Populism in Legislative Discourse: Evidence from the European Parliament, 1999-2004

Bart Bonikowski, Harvard University
Noam Gidron, Harvard University

Abstract
This paper examines populist discourse based on 24,339 plenary speeches delivered in the Fifth European Parliament. Rather than treating populism as a stable ideological attribute of actors, we operationalize it as a feature of political claims, which juxtapose the virtuous populace with corrupt elites. This allows us to observe variation in populism within parties and politicians. Politicians' propensity to use populism is associated with career opportunities in European and national politics and challenger-incumbent dynamics in national governments. These results hold across the political spectrum, including both the radical left and right, where populism is most prevalent. Our paper demonstrates that populism is a flexible political strategy whose use is shaped by incentives embedded in political institutions.

Few topics in European politics have received as much scholarly and public attention in the past decade as the rise of populism, particularly after the financial crisis (Kriesi, 2014; Kriesi & Pappas, 2015).[1] Because much of this research has focused on electoral dynamics, a common approach has been to identify specific political parties—usually on the radical right (Mudde 2007), but increasingly on the radical left as well (March, 2007; March & Mudde, 2005; Pauwels, 2014; Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014)—as ideologically populist and then to examine the parties' policymaking behavior and sociodemographic bases of support. This deductive approach has generated useful insights, but in treating populism as stable within actors, it has missed important mechanisms that influence politicians' strategic decisions to rely on populism in particular circumstances.

Building on research that treats populism as a form of political discourse (Hawkins, 2009, 2010; Poblete, 2015), we propose a more inductive approach to the empirical study of the phenomenon in European politics. Rather than reducing populism to a stable ideological attribute of political parties, we consider populism to be a dynamic property of political claims. This subtle shift allows us to explore the conditions under which politicians are more or less likely to engage in populist discourse. Specifically, our paper examines (a) whether participation in governing coalitions at the national level is associated with politicians' reliance on populist claims; and (b) whether politicians' career trajectories are associated with variation in populist claims-making. In order to answer these questions, we engage in what is, to the best of our knowledge, the most systematic comparative investigation of populist discourse across the left-right ideological spectrum.

The empirical case we consider is the Fifth European Parliament (EP), which met from 1999 to 2004. This time period is opportune because it is during the early 2000s that parties typically labeled as populist made major inroads into national politics and became increasingly vocal in the European Parliament (de Lange, 2012). The resulting dynamics set the stage for subsequent developments in populist politics that followed the EU's enlargement to Eastern Europe and the Eurozone financial crisis. We begin with a complete corpus of 24,339 speeches delivered in the course of the Fifth EP's plenary debates and merge these speeches with individual-level attributes of Members of the European Parliaments (MEPs) in order to examine the correlates of MEPs' reliance on populism. In addition to the substantive results of our study, our unique data are likely to be of interest to scholars of European politics and elite discourse.

In brief, we find that politicians on both the radical left and radical right are significantly more likely to rely on populism than their counterparts on the center-left and center-right. The

bimodality of populism is consistent with an emerging empirical literature that extends European populism research beyond the traditional emphasis on right-wing parties (Rooduijn & Akkerman, 2015).[2] Also as expected, we find that populist claims made by left-wing politicians focus primarily on economic matters, while those of right-wing politicians emphasize issues related to national sovereignty (Kriesi, 2014).

Aside from these baseline results, our study probes the individual-level correlates of populism to answer a simple but heretofore unexamined question: why are some politicians more populist than others, holding constant their ideological leanings? Our results suggest that the degree to which politicians rely on populism depends on their career incentives and the credibility of their parties' claims to "outsider" status. Members of European Parliament who enter national politics are more likely to make populist claims than those who remain in the EP or leave politics altogether. This finding follows previous work that emphasizes the role of career trajectories in shaping MEPs' political behavior (Daniel, 2015; Høyland et al., 2013; Meserve, Pemstein, & Bernhard, 2009). In addition, MEPs whose parties are represented in national governments use populist rhetoric less frequently than those whose parties occupy a peripheral position in national politics.

Our study makes two main contributions. Descriptively, by analyzing a large corpus of political speeches using both automated tools and close reading, we are able to systematically measure European populist politics in much more breadth and detail than past research. Our comparative analysis covers all EU member states between 1999 and 2004 and includes politicians from all ideological traditions. Theoretically, we demonstrate that conceptualizing populism as a dynamic and contextually driven discursive strategy (rather than a stable ideology) makes it possible to explain why particular politicians rely on populist claims in specific

circumstances. By highlighting the role of incumbent-challenger dynamics and career trajectories as two potential factors explaining variation in politicians' reliance on populism, we connect the party-focused populism literature with broader aspects of institutional and organizational politics.

More generally, our paper illustrates the utility of textual methods for the comparative study of elite political frames. As noted by Pierson (2016, p. 138), scholars of politics should take advantage of the digital revolution "to examine huge quantities of text, increasing researchers' ability to accurately map mass and elite political expression over time". Our work suggests one way to do so in the context of legislative discourse.

