

RESEARCH NOTE

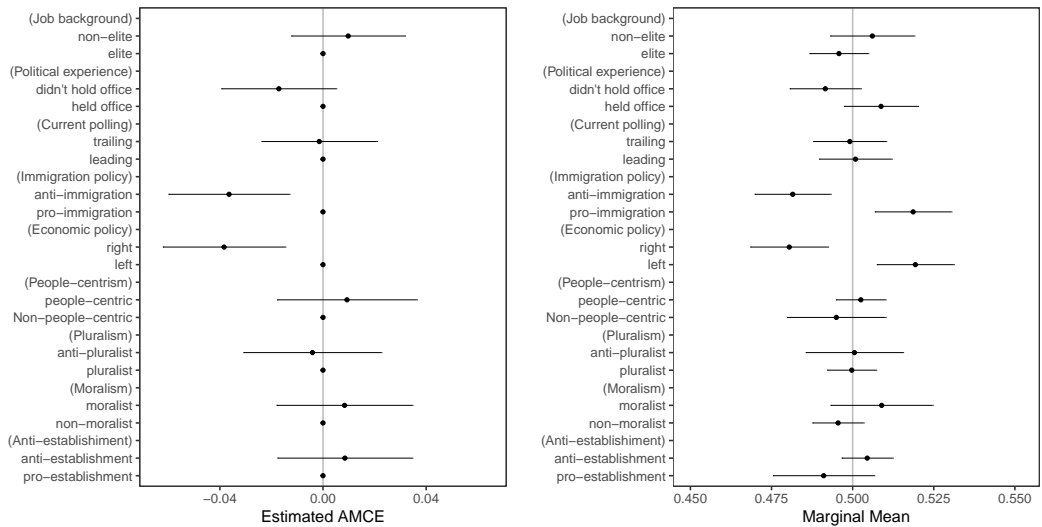
Online Appendix: The (In)effectiveness of Populist Rhetoric: A Conjoint Experiment of Campaign Messaging

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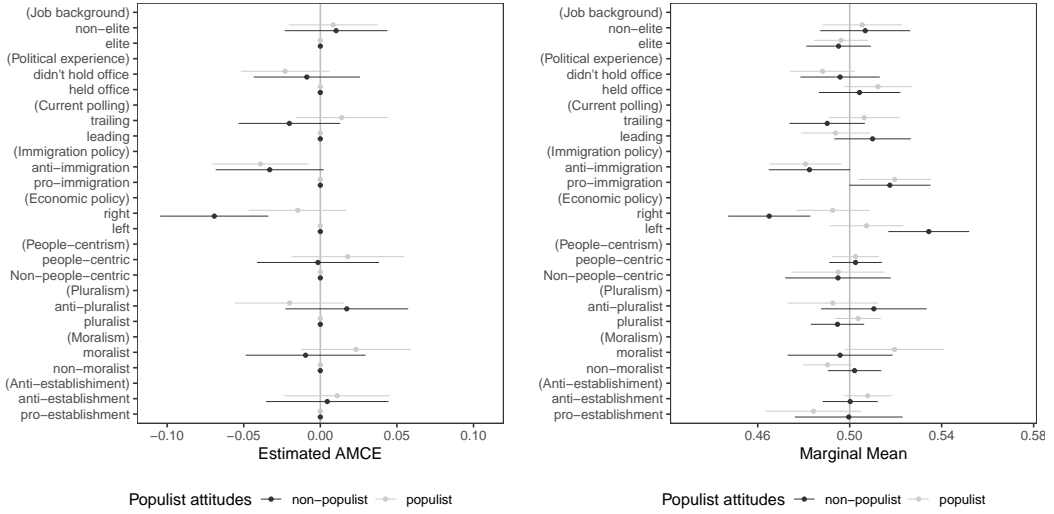
Appendix A: Tables and Figures



The plot shows the AMCE and marginal mean estimates of the randomly assigned profile and speech attributes on candidates' probability of being selected. Estimates are based on the baseline OLS model of the original MTurk sample. Bars represent 95% CIs. Robust standard errors are clustered by respondent.

