

Passionate Europe: The Role of Emotions in European Attitudes and Identity

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Monika Verbalyte

Europa-Universität Flensburg

Where is the gap?

- European researchers were late to the „emotional turn“ party, so there is still a huge research gap in regard to how specific emotions impact on European attitudes (Verbalyte et al. 2022);
- And even European identity/attachment which is seen as a sentiment and inherently emotional has not been much analyzed in this respect
- Therefore, more explorative approach

What do we know?

- Emotions near the utilitarian consideration are the strongest predictor of EU-support (Verbalyte & Scheve 2018)
- Fear, anger and voting for/against the EU (Garry 2014; Vasilopoulou & Wagner 2017)
- Anger/fear about immigration and support for European cooperation (Erisen et al. 2020)
- Social resentment (Abts & Baute 2022) and resentmentfulness (Capelos & Katsanidou 2018) in anti-immigration, anti-elite and anti-EU attitudes
- *Ressentimentful* individuals are less cosmopolitan or pro-European (Capelos & Demertzis 2022)

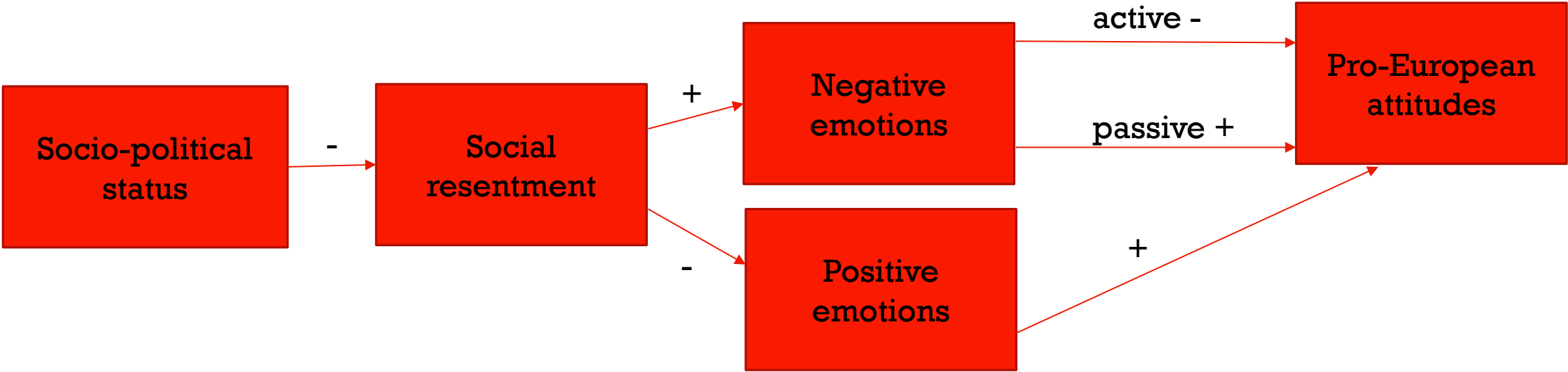
“Proxies” 1

- Anger is related to confrontational politics and far-right voting, whereas anxiety is associated with reconciliatory policies and voting for traditional parties (Lerner et al. 2003; Marcus et al. 2019; Vasilopoulos et al. 2019)
- Anger and populist attitudes/support (Magni 2017; Mayer & Nguyen 2021; Rico et al. 2017), anti-immigration attitudes (Rico 2024) and nativism (Abadi et al. 2024)
- Contempt towards the establishment arises from perceived threat to one’s national identity and is linked to populism (Elad-Strenger & Kessler 2024) and far-right discourse (Vahter & Jakobson 2023)
- Anxiety, sadness and hope strengthen political trust and lessen support for to far-right populist parties (Civettini, 2011; Lytkina & Reeskers 2024)
- However, positive emotions might also bolster (nativist) populism, particularly through expressions of pride (Salmela & von Scheve 2018) or hope for an alternative future (Bonansinga 2019; 2022)

“Proxies” 2

- *Ressentiment* is related to right-wing populist support (Abts & Rogenhofer 2024; Nguyen et al. 2022; Capelos et al. 2024)
- Social isolation through anger impact on populist attitudes (Filsinger 2024); low life satisfaction through anti-immigration attitudes and political distrust increases populist support (Lindholm et al. 2024); social marginalization (Elad-Strenger & Kessler 2024) and perception of unjust/unfair treatment (Demasi et al. 2024) are related to far-right populism/populist support
- Economic precariousness alone does not drive support for populism; individuals must also perceive it as unfair and feel politically powerless to change it (Abts & Rogenhofer 2024)
- Anxiety and anger are stronger predictors of populist attitudes and nativism than socio-economic and socio-cultural factors (Abadi et al. 2024)

