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Assessment of Citizens' Populist Orientations: Development and Validation of the POPulist ORientation (POPOR) Scale

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1	Assessment of Citizens' Populist Orientations: Development and Validation of the POPulist ORientation
2	(POPOR) Scale
3	
4	Abstract
5	Objectives. We developed and validated the POPulist ORientation (POPOR) Scale (composed of six 5-category items),
6	operationalizing populist orientation as a unidimensional construct composed of 6 facets: (a) anti- economic, financial,
7	and intellectual establishment attitude; (b) anti-political establishment; (c) conception of the people as a homogeneous
8	and virtuous entity; (d) consideration of the people as legitimated to take part directly in political decision-making
9	processes; (e) need for a strong leader; and (f) loss of relevance of the traditional ideologies. To prevent response bias,
10	we gave the POPOR Scale a forced-choice format and a balanced structure.
11	Method. We surveyed a quota sample of 1,348 Italians extracted from the general population and analyzed the structure
12	of the scale and its convergent validity via confirmatory factor analysis.
13	Results. The POPOR Scale showed a unidimensional structure and a good convergent validity. Supplemental analyses
14	showed its structural invariance across gender, age, education, and area of residence.
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16	Keywords: Populism; Measurement; Attitudes
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1 Introduction

2 Populism is a crucial feature of contemporary democracies. In the US 2016 presidential election, Donald Trump stood 3 out as a populist par excellence (Young, Ziemer, & Jackson, 2019). In Europe, the average share of the populist vote in 4 national and European parliamentary elections has more than doubled since the 1960s and the share of seats has tripled 5 (Inglehart & Norris 2017). Populist leaders such as Le Pen in France, Hofer in Austria, Tsipras in Greece, Iglesias in 6 Spain, Farage in the UK and Wilders in the Netherlands are prominent. Italy is no exception. In recent decades, all 7 Italian parties have shown signs of populism (Caiani & Graziano 2016). In the 2018 Italian general election, nearly 50% 8 of votes favored two overtly populist parties: Lega and the Five Star Movement (M5S) (Chiaramonte et al. 2018). 9 Many explanations of this growing populist trend focus on the 'supply side' of politics, mainly on populist ideology, constitutional changes and party strategies and rhetoric (e.g., Lisi & Borghetto 2019). The research on the

10 11 'demand side' of populism has mainly analyzed the role of actual or perceived economic insecurity (e.g. Guiso, Herrera 12 & Morelli 2017) and of anti-immigrant attitudes (e.g. Van Assche et al. 2018) in fuelling the resentment against the 13 ruling class and the disposition to accept anti-establishment, nativist, and xenophobic appeals. However, this line of 14 research tends to focus on the probability that citizens will vote for populist parties or candidates (e.g., Oesch 2008), 15 thus creating an artificial dichotomization between populist and non-populist parties that neglect differences in the 16 levels of populist orientation of their voters. Recently, a growing corpus of studies analyzed the role of voters' populist 17 orientations, values and predispositions in fueling the support for populist parties (e.g., Hameleers, & de Vreese 2018; 18 Stanley 2011; Van Hauwaert & Van Kessel, 2018).

Understanding the role of such orientations is a critical task to account for the present populist escalation and its political and cultural consequences, since the individual proneness could be more widespread than populist votes in the general population (Hawkins & Rovira Kaltwasser 2014). However, a necessary precondition for achieving this goal is the availability of an instrument capable of measuring it appropriately. The extant literature on this subject has profound methodological limitations. Consequently, in the present study, we develop and validate a novel POPulist ORientation (POPOR) Scale to measure populist proneness in the general population.

25 What Is Populism?

A broad consensus on the definition of the term 'populism' is still lacking. An often cited definition is that formulated by Mudde (2007, p. 23), who stated that populism is "a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps, 'the pure people' versus the 'corrupt elite' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people".

30 This definition points out the emergence of a vertical political conflict, setting the virtuous people against the
31 corrupt political and social élites, instead of the traditional horizontal conflicts derived from different interest groups all

1 belonging to the people. This us/them antagonism gives rise to two typical and complementary representations. On the 2 one hand, institutional personalities, intellectuals and, in general, individuals holding formal and informal positions of 3 power are regarded as true enemies of ordinary people, because they share the motivation to place their own advantage 4 ahead of the people's interest (Tarchi 2015). Thus, populists take a strong stance against the political, economic, and 5 intellectual establishment. On the other hand, the homogeneous and negative representation of the élites is juxtaposed 6 with an equally homogenous although positive representation of the ordinary people, conceived as an organic and 7 virtuous entity sharing non-conflicting interests and goals. The people are idealized as naturally honest and as 8 depositary of simple and immediate common sense (Taguieff 2002).

