi-layered emotion, within which perceptions of unfairness and feelings of anger are central. When linked to politics, it has predominantly been associated with the alleged "crisis of representative democracy" and populism. However, recent studies have shown that resentment can intervene positively in people's relations to politics and political institutions by facilitating certain types of political participation (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018). Despite this, the concept of resentment, and hence its role in contemporary representative democracy, is often poorly defined, with empirical investigations of its manifestation(s) remaining scarce. Borrowing a conceptualization of resentment as "resentful affectivity," our article draws on the analysis of focus groups carried out in Belgium (2019–2020) with individuals where resentful affectivity is likely to be observed (i.e., contemporary movements of contestation such as the Yellow Vests, Youth for Climate, and individuals who occupy a socially disadvantaged position). We find that experiences of intense anger, fear, disappointment, and the unfairness of representative democracy, i.e., of how representative democracy works on the ground, coexist simultaneously with remaining hopes in the democratic system. We show how this complex blend of emotions confronts citizens with what we call a "democratic dilemma." We document the different ways in which citizens cope with this dilemma and conclude by highlighting both the positive and negative ways in which resentment intervenes in the contemporary "crisis of representative democracy."

Keywords

affectivity; emotions; representative democracy; resentment

Issue

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1. Introduction

Recent decades have been marked by what is commonly described as a "crisis of representative democracy" (Crouch, 2004; Merkel et al., 2011; Tormey, 2014, 2015) to denote the increasing distrust, and defiance, that citizens express towards the institutions and actors of representative politics (see Droste, 2021, for a complementary analysis of feelings and beliefs among many citizens "left behind" and unheard by unresponsive political decision makers). Whether it is the rise of populist and anti-establishment actors, electoral abstention, political apathy, or political protest, citizens are finding various ways to express a sense of hate and disdain towards politics and established institutions (Hay, 2007). Arguably then, core systemic aspects of representative democracy find themselves on shaky ground when there is a decrease in political engagement, and withering trust in elected politicians. Drawing on the recent affective turn in the social sciences (Clough & Halley,

2007), the extant literature which focuses on the various deficits of electoral representation, populism, and anti-establishment politics, has increasingly paid attention to emotions (Cramer, 2016; Hay, 2007; Hochschild, 2016; Marcus, 2002; for an illustration of the role emotions play in citizens' political behaviours in the context of the Brexit vote, see Sullivan, 2021).

In this context, hate and disdain are often presented as intrinsic to citizens' troubled relationships with politics (Hay, 2007), and their feelings of being marginalized, undermined, and unrepresented are concomitantly found to be key explanatory factors in political events that mark our times, like the Brexit vote or the election of Trump (Akkerman et al., 2014; Bachman & Sideway, 2016; Canovan, 1999; Cramer, 2016; Dodd et al., 2017; Hochschild, 2016; Kaltwasser & Van Hauwaert, 2020; Spruyt et al., 2016). Resentment, the more complex affect capturing these emotions, is sometimes presented as *the* symptom and feature of the contemporary crisis of representative democracy (Fleury, 2020; Ure, 2015), of new forms of political "malaise" (Fukuyama, 2018; Hochschild, 2016), and the breeding ground for populism (e.g., Berlet, 2012; Hochschild, 2016). In contrast to this dominant understanding, or at least one strongly linked to it, other scholars point to resentment as engendering critical political engagement and thereby strengthening, invigorating, and innovating representative democracy (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018; Norris, 2011).

Despite the somewhat ambivalent and important role that resentment plays in the contemporary democracy, the concept is seldom defined with clarity. Equally, empirical investigations remain both scarce and partial; something which is largely explained by the lack of data and the marked proclivity to focus on its link with populism and/or "unconventional" political action (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018). Indeed, while the studies above hint at the role of resentment within different dimensions of the crisis of representative democracy, developing a more in-depth analysis of the nature and consequences of resentment is likely to generate more nuanced understanding. In this context, we investigate how different groups of citizens express resentment, and how this relates to their expectations of, and beliefs in, representative democracy. We conceive of resentment as "resentful affectivity" (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018) and use it as a heuristic tool to empirically investigate how citizens express resentment, and more specifically, what emotions underlie these expressions of resentment towards representative democracy. Our empirical analysis is based on focus groups carried out in Belgium between 2019 and 2020, amongst populations where resentful affectivity might be considered high. This included contemporary movements of contestation such as the Yellow Vests and Youth for Climate, as well as those individuals who are in socially disadvantaged positions.

Our analysis of the focus groups reveals a complex amalgam of anger, fear, feelings of unfairness, disappointment, and hope, that commingle in a complex resentful affectivity towards representative democracy. In addition, we distinguish between the specific objects of these emotions. More precisely, we show what aspects of democracy resentful citizens are angry or disappointed about, what they fear, judge to be unfair, and in contrast, what they are hopeful about and feel empowered by.

2. Resentful Affectivity and the Crisis of Representative Democracy

Resentment is broadly defined as a feeling of "anger about a situation you think is unfair" (Resentment, n.d.). It denotes a particular type of anger that emerges in a context where one feels unfairly treated, for example, in comparison to others in society; a feeling that neighbours, say, are happier, more successful, wealthier, in ways classically understood as relative deprivation (Spruyt et al., 2016). In scholarly accounts, this definition is additionally layered with the idea of a "brewing anger" that accumulates over time, and displays a distinctively bitter connotation (see Fleury, 2020).

In this context, scholars have also relied on the semantic difference between resentment (the English word) and the French word *ressentiment* (used as such in English) to distinguish between two types of brewing anger that produce different types of attitudes (see, e.g., Salmela & Capelos, 2021, for an in-depth theoretical discussion of resentment and *ressentiment*). Drawing on the foundational work of Scheler (1912), contemporary scholars (e.g., Capelos & Demertzis, 2018) have relied on this distinction in the context of populism. They have associated "resentment" with a form of moral anger accompanied by a sense of self-efficacy that might act as a driver for engagement and action. In contrast, *ressentiment* is seen here as "a compensatory emotion of the powerless that expedites transvaluation so that the person can stand and handle his or her frustration" (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018, p. 3). This semantic distinction points to the fact that the same moral anger may lead to different levels and/or kinds of political engagement.

More importantly, the main contribution of Capelos and Demertzis (2018) is the use of "resentful affectivity" as a concept that denotes both the complexity, and the fluidity, of emotions revolving in and around resentment. Here, they highlight various links between resentment and anxiety, fear, despair as well as varying levels of hope that intervene in the driving of political behaviour and attitudes. Their concept of resentful affectivity is especially useful when mapping the complexity of resentment and allows for the possibility of different effects that come from different constellations of resentful affectivity. This, in turn, opens the possibility of investigating and theorizing not only the negative, but also the positive impact of resentment on representative democracy. Their understanding of resentful affectivity includes "passive" and "active" forms of resentment, such as

those usually defined as indignation (i.e., the mobilizing form of anger which triggers protest; e.g., Jasper, 2014). In these ways, resentment can result in increased political engagement (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018) and, hence, can have potentially beneficial effects for democratic vitality. Or, put another way, resentment may indeed be linked with a crisis of representative democracy as many studies show, but it may also be a part of the dynamics that strengthen, invigorate, or innovate representative democracy by questioning and challenging it.

Resentful affectivity can also be used to distinguish between the different objects of various emotions. Anger and fear as the constitutive components of a resentful affectivity can, for instance, have a different object than feelings of hope which are constitutive of the same affectivity. This unlocks the possibility to see and understand different affective responses to different dimensions and forms of democracy, and, by doing so, improve our understanding of resentment's relation to the current crisis of representative democracy. This requires expanding the analytical scope of resentful affectivity beyond the negative consequences of resentment, and in particular, beyond its relation to populist voting.

3. Methods

Two analytical questions lead our research to deepen the understanding of resentment—defined by Capelos and Demertzis (2018) as discussed in the previous section—and its relationship with attitudes and expectations about representative democracy: (1) What affects and emotions characterize citizens' resentment towards politics (understood here as the practices, actors, and institutions of representative democracy)? And (2) How does resentment towards representative democracy relate to beliefs and expectations about democracy more broadly? This section explains how an abductive method, analysing focus group discussions, gives answers to these questions.

3.1. Data: Focus Groups

Analysing focus group discussions makes it possible to unravel the complex relationships citizens have with representative democracy by allowing them to express and confront their views on politics through agreement and disagreement (Duchesne, 2017; Morgan, 2010; Van Ingelgom, 2020). The focus group data used in this article were collected between April 2019 and February 2020 in the framework of the EOS RepResent project (FNRS-FWO no. G0F0218N) that examined the relationship between democratic resentment and political representation in Belgium. For this purpose, focus groups were organized with members of populations where resentful affect might be expected: contemporary movements of contestation, as well as socially disadvantaged individuals (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018; Feather, 2015). For the purposes of this article, we focus on the discussions that took place in four focus groups (19 participants in total) carried out in the Brussels region: one focus group with participants in the Yellow Vests protest, one with participants of Youth for Climate, one with inhabitants of Molenbeek (one of Brussels' least advantaged areas adjacent to one of the city's most advantaged areas), and one with blue-collar workers in the European Parliament (for an analysis of how low- and middle-income populations are more vulnerable to economic distress, which can increase their resentment toward democracy, see Ferrari, 2021). The selection of participants thus captured a diverse sample of citizens where resentful feelings were expected (given active involvement in social movements or given one's social position), and allowed us to inquire into the variant and diverse ways citizens express resentful affectivity. The Supplementary File 1 provides background information on the participants, illustrating the heterogeneity of their socio-demographic profiles. The sampling was theoretically driven, but did not necessarily aim for saturation; instead, comparison was key, and the sampling relies more on the principle of diversity (Van Ingelgom, 2020). Sampling data based on diversity, rather than on saturation or generalizing findings to a larger population, was instrumental in gaining the theoretical traction essential for this type of analysis.

In excavating citizens' feelings of resentment and views on (representative) democracy, each focus group was organized around three guiding questions proven to be relevant to study citizens' relationships towards politics (White, 2010). The focus groups opened with the questions: (1) What are the most important societal challenges that Belgium is facing today? (2) Who should take care of those issues? And (3) How should they be resolved (i.e., political solutions)? The average length of the focus groups was 2.5 hours. All focus groups were audio recorded—and when participants agreed (written informed consent was required for participation)—filmed. Based on these recordings, anonymized verbatim transcripts were made. The focus groups took place in French or Dutch, and the excerpts of the transcripts are translations by the authors. The Supplementary File 2 presents the four focus groups in more detail.

3.2. Analysis: An Abductive Approach

As with other contemporary social scientists interested in theory-building, our qualitative analysis favours shared standards of cumulative theory building (Lamont & White, 2009) and follows an abductive approach. Abduction as a method of data analysis was initially developed by Peirce (1934) as a way to draw inferences that are oriented towards theory-building. As such, abduction is distinct both from deductive and inductive methods, but combines features of both types of inferences. Building on abductive analysis principles, our results consider relevant insights from previous studies in the literature (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014;

Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). We develop abductive inferences through in-depth interpretive analysis following a two-step approach: first, analysing focus groups one by one in order to understand and characterize resentment and prevalent beliefs in, and expectations of, representative democracy in the light of previous studies; then, comparing the findings by looking for anomalies inside and between focus groups. In this way, qualitative data analysis consists of analysing and comparing transcripts iteratively, while also being sensitive to theoretical insights (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). We build on the scholarship around resentful affectivity by improving the conceptual clarity about the meaning and boundaries of resentment. This not only leads to a more nuanced understanding of contemporary forms of resentment, but also greater analytical clarity regarding the various ways resentment links to citizens' beliefs in, and expectations of, representative democracy.

4. Findings

Our analysis shows different variations of resentful affectivity towards representative democracy. Participants' expressions of resentment were grounded in a combination of contradictory emotions: anger, fear, disgust, desperation, and unfairness, but also hope, feelings of empowerment, and enthusiasm. This affectivity is expressed in relation to a profound dissatisfaction with the way "representative democracy works," but not a wholesale rejection of democracy as a principle, or as an ideal to attain. Strikingly, some participants expressed resentment towards representative democracy, while at the same time remained hopeful that the same set of institutions will bring solutions. In the remainder of this article, we refer to this tension as a "democratic dilemma." In particular, our analysis documents different ways in which participants cope with this democratic dilemma: the tension between disillusion in democratic institutions and their remaining hopes. In some cases, participants explained that they reverted to voting blank in elections, or resorted to protest and advocated democratic alternatives. Elsewhere, participants still shared the belief that the current system has the potential to function well. Below, we present our findings in detail. In Section 4.1, we unpack the interplay between anger, fear, unfairness, and disappointment which underlies the resentful affectivity as observed in our data. In Section 4.2, we examine how these are related to more positive emotions such as hope, and in Section 5, we discuss the different ways of coping the participants deployed in the face of this "democratic dilemma.''

4.1. Resentful Affectivity: Anger, Fear, Unfairness, Disappointment

In the accounts of participants, and in line with the existing literature, resentment is connected to anger, and especially a "brewing anger" that accumulates over time, displaying a distinctively bitter connotation, and often connected to disappointment. Those elements emerged clearly in the analysis of participant's exchanges in Molenbeek—a group composed of individuals who are in a socially disadvantaged position. The participants in this group expressed very explicit resentment towards politics, and some connected this to voting "blank" in the last elections as a protest against politicians failing to listen to them, and as an expression of disbelief in what politicians say. Interestingly, they explained or even justified—morally—their resentment, as a logical reaction to the distance and remoteness of politicians outside of election periods. In this group, we observed that resentment went hand in hand with the rejection of (elements of) the political system and political elites. In the following quotes, Mehmet expressed this rejection with a lot of anger: He starkly articulated his feeling of being ignored by political representatives as well as civil servants (in this quote, the municipality), as comparing "us" to dogs and even shit. Moreover, his bad experience when turning to the municipality services for help illustrates disappointment and the anger this raised:

> Abbou: There is no longer contact between inhabitants and politicians. It's a bit normal that we're going to vote blank.
>
> Mehmet (interrupting): There are many blank votes, yes, yes.
>
> Abbou: Well, it's normal [to vote blank] because we no longer believe what politicians say. I don't believe them anymore. I've been voting blank for several years now.
>
> Adil (interrupting): Politicians should come to the field, bring people together and talk.
>
> Abbou (interrupting): There, I agree too, of course.
>
> Adil (continuing): I think this is the best idea.
>
> Mehmet: And even I will pass by then, in contrast to the municipality [of Molenbeek].
>
> Moderator: Yes.
>
> Mehmet: Uh, they talk too badly. When I had a problem, I dropped by with my brother-in-law…."No, you didn't pay for that, you didn't pay for that." She [the civil servant of the municipality] treated us like dogs. I mean, sorry for that term, she spoke to us like, like we were shit, actually.

This illustrated an explicit form of resentment towards politics that goes to the heart of the relationship between voters and representatives in representative

democracy. The participants of this group from Molenbeek reached a broad consensus around not being listened to by politicians (Noordzij et al., 2020) and not trusting what they say. Perhaps more importantly, this was not a one-off experience, but rather a repetitive and long-lasting source of frustration.

This feeling of not being listened to is shared by many participants in the different groups, yet we observed variation in how resentment is expressed. Beyond the angry slogans of the climate marches, the exchanges among the Youth for Climate participants reflected a genuine anger. Their anger was directed at many different targets but was particularly explicit when they denounced the inaction of political elites in the face of climate change. Their critique of politics echoes broader societal concerns about the flaws of "career-politicians" and democratic myopia; the incompatibility of short-term electoral cycles with the necessary long-term vision inherent to address climate change.

However, in this case, we did not observe the same kind of frustration that accumulates over time. This may be linked to the age of the young activists, but also to the context in which their anger is expressed: a moment of intense mobilization. As explained by Knops (2021), this more active form of resentment, often called "indignation" (Jasper, 2014) is what characterizes their affective repertoire. As their conversation proceeded, their anger was marked by a kind of impatience (demanding that politicians act now!), and a form of disdain; "looking down" on politicians:

> Arthur: I mean, if a politician could not run for another term, if he had only four years to do exactly what he wanted, without thinking of the next one—not thinking about pleasing people—he would focus on the ideas he wants to implement. Because, as we know, politicians just spend time taking care of their image, and making sure they remain popular.

> Arthur: They are really losing time… losing a lot of time.

> Loic: Yeah, and actually, I used to think "ok, five years is a good amount of time to do something," but now when I think of the climate and I think that, if we carry on, we might enter an ice-age in 2040, it's just not enough!

In the focus group with Yellow Vests activists, fear was a central affect; and fear, as we have discussed above, is also part of resentful affectivities. When asked to describe what they saw as key problems in society, the Yellow Vests participants pointed toward a deep-rooted fear of falling further into precarity, the impact of climate change, an unhealthy environment, and unemployment. The participants also discussed how politicians try to use this fear to convince people of their own politics and to "keep the people down," describing politics as "a gigantic monster'':

> Otto: According to me, the biggest problem is poverty. And thus, the fear for poverty linked to unemployment. I believe that that is the biggest problem.

> Otto: A big fear. A big fear. That is a big problem, and that fear… you cannot simply say "come on, do a therapy session." No, no it has nothing to do with that. If there is no security, then people do strange things.

> Daan: Fear is a strong motive for people.

> Otto: So, the fear of being poor. Fear that soon our bees are no longer able to fertilize our fruit. Fear that our children… yeah, can no longer live in a healthy environment. Fear, fear, fear.

Besides the feelings of brewing anger, frustration, and fear, all the focus groups reflected feelings of unfairness in relation to participants' resentment towards representative democracy. An illustration of this can be found in the focus groups with blue-collar workers in the European Parliament, particularly when participants discussed inequalities. One inequality they observed was between people like them and "political and economic elites'':

> Cathie: I think that if they [politicians] would lower their salaries, and would learn to live with the wages that we are paid every month, I believe that they wouldn't manage. It would also be good that, instead of always coming up with all their blah blah blah, if they would learn to live like us, with the same monthly budget, we would see whether they still come up with the same proposals.

These types of sentiment echo previous findings on cultural distance between citizens and elites (Noordzij et al., 2020). Here, the participants felt a distinct disconnect, a sense of distance from elites who rarely understood their situation and do not try to improve it. In the conversation, this inequality was framed within the experience of a systemic hierarchy. It was observed at the workplace, where people working for the European Parliament have more rights and better living conditions than people working for subcontractors. At various points in the discussion, the experience of being at the bottom was discussed along with the frustration of voicelessness and not being heard. In these discussions, a sense of powerlessness is also perceptible. In the Molenbeek focus group, participants also expressed resentment by sharing their personal stories, and the experiences of unfairness and injustice they had lived through. This use of personal experiences with unfairness and injustice is very explicit in Mehmet and Abbou's conversation. Mehmet draws on his encounter with civil servants at the Molenbeek municipality services, while the other participants join the exchange with their personal experiences of getting "their papers" (residence permits) in

order. Here, they contrasted the poor experiences of "non-Belgians" with the more positive service received by Belgian citizens. For these participants, sharing their experiences was the key to justifying their expressed resentment, and demonstrating how "normal" it is for them to feel the way they do towards politics, and justify their actions (e.g., voting blank).

This section has illustrated the interplay between the brewing anger, the long-lasting frustration, disappointment, and the experiences of unfairness which underlie participants' resentment towards politics, understood here as actors and institutions of representative democracy. We have also highlighted the important role played by fear and the mobilization of anger, and the indignation felt by some of our analysed groups. Some participants used these feelings to explain why they vote blank, others explained that this led them to participate in protests. Section 4.2 shows how these feelings are also linked to remaining hopeful and having trust in existing political institutions.

4.2. But Also Hope, Enthusiasm, and Trust Towards (Representative) Democracy

In contrast to the emotions described in Section 4.1, in various instances participants' resentment is linked to emotions such as hope. This is expressed towards the representative system and made space for ideas on how to improve the existing system, rather than abolishing it entirely. These ideas typically implied increased citizen input and greater dialogue with their representatives. In their own words, participants expressed hope that there was a solution to the current situation. For example, the participants of the Molenbeek group discussed how the mayor should consult citizens; she should come to the field (as the researcher recruiting them did):

> Abbou: It was the mayor Françoise Schepmans who destroyed it [a parking lot]? Well she should have first consulted with all the locals who live there before she decided, you see?
>
> Walid: Yeah.
>
> Abbou: And she did it on her own, you see? Maybe I don't know with whom she consulted, why she didn't come on the field, why like Mr [pointing to the moderator who did the recruitment] came towards us anyway. Still he dared to ring our doorbell. That's why we're here today. See? But she didn't. She didn't come to the locals, she didn't speak.

This quote is highly illustrative of the tension between anger or frustration, and hope and faith in representative democracy. Indeed, Abbou's resentment towards politics does not lead him to promote solutions outside the current political system. Elected representatives should, and can, establish better representative relationships. When, in the previous quote, he strongly stated: "I couldn't give my vote to those politicians who don't have… who don't keep their word," he is, in fact, displaying that he values representative democracy and his own vote. He does not trust politicians, but he still, implicitly, values the institution of voting. In the same vein, Abbou says that "we don't believe politicians anymore," but he also implies that if politicians were willing to listen, citizens would show up to share their opinions when consulted. Abbou's dilemma perfectly illustrates how resentful individuals often have contradictory expectations of the institutions of representative democracy, which go beyond a surface antagonism with "the establishment." As the next quote illustrates, however disappointing the institutions of representative democracy are, they do remain part of the solutions envisaged for the future:

> Mehmet: Well, I think it's the state that has to, to move, you see. I don't know, or either it's the municipality that is, if it's the municipality actually that runs everything, uh, the city, I think they should be reacting at the same time too.
>
> Adil: I think that the, the mayor, he must also—as you are doing there [referring to the researchers]—bring people together from time to time and talk about neighbourhood problems, about… citizens who live in the region. They find solutions, I'm not saying right away, but as we go, uh, we solve one problem today, some, sometime after we solve another, and then voilà. But it's, it's, we come back to it, if he's not in the field, he's never going to understand people's problems.

This tension between anger and hope when discussing electoral politics was also found in the other groups. The European Parliament blue-collar workers, for example, expressed being fed up with the system and pointed out that politicians only tell nice stories during elections, but otherwise they do not care. However, hope was expressed when participants discussed voting, politicians, and political parties with the comment that: "Some politicians do have a heart….One has to keep hoping, each time there is elections." Similarly, as the quote below shows, despite their strong critique of political representatives, Youth for Climate participants reflected a high level of trust and hope in the same institutions they critiqued:

> Amelie: For me it [the solution] must come from politics, it is the political world that at some point should say: "Ok, with our expertise as ministers we are not able to find a solution," but instead we will invest more heavily in climate research, we will hire a team of scientists, trust them, and let them bring the solutions.

Indeed, at the time of the focus group, the Youth for Climate participants still expressed hope in the electoral

system in general, with participants strongly supporting, for example, the institution of voting (saying that it "is the basis of democracy"). Their hope is not blind or naive, however. Participants showed awareness of the complexity of decision-making and climate change politics. In this quote, we argue that they are not expressing a preference for expert governments, but rather, for elected representatives to acknowledge the limits of their expertise and to ask for more expert assistance when developing policy.

The Yellow Vests participants' outspoken ideas about how the political system needs to change take a different direction. They hold no more hope in electoral politics but remain committed to the ideals of democracy. In this context, participants called for radical democratic reform, in particular through the introduction of referenda. Indeed, the electoral, representative dimension of the current democratic system, and especially the institution of "political parties," is described in very negative terms, whilst referenda and citizen assemblies are seen as the way to re-locate democratic power within the hands of "the people" itself. They used their concrete experiences of engagement with the Yellow Vests, organizing assemblies and meetings amongst people with very different ideological preferences, for example, to illustrate the importance of deliberation between people with different views, and their distinction from political parties, which "in the end will always choose the party above the people." This distrust in the representative function of political parties led them to vote for small counter-parties as an expression of their discontent with mainstream politics. Hence, they too, whilst critical of many facets of representative democracy, nonetheless put their hopes into more direct forms of democracy.

Overall, the Yellow Vests participants painted a very grim picture of society and politics, yet they were excited and hopeful that their actions had the potential to bring positive change. What is happening in the Yellow Vests movement was described as "brilliant," a "growing positive vibe," that "they are doing well" and were "on the winning side." The Yellow Vests participants felt empowered and believed that the table had turned, with politicians now the ones who were afraid:

> Daan: This is a piece of clothing [referring to the yellow vest]. The very fact that the government takes away a piece of clothing, that is indeed that fear. It means that fear has changed sides, and that this small gadget [waves with the yellow vest], that should be in your car, that I wear at work, that it becomes a symbol, and that they fear that symbol.
>
> Daan: Yes, literally fear and that politics is aware of this gigantic weapon.
>
> Lara: We started very sweet with the yellow vests. What is it? It says: Fear, fear, fear. Just a thing. Putting on a vest to say: Fear. We cannot take it any longer. It is starting to explode.

This section illustrated how the tension between simultaneous assertions of resentment towards politics and hope in the power and agency of citizens in representative democracy, and democracy more generally, was a tangible feature of the findings. This informed us of the various ways in which citizens "cope" with the democratic dilemma, which we discuss in greater detail in Section 5.

5. Coping With the "Democratic Dilemma"

Our analysis sheds light on the resentful affectivity expressed by participants, and how it relates to representative democracy and alternatives (including elections, politicians, policy-making, and policy implementation). Our findings also show how resentments toward institutions of representative democracy are more accurately described as ones which encompass hope, with regard to various aspects of the overall democratic system. This simultaneous experience of strong negative feelings towards representative democracy in Belgium, alongside the hope that solutions lie in key democratic ideals and practices of the very same system, confronts citizens with what we call a "democratic dilemma." The analysis shows that this mix of positive and negative emotions elicits different responses in the way individuals act, as a means of coping with their democratic dilemma. This reflects the presence of variant beliefs and expectations towards and beyond representative democracy.

Some participants coped with this dilemma by voicing their discontent with the existing electoral system. Some did this by voting for parties regarded as offering an alternative to "mainstream" politics, by, for example, voting for populist parties, or (small) counter-parties. Yet, participants were also hopeful that politicians who understood and wanted to represent the interests of people "like them" could still emerge and step forward. In other words, whilst some participants concluded that the system did not serve them well, they did not necessarily blame representative democracy per se. Rather, they blamed individual political representatives who are currently in power, or a particular way of doing politics (distant, campaign-oriented, and "not listening to us"). For this reason, some participants expressed the importance of not giving up and keep hoping for a better outcome at the next electoral round. Other participants, in contrast, expressed their resentment towards electoral institutions specifically and voted blank. To justify this form of withdrawal, individuals blamed political elites and the disappointing options they get in elections. Yet, voting blank shows that they did not reject the principle and institution of voting per se. In this sense, voting blank became a way of temporarily coping with their chronic disillusionment with politics, and a way of drawing attention to both their dissatisfaction and dysfunction of electoral democracy.

Elsewhere, participants engaged in radically different types of action, including participating in (or organizing) protests. Here too, hope is partially vested in existing institutions, with politicians becoming the target audience of these protests. They are urged to improve policies, for instance, by acting more efficiently and effectively on climate change, or by taking the lived experiences of "average citizens" into account with greater integrity. Similarly, in the Youth for Climate groups, we saw that those politicians who were blamed for insufficient action were paradoxically perceived to be the same actors who hold the power to take meaningful decisions and go beyond the short-term thinking imposed by elections. Participants are thus hopeful about the power of mobilization to bring politicians to this realization.

Both Youth for Climate participants and Yellow Vests participants nonetheless linked this type of action to democratic alternatives. In the Youth for Climate discussions, it was explained that politicians lacked the necessary expertise to make good policy and should involve more experts. The Yellow Vests stressed that citizens should be the main locus of power in democracy, hence their proposal to strengthen this role with citizen deliberations and referenda. Participants' belief in the viability of these alternatives was commonly based on examples from abroad or neighbouring movements, and on their own practice of democratic deliberations, as was the case with the Yellow Vests movement.

Finally, our findings strongly suggest that total inaction and disengagement was not part of the coping strategies resentful citizens developed in relation to politics (at least not within the groups that we have analysed). This does not mean that resentful affectivity never leads to such inaction, or put differently, that resentment cannot unchain *ressentiment*, i.e., resentful victimhood, inaction, and powerlessness. Nevertheless, it is still noteworthy that it was not observed in our discussions with participants who came from radically different backgrounds.

The resentful affectivity and the democratic dilemma that we identified in our data pave the way to a clearer understanding of how resentful citizens deal with the democratic dilemmas they face: by voting for politicians and parties believed to offer an alternative to the politicians that do not listen to them, by voting blank, by protesting, or by vesting hope in alternatives to complement the current system of representative democracy.

6. Conclusions

This article draws on theoretical and empirical insights to clarify the links between resentment, and views and expectations toward democracy. We analysed four focus groups with citizens from various socio-economic backgrounds, including activists involved in social movements, as well as individuals from socially disadvantaged positions. We unpacked their resentment towards politics and how they cope with it, to show, significantly, that resentful affectivity is expressed in various ways. We observed varying combinations of, on the one hand, anger, fear, frustration, disappointment, feelings of unfairness, and indignation, yet on the other, various forms of hope and trust. At the same time, there was a striking commonality across these highly varying groups, that the aspect of politics most closely associated with the anger, frustration, disappointment, and feelings of unfairness was the strong feeling that politicians do not listen to citizens like them. This issue is at the heart of how representative relationships should work and at the heart of the contemporary crisis of representative democracy.

Our analysis demonstrates a simultaneous experience of these strong feelings of anger, fear, disappointment, and unfairness about representative democracy, and more precisely, how (electoral) representative democracy works on the ground, and the hope vested in the (representative) democratic system. Rather than studying the effects of single emotions, it is only by embracing this complexity of emotions, captured in our study by using resentful affectivity as a heuristic tool, that resentment shows it potential as a political force. This complex emotional blend of resentful affectivity confronts citizens with what we have called a "democratic dilemma." We observed the different ways this dilemma was coped with: Some expressed continued hope in electoral representation and that it can and should be improved; others judged it to be beyond salvation and put their hope in more participatory and direct democratic solutions. Despite being passionately criticized, and rejected, by many of the resentful citizens included in our study, not all participants had lost hope in representative democracy. For example, some voted for politicians and parties which they believed to offer an alternative to the politicians "who do not listen to us," whilst others voted blank, or turned to protesting. Moreover, the commonality across the groups analysed was that, despite showing an explicit resentment towards political elites, and elites in general, all stayed within the boundaries of what would be considered democratic values and ideals, be it an improved representative democracy or a shift to another form of democracy (for example, direct democracy). However, we also observed that citizens do not always turn to ideas about improving the democratic system to cope with the "democratic dilemma" they face. Coping solutions are also found at the personal level, like exhortations to "taking one's own responsibility," or through collective engagement, by connecting with fellow citizens through mobilization.