Model



Variables 1

- „When you think about the current political situation in [COUNTRY], to what extent do you feel...?
 - Anger
 - Anxiety
 - Sadness
 - Hope
 - Contempt
- Social resentment (Abts & Baute 2022; Abts & Rogenhofer 2024):
 - Injustice/relative deprivation („People like me are being systematically neglected, whereas other groups receive more than they deserve“)
 - Low political efficacy („How much influence you say that people like you acting together can have on how [COUNTRY] is governed?“)
 - Negative future prospects („And do you expect your household’s economic and financial situation 10 years from now to be much worse, worse, more or less the same, better, or much better than it is today?“)



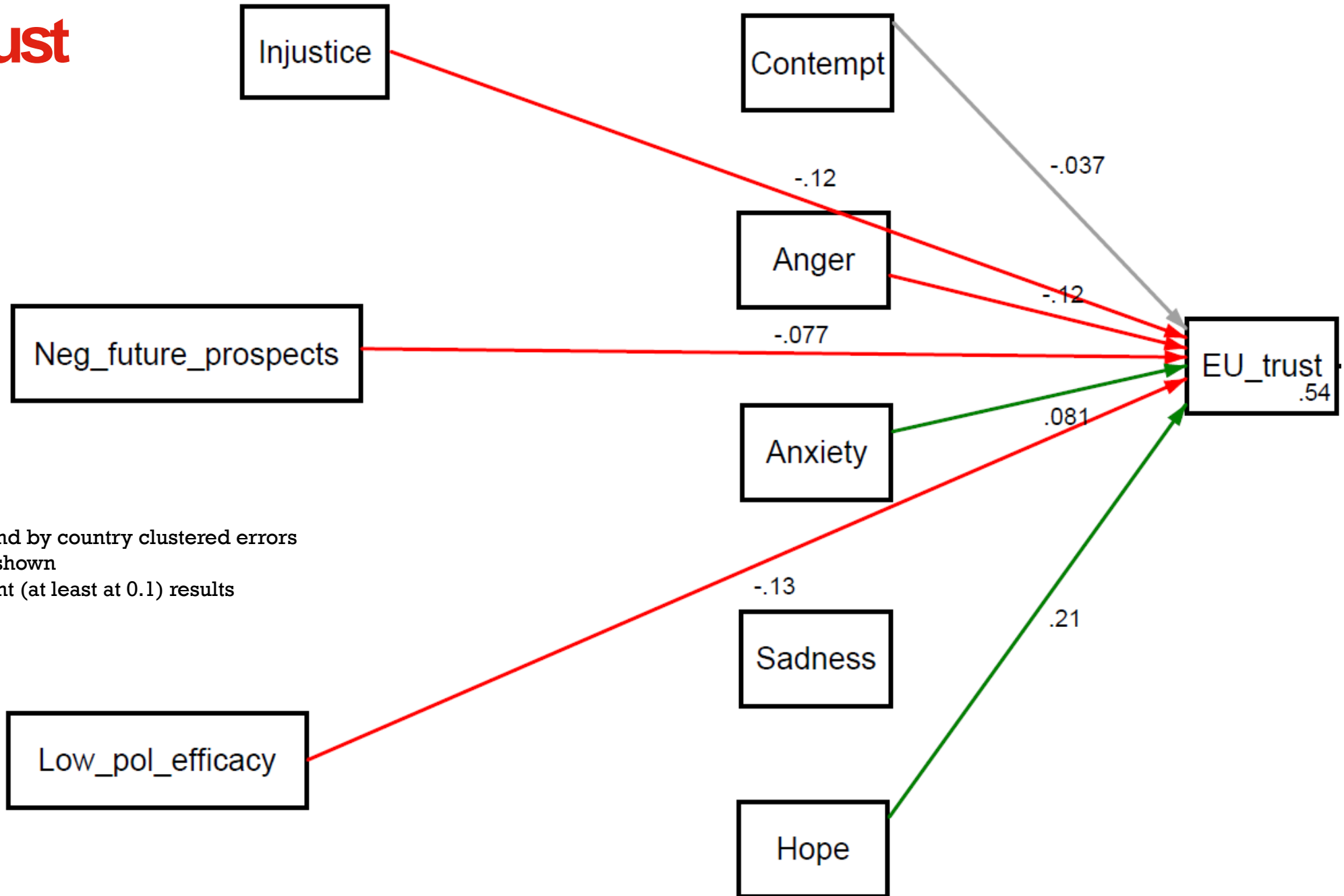
Variables 2

- **European trust:** „On a score from 1 to 10, how much do you personally trust the following groups or institutions?” The European Commission + The European Parliament
- **European identity:** “Do you see yourself as...? Only [NATIONAL]/ [NATIONAL] first and then European/ European first and then [NATIONAL]/ Only European
- **National law superiority:** „European Union law and policy should be implemented in [country] only when our national government agrees with them.”

Controls:

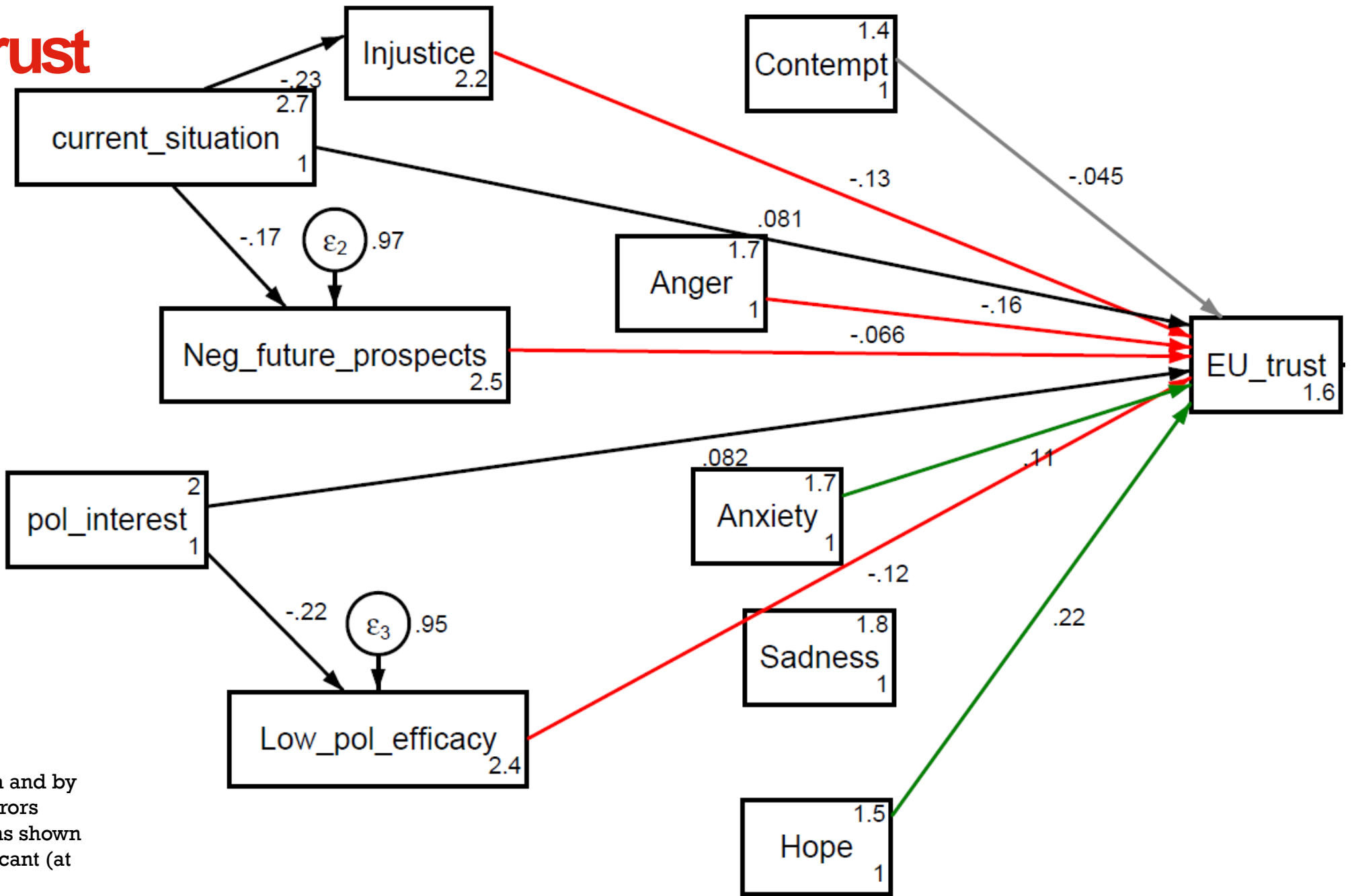
- **Current financial situation:** “Which of the following best describes your household’s current economic and financial situation?” From “We find it very difficult to live on the money we have” to “We live very comfortably on the money we have“
- Political interest
- Gender, education, employment status
- Countries fixed effects

EU trust



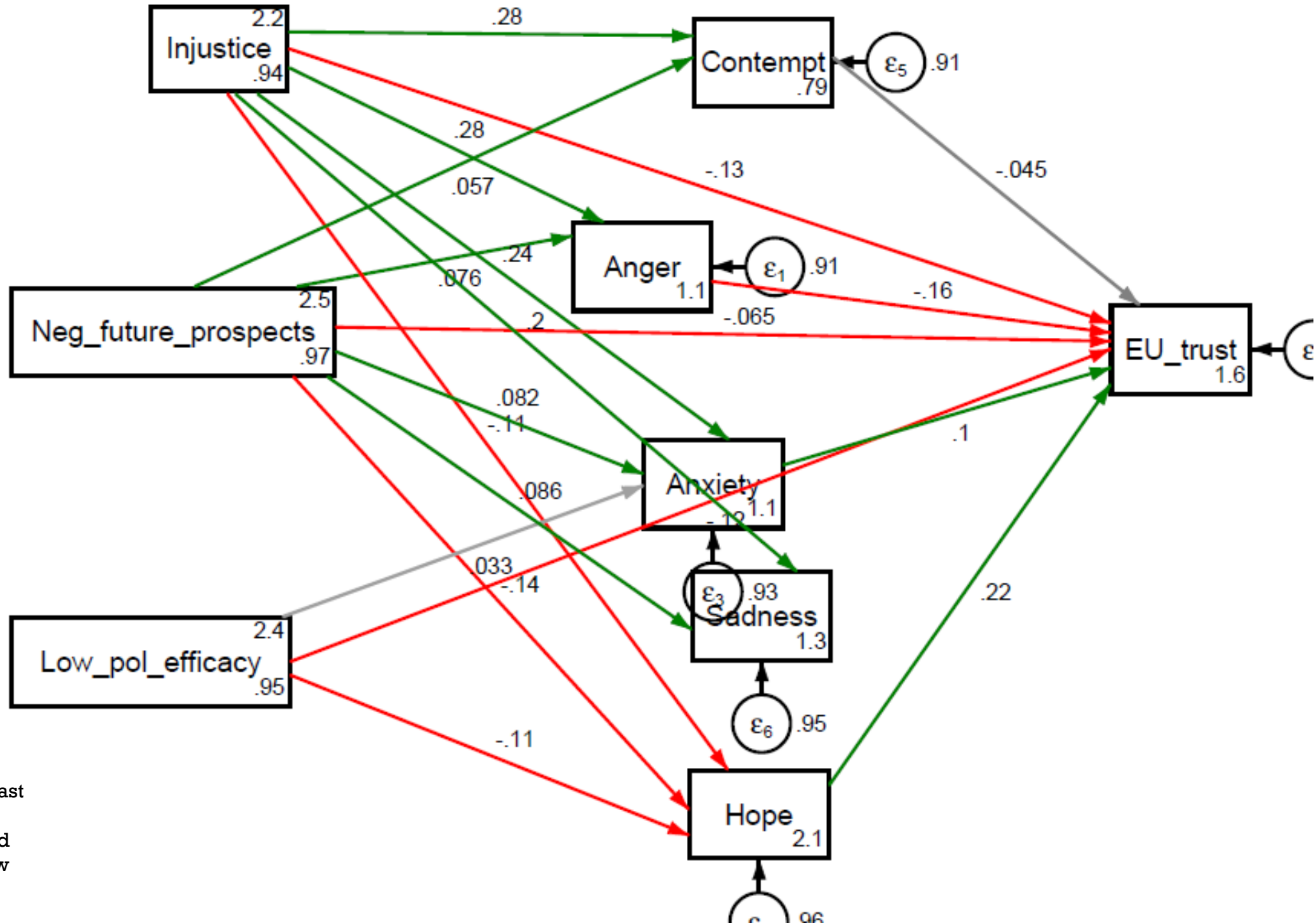
Note: Weighed data and by country clustered errors
Only significant paths shown
Gray – nearly significant (at least at 0.1) results