9 Other scholars (e.g. Betz & Johnson 2004; Mény & Surel 2002; Taggart 2000) have pointed out that, beyond the 10 people/elites opposition and the anti-establishment attitude, other features have to be added as typical of the populist 11 phenomenon. In particular, at the core of the populist orientations stands the idea that, by virtue of its positive nature, 12 the people should exert directly their political sovereignty, getting rid of every intermediation. The assertion of the 13 people's sovereignty, in conjunction with the adversity towards all kinds of representative bodies, would imply 14 universal political participation in political decision-making. Nevertheless, this goal of universal participation is at odds 15 with its practical actualization. Thus, according to Mudde (2004) himself, another crucial feature of populism is the 16 need for a strong leader, embodying the people's interest, speaking in its name and expressing its will organically (e.g., 17 Kriesi 2014; Kriesi & Pappas 2015). In other words, in the populist representation of the political world, the leader is 18 'one with the people', based on a shared identity and fate (Albertazzi & McDonnel 2008; Oliver & Rahn 2016). This 19 reduces the psychological distance between the leader and the followers, but jeopardizes the main principles of liberal 20 democracy, which is based on a complex equilibrium of institutional checks and balances. Thus, populism can be 21 labelled as 'democratic illiberalism' (Pappas 2013).

22 In addition, according to Mény and Surel (2002), leadership centrality and a parallel ideological impoverishment 23 are at the origin of the development of populist phenomena. Indeed, the last main feature of populism is the weakness of 24 its ideological content, stemming from the conviction that politics should be guided in primis by the people's common 25 sense and from the idea that the traditional ideologies have become obsolete and outdated. Thus, populism needs to 26 borrow ideological content from existing ideologies to become stronger and, consequently, right-wing and left-wing 27 forms of populism exist (Mudde 2007). This distinction is mainly rooted in their different conception of the source of 28 people's homogeneity: ethnic origin (i.e., the nation) for the former and class origin (i.e., the common people) for the 29 latter (Kriesi 2014). However, populism has its own ideological substance, beyond its derivatives from other ideologies, 30 as a distinct set of beliefs, less articulated than traditional ideologies, but expressing citizens' responses to the crisis of 31 the legitimacy of liberal democracy (Hawkins, Read, & Pauwels 2017).

1 The six features illustrated above could be individually observed in political programs or leaders' discourses 2 (e.g. the appeal to the people), without necessarily falling into a genuine populist frame. On the contrary, we are facing 3 genuine populism only when all of them are strictly interrelated and essential facets of the narrative of leaders or 4 political movements. When individual political orientations are concerned, the same common denominator could 5 converge in a consistent and integrated system of attitudes and beliefs held by citizens particularly attracted by, and 6 fueling, this rhetoric. We contend that populism can be studied as a citizens' orientation composed of the six 7 inextricable facets above, which should be empirically operationalized to measure a unique phenomenon.

8 Limitations of the Extant Scales of Populist Orientations

9 The idea that populist orientation can be operationalized as a set of attitudes and beliefs is not new. To the best of our 10 knowledge, 10 scales assessing individual populist orientation exist. Table 1 reports their main characteristics and the 11 methodological details of their validation.

12

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

13 From a conceptual point of view, there is no consensus as to whether populist orientations are uni- or multi-14 dimensional. Indeed, most scales operationalize populism as a unidimensional construct, whereas three of them claim 15 for 2 or 3 separate dimensions. Schulz et al. (2016) proposed three dimensions (anti-establishment attitudes, demand for 16 people sovereignty, and belief in homogeneity of the people) as parts of a higher order concept of populism. However, 17 every facet taken alone may be shared also by non-populists, thus none of them alone is able to distinguish populist 18 attitudes from other political attitudes. Actually, Schulz et al. (2016) also claim that a full populist is assumed to hold all 19 the three facets, thus weakening the conceptual support for separate dimensions. In the other cases, separate dimensions 20 tap attitudes that generate, or are consequential of, populism, such as anti-immigrant stances (Hammlers & DeVreese, 21 2018) or sentiments of national affiliation (Oliver & Rahn, 2016). In sum, we believe that, though constituted by a 22 number of facets, a true populist orientation can be detected only when all the defining facets are expressed by 23 individuals.

From a methodological point of view, all the existing scales are reasonably short: the number of their items ranges from 4 (Hawkins, Riding, & Mudde 2012) to 12 (Oliver & Rahn 2016; Schultz et al. 2018). This is definitely a plus, because the shorter the scale, the easier its administration and the lower the probability of leading to inaccurate information (Schuman & Presser 1981). However, they have relevant methodological limitations.

First, with the exception of the one proposed by Oliver and Rahn (2016), that has two thirds of the items structured in a Likert format, they are Likert scales. We contend that this format is sub-optimal when assessing empirically populist orientations. The present opinion climate is rather hostile towards political parties and élites (e.g., Bos, Sheets, & Boomgaarden 2018). Therefore, scales asking participants how much they agree with statements such as 1 'Politicians talk too much and take too little action' (Shultz et al. 2017) or 'The particular interests of the political class

2 negatively affect the welfare of the people' (Van Hauwaert & Van Kessel 2018) plausibly elicit superficial responses,

conforming to the present political *zeitgeist* (McGee 1962). Thus, these scales could lead respondents to use satisficing
more than optimizing cognitive processes, putting validity at risk (Tourangeau & Rasinski 1988).

5 Second, some of their items are not very focused or discriminant. For instance, items such as 'The politicians in 6 the Dutch Parliament need to follow the will of the people'(Akkerman et al. 2013) and 'The ordinary people should 7 have more influence in political decision making than corporations that only want to make profits' (Hammelers & de 8 Vreese 2018) – substantially analogous items are part of the other available scales – plausibly lack in validity, because 9 they could be given an affirmative response both by populists and by advocates of representative democracy. Moreover, 10 it is debatable that item such as 'How important is being an American to who you are?' and 'When it comes to really 11 important questions, scientific facts don't help very much' (Oliver & Rahn, 2016) actually tap into the core of populist 12 orientations. Indeed, the first realistically measures national identity (Huddy & Khatib, 2007) and the second looks like 13 being strictly linked with extrinsic religiousness (Van Camp, Barden, & Sloan 2016).

14Third, the large majority of the existing scales is not balanced – i.e., all of their items are worded in the populist15direction. This constitutes a markedly severe limitation. Since the methodological critiques to Adorno et al.'s F Scale16(1950), research has shown that non-balanced scales cannot help disentangling people high in the construct under study17from respondents giving response sets (e.g., Hyman & Sheatsley 1954). In Ray's (1983) words, 'A person with a high F18score might be simply a careless responder rather than a genuine fascist' (p. 82).

19 Fourth, the analyses used to test the dimensionality of some of the existing scales are suboptimal. Indeed, the 20 factorial structure has been typically assessed in terms of Cronbach's alpha and/or via exploratory factor analysis. 21 However, according to the present standards of research, only more advanced and diagnostic methodological 22 approaches can lead to reliable and valid scales (e.g., van der Linden and Hambleton 1997). This is particularly relevant 23 as concerns Akkerman et al.'s (2013) scale, that is largely the most cited one. In the dataset we have analyzed, 24 Akkerman et al.'s scale was available. Emblematically, though the authors of this scale argued it to be unidimensional, 25 confirmatory factor analyses, i.e., a technique much more discriminant and informative than that Akkerman and 26 colleagues used, did not yield a unidimensional structure, CFI = .78, RSMR = .05. According to Winkler, Kanouse, and 27 Ware (1982), genuinely unidimensional balanced scales can appear non-unidimensional when the data are partially 28 distorted by a response set, as often happens in samples of the general population (Curran 2016). Within the 29 confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) approach, it is possible to test whether a response set distorts the data and, in this 30 case, to correct this distortion by resorting to Marsh's (1989) correlated uniqueness (CU) approach. The CU approach

1 consists in controlling the error variance due to response sets by correlating the errors of the con-trait items. However,

2 given its non-balanced structure, we could not perform this check, nor—in the case of its presence—correct the data.

3 The Present Study

4 Goals and Hypotheses

5 To overcome the limitations above, we developed the POPOR Scale, a new unidimensional scale covering all of the 6 semantic areas of populist orientation illustrated above and structured into a format that should minimize the 7 methodological biases plausibly distorting the existing scales. We validated the POPOR Scale by testing its factorial 8 structure and its convergent validity. Our work was driven by five main criteria.

9 First, to operationalize all of the main aspects of populist orientation, the scale we propose addressed the six 10 facets of populist orientation illustrated above: (a) economic, financial, and intellectual anti-establishment attitudes (b) 11 political anti-establishment attitudes; (c) conception of the people as a homogeneous and virtuous entity, (d) 12 consideration of the people as legitimated to take part directly in political decision-making processes; (e) need for a 13 strong leader; and (f) loss of relevance of the traditional ideologies. Since most scholars consider these six facets as 14 inextricably related, and all needed to define populist orientations distinct from other political attitudes, we expected a 15 unidimensional factorial structure (H1).

Second, to develop a short scale, easy to administer to samples from the general population, we chose to measure each of the construct's facets using two indicators.

18 Third, to minimize the risk of obtaining stereotyped responses, superficially resounding with the current anti-19 political zeitgeist, we followed Heineman's (1953) classic suggestion and chose a forced-choice format inviting 20 participants to express their preference between two opposing opinions using a 5-not-labelled category format. To 21 prevent a possible impression management bias (Paulhus 1984), we made the two opposing opinions legitimate using a 22 presentation such as: 'Some people say that... (opinion A). Others say that... (opinion B). Where would you place 23 yourself between these opposing opinions?' Heineman (1953) showed this format to be superior to the Likert format, 24 because it generates more balanced distributions and more valid estimates. In addition, this format reduces participants' 25 tendency to give responses that are superficially coherent with the *zeitgeist* and to formulate answers based on 26 satisficing cognitive processes (Pavsic & Pitrone 2000). Consistent with this, in many relevant cross-national public 27 opinion surveys (e.g., the European Social Survey, ESS, and the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, CSES), this 28 formulation of items and scales is used increasingly.

Fourth, we wanted to give the POPOR Scale a balanced structure, placing the opinion expressing populism on the left in half of the items and on the right in the other half. Balanced (vs. not balanced) scales have some relevant advantages: (a) they help to maintain participants' attention; (b) they help to identify participants giving a response set; and (c) they allow detection and correction of the bias resulting from response sets, by using structural equations
 modelling (SEM).

3 Fifth, consistent with the most convincing literature on this topic, according to which only advanced and 4 diagnostic methodological approaches can lead to high-quality scales (e.g., van der Linden & Hambleton 1997), we 5 wanted to test the psychometric characteristics of the POPOR Scale via the SEM approach. Beyond verifying the 6 scale's unidimensionality, we also tested its convergent validity, by analyzing the relations between the POPOR Scale 7 and a series of variables that, according to the literature, are associated with populist orientation. We expected the 8 POPOR scale to show positive associations with: (a) voting for the two most populist Italian parties – i.e., Lega and 9 M5S (Corbetta et al. 2018) (H2); (b) perceived economic insecurity (Guiso, Herrera & Morelli 2017) (H3); (c) a 10 negative attitude towards immigration (Van Assche et al. 2018) (H4); and (d) a negative attitude towards the European 11 Union (EU) (Tsatsanis, Andreadis, & Teperoglu 2018) (H5).

12 Materials and Methods

13 Context

We performed this study within the 2018 'Italian National Election Studies' (Itanes: see www.itanes.org/en) research on the political attitudes and voting behavior of Italians in the 2018 national election.

16 Participants and Data Cleaning

17 We interviewed a quota panel composed of 1,564 people, stratified by gender, age, and area of residence. Participants

18 were interviewed twice, both times using the Computer-Assisted Web Interviews (CAWI) method. The CAWI

19 approach allowed us to record the response time for each item. The first interview was performed about a month before

20 the election and the second was performed in the month after the election.

When surveying samples from the general population, preliminary data cleaning is germane, to exclude careless and inconsistent participants (McGrath et al. 2010), such as those who showed insufficient effort responding (Huang et al. 2012). This is particularly relevant in web surveys, because the lack of control on the environment, the complete anonymity of the interviewees, and the ease and speed of responding can make the data inaccurate (Johnson 2005). Keeping in the analyses respondents providing inaccurate data would artificially attenuate the associations between the variables, lower the reliability of the scales, lead to distorted factorial solutions, and lower the statistical power of the

27 predictive models (Schneider, May, & Stone 2018).

Two main classes of respondents should be excluded. First, those whose responses are too fast to be accurate (Curran 2016). Based on a pilot study showing that reading the items of the POPOR Scale required at least 60 seconds, we deleted the 182 participants who responded in a shorter time. Second, those giving inconsistent responses (Schuman & Presser 1981). Thus, we deleted the 34 participants who gave the same score for all 12 items of the scale, before 1 reversing the items with the populist option on the left. The resulting dataset was composed of 1,348 participants

2 (46.7% men, $M_{age} = 48.66$, SD = 13.07).

3 Measures

We used the following sets of questions from a larger questionnaire, available from the corresponding author.
 Akkerman et al's (2013) scale. We administered our participants the Italian translation Akkerman and
 colleagues' (2013) 8-item not-balanced scale measuring populist orientations.

7 POPOR Scale. Based on the literature above, we isolated 12 pairs of opposing opinions covering the six facets 8 illustrated above. In particular, the 'anti-establishment' semantic area included four opposing opinions referring to 9 economic, financial and intellectual anti-establishment attitudes and to political anti-establishment attitudes. The 10 'people' semantic area included four opposing opinions referring to the people's homogeneity and virtue and to the 11 people's sovereignty. Finally, both the 'leader' and 'ideology' areas included two sets of opposing opinions referring to 12 the need for a strong leader and to the conviction that the traditional political ideologies are no longer needed for 13 orienting political actions. For each pair of opinions, we asked participants to place themselves according to which 14 statement they tended to agree with, by marking one of the boxes labelled from 1 to 5, where 1 meant complete 15 agreement with the first statement and 5 meant complete agreement with the second statement. We administered the 16 scale in the post-electoral survey. The 12 items and their frequency are reported in Table 2, both in Italian and in 17 English.

18

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

19 Variables Used to Test the Convergent Validity of the POPOR Scale. In the post-electoral survey, we asked 20 participants to declare the party they voted for in the 2018 Italian national election. Based on Corbetta et al. (2018), we 21 computed a dummy variable, contrasting voters for M5S and Lega to participants who voted for the other parties or did 22 not cast a vote. In the pre-electoral survey, we assessed perceived economic insecurity via two variables, taken from the 23 Eurobarometer: (a) 'How do you think the general economic situation in the country has changed over the last 12 24 months? (lot better, better, same, little worse, lot worse, DK)'; and (b) 'How do you expect the general economic 25 situation in this country to develop over the next 12 months? (lot better, better, same, little worse, lot worse, DK)'. We 26 assessed participants' attitude towards immigration in the pre-electoral survey via the following, the first two taken 27 from the ESS and the third from the 2013 ITANES post-electoral survey: (a) 'Would you say it is generally bad or good 28 for Italy's economy that people come to live here from other countries?' (10-point scale); (b) 'Would you say it is 29 generally bad or good for Italy's culture that people come to live here from other countries?' (10-point scale); and (c) 30 Some people say that we receive too many immigrants. Others say that we can receive many more. Suppose these

people are at the extreme of the following scale. Of course, others have intermediate opinions. Where would you place
 your opinion?' (7-point scale). High scores indicated a negative attitude towards immigration.

Finally, in the pre-electoral survey, we assessed participants' attitude towards the European Union (EU) via the following 3-category Eurobarometer items: (a) 'Generally speaking, do you think that Italy's membership of the EU is a good thing, a bad thing, neither good nor bad, DK'; and (b) 'Generally speaking, do you think that having the euro is a good or a bad thing for your country? (a good thing, a bad thing, neither good nor bad, DK)'. High scores indicated a negative attitude towards the EU.

