This paper seeks to investigate support for populist parties in Europe. While populism is an important and intensely debated topic, most scholarship is plagued with conceptual conflations between different variants of populism (Mudde/Kaltwasser 2011: 1). Despite existing pleas to avoid these, many influential scholars continue to use qualifying features of the Right to describe populism, possibly leading to severe shortcomings in their empirical analyses.

For example, in Inglehart's and Norris' publication "Trump, Brexit, and the rise of populism"^[Inglehart, Ronald, and Pippa Norris. "Trump, Brexit, and the rise of populism: Economic have-nots and cultural backlash." (2016).] ostensibly right-wing parties such as the National Democratic Party in Germany or the Hungarian Jobbik are classified as populist left, based solely on their left-right position on the economic scale.

To avoid similar conceptual confusions, this paper adopts Cas Mudde’s clear minimalist definition to identify core features that all subtypes of populism have in common. In line with this definition, we suggest that populist parties are primarily defined by their degree of anti-establishment agenda as well as their opposition to globalization. Subsequently, we propose to classify European populist parties along two left-right dimensions: progressivism and traditionalism.

While previous authors used economic and cultural factors to determine support for (mostly traditionalist) populism, we propose a hierarchical theoretical model that integrates those explanatory approaches and distinguishes between traditionalist and progressive populism as outcomes. This model is structured by two consecutive steps:

1. Economically deprived individuals - seeking to change the status quo - are more likely to reject establishment parties and consequently support populist parties instead.
2. Whether said people support progressive or traditionalist populism is determined by their cultural values:   
   1. Traditionalist populists are supported by people who believe that societal change has gone too far and that cosmopolitan liberal elites undermine national unity.
   2. Progressive populists draw their support from people who believe that capitalist elites (represented by institutions like multinational banks and companies) undermine the people's will by safeguarding the deeply reactionary society that is in dire need of radical change.

In order to operationalize our conceptual considerations, we use the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) dataset that contains information on the positions of political parties within Europe. We then devise two indices along which European parties can be classified: Populism vs. Establishment and Progressivism vs Traditionalism. K-Nearest Neighbor clustering identifies four clusters, traditionalist and progressive populist as well as establishment parties. After the successful classification, we combine the CHES data with European Social Survey (ESS) data round 5 – 8 and identify respondents that either vote for or identify with the classified populist parties, forming our dependent variable “Support for Populist Parties”.

We estimate a multinomial logistic regression to test our hypotheses of support for populism. Our models confirm our theoretical conceptualizations. Economically deprived individuals are more likely to both support traditionalist and progressive populist parties, but individuals who hold anti-immigration views as well as traditional values are more likely to support traditionalist populism, whereas the effect goes in the opposite direction for the support for progressive populism.

Further research might be able to build upon our conceptualization and give more attention to the different variants of populism, so as to not conflate the distinct explanatory frameworks that come along with these variants.