EU trust



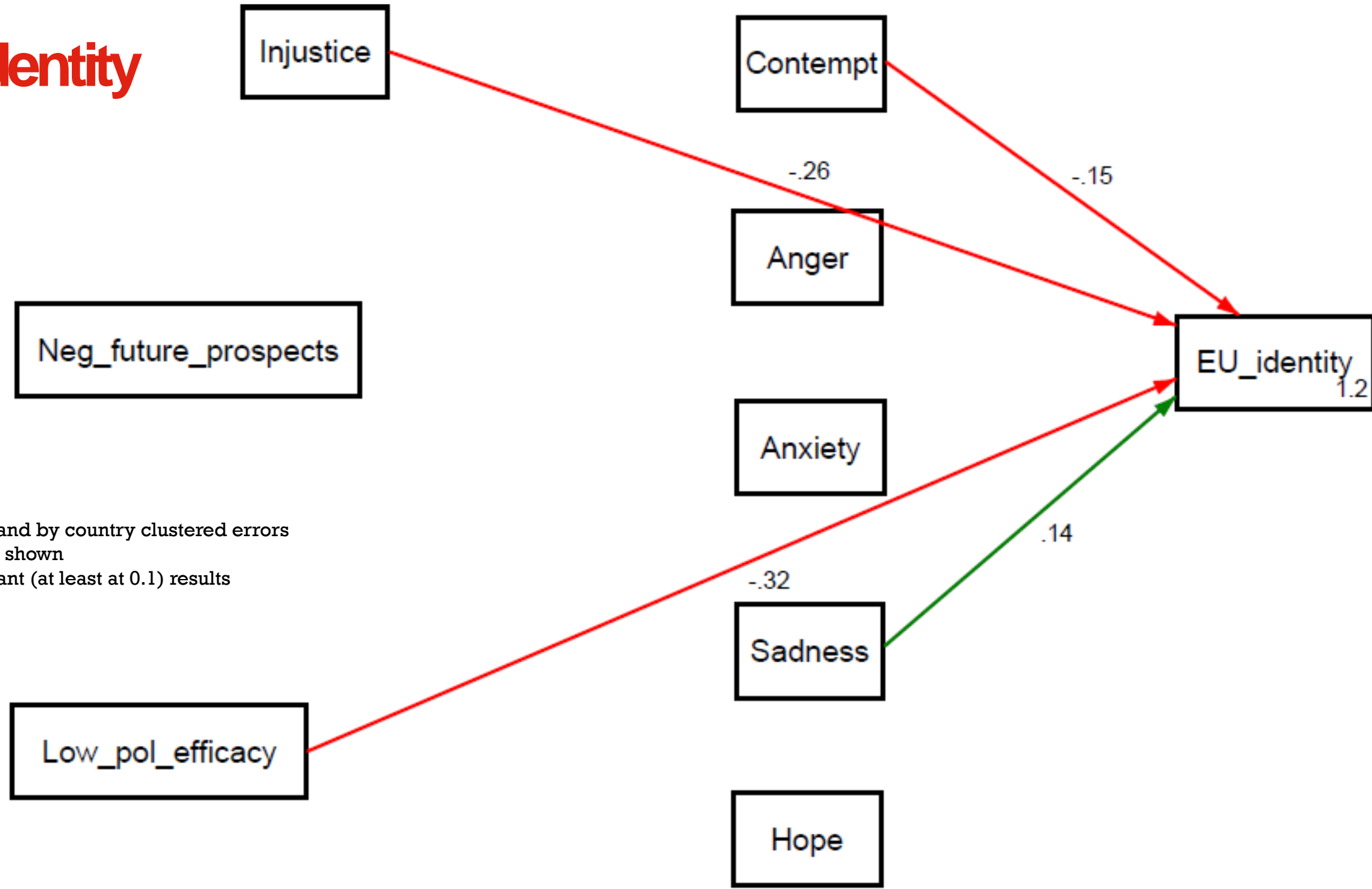
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EU trust



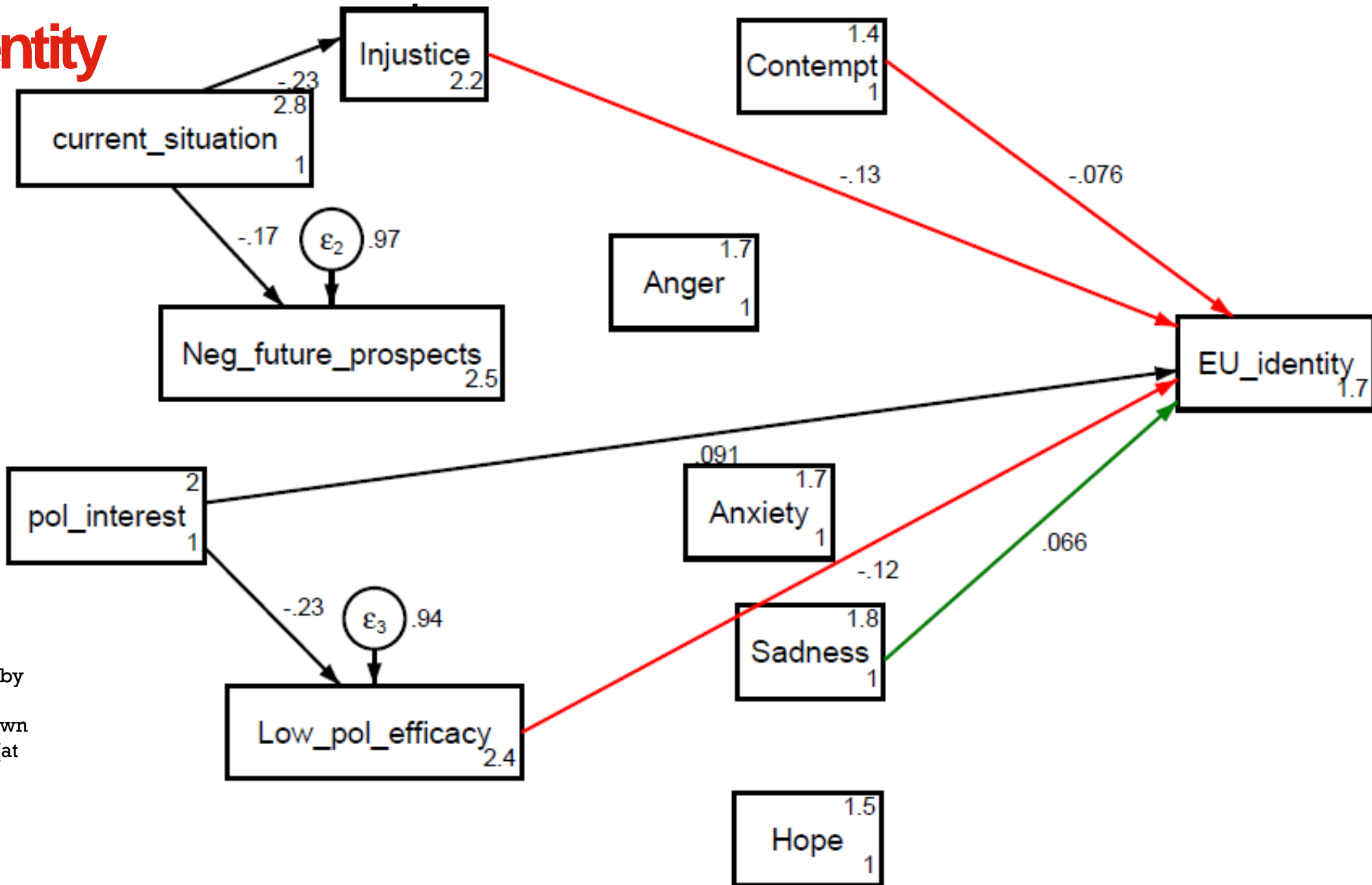
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 Controls – current situation and pol. interest – included but now shown

EU identity



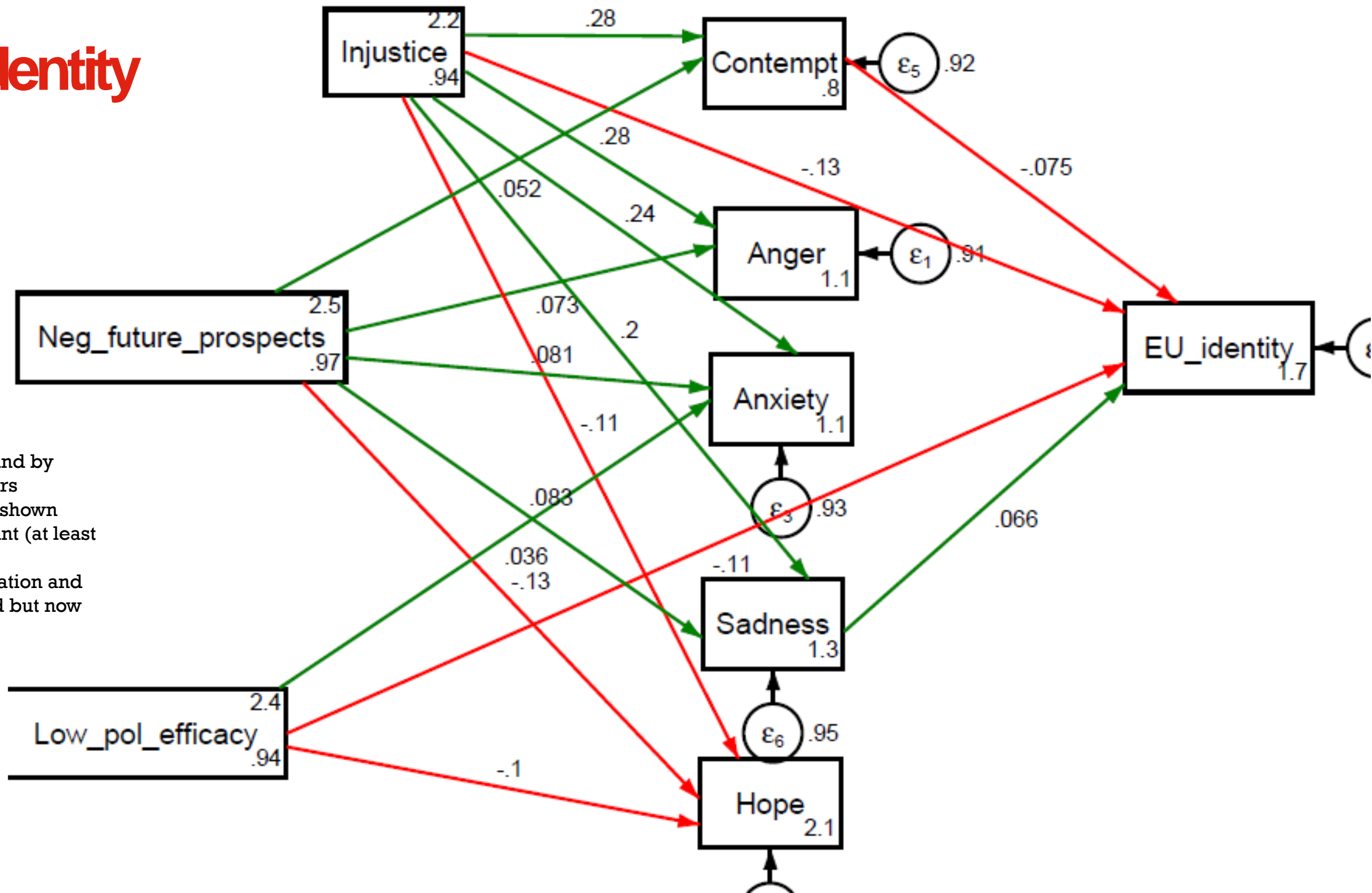
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EU identity