8 Data Analyses

9 We tested the dimensionality of the POPOR Scale via a series of CFAs, ML estimation). Subsequently, we tested its 10 convergent validity by analyzing its associations with participants' vote, actual and perceived economic insecurity and 11 attitude towards immigration and the EU via a series of SEMs. We performed all of these analyses using MPlus (ML 12 estimation). We evaluated the fit of our models using the *CFI* and the *RMSR*. Based on Hu and Bentler (1999), we 13 considered satisfactory the models with a *CFI* > .90 and the *SRMR* < .08. Finally, in supplementary analyses (available 14 as online material) we tested its structural invariance across participants' gender, age, education, and area of residence. 15 **Results**

16 Factorial Structure of the POPOR Scale

After performing eight CFAs, we obtained a 6-item, perfectly balanced, POPOR Scale, with one item measuring each of the POPOR facets. Table 3 reports the criteria used to choose the models we have tested, their main psychometric characteristics and their fit indices. To save space, we do not report all of the results analytically. More details are available from the corresponding author.

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TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

22 A first CFA (Model 1) showed that 11 out of 12 factorial loadings were significant, while that of Item 5 was not, 23 p = .073. A second CFA (Model 2), performed after deleting Item 5, led to significant saturations only. However, the fit 24 of the model was not satisfactory. A new model, tested by resorting to the CU approach (Model 3) led the factorial 25 loading of Item 12 to lose its significance. A new CFA performed after deleting this item (Model 4) led to a model with 26 significant loadings only. However, its fit was still not satisfactory. Based on an inspection of the modification indices, 27 we re-ran the model after deleting Item 9, which showed the worst fit to the model (Model 5). The model showed an 28 adequate fit. However, the resulting scale was not perfectly balanced, because it was composed of 5 items with high 29 scores expressing a high populist orientation and of 4 items with high scores expressing a low populist orientation. 30 Moreover, some of the POPOR facets were measured by one item, and some by two. Thus, based on the convergence of 31 substantive and statistic criteria, we deleted Item 2 (Model 6), Item 7 (Model 7), and Item 3 (Model 8). Consistent with

H1, the resulting scale was unidimensional, had significant loadings only (see Table 4), and showed a good fit (see the
 last line of Table 3). Each of the POPOR facets was measured by one item. Thus, we considered it as the POPOR Scale
 to be subjected to the tests of convergent validity.

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TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

5 Convergent Validity Tests

6 We tested the convergent validity of the POPOR Scale via a SEM in which, controlling for participants' gender, age, 7 and education, we regressed participants' POPOR score on perceived economic insecurity, attitude towards 8 immigration, and attitude towards the European Union. Moreover, we used participants' POPOR scores as predictors of 9 their vote (0 = the participant did not vote for a populist party, 1 = the participant voted for a populist party) on their 10 POPOR score. In the SEM, with the exception of participants' vote, that was measured using a single item, we modelled 11 all of these constructs as latent variables. Figure 1 shows the results of the model. Consistent with H2, the POPOR Scale 12 significantly predicted the dummy variable expressing having vs. not having voted for a populist party in the 2018 13 Italian national election, $R^2 = .24$. Moreover, respectively consistent with H3, H4, and H5, POPOR showed positive 14 associations with perceived economic insecurity, with a negative attitude towards immigration, and with a negative 15 attitude towards the European Union, $R^2 = .66$.

16

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Supplementary analyses, presented in the online material (see Table A1), showed the POPOR scale to be
structurally invariant across participants' gender, age, education, and area of residence.

19 Discussion

20 After years of nearly exclusive focus on the 'supply side' of populism, scholars recently began to analyze its 'demand 21 side', and a growing interest developed regarding citizens' populist orientations (e.g., Bos et al., 2018). A populist 22 orientation could be functional for citizens because it provides symbolic meanings and responses to the present 23 situation, in particular as (a) a Manichean group distinction used to attribute responsibility of their personal feelings of 24 uncertainty and lack of control to salient outgroups such as 'the elite' or 'the immigrants'; and (b) in the hope of 25 overcoming these personal feelings of anguish through their vote (Spruyt, Keppens, & Van Droogenbroeck 2016). 26 Thus, the need for studying such orientation is becoming more and more relevant in times and contexts characterized by 27 the rising of uncertainty stemming from the multifaceted threats perceived by public opinion in Western countries 28 (Kakkar & Sivanathan 2017). 29 There is wide consensus regarding the idea that people's populist orientation can be measured (Akkerman et al.

30 2013). However, the existing scales of populism have some relevant theoretical and methodological limitations.

31 Notably, our analyses showed that Akkermann et al's (2013) scale, which is the most widely used scale of populist

1 orientations, though considered unidimensional by its authors, did not show a unidimensional structure. Thus, it lacked 2 construct validity, and could hardly be suggested as a good measure of populist orientation. To overcome these 3 limitations, in this study, we have developed and validated the POPulist ORientation (POPOR) Scale across a wide 4 sample of the Italian population over 18 years. The POPOR Scale is composed of six forced-choice items and is 5 balanced against any response set. Confirmatory factor analyses showed that the POPOR Scale has a unidimensional 6 structure, has good convergent validity and is invariant across participants' sex, age, education and area of residence. 7 The POPOR Scale has some strong points, because it operationalizes all of the main facets of people's populist 8 orientation detected in the literature. Moreover, it is short, unidimensional, balanced, valid, invariant across the main 9 socio-demographic variables, and it has been validated via advanced and complete psychometric procedures. Indeed, 10 beyond testing its factorial structure via confirmatory factor analysis, we have tested the POPOR Scale's convergent 11 validity. This was the first time that formal tests of validity were performed in a scale focused on the 'demand side' of 12 populism, as eloquently witnessed in Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove's concluding remarks: having demonstrated that it 13 is possible to measure populism in individuals, it will be interesting to see whether populist attitudes correlate with 14 other attitudes' (p. 1346). The detection of its structural invariance (results available in the online supplemental 15 material) is another specific plus of the POPOR Scale, in that it is the only scale measuring populist orientations that 16 underwent such test.

17 The format of the POPOR Scale, although unusual, is probably its most distinctive and convincing characteristic. 18 The use of forced-choice items helped participants, at least in part, to resort to optimizing, as opposed to satisficing, 19 cognitive process when responding to the scale (Pavsic & Pitrone 2000), thus leading them to give more valid responses 20 (Heineman 1953). The POPOR Scale has a balanced format (half of its forced-choice items have the populist opinion on 21 their left and the other half on their right). Thus, in contrast to what happens in most of the existing scales of populism, 22 high POPOR scores can be attributed to high levels of populism and not to an acquiescent response set. The superiority 23 of our balanced format vs. the non-balanced format of the standard scales of populism manifested itself in helping us to 24 detect 34 participants who gave the same response to all of the original (i.e., before recoding the items with the populist 25 opinion on the left) 12 POPOR items, even if this led them to give contradictory responses. Moreover, it allowed us to 26 correct the POPOR scores from participants' idiosyncratic use of the scale (Marsh 1989). We suggest that future 27 researchers using the POPOR Scale employ the SEM approach, even if it is more demanding than the standard Likert 28 approach, because of its superior diagnostic power and for the opportunity of correcting participants' response bias that 29 it offers. The SEM approach, among other things, helped us show that the most widely used scale measuring populist 30 orientations (Akkerman et al. 2013), previously validated by resorting only to exploratory factor analysis, has not a 31 unidimensional structure. The second most frequently used scale is Oliver and Rahn's (2013) one. Also this scale was

validated only using exploratory factor analysis. Our study suggests that more discriminant and informative analyses
 should performed to test the factorial structure of this scale, before considering it a fully valid measure of populist
 orientations.

4 Consistent with the data showing that the likelihood of having participants who provide inaccurate responses 5 depends on the sample's socio-cultural level (Schuman & Presser 1981), our preliminary analyses helped in discovering 6 that 13.8% of our participants provided inaccurate responses, because they certainly gave a response set or responded 7 too quickly to the POPOR items. This number of careless or inconsistent respondents (McGrath et al. 2010) was 8 analogous to that stemming from other CAWI studies (e.g., Johnson 2005). This was far from surprising because, 9 according to some researchers, web interviews cannot allow any control on the process of responding, are void of social 10 exchanges between the interviewee and the researcher and allow responses that are too easy and fast (McGrath et al. 11 2010). It is plausible that these kinds of distortion could also affect surveys of the general population performed with 12 other methods of data collection that do not allow their detection, such as the standard paper-and-pencil method (e.g., 13 Curran 2016).

14 Beyond its strong points, this study could be further developed in future research. First, as with the other existing 15 scales of populism, we validated the POPOR Scale with a single population sample from a single nation. A second 16 administration of the POPOR Scale, performed right after the 2019 European election (N = 1,504, quota sample of the 17 Italian general population) led to the same factorial structure (loadings ranging from .10 to .66, all ps < .001, CFI = .95, 18 RSMR = .03, details available from the corresponding author). This—together with the test of structural invariance of 19 the POPOR SCALE-definitely speaks in favor of the robustness of the factorial structure we have detected, at least in 20 the Italian contexts. Future studies could test the scale's psychometric properties in other nations and its invariance 21 across different cultures. Second, it was administered using a CAWI approach only. A comparison of the POPOR 22 Scale's performance across different methods of administration could be interesting. However, even without these 23 possible developments, we believe the POPOR Scale to be a convincing tool for measuring people's populist 24 orientation.

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Source	Type of scale	Number of items	Number of categories	Balanced	Statistical analyses used in the validation
		(structure)		scale?	
Akkerman, Mudde and	Likert	6	5	No	Exploratory factor analysis
Zaslove (2013)		(unidimensional)			
Castaño Silva et al. (2018)	Likert	6 (unidimensional	Information not available	Yes	Confirmatory factor analysis and Item
		version)			Response Theory models
		9 (three-dimensional			
		version)			
Elchardus and Spruyt	Likert	4	5	No	Confirmatory factor analysis
(2016)		(unidimensional)			
Hammelers and de Vreese	Likert	10	7	No	Confirmatory factor analysis
(2018)		(bi-dimensional)			
Hawkins, Riding and	Likert	4	4	No	Exploratory factor analysis
Mudde (2012)		(unidimensional)			
Oliver and Rahn (2016)	Different kind of	12	Different number of categories	Partially	Exploratory factor analysis
	items	(three-dimensional)	across items		
Rooduijn (2014)	Likert	9	5	Partially	Confirmatory factor analysis
		(unidimensional)		-	
Schultz et al. (2018)	Likert	12	5	No	Confirmatory factor analysis
		(three-dimensional)			
Stanley (2011)	Likert	8	7	Yes	None
		(information not			
		available)			
Van Hauwaert and Van	Likert	8	5	No	Item Response Theory models
Kessel (2018)		(unidimensional)			

Table 1. Characteristics of the Extant Scales of Populism

Table 2. POPOR Scale: Items and Frequency

		1	2	3	4	5
Economic, financial, and inte	llectual anti-establishment attitudes					
1. Alcuni dicono che politici, giornalisti, esponenti dell'economia e della finanza fanno tutti parte dello stesso sistema corrotto che ha portato l'Italia alla crisi. Altri dicono che non è corretto metterli tutti assieme perché esistono responsabilità diverse. Lei dove collocherebbe la sua opinione? (R)	1. Some people say that politicians, journalists, and financial experts are all part of the same corrupt system that has led Italy into crisis. Others say that it's not right to lump those groups all together, because they have different responsibilities. Where would you place yourself between these opposing opinions? (R)	288	244	257	295	264
2. C'è chi dice che chi ha studiato ha più strumenti per capire i problemi della società, e chi dice invece che chi ha diplomi e lauree capisce poco dei problemi della gente comune. Lei dove collocherebbe la sua opinione?	2. There are those who say that educated people are better able to understand the problems of our society, and there are others who say that people with advanced degrees do not understand the problems of ordinary people. Where would you place yourself between these opposing opinions?	332	356	476	92	92
Political anti-es	stablishment attitudes					
 Alcuni dicono che i partiti sono necessari alla democrazia, altri che oggi in Italia senza i partiti ci sarebbe più democrazia. Lei dove collocherebbe la sua opinione? 	3. Some people say that political parties are necessary for a democracy. Others say that there would be more democracy in Italy today if there weren't any parties. Where would you place yourself between these opposing opinions?	302	328	401	166	151
4. Alcuni dicono che oggi in Italia i politici sono in maggioranza corrotti, altri dicono che quelli corrotti sono solo una minoranza. Lei dove collocherebbe la sua opinione? (R)	4. Some people say that most politicians in Italy today are corrupt. Others say that only a minority of politicians are corrupt. Where would you place yourself between these opposing opinions? (R)	502	386	283	126	51
People as a homoge	eneous and virtuous entity					
5. Alcuni dicono che, anche se gli italiani sono molto diversi tra loro, in fin dei conti la vedono allo stesso modo sulle cose davvero importanti. Altri dicono invece che anche fra gli italiani ci sono forti differenze e conflitti. Lei dove collocherebbe la sua opinione? (R)	5. Some people say that even though Italians are very different from one another, at the end of the day they regard the really important things in the same way. On the other hand, others say that even among Italians there are strong differences and conflicts. Where would you place yourself between these opposing opinions? (R)	54	102	325	407	460
6. C'è chi dice che i conflitti fra le persone sono inevitabili perché derivano dalla natura umana. Altri pensano invece che il popolo è fondamentalmente buono e onesto e che le persone sono messe le une contro le altre da chi comanda. Lei dove collocherebbe la sua opinione?	6. There are those who say that conflicts among people are inevitable because it's just part of human nature. On the other hand, others think that ordinary people are basically good and honest and that it's only because of those in charge that people are set against each other. Where would you place yourself between these opposing opinions?	258	367	384	197	142

People legitimated to take part directly in political decision-making processes

7. Secondo alcuni decidere sulle questioni politiche è un compito che spetta a chi eleggiamo in Parlamento. Secondo altri, invece, la gente comune dovrebbe poter decidere direttamente sulle questioni politiche, come accade nei referendum. Lei dove collocherebbe la sua opinione?	7. According to some people, the job of deciding political issues belongs to those we elect to the Parliament. According to others, ordinary people should be able to decide political issues directly, as it happens in referendums. Where would you place yourself between these opposing opinions?	219	263	306	255	305
8. C'è chi pensa che le persone comuni potrebbero benissimo andare in Parlamento a fare politica, e chi pensa invece che la politica sia una cosa complessa e che debba essere fatta da professionisti. Lei dove collocherebbe la sua opinione? (R)	8. There are those who say that ordinary people could easily enter the Parliament and do the job. On the other hand, other people think that political matters are complicated and need to be dealt with by professionals. Where would you place yourself between these opposing opinions? (R)	309	268	334	236	201
Need for	a strong leader					
9. Alcuni pensano che in politica c'è bisogno di un leader forte	9. Some people think that in politics you need a strong leader to	413	199	301	181	154
che guidi il popolo. Altri pensano invece che questo sarebbe	guide the people. On the other hand, others think that having a					
pericoloso per la democrazia. Lei dove collocherebbe la sua	strong leader would be dangerous for democracy. Where would you					
opinione? (R)	place yourself between these opposing opinions? (R)					
10. Alcuni pensano che l'insieme dei parlamentari rappresenti	10. Some people think that the Parliament as a whole best	211	324	475	194	144
al meglio gli interessi della società, altri pensano invece che il	represents the interests of society. Others think that the will of the					
volere del popolo puo essere realizzato solo attraverso un	people can be carried out only by having a strong leader. Where					
leader. Lei dove collocherebbe la sua opinione?	would you place yourself between these opposing opinions?					
Loss of relevance of the traditional ideologies						
11. C'è chi dice che oggi la divisione fra sinistra e destra è ancora importante e, al contrario, c'è chi sostiene che non ha più senso. Lei dove si colloca?	11. There are those who say that the difference between left and right in politics is still important today. Others say that the difference between left and right in politics doesn't make sense any more. Where would you place yourself between these opposing opinions?	185	177	307	245	434
12. C'è chi dice che non ci sono tanti modi per risolvere i problemi sociali, ma basta il buonsenso e la volontà di farlo. Al contrario c'è chi dice che i problemi sociali possono essere risolti in modo diverso dalle varie parti politiche. Lei dove collocherebbe la sua opinione? (R)	12. There are those who say that there's only one way to fix social problems and that it's enough to have common sense and the will to fix them. There are others who say that different political groups could fix social problems in different ways. Where would you place yourself between these opposing opinions? (R)	308	283	327	228	202

Note. The 8 items of the final POPOR Scale are in Italics. (R) = reverse item.

Model	Description	Range of the standardized factorial loadings	χ^2	CFI	SRMR	? Comment
Model 1	12 items	.06, <i>p</i> = .07161, <i>p</i> < .001	$\chi^2(54) = 602.51,$ p < .001	.72	.06	Factorial loading of Item 5 not significant Insufficient fit
Model 2	11 items (Item 5 deleted)	.11, <i>p</i> < .00161, <i>p</i> < .001	$\chi^2(44) = 558.66,$ p < .001	.73	.06	Insufficient fit
Model 3	11 items, Correlated uniqueness correction	.03, <i>p</i> = .3566, <i>p</i> < .001	$\chi^2(34) = 347.07,$ p < .001	.84	.05	Factorial loading of Item 12 not significant Insufficient fit
Model 4	10 items (item 12 deleted) Correlated uniqueness correction	.17, <i>p</i> < .00166, <i>p</i> < .001	$\chi^2(29) = 342.80,$ p < .001	.83	.05	Insufficient fit
Model 5	9 items (item 9 deleted), Correlated uniqueness correction	.29, <i>p</i> < .00167, <i>p</i> < .001	$\chi^2(24) = 144.16,$ p < .001	.93	.03	Non-perfectly balanced scale, more than one item for some POPOR facets
Model 6	8 items (item 2 deleted) $.10, p <$ Correlated uniqueness correction $.66, p <$	<.001 - $\chi^2(17) = 91.23, p < .001$.95	.0	3 N it	on-perfectly balanced scale, more than one em for some POPOR facets
Model 7	7 items (item 7 deleted) $.26, p < .73, p$	<.001 - $\chi^2(11) = 33.31, p < .001$.98	.0	$2 \frac{N}{it}$	on-perfectly balanced scale, more than one em for one POPOR facet
Model 8	6 items (item 3 deleted) Correlated uniqueness correction	.28, <i>p</i> < .0152, <i>p</i> < .001	$\chi^2(6) = 16.67, p$ < .001	.98	.02	

Table 3. Psychometric Characteristics and Fit Indices of the Tested Models

	Unstandardized loading	Standard error	Standardized loading
1. Some people say that politicians, journalists, and financial experts are all part of the same corrupt system that has led Italy into crisis. Others say that it's not right to lump those groups all together, because they have different responsibilities. Where would you place yourself between these opposing opinions? (R)	1.00***	.00	.45
4. Some people say that most politicians in Italy today are corrupt. Others say that only a minority of politicians are corrupt. Where would you place yourself between these opposing opinions? (R)	.91***	.15	.41
6. There are those who say that conflicts among people are inevitable because it's just part of human nature. On the other hand, others think that ordinary people are basically good and honest and that it's only because of those in charge that people are set against each other. Where would you place yourself between these opposing opinions?	.93***	.14	.52
8. There are those who say that ordinary people could easily enter the Parliament and do the job. On the other hand, other people think that political matters are complicated and need to be dealt with by professionals. Where would you place yourself between these opposing opinions? (R)	.78***	13	.37
10. Some people think that the Parliament as a whole best represents the interests of society. Others think that the will of the people can be carried out only by having a strong leader. Where would you place yourself between these opposing opinions?	.68***	.10	.36
11. There are those who say that the difference between left and right in politics is still important today. Others say that the difference between left and right in politics doesn't make sense any more. Where would you place yourself between these opposing opinions?	.54***	.10	.28

Note. The loading of the first item does not have a standard error because we fixed it to 1 to give the POPOR latent variable a unit of measurement. *** p < .001.

Figure 1. Convergent Validity Tests. Standardized Parameters and Standard Errors Are Displayed