Whether or not the expressions of resentment we found in our study undermine or strengthen democracy over the medium to long term, is an empirical question we do not answer. The salient finding, however, is that none of the resentful citizens included in our study rejected democracy per se, and many remained hopeful about democracy (albeit not always in its representative form). This finding, in turn, challenges

the often-implicit claim that resentment is mostly detrimental for democracy.

Our findings suggest two potential avenues for future research about resentment: how it plays out in political attitudes and behaviour over time, and further specifying and delineating its relationship to the health of democracy in particular. Our study only began to explore these questions. First, the conversation between extant scholarship and our own empirical analysis on resentment sheds light on the ways in which our understanding of the nature and the political effects of resentment can be strengthened. Our study is based on a snapshot of the emotions at play at a certain moment in time, and is, in that respect, static. However, emotions are continually evolving, and such a dynamic should therefore be accounted for. We can, for instance, imagine that when hope and trust prove to be empty and evaporate over time, resentment will impact political attitudes and behaviour differently. Indeed, rather than resentment as such, it might be precisely such a shift "within" resentful affectivity that drives citizens away from democratic politics—the tipping point, if you will, when resentment becomes *ressentiment*. Secondly, our findings show that understanding the affective dimension of populism is not only key, but can also be greatly improved by establishing a more systematic understanding of which kind of resentful affectivity—i.e., which mix and balance of emotions—undermines democratic attitudes and behaviour. Obviously, political contexts such as anti-democratic leadership and discourses, and (material and non-material) resources of resentful citizens should also be considered. Such context-specific variables and group-specific features might mediate how the democratic dilemma is solved, and, more significantly, impact upon the relationship between types of resentful affectivity and citizens' attitudes within and beyond democratic boundaries.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

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Article

Angry Reactionary Narcissists? Anger Activates the Link Between Narcissism and Right-Populist Party Support

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Abstract
Even though previous research connected personality traits and support for radical-right populist parties (RRP), the question of which mechanisms connect these concepts is still underexplored. In particular, we focus on narcissistic rivalry, a maladaptive path of grandiose narcissism. Drawing on the affective intelligence framework and the narcissistic admiration and rivalry concept, we propose that the effect of rival narcissism on vote choice for the German Alternative für Deutschland is mediated by reactionary political orientations and activated by anger. Drawing on 2017 data from the mixed-mode representative GESIS panel (N = 2,552 & 1,901), we employ moderated mediation analyses. We show that reactionary political orientations mediate the relationship between narcissistic rivalry and RRP support. However, high levels of generalised anger are needed to activate the relationship between personality, reactionary values, and RRP support, whereas the mediating role of anti-immigrant sentiment is not affected by anger. Our study emphasises the role of anger in RRP support, thus showing that anger might explain why only some people with a specific predisposition support RRPs. The study also stresses the complexity of the relationship between personality, value orientations, and political behaviour.

Keywords
anger; emotions; narcissism; reactionary politics; right-populist vote

Issue
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1. Introduction

The success of radical-right populist parties (RRP) across many Western democracies has created considerable interest among political scientists about the factors that have driven this support (e.g., Arzheimer & Berning, 2019; Gidron & Hall, 2017; Rydgren, 2008). Initially, most studies focused on short-term explanations for this support, such as economic, cultural, or status-threat perceptions, or preferences for specific policies (e.g., Rydgren, 2008). More recently, a growing number of researchers have been studying the psychological characteristics and basic values that underpin RRP support. This strand of research has highlighted the importance of fundamental traits, such as the Big Five personality traits or grandiose narcissism, and has shown that a considerable proportion of the population is, at least in principle, receptive to the appeal of RRPs (e.g., Ackermann et al., 2018; Aichholzer & Zandonella, 2016; Bakker et al., 2016; Mayer et al., 2020). The focus on the psychological underpinnings of radical-right support, however, also raises a more fundamental question: Through which mechanisms are basic personality factors translated into political attitudes, and ultimately into behaviour? To address

this question, we focus on three concepts that have been central to the public discussion of RRP support, but that have not yet been connected in the literature: narcissism, anger, and reactionary political orientation (RPO).

Previous studies found that the effect of personality traits on vote choice was mostly mediated by a set of more general attitudes or beliefs (e.g., Aichholzer & Zandonella, 2016; Schimpf & Schoen, 2017; Schoen & Schumann, 2007). We follow this mediation logic and draw on Capelos and Katsanidou's (2018) concept of RPO to argue that focusing on such orientations helps clarify the mechanisms that connect psychological dynamics to political behaviour. By seeking to overturn the present social and political status quo for an (often naively) imagined idealised past, reactionary orientations form a co-occurring bundle of low political efficacy, a rejection of outsiders through xenophobia and anti-European sentiment, and low levels of political trust that closely match the discourse instrumentalised by populist parties and politicians (see also Nijs et al., 2020). We will argue that RPOs play an important mediating role in connecting personality traits to RRP support.

Existing studies have focused primarily on the Big Five personality traits as measures of personality, but they do not include other more fitting personality conceptions. Furthermore, the study of stable personality traits and RRP support limits our ability to account for short-term changes and the "political activation" of these traits. Using narcissism and placing RPOs at the centre of our theoretical model, however, helps us address both of these shortcomings. Using high-quality panel data from a mixed-mode access panel representative of the German population (GESIS panel), we analyse support for the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) to argue that grandiose narcissism, particularly in its maladaptive form of narcissistic rivalry, is an important driver of RRP support, because it shares a close affinity with RPOs. Similarly, focusing on narcissism and RPOs also allows us to elaborate on the close relationship between anger and RRP support (Banks, 2016; Marcus et al., 2019; Rico et al., 2017). By integrating insights from personality psychology and the affective intelligence framework (Marcus, 2000), we demonstrate how important negative emotionality, especially anger, is for "activating" the RPOs of narcissistic individuals, and thus their support for RRPs.

2. The Psychological Roots of RRP Support: Narcissism, Anger, and RPO

On the individual level, existing explanations for RRP support have traditionally focused on socioeconomic factors and a subsequent backlash against cosmopolitan elites and immigration. Conceptualised as "losers of globalisation," RRP voters are less-educated, working class males with a greater risk of unemployment (Lengfeld, 2017; Oesch & Rennwald, 2018) and are therefore more likely to be both economically and culturally threatened by increasingly open and less-traditional societies (for a discussion of the underpinnings of threat, see also the contribution by Ferrari, 2021, in this issue). But while debates are ongoing about whether RRP support is primarily driven by economic insecurity or driven simply by a cultural backlash against the perceived loss of privilege, the empirical support for the link between socioeconomic disadvantage and right-wing populism remains mixed at best (Knigge, 1998; Lengfeld, 2017; Rooduijn, 2017).

More recently, scholars have also begun to investigate how voters' underlying attitudes and values relate to their support for RRPs. Voters may be drawn to RRPs because they share their populist conception of democracy, or because they are psychologically predisposed towards supporting RRPs. This literature has identified a core set of populist attitudes, which is orthogonal to the traditional left–right party spectrum, and which focuses on the rejection of (political) elites and a homogenous conception of the body politic (Akkerman et al., 2014; Hawkins et al., 2018; Van Hauwaert & Van Kessel, 2018).

However, voters may also be attracted by RRPs because of the parties' host ideology. We argue that there is a significant overlap between RPOs and RRP support. Specifically, the nativist and reactionary nostalgia at the core of RRPs host ideology (Betz & Johnson, 2004; Steenvoorden & Harteveld, 2018) closely mirrors the reactionary nostalgia of voters with strong RPOs (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018). As Capelos and Katsanidou (2018) emphasise, RPOs form voters' core political orientation, particularly their nostalgia for an idealised and homogenised past. In this, they are more than the sum of their individual parts; they are "complex clusters of resentful affective experiences" (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018, p. 1284) that combine a desire to return to an idealised past with a resentful reaction towards the present. In addition, the contents of this conglomerate of backward-gazing values to an idealised past and a resentful affectivity towards what is new is also affected by the supply side of politics and a country-specific context (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018). For further discussion of the concept, see Salmela and Capelos (2021) in this issue. Thus, references to a strong state and a strong leader might not, in all countries, be connected to a wish to return to the past, but in others—such as Germany—they are closely linked with the Third Reich (e.g., Arzheimer & Berning, 2019).

Following this theoretical insight, we argue that taking RPOs seriously can go a long way towards clarifying the mechanisms that connect voters' basic psychological makeup with their support for RRPs.

2.1. RRP Support and Personality Structures: The Importance of Narcissism

In recent years, a growing body of research has identified a close relationship between basic personality traits and support for RRPs. In this approach, support for RRPs

is not simply an expression of temporary social or economic concerns, but rather a reflection of a more fundamental psychological disposition. A particular focus has been placed on the Big Five personality traits. Specifically, low levels of agreeableness and openness to experience, and sometimes a high level of conscientiousness and neuroticism, were found to be related to right-wing vote choice (Aichholzer & Zandonella, 2016; Bakker et al., 2020; Schimpf & Schoen, 2017). Moreover, ideological attitudes such as social-dominance orientation and right-wing authoritarianism have also exhibited strong associations with RRP support (Berning & Ziller, 2017).

Placing voters' RPOs at the centre of our analysis, however, also sharpens our focus towards other less frequently studied personality traits such as the concept of grandiose narcissism (Raskin & Hall, 1979). Grandiose narcissism usually describes a pattern of grandiosity, a need for admiration, and a lack of empathy for others (e.g., Campbell & Miller, 2013). We focus on individual narcissism as a personality trait. Other studies, such as the one by de Zavala et al.(2009), rely on the concept of "collective narcissism," an emotionalised sub-facet of national identification alongside hostile reactions to in-group image threats which is not part of our study. Grandiose narcissism has been linked to a variety of negative outcomes related to psychological health (e.g., Campbell et al., 2002), but also to political ideology and prejudice (e.g., Cichocka et al., 2017). Regarding its relationship with the Big Five traits, narcissism is generally found to be closely related to agreeableness (negatively for rivalry) and extraversion (positively for admiration; e.g., Back et al., 2013). What makes the concept of narcissism so central to the study of RPOs, however, are the affective, cognitive, and behavioural dynamics that narcissists employ to maintain their grandiose self, particularly when their narcissism takes the maladaptive path of narcissistic rivalry. Specifically, Back et al. (2013) introduce two distinct domains of narcissism that have been validated by different studies (e.g., Leckelt et al., 2018; Rogoza, Żemojtel-Piotrowska, et al., 2016): narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry. While narcissistic admiration refers to an adaptive pathway that uses assertive self-promotion and charmingness to strive for uniqueness, the maladaptive path of narcissistic rivalry protects the grandiose self through aggressiveness by striving for supremacy and by devaluating others.

It is this maladaptive path that is particularly salient for the study of RPOs and RRP support. To dismiss perceived threats to the ego, those with high levels of narcissistic rivalry will focus on controlling others and their environment to maintain the grandiose self (e.g., Rogoza, Żemojtel-Piotrowska, et al., 2016). Individuals with high narcissistic rivalry will thus respond to both real and imagined status threats with an aggressive devaluation of others, particularly of other social outgroups (e.g., Back et al., 2013). This in turn increases the appeal of RRPs. Indeed, a recent study by Mayer et al. (2020) finds a strong relationship between narcissistic rivalry and support for RRPs. Moreover, this relationship is mediated especially through anti-immigrant sentiment (AIS). With regard to values, previous studies have found a negative relationship between the high-order value conservation and narcissism but have failed to include items for the narcissistic rivalry dimension (e.g., Rogoza & Cieciuch, 2020; Rogoza, Żemojtel-Piotrowska, et al., 2016). In contrast, Mayer et al. (2020) show a strong link between narcissistic rivalry and right-wing authoritarianism, a basic attitudinal belief system that strongly supports traditions and stability (Altemeyer, 1998).

We argue that the maladaptive responses associated with narcissistic rivalry should also be associated with an increase in more conservative and reactionary values. As discussed, rival narcissists protect their grandiose self through an aggressive elevation of their own identity vis-à-vis others, and through an attempt to assert supremacy over them. The rejection of immigrants is one such path. However, we argue that rival narcissists will also be drawn to the reactionary nostalgia at the core of RPOs, since the "nostalgic accounts of pride and feeling of strength" (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018, p. 1276) are inexorably linked to a sense of "national greatness and economic supremacy" (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018, p. 1284). The "idealised past" conjured up through RPOs is one of strong traditions, stability, and a strong state, all of which serve to protect the unquestioned supremacy of the in-group, and by extension, the rival narcissists.

To summarise, we hypothesise that high levels of narcissistic rivalry increase support for RRPs (Hypothesis 1). However, we expect that this effect will be mediated by RPOs (Hypothesis 2). Specifically, individuals with high levels of narcissistic rivalry will have higher levels of RPOs. Higher levels of RPOs thus increase support for RRPs.

2.2. Anger and the Importance of Emotions

Taking RPOs seriously also highlights an arguably more transient, but no less important, factor driving RRP support: voters' emotions. Scholars have increasingly recognised the importance that emotions play in understanding political behaviour in general (Marcus, 2000); negative emotions are central to explaining support for RRPs (Banks, 2016; Marcus et al., 2019; Vasilopoulos & Lachat, 2018). Anger and resentment appear to be especially important for RRP attitudes and support (e.g., Rico et al., 2017). Indeed, the notion of the *Wutbürger* or the "angry white men" (Ford & Goodwin, 2010)—citizens whose (excessive) anger drives them to reject "politics as usual"—has become a common trope for the description of reactionary politics and RRP voters.

Why is anger so inexorably linked with RRP support? Of course, anger may simply be part of the "political style" of populist parties (Moffitt & Tormey, 2014) and the "resentful affectivity" (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018, p. 1274) associated with RPOs. (For another study on the concept of resentful affectivity, see the contribution by

Celis et al., 2021, on this issue.) However, voters' emotions are not only a direct explanatory factor for RRP support, they also clarify the mechanisms that connect personality traits such as narcissistic rivalry, RPOs, and RRP support. Specifically, we make two related arguments. First, we follow insights from the affective intelligence literature (Marcus et al., 2019) to argue that the relationship between anger and RRP support is deeper, driven by the cognitive mechanisms associated with high levels of anger. Second, we emphasise the close link between anger and narcissism in general, and narcissistic rivalry in particular. Narcissistic individuals do not only experience anger more frequently, they also channel and express this anger differently.

The close relationship between anger and RRPs reflects a more general overlap between the cognitive effects of anger and the affective and attitudinal orientations of reactionary political values and RRP support. Affective intelligence theory has shown that anger is associated with habitual cognition and a reliance on established patterns of thought and behaviour. Because anger is focused on dealing with threats (Vasilopoulos et al., 2019) and rendering social judgement for violations of social norms (Petersen, 2010), angry individuals are more likely to assign blame and responsibility (Lerner & Keltner, 2001; Lerner & Tiedens, 2006). Anger thus links closely to several key components of the reactionary core of RRPs. Most fundamentally, anger not only increases the perceived responsibility of existing political elites but it also motivates voters to punish them (Lerner & Tiedens, 2006; Milburn et al., 2014), creating a close affinity with the rejection of the political status quo that is core to RRPs. Moreover, anger is also linked to reactionary attitudes such as nativism and authoritarianism commonly associated with RRPs (Dunn, 2015; Van Hauwaert & Van Kessel, 2018). Finally, the reduced depth of processing associated with anger also increases reliance on ethnocentrism and perceptions of group-threat in particular (Banks, 2016).

Moreover, the cognitive dynamics associated with anger form the "connective tissue" that connects narcissism to RPOs, and ultimately to political behaviour such as RRP support. This connection happens in two distinct but related ways. First, personality traits structure emotional responses and thus also the frequency and strength of those responses. Anger, for example, seems to be at the emotional heart of narcissism, and the link between narcissism and anger has been a core component of our understanding of narcissism, both in their early psychoanalytic origins and in more contemporary studies in social psychology (Czarna et al., 2018; Sauls & Zeigler-Hill, 2020). Narcissists experience anger at a consistently higher rate than non-narcissists (Czarna et al., 2018), and rival narcissists especially appear to have a more difficult time regulating negative emotions (Cheshure et al., 2020) such as anger (Krizan & Johar, 2015). At least some narcissists may therefore have higher levels of trait anger, which in turn renders them more susceptible to the appeal of RPOs and more likely to support RRPs.

More importantly, however, narcissism also impacts the ways in which anger is triggered, channelled, and expressed. As outlined above, rival narcissists more frequently channel their anger in an aggressive assertion of dominance and superiority to counteract ego threats (Czarna et al., 2018). In other words, narcissists may not only experience anger more frequently, but they also act differently when they get angry. The habitual pattern triggered for a person with a high level of rival narcissism is more likely to evolve around social dominance and hierarchy and the devaluation of others, thus creating a much closer affinity to RPOs and RRPs. We thus hypothesise that anger activates the relationships between (rival) narcissism, RPOs, and RRP support (Hypothesis 3), either because anger leads to rival narcissists having higher levels of RPOs, or because anger makes RPOs more salient for the support of RRPs (Hypotheses 3a and 3b respectively).

Figure 1 summarises our argument and our hypotheses. We contend that RPOs are an important factor in the study of RRP support, not only because RPOs directly explain subsequent vote choice, but also because they are an important path on which personality traits, particularly narcissistic rivalry, can be made politically salient and actionable. Moreover, we highlight the important role that anger plays in connecting these relationships. While anger in general shares some overlap with RPOs, it is especially important for the activation of rival narcissism, both by increasing the appeal of RPOs and in the ways in which these orientations influence the subsequent appeal of RRPs.

3. Data and Methods

Our study draws on several waves of the GESIS panel (Bosnjak et al., 2017; GESIS, 2017), a bi-monthly mixed-mode access panel representative of the German population, with a response rate of over 90%. The initial recruitment of the respondents was carried out in February 2014 and replacement waves were conducted in 2016 and 2018. The data we used was mostly collected in 2017 (waves E*) and 2018 (waves GA). Panellists who have missing values for any of the variables we are interested in are excluded from the analyses, hence our analyses are based on N = 2,525 individuals for the regression analysis and N = 1,901 for the mediation analysis. We pooled several waves for our measures (see Supplementary File, Table A1, for the descriptive statistics, the wording of questions, and specific wave references for all variables).

Our main dependent variable is RRP support, captured here through electoral support for the right-wing populist AfD. Specifically, respondents were asked directly after the general election of 2017 for which party they had voted with their second vote. We coded all respondents who named the AfD with 1 and coded 0 for respondents who took part in the election but who

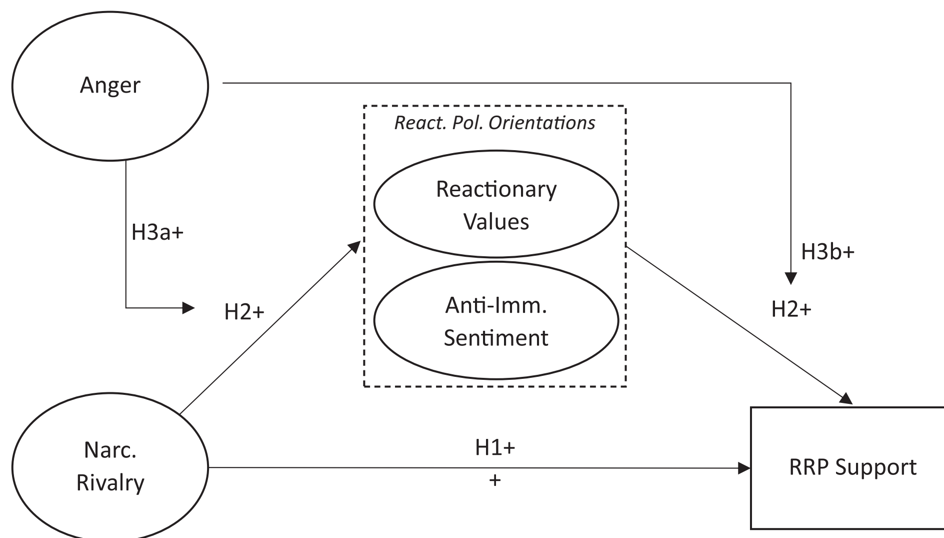

Figure 1. Theoretical model of the relationship between narcissistic rivalry, anger, RPOs and RRP support.

voted differently with their second vote. Our analyses thus exclude all non-voters (10% of all cases; N = 394). The result was that 9.9% of the respondents indicated that they had voted for the AfD. This is lower than the official second vote count of 12.6%, a phenomenon well-known in research (e.g., Mayer et al., 2020).

To measure narcissism, we used a validated short scale of the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (NARQ, Back et al., 2013), which measures each dimension with three items such as "I earned being viewed as a great personality" (for narcissistic admiration), and "I want my opponents to fail" and "Most people are losers" (for narcissistic rivalry; e.g., Paulhus et al., 2004). The answer options ranged from 1 (*does not apply at all*) to 6 (*fully applies*).

We operationalised RPOs based on two different but related concepts: reactionary value orientation (focused on the past) and AIS (as an affective measure of resentment towards newcomers). To capture reactionary value orientations, respondents were asked to what extent they are similar to (a) citizens who seek to preserve traditional values and beliefs (value facet tradition, Schwartz et al., 2012), and (b) citizens who prefer a strong state (value facet security/societal, Schwartz et al., 2012). The options ranged from 1 (*not at all similar*) to 6 (*very similar*). Both values are part of the higher order value "Conservation" (Schwartz et al., 2012). For the measurement of affective resentment towards newcomers, we used four items to measure AIS that asked for feelings towards Muslims, foreigners, refugees, and Sinti and Roma in Germany (1 for *very positive* to 5 for *very negative*; $\alpha = 0.83$). To measure generalised negative emotions—fear and anger specifically—respondents were asked how frequently they had felt afraid or annoyed in the last four weeks (0 for *not at all* to 10 *very often*). It is important to note that this measurement may capture both a temporary increase in these emotions or a more general disposition towards them. However, both trait and state anger shape judgements and cognition in similar ways, and higher levels of state anger are also linked to greater incidence of state anger (Deffenbacher et al., 1996). So, while these measures cannot disentangle generalised trait and state emotions, the overarching relationship to narcissism, RPOs, and RRP support should still fall in line with our theoretical priors.

To maintain comparability with standard models of RRP vote choice, all models control for standard socio-demographic factors such as gender, educational level, East or West German origin, age, as well as labour market status through a dummy variable for regular employment (full time or part time; e.g., Arzheimer & Berning, 2019) and left–right self-placement. In addition, all logistic regression models include political attitudes that in previous studies were found to have a substantial effect on RRP vote choice: internal and external efficacy (recoded so that higher values indicate higher efficacy), satisfaction with democracy, and satisfaction with their financial situation.

For the initial results, we estimated logistic regression models with robust standard errors for vote choice. For these estimates, we used mean indices for narcissism, reactionary political values, and AIS. To test the model outlined in Figure 1 directly, we then used structural equation modelling (SEM) to estimate a moderated mediation model which can simultaneously estimate all the paths outlined in Figure 1. This model aims to estimate both the direct and indirect effect of narcissistic rivalry through increases in reactionary political values on RRP vote choice. Moreover, we conducted the analysis for angry and non-angry individuals simultaneously (anger was defined as individuals being above or below the median anger score in the sample) to estimate the moderating effect that anger may have on both the direct and indirect paths. For these analyses, we included narcissism, reactionary political values, and AIS as latent variables. All mediated moderation models

were estimated through SEMs using lavaan (Rosseel, 2012) with diagonally weighted least square (DWLS) estimation. We recoded all independent variables to a range from 0 to 1 so that all analyses could compare non-standardised estimates between models.

We are aware of the many restrictions of using moderated mediation analysis with cross-sectional data instead of panel data, as cross-sectional data analyses, for example, sometimes cannot reveal the real longitudinal mediation process (for an overview, see e.g., O'Laughlin et al., 2018; Rohrer et al., 2021). However, we were not able to use panel data for the variables of interest as they were not measured regularly enough. In such cases, especially in studies between personality traits and vote choice, relying on cross-sectional data is an established approach with the clear need to carefully discuss one's assumptions and to proceed with caution (e.g., Wang, 2016). It is thus necessary to rule out possible confounders of the independent, mediator, and dependent variable, as well as to discuss the possibility of reverse causality (Rohrer et al., 2021). In addition, our treatment should be independent from the mediator (Imai et al., 2011). We controlled for several variables that might have affected our three variables of interest—as discussed in the previous paragraph—to account for the first assumption. Next, reverse causality does not seem to be plausible for the path from narcissistic rivalry to RPO, as personality traits are supposed to be very stable (e.g., Back et al., 2013; Wang, 2016). We also assumed that the two facets of RPO—reactionary values and AIS—are longstanding belief systems that are causally placed at the same level, but we agree that this could be debatable. For the path between RPO and vote choice, we assumed, based on previous studies, that vote choice is less stable than values, and thus that a path from RPO to vote choice—and not the other way around—is plausible (Caprara et al., 2006).

To facilitate transparency and replicability, all data cleaning and analysis code has been uploaded to the OSF.io repository (Mayer & Nguyen, 2021).

4. Results

4.1. RPOs Mediate the Effect of Narcissism and Negative Emotions on RRP Support

We have hypothesised that narcissistic rivalry increases RRP support, but that this support may be mediated through reactionary political values. To test these hypotheses empirically, we begin with a stepwise regression analysis that shows how our core variables of interest behave in relation to vote choice for the AfD (see Table 1), and how this relationship changes when additional variables are included. As expected, we find stronger evidence for Hypothesis 2 than for Hypothesis 1. While we initially find a direct relationship between narcissistic rivalry and RRP support in models M0 and M1, this relationship becomes non-significant once we include controls for RPOs. This does not change in model M3, where we include additional controls that have been found to explain RRP support. The effect of anger appears to be similarly mediated. Although anger remains significant in model M2, including the full set of controls similarly renders it non-significant. In short, the results in Table 1 give a strong indication that the effects of narcissism are mediated by RPOs, and that negative emotions such as anger and resentment play a similarly contingent role in driving RRP support. When including the Big Five personality traits (based on the BFI-10), rivalry is only significant in model M0 at the 10% level. However, none of the Big Five traits has a significant relationship in model M3. Furthermore, RPOs are important drivers of RRP support in model M3, especially AIS.

4.2. Anger Makes Narcissism and RPOs Politically Salient

While the results in Table 1 show some support for Hypothesis 2, untangling the relationship shown in Figure 1 between narcissistic rivalry, anger, RPOs, and RRP support requires a modelling approach that allows us to capture both the mediating role of RPOs and the moderating role of anger, while also controlling for the full set of independent variables outlined in Table 1. We therefore employed a mediated moderation SEM to simultaneously estimate all paths shown in Figure 1 and estimated the extent to which narcissistic rivalry is linked to RRP support either directly (Hypothesis 1) or indirectly through RPOs (Hypothesis 2), and to what extent these relationships may be moderated by respondents' level of anger (Hypothesis 3).

Table 2 summarises the results of our main mediated moderation analysis (for the full model see SI, Table A3) and strongly supports Hypothesis 2. Reactionary political values fully mediate the effect of narcissistic rivalry on RRP support. Indeed, as in Table 1, we find no significant direct effect once potential mediating relationships are considered. Moreover, we also find support for Hypothesis 3. Anger is a necessary condition of the relationship between narcissism and RRP support. The total effect of narcissistic rivalry is non-significant in the low anger condition but becomes significant in the high anger condition. However, this relationship is mediated through RPOs. The direct effect of narcissistic rivalry on RRP support is not statistically significant in either condition.

Moreover, these relationships appear to be robust with the inclusion of other personality variables, such as the Big Five personality traits or measures of narcissistic admiration and generalised anxiety (see Supplementary File, Tables A4 and A5). The same is true for the inclusion of financial satisfaction (Supplementary File, Table A6).

However, the SEM model also lets us disentangle these relationships further. Table 3 disaggregates the mediated relationships into the two subcomponents of RPOs we have identified: reactionary political values and AIS. Doing so demonstrates that, while the relationship

Table 1. Stepwise logistic regression models on RRP support, average marginal effects.

	M0 Narcissism baseline	M1 + Emotions	M2 + RPOs	M3 Full model
Narcissistic admiration	−0.03	−0.03	0.00	−0.00
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)
Narcissistic rivalry	0.14**	0.13**	0.00	−0.01
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)
Emotion: Fear		−0.06	−0.04	−0.03
		(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Emotion: Anger		0.10***	0.04	0.01
		(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Reactionary Orientations				
Reactionary political values			0.19***	0.12***
			(0.04)	(0.03)
AIS index			0.53***	0.27***
			(0.04)	(0.04)
Common explanatory variables for RRP vote choice				
Internal political efficacy				0.04
				(0.02)
External political efficacy				−0.11***
				(0.03)
Satisfaction: Democracy				−0.23***
				(0.02)
Satisfaction: Financial situation				−0.02
				(0.02)
Left-right self-placement				0.18***
				(0.02)
Occupational status: Full/part time				0.00
				(0.01)
Socio-demographic controls				
Age in years	−0.00	0.00	−0.00	−0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Education (ref. cat: middle)				
Low	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.02
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
High	−0.07***	−0.06***	−0.02*	−0.02
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Origin: East Germany	0.06***	0.06***	0.04***	0.02*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Gender: Male	0.04**	0.04***	0.03**	0.02*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
N	2,552	2,552	2,552	2,552
Nagelkerke's Pseudo-R^2	0.06	0.07	0.27	0.42
AIC	1402	1392	1099	890
BIC	1449	1451	1169	995

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses; sample weight (pw = z000011a) and cluster robust SE used; all independent variables recoded to the range of 0–1; *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.

Table 2. Summary of mediated moderation models: General overview.

		Effects on RRP support		
	Anger	Direct	Total indirect via RPOs	Total
Narcissistic rivalry	Low	−0.477 (p = 0.598)	1.359 *** (p = 0.001)	0.883 (p = 0.312)
	High	0.226 (p = 0.774)	1.665 *** (p = 0.000)	1.892 * (p = 0.016)

Notes: *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01 * p < 0.05; N = 1,901, χ^2 = 652.188, DF = 90, RMSEA = 0.0542, CFI = 0.907; all coefficients are standardised estimates.

Table 3. Mediated moderation models: Detailed overview.

Effect on RRP support mediated by…	Anger	Effect size	Std. Error	p-value
AIS	Low	1.533	0.263	< 0.001
	High	1.035	0.334	< 0.001
Reactionary political values	Low	−0.174	0.171	0.310
	High	0.630	0.238	0.008

Notes: N = 1,901; χ^2 = 652.188, DF = 90, RMSEA = 0.0542, CFI = 0.907; all coefficients are standardised estimates.

between narcissism, AIS and RRP support can be found in both low and high anger conditions, reactionary political values are only linked to RPOs in high anger conditions.

To test Hypotheses 3a and 3b specifically, Figure 2 disaggregates this relationship further. Specifically, Figure 2 shows how narcissistic rivalry is linked to reactionary values and to AIS, and how these are in turn related to RRP support for both the low and high anger conditions. Disaggregating the paths further helps to suggest a particular mechanism in play. Most paths are consistent in both the low and the high anger conditions; only the path between narcissistic rivalry and reactionary political values is statistically different between the low and high anger conditions (p = 0.001). In other words, some aspects of RPOs are independent of respondent anger. Rival narcissism always correlates with higher AIS, which in turn is associated with a higher probability to vote for the AfD. However, anger seems to play a central role in "activating" the value dimension of RPOs, and thus RRP support. While voters with reactionary political values always show higher support for RRPs, narcissistic rivalry only becomes associated with reactionary political values when respondents are also at higher levels of anger. In other words, the results suggest that it is anger that makes narcissistic rivalry politically salient. In summary, our results clearly support our theoretical priors: 1) that RPO mediates the relationship between narcissistic rivalry and RRP support, and 2) that anger, even when it is generalised, is a crucial component of these relationships.

5. Concluding Remarks and Perspectives

Understanding the mechanisms behind RRP support allows society to take a better stance against the rise of such parties that often deeply divide society. Previous research on the psychological roots of RRP support found some personality traits such as narcissistic rivalry,

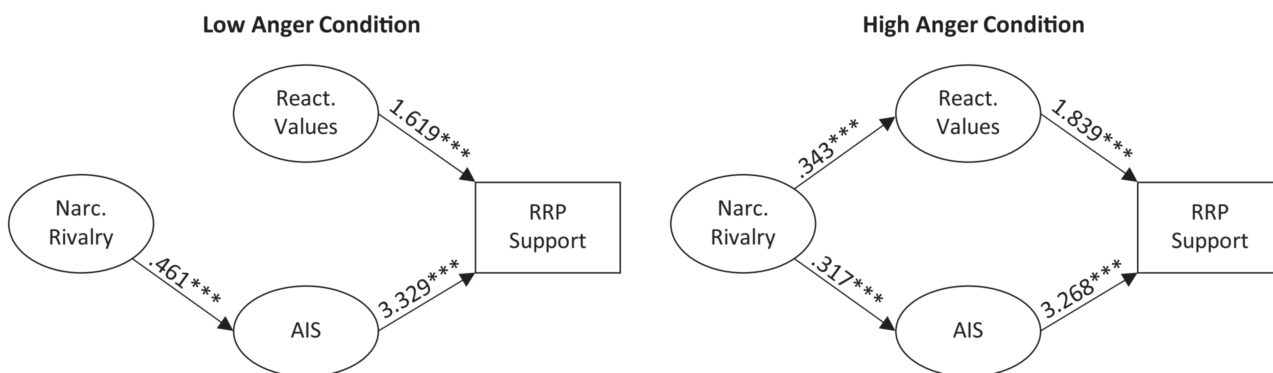

Figure 2. Mediation between narcissistic rivalry and RRP support for low and high anger conditions (only significant paths are displayed).

and emotions such as anger, to be strongly connected. In addition, a more general, backward-looking, reactionary political perspective also fosters RRP. However, existing studies have not considered the dynamic interplay between these different factors, thus leaving the mechanisms understudied. This article has attempted to address that gap.

We find that RPOs, such as value orientations for supporting a strong state and traditional ways, as well as AIS, play an important role in driving RRP support, even when controlling for other factors known from the literature. Moreover, focusing on RPOs also clarifies the relationships that connect personality structure, emotions, and RRP support. The effect of narcissistic rivalry on RRP support, for example, is mediated through both AIS (replicating the findings of Mayer et al., 2020) and a value orientation that focuses on traditional values and a strong state. However, this second relationship needs to be "activated" by negative emotions: Narcissism is only associated with more reactionary political values when respondents are angry.

Our article thus makes an important contribution to several different studies. Most directly, our article adds to the study of RRP support, highlighting once more that psychological factors such as personality structure and emotions are crucial components of RRP support, although their effect is entirely mediated through intermediate political orientations. However, our article also explores the mechanisms that connect "basic" psychological factors to political behaviour more closely. When focusing on the role that emotions play, we find that generalised anger is an important component for the association between narcissistic rivalry and RPOs, and ultimately for RRP support. As anger can also be triggered by current and past events, it can thus be one of the missing pieces of the puzzle of why some people with a specific predisposition support an RRP. This shows the importance of interdisciplinary research between psychology and political science.

Our study is not without limitations. Our results are based on the German case and only focus on one year (2017). It is thus to be seen whether the results are time—and place—invariant. However, the AfD is now considered a rather typical case of an RRP (e.g., Arzheimer & Berning, 2019), and the immigrant influx of 2015 was already two years past when the data of our study were obtained, thus making it more likely that our results are not unique to Germany. In addition, we are not able to observe how anger, narcissism, and RPOs interact in a longitudinal or experimental context. Future research thus needs to expand on our dynamic perspective and empirically test not only how stable these patterns are, but also whether these mechanisms are actually causal, as our results are based on cross-sectional data. Nevertheless, our results clearly suggest how complex the relationship can be between personality, value orientations and political behaviour.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

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Article

Political Reactionism as Affective Practice: UKIP Supporters and Non-Voters in Pre-Brexit England

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Abstract
United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) supporters and non-voters in England participate respectively in forms of engaged and disengaged anti-political activity, but the role of individual, group-based, and collective emotions is still unclear. Drawing upon recent analyses of the complex emotional dynamics (e.g., *ressentiment*) underpinning the growth of right-wing populist political movements and support for parties such as UKIP, this analysis explores the affective features of reactionary political stances. The framework of affective practices is used to show how resentful affects are created, facilitated, and transformed in sharing or suppressing populist political views and practices; that is, populism is evident not only in the prevalence and influence of illiberal and anti-elite discourses but also should be explored as it is embodied and enacted in "past focused" and "change resistant" everyday actions and in relation to opportunities that "sediment" affect-laden political positions and identities. Reflexive thematic analysis of data from qualitative interviews with UKIP voters and non-voters (who both supported leaving the EU) in 2015 after the UK election but before the EU referendum vote showed that many participants: 1) shared "condensed" complaints about politics and enacted resentment towards politicians who did not listen to them, 2) oriented towards shameful and purportedly shameless racism about migrants, and 3) appeared to struggle with shame and humiliation attributed to the EU in a complex combination of transvaluation of the UK and freedom of movement, a nostalgic need for restoration of national pride, and endorsement of leaving the EU as a form of "change backwards."

Keywords
affective practice; Brexit; EU referendum; non-voters; populism; national pride; reactionism; ressentiment; shame; UKIP

Issue
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1. Introduction

A widely accepted view of populism as a "thin ideology" (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017) emphasises a central distinction between "the people" and "the elite" which does not map in a simple way onto established right and left ideologies or a common political programme (Taylor et al., 2020). In addition, there are significant national and cultural variations in patterns of "populist attitudes" measured at the individual level (Castanho Silva et al., 2020) and self-reported anti-establishment sentiment (Droste, 2021). Moreover, as Obradović et al. (2020) note, right-wing populist rhetoric is triggered by—but not solely the product of—one's economic standing in society and, specifically, a felt sense of deprivation relative to others (Jay et al., 2019; Mols & Jetten, 2016; Salmela & von Scheve, 2017, 2018). Regarding the 2016 EU referendum in the UK, therefore, for the Leave campaign to succeed it needed to unite "both high-income and low-income earners through conceptualising the in-group as a moral majority" (Obradović et al., 2020, p. 126) against out-group political elites and immigrants.

In debates about populism, a focus on a reactionary "complex political orientation" provides a new perspective on such populist political behaviour as supporting the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) or voting for Brexit, because it highlights a critical motivational role for "resentful affectivity [combined] with the forceful desire to return to the past" (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018, p. 1272). Not to be confused with simple group-based nostalgia (Smeekes, 2019; Wohl et al., 2020), reactionism appeals to "an idealized past and social order and the desire for restoration of the past marks the broadly similar narratives of contemporary 'radical' populist, neo-Nazi, and ethno-nationalist political parties" such as the National Front in France (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018, p. 1284). UKIP was able to attract voters from both the left (e.g., traditional Labour supporters) and the right of UK politics to support a core bundle of anti-establishment, anti-immigration, and anti-EU messages (Hughes, 2019). Before the referendum, for example, the Leave campaign repeatedly used the message "Take back control" as part of a reactionary "depiction of a stalled present and a future that is compromised by the unstoppable changes imposed by elites on the country against its will" (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018, p. 1284).

This article addresses the contribution of reactionary orientations to understanding support for populist parties, movements, and views via recent accounts that focus not just on anger, fear, resentment, and their potential combinations with a lack of efficacy, but also on the complex emotional phenomenon of *ressentiment*. As exemplified by Salmela and Capelos (2021), the *ressentiment* driving reactionary political behaviour is not a complex combination of low levels of hope and low political efficacy with high levels of anxiety or anger (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018), but rather an emotional mechanism with two parallel transvaluation processes. These processes transform "what was once desired or valued yet unattainable into something reassessed as undesirable and rotten, and one's own self from inferior, a loser, to being noble and superior" (Salmela & Capelos, 2021, p. 191). The article also explores whether these phenomena can be found in England among non-voters and populist party supporters, groups that Kemmers et al. (2016) argue are exemplars of an "anti-establishment career" from "democracy's deviants" (Kemmers et al., 2016, p. 757) in their research conducted in the Netherlands.

In the following sections, the conceptualization of *ressentiment* as underpinning a reactionary orientation towards politically significant stances associated with populism is briefly reviewed, before the most recent account of *ressentiment* as an emotional mechanism is examined. A case is then made for understanding reactionary orientations not in terms of personality features or traits, and causal mechanisms, but instead within an affective practices framework (Wetherell, 2012). In this approach, patterns and flows of affectivity are examined using an alternative ontological focus on meaning, activity, and agency. The research questions are stated explicitly in the final introductory section.

2. Emotion-Focused Explanations of Reactionary 'Anti-Preferences' and Populist Support

Presenting an emotion-focused analysis of the EU referendum, Cromby (2019) has argued that explanations of Brexit have largely been framed in terms of the "feeling-organising myth" in which Brexit represents the anger and apathy of those left behind in Britain by market forces and globalisation (McKenzie, 2017a, 2017b). On this account, feelings of "anger, resentment, discontent, and hope, of feeling left behind or left out" (Cromby, 2019, p. 59) reflected the reality of growing inequality in the UK and contributed to a concomitant irrational diversion of "feelings of resentment from powerful elites" (Cromby, 2019, p. 59) towards immigrants. Cromby's analysis is broadly consistent with other explanations which favour a reactionist-like account of the demand-side of populism or backlash politics (Busher et al., 2018) and feature a complex blend of individual and group-based anger, fear, hope, loss, nostalgia, and pride. Capelos and Demertzis (2018), for example, argue that *ressentimentful* affectivity is characterised by low levels of hope and efficacy, but high levels of anxiety or anger; and that this specific cluster of affectivity is a "compensatory emotion of the powerless that expedites transvalution so that the person can stand and handle his or her frustrations" (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018, p. 412).

The possibility of transvaluation (rather than a mere diversion by elites of resentment) here is important as suggested by the focus of Salmela and Capelos (2021) on two parallel processes, as it may explain some of the complex and often contradictory ways in which groups such as non-voters and UKIP supporters seem to simultaneously desire and devalue possibilities (such as of being listened to by politicians; a point that is explored by Celis et al., 2021, in terms of "democratic dilemmas"). But in the accounts introduced above, shame is not identified as a driver of support for UKIP and Brexit. Salmela and von Scheve (2017, 2018) have focused on repression of personal shame and group identity distancing as key emotional mechanisms that underpin a reactionary political orientation. In Salmela and von Scheve's (2017) theoretical analysis, repression of economic shame about actual or anticipated loss of status is posited to transform the emotion into anger and resentment against a range of perceived threats to, or enemies of, oneself and one's groups (e.g., family, community, nation). Distancing from social identities that generate shame or humiliation combines with movement towards identities and attitudes that offer a more exclusionary, and potentially contemptuous and arrogant, group pride (Sullivan & Day, 2019). This combination of societal and cultural positioning along with personal and communal experiences motivates a strong interest in anything

that can turn things back to the way they were and fuels the expression of highly critical views of the current status quo. Further, Salmela and von Scheve (2018) speculate that a crucial distinction between reactionary-orientated populists on the right and left of politics, is that the former are not open to discussing sources of individual or group-based shame. This is where the double transvaluation possibility described by Salmela and Capelos (2021) offers a further insight worthy of rigorous empirical investigation: The *ressentimentful* individual seeks the recognition of others for the new self or social identity (which replaces the repressed shameful identity) through sharing of group-based emotions but also they "defensively suspect their peers of being deceptive" (Salmela & Capelos, 2021, p. 200).

3. Rationale for Studying Reactionary Orientations as Affective Practice

Wetherell's (2012) affective practices approach systematically combines affect theory and emotion science in a way that works through the conceptual excesses of the latter and the measurement (i.e., operationalisation) limitations and experimental focus of the former. It incorporates insights from forms of emotion discourse research (e.g., "extreme case formulations"; Edwards, 1999) that emphasised what emotion words and statements "do" in everyday accounts but failed to examine their embodied features and practices. Citing examples from internet comments boards about politicians such as "If any MP had balls, they'd have paid for things out of their own pocket like y'know… ordinary people" (Wetherell, 2012, p. 72), Wetherell shows how the analysis of such postings is "a nice reminder of the flavour of ordinary affective meaning-making in one of its discursive public forms" (2012, p. 72). But it is the potential of a further "example of an affective practice of 'righteous indignation'" (Wetherell, 2012, p. 72) that guides the research described below. Wetherell states that within melancholic communities, "rhetoric and narratives of unfairness, loss and infringement create and intensify the emotion. Bile rises and this then reinforces the rhetorical and narrative trajectory. It goes round and round" (Wetherell, 2012, p. 7). This brief analysis fits with the view that a reactionary orientation is not a defining, life-long personality trait; instead, it is a context-sensitive and practice-based "way of relating to the political world… strengthened, moderated, and superceded based on how citizens interact with their political environment" (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018, p. 1275; see also Billig's, 1978, 2014, analyses of fascism).

Accordingly, the aim for the current study is to investigate patterns of affective practice and related reactionary "felt utterances" (Wetherell, 2012) which are mentioned in or can be inferred from the practices and situations in which those affects are tried out, rehearsed, debated, regulated, shared and "sedimented" in longer term habitual and unreflective behaviour. This approach highlights long-term emotion-related processes that explain a "build up" of resentment and bile, as well as the way victimhood can be experienced as righteous. But also Wetherell (2012) points out the conceptual problems that attend traditional dynamic psychoanalytic accounts and the way they draw "attention away from the organization and normative logics of the unfolding situated episode, context, interaction, relation and practice and on to a hidden, determining, individual, psychic logic instead" (Wetherell, 2012, pp. 133–134; see also Salmela & Capelos, 2021). Her use of Billig's (1999) rethinking of repression is a useful reminder to focus research instead on the patterning of "actual everyday social relations" (Wetherell, 2012, p. 136) and investigating practices such as changing the topic and choosing to elaborate some views and neglect others. For UKIP supporters and non-voters this means exploring their stories and efforts to alter and change emotions that are personal or based on family or group identities as well as to examine how they recall, imagine, or anticipate occasions in which their experiences and emotions are shared and collective (Sullivan & Day, 2019). Close investigation of manifestations of and talk about group-based emotions such as shame and pride in everyday life may therefore reveal important distributions of affective practices in social formations (Wetherell, 2012).

4. Research Questions

The study research questions were: 1) Do non-voters and UKIP supporters demonstrate resentment and *ressentimentful* affectivity in accounting for their combined anti-political stances?, 2) Can posited emotional mechanisms and repression of shame be inferred from people's research conversations and accounts of their practices?, and 3) What distinct patterns of embodied and situated affect-laden and emotion-related activity—including "change backwards" (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018) affective practices—are evident in the interviews of non-voters and UKIP supporters?

5. Method

5.1. Research Context

In 2015, there were approximately 37 million eligible registered voters in England (Office for National Statistics, 2019) out of a possible UK total of 46 million voters (Gani, 2015). In the UK general election of that year, the registered voter turnout was 66.1% in England, which confirmed "a long-term decline in the willingness of voters to make it to the polling station" (Cowley & Kavanagh, 2016, p. 416). Non-participation of people who are eligible to vote in national elections is a source of concern to parliamentary democracies because it indicates growing discontent with and disengagement from political processes. Another concern amongst established parties was the growth of the UKIP from a fringe, radical

right-wing party in the 1990s (Ford & Goodwin, 2014) to the party with the third highest number of votes—12.6% or nearly 4 million across the UK—in 2015 (but only one parliamentary seat). As Ford and Goodwin (2014) explain, UKIP profited from a decade of growing anti-European Union sentiment and from adopting a strategy that fused nativism and anti-Europe, anti-EU, and anti-immigration stances with radical right-wing mistrust of elites. In affective terms, UKIP was able to organise "contrasting emotional feelings…hope for the future and nostalgia for the past, feelings it associated with notions of patriotism, tradition, and 'Britishness'" (Cromby, 2019, p. 60). Given that non-voters were likely to be disengaged, mistrustful of the two main parties and attracted by a combination of hope and nostalgia-infused anti-political emotions that eventually became prominent in the EU referendum Leave campaign, combining this group with UKIP supporters arguably represented citizens of England with reactionary political orientations. These two groups represent supporters of "anti-preferences" such as anti-immigration and anti-EU preferences that Capelos and Katsanidou (2018) argue co-occur when they are more strongly related to proxies for reactionism; namely, a respect for tradition and an "aversion towards openness to change" (p. 1278; see also Celis et al.'s, 2021, analysis of focus groups with target groups such as Yellow Vest protestors who are likely to experience resentful affect). Goodwin (2015) noted that after the 2015 election, UKIP's "continued prominence in British politics rests not only on the outcome of the forthcoming referendum on Britain's EU membership but also the salience of immigration, which since the general election has risen to record levels" (Goodwin, 2015, p. 15). At that time, he also pointed out that of the 10 to 15% of the population who support UKIP's twin opposition to the EU and immigration: "This is likely to fuel support for the 'Leave' camp at the referendum, although it may not be enough to carry the Eurosceptics over the line" (Goodwin, 2015, p. 15). Subsequent analysis of the EU referendum result indicated that mobilising non-voters was decisive in winning a small majority for Leave. The participants in this study should therefore provide insights into why some non-voters eventually contributed to the 72.6% turnout for the 2016 EU referendum, a level of voting participation "higher than any UK general election since 1992" (Dempsey & Johnston, 2018, p. 10).

5.2. Participants, Recruitment, and Interviewing

Ethical approval for the study was provided by the Ethics Committee of the Centre for Research on Psychology, Behaviour and Achievement, Coventry University. Participants were recruited for qualitative interviews on the basis of prior participation in a pre- and post-election Qualtrics survey of 1400 citizens of England eligible to vote in the 2015 election, distributed online by a market research company in the week before and the month following the election date of May 7th 2015. Demographic information and participant details including national identity and ethnic identity items informed by previous electoral research (Wyn Jones et al., 2013), are described in Table 1. Participants who did not vote in the election and participants who had voted for UKIP were selected from the whole sample, and people from both groups who gave permission to be contacted were invited to take part in an interview. This resulted in a study sample of 10 non-voters (9 female, 8 male, age range 22–75 years, average age 39.3 years) and 19 UKIP voters (10 female, 9 male, age range 23–84 years, average age 50.8 years). Interviews were conducted by telephone by the lead author and four research assistants (see Acknowledgements) in June 2015. The interviews took between 20 minutes and 50 minutes (with participants reimbursed at a fixed amount higher than the minimum wage). The same interview schedule was followed by all interviewers, but they were also able to ask follow-up questions to elicit more detail about the situated circumstances in which people "do and feel" politics in their daily lives. Interviews were recorded as digital files for subsequent deidentified verbatim transcription.

5.3. Analytic Strategy and Reflexivity

A critical realist case study framework was adopted in which interviews were used to identify and infer patterns of affectivity in the situated circumstances of individuals (Sullivan, 2018). The study was concerned with emotion-laden or oriented forms of intertwined discourse and embodied action that can potentially become habitual or "sedimented" over time (Wetherell, 2012). The affective practices theoretical framework which has been used for emotion-focused fieldwork (e.g., exploring experiences in relation to national days; see Wetherell et al., 2020) was combined with in-depth qualitative interviewing and a reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2020). Given the contentious nature of some of the political issues discussed, phone interviews provided freedom and anonymity from the demands of face-to-face conversation. While people's facial expressions and gestures could not be analysed, the distance of a telephone interview and the adoption of a naïve, interested, and gentle exploratory stance by the interviewers may have contributed towards the candidness of some interviewees' conversation (e.g., some participants expressed thanks for being listened to and others even described the interviews as "therapeutic"). The interviewers were attuned to the possibility that individuals who were being interviewed as potential reactionaries on the right of politics might experience personal and group-based shame in relation to their circumstances and to being interviewed by political "experts." Reflexivity concerns focused also on how people with reactionary orientations were identified and whether the theoretical and practical basis for this designation could feed back into the pathologisation of people who oppose mainstream politics. It was crucial

Table 1. Interview participant information.

Pseudonyms	NM1	NF1	NF2	NM2	NM3	NM4	NF3	NF4	NM5	NF5	UF1	UF2	UM1	UM2
Age	20	22	42	75	27	21	35	47	55	49	68	84	36	70
Gender	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male	Female	Female	Male	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male
Location by county	Bedfordshire	Greater Manchester	Norfolk	Somerset	Worcester-shire	Greater London	Greater London	Nottingham-shire	Essex	Greater London	Wiltshire	Wiltshire	Greater Manchester	East Midlands
National identification	British and English	British and English	British and English	English	British and English	British	British and English	English	British and English	British and English	British	English	British and English	British
Ethnic Identity	English	British and English	English	English	British and English	Pakistani	British and English	English	English	English	English	English	British and English	British
Previous voter	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EU Ref participation	Yes	Unsure	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	Yes	Yes
Intended EU Ref vote	Leave	Unsure	Leave	Unsure	Leave	Leave	Leave	Leave	Leave	Unsure	Leave	Leave	Leave	Leave

Note: NF = non-voter female, NM = non-voter male, UF = UKIP voter female, UM = UKIP voter male.

Table 1. (Cont.) Interview participant information.

Pseudonyms	UF3	UF4	UF5	UF6	UF7	UM3	UM4	UM5	UF8	UM6	UM7	UM8	UF9	UM9	UF10
Age	65	50	59	23	50	66	70	54	47	67	66	25	23	62	48
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female
Location by county	South Yorkshire	Greater Manchester	Norfolk	Lincolnshire	Dorset	Cambridge-shire	Oxford-shire	Cheshire	Greater Manchester	Hampshire	Mersey-side	Lancashire	Norfolk	Kent	Greater London
National identification	English	British	English	English	English	British and English	English	British and English	British	British	British and English	British	British	English	English
Ethnic Identity	English	English	English	English	English	British and English	English	English	British	English	British	British and English	British	English	English
Previous voter	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EU Ref participation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Intended EU Ref vote	Leave	Leave	Leave	Leave	Leave	Leave	Leave	Leave	Leave	Leave	Leave	Leave	Leave	Leave	Leave

Note: NF = non-voter female, NM = non-voter male, UF = UKIP voter female, UM = UKIP voter male.

to look for examples that disconfirmed themes and to report the results in accordance with criteria for good quality qualitative research (Levitt et al., 2018).

6. Results and Discussion

Consistent with the account of a reactionary orientation, and analogous to Billig's (1978, 2014) criticisms of authoritarian personality trait explanations of supporters of fascism, participants in this study combined subjective positions with enactments and embodiments of personal and social identities which often resonated with the circumstances of their communities. As outlined below, the themes identified in the combined post-2015 election interviews were: 1) sharing "condensed" complaints and expanding upon grievances about politics, including distrust, and enacting resentment about not being listened to (for in-depth examples, see Celis et al., 2021); 2) orienting towards shameful and purported shameless racism related to the new "righteous victim" identity; and 3) transvaluation, nostalgia, and change backwards. The latter two themes are presented with exemplars and interpreted in terms of multiple—often competing—fragmented frameworks and explanatory accounts, including critiques of explanations focusing on emotional contagion, pathologisation of the working class, and the role of collective nostalgia in support for populist ideas.

6.1. Immigration Shame, Shamelessness, and Ressentiment

As indicated in Table 1, both non-voters and UKIP supporters had overlapping anti-political stances and were broadly in agreement that the UK should leave the European Union. Given that many non-voters expressed a dislike for all political parties and elites because they did not listen to them and did not care about them, there were points of commonality with UKIP voters in terms of how they accounted for their opposition to migrants and free movement within the European Union. For example, one male non-voter noted:

> NM5: I'll vote because I think that Europe is part of the problem, we give them all that money and for what but I don't agree with UKIP and those lot they stand and then don't go, what's the point in that we don't vote for people to do nothing, they are just the same as the Euro bureaucrats taking the money and doing nothing aren't they?

NM2 focused on problems with all the political party leaders, and stated the main problem was that "I'm not given a reasonable choice of people to vote for. I don't want Milliband, I don't want Cameron, I don't want Clegg, I don't want Farage." What many participants agreed on, however, was the liberating and empowering anti-immigration and anti-EU message promoted by Farage and UKIP: "He speaks the truth. He speaks a lot of what people think, I think, but are too scared to say. I think he sticks up for a lot of people and what they're too scared to say out in public" (UF9).

With UKIP supporters, immigration consistently evoked the shame connected with racism. Initially some participants passed over the topic, as in the following conversation:

> NM1: Erm I think the younger I was the more positive I was about politics, keen, fresh.
>
> I: And now?
>
> NM1: Probably just disillusioned with it, it's not making a lot of difference to England with all these immigrants.

For non-voters and UKIP supporters who were Eurosceptics mostly, but not exclusively, because they were opposed to immigration, a key challenge was how to orient towards potentially shameful charges of racism connected with the populist party that supported a "new social self"; namely, that UKIP were known for "talking against immigration, they are taken to be racist'' (UM3). Where it was the explicit subject of conversation in the research interviews, racism was often oriented towards as a serious issue potentially laden with shameful thoughts and feelings. A wide range of discursive strategies was evident in the interviews including defensive denial at the suggestion of group-based shame connected with supporting UKIP (e.g., "Absolutely not. I haven't got a racist bone in my body," UM2) through to acknowledgement that UKIP contained some extremists and racists.

One participant summed up the kind of affective practices that made it difficult for many people to say openly that restricting immigration was UKIP's primary appeal:

> UF10: I know a lot of people say it's politically incorrect to say it, and again this is… social err sort of training almost, over the years. We're all kind of… I'm not and neither are any of UKIP racist, it not a racist thing, because you are led to be believe you are a horrible person if you think "well actually, you know, we're buckling at the seams."

Participant UF1 argued that she wanted to have:

> A points system like Australia, you know, I mean we must have people here who are going to contribute and make our country richer in every way… It's not you know sort of just banning all foreigners [laughs] you know, I'm not xenophobic, but erm ah now did your questionnaire talk about xenophobia.

The hesitation here suggests the kind of psychic disruption that has been identified previously as a plausible marker of shame in conversation (Probyn, 2005).

It was particularly evident in the conversations with UKIP voters that many oriented towards shameful features of support for UKIP through denying they were racist or xenophobic and normalising racist individuals within the party (i.e., such exceptions were argued to be present in all parties). Some non-voters seemed to feel that their lack of knowledge of political matters somehow marked them out as lesser citizens; this was noted frequently when discussing the elites and experts they resented. Analogously, UKIP supporters appeared to demonstrate that the charge of racism was another way in which they were made by elites to feel bad about their already difficult individual or collective circumstances. In response to the question, "Do you think politicians understand what is happening in your area?," NM3 provided an example that can be identified as discriminatory and expressing prejudice towards Eastern Europeans but also revealed resentment that politicians don't face these challenges: "No, like all the Poles coming in, well it's not just the Poles any more is it, it's all eastern Europeans, nobody does anything to stop it." The unnamed "nobody" here was explicitly identified in other interviews as politicians.

NM3 demonstrated how the ordinary experiences of two groups many of the participants disliked, Eastern European migrants and people of a Muslim faith, were presented as challenging and changing aspects of immigration that politicians did not have to deal with: "They are removed yeah, they don't have foreigners running all over their area, 70 different languages in their kids' school, not singing carols in case you upset the Muslim kids, halal meat everywhere, what's that for anyway halal?" Combining these accounts indicates an affective-discourse repertoire that can be drawn upon when discussing the state of the country and which shows that both UK political elites and Europeans can be described as unconcerned and even happy about the migration of, for example, Eastern Europeans to the UK (i.e., implying not only that a range of others do nothing about their concerns but also that some others actively want this to happen). In the example above, NM3 conformed with an explanation of *ressentiment* in which there is an affective dilemma of anger (potentially motivating action) and powerlessness to do anything about this that has become habitual or sedimented over a long time.

In contrast to accounts focusing on economic shame outlined by Salmela and von Scheve (2017), supporters of right-wing reactionist stances would be expected to react with anger to defend their illiberal political views or cover a sense of shame or failure for holding them. They would also be expected to respond this way to feelings of not being listened to and of being devalued by politicians (i.e., in comparison to migrants, who were often described by right-wing reactionists as "jumping the queue" and competing for limited resources). This study supported such explanatory accounts but also found that some participants advocated more openly aggressive and extreme views that might have been the product of the repression of individual economic and racism-related shame (Salmela & von Scheve, 2017). For example, NM4 said he talked about political issues mainly with his mates, raising the issue of asylum seekers in France, who were "trying to come over, that's not right and nobody is doing anything, the French just want to get them on trains over here, get rid of them like." UF7 reported social media discussions about "filling in the channel tunnel" to prevent refugees walking through it: "These so-called refugees are completely false and they should get lost," adding that "they're not refugees, they're economic migrants." Instead of trying to understand their aims in coming to the UK and any potential for them to contribute positively, she dismissed this group as only aiming to "come into this country and try to ruin it."

For one participant, being in public spaces in the presence of people not speaking English was deeply uncomfortable, raising further concerns and grievances that were ultimately connected with a loss of national identity:

> UF9: I was only shopping today and there was, I think they might have been Polish but they were speaking foreign, looking at you funny but you don't know what they're talking about. They could be talking about you, I don't feel comfortable, I feel like I'm in a foreign country, I'm not in Britain, I'm not in an English place, I feel like I'm in Poland somewhere, I'm not in the UK when I'm out and about.

Such accounts were related to a sense of loss that included the threat of a loss of identity and being pushed out by others, and it was usually accompanied with a familiar lament that it was shameful that politicians did not do anything about this. Instead of blaming others, however, several participants noted the loss of an imagined positive national community that appeared to prefigure the theme of transvaluation that is examined in Section 6.2: "We seem to have lost the knack of coping now" (UF2).

In this context, an alternative conceptualization of repression is helpful; namely, that shame is not unconscious but rather occurs as everyday interaction "reproduces immoral temptations, which are routinely resisted and repressed" (Billig, 1997, p. 140). The interviews allowed for some participants to say things which usually remain unspoken, except when sharing with like-minded others. Long-held racist and xenophobic views were usually rejected in favour of a positive in-group account that did not fully address the ambivalence that often comes with persistent prejudice (e.g., combinations of feelings of warmth and unspoken or repressed negative judgements of others as less competent, that make racial prejudice resistant to change; see Dixon et al., 2012). In place of acknowledgement of racism "in us," many participants reiterated the consequences of uncontrolled immigration:

> UM2: And the NHS is crumbling, schools can't cope, housing is in a terrible state because we haven't got enough, because there are millions and millions of people coming into the country. It's not racist to say stop.

Here evaluating grievances about immigration through the lens of prejudice feeds into a sense of resentment and powerlessness to be able to say something. The lack of open discussion has arguably resulted in a desire for leaders who will speak openly on such issues, a form of empowerment that shares shame and alleviates any guilt about the consequences of widespread restrictive or punitive control of "immigrants" (including asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants). UKIP, for example, created opportunities for a kind of liberation from repressed economic shame, older shame-attracting identities (e.g., some occupational identities as discussed by Salmela & von Scheve, 2017). However, being against Europeans and the EU did not appear to create a sustainable "noble and superior" social self (Salmela & Capelos, 2021).

Participants' emotion-laden references to many people sharing these views provide a kind of cover against the individualising effect of the charge of shameful racism associated with anti-immigration stances. It is telling that when evaluating claims about good and bad immigrants, one participant stated:

> So it's really difficult to find your way through the mire, you welcome the people who are prepared to work and abide by our rules, it's not that hard for god's sake, but we ought to be able to say no to people we don't want." (UF4)

Ultimately, therefore, racism was re-presented as an issue of being able to decide as a group who is acceptable while also avoiding as much of the "mire" attached to debates about immigration. Mixed feelings about supporting UKIP—and a sense of a defensive suspicion about one's populist peers (see Salmela & Capelos, 2021)—was indicated by a participant who was voting for them on a single issue of opposing the HS2 railway:

> UF4: You know discussing membership or not of the EU, is more palatable than discussing curbs on immigration but I have a feeling that the majority of supporters of UKIP are probably in it from the immigration point of view which I think is a bit of a shame as it gives is somewhat a negative image and it makes you perhaps feel a little awk-embarrassed to associate yourself with it.

Thus, even with her limited connection to UKIP, for this participant there was a strong sense of being associated with a group which struggled to avoid the shame of a morally indefensible position on immigration.

Further examples showed how willing some participants were to express deeply ambivalent, affective dilemmas around the "common sense" view that "a country should look after its own citizens before they start looking after imports" (UM2). Here the participant failed to realise that talking about "imports" is a dehumanizing way to address the potential contributions—and complex humanitarian and other needs—of economic and non-economic immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees. UF6 went further and imagined being able to close the borders completely before realising she would need to settle for something less than this fantasy:

> I'd like the borders to always be shut off, but the realistic approach would be just more control. Obviously if you stay in the EU you're not really going to be able to control the European citizens coming in because they're allowed to.

Another participant suggested that while the referendum was still a year away, there was already a shared sense of what leaving the EU would mean: "Yeah, yeah cause then they can say 'tatty bye' to a lot of people, shut the door and a lot more, then we might have some jobs, we have some schools and classes that are not overfull" (UF5). These overtly aggressive and dehumanizing stances demonstrated not only a shamelessness about leaving the EU in order to exclude a wide range of migrants, but also devaluation of an awareness of the shared basic concerns of people (e.g., to belong in and contribute to a place) and the value of a global solidarity.

A further shame sub-theme was the role of the EU in allowing and even intentionally causing humiliation of the British people. NM3 expressed anger about immigration and his powerlessness to do anything about it through traditional political practices. He positioned "the rest of Europe" as being happy that migrants were preferring Britain over their countries, while also devaluing voting as a means to be heard on the topic:

> I don't, I'm not going to vote. Europe is full of Eastern Europeans coming here, they all want to come here to use the NHS, take the jobs and the rest of Europe doesn't care, as it doesn't concern them, they're glad they're coming here and not there." (NM3)

Europe and the EU were represented as agents that felt positive about the control and power that they had over the UK: "I mean we almost have to get permission every time we want to do anything, change anything. Brussels has to authorise it, well that's ridiculous." UF9 imagined this trend continuing, especially if people voted to stay in the EU:

> It'll be more of what we've got already. More immigration coming over, more people taking our jobs that nothing will be Britain anymore. We'll be classed as the EU, we won't be our own country, we can't do anything unless we you know have to ask the EU people first if we can do this, do changes and I think if

> we're our own country we should be able to do and change whatever we like.

The affective dilemma of a potential future shameful loss of identity and control contrasted with the desire still for a positive sense of self-worth and even to return to a previous position of power. Ostensibly eschewing an anti-European stance based on nationality and general xenophobia, NM2 initially presented himself as open to collaboration with the EU: "I'm not a great patriot, so I'm not going to say ooh we don't want to be mixed up with Europeans." However, he went on to express a fundamental ambivalence which was eventually captured by a less open sense of "tolerance" and a stance consistent with the phrase "Take back control": "I don't mind being mixed up with Europeans, but I don't want them dictating to me how I should and shouldn't live" (NM2).

6.2. Transvaluation, Nostalgia, and Change Reactionist-Style

The account presented thus far suggests that the details of anti-EU feelings are usually passed over and, if stated in public conversation, are oriented to as something that others will find unacceptable or intolerable. An individual neo-liberal subjectivity that implies that we are responsible for the circumstances that we live in is deeply unpleasant to acknowledge: Blaming others can be an attractive alternative because it presents an opportunity to exercise a sense of agency and to look for sources of positivity about one's demeaned, devalued, or humiliated identity. It is possible then to find examples of Salmela and Capelos's (2021) parallel processes of transvaluation which were at different stages of being "worked through"; namely, devaluation of values that were previously regarded as important (e.g., community values, equality, national unity). Devaluation of the UK was evident in descriptions of the country as a "dumping ground for everywhere else" (UM6), "I just don't think there's anything to vote for anymore" (NF4), and "I just think the whole system stinks, it's rotten to the core. Not just politics, everything in this country stinks" (NM2). Arguably, freedom of movement was also devalued by citizens when they were willing to sacrifice this for themselves or for young people to limit immigration mostly, but not exclusively, from Europe.

Reactionary "desire for change backwards" and opposition to politicians trying to maintain the status quo contrasted with calls for radical political change, expressed by some participants as the need to "get rid of the lot we've got" (NF4) and to "start again with a different type of people in politics" (NM2). Many non-voters were despondent about the possibilities of achieving change through politics but were open to opportunities such as the 2016 referendum; while many UKIP voters felt that an anti-establishment party might be the best means to achieve the kind of change they wanted. Explicit discussions of change appealed to a widely shared view of a desirable past which many participants eventually connected with a need to leave the EU: "There's an awful lot of people who remember pre-war, like me, who feel very strongly that this isn't a country that we know any more" (UF2). Others described areas of cities and places like East London as irrevocably changed: "You go there and you don't recognise the place anymore, you feel like a foreigner in your own country" (UM9). UM5 spoke about these changes with a mixture of nostalgia and dismay:

> When you get to my age you remember when you lived in an area and everybody was in the same boat, there was that community, if you like, you know, can I borrow a cup of sugar from your neighbours, that sort of thing. Now the gap is so huge between the haves and have nots.

The connection between a retrospective focus and leaving the EU becomes clearer in statements from older participants who associated joining Europe with the beginning of a period of British decline:

> Before we were in Europe this country was getting on its feet and it was in a good state after the war, and we got in at a good time. Until we got into Europe and we saw the decline start to start, and that's the reason I'd like to see us out of it. (UM4)

The sense of loss is also evident in a response to the follow-up question: "So for you, the things that are kind of just gone downhill are linked to Europe rather than the banking crisis?," to which UM4 replied: "We're quite a clever race, and we're quite good at what we do and our manufacturing and all that" but also noted:

> I mean we lost steelworks and stuff like that, our car plants all gone. We used to produce the best cars in the world, the steel was took all over the world and it's all gone now, and you know we've lost it all.

UM2 concurred: "I feel very strongly about being in the European Union, I think that it's holding our country back quite dramatically."

Nostalgia about one's nation implies a positive experience of reflecting upon a time when things were better. While some of the examples above suggest a collective nostalgia, remembering what was good about the past was felt as a loss in the present. The NHS, for example, was a subject of both nostalgia and concern to many participants, but this does not appear to fit with a reactionary account of populism except where fear and anger about its decline could be traced to neglect by UK politicians and a potential monetary benefit of leaving the EU. Moreover, while immigrants were praised for their role in the NHS, many participants argued that ultimately the "way we are carrying on with the NHS, we won't have one anyway, not unless we get out of Europe

we won't" (UM4). The notion of an anti-establishment career (Kemmers et al., 2016) suggests that the resentful feelings of citizens combine with experiences of negatively changing life circumstances. Reacting angrily to the pace of social change and feeling nostalgic about the past are affects that sediment over time in a way that is consistent with findings that support for populist views increase with age.

In contrast, the seven participants in this study under 30 years old might be expected to be less likely to combine anti-politics stances with a desire to change things back to a previous, better time, when their community or the country was perceived in more positive or even "glowing" and mythologised terms. Family conversations provided some participants with a sense of a better past that had been shared with them as a younger generation. As a result, UF9 was clear about what needed to be done:

> We should get out definitely, be our own country. What we used to be. That's all gone pear shaped since we joined the EU. Years ago, my dad always told me all the time, how things are so different and now he doesn't even recognise the country anymore. It's not what it was, not at all.

From an older person's perspective, UM4 described feeling sorry for younger people as things get progressively worse in the country: "'Cause I feel sorry for the youngsters now who are going to have to put up with what they are going to get. And I think this world is on its way backwards not forwards." Somewhat confusingly, this participant's vision was more about going back, rather than forward towards more social change, because by leaving the EU he hoped that the UK would begin to reverse the problems caused by "into Europe":

> UM4: Things just haven't worked, I mean they have changed this country to something which is absolutely useless. I mean put it this way, it's gone back again. Before we went into Europe, this country was really getting on its feet. I mean it took a long time after the world war for things to get right and it seemed to get more and more right and settled and in a straight line if you get my meaning, we were on a balance.

Desire for "backwards focused" change was also articulated in the anticipated positive outcomes of leaving the EU: "I think we'll be a stronger country I think yeah we'll just be stronger and have more worldwide trade and more English can work more jobs and hopefully get the country back to what it used to be" (UF9). This sense of getting the country "back to what it used to be" encapsulates the sense of reactionary change, as contradictory as this can sound, because it is not literally about restoring the past. Change backwards by leaving the EU would also mean, "We'll be back to being known as being Great Britain, and the others [in the EU] aren't great without Britain. I think we'll get our name back, definitely" (UF9). UM5 who said he was against the EU "when we first went into all this," also remarked:

> My thoughts haven't changed. It goes back to we're an island and we're proud of being an island and independent, we don't want to be ruled by the masses. You know we managed for hundreds of years without that so let's carry on.

Against a narrated background of loss of past national strength, greatness, and previous collective coping abilities, several participants emphasised restoring national sovereignty as a benefit of leaving the EU:

> I think we should be an independent European country away from Brussels. We shouldn't let Europe dictate their rules to us when we've always been a force to contend with you know, we are a world power, we should just stay separate you know. (UM8).

In this situation, leaving the EU could refocus efforts on making "Britain as good as it was, I don't know, 40, 50 years ago, and we have declined, I think we've become too reliant on other countries when we don't need to from an economic point of view" (UF10). They imagined a reversal of the situation under the EU from being dictated to—and therefore being humiliated as a nation—to being able to dictate to others:

> UM1: Yeah, currently, I don't think it is British identity, its more European and that's one of the main reasons I want to come out, 'cause I want to revert to back to being British and English, like you say erm and at the moment I don't believe we are, we're sort of being told by other countries what to do really, when it should be the other way around.

The excerpt clearly catches the reactionary focus on change backwards to a normal British-first identity: "Because then you're British, you, you, you're not European, 'Ah, you're part of the EU,' no you're British and that's it. You go back to what you were, normal thing, which is you're British" (UF1 with imagined discussant in single quotation marks). The example also shows how this can be achieved through affective discursive practices in which undiscussed shame and inferable humiliation by the EU are replaced with a collective or hubristic pride based on superiority to, or desired dominance over, others.

7. Conclusions

The *ressentimentful* account of a reactionary orientation among supporters of populist ideas, parties, and movements is promising, but relatively untested. In this article, the concept of reactionary affective practices was introduced to explore how affects or emotions such as anger,

resentment, and fear combine with other emotions, and change over time to become intense feelings towards groups regarded as being opposed to one's own interests. Three additional features that have been identified in the political psychology literature were addressed: 1) support for a combination of anti-political stances (e.g., against voting, or for UKIP *and* for leaving the EU *and* being opposed to immigration), 2) a potential role for economic shame-repressing *ressentiment*, the ways in which shame became attached to UKIP and anti-EU views primarily through the possibility of racism (rather than simply being the product of a previously existing or dormant racism as many people oriented towards this), and 3) a focus on the affective complexity of reactionary change backwards (i.e., that it is not a simple desire to recreate the past, a feeling of collective nostalgia or widespread collective narcissism).

On the first issue, the analysis of interviews with English non-voters and UKIP supporters showed the importance of participating in ordinary activities of careful or limited sharing of grievances over time in forming the view not only that it would feel right to leave the EU, but also sensed that many others in their communities shared these feelings. By examining the affective practices of people around the time that the EU referendum was announced, it was possible to show how strongly many already felt about immigration, elite politicians, and the EU as the agent primarily responsible for social and political change, including the loss of industries, a decline in post-war prosperity, a humiliating curtailment of autonomy and independence, and a reduced role on the world stage. The benefit of focusing on reactionary affective practices—rather than reactionism as a discourse, general stance, or personality trait—was that the "demand side" of support for the populist policy of leaving the EU could be examined in the period before the official start of the referendum campaign (e.g., including attempts to link leaving the EU with saving money that could be redirected towards "our NHS").

Shame-repression and long-term *ressentiment* were examined by looking for instances where anger was used to cover (or condense) feelings of shame, or humiliation stemming from the neglect of UK politicians and the imagined enjoyment of the UK's predicament by Europeans or the EU. While many people spoke of losses and demonstrated suspicion that the right-wing populist anti-immigration politics of their populist peers could be criticised as racist, discriminatory, uncaring, and shameful; nevertheless extreme, aggressive, and dehumanizing attitudes were presented in a defiant, shameless manner. Some of these stances seemed unlikely to bear much discussion or criticism (i.e., which might have allowed shame to re-experienced), or been described in terms of the desire of the other to inflict humiliation. There was also evidence of the transvaluation of previous values and identities, but the parallel process of adopting a hopeful and potentially influential anti-EU stance was often experienced as a highly ambivalent embodied affective dilemma, even though it might ultimately provide the means to restore pride in a British or English identity.

Our conversations also revealed nostalgia for a relatively prosperous post-war period that some participants wanted to return to, and others felt could be achieved again if the humiliating, controlling, and restricting role of the EU could be done away with. These findings extended Salmela and von Scheve's (2017) analysis of the repression of economic shame and showed how many participants combined a felt need to leave the EU with other anti-political stances. Older relatives had shared their memories with younger family members who had experienced neither the beginning of the European Market, nor Britain as a great country leading the world, dictating to others, having less diversity, being "less full," and with an NHS system that was able to "look after our own."

The affective practices focus on everyday forms of sedimentation shows potential to flesh out Cromby's (2019) Vygotskyan account of Brexit in terms of condensed and internalized dialogical emotions as well as the repetition of feelings of organisation over time that eventually "come to include feelings of *knowing* that leaving the EU is desirable" (Cromby, 2019, p. 65). The analysis avoided pathologising people who supported leaving the EU and any emphasis on "the gullibility of ordinary people as well as their xenophobia" (Walkerdine, 2020, p. 144). Regarding shame repression and *ressentimentful* affectivity, there was evidence of a wide range of orientations towards the shame of being against immigration, especially when enacted in a dehumanising and aggressive manner. Further research on the contribution of reactionary orientations to political populism should focus on: instances of transvaluation of previously shared values, ideals and identities, deep ambivalence around humiliated and potentially restorable British and English identities, defensive enactments of right-wing aggressive and dehumanizing views, connections with widely shared emotions in people's communities (e.g., widespread feelings of betrayal, etc.), and experiences of collective pride or hubris.

As a final point, it is vital that further work uses additional methods of rich data collection (e.g., ethnography, walk-along interviews, video analysis) to explore the variety of reactionary affective practices on both the right and left of populist politics. Telephone interviews should be supplemented by approaches that can examine the patterns and flows of emotional activity in the private and public lives, spaces and practices in which participants and specialist groups (e.g., Yellow Vest protestors, Alternative für Deutschland supporters) do reactionary politics.

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The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

Perceptions, Resentment, Economic Distress, and Support for Right-Wing Populist Parties in Europe

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Abstract
Research has demonstrated that resentful emotions toward the politics and perceptions of being culturally and economically threatened by immigration increase support for populist parties in some European countries, and that macro-level economic conditions engender those perceptions and emotions and increase populist support. This article reveals that household-level economic conditions also affect perceptions that immigrants represent a threat to a country's culture and economy. Low- and middle-income populations are more vulnerable to suffer economic distress due to macro-level factors such as import shock, which can increase their resentment toward democracy, and their perceptions that immigration is a cultural and economic threat, therefore increasing the likelihood to vote for populist parties. A mediation analysis using the European Social Survey data from 2002 to 2018 provides evidence for the argument.

Keywords
economic conditions; economic distress; populism; voting behavior

Issue
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1. Introduction

Support for populist parties grew substantially in some European countries since the 2000s. In France, only 3% of people interviewed by the European Social Survey (ESS) declared that they voted for right-wing populists in 2008. That number grew to 13% in 2016. This represents an increase of 333% in populist support. Five percent of Austrian respondents reported that they had supported those parties in 2004, but that number jumped to 20% by 2016, which represents a 300% growth in right-wing populist supporters in that country. From 2008 to 2016, Finland's support for right-wing populists grew from 4% to 15%, a 270% increase. Although there are country-level variations, this seems to be an overall trend across various countries in Europe (Rooduijn et al., 2019).

At the micro-level, a quick look at the data available from the ESS reveals a persistent pattern across European countries in which the proportion of voters that support populist parties decreases with family income. For instance, the bivariate association between families' income and vote for populist parties has been negative in Germany, Finland, Ireland, Denmark, Poland, Switzerland, Austria, and many other countries since 2002. This article focuses on the micro-level foundations of populist support and investigates whether family-level economic conditions help explain support for right-wing populism and, if so, why?

At first glance, the association between families' income and support for right-wing populist parties seems puzzling because many studies argue that individual and family-level economic conditions are irrelevant after we take into account other factors related to perceptions, beliefs, and emotions. Various authors have demonstrated, for instance, that right-wing populist parties in Europe find support among sectors of the population that feel threatened economically (Lubbers & Scheepers, 2002; Lucassen & Lubbers, 2012) and

culturally (Ivarsflaten, 2005) due to changes in their social and economic environment, aggravated by the flux of capital and labor across the borders. Hence, according to this perspective, it is the *perception* of being culturally and economically threatened by immigrants that explains electoral support for right-wing populists, and the explanatory power of families' income disappears after we take those factors into account (Mutz, 2018). Other authors have shown that right-wing populist parties profit electorally from affective reactions that emerge in such an uncertain environment, including dissatisfaction with, distrust of, and resentment toward the status quo, political elites, and established institutions (Betz, 1994, 2009; Capelos & Demertzis, 2018; Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018). Right-wing populist parties and candidates present themselves as challengers to the current state of affairs, as nationalists who are anti-elite, pro-market, anti-state intervention, and anti-immigration (Betz, 1993; Mudde, 2010; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017), attracting voters who are resentful of the status quo and feel threatened culturally and economically. Hence, one may conclude that resentment and perceptions of cultural and economic threat are the main driving forces, and economic conditions at the micro-level become irrelevant once we consider those factors.

In this article, we challenge this conclusion by taking a different approach. Conventional approaches investigate objective conditions (e.g., family income) *against* subjective factors, such as emotions and perceptions. Instead, we investigate a causal chain connecting family-level economic conditions and vote for right-wing populist parties. We argue that as families' economic conditions decline, feelings of resentment at the status quo, and perceptions that immigrants represent an economic and cultural threat to the country, increase. These perceptions and resentment, then, affect support for right-wing populism. In other words, we argue that perceptions of cultural and economic threat and resentment at the status quo *mediate* the effect of family economic conditions on vote for populists. It is not surprising, then, that the effect of family-level economic conditions may disappear when one controls for emotions and perceptions. It is not that these objective conditions don't matter, but that they matter in great part *indirectly*.

This argument is not new, but it has not received the attention it deserves nor the empirical treatment it requires. In that sense, this article contributes to the literature on causes of populist support, first, by integrating the three explanations mentioned above—resentment and perceptions of cultural and economic threat—and proposing that they work as a causal mechanism connecting family-level economic conditions and support for populism. Those feelings and perceptions affecting populist support may have other origins, but we argue that they are also significantly affected by families' economic conditions. More precisely, the argument is that economic hardship affects people's perceptions of cultural threats and economic insecurity, fuels resentful emotions and, through those perceptions and emotions, increases support for populist parties. That causal chain is evaluated using a mediation analysis, which provides the empirical treatment the argument requires.

The second contribution of the article is that this approach reconciles two simple facts that consistently appear in opinion surveys and previous literature: The first is the role of emotions, beliefs, and perceptions on populist support (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018; Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018). The second is that those resentful affects and perceptions are not equally distributed across socioeconomic groups (Betz, 1993, 2009; Lucassen & Lubbers, 2012). Resentment toward the status quo and perception of being economically and culturally endangered are higher among low- and middle-income groups than among the high-income population. We argue that low-income groups become more susceptible to populist appeals to the extent that they are also more likely to feel more vulnerable, threatened, and resentful toward the current configuration.

Using the ESS data from 2002 to 2018, this article shows that, on average, around 55% of the effect of families' income on the propensity to vote for right-wing populist parties is mediated by the effect of the former on feelings of resentment at the status quo and perceptions of being culturally and economically threatened by immigrants. In other words, 55% of the effect of families' income on populist vote occurs because income affects resentment and perceptions. When we control for the effect of macro-level economic conditions, such as regional-level unemployment, import shocks, inflow of immigrants, and regional trade balance, that mediation effect remains close to 50%.

2. Literature Review

Support for populist parties is often associated with a combination of economic conditions such as stagnation, unemployment, import shock linked to globalization, and perception of economic deprivation (Colantone & Stanig, 2018, 2019; Margalit, 2019; Mayda, 2006; Rodrik, 2018). Other authors point to the effect of cultural grievances and perceptions that a person's social status is under threat (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007; Mutz, 2018; Sniderman et al., 2004, 2007) or to reactionist attitudes fueled by resentful affectivity toward the status quo, political elite, and other groups (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018; Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018). Let us consider the resentful affectivity argument first.

2.1. Resentful Affect

Right-wing populist parties find support among citizens who developed a bundle of anti-immigrant, anti-EU, anti-political elite sentiments whose core, at the emotional level, can indicate a resentful reaction toward the current state of affairs (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018;

Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018). The concept of resentful affect, or resentment, as used here refers to an emotional reaction that can be expressed as a pure dissatisfaction with an object or idea. Demertzis (2006) and Capelos and Demertzis (2018) discuss the concept of resentful affect and *ressentiment* and their relation to anti-immigrant sentiments. While resentment can be about a moral anger, *ressentiment* refers to compensatory emotions that couple with frustrations due to feeling powerless in the face of unfavorable events. The concept of resentful affect in this article is closer to those definitions but focuses on the expression of dissatisfaction associated with those emotional reactions. Right-wing populist parties reinforce people's resentment at the way their polity operates, as well as the anti-attitudes connected to that sentiment, and profit electorally from it because they present themselves as guardians of the national identity and economic interest against immigrants, foreign government demands, and domestic corrupted elite (Golder, 2003; Mudde, 2007).

Studies show that these feelings are amplified in contexts of economic hardship at the micro- and macro-levels. They are more common among some socioeconomic groups that feel less powerful to change the course of events (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018) and are more vulnerable and likely to suffer economic deprivation (Semyonov et al., 2006). According to these findings, resentment is not randomly distributed among economic strata, and even though it can occur across income lines, it is less likely to emerge among those who are more well-off in society, to the extent that economic deprivation is less likely to reach them.

If it is the case that (1) higher resentment at the way the polity operates increases the likelihood of voting for right-wing populist parties, and (2) families that are more well-off are less likely to develop those resentful emotions, then it must be the case that families' economic conditions affect support for populist parties due to its effect on resentful affect. But resentful affect at the status quo does not mediate the effect of economic conditions alone. It does so in combination with perceptions of economic and cultural threat, especially toward immigrants in the European context.

2.2. Cultural Threat

One of the main theses about the emergence of right-wing populist parties emphasizes electoral support from those who feel culturally threatened or left behind. We use these terms broadly and interchangeably to represent the perception that one's values, beliefs, and lifestyle are threatened due to contact with out-group members. This contact is perceived as a *cultural* or *status threat* if the out-group members or their social status grows in number or importance (Mutz, 2018; Semyonov et al., 2004).

One mechanism that can trigger cultural threat is the economic and social changes associated with modernization (Inglehart, 1997; Minkenberg, 2000; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). The cultural aspect of the modernization argument says that modernization favors the emergence of post-materialist values of multiculturalism, racial and gender equality demands, sexual freedom, individualism, and a rupture with previously established social hierarchies and authority (Golder, 2016; Inglehart, 1997; Minkenberg, 2000). It leads to an attitude backlash among those who previously maintained high social status and hold values whose validity is being challenged.

In recent years, much attention has been given to the effect of immigration on perception of threat to cultural dominance by some non-immigrant subpopulations in Europe. Various studies show that attitudes toward immigrants are consistently associated with support for right-wing populist parties that defend nativism and nationalism. Some researchers say that right-wing extremists and populist parties would not have been successful without mobilizing those grievances over immigration (Ivarsflaten, 2008; Lubbers et al., 2002; Norris, 2005).

The social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Turner & Tajfel, 1986) and group conflict theories provide theoretical justifications for why some groups feel culturally threatened. According to the group conflict argument, society is characterized by a competition between identity or ethnic groups to establish dominance over material resources and social values (Coser, 1956). Blalock (1967) differentiates between actual and perceived competition, and states that actual competition affects majorities' perceptions of competitive threats from out-group members, producing hostility toward them. Scheepers et al. (2002) connect this argument to social identity theory, which states that in-group members tend to perceive their group as superior, attribute in-group characteristics to themselves, and negatively value out-group members. As a result of perceived competition and an in-group desire for in- (or out-)group characteristics to dominate (or be avoided), the perception of cultural threat intensifies if immigration becomes a salient issue, which causes attitudes of ethnic exclusionism to increase (Scheepers et al., 2002). As the argument goes, immigration and an influx of a culturally-alien population, which results from modernization and globalization, leads to feelings of loss of national identity, and seeds reactionary tendencies among those who feel culturally threatened, increasing support for populist parties in that sub-population (Koopmans et al., 2005; Norris, 2005). Some authors have highlighted that a similar phenomenon happened in the US, but the population that is growing in number and status is Black Americans, not only immigrants, raising perceptions of status threat for some white subgroups and increasing their propensity to vote for candidates that represent the reestablishment of those threatened hierarchies (Mutz, 2018).

Ultimately, it is the *perception* rather than the actual cultural threat that matters, but the actual competition over resources fuels the perception of cultural threat (Blalock, 1967; Scheepers et al., 2002) and can increase

populist support. Previous research has demonstrated that regional-level import shocks can trigger xenophobic beliefs (Hays et al., 2019) and, through those beliefs, populist support increases. Other authors have demonstrated that occupation and social class have a similar effect, impacting perceptions of cultural and economic threat, and therefore populist support (Lucassen & Lubbers, 2012). This article builds on that literature and investigates if this type of mediation effect, where perception of cultural threat due to immigrants mediates the effect of socioeconomic variables on support for populism, also occurs at the level of individual and family economic conditions.

2.3. Economic Threat

Alongside resentment at the status quo and perceived *cultural threat* due to immigration, authors have investigated if populist support is prevalent among those who feel economically threatened or left behind economically. It is important to distinguish between a person's actual economic circumstances and their perception of being under economic threat or competing for economic resources. This distinction is theoretically relevant and has methodological implications, as we will discuss briefly below and in detail in the next section.

Changes in the economic environment and perceptions of economic vulnerability are connected, and both can affect voting behavior. Modernization, globalization, and group conflict theory provide theoretical justifications for why feelings of economic insecurity can increase electoral support for right-wing populists instead of other parties with different political positions, such as those that favor welfare programs. The economic aspect of the modernization argument points that some are left behind during the modernization process because they do not possess the human capital and skills to "obtain the standard of living they would have enjoyed in the past" in the post-war industrial period (Golder, 2016, p. 482; see also Betz, 1994). Some right-wing populist parties profit from these grievances by promising a return to an abstract and idealized moment of prosperity and order in the past (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018).

Two of the main arguments in the recent debate about populist support emphasize the role of globalization and immigration. Salience and intensification of trade and immigration in the context of a globalized economy can cause anti-immigration sentiments or increase support for nationalist anti-immigration right-wing parties if they trigger perceptions that immigrants compete for job positions and drain welfare resources (Colantone & Stanig, 2018). Additionally, realist group conflict theory provides a justification for why this can lead to anti-immigrant sentiments: a conflict of economic interests between immigrants and nationals that compete for scarce economic resources (Hardin, 1997). This conflict can lead to a perception that immigrants represent an economic threat. Authors have shown, for instance, that actual economic decline, such as regional-level trade-induced economic shocks, affect right-wing support because they affect sociotropic economic concerns and attitudes toward immigrants (Hays et al., 2019). Hence, those attitudinal and subjective factors mediate the effect of actual economic conditions on populist support.