Defining Populism

Scholars agree that "populism leave[s] an imprint on important political phenomena" (Hawkins, 2010, p. 49) by shaping repertoires of political mobilization (Madrid, 2008; Subramanian, 2007), galvanizing new forms of political engagement (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012), legitimizing exclusionary discourse (Wodak, 2015), and contributing to party system polarization and more general political realignments (Fella & Ruzza, 2013; Laclau, 2005; Pappas, 2013). While the substantive significance of the topic has been widely recognized by political scientists (and, more recently, also by sociologists [Berezin, 2009; de la Torre, 2000, 2015; Hetland, 2014; Jansen, 2011; Savage, 2000]), there is less of a consensus on the definition of populism (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013; Moffitt & Tormey, 2014).

We follow a line of research that treats populism as a form of political discourse predicated on a moral opposition between a corrupt elite and a virtuous populace (Hawkins, 2009, 2010; Laclau, 1977). The moral logic of populism rests on a particular view of democratic representation, whereby "the people" are the only legitimate source of political authority and

4

should therefore be engaged in political decision-making in as direct a manner as possible. The people's interests are viewed as incompatible with those of elite actors occupying intermediary institutions, who are perceived as having abandoned democratic principles in favor of their own self-interest (Mudde, 2007).

While the dichotomous structure of populist discourse is its defining property, the specific categories that constitute the populist binary vary widely (Kriesi, 2014). "The people" can be defined in vague terms that allow for broad identification across a variety of target audiences (e.g., the speaker may rely on an undefined first person plural or on generic concepts, such as "everyday people") or the category can be based on more specific criteria, such as ethnicity, nationality, geographic region, or religion. Similarly, which elites are viewed as having betrayed the people depends on context and the ideological predilections of the speaker: elected officials and bureaucrats (i.e., political elites) are likely to be frequent offenders, but populist claims may also target economic elites (e.g., bankers, CEOs), intellectual elites (e.g., academics, artists), or cultural elites (e.g., mainstream media). Some varieties of populism also draw a direct connection between the elites and disparaged out-groups, such as immigrants and ethnic minorities, claiming that the elites prioritize those groups' interests over those of 'the people' (Mols & Jetten, 2016).

The conceptualization of populism as a form of discourse can be distinguished from a dominant strand of research, which defines populism as a political ideology. This distinction implies two contrasting modes of analysis. Those who define populism as an ideology tend to measure the phenomenon at the level of individual and collective political actors, categorizing them as either populist or not and, in the process, treating populism as relatively stable (de Lange, 2012; Ivarsflaten, 2008). In contrast, scholars who define populism as a form of discourse

are agnostic about the stability of populist claims within actors, because they typically operationalize populism at the level of individual speech acts (Deegan-Krause & Haughton 2009; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). Consequently, actors may manifest differing degrees of populism and the same actor may rely on populist claims in some settings but not others. This does not preclude the possibility that on average, some actors may be more populist than others, but the difference becomes a matter of degree.

One of the advantages of the discourse-based approach is that it treats the phenomenon in dynamic terms: populism is free to fluctuate over time, within and between political actors, and across contexts. By focusing specifically on how populism varies by ideology, party incumbency status, and politicians' career trajectories, our paper points the way toward a more systematic and nuanced understanding of populist politics in Europe and beyond.

The European Parliament as an Arena for Populist Politics

The European Parliament serves as a particularly fruitful site for the study of cross-national and ideological variations in populist politics. The EP is host to a large number of parties from all EU member states, which provides us with a wide range of national and ideological variation, and all speeches generated by these parties' representatives are translated into English, making possible systematic comparisons using automated tools. Furthermore, the EP is a single, centralized venue of interaction for national political actors and is therefore likely to serve as a locus of sustained ideological competition. In taking advantage of these attributes of the EP, we are able to capture more general features of populism than country-specific case studies.[3]

Several particular characteristics of the EP need to be taken into account in our analyses. First, in considering ideological variation, it is essential to examine not only differences between national parties, but also between parliamentary groups, which unite MEPs from various national

parties based on shared ideology and serve as the primary cleavages along which MEPs vote (Hix, Noury, & Roland, 2007). By 1999, there were seven such groups (in descending order of size, followed by their official abbreviations): the conservative and Christian democratic European People's Party and European Democrats (EPP-ED), the social democratic Party of European Socialists (PES), the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party (ELDR), the Green and regionalist European Greens and European Free Alliance (EG-EFA), the communist and far left European United Left and Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL), the national-conservative Union for Europe of the Nations (UEN), and the Euroskeptic Europe of Democracies and Diversities (EDD). Our analysis will focus on variation in populist discourse across these transnational groups, although we also account for potential differences by national parties.

Second, the EP is a highly contentious political arena that provides representation to some of the staunchest opponents of the EU, on both the radical left and right (Brack, 2012a). This places elected officials in a precarious position, because the more they speak out against European integration, the more likely they are to expose themselves to charges of hypocrisy for cooperating with the corrupt institutions they oppose. Faced with this dilemma, some MEPs from radical parties choose the "exit" strategy and abstain from parliamentarian activities; others choose "voice" and use the EP as a forum for expressing their anti-EU views (Brack, 2012b, p. 98). The latter strategy, which is a function of MEPs' status in both national and European politics, is directly observable in our analyses of EP plenary debates.

Third, while re-election is assumed to be the primary goal of elected representatives (Mayhew, 1974), many MEPs had previously run for office in their home countries and many go on to do so after their EP terms (Bale & Taggart, 2005; Daniel, 2015). Past research has shown that the variation in career incentives in the European and national political arenas has

implications for MEPs' political behavior (Høyland et al., 2013; Meserve, Pemstein, & Bernhard, 2009). Consequently, we attend to MEPs' navigation of both political arenas, focusing on the incentives that career trajectories may generate for populist politics.

Data and Methods

We build on previous research that has demonstrated the utility of using political texts as sources of data on populism (Hawkins, 2009, 2010; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). Our analyses rely on Proksch & Slapin's (2010) compendium of parliamentary speeches, which the authors obtained from the EP website.[4] We begin with 55,351 speeches delivered by 750 MEPs from 183 national parties. We then limit the data to the fifteen member states that constituted the EU prior to the 2004 enlargement to Eastern Europe and drop speeches attributed to multiple MEPs, those given by members of the EP Bureau (these speeches are primarily procedural), those pertaining to foreign affairs[5], as well as those that contain fewer than 75 words (these speeches are either procedural or consist of points of information rather than substantive claims). This results in a final data set of 24,339 speeches delivered by 651 MEPs from 142 national parties. The number of speeches per MEP ranges from 1 to 1,204, with a mean of 136 (and a median of 55), while the number of speeches per party ranges from 1 to 1,227, with a mean of 472 (and a median of 370).[6] We use the EP's official English translations of these speeches, which allows us to compare speeches originally given in different languages.

We supplement the speeches with MEP-, party-, and parliamentary-group-level data. We use online and national news sources to determine whether individual MEPs went on to national political careers upon the conclusion of their EP terms. We also link national parties to measures of ideology from the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP) (Volkens et al., 2013). Given that the CMP measures party ideology at the time of national elections, data for some regional and

European parties that do not compete in national elections were unavailable. In cases where a party represented in the EP took part in two elections, one prior to 1999 and one between 1999 and 2004, we average the party's ideology scores across the two time points. In all other cases, we rely on data from the most recent election prior to 1999. Because the CMP does not cover supranational parties, we generate a second measure of ideology based on MEPs' membership in parliamentary groups, which have clear ideological profiles. We classify the GUE/NGL and EG-EFA groups as far left, the Independents and EDD as far right, and the remaining groups as centrist (including center-left and center-right).[7] Finally, data on parties' participation in national governments come from the ParlGov database (Döring & Manow, 2012).

To estimate the prevalence of populism in EP speeches, we rely on dictionary-based automated text analysis.[8] Dictionary approaches begin with a list of terms that correspond to a concept of interest and then generate counts of those terms across all texts in a given corpus (the terms in dictionary and the corpus are first stemmed using standard procedures; we elaborate below on our experimentation with other text classification methods). Such analyses produce a variety of measures of document relevance; having considered a number of alternative approaches, we chose to rely on a simple binary measure of whether populist terms appear in a given speech.[9] This measure allows us to aggregate the proportion of populist speeches to the desired units of analysis: MEPs, parties, and transnational parliamentary groups.

In constructing the dictionary, we took Rooduijn & Pauwels's (2011) list of English-language populist terms as a starting point. Because their dictionary was devised for a study of populism in the United Kingdom, we revised and expanded it to fit with the context of the EP through an iterative and inductive process. We validated each term using an extensive manual coding procedure (which itself was subject to intercoder reliability tests), during which we

considered 211 terms and read a total of 1,150 speeches. The validation demonstrated that our dictionary-based measures accurately capture the populist content of speeches in over 75 percent of cases. For more details on the dictionary development and validation, see Appendix A in the online supplementary materials. For a list of dictionary terms used to classify the speeches in the corpus, see online Appendix B. Regarding the latter, it is crucial to emphasize that it is not necessary for the terms in the dictionary to be inherently populist (many terms, including "worship" and "ruling circle," are quite obviously not); what matters for our purposes is that the terms happen to accurately capture populist speeches in this particular corpus of texts, as determined by our extensive validation procedure. For this reason, the dictionary should not be mechanically applied to other corpuses.

In addition to dictionary-based classification, we also tested a variety of more sophisticated supervised machine learning methods, including support vector classifiers (Joachims, 1998), random forests (Dietterich, 2000), and nonparametric aggregate classification algorithms (Hopkins & King, 2010), but none of these approaches were able to accurately detect populist discourse in the corpus. Instead, these supervised methods tended to identify speeches that contained non-populist socialist and nationalist discourse of radical-left and radical-right political parties. This is not altogether surprising, because, as we will show in more detail, populism is relatively sparsely distributed in the corpus and it is overrepresented among radical political actors. More importantly, however, the inability of these methods to find populist speeches beyond those coded as such by our dictionary approach further attests to the latter's validity, because it demonstrates that our dictionary appears to have generated very few false negatives (that is, populist speeches coded by the dictionary algorithm as non-populist). Moreover, the algorithms' identification of hundreds of radical-left and radical-right speeches

that do not contain populist language further reassures us that populism is analytically separable from socialism, Euroskepticism, and nationalism. Together, these findings suggest that for rarely occurring discursive phenomena, relatively simple dictionary methods may outperform more complex approaches to text classification.

To illustrate the results of our automated speech classification and provide some context for subsequent analyses, we provide two excerpts from populist political speeches, one on the radical left and the other on the radical right (in the results section, we also give examples of non-populist speeches by radical-left and radical-right MEPs). The dictionary terms are highlighted in bold. The first example comes from a 1999 speech by Konstantinos Alyssandrakis, an MEP from the Communist Party of Greece:

> We are opposed to this EU, this **lackey** of **imperialism** and **big business**, and we are opposed to the reversal which this **autocracy** means for democracy. The EU cannot change with intergovernmental conferences, nor do the proposed negative institutional changes represent a change for the better for the people of Europe. The people themselves will oppose, intervene and change the power ratios in order to bring down this **anti-grass-roots**, **anti-democratic**, **autocratic** structure which exists to serve **big business** and create a Europe of peace and collaboration, friendship and equality between peoples, real democracy and freedom and economic prosperity for the benefit of the workers.

The speaker makes a clear opposition between the autocratic EU and the selfish interests of big business on one hand and the virtuous objectives of the people, particularly the workers, on the other hand. The tone is morally laden and returning power to "the people" is framed as the only legitimate solution to the current crisis.

A different set of issues is at stake in a 2001 speech by Ole Krarup of the Danish People's Movement Against the EU, but the morally charged tone is similar:

> What the treaty of Nice essentially boils down to is **more Union** and **less democracy**. The treaty of Nice increases the distance between the EU **elites** and the people of the EU countries, who are being **taken hostage** as part of what might be described, at its mildest, as a warped understanding of democracy which also finds expression in this assembly. […] The only people who are being asked

are the Irish people, and I sincerely hope that, on behalf of all the populations of
Europe, the Irish people will tell these **elites** that their conception of democracy is
a misunderstanding and then vote against the treaty on 7 June.

Here, the charge is leveled against amorphous "EU elites" for pushing through

enlargement without any concern for the wishes of the people, who have been "taken hostage" in

the process. Though the speech is quite clearly Euroskeptical, most of the dictionary terms

present in it are not inherently ideological, unlike in the Alyssandrakis's speech (for a discussion

of the use ideological terms in our dictionary, see online Appendix A).

Who Uses Populist Discourse and When?

The main goal of our empirical analysis is to uncover the conditions under which MEPs are more

likely to rely on populism. In order to determine whether such conditions differ by ideology, we

first need to consider how the distribution and content of populist claims may vary along the

ideological spectrum. We therefore begin with a discussion of the association between populism

and radical politics observed in past research. We then hone in on two explanatory factors—

career trajectories and incumbent-challenger dynamics—that may be associated with variation in

populist rhetoric across MEPs.

There are good reasons to expect populism to be most prevalent on the radical right and

the radical left and least prevalent among centrist MEPs (March, 2007; Pauwels, 2014; Rooduijn

& Akkerman, 2015; Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014). Populist discourse is, by definition,

based on anti-elite appeals and MEPs on both ideological extremes have incentives to attack the

establishment, especially within the European Parliament, where they are often politically

marginalized. Conversely, because centrist (i.e., center-left and center-right) MEPs constitute the

primary "grand coalition" within the EP and are seen as members of the European political elite

(Hix & Høyland, 2013), they have fewer incentives to make anti-elite claims.[10] Furthermore,

most radical MEPs' parties occupy peripheral positions not only in the European arena, but in national politics as well. This makes radical MEPs all the more likely to be broadly critical of political elites.

While populism is likely to be prominent on both sides of the political spectrum, we would expect it to vary in content, with the binary moral categories constituting "the people" and "the elites" pointing to different actors, depending on the ideology of the speaker (Kriesi, 2014; and as suggested by our two earlier examples of populist talk). Given the prevalence of socialist and communist ideas on the radical left, left-wing populism should be primarily economic in content, emphasizing a moral opposition between oppressed constituencies and corrupt agents of capital. In contrast, considering the preoccupation of radical-right parties with nationalism, we should expect right-wing populism to stress questions of national sovereignty and vilify European political elites.

Populism as a Strategy of Challengers

The anti-elitist content of populist claims is more likely to be perceived as credible when those who use populist discourse do not hold central positions of power (Bonikowski & Gidron, 2016). Therefore, challengers should be most likely to use populist rhetoric, in an attempt to disparage governing elites and call for a reconfiguration of the political field. Incumbents, in contrast, should generally refrain from using anti-establishment claims in order to avoid accusations of hypocrisy.

In the context of the EP, politicians are not only embedded in European politics, but also in the political contexts of their home countries. If one of the purposes of MEPs' political discourse is to appeal to constituents in the home country (Gattermann & Vasilopoulou, 2015) then the incumbency status of MEPs' national parties is likely to be an important determinant of

the content of that discourse. Specifically, we expect a national party's participation in government to have a dampening effect on its MEPs' use of populism.

Indeed, previous work suggests that "the biggest initial problem for right-wing populist parties is that they will invariably be pressured to tone down the radicalness of their agenda and political presentation. This 'filtration effect' is the inevitable result of being forced into coalitions with mainstream (normally conservative) parties" (Heinisch, 2003, p. 101). Yet there is no reason to expect this relationship to hold only for the radical right. Radical-left and mainstream parties should similarly rely less on populism when occupying an incumbent position.

Populism and Political Career Trajectories

A large body of literature on legislative behavior, in both American and European politics, suggests that future career expectations shape legislators' present-day choices, as forward-looking politicians seek to accumulate accomplishments that may be compelling to their future constituents (Hibbing, 1986, 1999; Scarrow, 1997). There is evidence that this is also the case among MEPs (Bale & Taggart, 2006; Daniel, 2015), whose navigation of European and national political arenas generates incentives to establish credentials as defenders of national interests for subsequent use in national elections.

Along these lines, Meserve et al. (2009) show that MEPs who seek to continue their careers within the EP are less likely to defect from their parliamentary groups' roll call votes, in order to establish a positive reputation with group leaders who influence the MEPs' subsequent promotions within the EP. In contrast, MEPs interested in pursuing careers in national politics are more likely to defect from their group, because their political goals are not tied to their credentials in the EP. Høyland et al. (2013) further demonstrate that the implications of career trajectories for MEP behavior depend on electoral institutions: MEPs who aim to move from the

14

European to the national arena tend to invest less in EP legislation, especially in countries with candidate-centered systems (where voters can choose the candidate when voting for a party) as opposed to party-centered systems (where voters choose from a pre-determined list of candidates).

In addition to securing anti-establishmentarian credentials that can be used in subsequent national elections, populist claims are especially likely to receive public attention in national media while the EP is in session (Gattermann & Vasilopoulou, 2015), thereby bolstering the candidates' profile and name recognition. Indeed, interviews conducted by the second author suggest that MEPs are well aware of the salience of their incendiary rhetoric and skillfully disseminate it through social media to galvanize support among party activists and constituents (the distinction between these two potential audiences suggests alternate mechanisms shaping populist rhetoric, which we disaggregate in our analysis). As one respondent, an MEP from a radical right-wing party, put it, "We might have a small membership, but if you look in terms of social media and the number of times something is shared, it's astonishing. […] There is an enthusiasm among [our party's] members; once we get something out there it will be disseminated quite widely." Along similar lines, an MEP from a center-right party explained that "When we feel something is relevant and interesting for the wider audience, we put it [the speech from the EP] on Facebook, twitter, our own websites".

This discussion suggests that future entry into national politics may provide MEPs with incentives to make populist claims. We expect MEPs who subsequently run for national office to use populist language more frequently than those who remain in the European Parliament or leave politics altogether.

Results

In testing our hypotheses, we rely on bivariate associations of populism with the variables of interest, as well as on multivariate models that account for the nested structure of the data. We first discuss the distribution of populist claims within the full corpus of speeches, and then turn to our predictions concerning career trajectories and incumbent-challenger dynamics as correlates of MEPs' populist rhetoric.

Distribution of Populist Discourse

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for our data, breaking down the proportion of populist speeches by the categorical variables of interest. The overall proportion of populist speeches in the corpus as a whole is 0.029. Although this prevalence rate may appear low, its magnitude should be viewed in the context of the particular characteristics of the EP. Considering the technocratic nature of many EP's discussions, the mere existence of populist language demonstrates that this framing strategy has become part of mainstream political discourse in Europe. Furthermore, while relatively rare, populist speeches are likely to gain more attention outside of the EP than more common—but less media-worthy—technocratic discourse (Gattermann & Vasilopoulou, 2015). Moreover, given our sample size (N = 24,339), a prevalence rate of 0.029 yields 705 populist speeches by 181 MEPs from 85 national parties spanning all 15 EU member states, which is sufficient for the evaluation of our hypotheses.

[Insert Table 1 about here.]

Table 1 reveals considerable variation in populism. Populist claims are indeed most prevalent among outsiders on both the radical right and radical left. Of the five parties that most frequently make use of populism, two are radical-left (the Communist Party of Greece and the

16

French Lutte Ouvriere) and three are paradigmatic examples of radical right-wing parties (the French National Front, the UK Independence Party, and the Belgian Flemish Block).

[Insert Figure 1 about here.]

To more systematically examine this finding, we rely on the parliamentary-group-based measure of MEPs' ideology and compare the proportions of populist speeches across the radical left, center (both center-left and center-right), and radical right. As shown in Figure 1, parties on both the radical left and radical right are more likely to rely on populism than parties in the center.[11] Perhaps surprisingly in light of scholars' focus on the populist right (Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014), the proportion of populist speeches on the left (0.073) significantly exceeds that of the right (0.049).[12]

A possible objection to our analytical strategy is that our dictionary captures socialism (on the radical left) and Euroskepticism (on the radical right) instead of populism. Theoretically, the question is whether all anti-system claims are necessarily populist. One possible response is that indeed most radical claims that seek to challenge the existing configuration of power. Because radical politics are fundamentally concerned with challenging the logic of the political system, they inevitably juxtapose the will of the people with the interest of existing power-holders. It is for this reason that Laclau (1977) views populism as a dominant articulation of radical ideologies of the right and also the left. In fact, he goes further, to argue that "in socialism […] coincide the highest form of 'populism'" (Laclau, 1977, p. 196).

While this argument is provocative, treating all anti-system claims as populist undermines the utility of populism as an analytical concept. A conflation of populism and radicalism would imply that there is no need to measure instances of populist discourse in the European Parliament; it would be sufficient to count the number of radical (left and right) MEPs.

We see this strategy as unproductive. Instead, we favor a solution that clearly distinguishes between populism and its co-occurring political ideologies.

Even though socialism and Euroskepticism are opposed to existing political institutions, their constituent claims need not be expressed through populist discourse. Socialist appeals, for instance, that evoke the specific interests of the proletariat, can be analytically separated from those that juxtapose the wellbeing of the people as a whole and make moral accusations toward corrupt elites. For example, the following excerpt from a socialist speech, delivered by MEP Yiannis Theonas of the Communist Party of Greece, does not rely on populist framing:

> Today, in the Europe of unemployment and underemployment, it is urgently necessary to establish broader social protection and to extend the rights of working people, but this demands a different system of economic and social development, which the EU cannot possibly create, because of its nature and character.

Similarly, radical-right critiques of European institutions can be classified as populist when they attack the moral worth of specific elite groups (e.g., the technocrats in Brussels) and as non-populist when they take issue with the merits of integration-oriented policies.[13] The following excerpt from a Euroskeptical speech, delivered by MEP Carl Lang of the French National Front, does not rely on populist framing:

> The Commission and the Andersson report are not proposing a social policy; they are giving Brussels exorbitant decision-making powers as regards funding, i.e. as regards the organisation and the provision of social protection services in the countries of Europe, which is why we voted against this text. Social protection should be an expression, first and foremost, of national solidarity and it comes first and foremost, exclusively in fact, under the jurisdiction of the nation state.

An analytical approach that allows for these distinctions between socialism, Euroskepticism, and populism is open to the possibility that radical claims will be frequently populist. This becomes, however, a matter for inductive empirical investigation rather than a

baseline assumption. It also allows for the possibility of populist claims at the center, in line with argument on the mainstreaming of populist politics (Mudde, 2004).

This theoretical solution to the charge of analytical conflation raises a second, empirical question: if populism is not coterminous with socialism and Euroskepticism, is our analytical strategy able to discriminate between the populist and non-populist variants of these ideologies? Those terms in our dictionary that are frequently found on the radical right, such as "eurocrats" or "euroglobalist," are quite clearly morally charged. One would not expect to observe them in a non-populist critique of European institutions and our extensive validation of the dictionary (see Appendix A for more details) confirmed that this was indeed the case.

To ensure that we are not capturing pure class-based discourse on the radical left, we carried out an additional validation that examined the content of left-wing populist speeches. The key criterion that distinguishes populist and non-populist socialist claims is how the aggrieved party is constructed: if those who are ostensibly wronged by the corrupt elite are defined as belonging to the working class, the speech should be treated as socialist but not populist; if the aggrieved party is defined in non-class terms using broadly inclusive categories (e.g., "the people," "citizens", "the grass roots"), the speech should be viewed as populist.

In verifying how left-wing speeches construct the category of the aggrieved party, we relied on a combination of automated text analysis and close reading. In a first step, an algorithm parsed all left-wing speeches one paragraph at a time and flagged paragraphs in which one of our dictionary terms co-occurred with a reference to the working class.[14] In a second step, we read in its entirety every speech that contained at least one flagged paragraph and coded it as either an instance of class discourse or populist discourse. We recoded speeches that consisted solely of class discourse as non-populist. Speeches that contained a mix of class-based language and

populism were coded as populist, consistently with our conceptualization of populism as a frame used to express other political ideologies.

Of the 117 speeches flagged by the algorithm as containing references to the working class, 35 consisted solely of class-based discourse and were subsequently recoded as non-populist. 27 speeches did not include references to a corrupt elite, which is to be expected based on the accuracy of our populist dictionary (as explained in Appendix A).[15] Finally, the remaining 55 speeches defined the aggrieved party in populist terms. The categories used varied, but "the people," "people," and "peoples" were the most common, occurring in 58 percent of the speeches, followed by "grass roots" and "anti-grass-roots," which occurred in 45 percent of the speeches. Other frequently appearing terms included "taxpayers", "citizens", "consumers", and "employees."[16] Based on the results of this supplementary validation, we are confident that our dictionary captures populist rather than purely class-based speeches on the radical left.[17] We are further reassured in these conclusions by the fact that a test of five supervised machine learning algorithms yielded hundreds of socialist and Euroskeptical speeches in the corpus that were determined, through additional manual coding, not to contain populist language.

[Insert Table 2 about here.]

In order to probe into substantive differences between far-right and far-left populist discourse, we generated a rank-ordered list of words most frequently used in populist speeches on each side of the political spectrum.[18] We then classified the words into five categories: social issues and policy, economic issues, democracy and representative institutions, national and supranational issues, and moral terms constitutive of populist claims. Table 2 presents a ranking of the top thirty words by ideology, along with each word's prevalence across all speeches within

a given ideological camp and the proportion of each topic category within the sum of all top-30 word occurrences in each camp.

As expected, economic topics are the most prevalent on the left (accounting for 43 percent of all top-30 terms), evidenced by words such as "workers," and "business," while topics related to democratic representation and national interests are most prevalent on the right (accounting for 46 percent of all top-30 terms), as evidenced by words such as "democracy," "national," and "Brussels." Economic issues also appear on the right, but are represented by only two terms. Neither of the most popular topics on the right—political representation and nationalist appeals—is widespread in populist speeches by left-wing MEPs. These results demonstrate that the content of populist claims on the left and the right is distinct, even though these claims are based on a moral opposition between the people and the elites.

Predictors of Populist Discourse

We now turn to the hypotheses regarding potential mechanisms that shape variation in MEPs' reliance on populist discourse. First, we examine the relationship between parties' incumbent-challenger position and populism. As we have argued, membership in national governments is likely to alter the discursive incentives within the EP: MEPs from incumbent parties should be less likely to rely on populist claims than those whose parties occupy challenger positions.

[Insert Figure 2 about here.]

The bivariate results, presented in Figure 2, are consistent with our expectations, regardless of ideology. On the left, members of challenger parties rely on populism in 8 percent of speeches, compared to 1.8 percent among incumbents, while on the right populism is prevalent in 5.1 percent of challenger party and 2 percent of incumbent party speeches. It appears

that exclusion from government participation at the nation-state level heightens the incentives for European politicians to rely on populist discourse.

Whether populism among political outsiders is a stable long-term strategy or one that is likely to be altered once a party shifts from challenger to incumbent status is more difficult to adjudicate using our data. Only five radical-left and radical-right parties represented in the EP entered government between 1999 and 2004 and four of them had not made frequent use of populist discourse in the EP (their number of populist speeches ranged from 0 to 3). The fifth, Lega Nord, featured populist claims in 10 percent of its 59 speeches and the proportion did not change while the party was in power. We cannot know whether this pattern would hold had a larger number of speeches been available and whether it generalizes to other parties.

[Insert Figure 3 about here.]

Finally, we consider the role of MEPs' career trajectories across European and national political arenas in shaping their political discourse. As Figure 3 illustrates, those MEPs who switch from the European to the national parliamentary arena upon the completion of their EP term tend to rely more on populism during their time in the EP (4.7 percent vs. 2 percent in the full sample). In line with previous research, we find that future-oriented career considerations generate constraints and incentives for specific types of behaviors—in our case, in the degree to which they rely on populism.

There are two possible explanations that could account for this finding. MEPs could be using their speeches to reach out directly to their constituents back home or they could be taking a populist stand in the EP in the hope of impressing the party selectorate that appoints candidates to party lists. While both pathways are likely at play, it is possible to gain some purchase on the distinction by examining differences between MEPs from party-centered and candidate-centered

electoral systems (Høyalnd et al., 2013). The former rely on party lists, while in the latter, candidates appeal directly to the voting public through open ballots. If the difference in the use of populism by those who run in national elections and those who do not is greater among MEPs from candidate-centered systems, this would suggest that populist speeches are aimed primarily at voters back home. If the difference is greater in party-centered systems, the main audience for populist appeals is more likely to consist of party elites.

[Insert Figure 4 about here.]

Figure 4 presents the breakdown of populist discourse by electoral system type. Among MEPs from party-centered systems, those who ran in national elections relied on populism nearly three times as often as those who did not (the prevalence of populism for the former was 5.7 percent and for the latter 1.9 percent). In contrast, among MEPs from candidate-centered systems, the use of populism was not positively associated with running for national office; in fact, those who ran for office used populism less (1.1 percent) than those who did not (2.1 percent). While intriguing, we treat this finding as tentative, given the relatively small number of countries represented at the EP in our study period. There may be other country-level factors correlated with electoral system type that would give rise to the same observed results.

A further possible complication is that the observed relationship between populist discourse and running in national elections may operate in the opposite direction in party-centered electoral systems: rather than MEPs using populism to appeal to party elites, party leaders may select *post facto* those MEPs who happen to make frequent use of populist claims. If this is the case, however, it is likely to only further reinforce the incentives for MEPs to make populist claims by way of a learning process: if MEPs with national political aspirations are

23

aware of their party leaders' preferences for populist talk, they will structure their political

discourse in the EP accordingly.

Our baseline results suggest that the relationship between national political aspirations

and populism appears to vary by ideology, with the effect limited to the center and the left. On

the right, in contrast, there appears to be no association between populist language and

participation in national elections. This difference, however, disappears once we distinguish

between party- and candidate-centered systems (see Figure 5). Within party-centered systems,

candidates who run for national office tend to rely on populism more than those who do not, on

the radical left and the radical right, as well as in the center. Within candidate-centered systems,

MEPs on the radical left do not differ in their use of populism regardless of their entry into

national politics, while those on the radical right rely on populism *less* when running in national

elections. Again, in light of the small number of countries included in the analysis, we treat these

results as suggestive rather than conclusive.

[Insert Figure 5 about here.]

The analyses presented thus far have consisted of tests of bivariate associations between

populism and the predictors of interests. While informative, this approach does not account for

the nestedness of the speeches within higher units of analysis and the possibility that some of the

results may be driven by distributional features of the data. To address these issues, we repeat the

analyses within a multivariate framework, using logistic regression to predict the probability that

a speech contains populist language. We run comparable models for the sample as a whole, with

standard errors clustered on party.[19]

The independent variables mirror those used in the bivariate analyses with two

exceptions: we add linear and quadratic speech-level word count variables to all the models to

account for possible curvilinear effects of speech length on the prevalence of populist language (short speeches are the most likely to be administrative while long speeches are the most likely to be policy-oriented rather than polemical). We use an alternative continuous measure of party ideology based on the Comparative Manifesto Project (along with a quadratic term that allows us to map the U-shaped distribution of populism by party ideology).

[Insert Table 3 about here.]

The results from the full-sample multivariate models, presented in Table 3, are consistent with the bivariate analyses. The U-shaped pattern of populism by ideology is strongly present whether we rely on a parliamentary-group-based measure of ideology (as we had in the bivariate analyses) or the continuous measures from the Comparative Manifesto Project.[20] The presence of MEPs' party in government has a significant negative association with the use of populism, while entry into national politics is indeed associated with greater reliance on populism.

Discussion and Conclusions

By treating populism as a dynamic attribute of political claims rather than a stable property of political actors, we have sought to provide new insights into the distribution and correlates of populist politics across a wide range of countries, parties, and ideological positions. Our findings reveal that populism varies in a patterned way that cannot be sufficiently captured by existing deductive approaches that focus on populism's "usual suspects." In systematically identifying populism across the political spectrum, this study contributes to a growing body of research that seeks to move beyond the conflation of populism with the radical right (March, 2007; March & Mudde, 2005; Pauwels, 2014; Rooduijn & Akkerman, 2015; Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014).

Substantively, our results suggest that populism is strategic tool within the discursive toolkit of European politicians. The degree to which politicians rely on populism depends, at least partially, on structural factors, such as their parties' membership in government and their individual career trajectories within the European and national political arenas. One implication that follows from this is that radical actors who enter mainstream politics may moderate their reliance on populism, particularly as their parties come to hold power in national governments. Whether these actors would also adjust their policy preferences to the mainstream is beyond the scope of our study, but at least at the discursive level, our findings suggest a path toward the possible incorporation of populist radicalism within mainstream politics (Sartori, 1976).

Our analytical strategy suggests possible avenues for future research on European populist discourse. An inductive analysis of political speeches may be particularly promising for understanding the politics of the Eurozone crisis. Scholars have argued that the crisis was followed by a surge in support for populist parties, particularly in countries that were hit hardest by the recession (Kriesi & Pappas, 2015; Pappas & Aslanidis, 2015), but the degree to which these developments have been reflected in mainstream political discourse has not yet been systemically studied. Our work suggests a path of inquiry that goes beyond party-level polling and electoral outcomes.

Future studies could examine whether political actors who do rely on populism have changed the content of the moral categories that constitute their populist claims. It may be the case that centrist and radical right parties have partly incorporated economic populist claims into their traditional discursive repertoires as a response to the economic shocks experienced by their constituents. It is also possible that centrist parties have come to rely on populism more heavily over time as a competitive response to populism's prevalence among more radical political

actors, thereby reshaping the ideological distribution of populist discourse. A traditional party-centric perspective that features electoral support as the primary dependent variable may overlook such developments in populist politics.

More generally, our paper has implications for research on elite framing strategies and suggests a possible path for incorporating research on discursive repertoires with research on organizational aspects of politics. We show that in order to understand political actors' reliance on particular elements of their discursive repertoires (Swidler, 1986), it is not sufficient to attend to their stable political preferences. Instead, scholars must also take into account the configuration of incentives and constraints through which political actors navigate. Our results demonstrate that populism is an oppositional discourse employed by challengers to make claims against political incumbents, as well as a means for career advancement.

While we have focused on populist language in particular (see also Rooduijn and Pauwels [2011]), our methods could be applied to other domains of political discourse. For instance, frames that deal with notions of solidarity and nationhood, which are likely to generate and reinforce collective representations of the body politic, could be subjected to a similar analysis (Hall, 2016). Such research would require the collection of large corpora of political texts, the combination of automated textual tools with close reading, and attention to the determinants of elites' reliance on specific discursive structures.

The conceptualization of populism as discourse, rather than stable ideology, enabled us to observe populism outside of the narrow focus of most existing Europeanist research, marking one of the first systematic analyses of populism across countries. Our results suggest that scholarship on this topic should move beyond the conflation of populism with specific ideologies or party families and consider instead the full range of the phenomenon, based on the incentives

and constraints within which political actors operate. Such an approach is not only more

empirically accurate, but it also promises to take full advantage of bringing together research on

elite frames and institutional politics.

Endnotes

1. Commentators use a variety of labels for such parties, including far right, radical right, extreme right, populist right, right-wing populist, and so on. Following Mudde (2007), we use the term "radical right" to analytically separate these parties' ideological positions from their use of populism as a discursive strategy.

2. Laclau (1977) argues that the connection between socialism and populism is particularly strong, with socialism being at its most effective and radical when articulated through populist language.

3. Importantly, we do not claim that the EP is a microcosm of national politics in Europe. A number of factors could lead to populism in the EP being either overrepresented (e.g., low voter turnout in European elections that gives advantage to nationally marginal parties with strong bases of support) or underrepresented (e.g., low attention to the EP in the media) in this arena. