



# It's the emotions, Stupid! Anger about the economic crisis, low political efficacy, and support for populist parties<sup>☆</sup>



Gabriele Magni

The Department of Political Science, 361 Hamilton Hall, CB 3265, UNC Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3265, United States

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of anger about the economic crisis on electoral participation and voting behavior. Previous work on emotions has consistently underlined the mobilization potential of anger. The economic crisis has generated widespread anger, but political disengagement, rather than mobilization, and growing support for populist parties have emerged as the dominant effects. This is because the impact of anger about the crisis is moderated by political efficacy. Among citizens with low efficacy, anger decreased electoral participation and fueled support for populist parties. In contrast, among citizens with high efficacy, anger promoted participation and increased support for mainstream opposition parties. I use the 2005–2010 British election panel, which allows me to address endogeneity concerns, control for pre-crisis engagement and other negative emotions, and perform causal mediation analysis. This work contributes to the study of emotions and voting behavior; support for populist parties; and the political consequences of the crisis.

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## 1. Introduction

The 2008 economic and financial crisis has caused a deterioration in the economic conditions of many citizens around the world. Both in Europe and the US, millions of people have become unemployed, undergone severe pay cuts, and even lost their homes. The crisis has threatened their way of life and generated diverse emotional reactions, among which one of the most common responses has been anger. How does anger about the economic crisis affect political participation and voting behavior?

Existing scholarship on the effects of emotions consistently shows a link between anger and mobilization. Cognitive appraisal theories of emotions posit that anger leads individuals to attack the source of their distress (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991; Smith et al., 2008). Both equity theory (Adams, 1963; Walster et al., 1978) and more recent experimental studies (Van Zomeren et al., 2012; Van Zomeren et al., 2008) show that anger promotes action to redress the perceived unfairness. Election campaign studies also find that

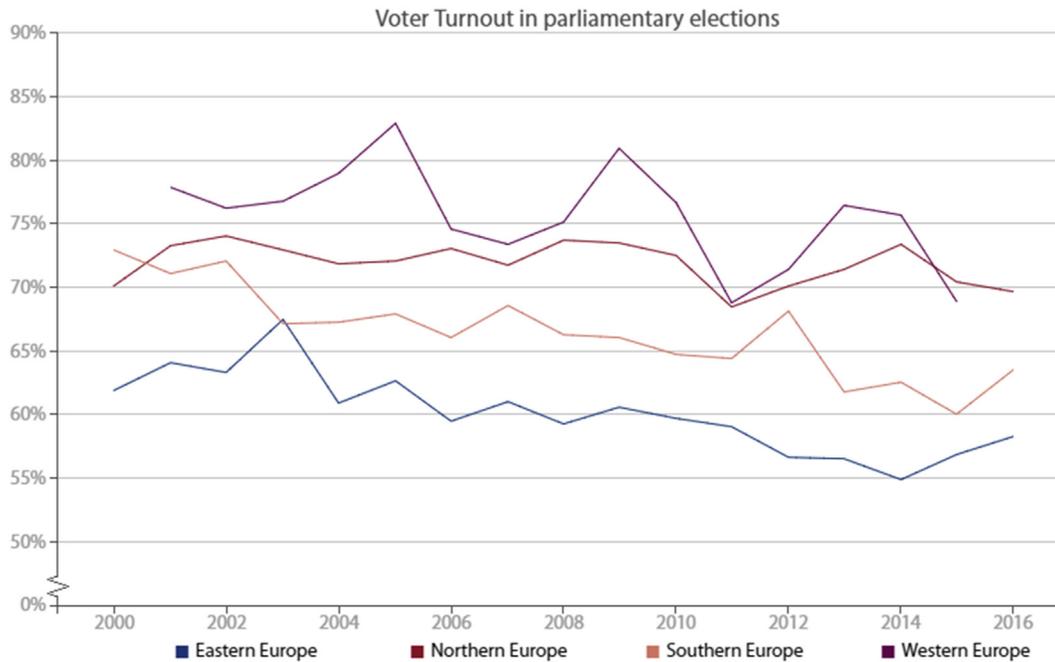
anger stimulates mobilization to a greater extent than enthusiasm and anxiety (Valentino et al., 2011; Weber, 2013).

The aftermath of the economic and financial crisis, however, offers a different picture. Two striking patterns have emerged in Europe and the US. First, electoral participation has not substantially increased. Even in Southern Europe, a region in which the crisis has been severe and has generated widespread anger, a spike in voter turnout never emerged; if anything, the trend is slightly decreasing (Fig. 1). Second, political disaffection with traditional actors and support for populist forces have grown since the beginning of the crisis. In several countries, non-mainstream and challenger parties have substantially increased their popularity (Hernández and Kriesi, 2016) especially among individuals negatively affected by the crisis (Hobolt and de Vries, 2016; Hobolt and Tilley, 2016).

I address these issues and delve into the political consequences of the economic crisis by exploring the link between anger about the crisis, political alienation, and support for populist parties. Such a link deserves investigation because previous work has overlooked the impact of negative emotions on support for populist parties. While scholarship on emotions has mostly analyzed the influence of anger on participation, ignoring its effect on voting behavior, studies on populist parties have for a long time focused on structural characteristics and socio-demographic resources, neglecting

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E-mail address: [magni@live.unc.edu](mailto:magni@live.unc.edu).



**Fig. 1.** Voter turnout in European Parliamentary elections (2000–2016). From top to bottom: trends in Western Europe, Northern Europe, Southern Europe, and Eastern Europe. International IDEA - institute for democracy and electoral assistance.

the psychological factors that can more likely explain short-term changes.<sup>1</sup>

To understand the political effects of anger about the economic crisis, we need to consider a factor that has been central in the crisis and that interacts with anger to shape its effect: low levels of political efficacy, defined as the perception of one's limited ability to influence politics.<sup>2</sup> The interaction between anger and low efficacy explains both the initial disengagement from the political system and the following increased support for populist actors. Anger is an attack emotion, which sparks the motivation to act and induces individuals to seek change. Citizens with low efficacy, however, exhibit limited confidence in their ability to influence the political process. Angry people with low efficacy are therefore individuals who strive for change but do not see change as feasible within the system. As a result, these citizens distance themselves from the system that is causing their distress and become more receptive of populist appeals. By promoting anti-establishment messages, populist parties offer a path for change outside – and against – the traditional political landscape in which citizens with low efficacy believe to have very little influence.

While an anti-incumbent vote has generally emerged during the crisis and has led to the defeat of governing parties (LeDuc and Pammatt, 2013; Bartels, 2012), it is the interaction of anger and low efficacy that best captures the demobilization that followed the crisis and the subsequent shift to populist parties. Low efficacy by itself could explain disengagement, but does not necessarily push individuals to seek change. In contrast, anger sparks a desire for

change and motivates an anti-incumbent vote, but does not necessarily favor populist options. In fact, among citizens with high efficacy, anger does not decrease participation. Since angry people who feel efficacious conjugate desire for change with the perception that they can influence political outcomes, they seek change in the electoral arena by opting for mainstream opposition parties, rather than anti-establishment alternatives that unpredictably challenge the system.

I test this argument with the British Election Study, a nine-wave panel survey conducted between 2005 and 2010 that includes questions on emotions about the economic crisis.<sup>3</sup> The panel character of the data allows me to address endogeneity concerns that often affect survey data dealing with emotions, to account for anger predisposition, and to control for pre-crisis levels of participation, party preferences and other negative emotions, thereby isolating the impact of anger about the crisis.

This study offers several contributions. First, it engages with the existing scholarship on political parties by offering insights into the growing support for populist forces. Unveiling the role of psychological factors like emotions and political efficacy, this study complements previous work that has usually focused on long-term resources. Second, it contributes to the literature on the political effects of emotions. It shows that anger can demobilize, thereby challenging previous findings that consistently underlined its mobilization potential.<sup>4</sup> And it explores the link between anger and voting behavior, therefore enriching a literature that has mostly investigated the impact of emotions on participation. More broadly, this study addresses pressing political concerns and central issues of democratic life, if one considers that widespread anger about economic crises posed serious challenges to political systems in the past. In a time

<sup>1</sup> Recent exceptions include Schumacher and Rooduijn (2013); Bakker et al. (2015); Bos et al. (2017). They examine how protest attitudes, the personality trait of agreeableness, and implicit attitudes are related to support for populist parties. Below I discuss work developed before the economic crisis and focused on attitudinal positions and resentment.

<sup>2</sup> This definition follows Campbell et al.'s (1954) and Finkel's (1985). Finkel describes efficacy as "the perception that the self is capable of influencing government and politics" (892). Below I discuss the concept of political efficacy more thoroughly.

<sup>3</sup> This work cannot test post-2010 effects because the panel study ended that year.

<sup>4</sup> Valentino et al. (2011) find that anger induces mobilization especially among individuals with more resources. I argue that – among individuals with low efficacy – not only has anger a more limited effect, but actually increases the likelihood of demobilization.

when anti-establishment forces have gained popularity on both sides of the Atlantic – from UKIP to US congressional and presidential candidates, from the Italian Five Star Movement to the French National Front – the focus on the interaction between anger and low efficacy helps us understand the reasons behind this phenomenon.

## 2. Previous work

### 2.1. Anger and political participation

Individual political participation can vary substantially from one election to the next. While the literature has emphasized the importance of demographics and structural factors, stable characteristics do not fully explain change in individual responses over time. To understand these fluctuations we need to examine short-term motivations, and here emotions play a central role (Valentino et al., 2011). Anger, specifically, takes on such centrality that “one can define [it] as the essential political emotion” (Lyman, 1981: 61; see Ost 2004). This is because anger is related to competition (Cottrell and Neuberg, 2005; Mackie et al., 2000) and politics revolves around competition over resources.

Cognitive appraisal theories of emotions explain that the assessment of specific situations and the relationship between an individual and their environment influence the emergence of distinctive emotions. Anger, specifically, is systematically linked to four appraisals: goal obstacle, other accountability, unfairness, and threat to self-esteem (Kuppens et al., 2007). Cognitive appraisal theories agree that anger develops when individuals can identify the cause of a threat with certainty, and especially when they locate external accountability and blame others for the situation (Smith and Kirby, 2004; Lerner and Keltner, 2001; Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991). Existing scholarship, however, disagrees on the importance of the appraised coping potential. Some maintain that anger emerges when individuals feel confident in their ability to eliminate the cause of their distress (Frijda, 1986). Others argue that a sense of control can change the experience of anger but is not essential to its arousal (Smith and Kirby, 2004; Smith and Lazarus, 1990, 1993).<sup>5</sup>

Appraisal theories also posit that emotions influence behavior inasmuch as individuals take alternative patterns of action to cope with the emotions arising from their situation. Anger stimulates individuals to attack the source of the threat (Folkman et al., 1986; Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991; Smith et al., 2008) and promotes action to redress the perceived unfairness (Van Zomeren et al., 2012; Van Zomeren et al., 2008). Consistently, work on the political effects of emotions finds that anger stimulates mobilization more than anxiety and enthusiasm during election campaigns and on election days (Valentino et al., 2011; Weber, 2013). Social movement studies also find that anger facilitates mobilization and sustains conflict (Jasper, 2011).

### 2.2. Anger, populist parties, and political efficacy

While existing scholarship has extensively explored the impact

of anger on political participation, studies on its effects on voting behavior are limited. Affective Intelligence Theory posits that anger depresses the search for political information and leads individuals to rely on cognitive heuristics (MacKuen et al., 2010; Valentino et al., 2008; Marcus et al., 2000). Anger also induces risk-seeking behavior (Lerner and Keltner, 2001), which helps us understand why anger boosted support for the Iraq War (Huddy et al., 2007). Even if this work stops short of explaining how emotions shape voting behavior, one could hypothesize that anger favors riskier choices.

Among opposition candidates, populist forces are certainly a risky choice: they challenge the status quo, propose dramatic changes with unpredictable outcomes, and have little familiarity with government responsibility. Previous work on support for populist parties has often neglected the role of psychological factors and focused on socio-demographic characteristics. Populist far-right parties tend to score better among men; young and older voters, rather than middle-aged ones; less educated citizens; unemployed, self-employed, or small business owners; and individuals at the margins of society (Betz, 1994; Arzheimer and Carter, 2006; Lubbers et al., 2002; Evans, 2005). While structural factors convincingly explained patterns of support in the past, individual stable characteristics are not well suited to account for the rapid growth of populist parties in recent years.

Studies on attitudinal positions show that political dissatisfaction and anti-immigrant views fuel the populist and far-right vote (Ignazi, 1992; Lubbers and Scheepers, 2000; Schumacher and Rooduijn, 2013), in addition to citizens' resentment sparked by grievances against globalization, immigration, and political corruption (Betz, 1993, 1994; Demertzis, 2006). This work can account for shorter-term changes, but focuses on a timeframe that preceded the economic crisis and the subsequent rise of populist parties. Since the crisis, a transnational cultural conflict spurred by non-mainstream parties has intensified (Hooghe and Marks, 2017; see also Kriesi, 2010). Challenger parties have substantially increased their popularity (Hernández and Kriesi, 2016), especially among individuals negatively affected by the crisis (Hobolt and de Vries, 2016; Hobolt and Tilley, 2016). For these reasons, we need to explore factors related to the crisis that can explain the rapid growth of populist parties.

Central to the economic crisis have been negative emotions and low political efficacy.<sup>6</sup> Low political efficacy is related to many of the features that predicted support for populist parties in the past, including lower education, lower income, and lower social position (Wu, 2003). In the context of the crisis, it is interesting to explore how affect and efficacy interact to influence political behavior, given that efficacy can moderate the impact of emotions. Such a moderating role was first proposed by Bandura (1977, 1982), who, studying changes in behavior, unveiled an interaction between self-efficacy – i.e. self-appraisal of one's possibility of action – and affective arousal (Rudolph et al., 2000). Since then, Bandura's concept of self-efficacy has been related to the internal dimension of political efficacy (Madsen, 1987).

Political efficacy was first defined as the “feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process” (Campbell et al., 1954, 187).<sup>7</sup> Earlier work argued that

<sup>5</sup> “[W]e do not view appraisals of coping potential as being directly relevant to the elicitation of anger. Therefore, like Berkowitz and Harmon-Jones, we would not expect appraisals of high coping potential to be invariably associated with the experience of anger” (Smith and Kirby, 2004, 135). Berkowitz and Harmon-Jones maintain that individuals can experience anger even when they feel unable to overcome their negative condition. In an experiment measuring students' reaction to a distressing message about tuition increase, self-reported anger was as high when students were told that the choice had already been made as when they were told that a petition could still influence the final decision (Berkowitz and Harmon-Jones, 2004; Harmon-Jones et al., 2003).

<sup>6</sup> I provide evidence on this point in the analysis below.

<sup>7</sup> Two dimensions of the concept have later been specified: an internal one, which captures beliefs about one's self capacity to understand and participate effectively in politics; and an external one, referring to opinions about the responsiveness of the system to citizens' demands (Niemi et al., 1991). I do not expand on this point because the data do not allow me to clearly distinguish between internal and external efficacy, since the survey item measuring efficacy confounds the two dimensions.

political efficacy has a positive effect on voting and campaign involvement (Finkel, 1985; Pollock, 1983). More recently, some studies suggested that efficacy interacts with affect to generate distinctive political consequences. High internal efficacy is instrumental in triggering the positive impact of anxiety on political learning and involvement (Rudolph et al., 2000; Nadeau et al., 1995) and can increase participation by facilitating the emergence of anger in response to policy threats (Valentino et al., 2009). The recent economic crisis has certainly emerged as a threat to many citizens and produced widespread anger. At the same time, a large sector of society has displayed low perceived influence over politics in the aftermath of the crisis. Moving from these considerations, the next section develops a theory on the impact of anger and political efficacy on participation and party preferences.

### 3. Theory and hypotheses: anger, low efficacy, and political engagement

How do we reconcile the theoretical claims about anger-induced mobilization with the empirical political disengagement that followed the 2008 economic crisis? We can answer this question if we acknowledge that individuals exhibit varying degrees of political efficacy and that anger affects people differently conditional on their perceived level of efficacy. To understand why this is the case, we need to consider the blame attribution – a critical appraisal for the elicitation of anger – that has developed during the crisis. The probability of mobilization increases with the specificity of blame attribution, especially in the context of economic hardships (Javeline, 2003). However, anger about the economic crisis has arguably been characterized by systemic blame attribution. Both at the expert and at the ordinary citizen level, responsibility for the crisis has often been cast upon the entire political-economic system. In a survey of financial-crisis experts the vast majority believed that “everyone was at fault” for the crisis, rather than just “Wall Street” or “the government.”<sup>8</sup> Ordinary citizens have blamed globalization-related factors and the international system as a whole, including international investors, foreign governments, international institutions, and the EU (Fernández-Albertos et al., 2013). In the UK, an overwhelming majority considered the economic-financial system responsible for the crisis, in addition to governments and mortgage holders (Wagner, 2014).<sup>9</sup>

Angry people express a desire for retribution (Druckman and McDermott, 2008), but retribution becomes harder in the case of systemic blame. In such a context, punishing a single actor is not satisfying. If the system as a whole is to blame, a fundamental reshaping of the political-economic landscape in which the crisis originated is required. This demanding enterprise calls for skills and resources that are presumably not readily available in the general population. Hence, citizens yearning for change ask themselves whether change is actually possible. I argue that the answer depends on citizens' feelings of political efficacy. While anger, accompanied by a sense of injustice and a desire for change, sparks the motivation to act, belief in one's personal ability to influence politics shapes opinions on the feasibility of change. Therefore, I hypothesize, the effect of anger is conditional on political efficacy, defined as “the perception that the self is capable of influencing government and politics” (Finkel, 1985, 892). Among individuals with low political efficacy, change does not look feasible, and anger

favors demobilization. Angry citizens who do not believe they can transform a disliked system distance themselves from the environment that is causing their distress.

**H1.** *Anger about the economic crisis decreases electoral participation among citizens with low efficacy.*

I do not expect anger to produce such effect among citizens with high efficacy. Not only are angry citizens with high efficacy propelled by a desire for change and retribution. They also believe they have the means to influence politics and bring about change. When citizens feel empowered, anger sparks the motivation to take action and increases participation (Fig. 2).

**H2.** *Anger about the economic crisis increases electoral participation among citizens with high efficacy.*

Angry individuals who feel inefficacious are therefore more likely to demobilize, but they can still harbor political preferences. Populist parties are well-positioned to take advantage of a disengagement that is spurred by a mix of anger and low-efficacy, and can re-engage individuals who have grown frustrated with traditional actors. This matters politically because citizens who are currently disengaged constitute a pool of potential future voters. In the short-term, growing support in public opinion for anti-establishment actors may convince mainstream parties to modify their positions to prevent electoral losses, thereby promoting tangible effects even outside the electoral channel.

To understand the favorable position of populist parties, one needs to consider the condition of angry individuals with low efficacy. These citizens are enlivened by a sense of injustice and a desire for change, but they also believe they cannot promote change. Populist parties successfully appeal to these citizens by offering a seemingly viable path to action. The first step in this process is to provide a clear target to blame, who is identified in the political-economic establishment. Anti-establishment messages occupy a central position in the platforms of populist parties. As Mudde explains, “the main criterion for [the identification of populist or protest parties] is a core antiestablishment position” (Mudde, 2007: 29; see also Barr, 2009).<sup>10</sup> This step is important because it addresses the fundamental appraisals identified by cognitive appraisal theories as systematically linked to anger: cause identification and goal obstacle, external blame attribution, and feelings of unfairness (Kuppens et al., 2007). Populist parties depict the establishment as the cause of the problems and the obstacle that needs to be removed to redress the unfairness. Channeling citizens' anger against a clear target lays the foundation for future mobilization, given that its likelihood grows with the specificity of blame attribution (Javeline, 2003).

Identifying the entire establishment as the target to blame also serves another purpose: offering a pathway to action *outside* the system for citizens who feel powerless *within* the system. Populist parties describe the conflict between the ‘ruled’ and the ‘rulers’ as the fundamental cleavage in society (Schedler, 1996: 294) and present themselves as opposed to an undifferentiated political class that includes both government and opposition parties (Rydgren, 2005). This uncompromising stance promises retribution against the entire system, which goes well with the diffuse blame attribution that accompanies anger about the crisis and the sense of marginalization of citizens feeling inefficacious.

Besides offering a clear target to blame and a path toward change outside the traditional political landscape, populist actors

<sup>8</sup> Investor Home, “The Global Financial Crisis Experts Survey”: <http://investorhome.com/gfc/>.

<sup>9</sup> Further analysis in the online appendix indirectly confirms the systemic blame attribution linked to anger about the crisis: angry individuals blamed more actors than individuals who were not angry.

<sup>10</sup> Given the centrality of such appeals, populist parties have sometimes been labelled anti-political establishment parties (Schedler, 1996; Abedi and Lundberg, 2009).

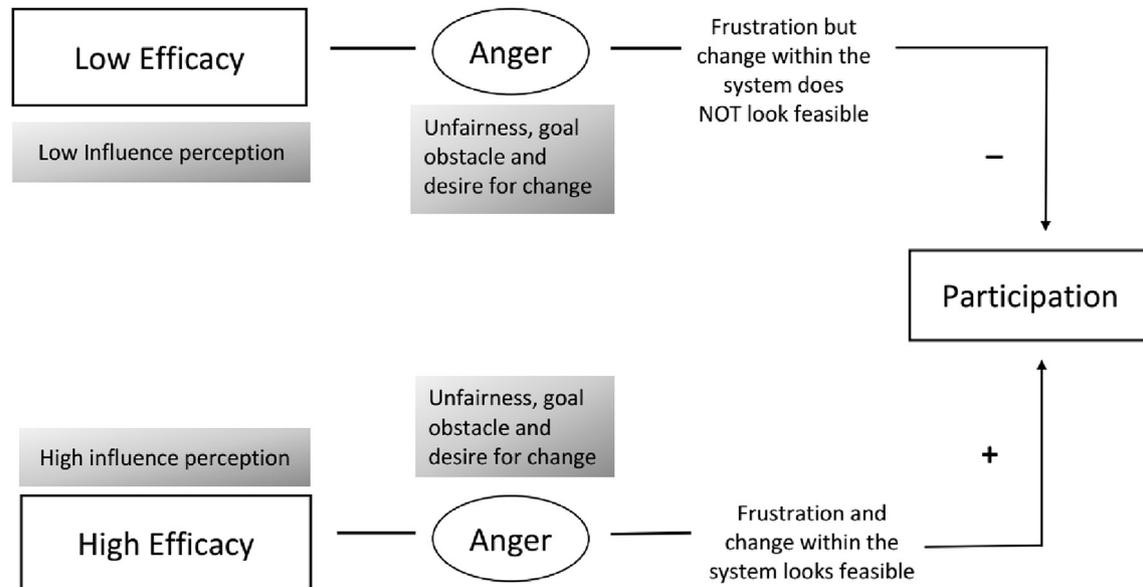


Fig. 2. Effects of anger on political participation conditional on political efficacy.

also promote a sense of empowerment among inefficacious citizens by offering messages that celebrate the political role of ordinary citizens. They exalt ‘the pure people’ and their authenticity against ‘the corrupt elite,’ and argue “that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people” (Mudde, 2004: 543; see also Stanley, 2008). In the populist code, virtue is on the side of common people (Wiles, 1969: 166), who can successfully engage in the political process following their common sense. Populist parties show therefore a road toward change that can be travelled by ordinary people.

**H3.** *Anger about the economic crisis increases support for populist parties among citizens with low efficacy.*

On the other hand, I do not expect support for populist forces to increase among angry citizens with high efficacy. These citizens are still expected to opt for anti-incumbent parties as a way to satisfy their desire for change sparked by anger. However, believing that they can influence outcomes within the political system, they are more reluctant to embrace alternatives that vocally challenge the entire establishment. For this reason, angry citizens with high efficacy become more supportive of mainstream opposition parties, which represent a viable option for change within the system (Fig. 3).

**H4.** *Anger about the economic crisis increases support for mainstream opposition parties among citizens with high efficacy.*

#### 4. Data and context: the UK and the 2010 election

The recent economic crisis offers a good opportunity to explore the impact of anger on citizens’ attitudes toward politics. The economic crisis has emerged as a threat for many citizens and has generated strong emotions like anger and fear (Wagner, 2014). To test the hypotheses above, I use the 2010 British Election Panel Study (British Election Study, 2010). 2010 is a good time to evaluate the effects of anger about the financial and economic crisis because at that time the impact of the crisis became fully apparent throughout Europe. Indeed, 2009 was the *annus horribilis* for most European economies, with plummeting growth, increasing deficits, and rapidly rising unemployment. By the following year, citizens became aware of the negative consequences of the economic

turmoil and the financial crisis dominated election campaigns across Europe.

The UK also offers a hard test for my theory. The economic recession and the resulting widespread discontent were central issues in the country, even if the crisis was arguably not as severe as in most southern European countries.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, if the hypothesized political effects of anger are confirmed in such a context, they are likely to be amplified in the European countries where anger ran deeper. Moreover, the British electoral system is single-member plurality, which often penalizes third or protest parties. If the hypothesis linking anger to support for anti-establishment parties among citizens with low efficacy is confirmed in this institutional environment, we can more confidently expect the findings to travel to political contexts in which proportional representation may facilitate the electoral success of populist actors.<sup>12</sup>

In the British context, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) offered a telling example of a populist party. UKIP promoted a populist, anti-politician message, which expressed dissatisfaction with all the traditional political forces, and aimed to recruit protest voters by branding itself as the “real opposition” (Abedi and Lundberg, 2009; Ford et al., 2012).<sup>13</sup> The Conservative Party represented instead the clearest mainstream opposition alternative in the 2010 election. Conservatives had been out of office for almost 15 years and presented themselves as a possibility for change under

<sup>11</sup> Eurobarometer 73 (2010) reports citizens’ opinions about the economic situation. The following are the percentages of respondents choosing bad or very bad in the UK, Italy, Spain, and Greece. National economy situation: UK 82%, IT 84%, SP 95%, GR 98%. National employment situation: UK 76%, IT 88%, SP 98%, GR 99%. Household financial situation: UK 20%, IT 37%, SP 42%, GR 63%. Personal job situation: UK 20%, IT 42%, SP 39%, GR 49%.

<sup>12</sup> One may argue that citizens are more prone to vote for populist parties in single-member plurality as a protest vote because of the low chance of victory for such parties and the low risk involved. However, this claim is not convincing for angry people, since anger induces risk-seeking behavior. For this reason I believe that the wasted vote argument applies, even if somehow weakened by the fact that votes for third parties had been on an upward trend in the UK before the 2010 election.

<sup>13</sup> Surveys of British voters (2009 European Election Study) and party experts (2010 Chapel Hill Expert Survey) confirm that UKIP was perceived as a non-mainstream, rather extreme option. This analysis is available in the online appendix.

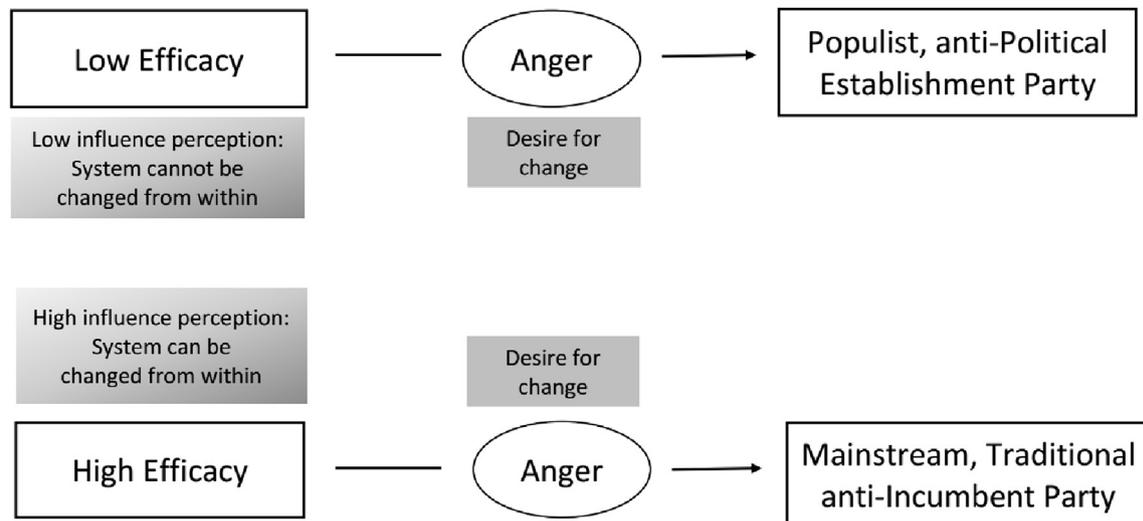


Fig. 3. Effects of anger on party support conditional on efficacy.

the leadership of the relatively young David Cameron, who had been working to modernize the image of the party and distance himself from the Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s (Curtice and Fisher, 2011). With a turnout of 65%, the Conservative Party won the election securing 36.1% of the votes (+3.7 compared to 2005); the Labour Party obtained 29% (−6.2), the Liberal-Democrats 23% (+1), and UKIP 3.1% (+0.9) (Curtice and Fisher, 2011).<sup>14</sup>

Additionally, the British Election Study offers important advantages because it contains panel data with nine waves of surveys conducted between the 2005 and the 2010 elections. Panel data raise fewer concerns about causal direction and endogeneity between emotions, on the one hand, and political participation and preferences, on the other, because they provide survey items capturing emotions in waves that precede the ones that include indicators of political behavior.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, thanks to the panel nature of the data I can control for anger predisposition, political participation, and party preferences before the crisis, which allows me to evaluate how anger about the crisis has modified patterns of political participation and party choice. Finally, survey data from the UK nicely complement the existing literature on the political effects of anger, which has often been conducted in experimental settings in American politics.

## 5. Analysis and results

### 5.1. Anger about the crisis and political participation

A preliminary analysis reveals that anger has been the dominant emotional reaction to the crisis. In 2005, before the crisis unfolded, only 13% of the respondents expressed anger about the general economic conditions in the country. Five years later, in the middle of the financial crisis, this percentage had increased to about half of

the sample (see Fig. 4). Anger about the crisis was experienced by citizens with both low (54% expressed anger) and high efficacy (47%).<sup>16</sup> Among the negative emotions potentially related to the crisis, anger has emerged as a reaction more common than fear, which increased from 17% to 32.5% between 2005 and 2010.

Moreover, the distribution of efficacy reveals that a vast proportion of respondents perceived to have very low influence over politics. About one third of respondents reported a value of 0 on an 11-point scale, and about half of the sample chose a value of 0 or 1. This distribution leads one to wonder whether low efficacy is a factor that shapes the response to the crisis via its interaction with anger, as my hypotheses maintain, or a byproduct of the crisis itself. Previous research has shown that political efficacy tend to be relatively stable over time (Acock and Clarke, 1990). But what happened in the context of a historic event like the economic crisis, which has the potential to disrupt citizens' lives? A comparison of the levels of efficacy among the same respondents before and during the crisis shows that its distribution has not changed substantially between 2005 and 2010. The proportions of respondents with levels of efficacy of 0 and 1 were 0.31 and 0.15, respectively, in 2005, and 0.34 and 0.13 in 2010 (Fig. 5). At the macro-level, therefore, the crisis has not decreased political efficacy.<sup>17</sup>

To explore the effect of anger about the economic crisis on political participation I adopt a logit model measuring the act of voting or not in the 2010 election. The independent variable of interest is anger about the crisis, which is obtained from the following survey item: "Which, if any, of the following words describe your feelings about how you have been personally affected by the current financial crisis?" Respondents could indicate up to four feelings among the following: angry, happy, disgusted, hopeful, uneasy, confident, afraid, and proud. In the models below, anger is a binary variable equal to 1 for respondents who chose "angry" and 0 for everyone

<sup>14</sup> UKIP and the Conservative Party are arguably more attractive for the conservative electorate. However, my theoretical claims gain even more plausibility if the analysis can show that angry voters are more likely to support these parties regardless of their ideological preferences.

<sup>15</sup> Since the question on feelings about the crisis was asked in the pre-campaign wave, it is clearly separated from the measure of political participation, which comes from the post-election wave.

<sup>16</sup> These data partially address another potential endogeneity issue – i.e. the question on whether high efficacy helps to give rise to anger – and suggest that the correlation between anger and efficacy is not very strong. Further analysis reveals that pre-crisis levels of efficacy (2005) are not a significant predictor of anger about the crisis, even after controlling for anger predisposition and party preferences. As a robustness check, all the models in the paper are run with a measure of efficacy from 2005. The results are largely confirmed and are available in the appendix.

<sup>17</sup> This does not exclude that changes may have occurred at the individual level, but suggests that they were not unidirectional.

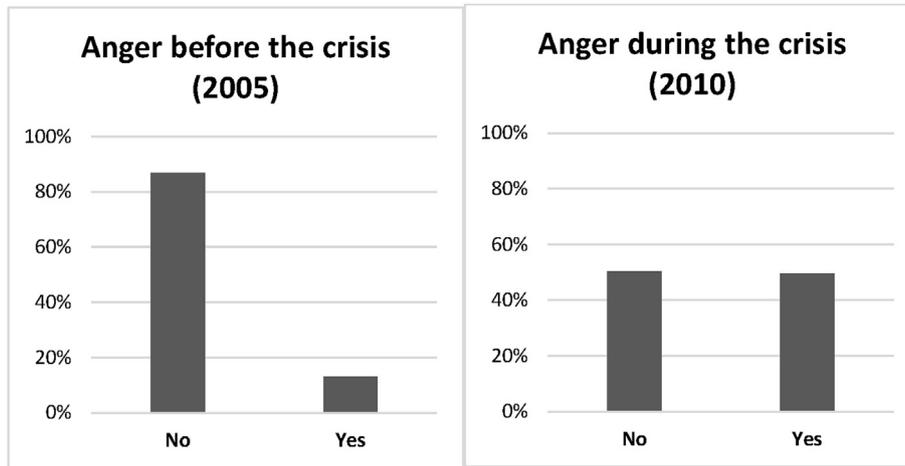


Fig. 4. Anger about the general economic situation.

else.<sup>18</sup> The measure of anger comes from the pre-campaign wave, while the dependent variable is obtained from the post-campaign wave. Anger enters the equation also in interaction with political efficacy, which measures individuals' confidence in their ability to influence politics and public affairs. To test the robustness of the findings, efficacy is measured both on an 11-point scale and as a binary variable.<sup>19</sup> Since the anger coefficient corresponds to the effect of anger for individuals with low efficacy, for whom the interaction term is eliminated, I expect this coefficient to be negative: anger is predicted to decrease political participation when efficacy is low.

Model 1 takes advantage of the panel data to introduce several controls (see Table 1). First, I consider whether respondents voted or not in the 2005 and 2009 elections. By accounting for previous participation, I can analyze how anger has modified citizens' political engagement over time. This also addresses the consideration that voting is habit forming and casting a ballot at one election may increase the likelihood to vote in the future (Gerber et al., 2003; Aldrich et al., 2011). Second, I isolate the impact of anger about the crisis by controlling for anger predisposition, which is operationalized by a measure of anger about the economy in 2005. Following recent work on the impact of anger about the crisis, I also control for standard evaluations of the economic situation (Wagner, 2014; see also Chzhen et al., 2014). Third, I include socio-economic resources and demographic characteristics that can influence political participation: education, income, age, age squared, gender, race, and union membership (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980; Verba et al., 1995).

<sup>18</sup> Two limitations must be acknowledged in the measure of anger. First, psychologists have shown that self-reported emotions do not always perfectly map onto the somatic emotional experience. Second, anger is not measured on a continuous scale. Even if the survey item is an imperfect measure of anger, I take advantage of the panel data to capture and isolate the effects of anger about the crisis to the best of my ability. First, I control for anger about the economy registered before the crisis in 2005, thereby accounting for individual anger predisposition. Second, I include variables measuring fear and disgust, and show that only anger produces the hypothesized effects. A list of survey items and coding decisions can be found in the online appendix.

<sup>19</sup> "On a scale from 0 to 10, where 10 means a great deal of influence and 0 means no influence, how much influence do you have on politics and public affairs?" The binary operationalization of efficacy forces me to choose a somewhat arbitrary cutoff point, but also makes data interpretation and discussion easier. The "low efficacy" category includes respondents who reported one of the two lowest values on the 11-point scale. This way, the binary variable divides the sample roughly in half between respondents with lower efficacy (47.2%) and higher efficacy (52.8%). The online appendix provides a discussion of the other direction of the interaction term. As a robustness check, all of the models in the paper are run in the appendix with split analysis rather than interaction terms. Results remain substantially unchanged.

Finally, strength of party identification and attention to the election campaign consider that strong partisans and citizens who pay attention to politics are more likely to participate (Valentino et al., 2011; Verba et al., 1995).<sup>20</sup>

Model 2 further isolates the effect of anger about the crisis within the category of negative emotions by controlling for other emotions. Two emotions emerge as possible alternative explanations for removal from politics: fear, sometimes referred to as anxiety, and disgust. Existing literature suggests that fear – which derives from uncertainty about the origin of the threat (Lerner and Keltner, 2001; see also Wagner, 2014) and tends to arise when people do not feel confident about eliminating the cause of their distress (Lazarus, 1991; Frijda, 1986) – activates the avoidance system, thereby possibly causing disengagement. In the political context, anxiety increases information seeking and learning (MacKuen et al., 2010; Valentino et al., 2008), but is not a powerful mobilizer (Valentino et al., 2011). Alternatively, one could hypothesize that individuals with low efficacy are more likely to experience disgust. If they feel hopeless and frustrated about the entire system that is out of their control, they could develop an aversive reaction leading to disengagement. Model 2, therefore, controls for fear and disgust about the economic crisis.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, to further account for anger predisposition and isolate the impact of anger about the crisis, I also control for anger about other political topics, namely the national health system and the Iraq War.

The results show that anger decreased electoral participation among citizens with low efficacy. Controlling for the other covariates, the odds of voting for angry citizens with low efficacy are about 20 percentage points lower than the odds for non-angry individuals.<sup>22</sup> This is the specific effect of the interaction between

<sup>20</sup> A model in the appendix controls for two additional factors. Given that anger has often emerged among citizens who held the government responsible for the crisis (Wagner, 2014), I include government blame to verify that anger is not just a proxy for blame attribution. Moreover, since some authors have argued that emotions could be linked to partisan preferences (Ladd and Lenz, 2008, 2011), I control for party preferences. Finally, an additional model also controls for the interaction between anger and party preferences. Results do not substantially change.

<sup>21</sup> Fear and disgust are binary variables equal to 1 for respondents who chose 'afraid' and 'disgusted,' respectively, and 0 for everyone else. An analysis of respondents' reported feelings show that citizens with low efficacy expressed anger in greater proportion than disgust or fear (54% versus 43% and 33%, respectively). A fully saturated model in the online appendix also introduces three two-way interactions between efficacy and each negative emotion (anger, fear, and disgust). Unlike anger, fear and disgust are never significant.

<sup>22</sup> See the online appendix for the predicted probability.

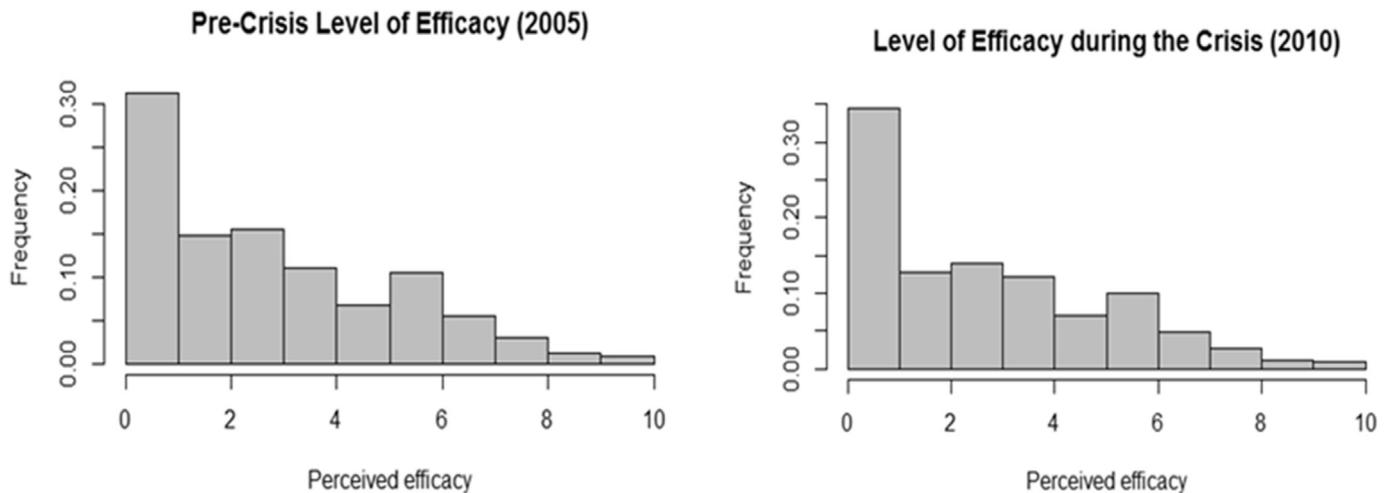


Fig. 5. Distribution of efficacy, before and during the crisis.

anger and low efficacy, and not simply of the feeling of political inefficaciousness, as revealed by the non-significance of the efficacy coefficient for citizens who did not express anger. The fact that anger about the economic crisis has diminished electoral participation among individuals feeling inefficacious should not be underestimated, considering that a very large share of the electorate expressed low efficacy.<sup>23</sup> Results for citizens with higher efficacy are less clear, but the positive interaction between anger and efficacy suggests that anger did not have a negative effect on participation for highly efficacious individuals. Furthermore, many factors that capture long-term resources and are usually associated with participation are not significant, inasmuch as their effect is likely captured by the variables controlling for previous electoral participation. By contrast, anger about the crisis has developed at a later point to modify previous patterns of participation.

## 5.2. Anger about the crisis and party preferences

Anger about the economic crisis has therefore demobilized citizens who do not believe they can influence politics. To fully understand the political consequences of anger we now need to consider its effect on party preferences and voting behavior. To evaluate the impact of anger on support for populist parties, I analyze vote choice and opinions about UKIP. Party evaluations, rather than just vote choice, allow me to assess the impact of anger on political preferences even for citizens who did not go to the polls. Furthermore, growing support in public opinion for non-mainstream actors represents a pool of potential future votes, and may convince mainstream forces to modify their positions to prevent electoral losses, thereby promoting change even outside the electoral channel.

The three OLS models below measure public support for UKIP on an 11-point scale (Table 2).<sup>24</sup> The first model includes only anger, political efficacy, and their interaction.<sup>25</sup> Model 2 controls for UKIP support in 2005. Accounting for baseline support before the crisis

addresses endogeneity concerns in the relation between anger and party support, considering that populist parties can fuel political discontent (Rooduijn et al., 2016). This allows me to measure how anger has affected opinions about UKIP between 2005 and 2010. The model also introduces socio-demographic variables often correlated with support for populist far-right parties: education, age, income, gender, and race. Moreover, it controls for other emotions to isolate the effect of anger about the crisis: fear, disgust, and anger predisposition as measured by anger about the economic situation in 2005. Finally, model 3 includes additional regressors such as indicators of social integration (home ownership and union membership); attitudinal positions that often fuel the protest and far-right vote (economic and political dissatisfaction); blame attribution for the crisis to the EU and anti-immigrants views, given that immigration and opposition to the EU are central issues in UKIP's message (Mellon and Evans, 2016).<sup>26</sup>

The results show that angry people with low efficacy became more supportive of UKIP between 2005 and 2010, given that anger remains significant after controlling for 2005 UKIP support. While other emotions do not have a significant impact, factors that drive support for UKIP include lower levels of education, negative economic evaluations, negative attitudes toward immigration, and EU blame for the crisis.<sup>27</sup> Among citizens with low efficacy, all other things equal, anger increases support for UKIP between 0.6 (model 3) and 1.2 points (model 1) on a 10-point scale. Further analysis reveals that the impact of anger has been greater than the impact produced by moving from the lowest to the highest category of education; and similar to the impact of negative attitudes toward immigration and EU blame attribution.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, the negative interaction between anger and efficacy suggests that the impact of anger on support for UKIP vanishes as efficacy grows. Angry citizens with high efficacy have not increased their support for UKIP between 2005 and 2010.<sup>29</sup> On the contrary, they have become more supportive of the Conservative Party (Table 3), therefore embracing a mainstream opposition

<sup>23</sup> As mentioned, one third of the sample chose a value of 0 on the 11-point scale and about half of the sample chose a value of 0 or 1.

<sup>24</sup> "On a scale that runs from 0 to 10, where 0 means strongly dislike and 10 means strongly like, how do you feel about the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)?" All of the models on party preferences were also run as ordered logit models and can be found in the online appendix.

<sup>25</sup> Efficacy is measured as an 11-point variable. Adopting a binary variable for efficacy does not change the results, as shown in the online appendix.

<sup>26</sup> A fully saturated model in the online appendix also introduces three two-way interactions between efficacy and each negative emotion (anger, fear, and disgust). Fear and disgust are never significant.

<sup>27</sup> A model in the online appendix adopts individual-level change in UKIP support between 2005 and 2010 as the dependent variable. Results do not change.

<sup>28</sup> The online appendix illustrates this finding.

<sup>29</sup> A graphic representation of the interaction effect is available in the online appendix.

**Table 1**  
Electoral participation (2010).

	Vote at the 2010 Election			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	Efficacy (11-point)		Efficacy (binary)	
Anger	−0.95*	−0.98*	−1.10*	−1.17*
	(0.47)	(0.49)	(0.47)	(0.50)
Anger*Political efficacy	0.36	0.35	1.83*	1.89*
	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.74)	(0.75)
Political efficacy	−0.14	−0.14	−0.59	−0.68
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.49)	(0.50)
Anger (2005)	−0.35	−0.29	−0.33	−0.26
	(0.49)	(0.52)	(0.50)	(0.52)
Vote (2005)	1.47***	1.52***	1.48***	1.54***
	(0.38)	(0.38)	(0.38)	(0.39)
Vote (2009)	1.90***	1.90***	1.90***	1.90***
	(0.36)	(0.36)	(0.36)	(0.37)
Education	−0.17	−0.18	−0.18	−0.19
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Income	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Male	−0.17	−0.22	−0.19	−0.24
	(0.33)	(0.34)	(0.33)	(0.34)
White	0.16	0.14	0.18	0.18
	(0.89)	(0.88)	(0.89)	(0.88)
Age	−0.17	−0.17	−0.18	−0.18
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Age squared	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.002
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
PID strength	0.62*	0.64*	0.63*	0.65*
	(0.29)	(0.30)	(0.29)	(0.30)
Union member	0.65	0.64	0.69	0.68
	(0.49)	(0.49)	(0.49)	(0.50)
Campaign attention	0.13	0.13	0.12	0.12
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Economic evaluations	−0.21	−0.23	−0.21	−0.24
	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.17)
Fear		−0.19		−0.20
		(0.37)		(0.37)
Disgust		0.07		0.09
		(0.40)		(0.40)
Anger (health system)		−0.39		−0.42
		(0.37)		(0.37)
Anger (Iraq war)		0.30		0.33
		(0.36)		(0.36)
Constant	4.02	4.11	4.33	4.47
	(2.98)	(3.01)	(3.02)	(3.06)
N	1184	1184	1184	1184
Log Likelihood	−149.13	−148.12	−147.43	−146.27
AIC	332.25	338.24	328.85	334.55

\*\*\*p &lt; 0.001; \*\*p &lt; 0.01; \*p &lt; 0.05.

alternative.<sup>30</sup> On a 10-point scale, all things equal, anger increases support for the Conservative Party by more than 1 point among individuals with the highest level of efficacy.<sup>31</sup>

After considering the effect of anger on party evaluations, analyzing the electoral choice of angry citizens who did go to the polls allows us to explore additional points. First, it is possible to assess whether anger has influenced behavior beyond opinions. Second, a multinomial model makes a direct comparison between parties possible. Since voting for UKIP is the left-out category in the models in Table 4, negative coefficients indicate an increase in the probability to vote for UKIP over the other parties. To account for

<sup>30</sup> Efficacy is as an 11-point variable. Results do not change with a binary operationalization. A model in the appendix shows that the results are robust to the inclusion of controls, including interactions between efficacy and fear and disgust, respectively.

<sup>31</sup> See the online appendix for graphical representations of coefficient size and interaction effects.

**Table 2**  
Support for UKIP.

	Support for UKIP		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	Anger	1.164***	0.653***
	(0.164)	(0.181)	(0.180)
Anger*Political efficacy	−0.045	−0.139**	−0.168***
	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.051)
Political efficacy	−0.095**	−0.013	0.038
	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.037)
Fear		−0.005	−0.121
		(0.131)	(0.129)
Disgust		0.249	0.112
		(0.142)	(0.141)
Anger (2005)		−0.243	−0.429*
		(0.175)	(0.173)
Education		−0.137***	−0.112**
		(0.041)	(0.040)
Income		0.003	0.003
		(0.017)	(0.018)
Age		0.015**	0.009
		(0.005)	(0.005)
Male		0.067	0.105
		(0.117)	(0.115)
White		−0.193	−0.112
		(0.366)	(0.368)
UKIP support (2005)		0.732***	0.692***
		(0.022)	(0.022)
Home owner			0.284
			(0.155)
Union member			−0.302*
			(0.136)
Unemployed			0.781
			(0.618)
Economic evaluations			−0.141*
			(0.055)
Democracy satisfaction			−0.050
			(0.070)
Immigr: negative attit.			0.733***
			(0.153)
Blame EU (crisis)			0.543***
			(0.133)
Constant	3.280***	1.361**	1.067
	(0.122)	(0.507)	(0.556)
N	2571	1499	1479
R-squared	0.044	0.497	0.527
Adj. R-squared	0.043	0.493	0.521
Residual Std. Error	2.890	2.149	2.092
	(df = 2567)	(df = 1486)	(df = 1459)
F Statistic	39.186***	122.529***	85.611***
	(df = 3; 2567)	(df = 12; 1486)	(df = 19; 1459)

\*\*\*p &lt; 0.001; \*\*p &lt; 0.01; \*p &lt; 0.05.

previous party preferences, binary variables control for citizens' vote choice at the 2005 national election.

Table 4 further confirms the theory expectations. The effect of anger on vote choice at the 2010 election is still conditional on political efficacy. Among citizens with low efficacy, anger has increased the probability to vote UKIP over Labour, Conservatives, and Lib-Dem.<sup>32</sup> Fig. 6 below depicts the predicted probabilities of party choice calculated from the multinomial model. Anger has increased the probability to vote for UKIP from less than 5% to around 10% among citizens with low efficacy, a noticeable result for a populist party in a plurality system. On the contrary, anger

<sup>32</sup> These findings are robust to the inclusion of additional controls, including interactions between efficacy and fear and disgust (see the online appendix). Adopting a binary variable for efficacy instead of an 11-point variable also does not change the results. These findings complement and expand those by Wagner (2014), who shows that anger decreases the likelihood of voting Labour among previous supporters of the party.

**Table 3**  
Support for conservative party.

	Support for Conservative Party
Anger	0.079 (0.111)
Anger*Political efficacy	0.116*** (0.034)
Political efficacy	-0.014 (0.024)
Conservative Support (2005)	0.785*** (0.014)
Constant	1.890*** (0.089)
N	2734
R-squared	0.559
Adj. R-squared	0.558
Residual Std. Error	2.017 (df = 2729)
F Statistic	864.586*** (df = 4; 2729)

\*\*\*p < 0.001; \*\*p < 0.01; \*p < 0.05.

**Table 4**  
Vote choice in the 2010 election.

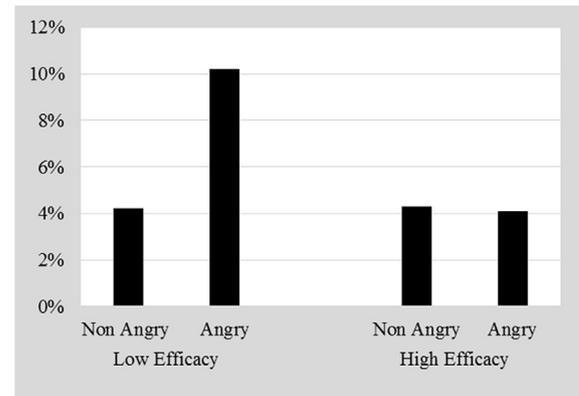
	Dependent variable		
	Labour (UKIP)	Conserv (UKIP)	LibDem (UKIP)
Anger	-1.044** (0.365)	-0.659* (0.334)	-1.114** (0.354)
Anger*Political efficacy	0.120 (0.131)	0.251* (0.122)	0.231 (0.128)
Political efficacy	0.076 (0.092)	-0.077 (0.090)	0.001 (0.092)
Vote UKIP 2005	-3.683*** (0.793)	-1.103 (0.604)	-2.104** (0.665)
Vote Conserv 2005	-1.819** (0.594)	1.947*** (0.576)	-0.781 (0.606)
Vote Labour 2005	1.596** (0.584)	0.544 (0.622)	1.089 (0.618)
Vote LibDem 2005	-0.083 (0.602)	0.821 (0.622)	2.154*** (0.617)
Constant	1.690** (0.565)	1.094 (0.588)	1.247* (0.593)
N	1535	1535	1535
Akaike Inf. Crit.	2590.062	2590.062	2590.062
Residual Deviance	2542.062	2542.062	2542.062

\*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01; \*\*\*p < 0.001.

registers barely any effect on support for UKIP among citizens with high efficacy.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the interaction between anger and efficacy in Table 4 is positive and significant for the Conservative Party. This confirms the hypothesis that, as efficacy becomes higher, anger increases the likelihood to vote for the mainstream opposition alternative represented by Conservatives, but not for the incumbent Labour Party.<sup>34</sup> While citizens with the lowest level of efficacy had a probability around 50% to vote for the Conservative Party

<sup>33</sup> For easiness of interpretation, this plot reports efficacy as a binary variable, as specified in footnote 21. Furthermore, the positive interaction between anger and efficacy in column 2 of Table 4 suggests that the Conservative Party may have been the preferred option for angry citizens with high efficacy. Further analysis confirms that, while anger increased the probability to vote for the Conservative Party by less than 3 percentage points among citizens with low efficacy (from 48% to 50.5%), anger produced an increase of 13 percentage points among citizens with high efficacy (from 36% to 49%).

<sup>34</sup> Even if not significant, the interaction effect for Lib Dems is similar to the one for Conservatives. This confirms that – as efficacy grows – angry individuals are more likely to choose mainstream opposition parties.



**Fig. 6.** Predicted Probability of Voting UKIP in the 2010 Election conditional on Anger and Efficacy.

regardless of whether they were angry or not, anger increased the probability that citizens with the highest level of efficacy voted Conservative from about 20% to slightly more than 40%.<sup>35</sup>

### 5.3. Causal mediation analysis

Among angry citizens, those with high efficacy have therefore chosen a mainstream opposition force, while those feeling inefficient have opted for the party that represented an open challenge to the entire establishment. This section tests the causal mechanism explaining that angry individuals with low efficacy have grown alienated from the traditional political landscape and become more supportive of UKIP between 2005 and 2010. I test this mechanism with causal mediation analysis.

The notion of mediation suggests that the treatment affects the outcome indirectly through a mediator, so that the total effect of the treatment can be divided into the direct effect of the treatment and the causal mediation. Through causal mediation analysis, one can identify and test the impact of a mediator: if the treatment does not influence the mediator, the effect of the causal mediation is null (Imai et al., 2010: 309–12). In this analysis, anger is the treatment, political alienation is the mediator, and UKIP support is the outcome. Political alienation is an index built from three items measuring trust in politicians, political parties, and the parliament. Since the indicator is applied to individuals feeling inefficient, this variable follows measures of political alienation adopted in the literature, which combine distrust and inefficacy (Reef and Knoke, 1999: 416–18). Further information is available in the online appendix.

I use the R mediation package developed by Tingley (Tingley et al., 2014) and coauthors and specify two models: the outcome model, in which the dependent variable is UKIP support and the independent variables are the regressors previously described, in addition to the mediator; and the mediator model, in which the dependent variable is political alienation and the independent variables are the same as in the outcome model.<sup>36</sup> Since in causal mediation analysis the outcome depends on both the treatment and the mediator, anger enters both the outcome and the mediator model as an independent variable. To account for the effect of anger conditional on efficacy, I estimate the impact of the average causal

<sup>35</sup> See the online appendix for a representation of the predicted probabilities for all the major parties calculated from the model using the continuous version of the efficacy variable.

<sup>36</sup> The models can be found in the online appendix.

**Table 5**

Mediation of political alienation in the impact of anger on support for UKIP among citizens with low efficacy.

	Estimate	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	p-value
ACME	0.0588	0.0155	0.1123	0.00
ADE	0.5867	0.2434	0.9588	0.00
Total Effect	0.6455	0.3123	1.0175	0.00
Prop. Mediated	0.0887	0.0226	0.2378	0.00

Simulations: 1000.

Sample Size Used: 1494.

mediation (ACME) for citizens with low efficacy.

The results in Table 5 show that the causal mediation (ACME coefficient) is statistically significant and positive, which indicates that the treatment (anger) has a positive impact on the mediator (political alienation). Anger also has a positive and significant direct effect on UKIP support (ADE), which leads to an overall positive total effect. These findings confirm that anger favored political alienation among citizens with low efficacy, which in turn increased support for UKIP.<sup>37</sup>

## 6. Conclusions

The effects of anger about the economic crisis have been conditional on political efficacy. While anger generally sparks desire for change, efficacy determines the perceived availability of options. For citizens with low efficacy, change through traditional channels did not look feasible. Anger therefore pushed these citizens away from the disliked system by decreasing participation and enhancing support for populist actors who challenged the entire establishment. These results shed new light on the link between anger and political engagement: while the literature has consistently reported a mobilization effect, this work provides evidence that individual variation in political efficacy accounts for conditional outcomes. The fact that anger had opposing effects on electoral participation conditional on efficacy helps explain why turnout has not dramatically fallen following the crisis: the disengagement of citizens feeling inefficient has been at least partially compensated by the increased participation of citizens with high efficacy. Nonetheless, the depressing effect on participation among citizens with low efficacy is troublesome, considering that a very large sector of society currently perceives itself to have low influence over politics.

Furthermore, latent support for populist actors should not be underestimated. Angry individuals with low efficacy are less likely to go to the polls, but become responsive to the messages of anti-establishment parties and candidates, thereby constituting a pool of potential voters. Between 2005 and 2010, angry citizens with low efficacy grew frustrated with establishment parties, disengaged, and became more supportive of UKIP, developing more positive opinions about the party. Even if the data at hand do not allow me to test post-2010 effects, the electoral gains of UKIP following the 2010 election suggest that the party may have been successful at re-engaging some of the previously alienated angry voters. This pattern could also help explain the increased support for populist forces in Europe and the US in recent years following growing political disaffection. Since populist actors have the potential to

bring into the political process citizens who were previously disengaged, future research would do well to investigate the mechanisms through which mobilization can be triggered among citizens with low efficacy. One could consider the ability of anti-establishment parties to provide clear targets to blame. By offering identifiable and tangible foes, populist actors may convince individuals with low efficacy that retribution is possible and mobilize them to punish the culprits.

## Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data related to this article can be found at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2017.09.014>.

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<sup>37</sup> The results of the causal mediation analysis do not change with a heteroscedasticity-consistent estimator and the nonparametric bootstrap. Since the model-based inference in mediation analysis relies on the sequential ignorability assumption, I conducted sensitivity analysis. The online appendix discusses such assumption and presents the full results of the sensitivity analysis. The analysis reveals that when  $\rho$  (i.e. the correlation between the residuals of the outcome and the mediator regression) equals 0.1, the confidence interval for ACME contains 0.

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