One issue with the subjective factors that mediate the effect of actual economic conditions on vote is that they are strongly correlated (Sniderman et al., 2004, 2007) and can causally affect each other. For instance, sentiments of economic insecurity can fuel resentment at the status quo or perceptions of cultural threat, and vice-versa. This mutual determination between perceptions and affect can pose some challenges for empirical analysis of how they mediate the effect of economic conditions. The next section discusses a strategy to investigate this question.

2.4. The Mediation Effect of Resentment and Perceptions of Cultural and Economic Threat

We can draw two conclusions from the previous sections. First, it is not easy to disentangle feelings of resentment at the status quo and perceptions of cultural and economic threat, especially in observational data. Although actual economic conditions and immigration can be exogenous factors, the subjective dimensions of perception of economic insecurity, cultural threat, and resentful affect are endogenous. Resentment can emerge due to perceptions of being left behind culturally and economically, especially among those who are more vulnerable. Conversely, resentment can intensify perceptions of cultural and economic threat if it is fed by other sources, such as feelings of political inefficacy (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018; Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018). The same goes for the relationship between the perception of economic and cultural threat. Some studies have considered those two dimensions separately and evaluated their relative importance to explain populist success or anti-immigrant attitudes (Ivarsflaten, 2008; Lucassen & Lubbers, 2012; Mutz, 2018; Sniderman et al., 2004, 2007). However, empirical measures of those two factors are highly correlated and, more importantly, they can cause each other. Perceptions that immigrants compete for jobs or are bad for the economy can lead to animosities that are expressed in terms of cultural threat, and vice-versa. Hence, empirical analyses must take into account this endogeneity between these three dimensions; namely, resentment, and perception of cultural and economic threat.

The second conclusion is that, at the micro-level, economic factors matter for populist support because they affect a person's resentment and perceptions of cultural and economic threat. That is, these elements matter because they mediate the effect of economic conditions on populist support. Although there is strong evidence that regional-level factors (such as trade-induced eco-

nomic shocks) matter (Colantone & Stanig, 2018; Hays et al., 2019), there are mixed findings that individual-level economic conditions affect populist support (Ivarsflaten, 2005; Koopmans et al., 2005; Mutz, 2018). Some studies in the US show that family income is not associated with support for Trump (Mutz, 2018), but a series of studies demonstrate that high-income individuals are less likely to support populists (Hays et al., 2019; Rydgren & Ruth, 2013; Werts et al., 2013). How should we understand this mixed evidence on the effect of family-level economic conditions, in particular income levels, with regards to support for right-wing populist parties?

The key to understand the role of individual- or household-level economic conditions on populist support is through its effect on resentment and threat perception. The main argument of this article is that the perceptions of sociocultural and economic threat and resentful affect are not equally distributed across income groups. Those more vulnerable relate differently to the economic environment when compared to the affluent population. They are more exposed to suffer the economic consequences of economic downturns and feel threatened by the influx of immigrants. We can state that hypothesis as follows: *Individual- or household-level economic hardship affects support for populist parties because they increase perception of sociocultural threat from immigrants and fuel resentful affect toward the status quo.*

Although scholars have considered that type of mediated effect for regional-level economic shocks (Hays et al., 2019) and class occupation (Lucassen & Lubbers, 2012), the same has not been done for personal or family economic conditions. Moreover, resentful affect as a mediator of families' economic conditions has not been fully integrated into this type of mediation analysis.

One difficulty with this argument is that, because the three mediators—resentful affect and perceptions of cultural and economic threat—mutually affect each other, we cannot use them separately in the mediation analysis nor control for them separately, 'in parallel,' unless we can ensure their exogenous variation through manipulation or find intermediate variables that "block" their causal connection. In other words, the mediation effect is not identifiable if we use those three variables in parallel or separately with observational data. A possible identification strategy is to use them jointly as if they represented a single subjective state of resentment-threat perception (Park & Esterling, 2020). Figure 1 contains a diagram that captures this solution. The resentment-threat box contains the three mediators that affect each other, and it represents their joint state.

Figure 1 captures the idea that individual- or family-level economic conditions affect populist support through subjective states that combine resentment and perception of cultural and economic vulnerability. It also advances the notion that not all economic groups are affected in the same way by macro-level factors, which include unemployment levels and trade-induced economic shocks. It is likely, as the figure indicates, that those who are well-off economically will not have their personal economic conditions as affected as those who are more vulnerable. Hence, if we control for income when evaluating the effect of regional-level factors on populist support, we "block" one of the paths those conditions take to affect support for populism, namely, families' economic situations, and underestimate the total impact of macro-level features. On the other hand, we can control for regional-level factors and evaluate the direct and mediated effect of family income on populist vote through resentment-threat perceptions. We adopt this strategy in the empirical analysis below.

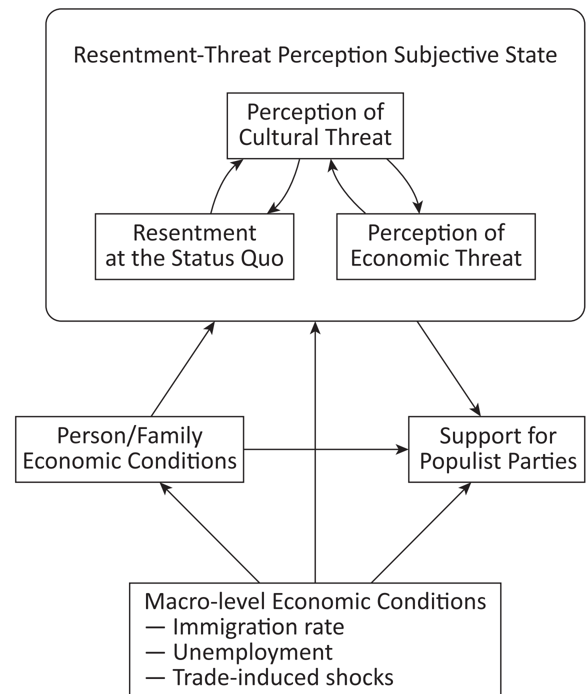

Figure 1. Causal diagram representing the hypothesis of mediated effect at the micro-level of economic conditions on populist support through resentment toward the status quo and perceptions of cultural and economic threat.

Notice that these considerations do not suggest that only low- or middle-income populations will think they are threatened economically or culturally, or feel resentful toward the status quo. Affluent populations can feel the same, and those perceptions and feelings can have an independent impact on support for populism, as many other authors have demonstrated (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018; Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018; Sniderman et al., 2004). The argument here says only that family and regional economic hardship conditions increase the chances that certain subjective states emerge, which are expressed in terms of resentment and perceptions of cultural and economic threat, increasing support for populists whose political positions profit electorally from those states.

3. Data and Methods

3.1. Data

The empirical analysis is based on data from nine waves of the ESS collected biannually from 2002 to 2018. The ESS is a cross-country academically driven survey that measures attitudes, beliefs, and behavior of populations across Europe and the UK using standardized questions. The countries included in the analysis are Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, Finland, France, the UK, Greece, Czechia, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Slovenia, and Slovakia. These are all cases in the ESS that have supporters of right-wing populist parties.

The dependent variable is *vote for populist parties* captured in the respondents' answer to the question about the party they voted for in the last national election, coded as 1 if the respondent voted for a right-wing populist party and 0 otherwise. The classification of parties as right-wing populists is based on Albertazzi (2008), Burgoon et al. (2018), Fella and Ruzza (2013), Mudde (2007), Rooduijn and Burgoon (2018), and Tarchi (2008). In Germany, electors have two votes and people were considered supporters of right-wing populist parties if they voted for these parties in at least one of their votes. Table 1 lists the countries and parties classified as right-wing populists.

The factors that, according to our hypothesis, mediate the effect of household-level income on populist support are *resentful affect* and *perceptions of cultural and economic threat*. We follow the previous literature to maintain comparability of this article with others' results, and select questions in the ESS that match as best as possible those underlying theoretical concepts. To capture *economic threat* we use an 11-point scale ESS question, asking whether the respondent perceives immigrants as good or bad for the country's economy. *Cultural threat* is captured using another 11-point scale question, asking if the country's cultural life is enriched or undermined by immigrants. Both variables are coded such that high values mean the respondent perceives a higher threat. Hays et al. (2019) adopted these same questions to measure xenophobic beliefs, which they use as a mediator for the effect of regional-level import shocks on vote for populism. This article complements their analysis and shows that those dimensions also work as mediators for the effect of individual-level economic conditions on populist support. Resentment against the status quo is captured in an 11-point scale ESS question that asks respondents how satisfied they are with the way democracy works in their country. Higher values mean more resentment.

As discussed above, we cannot investigate the mediation effect of *resentful affect* and *cultural and economic threat* separately or in parallel because these factors

Table 1. Right-wing populist parties in Europe.

Country	Right-Wing Populist Party
Austria	FPÖ, BZÖ
Belgium	Vlaams Blok (VB), Vlaams Belang (VB), Lijst Dedecker, Démocratie Nationale
Czechia	Úsvit Tomia Okamury
Denmark	Dansk Folkeparti
Finland	True Finns, Finnish People's Blue-Whites
France	Front National (FN), Mouvement National Républicain (MNR)
Germany	National Democratic Party, Republikaner, Alternative for Germany (AfD)
Greece	Xrusi Augi (Golden Dawn), LAOS (Popular Orthodox Party)
Hungary	Jobbik, Fidesz
Italy	Forza Italia, Lega Nord, Alleanza Nazionale, Fiamma Tricolore
Netherlands	List Pim Fortuyn (LPF), Party for Freedom (PVV)
Norway	Progress Party (FRP)
Poland	League of Polish Families (LPR), Congress of the New Right (KNP)
Slovakia	Slovak National Party (SNS)
Slovenia	Slovene National Party (SNS), Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS)
Sweden	Social Democrats, Sverigedemokraterna
Switzerland	Swiss People's Party, Freiheits-Partei, Ticino League
UK	UK Independence Party, British National Party (BNP)

Notes: This list focuses on vote for right-wing populist parties as collected by the ESS until 2016 and reflects the sources cited in the text, but it may not portray the most-recent complete picture of right-wing populist parties in Europe. France's Front National party name changed to National Rally in 2018.

affect each other, which can confound their association with *income* and *populist support*. Hence, instead of using them separately, we use a principal component score (PCA) created using the measurements of those dimensions. Similar analysis using these variables and principal component analysis were conducted by other authors (Sniderman et al., 2004, 2007). We call the resulting variable the *threat-resentment index,* and it is intended to capture the subjective state representing the three mediators jointly. The greater the value of the principal component, the greater the *resentment* and *perception of cultural and economic threat* on average. The Pearson partial correlation coefficient between the threat-resentment index and the original variables is 0.61 for resentment over how the democracy works, 0.85 for perception of cultural threat, and 0.86 for perception of economic threat. For any given value in two of these dimensions (e.g., perception of cultural and economic threat), the threat-resentment index grows linearly on the third (e.g., resentment).

The measurement of resentful affect and the threat-resentment index constructed here is similar to the way Capelos and Katsanidou (2018) instrumentalize resentful and affective reactions. Hays et al. (2019) use the same question about satisfaction with the economy as in Capelos and Katsanidou (2018) but interpreted it as an indicator of sociotropic concerns of the respondent instead of resentful affect. Capelos and Katsanidou (2018) utilize this question and a series of others to create (1) a *satisfaction* index constructed using questions about satisfaction with life, government, democracy, and the economy, a (2) *social trust* index created from questions about whether the respondent trusts other people or if they believe that others always try to take advantage, and an (3) *institutional trust* index based on questions about trust in political institutions, government, parliament, the legal system, police, politicians, and political parties. Following Capelos and Katsanidou (2018), we create indices of satisfaction, social trust, and institutional trust using the same questions those authors selected. We compare the effect of these indices of resentment and also the threat-resentment index designed to capture a combination of threat perception (cultural and economic) and resentment.

If the argument of this article is correct, the threat-resentment index should better capture the indirect (mediated) effect of a persons' economic conditions on populist support because it includes indicators of the three relevant dimensions—resentment, and cultural and economic threat—as discussed in the theoretical section.

Total household income is available in the ESS in deciles, so we use that variable as a proxy for family's economic condition. There is evidence that the social basis of right-wing populist parties in Europe are low-income, low-educated, often young and male, and often are unemployed (Arzheimer, 2009; Arzheimer & Carter, 2006; Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018; Evans, 2005; Givens, 2004; Golder, 2003; Hays et al., 2019; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2002; Lucassen & Lubbers, 2012). Hence, following the literature, we include individual-level controls for *gender*, *age*, *education*, *union membership*, *religious affiliation*, *unemployment*, and *ideology* (self-placement on the left-right scale).

3.2. Methods

The two main quantities of interest in the article are the mediation effect of the resentment-threat index, which is composed of resentment and perceptions of cultural and economic threat, and the proportion of the effect of household economic situation on support for populism that is jointly mediated by those factors. The Supplementary File discusses the causal parameters in more detail.

4. Results

We start with some descriptive statistics (see Table A1 in the Supplementary File) of the raw variables employed to construct the perception and resentment indices. The proportion of votes for populist parties is around 13% in the entire sample, which contains data from 2002 to 2018. Among the dissatisfaction measures, government has the largest average, followed by the country's economy. The measure we selected to construct the resentment-threat index, dissatisfaction with the democracy, has a negative mean and median. It means that, on average, people are more satisfied than not with the way democracy works in their country. The same goes for cultural and economic threat. On average, people feel more threatened economically than culturally by immigrants.

The variables capturing perception of threat by immigrants, satisfaction, and trust in institutions or other people are all positively correlated. Figure 2 shows the pairwise correlation using Pearson's correlation coefficient between the variables used to capture those dimensions. Notice that perception of cultural and economic threat are among the pairs that show the highest positive correlations. Those two variables are also highly correlated with dissatisfaction with democracy, which is the variable this article uses as proxy for resentment toward the status quo. The only other variable that is as strongly correlated with perception of cultural and economic threat as the resentment measure is distrust in the parliament. Another interesting feature in Figure 2 is that the measures used to create the indices of dissatisfaction, social trust, and institutional trust are all strongly correlated to each other. This supports what other authors have found about those factors (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018; Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018; Sniderman et al., 2004, 2007).

The first component of the PCA created to summarize those dimensions captures a large portion of their variation, and the analysis indicates that one component is sufficient to represent the underlying variables. The main mediator variable instrumentalizing this

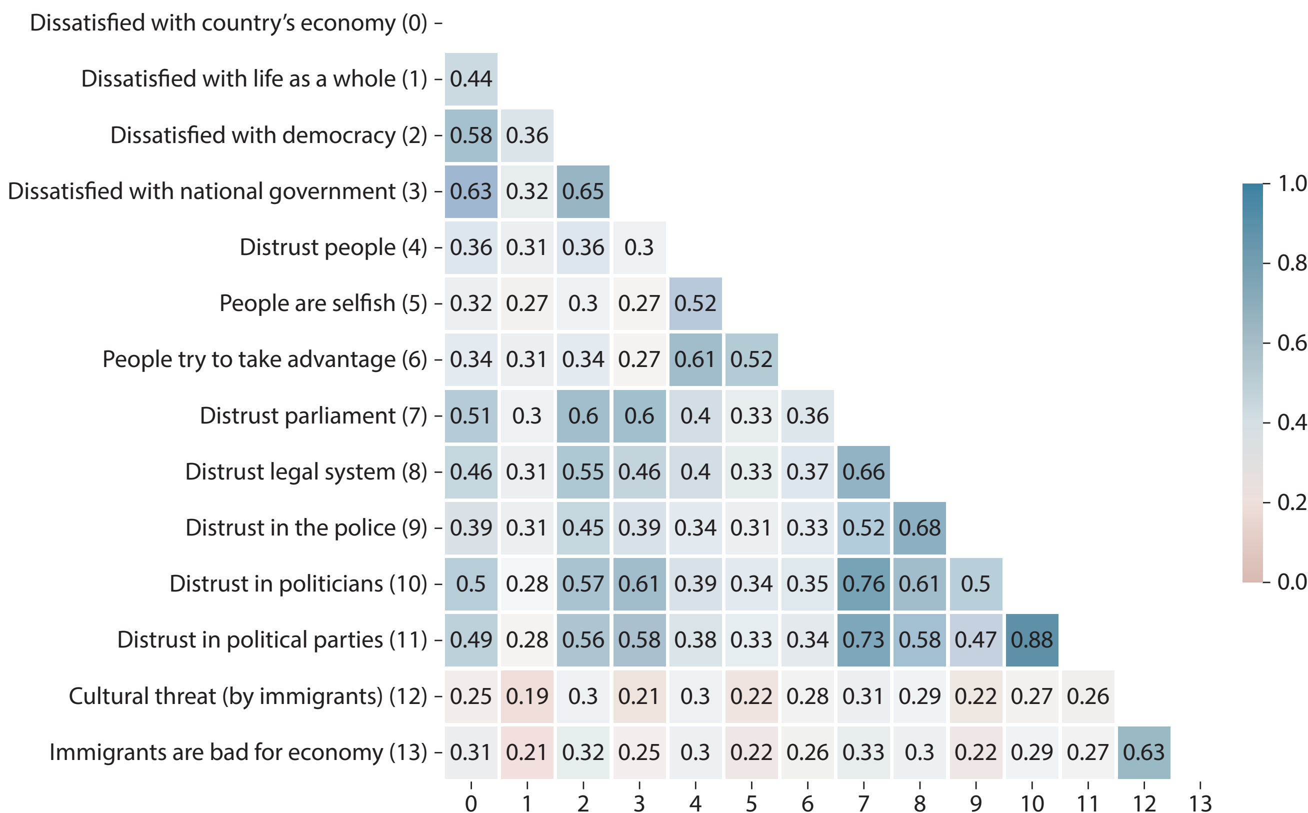

Figure 2. Pairwise correlation between measures of dissatisfaction, trust, and perceptions of cultural and economic threat.

article's theoretical argument, the resentment-threat index, created using *resentment* and *perceptions of cultural and economic threat*, captures more than 60% of the variation of the original variables. The correlation between the index and each original variables is 0.61 for *resentment*, 0.85 for *cultural threat*, and 0.86 for *economic threat*. Similar patterns emerged for the *satisfaction*, *social trust*, and *institutional trust* indices we created to contrast with the results of the resentment-threat index.

Table 2 shows the results of a mediation analysis using the indices as mediators. It includes point estimates and confidence intervals in parentheses for eight different models divided into four groups. Each group shows the results of the analysis using different mediators. The top row indicates which mediator was used in the first and second stage regressions, as well as in the respective mediation analysis, which is based on those first and second stage results. For easy visualization, the results of the respective mediation analysis are presented in the same column of the second stage regression (rows ACME, ADE, and Proportion Mediated; see Supplementary File for the precise definition of these quantities). The second and third columns of Table 2 contain the mediator we propose, i.e., the threat-resentment index, which we use to evaluate this article's core argument. We also included three other groups of columns. Each group presents results for alternative indices adopted by previous studies. We include these additional analyses so that readers can easily compare the results using the threat-resentment index against alternative constructions in the literature. In the regressions, all the variables were standardized to facilitate comparisons between the magnitude of the estimated effects, and all models include country-year random effects to account for heterogeneity at those levels.

The first stage regressions capture the first link of the causal chain connecting family-level income to populist vote through perceptions and resentment. Hence, the dependent variable in the first stage is the mediator, which by construction are PCA indices, and follows a continuous scale. The four "First Stage" columns of Table 2 show the results of linear regressions of each mediator on individuals' income and the control variables. Let us focus on the effect of *income* on the mediators. As expected, *income* has a negative effect on the mediators. It means that as *income* increases, the value of the threat-resentment index diminishes, which means that affluent people feel less threatened culturally and economically by immigrants, and also feel less resentful toward democracy. Comparatively, the size of the effect of *income* is only paralleled by *education* and *ideology*, the former having twice the effect of *income*. If we consider the dissatisfaction index, the effect of *income* is similar, but *education* becomes less relevant. High-income people are less dissatisfied with the economy, the way democracy works, the government, and life as a whole. The same goes for the *social* and *institutional distrust indices*. *Income* reduces distrust in both cases. These results indicate that perceptions, dissatisfaction, and

trust are not randomly distributed among income groups. Resentment and perception of cultural and economic threat are more prevalent among the low-income population, as are feelings of dissatisfaction and distrust in institutions.

The columns "Second Stage" display estimates of probit hierarchical models. The models regress the dependent variable, *vote for populist parties*, on *income*, the mediators, and the individual-level controls. Let us focus on the effect of *income* and the mediator. As expected, as *income* increases, the propensity to *vote for populist parties* diminishes. The effect of the mediators is also as expected. Consider the threat-resentment index. The effect of that index on *vote for populism* is not only positive, but the largest among all the other variables considered, which echoes what other studies have found (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018; Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007, 2010; Hays et al., 2019; Sniderman et al., 2004, 2007). The more people resent the way democracy works in their country and feel threatened economically and culturally by immigrants, the more they tend to support populist parties. The second-largest effect, *ideology*, is the only factor included in the estimation that has a similar magnitude of the effect of the threat-resentment index.

The other indexes display similar behavior. All of them have a positive effect on *support for populism*. People that are more dissatisfied with the democracy, economy, government, and life in general are more likely to vote for populists, as are those who have higher distrust in other people, political parties, legislature, and the political elite. *Income*, on the other hand, reduces those perceptions and feeling of resentment, threat, distrust, and dissatisfaction. Taken together, these results tell a story that supports the hypothesis of the mediation effect of the *threat-resentment* factor.

The results of the mediation analysis also supports this interpretation. The bottom part of Table 2, starting on the row ACME and ending on the row Proposition Mediated, shows the estimated quantities of direct interest for this article's argument. The column name that corresponds to the mediation results indicates the mediator used in the analysis. Consider the third column, which show the results of the mediation analysis using the threat-resentment index as mediator. The row ACME shows that *income* has a negative effect on *vote for populist parties*, as it reduces the perceptions of threat and resentment. Moreover, 55% of the effect of *income* on *populist support* goes through that channel. The proportion of the effect of *income* mediated by perceptions can be as small as 46% or as large as 71%. Any value on that interval would not be rejected by the analyses presented in Table 2. This represents a large share of the effect of *income*. It is not a surprise, then, that the effect of family-level economic conditions (e.g., income levels) becomes insignificant in some empirical analyses when one includes subjective factors, such as perceptions of threat or measures of resentment. A large part of the effect of income is not direct but mediated by those factors. So, controlling for them "blocks" some channels of communication between income and vote, obscuring some mechanisms connecting the former to the latter. When we compare with the other indices of *dissatisfaction*, *social trust*, and *institutional trust*, the threat-resentment index mediates a larger share of the effect of *income*. Hence, it seems that *income* does affect various dimensions of satisfaction or trust, but a combination of indicators of *perceptions of cultural* and *economic threat* (Lucassen & Lubbers, 2012) and *dissatisfaction with democracy*—which can turn into affective resentment with the way the political regime works in the country (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018)—seems to better capture the path connecting families' income and their support for populism.

It is worth noting the effect of the other variables. They corroborate our intuition and what others have found about supporters of populist parties. In all models, except two, *ideology* has a positive effect. People who place themselves in the right side of the left-right ideology spectrum tend to feel more *resentful* and *threatened culturally* and *economically* (second columns), display higher levels of *social distrust* (sixth column), but also feel less *dissatisfied* (forth column) and *trust institutions more* (eight column). Right-wing people are more likely to vote for populist parties, regardless of the mediator we use to control for *perceptions* and *resentment* (third, fifth, seventh, and ninth column). Authors have pointed out that populist supporters are usually male, low-educated, self-employed or unemployed, and young (Arzheimer, 2009; Evans, 2005; Givens, 2004; Golder, 2016; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2002; Lucassen & Lubbers, 2012). Table 2 echoes those findings. *Age* reduces *perception of threat*, *dissatisfaction*, and *support for populist parties*, and so does years of *education*, which has a large magnitude of effect when compared to other variables in many models. The negative effect of *gender* shows that women are less likely to support populist parties (Givens, 2004), but they are more resentful with the way democracy works and feel more threatened economically and culturally than men. They also have less social distrust, but more institutional distrust. As expected, the *unemployed* feel more threatened and are more likely to support populist parties, and so do those who are or were *members of unions*. Even though the analysis does not differentiate between religious denominations, we see that, on average, religious affiliation in Europe diminishes the inclination to vote for populists, the feelings of resentment toward democracy, and the feelings of being culturally and economically threatened by immigrants.

For the mediation effect found in Table 2 to have a causal interpretation, sequential ignorability must hold. In the context of the analysis in Table 2, it means, first, that *household income* is not affected by the *threat-resentment index* or *support for populist parties*, given the controls. This condition would be violated if, for instance, a persons' household was determined

Table 2. Effect of income on vote for right-wing populist parties through its effect on resentment and perceptions of cultural and economic threat.

	Threat/resentment index (TRI)		Dissatisfaction index (DI)		Social distrust index (SDI)		Distrust in institutions index (DII)	
	First Stage	Second Stage	First Stage	Second Stage	First Stage	Second Stage	First Stage	Second Stage
Income	–109 (–0.1157, –0.1024)	–0.0678 (–0.0979, –0.0377)	–0.1405 (–0.1466, –0.1344)	–0.0625 (–0.092, –0.033)	–0.0939 (–0.1003, –0.0875)	–0.1167 (–0.1454, –0.0879)	–0.0936 (–0.1, –0.0873)	–0.0966 (–0.1258, –0.0674)
TRI		0.7739 (0.7423, 0.8055)						
DI				0.5815 (0.5482, 0.6148)				
SDI						0.3335 (0.3029, 0.3641)		
DII								0.5451 (0.513, 0.5771)
Ideology	0.1145 (0.1085, 0.1205)	752 (0.723, 0.7809)	–0.1145 (–0.1199, –0.109)	0.8786 (0.8496, 0.9075)	0.0249 (0.0192, 0.0306)	0.8098 (0.7818, 0.8378)	–24 (–0.0296, –0.0183)	0.8404 (0.8119, 0.8689)
Age	–0.0022 (–0.0091, 0.0046)	–0.1629 (–0.1932, –0.1326)	–0.0039 (–0.0102, 0.0023)	–0.1753 (–0.2051, –0.1455)	–0.0461 (–0.0527, –0.0396)	–158 (–0.1871, –0.1289)	0.0115 (0.005, 0.0181)	–0.1804 (–0.21, –0.1508)
Education	–0.2106 (–0.2171, –0.2042)	–0.2535 (–0.2842, –0.2228)	–0.0585 (–0.0644, –0.0526)	–0.3563 (–0.3858, –0.3269)	–0.0993 (–0.1055, –0.0931)	–0.3599 (–0.389, –0.3308)	–0.0973 (–0.1034, –0.0912)	–0.3437 (–0.3732, –0.3142)
Female	0.0278 (0.0157, 0.0399)	–0.2817 (–0.3361, –0.2274)	0.0431 (0.0321, 0.0542)	–0.2763 (–0.3296, –0.223)	–0.0695 (–0.0811, –0.0579)	–0.2268 (–0.2792, –0.1744)	0.03 (0.0185, 0.0415)	–0.2572 (–0.3103, –0.2042)
Unemployed	0.0785 (0.044, 0.1129)	0.0286 (–0.1207, 0.1778)	0.2727 (0.2413, 0.3041)	–0.0714 (–0.2172, 0.0744)	0.1399 (0.107, 0.1728)	0.0359 (–0.1073, 0.1791)	0.1108 (0.0782, 0.1435)	52 (–0.0925, 0.1965)
Religion	–0.0258 (–0.0387, –0.0129)	–0.2254 (–0.2836, –0.1671)	–113 (–0.1248, –0.1012)	–174 (–0.2311, –0.1169)	–0.0252 (–0.0376, –0.0128)	–0.2292 (–0.2853, –0.1732)	–0.1336 (–0.1459, –0.1214)	–0.1702 (–0.2271, –0.1134)
Union	0.0359 (0.0219, 0.0498)	0.1252 (0.0628, 0.1876)	0.0662 (0.0535, 0.079)	0.1151 (0.0541, 0.1761)	0.0113 (–0.002, 0.0246)	0.1467 (0.0868, 0.2066)	0.0287 (0.0154, 0.0419)	0.1364 (0.0757, 0.1971)
ACME		–0.0058 (–0.0073, –0.0045)		–0.0059 (–0.0074, –0.0045)		–0.0023 (–0.003, –0.0018)		–0.0037 (–0.0046, –0.0028)
ADE		–0.0047 (–0.0071, –0.0024)		–0.0045 (–0.0071, –0.0023)		–0.0086 (–0.0118, –0.0061)		–0.0069 (–0.0096, –0.0046)
Proportion Mediated		0.553 (0.4602, 0.7064)		0.5657 (0.4681, 0.7048)		0.2124 (0.171, 0.2657)		0.3473 (0.2825, 0.4378)
RE (Ctr+Year)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Adj./Pseudo R2	0.2626	0.5206	0.3645	0.4975	0.2344	0.4931	0.2911	0.5046

by their attitudes toward immigrants or populist parties, which seems implausible. Another possibility is that there are unobserved confounders affecting both *income* and *resentment-threat perceptions*. Macro-level factors, such as *economic shock*, *unemployment rate*, and *influx of immigrants* can work as confounders in this case. Second, another identification condition is that *vote for populist parties* and *resentment-threat perceptions* are independent, given *income* and the other covariates. As before, this condition could be violated if people become resentful and feel threatened, because they would potentially vote for the populist party under some economic conditions and subjective states, which again seems implausible. But it could be the case if the parties inculcate resentment and feelings of insecurity that would not exist otherwise. Another possibility is that there are omitted factors causing both *vote for populist parties* and *resentment-threat perception*, such as macro-level *import economic shocks* (Hays et al., 2019). To deal with this possibility, we repeat the analysis of Table 2 for 2016 only, due to data availability, and include variables capturing those macro-level factors.

Table A2 in the Supplementary File shows the results of the analysis after controlling for macro-level variables measured at the NUTS 1 level as in Hays et al. (2019). The controls include *economic growth rate*, *region* and *countries' population*, *region population density*, *region's unemployment rate* in the current year, as well as 1 and 5 years ago, *trade balance*, *inflow of immigrants*, and *trade-induced import shock*. *Inflow of immigrants* is the change in the ratio of immigrants at the NUTS 2 level from 2001 to 2011. For details of the other variables see Hays et al. (2019). Table A2 also shows the proper test for the hypothesis that *resentment-threat* mediates the effect of *household income* on *support for populist parties*, depicted in the diagram of Figure 1. All results presented on the second and third columns of Table 2 hold when regional controls are included. The effect of *resentment-threat* is larger on *populist votes* than in all models of Table 2. When we take into account regional factors, 41.1% of the effect of *household income* on *populist support* is mediated by its effect on *resentment* and *perceptions that immigrants pose an economic and cultural threat to the country*. The confidence interval ranges from 28% to 70%. Even in the lower end of the interval, the mediated effect is large.

5. Final Discussion

Support for right-wing populist parties has grown in various European countries in the last decades (Rooduijn et al., 2019). From a normative perspective, on the supply side this can be a reason for concern to the extent that right-wing populists represent a threat to democratic institutions. They represent a threat for a few reasons. First, their discourse depicts the political institutions and democratic procedures, such as general elections, as dysfunctional, corrupted, and manipulated by self-serving mainstream parties. The solution right-wing populists propose are not through a democratic process and institutional remedies, but through an elected outsider leader who represents the voice of "the people" against the old and corrupted political elite. Second, they often use otherizing tactics to picture some social groups as a threat to the "good people," denying voice and political rights to minorities and some social groups. So, anyone opposing those ideas are accused to be "against the good people's interest." Third, these leaders often appropriate the meaning of nationalism and equate it with their political agenda. Hence, anyone against their positions is accused to be against the "homeland." Finally, right-wing populists often try to undermine free press by accusing them of promoting fake news. Although the intensity of these supply-side features of right-wing populist parties vary by country, many are common to one degree or another across borders, in particular the opposition of "the people" against the political elite and established institutions. Despite of that variation, right-wing parties can represent a threat, in sum, by disregarding the democratic institutions and their rituals, denying political voice to social groups, appropriating the meaning of nationalism, and trying to undermine free press.

The question is why and how these parties find support for their ideas among the electorate. On the demand side of right-wing populist politics, this article provided evidence of a mediating mechanism connecting families' economic conditions, captured empirically using families' income, and vote for right-wing populists. On average, across European countries, families' economic situations affect populism because as their financial security declines, people are more likely to resent the way democracy works and perceive immigrants as an economic and cultural threat to the country. As resentment and perception of threat increases, the chances to vote for right-wing populists also increases.

The analysis conducted here has some limitations but also points to some opportunities for extensions and future research. One limitation is how the article operationalizes families' economic conditions, using family-level income in deciles. The distinction is between theoretical and empirical concepts. The analyses use family income as a proxy for economic conditions. This is a restriction imposed by the available data, because family income in deciles is promptly available in the ESS. But there is no reason for restricting the theoretical discussion due to the limitations imposed by available proxies. Others may operationalize that concept of family economic conditions differently and provide additional evidence for or against the argument. Along those lines, possible extensions involve expanding the set of concrete circumstances that can affect perceptions and emotions that mediate the effect of those circumstances on support for right-wing parties, such as schooling or race. Other extensions can include other mediators. Authors have shown, for instance, that anger affects support for right-wing populism (Mayer & Nguyen, 2021). Others

show that low-income groups tend to perceive that the government is unresponsive (Droste, 2021), which can reinforce the findings presented here.

Another limitation is that the analyses in the article use only observational data. The article adopted as part of its identification strategy an aggregated index constructed from mutually causal related mediators, but future research can further investigate the theoretical argument to leverage causal interpretations using other identification strategies, such as experimental designs. Finally, the focus of this article is on the vote for right-wing populists, but next steps involve investigating whether similar mechanisms can explain support for left-wing populist parties and, if not, how they differ and why.

These results suggests that if right-wing populism were a threat to democracy, that threat will be echoed and supported by public opinion to the extent that perceptions of threat and resentment increases and are fueled by a decline in families' economic conditions. Hence, to attenuate the public anti-attitudes (anti-immigrants, anti-democratic institutions, anti-parties, anti-minority groups) that can lead to unjustifiable discrimination against some social groups and threaten democratic institutions and inclusiveness, one can act directly at the cognitive and affective levels and try to assuage resentment and persuade people that other groups are not a threat. But because real economic conditions at the family-level fuel those perceptions and feelings, that strategy may not be sufficient. It will work more effectively if accompanied by measures to mitigate concrete conditions that can lead families to economic hardship.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

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Article

Feeling Left Behind by Political Decisionmakers: Anti-Establishment Sentiment in Contemporary Democracies

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Abstract
According to much of the extant literature, feelings and beliefs among many citizens of being left behind and unheard by unresponsive political decisionmakers, who lack moral integrity represent the epicenter of recent protest and populist discontent in democratic society. Based on survey data for 20 contemporary democracies from two ISSP waves, we found that anti-establishment attitudes are not shared among the majority of respondents. Although there are differences between country contexts. Such sentiment is associated with macrostructural dynamics, since unfavorable attitudes toward politicians are more widespread among publics in countries which are exposed to higher levels of public corruption and witnessed increasing levels of income inequality. Besides, such sentiment is also restricted to particular social groups of society, because hostile feelings toward political decisionmakers are stronger among citizens in the lower ranks of society and among younger birth cohorts. Since the beginning of the century and throughout the Great Recession, unfavorable attitudes toward politicians have not increased among the public in advanced democracies. However, our analysis indicates that respondents with such attitudes have increasingly turned toward voting for anti-elite parties to raise their voice and now make use of online options to express their political views more frequently than in the past. Overall, the analysis contributes to recent research on populist and reactionist dynamics in contemporary democracies by addressing dynamics and structures of the feeling of being left behind by political decisionmakers and its implications for political (in)activity.

Keywords
anti-elitism; anti-establishment sentiment; democratic discontent; ISSP; political participation; populist attitudes

Issue
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1. Introduction

As Mair (2013, p. 19) observes: "The political class has become a matter of contention." Nowadays, democracies all over the world seem to be confronted with the phenomenon of a widening gap between citizens and their elected representatives. Discourses and worldviews which pit "ordinary people" against "self-serving" and "morally corrupted" elites in a stylized friend–foe dichotomy, have recently gained salience. Many observers emphasize not only a withdrawal of citizens from conventional political life, but also increasing contempt for political elites. Next to rising levels of voting abstention, the decline of established political parties and an overall erosion of "politics as usual," we are witnessing two other trends: the rise of populist parties and the rise of popular protest movements. According to much of the literature, such parties and movements appeal to people who are discontented with the political mainstream, who may share the feeling of being unrepresented by political authorities and disconnected from official decisionmakers. Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017, p. 51) note: "Populist political parties use populism to challenge the establishment and to give voice to groups that feel unrepresented."

While research has engaged in studying the changing role of political parties for voters, citizens' political apathy and the sympathizers of populist move-

ments, we know far less about how citizens' feelings and attitudes toward political elites look like, how they vary socially and how they shape political behavior. A look at the extant literature elucidates that structures, variations, and implications of such an anti-establishment sentiment in contemporary democracy needs further research.

Anti-establishment sentiment is a phrase borrowed from the everyday language of politics (in private talk or media coverage) and is typically adopted in scientific articles without any clear definition as an ad hoc semantic. Anti-establishment sentiment as a political attitude is conceptualized here as a component of populist attitudes. So-called populist attitudes are commonly perceived as a multidimensional and morality-based construct comprising (1) anti-establishment attitudes next to (2) a Manichean outlook on society and (3) belief in popular sovereignty (Akkerman et al., 2014; Mudde, 2004). While anti-establishment sentiment can generally refer to a conglomerate of very different groups of political, economic, intellectual, and cultural elites, we are only interested in discontent with political elites. In the literature on populist attitudes, anti-establishment attitudes are indeed typically equated with negative attitudes toward the political establishment. Thus, when we speak of anti-establishment sentiment or anti-establishment attitudes, we do this with reference to political elites. If we define attitudes as a "psychological tendency, expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree or favor or disfavor" (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 1), anti-establishment attitudes are negative and unfavorable evaluations of political representatives. To be more specific, anti-establishment attitudes are a set of "feelings of marginalization" (Oliver & Rahn, 2016) relative to political power and beliefs of being unheard and unrepresented by political elites who are perceived as morally corrupt, self-serving, and who are depriving voters of their legitimate voice. Hence, on the one hand, the concept comprises feelings of external political efficacy which refer to more generalized and affectively charged beliefs about politicians' responsiveness to citizens' demands (Niemi et al., 1991). On the other hand, it refers to beliefs that politicians lack moral integrity (Akkerman et al., 2014). In public opinion literature, anti-establishment orientations have been for long examined under the rubrics of political cynicism (Agger et al., 1961; Rooduijn et al., 2017), political efficacy (Niemi et al., 1991), political trust (Citrin & Stocker, 2018) or political support (Easton, 1975). More recently, attitudes toward the political establishment have been included in concepts, such as political disaffection (Torcal & Montero, 2006) and populist attitudes (Akkerman et al., 2014; Kaltwasser & Van Hauwaert, 2020). Although "anti-establishmentness" is not an exclusive feature of populist attitudes, the view that political elites are self-serving, morally corrupt and disinterested in the "average man" is at the heart of populism (Mudde, 2004).

Surprisingly, previous research has either explored anti-establishment attitudes as a component of a broader concept, as in the cases of populist attitudes and political cynicism, or it has been operationalized via one single indicator, namely trust in politicians (Noordzij et al., 2019). The analysis based on data from the General Social Survey (GSS), offered by Rahn (2019), represents a notable exception in dealing with so-called anti-elite attitudes in the United States and their effect on voting for Donald Trump. However, it should be noted that Rahn herself did not provide any definition of her concept of anti-elite attitudes.

Against this backdrop, extent and social basis of anti-establishment sentiment still remain a lacuna—particularly when it comes to cross-country research. Besides, whereas anti-elitism and trust in politicians have been studied as predictors of populist voting (Rooduijn, 2018) or protest behavior (Grasso et al., 2019; van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013), it remains unclear whether hostility toward political elites became over time more important for participation in political life or not. Therefore, this article intends to find out (1) how widespread anti-establishment attitudes are among the electorate, (2) who feels left behind by political decisionmakers, (3) how anti-establishment attitudes are linked to macrostructural dynamics, and (4) whether those who feel left behind by political authorities have become politically more active than before by raising their voice in elections, on the web or in the streets. The analysis of hostile attitudes toward politicians is relevant for finer-granulated research on populist mindsets, reactionary attitudes, and convictions of (non-)voters and protesters. This is in particular the case, since beliefs of being unheard by political decisionmakers can give rise to affects like resentment and can constitute a part of *ressentiment* that guides political action in populist times (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018; Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018; Salmela & Capelos, 2021; Salmela & von Scheve, 2017).

2. Anti-Establishment Attitudes: Prevalence, Social Correlates, and Political Repercussions

The rising success of populist parties in elections across the world suggests that hostile feelings toward political decisionmakers are generally widespread among voters. Populist parties characteristically draw on a rhetoric that emphasizes the distance and estrangement between ordinary citizens and the political establishment. Also, prominent protest movements which have formed since the global financial crisis of 2008 in various national contexts hint at widespread discontent with the "political class," as such movements typically confront established parties and politicians with ignored demands from below. Next to such empirical reasons for proposing the virulence of anti-establishment attitudes, there are theoretical accounts. Mudde's (2004) diagnosis of a "populist zeitgeist" suggests that today populist discourse has become a mainstream phenomenon in politics in

advanced democracies. The outrage over established political representatives represents a central part of such a populist zeitgeist. Inglehart (1977) takes on another perspective according to which postmodern societies witnessed a "cognitive mobilization" throughout the last decades, meaning that societal modernization triggered critical views toward political authorities (see also Dalton & Welzel, 2014). Such a view is echoed in more recent accounts which postulate the "deconsolidation" (Foa & Mounk, 2017) or even the "end" (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018) of democracy in face of decreasing levels of support for democratic institutions. Against this backdrop, we expect that anti-establishment attitudes should be relatively widespread among the public ("anti-establishment zeitgeist" thesis).

Recent discussions on political discontent suggest two popular individual-level explanations for the prevalence of anti-establishment sentiment: socio-economic status and generational change. First, a growing body of research confirms that parties and governments respond unequally to different social status groups. For the United States, Gilens (2012) documents selective responsiveness on the part of political decisionmakers, in favor of affluent citizens. He finds that political decisions only reflect lower status citizens' opinions if these coincide with the preferences and opinions of affluent citizens. Low and even middle-income groups seem to have no political influence once their preferences diverge from those of top income groups. Studies on European countries corroborate these findings (Elsässer et al., 2020; Schakel, 2019). Explanations for this phenomenon vary from interest-group lobbying (Gilens, 2012) to political participation (Gallego, 2014) or descriptive representation (Bovens & Wille, 2017). As studies on perceived responsiveness demonstrate, actual responsiveness is indeed mirrored in perceived responsiveness. In a recent comparative analysis, Lindh and McCall (2020) show that in nearly all countries under analysis workers perceive the government as less responsive than members of the middle and upper classes. As a consequence, it is supposed that perceived unresponsiveness gives birth to anti-establishment attitudes, as a rational and an emotional reaction. Second, there is support for the idea that a generational change is afoot and is the influence of shrinking support for democratic values and decreasing institutional trust in Western democracies (Dalton, 2004, 2005). As research shows, the young tend to be less trusting of government and are less invested in democracy than their elder counterparts (Citrin & Stocker, 2018; Foa & Mounk, 2017). Whereas this is interpreted as a form of emancipation and the emergence of more "critical" or more "assertive" citizens by some authors (Dalton & Welzel, 2014; see Inglehart, 1977), others claim that generational change is bringing about democratic deconsolidation (Foa & Mounk, 2017). In face of existing accounts on unequal responsiveness and assertive citizens, we expect that lower classes ("unresponsiveness" thesis) and younger birth cohorts ("critical citizens" thesis) should exhibit stronger anti-establishment attitudes.

In addition to individual-level variation, perceptions of political elites likely are conditioned by national contexts and macrostructural processes. However, most of the extant literature on political discontent has either dealt with investigations at the individual *or* the aggregate level. As a consequence, multilevel designs remain largely absent. Furthermore, while previous research on the contextual determinants of democratic discontent has relied on cross-sectional evidence and between country effects, dynamics in contextual factors are often overlooked. Although the literature on political discontent has uncovered a broader set of macrostructural explanations, we will focus on three popular accounts: economic inequality, public corruption, and economic affluence.

Economic affluence and socio-economic conditions are likely to shape popular perceptions of the functioning of democratic institutions and their legitimacy in general and therefore provide a fertile terrain for democratic consolidation (Inglehart, 1977; "affluence" thesis). However, it is also reasonable that it is not economic affluence as such but rather the distribution of economic affluence that matters for feelings and attitudes toward democratic institutions and its personnel (Anderson & Singer, 2008; Schäfer, 2012). According to the Schattschneider's (1960) hypothesis, those with more economic resources are able to eliminate policy alternatives from the political agenda beneficial to the lower and middle classes. As a consequence, those in the lower and middle classes will begin to believe that political decisionmakers are no longer responsive to their political interests ("inequality" thesis). In addition to economic affluence and its distribution, anti-establishment sentiment is likely to be rooted in objective misconduct of politicians and whether political authorities play by the rules. A study by Anderson and Tverdova (2003) indicates that trust in government is negatively related to the actual level of corruption. Consequently, we expect that anti-establishment attitudes should be enhanced through actually observable missing integrity of political decisionmakers ("objective misconduct" thesis).

Have those who feel unrepresented by political decisionmakers become politically more or less active over time? On the one hand, anti-establishment attitudes make up a sentiment that potentially inspires political engagement. According to literature on populist voting, discontented citizens experience political fulfillment through voting for a party that voices their discontent, regardless of whether discontents are "expressed" or (also) "fueled" (Rooduijn et al., 2016). Indeed, populist voting seems to be driven in large parts by political disaffection and perceived unresponsiveness (Ferrari, 2021; Rooduijn, 2018). Participation in unconventional forms of political protest is also more likely for citizens who have lost faith in politicians and public officials (Gallego, 2014; Grasso et al., 2019; van Stekelenburg

& Klandermans, 2013). While earlier research on political action has addressed protest activities such as non-voting or taking part in demonstrations, more recent accounts additionally emphasize positing political opinions online on the web (Rensmann, 2017; Zukin et al., 2006) and voting for outsider or challenger parties (Inglehart & Norris, 2019). Citizens may choose "voice" (as in voting for so-called anti-elite parties or joining protests) to express their discontent. This "voice" option might be based on pure protest motives and on perceptions of responsiveness because populist parties and candidates often politicize issues which were previously not debated. Unfavorable perceptions of political elites are embedded in emotional states of anger (Rico et al., 2017), resentment, and *ressentiment* (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018; Salmela & Capelos, 2021; Salmela & von Scheve, 2017). In particularly, anger and resentment have previously been found to boost political action (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018). Anti-establishment attitudes are also of moralized character because political elites are perceived as self-serving and morally corrupt. Since previous research reveals that morality increases the motivation to become politically active (Skitka & Bauman, 2008), a morality-based rejection of political decisionmakers might create a legitimized justification for personal engagement. As Anduiza et al. (2019) show, political attitudes which comprise an anti-elitism component tend to have a positive effect on political engagement. On the other hand, anti-establishment attitudes might make citizens choose "exit" (as in abstention) and thereby spur withdrawal from political life. As a study by Capelos and Demertzis (2018) shows, political discontent as manifested in *ressentiment* can lead to so-called "dormant support" if it combines with perception of self-efficacy. Thus, such a withdrawal may either be performed as a form of "meaningful political agency" (Kemmers, 2017, p. 391) or simply as a consequence of missing viable "voice" options, i.e., opportunity structures for articulating political discontent. However, throughout the last two decades viable "voice" options have increased in contemporary democracies. Either in the form of the rise of populist challenger parties (Inglehart & Norris, 2019), the spread of protest movements (Grasso et al., 2019), or the increasing role of social media and digital publics (Rensmann, 2017). According to the literature, the success of populist anti-elite parties and movements appears to be fueled by the mobilization of politically alienated citizens who have a strong propensity to support populist actors, because their populist discourse articulates citizens' discontent with the political mainstream (Gidron & Hall, 2020; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017; Rooduijn et al., 2016, 2017). Via options to visibly articulate discontent, populist movements and parties are able to mobilize excluded segments of society which have previously felt unrepresented and left behind by the established political personnel. In face of populist parties' electoral wins since the Great Recession, the rise of new street protest movements and the emergence of an angry political web culture, we expect that increased "voice" opportunities have strongly gathered support among citizens who feel left behind and betrayed by political decisionmakers ("increasing engagement" thesis).

3. Data and Methods

3.1. Data

We use data from the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) for our analysis. In 2004 (field period: 2003–2006) and 2014 (field period: 2013–2016), the ISSP contained a "citizenship" module, which asked respondents about their attitudes and feelings toward politicians (ISSP Research Group, 2012, 2016). For the analysis, the number of countries decreases to 20 because some countries did not participate in both waves and for others important items are missing. The final dataset is therefore a panel study on the country-level, but with different individuals in each wave. It covers a set of developed democracies: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Finland, France, Israel, Japan, South Korea, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United States.

3.2. Variables and Analytical Design

In a first step, we explore anti-establishment attitudes and how differences therein can be explained. We operationalize anti-establishment attitudes on the basis of five items which tap into citizens' attitudes toward political decisionmakers (see Table A1 in the Supplementary File for exact wordings). The items indicate (1) to what extent respondents think that the government does not care much about ordinary people, (2) to what extent respondents think that politicians cannot be trusted, (3) to what extent respondents think that politicians are only self-serving, (4) to what extent respondents think that government officials are committed to serve the people, and (5) whether respondents think corruption is widespread among government officials. Following Rahn (2019), we recode the items and construct a scale with a 0–1 range with higher values indicating more hostile feelings and attitudes toward political elites (cross-country Cronbach's Alphas reach 0.71 and 0.74 respectively).

The investigation into anti-establishment attitudes relies on a multilevel hybrid model that nests people in years, which are in turn nested in countries. This approach uses individual-level data and allows the decomposition of country-level effects into a "between" (cross-sectional) and a "within" (longitudinal) components, while simultaneously controlling for compositional effects from the individual level (Fairbrother, 2014).

In a second step, we analyze whether anti-establishment attitudes correlated with different forms of political participation and how this has changed over

time. We choose to distinguish between rather "conventional" forms of political action including (1) abstaining from voting and (2) voting for an anti-elite party next to so-called "unconventional" political action in form of (3) taking part in demonstrations and street protests and (4) expressing political views on the internet (on such a distinction see, e.g., Barnes & Kaase, 1979; Capelos & Demertzis, 2018). Taking part in demonstrations, expressing political views on the internet and abstain from voting are coded as dummy variables with a value of 1 (otherwise 0) if respondents have participated in a demonstration, or have posted something political on the internet in the past year, or did not vote in the country's last national election. By anti-elite parties we mean parties which Abedi (2004) defines as "anti-political-establishment parties" and which (1) perceive themselves as challengers to the parties that make up the political establishment, (2) emphasize a fundamental divide between the political establishment and the people, and (3) challenge the status quo in terms of major political issues. Against this backdrop, we operationalize voting for an anti-elite party by relying on an indicator derived from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) which measures the salience of anti-elite rhetoric for political parties based on expert rankings (Bakker et al., 2020). The salience score ranges from 0 (low) to 10 (high). Unfortunately, the measure is only available for a set of European countries, this restricts our analysis on voting decisions to a number of 12 European countries. Therefore, we refrain from multilevel modelling in the analysis of political participation and rely on simple regression models with country and time fixed effects.

We operationalize objective social status via a respondent's location within the labor market with the class schema based on Oesch (2013). Such a categorization leads to an eight-class schema which distinguishes between: (1) managers, (2) sociocultural professionals, (3) technical specialists, (4) large employers, (5) small business owners, (6) clerks, (7) production workers, and (8) service workers. For the analysis, we slightly diverge from the original schema and pooled managers and large employers so that we use a seven-class schema. We measure generational differences by distinguishing between 5 birth cohorts (1925–1940: inter war generation, 1940–1955: 68ers, 1955–1970: babyboomers, 1970–1985: generation X, 1985–2000: generation Y).

As controls, we use subjective social status, measured by a question asking respondents to place themselves on a 10-point social ladder reflecting their position in society. For the highest schoolleaving certification, we make use of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) and create four categories: (1) low (no formal qualification/lower secondary education), (2) medium (middle secondary education), (3) higher medium (higher secondary education), and (4) high (tertiary education/university degree). Respondents' interest in politics is measured on a 4-point disapproval scale, whereas respondents' self-perceived political understanding is reported on a 4-point approval scale. A variable covering the political self-placement on a left-right scale has only been asked in the second wave of the ISSP citizenship module (2013–2016) so that we have to exclude this item from our analysis. The models also control for family income and the number of persons living in the household. Because the ISSP includes family income in country specific values, each income value is standardized relative to the country's mean income. We also control for gender (dummy variable: male/female) and region (dummy variable: urban/rural).

In the multilevel analysis, we consider three explanatory factors on the country level: economic inequality, national economic affluence, and the level of public corruption. Inequality is operationalized by the Gini index, which measures the extent to which the distribution of income among individuals or households deviates from a perfectly equal distribution (SWIID, 2021). It can range from 0 (perfect equality) to 100 (perfect inequality). Affluence is measured by GDP per capita (PPP, in $1,000 US; OECD, 2021). As a measure for corruption, we rely on the CPI (Corruption Perception Index) which ranks countries based on how corrupt their public sector is perceived by experts (Transparency International, 2021). Note that the CPI ranges in value from 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (absolutely clean from corruption). The selected indicators always refer to the year before the ISSP fieldwork year.

4. Findings

How widespread are negative attitudes toward political decisionmakers in contemporary democracies? Visual inspection of the distribution of the scale of anti-establishment attitudes shows it to be normally distributed. In both survey waves, around 16% of the respondents express strong anti-establishment attitudes, as indicated by values in the highest quartile on the scale (Figure 1). However, nearly 80% of all respondents are grouped in both quartiles in the middle of the scale. This indicates that contemporary democracies are neither polarized by negative feelings toward politicians, nor can we speak of widespread anti-establishment sentiment which manifests itself in an "anti-establishment zeitgeist." The results are not indicative of a so-called "silent majority," which is marked by strong feelings of political discontent. Our findings align with empirical research (van Ham et al., 2017) that does not offer backup for the diagnosis of "democratic deconsolidation" in advanced democracies, since the great majority still supports democratic norms and institutions.

As the literature on democratic support indicates, there are cross-country differences in legitimacy beliefs, trust levels and sentiments (Martini & Quaranta, 2020). This is confirmed by our findings on anti-establishment sentiment. Figure 2 shows the prevalence and temporal development of anti-establishment sentiment among the 20 democracies, as measured using our

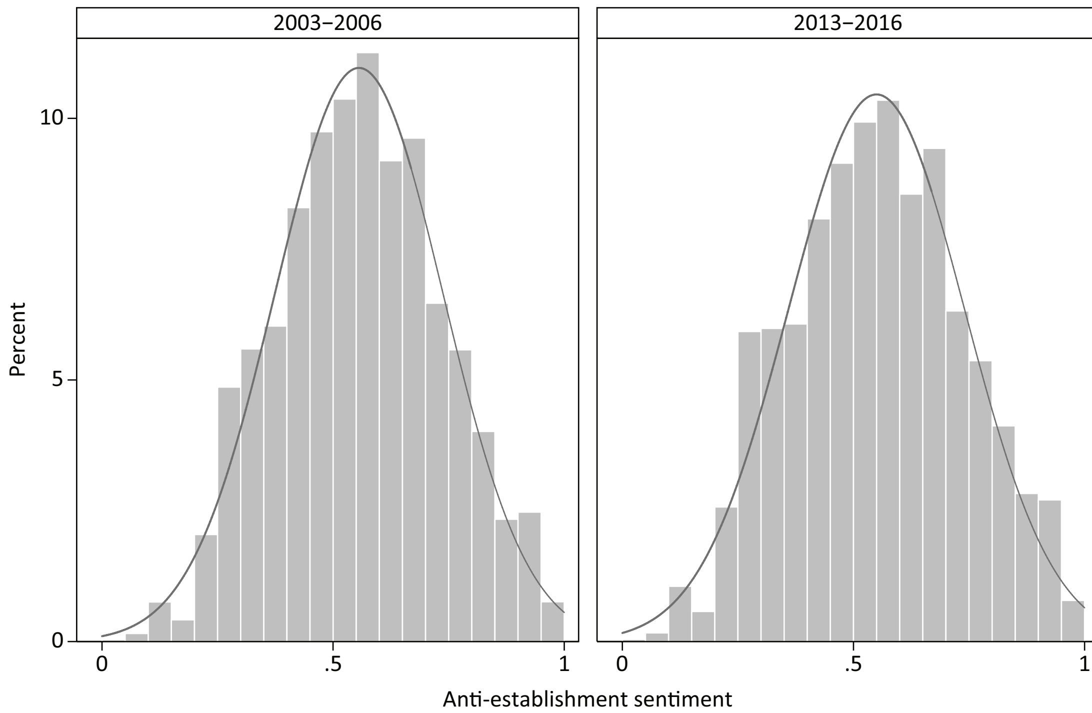

Figure 1. Distribution of anti-establishment attitudes. Source: ISSP Research Group (2012, 2016, weighted).

anti-establishment attitudes scale. Whereas average anti-establishment attitudes remained relatively stable in some cases (Finland, Australia, Austria, Czech Republic) or strongly decreased in some (Norway, Germany, Sweden), it strongly increased in others (United States, Spain, Slovenia). However, the overall means for both survey waves are nearly identical (0.556 for wave 1 and 0.552 for wave 2). Although

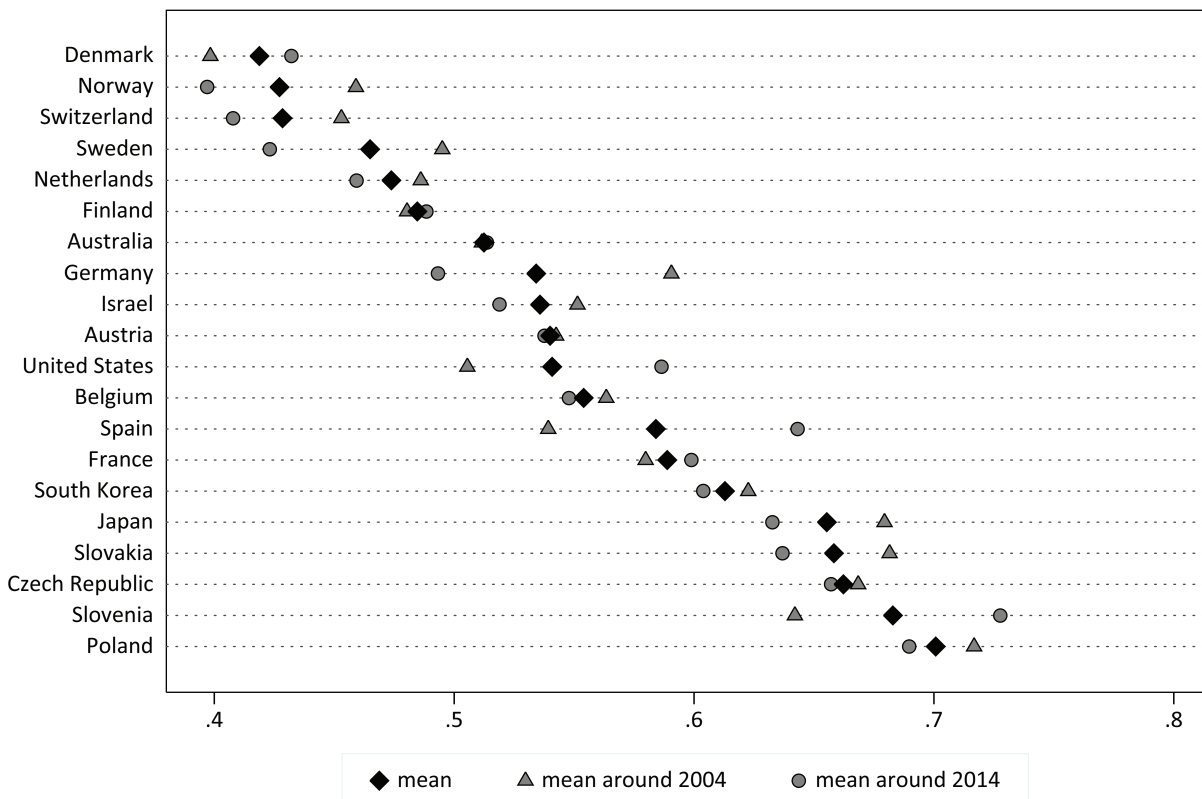

Figure 2. Mean values of anti-establishment attitudes, by wave and country. Source: ISSP Research Group (2012, 2016, weighted).

there are some fluctuations at the country-level, anti-establishment attitudes have neither increased uniformly among publics nor have they exploded since the beginning of the century and throughout the years of the Great Recession.

How is anti-establishment sentiment distributed among different social groups, and which contextual conditions favor beliefs that the political personnel is alienated from their voters? The coefficient plots in Figure 3 and 4 show results from hierarchical linear multilevel regressions which nest individuals (N = 33,246; level 1) in 40 country-years (level 2), which are nested in 20 countries (level 3; for detailed information see Table A2 in the Supplementary File). The intraclass coefficient in the empty model (Model 0) indicates that most of the variance in anti-establishment sentiment is located at the individual level. However, there is also a considerable amount of variance between countries (19.9%) and between survey waves (23.5%).

At the individual level, results reveal that social class and birth cohort membership matter for anti-establishment attitudes. We can find a clear class-gradient which confirms the class-based "unresponsiveness" thesis. Anti-establishment attitudes are stronger among production workers in contrast to managers. There are also significant differences between service workers, clerks and technical professionals in contrast to the manager class, albeit to a lower degree. No significant differences in anti-establishment attitudes exist between managers and sociocultural professionals. Thus, by large and as expected from the literature, the differences between social classes in anti-establishment attitudes support the idea that actual unequal government responsiveness goes hand in hand with perceived unresponsiveness. However, such an explanation is not necessarily true. A lower status position could also give rise to complex feelings of *ressentiment* and denied social recognition which can find expression in scapegoating or assigning responsibility to external "enemies." With political decisionmakers representing only one of those "enemies" among others (see Ferrari, 2021; Salmela & von Scheve, 2017). Besides, the strong anti-establishment sentiment among self-employed as compared to managers remains in need of an explanation. This result could be interpreted as a sign of the alienation of specific parts of the middle classes from the political process, albeit we should be careful with this, because the group of the self-employed is very heterogenous. As expected above, the analysis documents statistically significant differences between birth cohorts. In contrast to the youngest birth cohort, older birth cohorts are more positive about the political personnel. There is, however, no statistically significant difference between the youngest birth cohort (1985–2000) and the cohort born between 1970 and 1985. When it comes to attitudes toward political elites, there seems to exist a generational gap which separates people born after 1970 from the ones born before.

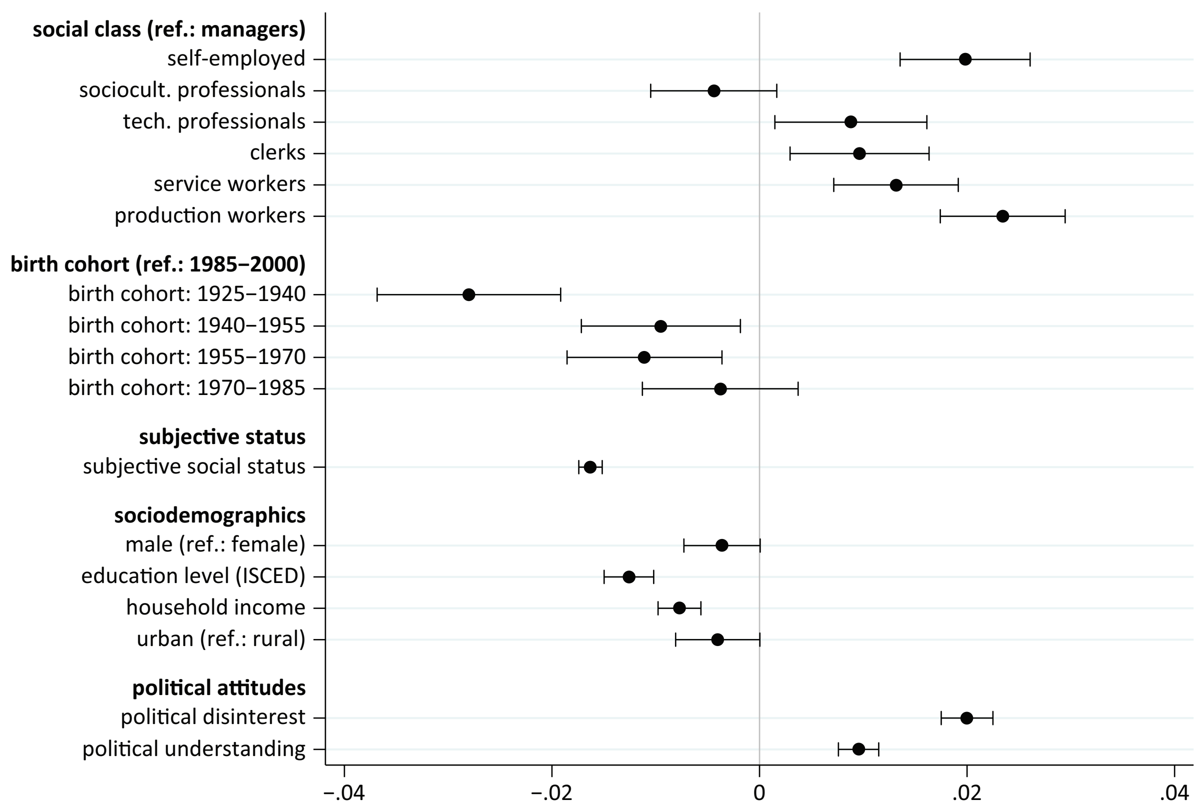

Figure 3. Coefficient plot for the individual level. Note: Point estimates and 95% confidence intervals are based on Model M2 in Table A2 in the Supplementary File. Source: ISSP Research Group (2012, 2016).

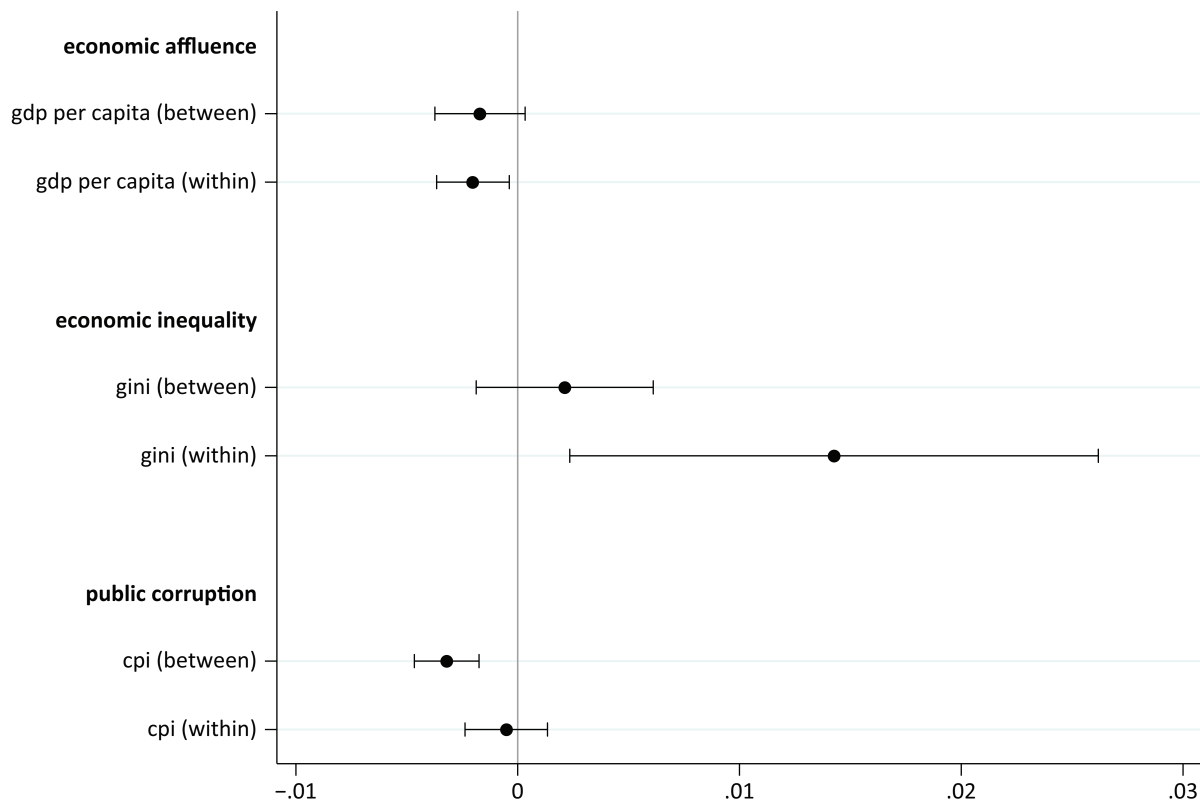

Figure 4. Coefficient plot for the contextual level. Note: Point estimates and 95% confidence intervals are based on Model M2 in Table A2 in the Supplementary File. Source: ISSP Research Group (2012, 2016).

Such findings support accounts which emphasize the rise of elite-challenging sentiments among younger generations and are congruent with the cohort-based "critical citizens" thesis (Dalton & Welzel, 2014; Foa & Mounk, 2017). Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether this is driven by value change, intergenerational social downward mobility or resentment, which is rooted in the participation within digital publics among younger generations. The control variables show that respondents feel unrepresented by political decisionmakers to a larger extent, when they place themselves in the lower ranks of the social ladder, earn less, have lower levels of education, live in rural regions, are politically disinterested, and perceive themselves as competent and knowledgeable in political issues.

At the contextual level, we find a positive and statistically significant relationship between income inequality and citizens' attitudes toward politicians. However, this relationship is driven by within-country differences, i.e., differences between survey years, whereas levels in societal income inequality between countries do not explain differences in citizens' anti-establishment sentiment. Thus, people exhibit more hostile attitudes toward politicians in those years where more inequality exists in their country than what exists during an average year (within-country effect). We also discover a negative and statistically significant association between economic affluence and citizens' perception of politicians. This relationship is also driven by within-country differences. Thus, it is more the dynamics of affluence which matter for discontent with the political establishment than its actual level. Not surprisingly then, on average, economic downturns are associated with hostile feelings toward political decisionmakers. Results further suggest that, all else equal, citizens living in a country where corruption in the public sector is widespread, have a more negative opinion of politicians compared to those living in a less corrupt society. In contrast, within country dynamics in public corruption do not matter. In other words, knowing the level of corruption in a country, relative to other countries, gives us purchase on their beliefs about the responsiveness and moral integrity of their political authorities. Knowing how corruption prevalence in a given society has changed between survey waves, however, does not help to explain citizens' anti-establishment sentiment. Thus, whereas contextual dynamics are important when it comes to inequality and affluence, levels are decisive when it comes to official misconduct by political decisionmakers. Yet, note that we have to interpret the contextual effects with caution, since the number of countries (N = 20) in the analysis is rather small.

Are anti-establishment attitudes related to active political participation, or rather to a withdrawal from political life? Due to limited space and because we are mainly interested in the association between anti-establishment attitudes and different forms of political participation, we leave other variables undiscussed.

Table 1 shows that, net of controls, respondents who score higher on the anti-establishment attitudes scale are more likely (1) to abstain from voting in national elections, (2) to take part in street protests, and (3) to post and discuss political issues on the internet. Besides, and not very surprising, (4) respondents with stronger negative feelings toward politicians also vote for parties which criticize the political elite and emphasize the aloofness of the political personnel more strongly. Therefore, anti-establishment attitudes correlate with both: active political participation and withdrawal from political life. This finding suggests that although some citizens share the same kind of attitudes toward political decisionmakers, the articulations of such attitudes are far from homogenous. Indeed, as qualitative evidence suggests, the chosen form of political action depends on citizens' power orientation which consists of the (implicit) definitions of the situation with regard to where political power is located and who the main actors who possess power are (Kemmers, 2017). Accordingly, we should be careful about speaking of "the discontented citizens," since their discontent finds different political expressions and seems to be embedded in different understandings of the concept of democracy and contradictory expectations toward political representation (Celis et al., 2021; Sullivan, 2021).

But have the associations between anti-establishment attitudes and political action perhaps changed over time? Figure 5 displays the predicted probabilities (the average of the predicted probability for all respondents in the analysis) of political participation for different levels of anti-establishment sentiment over time (see Table A3 in the Supplementary File for detailed information). Looking at all types of political activity, we see again that anti-establishment attitudes are a good predictor in all cases of political action. However, the predicted probabilities indicate that anti-establishment attitudes are a much more important predictor of voting abstention and taking part in demonstrations or street protest around 2004 compared to the years around 2014. It should be noted that the difference for voting abstention is no longer statistically significant for respondents who score very high on the anti-establishment attitudes scale. In contrast, we can observe a different pattern for online posts and voting for anti-elite parties. Around 2014, anti-establishment attitudes substantially affected

Table 1. Regression estimates of the effect of anti-establishment attitudes on types of political participation.

	M1		M2		M3		M4	
	abstain from voting in national elections		taking part in demonstrations and street protests		posting political opinions on the internet		voting for anti-elite parties	
	AME	*p*	*AME*	*p*	*AME*	*p*	*Coef.*	*p*
Anti-establishment sentiment	.137	***	.030	**	.055	***	1.975	***
Male (Reference: female)	.023	***	−.000		.009	**	.131	***
Birth cohort (reference: 1985–2000)								
Birth cohort: 1925–1940	−.187	***	−.078	***	−.127	***	−.284	***
Birth cohort: 1940–1955	−.182	***	−.052	***	−.105	***	−.218	**
Birth cohort: 1955–1970	−.134	***	−.034	***	−.078	***	−.074	
Birth cohort: 1970–1985	−.074	***	−.034	***	−.045	***	.029	
Urban	.015	**	.021	***	.009	**	−.060	
Occupation (Reference: managers)								
Self-employed	.004		−.001		.007		.068	
Sociocultural professionals	−.002		.029	***	007		.139	*
Technical professionals	−.001		.002		.005		.137	*
Clerks	.007		−.007		−.001		.123	*
Service workers	.034	***	.006		−.001		.323	***
Production workers	.032	***	.002		−.008		.273	***
Household income	−.016	***	−.002		−.002		−.102	***
Education level (ISCED)	−.013	***	.007	***	.012	***	−.034	
Subjective social status	−.008	***	−.002	*	−.001		−.038	***
Political disinterest	.057	***	−.031	***	−.043	***	−.116	***
Perceived political knowledge	−.012	***	.005	***	.010	***	.033	
wave 2 (Reference: wave 1)	−.044***		−.026***		.038***		.386***	
Country dummies	yes		yes		yes		yes	
Adj. pseudo R^2	.190		.156		.169		.196	
N	31,034		32,789		32,515		16,735	

Notes: *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05. Source: ISSP Research Group (2012, 2016).

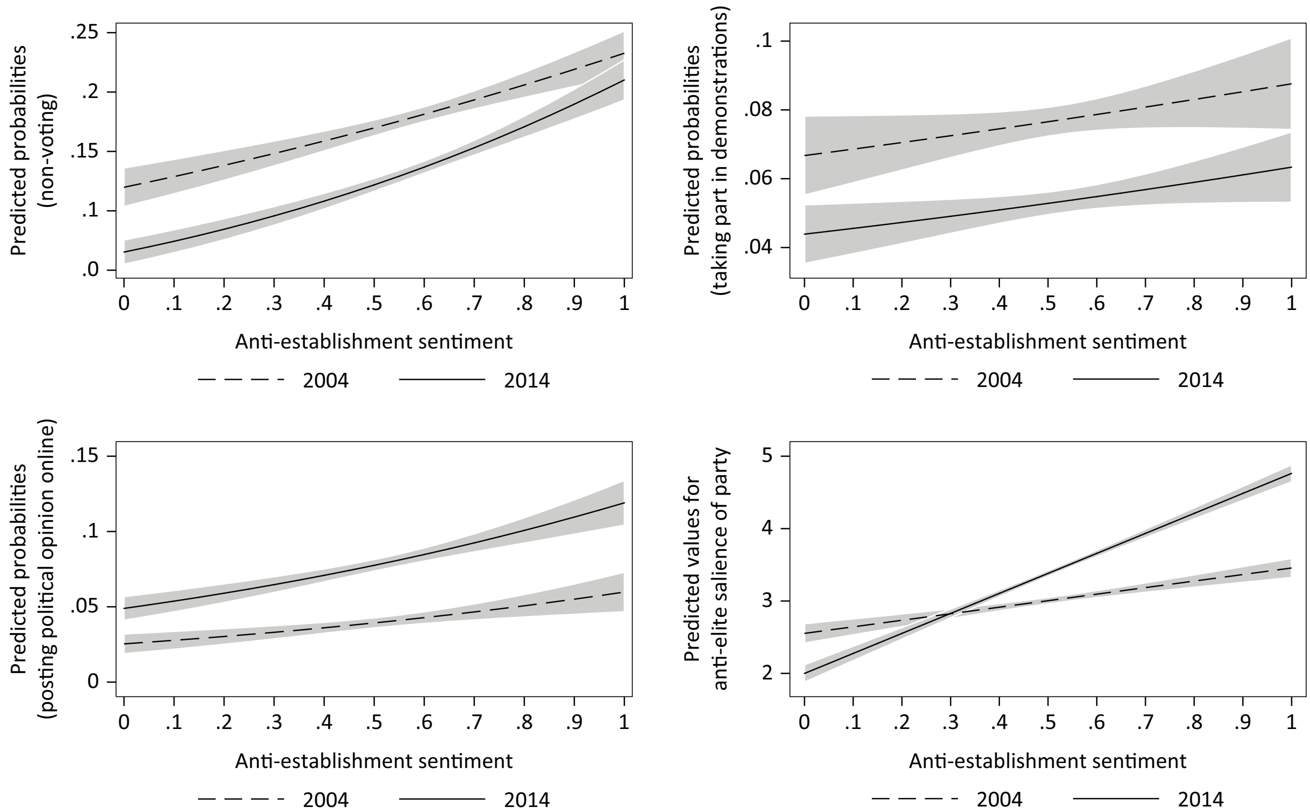

Figure 5. Predicted probabilities for anti-establishment attitudes on different types of political participation over time. Source: ISSP Research Group (2012, 2016).

the likelihood of politically motivated online activity, especially for high levels of anti-establishment attitudes, while this does not hold true for 2004. When it comes to voting for anti-elite parties, the plot in the bottom right corner of Figure 5 demonstrates the strength of the substantive effect of anti-establishment attitudes. The predicted effect sizes indicate that respondents who strongly feel left behind and unheard by political decisionmakers have increasingly turned toward anti-elite parties in national elections over time. Respondents with strong hostile feelings toward political officials vote for parties which on average score up to 2 points higher on the CHES-anti-elite salience scale in 2014 as compared to the years around 2004. All in all, thus, our "increasing engagement" thesis is only partly confirmed, since it is limited to posting political opinion online and supporting anti-elite parties. What is the main take-away of our analysis? The results of the interaction plots (Figure 5) point out that something has happened. The different effect sizes for the different waves could be interpreted as a consequence of changed opportunity structures, both at the party level (emergence of populist anti-elite parties) and the level of the political publics (social media platforms and political web culture). First, the findings demonstrate the return of politically disaffected voters to the ballot box. Over the last two decades, their feeling of being left behind by political decisionmakers has increasingly translated into support for anti-elite parties who draw on a rhetoric that emphasizes the distance between ordinary citizens and the political personnel. Second, whereas citizens who feel alienated from the political establishment still participate more often in demonstrations and street protests than others. They seem to have increasingly left the streets in favor of online "voice" options on the web.

5. Conclusion

According to much of the present literature, feelings and beliefs among many citizens of being left behind and unheard by unresponsive political decisionmakers, who lack moral integrity represent the epicenter of recent protests and discontent in democratic society. In this article, our first aim was to take a look at the prevalence of anti-establishment sentiment, i.e., negative attitudes toward political officials, and to identify which social groups are more discontented with the political elite than others as well as which social macro-contexts are associated with such sentiment. In a second step, we have focused on the consequence of discontent with politicians for political participation and explored whether citizens with more negative attitudes toward political decisionmakers have rather become politically active over time or politically apathetic.

Based on two ISSP waves for 20 contemporary democracies, we found that anti-establishment attitudes

are not as widespread among citizens as accounts on a "populist zeitgeist" or a "silent majority" would suggest. Such attitudes are associated with certain macrostructural dynamics, since anti-establishment attitudes are more widespread among publics in countries which exhibit higher levels of public corruption and witnessed increasing levels of economic inequality. At the individual level, such attitudes are restricted to particular segments of society, since hostile feelings toward political decisionmakers are stronger among citizens in the lower ranks of society and among younger birth cohorts. Although anti-establishment sentiment has not increased among the public since the beginning of the century and throughout the Great Recession, our analysis indicates that citizens with such attitudes have increasingly turned toward voting anti-elite parties to raise their voice and now make use of online "voice" options to express their political views more frequently than in the past. We have interpreted this finding as a result of changing opportunity structures and macrostructural contexts. Thus, when anti-elitist discourse succeeds in resonating with relatively stable attitudes toward political decisionmakers in the population, these attitudes can find expression in viable modes of political action whether in the form of support for political candidates or participation in movement-based protests and digital publics.

Our study is confronted by several limitations. First, our operationalization of anti-establishment sentiment which basically relies on extracting people's (latent) evaluative attitudes from self-reported answers cannot fully satisfy "anti-establishmentness" in its emotional complexity. Indeed, our operationalization leaves the affective part of anti-establishment sentiment largely unaddressed, since affective evaluations on the basis of emotions like anger, outrage, resentment, worry, frustration, powerlessness, or even hate are not included in our measure (see Capelos & Demertzis, 2018; Salmela & Capelos, 2021; Salmela & von Scheve, 2017). However, since data for such more complex measurements does not exist for cross-country comparative research, we have to rely on available datasets. Second, our study investigates anti-establishment attitudes with reference to a specific group of elites, namely established politicians. Therefore, our findings cannot be generalized to other groups of elites (e.g., media elites, intellectual elites, economic elites). Third, due to the use of a cross-sectional design, we are restricted to describing correlations and cannot really conclude on causal effects of anti-establishment attitudes.

As Dalton (2004, p. 7) states, "dissatisfaction with authorities, within a democratic system, is not usually a signal for basic political change." In his landmark work, *The Silent Revolution*, Inglehart (1977) theorizes and demonstrates the motivation driving the rise of elite-challenging action and distrust—a growing emancipatory spirit visible in changing value orientations. Similarly, Dalton and Welzel (2014) conclude that citizens have turned toward a decidedly "assertive" posture to politics: They have become more distrustful of traditional politics and are increasingly ready to confront representatives with demands from below. Today observations of a "backlash" against liberal democracy (Inglehart & Norris, 2019) or "reactionary politics" (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018) expose such earlier diagnoses as rather optimistic and hint at the socially disintegrative and regressive character of elite-challenging sentiment. Not only is such sentiment distributed unequally across social groups, it has increasingly found expression in vote choice and political online activity. Indeed, it seems that political apathy has given way to resentful activity, at least in parts.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

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Article

Post-Truth Politics, Digital Media, and the Politicization of the Global Compact for Migration

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Abstract

The debate over the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) in late 2018 showcases the crucial role of digital and, in particular, social media as vehicles of disinformation that populist actors can exploit in an effort to create resentment and fear in the public sphere. While mainstream political actors and legacy media initially did not address the issue, right-wing populist actors claimed ownership by framing (presumably *obligatory*) mass immigration as a matter of social, cultural, economic, and not least political risk, and created an image of political and cultural elites conspiring to keep the issue out of the public sphere. Initially advanced via digital and social media, such frames resonated sufficiently strongly in civil society to politicize the GCM in various national public spheres. In this article, these dynamics are explored by comparing the politicization of the GCM in three EU member states, namely Germany, Austria, and Sweden. Using a process-tracing design, the article (a) identifies the key actors in the process, (b) analyzes how the issue emerged in social and other digital media and travelled from digital media into mainstream mass media discourse, and finally (c) draws comparative conclusions from the three analyzed cases. Particular emphasis is placed on the frames used by right-wing populist actors, how these frames resonated in the wider public sphere and thereby generated communicative power against the GCM, ultimately forcing the issue onto the agenda of national public spheres and political institutions.

Keywords

communicative power; digital media; frame analysis; Global Compact for Migration; populism; public sphere

Issue

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1. Introduction

The debate over the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) in late 2018 showcases the crucial role of social and other digital media as vehicles of disinformation that populist actors can exploit in order to politicize issues by creating resentment and fear in the public sphere. Adopted at an intergovernmental conference in Marrakesh in December 2018, the GCM provides an assessment of the political issues brought about by international migration and formulates *legally non-binding* recommendations for dealing with them (cf. Newland, 2019; Pécoud, 2020). While most of the 23 objectives can be categorized as either uncontroversial (e.g., improving migration data) or merely aspirational (e.g., reducing negative drivers of migration), others were ultimately construed as much more controversial, in particular the aspect of improving opportunities for legal migration (see Newland, 2019, for a more detailed overview). Although the GCM initially did not attract much attention in EU public spheres, a number of EU member states soon began to withdraw their approval of the compact. The aim of this article is to analyze what caused this change of position and, in particular, what role mobilization and politicization processes facilitated by social media infrastructures played in these processes.

Theoretically, the case of the GCM is relevant from a number of perspectives. Against the backdrop of the theme of this thematic issue, the case draws attention

to the ways in which the far right mobilized opposition against the GCM through the use of specific frames (see also Godwin & Trischler, 2021) and resentful affect (see also Salmela & Capelos, 2021), ultimately forcing the issue onto the agenda of the wider public sphere and the political system. Against the backdrop of discussions on *post-truth politics*, the case furthermore highlights (a) the role that *inadvertent* misinformation as well as *deliberate* disinformation can play in mobilization processes in the public sphere, and (b) what impact this may have on institutional decision making. In addition, the case also offers methodologically relevant insights into the operationalization of how communicative power is generated in the public sphere: Drawing on earlier work, communicative power generation is seen to be initiated through framing processes and depends on the extent to which frames advanced, e.g., via social media resonate in the public sphere at large (Conrad & Oleart, 2020). Finally, the case highlights that such mis-/disinformation and mobilization processes would be inconceivable in the absence of social and other digital media infrastructures.

The empirical analysis highlights the causal pathways through which opposition against the GCM moved from the fringes of the political spectrum via social/digital media into the wider public sphere and ultimately into the institutions of the political system. This process is analyzed through a comparative case study with a process-tracing design (Beach & Brun Pedersen, 2013). The study analyzes three cases of countries where the debate on the GCM, though ultimately short-lived, was particularly contentious: Germany, Austria, and Sweden. These are illustrative cases, chosen primarily for the purpose of demonstrating how far-right actors have used social and other digital media to cause outrage about the GCM, what impact this has had on broader public debate and what responses it ultimately elicited from institutional actors within the political system.

Following this short introduction, the next section presents the article's theoretical argument on post-truth politics, digital media and right-wing mobilization against the GCM. Section 3 presents the analytical framework, while Section 4 presents the empirical analysis. The article ends with a concluding discussion in Section 5.

2. Post-Truth Politics, Digital Media, and Right-Wing Mobilization Against the GCM

The short-lived politicization of the GCM is not merely a textbook example of the impact of social media in contexts characterized by politicization, polarization and disinformation (cf. Tucker et al., 2018). The causal impact of mis-/disinformation about the GCM also makes it an illustrative case for the broader phenomenon of post-truth politics.

Despite the growing popularity of the concept (e.g., Farkas & Schou, 2020; MacMullen, 2020; McIntyre, 2018; Newman, 2019), theoretical debates on post-truth politics clearly underline how difficult the concept is to define, both in terms of its originality/novelty and the severity of the challenge that it presents to liberal democracies. In the Oxford English Dictionary, where post-truth was chosen as the word of the year in 2016, the concept was defined as "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" (Post-truth, n.d.). This definition rhymes well with the communicative processes surrounding the adoption of the GCM. The theoretical point of departure in this article connects post-truth politics to a profound transformation in political culture, characterized by a loss of the "symbolic authority of truth" in the public sphere (Newman, 2019). According to this view, the extent to which factually correct information matters in political debate appears to be fading. In fact, post-truth politics is characterized by the idea that *facts themselves* are becoming contentious, thereby undermining the distinction between *facts* and *opinions* that Hannah Arendt saw as an indispensable precondition for political dispute: There cannot be any meaningful discussion on political issues in the absence of a commonly accepted factual basis (Newman, 2019). Furthermore, post-truth politics is characterized by an undermining of what Habermas—in his *Theory of Communicative Action*—still held to be something that could be taken for granted, namely the "implicit validity claims" raised in interpersonal communication (Habermas, 1981): The idea that we can trust that the person we are talking to actually means what they say and believe it to be true, at least to the best of their knowledge.

Beyond this speaker dimension, MacMullen (2020) has furthermore drawn attention to what we may call the audience dimension of post-truth politics: Post-truth politics is *also* characterized by audiences who are seemingly indifferent about the factual veracity of the information they are exposed to. People with this kind of "motivationally postfactual" attitudes *could* know with ease whether or not information given to them is correct but accept the information regardless because it confirms their previously held beliefs, gives them a good feeling and/or a sense of community (MacMullen, 2020). Given the extent to which the politicization of the GCM was premised on disinformation (as the analysis will demonstrate), this is an important point of departure.

In this context, social media are viewed by most scholars to play an important role (Bennett & Pfetsch, 2018; Farkas & Schou, 2020; McIntyre, 2018; Sunstein, 2017), all the more so as it has been demonstrated that false news stories travel much faster online than true ones (Vosoughi et al., 2018). The analysis presented in this article addresses this connection between social (and other digital) media and post-truth politics: Social media are not simply used in an effort to mobilize against and politicize a particular issue, but rather provide an infrastructure that allows for the inadvertent spread of misinformation as well as for the deliberate spread of

disinformation about the issue at stake. In this context, it has to be pointed out that although mis-/disinformation are at times used interchangeably, misinformation may be unintentional, whereas disinformation essentially refers to "misinformation that is deliberately propagated" (Guess & Lyons, 2020, p. 11; see also Tucker et al., 2018). Theoretical arguments about post-truth politics, in combination with observations about the role of social and other digital media in such contexts, clearly call for more empirical research on processes in which mis-/disinformation has had politically relevant outcomes. Debates on the GCM are well-suited for this kind of analysis: Although they were ultimately relatively short-lived and arguably had limited *immediate* political impact beyond the sudden politicization of the GCM, they were indicative of the kind of polarization and "disrupted public spheres" (Bennett & Pfetsch, 2018) that have increasingly come to characterize liberal democracies in the wake of the rise of digital and social media (Barberá, 2020; Persily & Tucker, 2020; Sunstein, 2017).

3. Methodological Aspects

The article proposes a causal mechanism that explains the short-lived politicization of the GCM between the time of the agreement on the draft text in July 2018 and the adoption of the GCM in December 2018. During this period, a number of states (including one which is analyzed here, namely Austria) withdrew from the compact, which raises questions about the reasons why some countries changed course on a matter that they had just agreed on. The causal mechanism consists of four parts, which can be summarized as (a) initial news reporting; (b) silence in the public sphere and mobilization in the digital sphere; (c) contestation by institutional actors; and (d) contestation of and support for the GCM in mainstream media (see Figure 1). First, news on the agreement on the draft text of the GCM in July 2018 was reported in legacy media in the analyzed countries. Legacy media are here taken to include traditional mass media such as daily newspapers and/or public broadcasters, but also their respective online versions (cf. Davis, 2019). At this point, the GCM was framed predominantly as a problem-solving instrument and was neither made the object of opinion-making journalism nor sparked any immediate debate in other (visible) forums of the public sphere. Second, civil-society actors at the domestic level—both organized and unorganized—started mobilizing against the compact, triggered either by news reporting on the GCM draft text or by events such as the announcement of Hungary's withdrawal from the compact. This mobilization took place to a large extent (though not exclusively) via social and other digital media. As the analysis will show, blogs played an important role in this process, although their resonance clearly depended on amplification achieved through sharing via social media. Increasingly, the GCM was then also framed as a matter of risk. Third, mobilization against the GCM on social media began to *resonate* in the broader public sphere, in particular as representatives of political parties began to address and criticize aspects that had previously seemed uncontroversial. The line between these two parts of the causal mechanism may be somewhat blurry, since some right-wing populist politicians also used social media to participate in the initial mobilization against the GCM. The third part of the causal mechanism is however characterized by the increasing contestation of the GCM also by other and more moderate institutional actors. At this stage, these actors found themselves compelled to respond to the apparently intensifying public opposition to the compact, not least with regard to claims that parliaments and/or the general public had been kept in the dark about an issue construed as highly sensitive. This led to the fourth step of the causal mechanism: As institutional actors began to address presumably controversial aspects of the GCM, the issue was increasingly also taken up by legacy media, which in turn had an impact on the way the GCM was framed; while some legacy media reported on disinformation campaigns and attempted to clarify the actual

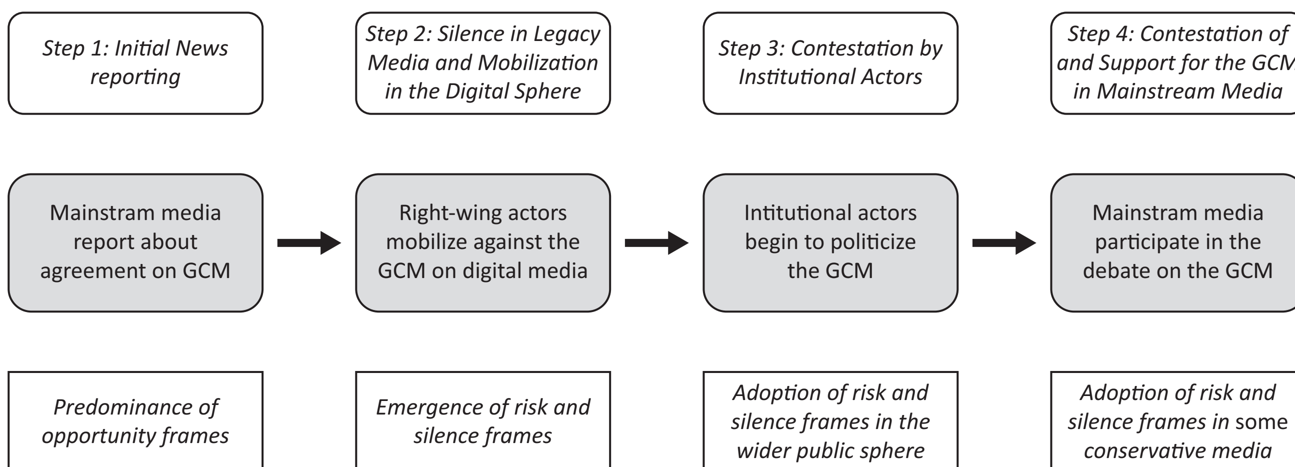

Figure 1. Basic structure of the causal mechanism.

form, content and ambitions of the compact, others adopted the frames advanced via social media and either criticized the previous lack of debate on the GCM *or* presented the compact as a matter of risk and/or threat.

The dynamics of the politicization of the GCM vary across the analyzed states, but the analysis reveals that a broader causal mechanism was at play across countries. In an effort to refine the causal mechanism in light of empirical findings from the three countries, the analysis (a) develops a timeline of the politicization of the GCM; (b) identifies the most relevant *actors* in this process; (c) analyzes the frames used by these actors in making sense of the GCM and its consequences, in particular as regards differences in the frames used by actors on digital/social as opposed to legacy media; and (d) discusses the importance of social media infrastructures as a prerequisite for politicizing the GCM and thereby forcing it (back) onto the agenda of the political system.

The analysis is based both on legacy media material (both quality and tabloid newspapers) *and* social and digital media material. The content analysis of legacy media material is based on a total of 322 articles published between July and December 2018. All articles were collected via the websites of the respective newspapers (see Table 1 for an overview). The German sample consists of articles from the conservative daily *Die Welt*, the liberal daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the left-alternative daily *die tageszeitung*, the daily tabloid *Bild*, and the liberal weekly *Die Zeit*. The Austrian sample consists of articles from the left-liberal daily *Der Standard*, the liberal daily *Die Presse*, the conservative weekly *Wochenblick*, and the daily tabloid *Kronen-Zeitung.* The Swedish sample consists of articles from the liberal daily *Dagens Nyheter*, the conservative daily *Svenska Dagbladet*, the liberal tabloid *Expressen*, and the social democratic tabloid *Aftonbladet*. In order to trace the development of the respective publications' coverage of the GCM, the publication date and the type of article were coded for all 322 articles. This was done in order to ascertain when the debate started in the analyzed countries, what triggered it and whether the debate on social media *preceded* or merely *accompanied* the debate in mainstream media and the wider public sphere. But the types of articles published also reflect the increasing politicization of the issue: While early coverage of the GCM took place predominantly in the form of news reporting, the frequency of opinion articles increased as the debate intensified. Especially towards the end of the analyzed period, the sampled newspapers published an increasing number of editorials, signed commentaries and op-ed articles. However, the newspaper sample also included a considerable share of analytical background articles that were neither purely news nor opinion articles. In order to simplify the analysis, articles were coded as belonging to one of three categories, i.e., (a) news, (b) background and/or analysis, or (c) opinion articles. Opinion articles included editorials, signed commentaries, op-eds and also interviews, in which invited speakers are given the opportunity to express and explain their views about an issue at hand.

For the frame analysis, on the other hand, a sample of 60 articles (20 per country) was selected. For each country, five articles were sampled for the month of July, ten for October and November, and five for December. Priority was given to the articles that most adequately reflected the diversity of views in the broader debate on the GCM, that is: Whenever possible, articles that are supportive as well as articles that are critical of the GCM (or aspects thereof) were selected. Preference was furthermore given to opinion pieces. This was done in an effort to capture the increasing contentiousness of the debate on the GCM, which is seen as an indicator of the compact's increasing politicization. Nevertheless, the sample also reflects the predominance of news reporting and analytical articles, in particular in the month of July.

In the frame analysis, frames were identified inductively and refined in successive rounds of coding. The frame analysis includes all diagnostic and prognostic

Table 1. Mainstream media coverage of the GCM (percentages in parentheses).

Country	Type of article	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Total
AUT	News	4 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	5 (25)	43 (49)	17 (57)	69 (48)
AUT	Background/Analysis	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (100)	9 (45)	28 (32)	8 (27)	47 (33)
AUT	Opinion	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	6 (30)	17 (19)	5 (17)	28 (19)
AUT	Total	4	0	2	20	88	30	144
GER	News	2 (40)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (40)	25 (28)	14 (35)	43 (32)
GER	Background/Analysis	3 (60)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (60)	44 (50)	20 (50)	70 (52)
GER	Opinion	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	15 (17)	6 (15)	21 (16)
GER	Total	5	0	0	5	88	40	134
SWE	News	4 (80)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (50)	4 (44)	13 (46)	22 (50)
SWE	Background/Analysis	1 (20)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (50)	2 (22)	9 (32)	13 (30)
SWE	Opinion	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (33)	6 (21)	9 (20)
SWE	Total	5	0	0	2	9	28	44
	Total	14	0	2	27	181	98	322

frames, i.e., frames that either identify and define problems connected to the GCM *or* propose solutions to these perceived problems, respectively (cf. Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow & Benford, 1988). In particular, the frame analysis considers the impact of what is referred to, in this thematic issue, as "resentful affect" (cf. Capelos & Demertzis, 2018; Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018), arguing that the politicization of the GCM was premised on the deliberate use of a highly specific set of frames. In this regard, emphasis is placed on the aspect of timing, i.e., the question to what extent the initial silence in the public sphere gave right-wing actors an opportunity to set the tone in the debate through the use of resentful affect and disinformation on social media. Most of the frames identified in the analysis belong to the categories of *risk*, *opportunity* or *process* frames, i.e., frames that construed the GCM as a matter of risk (see also Godwin & Trischler, 2021) as an opportunity, or that addressed issues concerning the process of drafting and negotiating the compact. A full list of all identified frames is available in Supplementary File 1.

The social media analysis, on the other hand, is based on material collected on Twitter between 1 July and 31 December 2018. To begin with, the analysis identified (a) the most important hashtags around which the debate crystallized and (b) the most impactful users in the sampled period. The most important hashtags were identified by performing a keyword search based on the most commonly used Swedish and German words for the GCM (i.e., "migrationsavtal" and "Migrationspakt," respectively). Combining this keyword search with predefined minimum levels of engagement (i.e., "likes" and "retweets") made it possible to identify the most salient hashtags in the analyzed period. In a second step, these keywords and hashtags were then used to identify the most impactful users. Impact was also defined in terms of engagement: The most impactful users were considered to be those whose tweets generated the highest numbers of likes and retweets. This dual sampling strategy made it possible to focus the social media analysis both on the role of impactful individuals and at the same time also to analyze other content published under the same hashtags. Since a number of tweets also included links to other content by these individuals (notably blogs), these were also included in the analysis.

4. The Unexpected Politicization of the GCM in Austria, Germany, and Sweden

The story of the GCM can be read as the story of an unexpected politicization. Politicization is usually understood as a process of "making previously unpolitical matters political," or "moving something into the realm of public choice" (Zürn, 2019, pp. 977–978). This understanding certainly applies in the context of the GCM. After all, all 192 UN member states apart from the United States agreed to the text of the compact on 14 July 2018. Numerous observers have furthermore pointed out that the compact is not a legally binding international treaty (e.g., Guild et al., 2019; Newland, 2019), but merely identifies non-binding policy recommendations as to how governments should address international migration (Pécoud, 2020). Presumably, this is also why the GCM did not attract more attention in the public sphere sooner. Nevertheless, Hungary announced its withdrawal from the compact already four days after the agreement on the draft text, thereby kick-starting the unexpected and short-lived politicization of the GCM, in the wake of which Austria (31 October), Bulgaria (12 November), the Czech Republic (14 November), and Poland (20 November) also withdrew from the compact.

Austria's opt-out from the GCM is perhaps not surprising, given that the country has a right-wing populist party in government. Still, the decision to change course just three and a half months after agreeing to the draft text constitutes a puzzle, in particular as Austria had held the Council Presidency of the European Union at the time. Sweden and Germany, by contrast, merely have significant right-wing populist parties *in parliament*, namely the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the Sweden Democrats (SD), respectively. Both countries witnessed contentious debates on the GCM in October and November, but nonetheless did adopt the compact at the Marrakesh conference. In the German case, the AfD played a key role in mobilizing against the GCM in Germany, whereas in the Swedish case, the SD's role is somewhat more ambiguous: The party was late to address the issue and focused predominantly on its criticism of the Swedish government for not having informed the public and addressed the issue in the Riksdag—an approach that mirrors the one adopted by forces on the right wing of Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in Germany. Parliamentary debates on the GCM only took place in Germany and Austria. In Germany, the parliamentary debate preceded the decision in favor of the GCM on November 29, 2018. In the Austrian case, a debate was held on 21 November 2018, three weeks after the government's announcement of the country's withdrawal from the GCM. In Sweden, the GCM was merely addressed in a hearing in the Riksdag's Foreign Affairs Committee on 29 November 2018.

4.1. Initial News Reporting, Silence in Legacy Media, and Mobilization in the Digital Sphere

News about the agreement reached in July 2018 was reported in mainstream media in all three of the analyzed states but neither sparked any debate in the wider public sphere nor was not made the object of opinion-making journalism in legacy media. As illustrated by Figure 2, newspaper coverage of the GCM was in fact fairly slow to pick up. Apart from news coverage of the agreement in July, the months of August and September were characterized by more or less complete silence. As a notable exception, a debate began to intensify in September in the Austrian newspaper

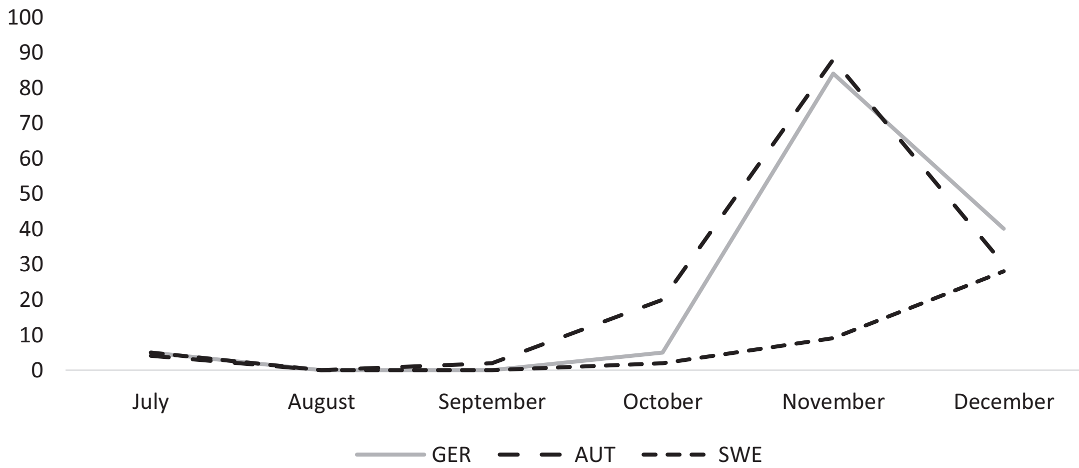

Figure 2. Newspaper coverage of the GCM by country (numbers of articles).

Wochenblick (which has a close affinity to the right-wing populist FPÖ). The development of newspaper coverage in Germany mirrors its Austrian counterpart and peaked in November, due to the fact that the Austrian withdrawal on the last day of October also sparked debate in Germany, in particular among the right wing of the CDU. By comparison to the Austrian and German debates, the Swedish debate was even slower to pick up. Here, newspaper coverage did not reach its peak until late November and early December, when the GCM was taken up in the foreign affairs committee of the Riksdag, accompanied by protests in various Swedish cities.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of the three main categories of frames used in newspaper coverage of the GCM. In July, the GCM was predominantly framed as an opportunity, most of all by highlighting it as a *problem-solving instrument*, both in general and as regards strengthening migrants' rights. At this point, risk frames only appeared by reference to statements made by the Hungarian government upon the country's withdrawal from the GCM and were not adopted by the respective publications. These risk frames presented migration in general as a threat and expressed concerns that the GCM may become legally binding with time.

Despite this relative silence on the GCM in the summer, mobilization via social and other digital media notably *preceded* debate in legacy media in all three states. Germany witnessed a relatively quick start and intensification of the debate on Twitter, where the hashtag #MigrationspaktStoppen emerged as early as in mid-September. Other important hashtags in the mobilization process on Twitter included #Migrationspakt, #StopptDenPakt (Stop the pact) or #Umvolkung (i.e., replacement of native populations with immigrants). These hashtags were frequently used in combination. A number of the AfD's MPs started using the hashtag #MigrationspaktStoppen from early to mid-October, claiming, e.g., that "project resettlement is on!" (Bystron, 2018). The party ultimately also claimed *exclusive* credit for putting the issue onto the agenda of public debate

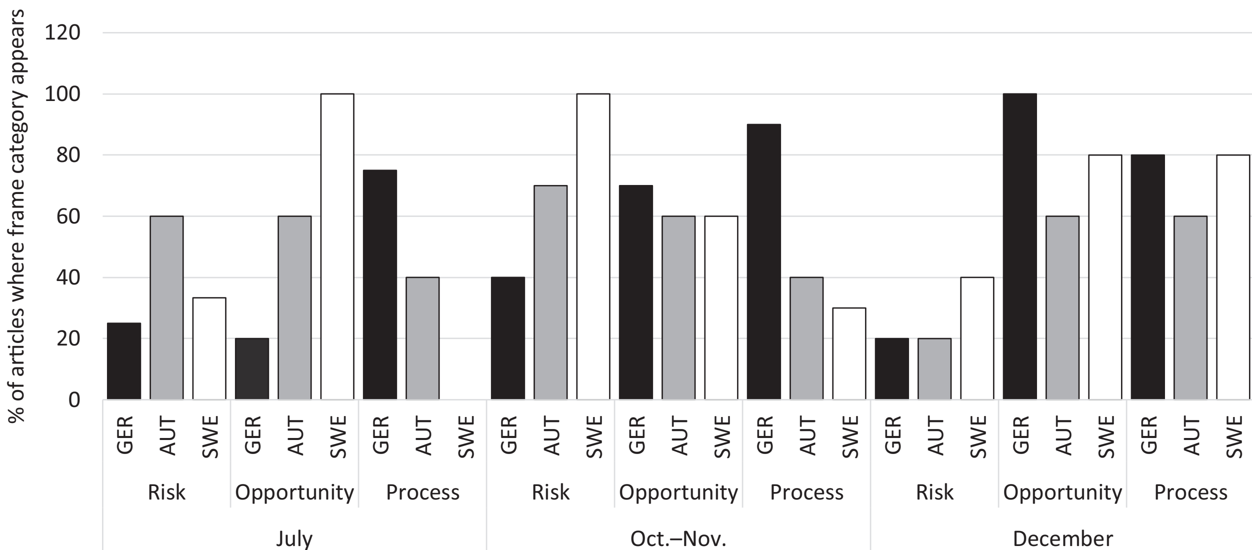

Figure 3. Types of frames used in newspaper coverage of the GCM.

(Alternative for Germany, 2018). This phase was also characterized by considerable activity on the part of conservative bloggers (e.g., Roland Tichy, Vera Lengsfeld, David Berger or Sylvia Pantel, an MP and spokesperson of the *Berliner Kreis* within the CDU), whose contributions were shared (and thereby amplified) via social media.

In this mobilization process in Germany, the GCM was predominantly framed as a matter of risk, but process frames—in particular the types of *silence frames* that were later also adopted in mainstream media coverage—were also commonly used (e.g., Pantel, 2018a, 2018b). In terms of misleading frames, this initial phase was characterized by ideas of economic, social and/or cultural risk—essentially the idea that, with the GCM, "all hurdles for migration are supposed to fall" (Tichy, 2018; see also Godwin & Trischler, 2021), that the "UN wants to compel states in the West to accept a massive relocation of migrants," and that political elites are fully aware that the GCM would fundamentally transform European societies (Lengsfeld, 2018). On Twitter, such risk frames were expressed in even more drastic terms, suggesting that the consequence of the GCM would be "a fight for resources and civil war" (Landkauf, 2018), that the German population would "flip and become predominantly Islamic and African" within two generations, while democracy would "mutate into Islamic authoritarianism" (ibikus31, 2018).

In Sweden, the mobilization process began somewhat later, instigated by reports about a warning of the Polish government against the GCM (as a threat to national security and migration laws) that were shared on Twitter in October, primarily among right-wing social media users. Initially, this mobilization crystallized around generic hashtags such as #svpol and #migpol. As the debate intensified, however, it increasingly crystallized around the hashtags #Mynttorget and #Mynttorgetprotesterna, named after the square in Stockholm where demonstrations took place from early December onwards. Two bloggers played a key role in this mobilization, namely Katerina Janouch and Jenny Piper. Their contributions were widely shared on social media and were therefore instrumental in framing the GCM on social media. The former ultimately also organized the demonstrations against the GCM in Stockholm. Both risk and process frames were central in this early mobilization against the GCM. Regarding the latter category, silence frames were particularly salient, most notably the idea that critical debate on the GCM was being silenced by the political elite in Sweden, which had allegedly plotted to keep the public in the dark about the compact and adopt it without the general public becoming aware of it (e.g., Piper, 2018). Risk frames, on the other hand, were used to emphasize the compact's alleged lack of distinction between legal and illegal migration, which was taken as tantamount to migrants receiving the *right* to settle in *any* country of destination. Consequently, the GCM is construed as implying dramatic negative social, economic and/or cultural consequences. Resentful affect plays an important role here as well, as some speak of an "assault on Sweden" (Janouch, 2018a) and present the GCM as opening the doors to increasing sexual violence (Janouch, 2018b; Zackrisson, 2018).

As the mobilization against the GCM gained traction on social media, mainstream media were still notably silent on the issue, reflecting that the issue was not up for debate in the Swedish parliament. In fact, the Swedish government's apparent silence on the issue resulted in the subsequent prominence of *silence frames* on social media, which later also resonated in mainstream media. In this initial phase, the SD did not pick up the issue, which an increasing number of Twitter users expressed bewilderment about. This void was however quickly filled by smaller (right-wing) parties and movements, such as the Alternative for Sweden (AfS) and the Populists. The former was quick to claim ownership of the issue by branding itself as "the only Swedish party to have taken a stance against the UN's migration agreement, of course" (Alternative for Sweden, 2018). As discussed below, it was the increasing resonance of silence frames that ultimately forced the other parties to respond, in particular the SD, thus marking the link between the first and second part of the causal mechanism in the process.

In the Austrian case, finally, mobilization on social media began sooner than in Sweden and tended at least in part to coincide with the mobilization process observable in Germany. For one, the shared language resulted in the use of shared hashtags. More importantly, the Identitarian Movement (*Identitäre Bewegung*), which was instrumental in the Austrian mobilization process, is also active in Germany, and content by the Identitarian Movement's most prominent proponent Martin Sellner was frequently shared by German users. In Austria, the movement's digital media campaign against the GCM began as early as September 2018 and was amplified by the organization of demonstrations in October and November. Some media have pointed out that the movement's reading of the GCM was also highly influential in shaping the position of Vice Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache (Baumann, 2018). Soon after the start of the Identitarian Movement's campaign, Strache expressed his opposition to the GCM, stating as early as 10 September that he is "absolutely critical and negative" about the GCM, and two weeks later that he would not support any UN compact in which migration issues are not decided on by Austria ("UN-Migrationspakt: Türkis-Blau mahnt zu Vorsicht," 2018). The Identitarian Movement's reading of the GCM was also adopted by other media: first by the newspaper *Wochenblick* (which has a close affinity to Strache's FPÖ), later by the FPÖ blog *unzensuriert*, and finally by the tabloid newspaper *Kronenzeitung*. Given Strache's statement that signing the compact would have been a violation of the coalition agreement with the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), it is highly plausible to attribute the Austrian government's

change of position on the GCM to the junior coalition partner FPÖ and, in particular, Vice Chancellor Strache.

4.2. Resonance in the Wider Public Sphere: Contestation by Institutional Actors

While the mobilization process on social media marked the starting point of the sudden politicization of the GCM in the German case, the next step in the process begins when contestation of the compact starts to surface also among representatives of political parties and/or MPs. These now find themselves more or less forced to position themselves in relation to increasing concerns about the GCM.

In Sweden, this refers primarily to the SD, who had initially not addressed the GCM. But in addition, the Moderates also began to question the apparent silence that had surrounded the drafting and negotiation of the GCM. In particular, the party criticized the lack of an analysis of the consequences of the compact, which was also expressed in a subsequent hearing in the Swedish parliament's foreign affairs committee on 29 November and became a central theme in the ensuing debate in the wider public sphere. As Figure 2 shows, this also coincided with a significant increase in mainstream media coverage, which only reached its peak in Sweden in late November and early December. This increasing contestation over the GCM's content and the process pursued by the Swedish government is also reflected in the frames used in mainstream media coverage of an increasingly contentious debate. Figure 3 illustrates that whereas opportunity frames dominated the (albeit limited) news coverage in July, it was indeed risk frames that dominated in October and November. In part, this reflects a shifting emphasis among institutional actors: At this point, even more moderate actors began to adopt the types of process frames initially advocated by far-right actors via social media, specifically as regards the question why the potential consequences of the GCM had not been explored, why the issue wasn't addressed in the Swedish parliament and why the Swedish government did not do more to "anchor" the GCM in the public sphere by raising awareness of and building support for the compact.

In Germany, criticism of the GCM began to surface in more conservative circles within Angela Merkel's CDU, specifically in the *Werte Union* and the *Berliner Kreis*. To some extent, such concerns were expressed also via social media. For instance, the Werte Union started using the prominent hashtag #MigrationspaktStoppen from mid-October (Werte Union Berlin, 2018), urging that the GCM should be discussed both at the CDU's convention in early December *and* in the Bundestag. Similarly, the MP Alexander Mitsch (also a member of the Werte Union) used his Twitter account to call for parliamentary debate and corrections to the GCM, later claiming credit for the Werte Union for having generated debate on the GCM in the German public sphere. This increasing contestation also had a considerable impact both on the amount of coverage of the GCM in Germany in November *and* on the increasing use of risk and process frames. Questions about a lack of discussion about the compact gained prominence in this phase, underlining the impact of social media mobilization on the frames used by at least a certain segment of institutional actors. Despite the fact that party-political actors have claimed credit for putting the GCM onto the agenda, it is clear that the impetus came from mobilization processes taking place on social media, as underlined by the initial silence in mainstream media and the apparent lack of interest on the part of institutional actors (apart from the AfD).

4.3. Resonance in the Wider Public Sphere: Contestation of, and Support for, the GCM in Mainstream Media

This leaves the question of when and to what extent the increasing politicization moved from institutional actors into the arenas of opinion-making journalism. This fourth step of the causal mechanism shows that social media mobilization not only resulted in institutional actors (re-)politicizing the GCM, but also had an impact on the frames employed on the opinion pages of the respective publications.

With the exception of the *Wochenblick*, resonance of social media frames in Germany and Austria remained somewhat limited in mainstream media, in particular as regards the various risk frames that had been advanced on social media. Instead, the other sampled newspapers focused on reporting, analyzing, and commenting on the extent to which the belated politicization of the GCM was a result of the spread of mis-/disinformation on social media (e.g., Vehlewald, 2018). Consequently, as illustrated by Figure 3, *process* and *opportunity frames* played a more important role at this point than risk frames, due also to the fact that many of the sampled publications used the adoption of the GCM on 10 December as an occasion to analyze its opportunities, but also to comment on deficits in the process. In particular, the more progressive publications left no doubt that governments could and should have gone to greater lengths to raise awareness of and build support for the GCM already in the drafting process. The liberal daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung* concluded that the German government had simply "failed" in this regard and should learn its lesson from this "disaster" (Kastner, 2018), i.e., that the far right had been given an opportunity to spread disinformation about the GCM. In a similar vein, the liberal *Der Standard* argued that although there had certainly been enough to discuss, there had evidently been no interest in opening a debate on an issue as controversial and potentially divisive as migration (Hoang, 2018).

Notably, however, the end of the process also witnessed a much more ambivalent perspective on the GCM than could be expected from the initial lack of interest. In the end, some of the conservative publications came

out in more or less complete opposition to the GCM and presented opinions that highlighted the risk frames advanced in the mobilization process on social media (e.g., Aust & Büchel, 2018; Schmid, 2018). A similar process could also be observed in Sweden, where a number of editorials took issue with the process of dealing with the GCM at the domestic level and proposed, at the very least, to postpone the adoption of the compact (e.g., Dahlman, 2018; Sonesson, 2018).

5. Conclusions

The analysis has shown that the case of the GCM can be taken as a textbook example for the unexpected politicization of an issue more or less purely because of the ability of right-wing actors to exploit social media as an infrastructure for the spread of mis-/disinformation. In this article, this process was highlighted through the use of a comparative case study that traced the development of the GCM's politicization in three EU member states. Although the process followed its own dynamics in the three chosen countries, a similar causal mechanism was at play in all three cases. All three countries had participated in the negotiations and agreed on the draft text that was finalized in July 2018. Although mainstream media had reported on this achievement, this did not generate any debate within the political institutions or the wider public spheres, but ultimately sparked a mobilization process on social and other digital media. In this mobilization process, the ability of actors on the far right both to frame the issue and to exploit these frames was instrumental in creating a sense of urgency that allowed the issue to reach the agenda of the wider public sphere and the political system. The initial silence in the wider public sphere—which far-right actors ironically framed as a *strategic move* on the part of the political establishment to keep the public in the dark about the implications of the GCM—was in fact what allowed far-right actors and right-wing populists alike to claim ownership of the issue in the first place. As the mobilization process gained traction on social and digital media, accompanied by increasing protests on the streets, mainstream political actors as well as mainstream media were forced to position themselves on the issue. At this point, however, the frames advanced via social and other digital media had already resonated in the three public spheres.

Given that the empirical basis of this article is limited to such a small number of states, it is evidently difficult to draw any generalizing conclusions. Nonetheless, the article's empirical findings underline that the GCM is a highly relevant case against the backdrop of broader debates on the role of social and other digital media in post-truth politics, and the implications of these findings have to be discussed in that context. Future research will need to address whether similar processes can also be observed in other cases and in a larger number of states, whether in the EU or elsewhere. If similar patterns can be shown on a broader empirical scale, then the mobilization and politicization processes that could be witnessed in the run-up to the adoption of the GCM in December 2018 are certainly highly ambivalent as regards the role of the public sphere in liberal democracy: The process was based on the—presumably *strategic*—use of mis-/disinformation, and this mis-/disinformation appears to have fallen onto fertile ground in the digital sphere. This provided an opportunity for right-wing populist actors to also claim ownership of the issue by exploiting the frames constructed in the digital sphere even further. From the perspective of deliberative democracy and communicative power generation, the ability of organized civil society to identify concerns and amplify them in the public is traditionally hailed as bearing significant emancipatory potential. But as the case of the sudden and unexpected politicization of the GCM via the digital sphere has indicated, this mechanism can be turned onto its head seemingly easily by skillful political actors, all the more so in a political culture that is increasingly characterized by post-truth politics.

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Conflict of Interests

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Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

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