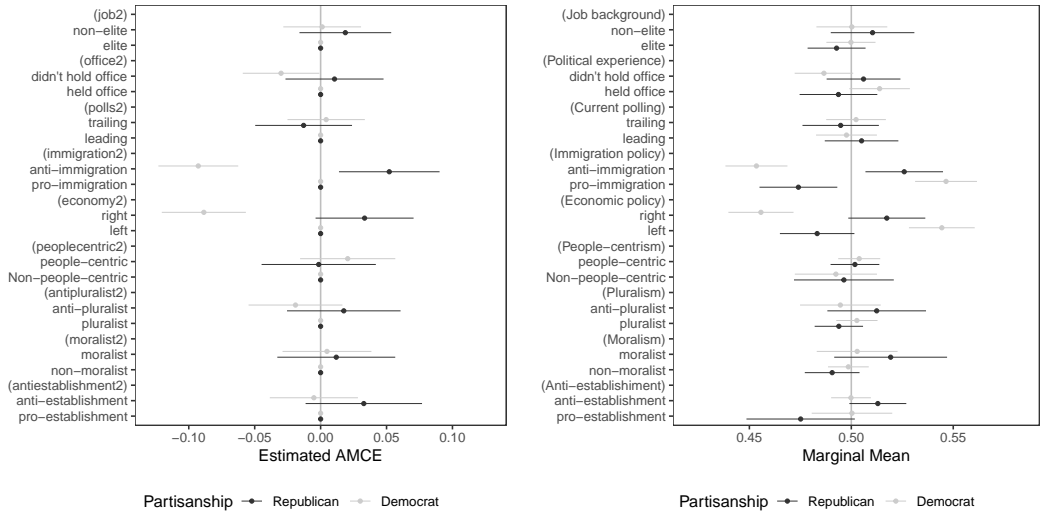
Figure A1. Effects of using various features of populist rhetoric and other attributes (alternative coding)

Both authors contributed equally and names are listed in alphabetical order. We thank Bruno Castanho Silva, Maria Snegovaya, the editor, and anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on this paper. The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the research.



