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Euroscepticism among Dutch Leftist and Rightist Populist Constituencies: How can the U-Curve be Understood?*

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Abstract

The U-curve in euroscepticism is well established: both leftist and rightist populist constituencies are more eurosceptic than voters for establishment parties. Using rich survey data on a country with both constituencies represented in parliament (the Netherlands; $n=1,296$), we examine *why* euroscepticism drives populist voting. Our analyses demonstrate that euroscepticism is part of the well-established link between both 1) distrust in politics and politicians, and 2) support for protectionism on the one hand, and voting for both types of populist party on the other. It is also part of the well-known relationship between 3) ethnocentrism and rightist populist voting. Surprisingly, euroscepticism is not part of the typical association between economic egalitarianism and voting for a leftist populist party. The concluding section discusses the implications of our findings and provides suggestions for further research.

Keywords: euroscepticism; populist voting; political distrust; protectionism

Introduction

Increasing anti-European sentiment on the right end of the political spectrum profoundly changed the relationship between the left–right dimension and euroscepticism (Van Elsas and Van der Brug, 2015; Werts *et al.*, 2012). Once strongly connected to the radical left and rooted in concerns about economic inequality and the welfare state, today euroscepticism follows a U-curve. Scepticism is no longer only remarkably strong on the (economically oriented) left-wing flank, but also on the (culturally focussed) right-wing flank (Conti and Memoli, 2012; De Vries and Edwards, 2009; Halikiopoulou *et al.*, 2012; Taggart, 1998), due to the rise of right-wing populist parties in the 1990s, which combine a nationalist and anti-immigrant agenda with high levels of opposition to the EU (Ford and Goodwin, 2014; Mudde, 2007; Taggart, 2004).

While the existence of this U-curve is well-established at the party-level (see, for example, Conti and Memoli, 2012; De Vries and Edwards, 2009; Halikiopoulou *et al.*, 2012; Taggart, 1998), two recent studies by Van Elsas and colleagues show that it is mirrored among the European population at large (Van Elsas and Van der Brug, 2015; Van Elsas *et al.*, 2016): citizens who identify as most leftist and most rightist report the highest levels of euroscepticism. Determining the meaning of this pattern is not straightforward, however, as it is unclear what the ideological basis of euroscepticism is. As Taggart (2004, p. 281) argues: ‘populist Euroscepticism is a very broad umbrella covering a most unusual set of political adversaries’. Moreover, extant studies do not specifically focus on leftist and rightist populist constituencies, but instead discern voters based on left–right

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self-placement (Van Elsas and Van der Brug, 2015; Van Elsas *et al.*, 2016). The question of how euroscepticism among populist constituencies can be understood is, consequently, still open.

In short, while various studies suggest that opposition towards European integration is a major electoral selling point for populist parties on the flanks (Taggart, 1998; Werts *et al.*, 2012), to date there are no studies that ask *why* the constituencies of these parties are most sceptical of the EU. In this study, we aim to fill this lacuna by analyzing recent rich data on political attitudes. We focus on answering the question: how can euroscepticism as a driver for voting for leftist and rightist populist parties be explained?

While euroscepticism has often been understood as a general disapproval of EU membership and integration, it is important to take its underlying aspects into account (Hobolt and De Vries, 2016; *cf.* Leruth *et al.*, 2018). Based on Lubbers and Scheepers (2010), we conceptualize euroscepticism as resistance to a reduction of national sovereignty ('political'), a negative evaluation of the costs and benefits of EU membership ('instrumental'), and/or a low level of identification with the EU ('cultural'). Data collected in 2012 in the Netherlands provide a closely related measure of euroscepticism and are especially relevant as a left-wing and a right-wing populist party have been in parliament simultaneously in this country since 2006: the *Socialist Party* (SP) and Geert Wilders' right-wing *Party for Freedom* (PVV), respectively (Akkerman *et al.*, 2017; Otjes and Louwerse, 2015; Schumacher and Rooduijn, 2013).

The right-wing populist PVV, established in 2006 by Geert Wilders, is well-known for its national-populism and anti-EU agenda (Vossen, 2011). It acquired 15 out of 150 seats in parliament in 2012, the year of our data collection (and 20 seats in the most recent parliamentary elections, held in 2017). The SP, founded as a Maoist splinter party, gained electoral success after reinventing itself as a socialist protest party (Lucardie and Voerman, 2012). It has had seats in the national parliament since 1994, and gained 15 seats in 2012 (and 14 in 2017). Whether the SP can be labelled as populist is subject to debate. The party's populist character is primarily seen in how it represents the economic interests of the 'common man' against 'neo-liberal' policies and institutions (March, 2011; Otjes and Louwerse, 2015). A recent review of the literature concludes that 'the key features of populism – anti-elitism and appeals to popular sovereignty – are still visible in SP's rhetoric' (Otjes and Louwerse, 2015, p. 67), but some argue that 'populism is more an auxiliary rhetorical devise than an ideological core attribute' of the SP (Van Kessel, 2015, p. 121; *cf.* March, 2011). Nevertheless, it is still generally considered to be a populist party (Otjes and Louwerse, 2015).