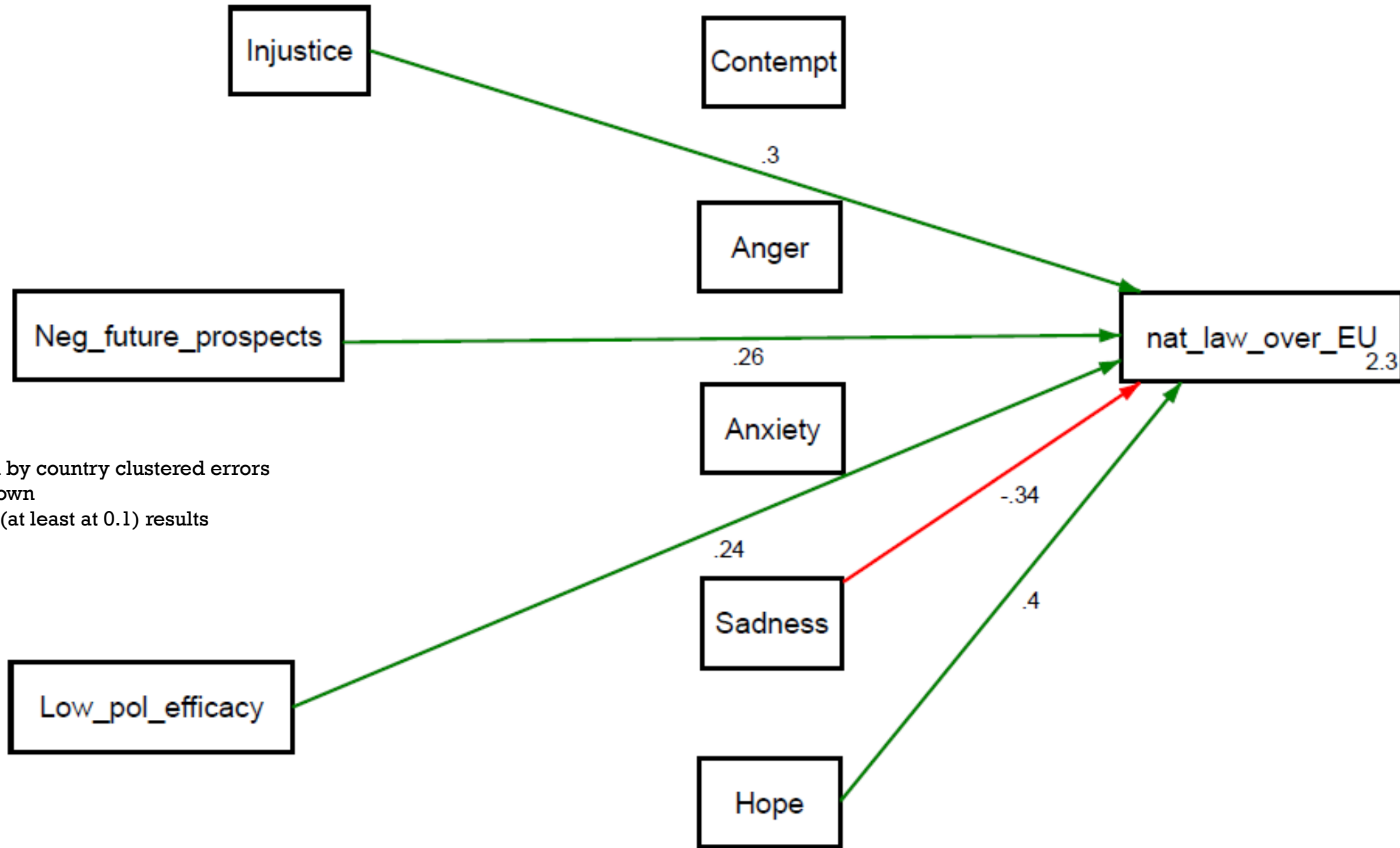
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EU identity



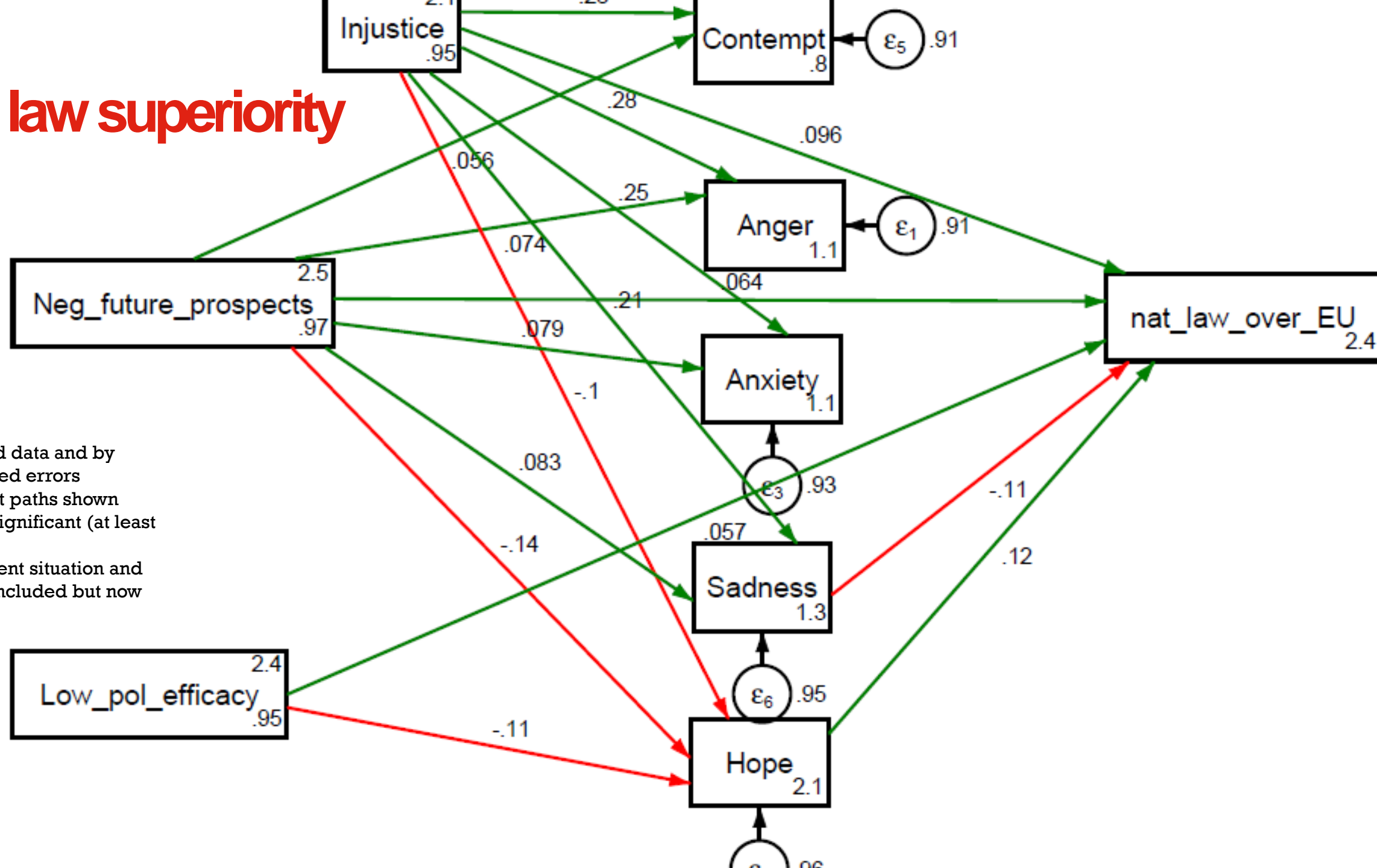
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Nat. law superiority



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Nat. law superiority



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Results and Conclusion:

- **Socio-political variables** have direct as well as indirect effects on EU attitudes and identity yet political interest more direct than current financial situation
- **Social resentment** has a positive relation to negative emotions and negative to positive ones; pol. efficacy has the lowest impact on all emotions and attitudes
- **Different emotions** drive different pro-European attitudes; difference between **active and passive negative emotions** confirmed; surprising role of **sadness**; ambivalent role of **hope**
- **EU identity is the least utilitarian** of attitudes which does not mean it is the most dependent on emotions – EU trust is