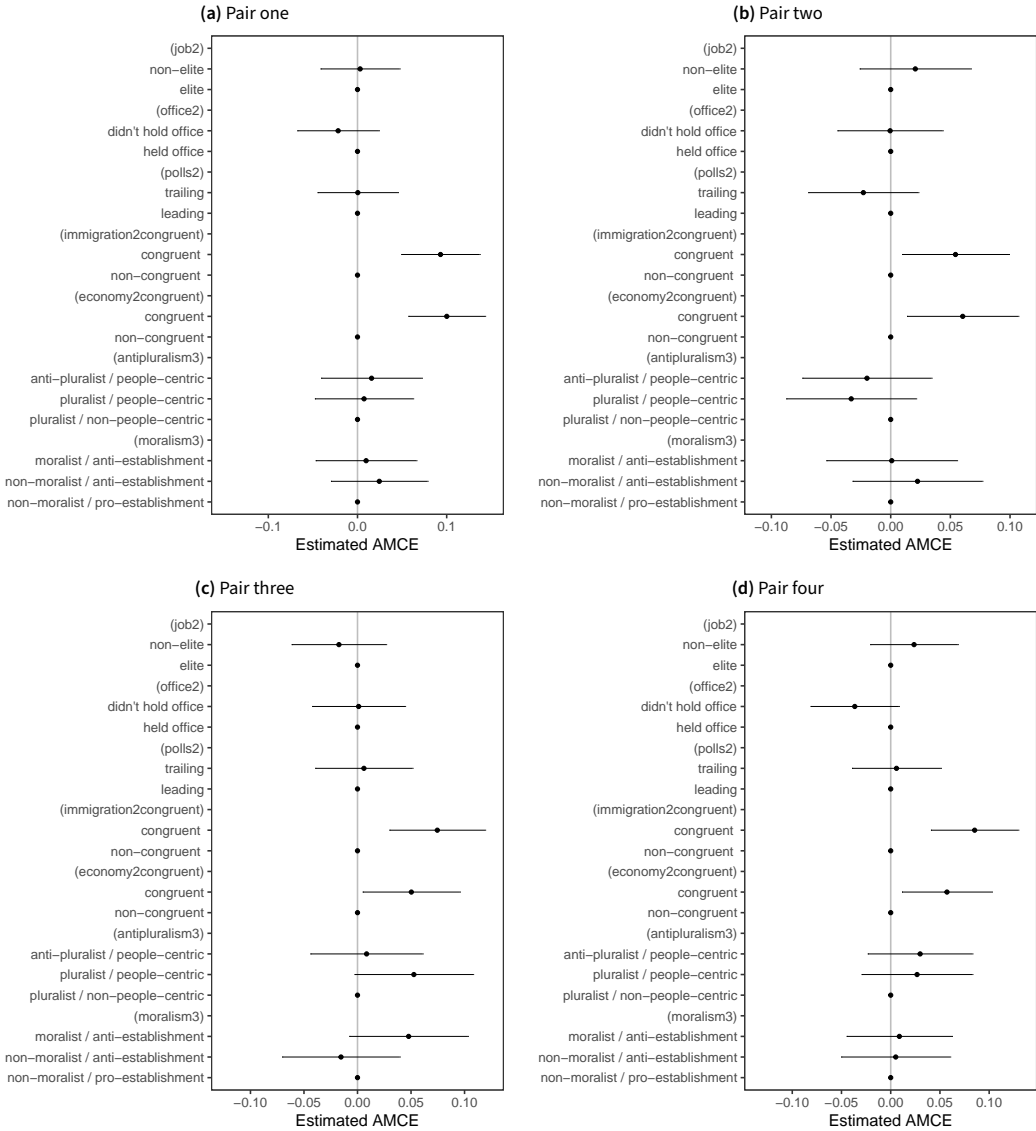
The plot shows the AMCE and marginal mean estimates of the randomly assigned profile and speech attributes on candidates' probability of being selected by respondents' populist attitudes. Estimates are based on the baseline OLS model of the original MTurk sample. Bars represent 95% CIs. Robust standard errors are clustered by respondent.

Figure A2. Effects of using various features of populist rhetoric by populist attitudes (alternative coding)



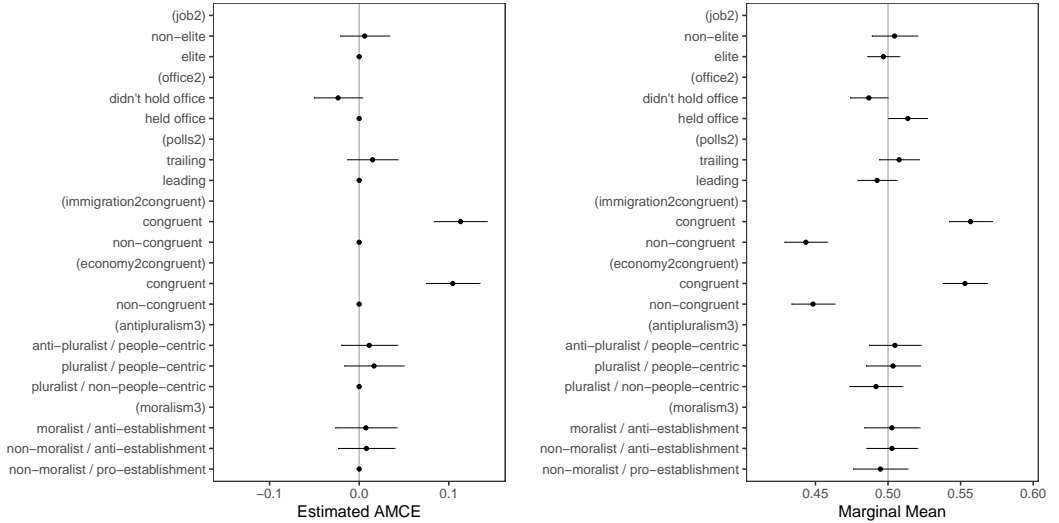
The plot shows the AMCE and marginal mean estimates of the randomly assigned profile and speech attributes on candidates' probability of being selected by respondents' partisanship. Estimates are based on the baseline OLS model of the original MTurk sample. Bars represent 95% CIs. Robust standard errors are clustered by respondent.

Figure A3. Effects of using various features of populist rhetoric by partisanship (alternative coding)



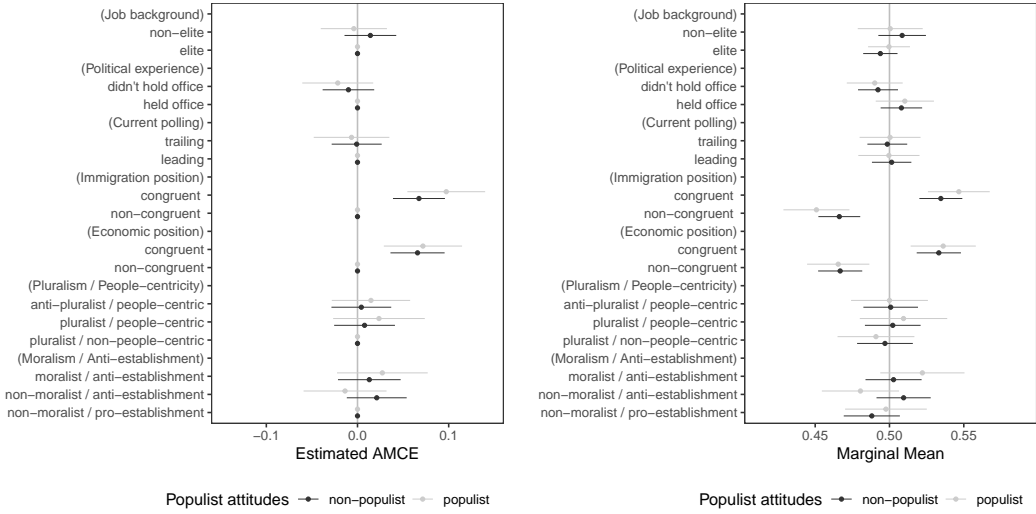
The plot shows the AMCE estimates of the randomly assigned profile and speech attributes on candidates' probability of being selected. Estimates are based on the baseline OLS model of the original MTurk sample. Bars represent 95% CIs.

Figure A4. Effects of using various features of populist rhetoric and other attributes (for each of the four candidate pairs)



The plot shows the AMCE and marginal mean estimates of the randomly assigned profile and speech attributes on candidates' probability of being selected. Estimates are based on the baseline OLS model of the original MTurk sample. Bars represent 95% CIs.

Figure A5. Effects of using various features of populist rhetoric and other attributes (attentive respondents only)



The plot shows the AMCE and marginal mean estimates of the randomly assigned profile and speech attributes on candidates' probability of being selected. Estimates are based on the baseline OLS model of the original MTurk sample. Bars represent 95% CIs.

Figure A6. Effects of using various features of populist rhetoric by strong populist attitudes



Candidate A worked as a journalist before running for office. Candidate A has held an office for many years and is likely leading in the polls now. Here are Candidate A's campaign message highlights: *"I'll bring the best people to solve our problems in America. I believe that Washington needs more qualified people like me at the moment... I believe American immigration laws are too cruel... When I'm in office, we will boost our businesses by lowering taxes."*

Candidate B worked as a firefighter before running for office. Candidate B has held an office for many years and is likely trailing in the polls now. Here are Candidate B's campaign message highlights: *"I believe we, the people, share the same values and interests. I'll work with all my colleagues in Congress who want what's best for Americans... I believe there should be a path to citizenship... When I'm in office, we'll get Americans off of welfare and back to work."*

If you had to choose between these two candidates in the upcoming primary, who would you vote for? If neither of the two candidates appeals to you, please still indicate who you would rather vote for.

Candidate A

Candidate B



Figure A7. Example of a random conjoint task

Table A1. Effects of various candidate and speech characteristics on vote choice

	Probability of selection			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Job background (non-elite)	0.008 (0.011)	0.009 (0.011)	0.009 (0.011)	0.008 (0.011)
Political experience (none)	-0.014 (0.012)	-0.014 (0.012)	-0.014 (0.012)	-0.013 (0.012)
Current polling (trailing)	-0.003 (0.012)	-0.003 (0.012)	-0.003 (0.012)	-0.002 (0.012)
Immigration policy (congruent)	0.077** (0.012)	0.077** (0.012)	0.077** (0.012)	0.077** (0.012)
Economic policy (congruent)	0.067** (0.012)	0.067** (0.012)	0.067** (0.012)	0.067** (0.012)
Pluralist / People-centric	0.013 (0.014)	0.012 (0.025)	0.0004 (0.030)	-0.0001 (0.029)
Anti-pluralist / People-centric	0.008 (0.013)	0.004 (0.024)	0.013 (0.028)	0.017 (0.029)
Non-moralist / Anti-establishment	0.010 (0.014)	-0.009 (0.024)	0.013 (0.030)	-0.015 (0.029)
Moralist / Anti-establishment	0.017 (0.014)	0.032 (0.024)	0.059 (0.031)	0.005 (0.028)
Partisanship (Democrat)			0.025 (0.023)	
Populist Attitudes (Populist)				-0.020 (0.023)
Pluralist / People-centric : Non-moralist / Anti-establishment		0.037 (0.034)	0.037 (0.034)	0.037 (0.034)
Anti-pluralist / People-centric : Non-moralist / Anti-establishment		0.020 (0.034)	0.020 (0.034)	0.020 (0.034)
Pluralist / People-centric : Moralist / Anti-establishment		-0.036 (0.035)	-0.037 (0.035)	-0.037 (0.035)
Anti-pluralist / People-centric : Moralist / Anti-establishment		-0.008 (0.035)	-0.008 (0.035)	-0.008 (0.035)
Pluralist / People-centric : Democrat			0.020 (0.029)	
Anti-pluralist / People-centric : Democrat			-0.016 (0.027)	
Non-moralist / Anti-establishment : Democrat			-0.036 (0.028)	
Moralist / Anti-establishment : Democrat			-0.044 (0.030)	
Pluralist / People-centric : Populist				0.022 (0.028)
Anti-pluralist / People-centric : Populist				-0.023 (0.027)
Non-moralist / Anti-establishment : Populist				0.011 (0.028)
Moralist / Anti-establishment : Populist				0.047 (0.029)
Observations	7,616	7,616	7,616	7,616
Adjusted R ²	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010

The table shows the AMCEs of the randomly assigned profile and speech attributes on candidates' probability of being selected. Robust standard errors clustered by respondent are given in parentheses, * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Table A2. Effects of policy and populist rhetoric (components) on vote choice

	Probability of selection	
	(1)	(2)
Job background (non-elite)	0.010 (0.011)	0.009 (0.012)
Political experience (none)	-0.017 (0.011)	-0.014 (0.012)
Current polling (trailing)	-0.002 (0.011)	-0.002 (0.012)
Immigration policy (anti)	-0.049 (0.025)	
Economic policy (right)	-0.051* (0.026)	
Immigration (congruent)		0.087** (0.025)
Economic policy (congruent)		0.080* (0.026)
Pluralist / People-centric	0.024 (0.032)	0.026 (0.031)
Anti-pluralist / People-centric	-0.008 (0.031)	0.018 (0.030)
Non-moralist / Anti-establishment	-0.037 (0.032)	-0.031 (0.030)
Moralist / Anti-establishment	0.032 (0.031)	0.058 (0.031)
Pluralist / People-centric : Non-moralist / Anti-establishment	0.040 (0.034)	0.038 (0.034)
Anti-pluralist / People-centric : Non-moralist / Anti-establishment	0.015 (0.033)	0.021 (0.034)
Pluralist / People-centric : Moralist / Anti-establishment	-0.043 (0.034)	-0.037 (0.035)
Anti-pluralist / People-centric : Moralist / Anti-establishment	-0.023 (0.034)	-0.008 (0.035)
Immigration policy (anti) : Pluralist / People-centric	0.013 (0.027)	
Immigration policy (anti) : Anti-pluralist / People-centric	0.043 (0.027)	
Immigration policy (anti) : Non-moralist / Anti-establishment	0.006 (0.027)	
Immigration policy (anti) : Moralist / Anti-establishment	-0.025 (0.028)	
Economic policy (right) : Pluralist / People-centric	-0.041 (0.028)	
Economic policy (right) : Anti-pluralist / People-centric	-0.010 (0.027)	
Economic policy (right) : Non-moralist / Anti-establishment	0.051 (0.028)	
Economic policy (right) : Moralist / Anti-establishment	0.038 (0.028)	
Immigration (congruent) : Pluralist / People-centric		-0.005 (0.028)
Immigration (congruent) : Anti-pluralist / People-centric		-0.017 (0.027)
Immigration (congruent) : Non-moralist / Anti-establishment		-0.003 (0.028)
Immigration (congruent) : Moralist / Anti-establishment		-0.005 (0.028)
Economy (congruent) : Pluralist / People-centric		-0.024 (0.029)
Economy (congruent) : Anti-pluralist / People-centric		-0.013 (0.027)
Economy (congruent) : Non-moralist / Anti-establishment		0.047 (0.028)
Economy (congruent) : Moralist / Anti-establishment		-0.047 (0.029)
Observations	8,032	7,616
Adjusted R ²	0.003	0.011

The table shows the AMCEs of the randomly assigned profile and speech attributes on candidates' probability of being selected. Robust standard errors clustered by respondent are given in parentheses, *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

Table A3. Descriptive Statistics (MTurk, n = 1004/8032 vs ANES 2020 Benchmark)

Statistic	ANES Mean	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Max
Age	49.92	38.35	11.38	18	30	44	78
Female	0.52	0.38	0.49	0	0	1	1
White	0.69	0.79	0.41	0	1	1	1
College+	0.37	0.78	0.42	0	1	1	1
Republican	0.42	0.36	0.48	0	0	1	1
Democrat	0.46	0.58	0.49	0	0	1	1
Populist	—	0.56	0.50	0	0	1	1

Appendix B: Operationalization of Populism and its Components

Following the theoretical literature, our experiment operationalizes populism along the dimensions of people-centrism, anti-elitism, and anti-pluralism. Unlike previous studies that only included populist attributes (Neuner and Wratil 2022; Silva, Neuner, and Wratil 2022), we also include elitist and pluralist attributes, populism's direct opponents, as the non-populist attributes (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017). People-centrism specifies that people should be the only legitimate source of political power. Elitism, on the other hand, considers the elites should make political decisions. People-centrism is a shared feature between populism and liberal democracy. However, unlike liberal democracy's pluralist view of the people, populist understanding of the people is homogenous and virtually pure (anti-pluralist) (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017). In other words, there are two types of people-centrism: pluralist and anti-pluralist. Therefore, we include three categories of attributes in the people-centrism dimension: pluralist people-centrism, anti-pluralist people-centrism, and elitism.

Anti-elitism, the other core component of populism, is not simply about criticizing the status quo or the establishment (Müller 2017). Elites, as the opposite of the pure people, in populism are morally corrupted and intentionally subverting the people's interests. The distinction between the people and the elite in populism is purely moral (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017). In other words, a populist anti-elitist message should be morally charged (Bonikowski and Gidron 2016; Bonikowski and Zhang 2023). However, one can criticize the status quo or the establishment without vilifying the elite. We, therefore, include three categories of attributes in the anti-elitism dimension: moralized anti-establishment, non-moralized anti-establishment, and pro-establishment.

Following the multi-dimensional theoretical structure of populism (Wuttke, Schimpf, and Schoen 2020), a campaign message is only considered populist when it contains all of the anti-pluralist, anti-elitist, and anti-pluralist attributes.

In Table B1 below, we include the list of all conjoint attributes and their possible levels.

Table B1. List of conjoint speech attributes

Introductory vignette:

“The next election for the US House of Representatives will be held later this year in November. In the next few minutes, we are going to describe four pairs of potential candidates considering running in your party’s primary for an open seat in your district. For each candidate, we will show you his or her background and campaign message highlights. Please remember that we are interested in your personal opinion. There are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers.”

Candidate’s Background:

Candidate [A / B] worked as a [elite: state official / government advisor / businessmen / lawyer / professor / journalist; non-elite: social worker / teacher / firefighter / farmer] before running for office. Candidate [A / B] has [never held an office before; held an office for many years] and is likely [leading / trailing] in the polls now. Here are Candidate [A / B]’s campaign message highlights:

Populist Rhetoric Features of Anti-Pluralism and People-centricity:

<i>Anti-Pluralist & People-centric</i>	<i>Pluralist & People-centric</i>	<i>Pluralist & Non-people-centric</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I believe we, the people, share the same values and interests. • This campaign is not about me, it is about the American people. • I believe the government is to respond to the will of the people. • I am running to represent the voice of the American people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will make sure to listen to all the different voices of the people. • I am running to defend all our rights, no matter our differences. • I will serve everyone in America regardless of their convictions. • I am running to represent our diverse American voices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I’ll do what is best for America even if the people disagree. • I’m running to bring expertise back to politics in Washington. • I’ll bring the best people to solve our problems in America. • As your representative, I will make sure to listen to the experts.

Populist Rhetoric Features of Moralism and Anti-establishment:

<i>Moralist & Anti-establishment</i>	<i>Non-moralist & Anti-establishment</i>	<i>Non-moralist & Pro-establishment</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • But there’re bad people in Washington who don’t care about Americans. • Sadly, the corrupt Washington elites only listen to special interests. • Sadly, Congress is full of insiders who only care about themselves now. • I’ll protect Americans against all evil in Washington. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I’ll fix the mess in Washington for the sake of America. • Unfortunately, the government has created more problems than it has solved. • I believe politicians in Congress talk too much and take too little action. • Sadly, so many in Washington are out of touch with the American people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I believe that Washington needs more qualified people like me at the moment. • I believe our government is there to help people, even though it’s not easy. • I trust our Congress is mostly full of honest people who care for Americans. • I’ll work with all my colleagues in Congress who want what’s best for Americans.

Immigration policy position:

<i>Anti-immigration</i>	<i>Pro-immigration</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I strongly believe illegal aliens should be deported. • I believe American immigration laws are too generous. • I’m committed to securing American border at all cost. • I will make sure our immigration laws are enforced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I believe there should be a path to citizenship. • I believe our American immigration laws are too cruel. • I’m committed to making our immigration system more open. • I will make sure American immigration laws are humane.

Economic policy position:

<i>Right: Low tax, low public goods</i>	<i>Left: High tax, high public goods</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I believe current tax rates discourage investment and they must be lowered. • I strongly believe America should encourage innovation by cutting taxes. • When I’m in office, we will boost our businesses by lowering taxes. • When I’m in office, we will get Americans off of welfare and back to work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I believe the richest 1% percent should pay their fair share of taxes. • I’ll increase the current minimum wage to a living American wage. • When I’m in office, we will limit the unfair tax advantages for the rich. • When I’m in office, we will increase our efforts to help the poor in America.

Choice outcome:

“If you had to choose between these two candidates in the upcoming primary, who would you vote for? If neither of the two candidates appeals to you, please still indicate who you would rather vote for.” [Candidate A / Candidate B]

References

- Bonikowski, Bart, and Noam Gidron. 2016. The Populist Style in American Politics: Presidential Campaign Discourse, 1952–1996. *Social Forces* 94 (4): 1593–1621. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sov120>.
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- Silva, Bruno Castanho, Fabian Guy Neuner, and Christopher Wrátil. 2022. Populism and candidate support in the us: the effects of “thin” and “host” ideology. *Journal of Experimental Political Science*, 1–10.
- Wuttke, Alexander, Christian Schimpf, and Harald Schoen. 2020. When the whole is greater than the sum of its parts: on the conceptualization and measurement of populist attitudes and other multidimensional constructs. *American Political Science Review*, 1–19.

Appendix C: Power Analysis

According to our calculations, our conjoint design with the resulting effective sample size of 8032 provides 90% statistical power to detect a small effect ($AMCE > 0.06$) and near 80% statistical power to detect a smaller effect of substantive significance > 0.04 of the target 3-level substantive attributes at $\alpha = 0.05$ with a near zero probability that estimated coefficients have incorrect signs (Stefanelli and Lukac 2020). For the possible interaction of two populism treatments or their possible heterogeneity by populist attitudes, given the proportion of populism treatment (1/3) and the distribution of populist attitudes ($\sim 1/2$), our design can only reliably detect interaction effects greater than 0.07 with 80% power (Schuessle and Freitag 2020).

References:

- Stefanelli, Alberto, and Martin Lukac. 2020. "Subjects, trials, and levels: Statistical power in conjoint experiments." (<https://mblukac.shinyapps.io/conjoints-power-shiny/>).
- Schuessler, Julian, and Markus Freitag. 2020 "Power analysis for conjoint experiments." (<https://markusfreitag.shinyapps.io/cjpowr/>).

Appendix D: Survey instrument

Populist attitudes [binary variable, defined as 1 if and only if respondents agree with all three subcomponents of populism]

“How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?” (Strongly disagree; Somewhat disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Somewhat agree; Strongly agree)

Anti-pluralism:

- “Ordinary people share the same values and interests”
- “Ordinary people are of good and honest character”

People-centrism:

- “The people, not the elites, should make our most important policy decisions”
- “The politicians need to follow the will of the people”

Moralized anti-elitism:

- “The government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves”
- “Quite a few of the people running the government are crooked”

Partisanship [binary variable: Republican or Democrat, including leaners]

“Which of the following categories best describes your political affiliation?” (Democrat; Republican; Independent; Other)

[if Independent] “Would you say that you are...” (Independent, lean Republican; Independent, do not lean towards either party; Independent, lean Democrat)

Appendix E: Robustness checks

We conduct a number of robustness checks with no change in the underlying substantive conclusions. First, decompose our two complex populist-related conjoint attributes into the four simpler, mutually exclusive binary variables as an alternative conceptualization (see Figures A1-3). Second, we replicate our subgroup analysis by populist attitudes with the stronger, more exclusive definition of these attitudes in which the respondents have to strongly agree with all six populist items (see Figure A6). Third, we test for the possible carryover and profile order effects by restricting our sample to each of the candidate pairs (see Figure A4 and interacting the profile order with the attribute effects (not shown). Fourth, we restrict our sample to the 70% of respondents who passed a relatively demanding attention check (see Figure A5).¹

1. The question fielded at the end of the omnibus survey was worded as follows: “In the survey, you read about:” (Information Theory, Critical Race Theory, Theory of Knowledge, Theoretical Rationality). The second option was the correct one.