I. Support for Euroscepticism among Populist Constituencies: Four Explanations

Populism is commonly understood to be a 'thin-centered' ideology that is built on a Manichean view of the world in which there is a 'pure people' that suffers the perils caused by a 'corrupt elite' (Canovan, 1999; Mudde, 2007; Taggart, 1998, 2004). As there are diverse interpretations of 'the people', populism is easily combined with other, or 'fuller', ideologies including those on the left and on the right – explaining why there is no such thing as 'the' populist voter (Rooduijn, 2018). Kriesi (2014) identifies three conceptions of 'the people': a cultural one of 'the people as a nation' that is typically associated with rightist populism, an economic conception of 'the people as a class'

associated with leftist populism, and a political conception of 'the people as sovereign' which is characteristic of both types of populism. Recent research indicates that the first two are predominantly related to preferences for rightist and leftist populist parties, respectively, whereas the latter underlies voting for populist parties on both flanks (Akkerman *et al.*, 2017; Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel, 2018).

Against this background, we scrutinize four possible explanations for support for euroscepticism among populist constituencies, which are elaborated on below. The first two are explanations that may be valid for both leftist and rightist populist constituencies, as they may be conceived of as threats to the people as sovereign. These focus on: their anti-institutional mood (Canovan, 1999; Kriesi, 2014), reflected in distrust of political institutions and politicians (Kemmers *et al.*, 2016); and opposition to international free trade (Van der Waal and De Koster, 2018). The third explanation matches a conception of the people as a class and revolves around economic concerns and focuses on opposition to inequality, such as economic egalitarianism (De Koster *et al.*, 2013; De Vries and Edwards, 2009). As such, it has potential when it comes to understanding euroscepticism as a driver for voting for a leftist populist party. The fourth addresses cultural concerns, reflecting a conception of the people as a nation, focusing on opposition to cultural diversity, such as ethnocentrism (De Koster *et al.*, 2013; De Vries and Edwards, 2009; Ford and Goodwin, 2014; Mudde, 2007), which promises to explain euroscepticism as a driver for voting for a rightist populist party.

Distrust in Political Institutions and Politicians as a Driver of Euroscepticism

In general, populism is strongly associated with an 'anti-institutional mood' (Kemmers *et al.*, 2016). It leans heavily on the idea that 'the people' should effectively hold the power to rule, but in the current system this is a privilege they lack or, worse, are denied. Kriesi argues accordingly that the 'central populist message is that politics has escaped popular control and that popular control has to be restored' (2014, p. 363). Consequently, a general distrust of the political 'system' – in particular political parties and politicians, the 'elites' who wrongly hold the power – is central to populism in both its leftist and rightist guise.

Kriesi (2014) argues that this 'strong anti-institutional impulse' is therefore the most genuine element of populism. According to Canovan (1999, p. 6), populists 'love transparency and distrust mystification', which means that they 'denounce backroom deals, shady compromises, complicated procedures, secret treaties, and technicalities that only experts can understand'. Canovan further argues that the 'politics of coalition-building is evidently open to populist attack on these sorts of grounds, while European Union politics is a sitting duck' (1999, p. 6). The latter is true, of course, because supra-national organizations like the EU make politics seem even less transparent and more of a mystical 'back-room dealing' phenomenon, far away from 'the people'.

In this study, we consequently consider the distrust in political institutions and politicians (henceforward: 'political distrust') that is typical of populist constituencies (Kemmers *et al.*, 2016) as a possible explanation for their euroscepticism. This would mean that euroscepticism is part of the link between political distrust and support for those parties. In technical terms, we expect that euroscepticism is a mediator of a positive effect of political distrust on voting for populist parties (Hypothesis 1).

Opposition to International Free Trade as a Driver of Euroscepticism

In addition to their opposition to establishment political institutions and politicians, both leftist and rightist populist parties oppose free trade (henceforward also referred to as 'support for protectionism'). Support for protectionism can be found among leftist populist parties, such as *die Linke* (the Left) in Germany, and their rightist counterparts, such as *Front National* (National Front) in France. These types of party, for instance, warned Western European workers that the implementation of the so-called 'Bolkenstein Directive' in 2006 would lead to 'unfair competition' from proverbial 'Polish plumbers'.

In the Netherlands, the leftist populist SP more strongly opposes international free trade than the rightist populist PVV does. Nevertheless, recent research that focuses on the electorate instead of the party level, demonstrates that opposition to free trade is fierce among both leftist and rightist populist constituencies, and drives their vote *in addition to* political distrust and economic and cultural concerns (Van der Waal and De Koster, 2018). Support for protectionism is therefore not part of the link between political distrust and support for populist parties, as one might expect due to the opaque 'backroom dealing' and bickering surrounding free trade negotiations and agreements. Moreover, despite the distributive consequences of free trade, support for protectionism is not part of the association between economic egalitarianism and voting for a leftist populist party. Opposition to international free trade does not, in fact, reflect economic concerns, but cultural concerns related to free trade's disruption of the national and cultural order (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2006; Margalit, 2012; Van der Waal and De Koster, 2015). Concomitantly, support for protectionism proves to be part of the link between ethnocentrism and voting for a rightist populist party, albeit a very minor part (Van der Waal and De Koster, 2018).

Support for protectionism is, thus, largely an independent driver of support for populist parties. International free trade may be conceived of as a threat to the people's sovereignty. Because the common market is a central pillar of the EU, support for protectionism may also underlie euroscepticism. Therefore, we assess whether the greater support for protectionism among the leftist and rightist populist constituencies is an explanation for their opposition to the EU. This would mean that euroscepticism is part of the link between support for protectionism and voting for those parties. Technically, this implies that euroscepticism is a mediator of a positive effect of support for protectionism on voting for populist parties (Hypothesis 2).

Opposition to Economic Inequality as a Driver of Euroscepticism

While political distrust and support for protectionism are potential drivers of euroscepticism among leftist *and* rightist populist constituencies, economic egalitarianism is a likely driver of the euroscepticism of the former. The left is traditionally sceptical of European integration, because this is essentially an economically liberal project that would allow for more free market exchange, while undermining the sovereignty of states to implement their own economic policies (Marks and Wilson, 2000; *cf.* Garry and Tilley, 2015). According to textbook economics, this increases efficiency and productivity, but also aggravates economic inequality. It is the latter that left-wing parties, including populist ones (De Vries and Edwards, 2009; Marks and Wilson, 2000; Van Elsas and Van der Brug, 2015), traditionally resist. According to Van Elsas and Van der Brug (2015), this is also why euroscepticism used to have a linear relationship with the left-right dimension,

with the left being the most and the right being the least sceptical when it comes to European integration.

Among the public at large, the agenda of economic redistribution of leftist parties is reflected in the economic egalitarianism of their supporters, especially those of leftist populist parties (De Koster *et al.*, 2013). Their resistance to the EU might therefore be inspired by their opposition to the inequality inducing character of the European common market, and thus by their economic egalitarianism. If so, euroscepticism is part of the link between economic egalitarianism and support for leftist populist parties. Technically, this would mean that euroscepticism is a mediator of a positive effect of economic egalitarianism on voting for a leftist populist party (Hypothesis 3).

Opposition to Cultural Diversity as a Driver of Euroscepticism

The previous section identified the euroscepticism of leftist populist constituencies as possibly pertaining to the classical economic cleavage in politics. Right-wing populist parties, on the other hand, are often considered to reflect the emergence of a new cultural cleavage, centering on issues of identity, nationalism and immigration, instead of economic redistribution (Elchardus and Spruyt, 2012; Kriesi *et al.*, 2008). They are most opposed to cultural diversity in order to protect a virtuous 'people' from the influences of so-called 'outsiders'. It may very well be that the euroscepticism of the rightist populist constituency is also due to these concerns over increasing cultural and ethnic diversity, as European integration means less leeway for nation states concerning international migration, while immigration flows may be perceived as a threat to national identity (Stockemer, 2016; Toshkov and Kortenska, 2015).

Right-wing populist parties have proved successful in mobilizing their electorates by opposing immigration and cultural and ethnic diversity (De Vries and Edwards, 2009; Ford and Goodwin, 2014; Mudde, 2007). Moreover, ethnocentrism, a key indicator for this opposition, has proved to be the most prominent driver of support for those parties (Akkerman *et al.*, 2017; De Koster *et al.*, 2014; Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel, 2018). The euroscepticism of rightist populist constituencies might therefore reflect their opposition to cultural diversity. In that case, euroscepticism is part of the link between ethnocentrism and support for rightist populist parties. Technically, this would mean that euroscepticism is a mediator of a positive effect of ethnocentrism on voting for a rightist populist party (Hypothesis 4).

II. Data and Measures

Our data (Achterberg *et al.*, 2012) were collected in 2012 through CentERdata, a research institute that carefully maintains a panel representative of the Dutch population aged 16 years and over. 1,707 individuals were invited to complete the survey, and 1,302 did so. The response rate of 76.2% is somewhat higher than the 2012 wave of the bi-annual Cultural Change in the Netherlands survey (Coumans and Knops, 2012), and comparable to the 2012 wave of the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies (Oudejans, 2013). We removed six respondents who took less than the minimum time reasonably needed to complete the survey (10 minutes), leaving a dataset of 1,296.

We measured *voting behaviour* in three categories by using the question of which party the respondents would vote for if elections for the national parliament were to be held tomorrow. We coded those preferring the SP as a *vote for the populist left* and those opting for the PVV and splinter parties *Democratisch Politiek Keerpunt* (DPK; Democratic Political Turning Point) and *Trots op Nederland* (TON; Proud of the Netherlands) as a *vote for the populist right*. The category of reference, *vote for non-populist parties*, includes respondents favouring centrist, small Christian and new-leftist parties. The three main centre parties are: *Partij van de Arbeid* (PvdA, Labour Party), *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie* (VVD; Liberal Conservatives) and *Christen-Democratisch Appèl* (CDA; Christian Democrats). The smaller Christian parties are: *ChristenUnie* (CU; ChristianUnion) and *Staatskundig Gereformeerde Partij* (SGP; Reformed Political Party), while the new-leftist parties are *Democraten 66* (D66; Liberal Democrats) and *GroenLinks* (GL; Green Left). As a first robustness check, we also performed the analyses with a narrower definition of *vote for non-populist parties*, limiting this category to respondents who voted for one of the main centre parties (PvdA, VVD and CDA).

Respondents preferring the splinter parties *Partij voor de Dieren* (PvdD; Party for the Animals, $n=12$) and *50Plus* (50+; Party for the Elderly, $n=13$) are hard to classify in the three categories described above, and were consequently coded as missing. Respondents who indicated they ‘don’t know yet’ ($n=201$), ‘would not vote’ ($n=30$), are ‘not allowed to vote’ ($n=16$), or ‘won’t say’ ($n=14$) were also coded as missing.

Our measure for the mediating variable *Euroscepticism* includes items that cover euroscepticism’s three sub-dimensions (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2010). Political euroscepticism is captured by the first item: ‘Some people say that the European Union should have more influence on various policy areas. To what extent do you agree or disagree with them?’ Response categories range from 1 ‘strongly disagree’ to 5 ‘strongly agree’.[‡] Instrumental euroscepticism is tapped by items two and three: ‘Generally speaking, Dutch membership of the European Union is [1 ‘a good thing’; 2 ‘a bad thing’; 3 ‘neither a good nor a bad thing’]’ and ‘Some people say that the Netherlands substantially benefits from its membership of the European Union. Do you agree or disagree with them?’ (response categories range from 1 ‘strongly disagree’ to 5 ‘strongly agree’). The cultural dimension, non-identification with the EU, is covered by the fourth item: ‘In the near future, do you see yourself as: 1 ‘predominantly Dutch’, 2 ‘first Dutch, then European’, 3 ‘just as much Dutch as European’, 4 ‘first European, then Dutch’, 5 ‘predominantly European’’. These items were coded so that higher scores indicate higher levels of euroscepticism, with a range of 1–5, and can be combined into an overall euroscepticism measure. A factor analysis indicated that there is a first factor with an Eigenvalue of 2.44, which explains 61.1 per cent of the variance. We created a reliable scale for euroscepticism (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.78$) by calculating the mean score for respondents with valid answers to at least three of the four items.

We measured *economic egalitarianism* by means of items used in previous research in the Dutch context (see, for example, De Koster *et al.*, 2013; Van der Waal and De Koster, 2018):

[‡]All five-point Likert items used in our measures also included the answer category ‘don’t know’, which was coded as missing in all cases.

1. The state should raise social benefits.
2. There is no longer any real poverty in the Netherlands.
3. Large income differences are unfair because everyone is essentially equal.
4. Companies should be obliged to allow their employees to share the profits.

Response categories range from 1 'strongly disagree' to 5 'strongly agree'. After reverse coding the second item, a factor analysis indicated that a first factor with an Eigenvalue of 1.95 explains 48.8 per cent of the variance. We constructed a scale for economic egalitarianism (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.64$) by calculating the mean score for the respondents who had valid scores on at least three of the four items. Given the moderate reliability, we performed a second robustness check, consisting of four analyses that each used one separate item for economic egalitarianism instead of the multi-item scale.

Support for protectionism was measured by means of a commonly used item on the favourability of import limitations (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2006), which has also been used in the Dutch context (Van der Waal and De Koster, 2015, 2018). Its response categories are: 1) strongly favour; 2) favour; 3) neutral; 4) oppose; 5) strongly oppose. It reads: 'Some people have suggested that the Dutch government should limit imports in order to protect jobs. Others say that such limits would raise consumer prices and would hurt Dutch exports. Do you favour or oppose import limitations?'

Ethnocentrism was measured using six items indicating negative prejudice towards outgroups taken from Eisinga and Scheepers (1989) and recently used in the Netherlands (see Van der Waal and De Koster, 2015, 2018).

1. Foreigners carry all kinds of dirty smells around.
2. With Moroccans you never know for certain whether or not they are going to be aggressive.
3. Most people from Surinam work quite slowly.
4. Most Turks are rather self-indulgent at work.
5. Foreigners living in the Netherlands should adapt to Dutch uses and customs.
6. The Netherlands should have never let foreign guest workers in.

A factor analysis showed that a first factor with an Eigenvalue of 3.72 explains 62.1 per cent of the variance. We created a scale for ethnocentrism (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$) by calculating the mean score for the respondents who had valid scores on at least four of the six items.

We measured *political distrust* by means of three items previously used in the Netherlands (Van der Waal and De Koster, 2018). The first and second items respectively inquire as to what extent the respondents trust politicians and politics (response categories range from 1 'absolutely no trust' to 5 'certainly a lot of trust'). The third asks to what extent they agree with the statement that 'politicians seldom speak the truth' (response categories range from 1 'strongly disagree' to 5 'strongly agree'). A factor analysis yielded a first factor with an Eigenvalue of 2.39, which explains 80 per cent of the variance. We created a reliable scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$) by calculating the mean score for respondents without missing values on these items.

We also included various controls. *Age* was measured in years and *gender* was coded '0' for males and '1' for females. The variable *non-native* was coded '0' for the

respondents of whom both parents were born in the Netherlands and ‘1’ for others. *Education* was measured as the number of years required to attain one’s highest level of education, ranging from 8 (only primary education) to 18 (university degree). *Net household income* was measured in thousands of Euros per month. *Labour-market position* was measured by means of four dummy variables: 1) not in the labour market (retired, student, housekeeping or disabled); 2) employed; 3) partially employed; 4) unemployed. *Religious denomination* was also measured with four dummies: 1) no religious denomination; 2) Protestant; 3) Catholic; 4) other religious denomination. *Attendance at religious services* was measured with three dummies: 1) no attendance at religious services; 2) occasional attendance at religious services (ranging from less than once a year to once a month); 3) frequent attendance at religious services (once a week or more frequent).

Table 1 lists the descriptive statistics.

III. Results

Prior to testing our hypotheses, we explored how euroscepticism is related to the well-established drivers of populist voting addressed in the theoretical section. Table 2

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>n</i>
Voting behaviour				
<i>Vote for non-populist parties</i> (ref.)				
<i>Vote for populist left</i>	0.17		0-1	980
<i>Vote for populist right</i>	0.06		0-1	980
<i>Euroscepticism</i>	2.96	0.87	1-5	1,256
<i>Political distrust</i>	3.24	0.90	1-5	1,243
<i>Support for protectionism</i>	2.32	0.87	1-5	1,126
<i>Economic egalitarianism</i>	3.24	0.70	1-5	1,259
<i>Ethnocentrism</i>	2.57	0.78	1-5	1,213
<i>Gender</i> (female)	0.44		0-1	1,296
<i>Age</i>	56.63	15.24	16-90	1,296
<i>Non-native</i>	0.08		0-1	1,274
<i>Education</i>	14.50	2.75	8-18	1,295
<i>Net household income</i> (in thousand euros)	2.65	1.39	0-13.73	1,295
Labour-market position				
<i>Not in labour market</i> (ref.)				
<i>Employed</i>	0.47		0-1	1,271
<i>Partially employed</i>	0.02		0-1	1,271
<i>Unemployed</i>	0.06		0-1	1,271
Religious denomination				
<i>No religious denomination</i> (ref.)				
<i>Protestant</i>	0.21		0-1	1,296
<i>Catholic</i>	0.28		0-1	1,296
<i>Other religious denomination</i>	0.06		0-1	1,296
Attendance at religious services				
<i>No attendance at religious services</i> (ref.)				
<i>Occasional attendance at religious services</i>	0.32		0-1	1,280
<i>Frequent attendance at religious services</i>	0.13		0-1	1,280

Table 2: Zero-order Correlations between Potential Drivers of Voting for Populist Parties and Euroscepticism

	<i>r</i>	<i>n</i>
<i>Political distrust</i>	0.40***	1,226
<i>Support for protectionism</i>	0.31***	1,115
<i>Economic egalitarianism</i>	0.09**	1,236
<i>Ethnocentrism</i>	0.41***	1,191

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

demonstrates substantial correlations with political distrust, support for protectionism and ethnocentrism, suggesting that all three could be relevant for understanding the euroscepticism of populist electorates. Economic egalitarianism seems to be a less likely candidate, as it is only modestly related to euroscepticism.

Table 3 compares the level of euroscepticism and other potential drivers of populist voting across the three categories of voter: non-populist party constituency (column (1)), left-wing populist constituency (column (2)), and right-wing populist party constituency (column (3)).

The first three rows demonstrate that, in line with our theorizing, both of the populist constituencies report higher levels of euroscepticism, political distrust and support for protectionism than the non-populist constituency. In each case, it is the right-wing populist constituency in particular that stands out: it is most eurosceptic, most distrustful of politics, and most strongly in support of protectionism – it is only in the latter case that the difference with the left-wing populist constituency is not significant. Turning to economic and cultural concerns, Table 3 reveals that the two types of populist constituency differ *vis-à-vis* the non-populist constituency, in line with our theorizing. The leftist populist constituency is more economically egalitarian than voters for non-populist parties, but not significantly more ethnocentric. Among the rightist populist constituency, this pattern is reversed: it is more ethnocentric than voters for non-populist parties, but just as economically egalitarian.

Having established these descriptive findings, we turned to testing our hypotheses, conducting two types of analysis, which we will discuss consecutively. First, we performed multivariate multinomial regression analyses, presented in Table 4, which estimated the role of all the drivers of populist voting behaviour, while also including the

Table 3: Mean scores of Euroscepticism and other Potential Drivers of Voting for Populist Parties

	<i>Non-populist party constituency</i>	<i>Left-wing populist party constituency</i>	<i>Right-wing populist party constituency</i>	<i>n</i>
<i>Euroscepticism</i>	2.68	3.23***	3.97***	971
<i>Political distrust</i>	2.97	3.54***	4.08***	961
<i>Support for protectionism</i>	2.18	2.51***	2.72***	889
<i>Economic egalitarianism</i>	3.11	3.67***	3.18	968
<i>Ethnocentrism</i>	2.45	2.52	3.44***	938

Notes: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$ (left-wing and right-wing populist constituencies compared to non-populist party constituency; significance levels apply both with and without Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons).

Table 4: Explaining Support for Euroscepticism among Populist Constituencies

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Populist left	Populist right	Populist left	Populist right	Populist left	Populist right
<i>Political distrust</i>	0.70*** (0.14)	1.46*** (0.24)			0.53*** (0.15)	1.19*** (0.25)
<i>Support for protectionism</i>	0.48*** (0.14)	0.67*** (0.20)			0.41** (0.14)	0.67*** (0.22)
<i>Economic egalitarianism</i>	1.31*** (0.19)	0.12 (0.26)			1.42*** (0.20)	0.25 (0.28)
<i>Ethnocentrism</i>	-0.03 (0.16)	1.62*** (0.28)			-0.24 (0.17)	1.27*** (0.29)
<i>Euroscepticism</i>			0.83*** (0.13)	1.93*** (0.22)	0.78*** (0.16)	1.40*** (0.25)
<i>Gender (female)</i>			-0.12 (0.21)	-0.95** (0.37)	-0.26 (0.24)	-0.80 (0.42)
<i>Age</i>			-0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.02* (0.01)	-0.02 (0.02)
<i>Non-native</i>			0.28 (0.41)	0.79 (0.62)	0.38 (0.45)	0.97 (0.71)
<i>Education</i>			-0.09* (0.04)	0.02 (0.07)	-0.04 (0.05)	0.19* (0.08)
<i>Net household income (in thousand euros)</i>			-0.222** (0.09)	-0.24 (0.14)	-0.09 (0.09)	-0.12 (0.16)
<i>Not in labour market</i>	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
<i>Employed</i>	0.62* (0.29)	0.00 (0.48)	0.46 (0.28)	0.12 (0.44)	0.67* (0.30)	-0.12 (0.50)
<i>Partially employed</i>	-0.12 (0.80)	0.41 (1.20)	-0.03 (0.74)	-0.30 (1.25)	-0.08 (0.85)	0.22 (1.30)
<i>Unemployed</i>	0.81 (0.50)	0.82 (0.63)	0.62 (0.47)	1.22* (0.62)	0.92 (0.52)	0.87 (0.71)
<i>No religion</i>	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
<i>Protestant</i>	-0.37 (0.35)	-0.68 (0.57)	-0.38 (0.33)	-0.31 (0.55)	-0.38 (0.36)	-0.67 (0.63)
<i>Catholic</i>	-0.06 (0.30)	-0.28 (0.45)	-0.15 (0.27)	-0.19 (0.45)	-0.07 (0.31)	-0.14 (0.49)
<i>Other religion</i>	-1.17 (0.71)	-1.97 (1.37)	-0.78 (0.68)	-1.57 (1.16)	-1.40 (0.72)	-1.97 (1.22)
<i>No attendance at religious services</i>	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
<i>Occasional attendance at religious services</i>	0.02 (0.27)	-0.45 (0.46)	-0.07 (0.25)	-0.45 (0.45)	0.12 (0.28)	-0.39 (0.50)
<i>Frequent attendance at religious services</i>	-1.88** (0.66)	-0.69 (0.74)	-2.10** (0.64)	-0.82 (0.73)	-1.79** (0.67)	-0.30 (0.79)
Constant	-6.82*** (1.37)	-14.03*** (2.53)	-1.46 (1.00)	-8.19*** (1.69)	-8.86*** (1.47)	-18.09*** (2.82)
Pseudo R ²	0.29	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.34	0.34

Notes: Multinomial regression analyses. Reference category: vote for non-populist parties. Entries are log odds, standard errors in parentheses; $n=833$; *** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

control variables. As a result of the rescaling that occurs in each separate model in logistic regression analyses, coefficients cannot simply be compared between the models in Table 4 (Breen *et al.*, 2013). The analyses in Table 4 do not therefore suffice when it comes to testing the hypothesized mediating effect of euroscepticism. Therefore, we also applied a decomposition analysis using the KHB method (Breen *et al.*, 2013), which was specifically designed to correct for this characteristic of logistic regression analyses. This decomposition analysis uncovered to what extent euroscepticism mediates the effects of political distrust (Hypothesis 1), support for protectionism (Hypothesis 2), economic egalitarianism (Hypothesis 3) and ethnocentrism (Hypothesis 4) on voting behaviour. Table 5 presents the results.

Model 1 in Table 4 reports findings in line with those in Table 3: political distrust and support for protectionism drive voting for both types of populist party, while economic egalitarianism only does so for the leftist type and ethnocentrism only for the rightist type of populist party. Model 2 demonstrates that euroscepticism also drives voting for both types of populist party, while Model 3 reveals that it does so in addition to the drivers already included in Model 1. At first sight, the declining strength of the coefficients compared to Model 1 may suggest that euroscepticism is a mediator, as hypothesized. However, the rescaling between the models implies that this inference cannot be made.

The decomposition analysis presented in Table 5 seeks to answer the question of whether euroscepticism really mediates the effects of political distrust, support for protectionism, economic egalitarianism and ethnocentrism. The first row of Table 5 shows the strength of the initial association between the drivers of populist voting before euroscepticism was added to the model (slightly different than in Model 1 in Table 4, because of the corrections applied by the KHB method). The second row shows the strength of their association after euroscepticism was included. The first three columns focus on the three significant drivers of voting for a leftist populist party: political distrust, support for protectionism and economic egalitarianism, respectively. The last three columns focus on the significant drivers of voting for a rightist populist party: political distrust, support for protectionism and ethnocentrism.

The third and fourth rows in Table 5 reveal that five out of six of those drivers are significantly mediated by euroscepticism. As expected, euroscepticism mediates the link between political distrust and voting for a leftist (column (1)) and rightist (column (4)) populist party, for 27 per cent and 23 per cent, respectively. This corroborates Hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 2 is also corroborated, as columns (2) and (5) demonstrate that euroscepticism mediates the link between support for protectionism and voting for those parties by 20 per cent and 22 per cent, respectively. In contrast, Hypothesis 3 must be rejected, as euroscepticism does not mediate the link between economic egalitarianism and voting for a leftist populist party. Euroscepticism does, however, mediate the link between ethnocentrism and voting for a rightist populist party by 26 per cent, corroborating Hypothesis 4.

We conducted two robustness checks, which both led to the same conclusions about the tenability of our hypotheses as the main analyses. In the first check, the category of reference – *vote for non-populist parties* – was limited to respondents who voted for the three main centre parties (PvdA, VVD and CDA). In that case, euroscepticism mediates the effect of political distrust on voting for a leftist populist party by 27 per cent ($p < 0.001$) and voting for a rightist populist party by 24 per cent ($p < 0.001$). It mediates

Table 5: Decomposition of Initial Effects of Drivers for Populist Voting into Direct Effects and Indirect Effects via Euroscepticism[†]

	<i>Voting for populist left</i>			<i>Voting for populist right</i>		
	<i>Political distrust</i>	<i>Support for protectionism</i>	<i>Economic egalitarianism</i>	<i>Political distrust</i>	<i>Support for protectionism</i>	<i>Ethnocentrism</i>
Initial effect	0.72*** (0.14)	0.51*** (0.14)	1.38*** (0.19)	1.54*** (0.26)	0.85*** (0.22)	1.71*** (0.29)
Final direct effect	0.53*** (0.15)	0.41** (0.14)	1.42*** (0.20)	1.19*** (0.25)	0.67** (0.22)	1.27*** (0.29)
Indirect effect via ...						
... Euroscepticism	0.19*** (0.04)	0.10** (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)	0.35*** (0.07)	0.18** (0.05)	0.44*** (0.09)
Percentage of initial effect explained by ...						
... Euroscepticism	26.56%	19.91%	-2.68%	22.51%	21.62%	25.57%

Source: Calculations on Achterberg *et al.* (2012); KHB method with logistic regression analyses; $n = 833$; entries are log odds; standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ (two-sided tests for significance); [†] Controlling for all other variables included in the regression analyses.

the effect of support for protectionism on voting for those two parties by 19 per cent ($p=0.018$) and 19 per cent ($p=0.014$), respectively. Similar to the main analyses, the first robustness check also demonstrates that the link between economic egalitarianism and voting for a leftist populist party is not significantly mediated by euroscepticism ($p=0.167$), while the link between ethnocentrism and voting for a rightist populist party is mediated by 31 per cent ($p=0.001$).[§]

We conducted four analyses for the second robustness check, one for each separate item for economic egalitarianism instead of the multi-item scale. These analyses also corroborate Hypothesis 1 (euroscepticism mediates the positive link between political distrust and voting for a populist party), Hypothesis 2 (euroscepticism mediates the positive link between support for protectionism and voting for a populist party), and Hypothesis 4 (euroscepticism mediates the positive link between ethnocentrism and voting for a rightist populist party). Just like the main analyses, they also indicate that Hypothesis 3 (euroscepticism mediates the positive link between economic egalitarianism and voting for a leftist populist party) must be rejected.

Conclusion and Discussion

Populist parties on both flanks of the political spectrum are most negative about the EU (Conti and Memoli, 2012; De Vries and Edwards, 2009; Halikiopoulou *et al.*, 2012). Our study on the Dutch case shows that this U-curve in euroscepticism also exists among the constituencies of these parties, which resembles recent findings that citizens who identify themselves at the poles of the left–right axis are most eurosceptic (Van Elsas and Van der Brug, 2015; Van Elsas *et al.*, 2016). Our main goal was to discover *why* populist constituencies are eurosceptic. Our findings point at differences as well as substantial similarities between leftist and rightist populist constituencies.

Starting with the similarities, there are well-established links between, on the one hand, political distrust (Kemmers *et al.*, 2016) and support for protectionism (Van der Waal and De Koster, 2018), and, on the other, voting for rightist and leftist populist parties. This study demonstrates that the euroscepticism of those populist constituencies is part of both of these well-known links. The two types of populist constituency are, thus, more wary of the EU than voters for establishment parties, because they have lower trust in its institutions and politicians, and are more opposed to its common market. The relevance of political distrust indicates that the euroscepticism of populist constituencies substantially reflects their anti-institutional impulse, independent of left–right ideology (*cf.* Canovan, 1999; Kemmers *et al.*, 2016; Kriesi, 2014; Serricchio *et al.*, 2013), representing opposition to institutions perceived as opaque, overtly technical, complicated and undemocratic (Canovan, 1999).

Turning to the differences, our study replicated earlier research in demonstrating that economic egalitarianism drives voting for a leftist populist party and not for a rightist

[§]A referee suggested comparing the two populist constituencies with respondents whose voting behaviour was coded as missing in our main analyses because they responded 'don't know yet', 'would not vote' or 'won't say'. Compared to this rather heterogeneous group, supporters of leftist populist parties are more economically egalitarian ($p<0.0005$), but euroscepticism does not mediate this link ($p=0.699$). Supporters of rightist populist parties display more political distrust ($p=0.010$) and ethnocentrism ($p<0.0005$) than this group, and euroscepticism mediates these links by 28 per cent ($p=0.022$) and 12 per cent ($p=0.022$), respectively.

one, while ethnocentrism drives the vote for a rightist populist party and not a leftist one (*cf.* Akkerman *et al.*, 2017; Rooduijn, 2018; Rooduijn *et al.*, 2017). Nevertheless, while euroscepticism proved to be part of the latter link, it does not play a role in the former, indicating that euroscepticism is not driven by economic concerns.

Our findings on the role of opposition to international free trade when it comes to euroscepticism point in the same direction. Euroscepticism proves to be part of the link between support for protectionism and voting for populist parties at both ends of the political spectrum, while support for protectionism is not motivated by voters' economic concerns (*cf.* Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2006; Margalit, 2012; Van der Waal and De Koster, 2015). Populist constituencies' resistance to the EU certainly partly reflects 'economically protectionist EU opposition' (Van Elsas and Van der Brug, 2015, p. 199), but this opposition to the European common market is not inspired by fears over its distributive consequences, although this is the core assumption in theorizing on the euroscepticism of, in particular, leftist constituencies, and the role of egocentric utilitarianism therein (*cf.* Serricchio *et al.*, 2013, p. 53).

The question is, of course, whether our findings result from our focus on the Dutch case. Our conclusion that economic concerns do not explain euroscepticism among Dutch leftist populist constituencies resembles the previously reported low salience of those concerns for opposing the EU among the Dutch population in general (Startin and Krouwel, 2013). It may thus be a Dutch particularity, especially because the Netherlands has experienced relatively weak effects of the economic and financial crisis (Akkerman *et al.*, 2017, p. 384). It is possible that things are different in (mostly Southern) European countries in which this crisis had more severe effects. On the other hand, our findings are in line with those of Serricchio *et al.*, (2013), who, in a study of more than two dozen countries, found that economic concerns played a marginal role in explaining euroscepticism, even during the global financial crisis and its aftermath. They instead found that cultural concerns and anti-institutionalism were crucial drivers of euroscepticism, which resembles our results. Again, however, these factors may not be equally relevant throughout Europe: it is possible that in countries with the largest influx of refugees and in which the politicization of the 'migration crisis' has been most outspoken, ethnocentrism and political distrust are even more closely related to euroscepticism and populist voting behaviour than in the Dutch case.

Finally, our findings may inspire further research. First, given our focus on a single national case, it is worthwhile to assess in cross-national studies how country characteristics such as the impacts of the economic and migration crises shape the mechanisms scrutinized here. Second, in so doing research would benefit from including a measure for populist attitudes (for example, Akkerman *et al.*, 2017; Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel, 2018) alongside the indicators used in our study. That would enable scholars to analyze whether the mechanisms discussed here simply result from a match between the policy stances of populist parties on the one hand and citizens' attitudes related to economic inequality, cultural diversity, free trade and political trust on the other, or that a preference for a populist notion of politics weighs in as well.

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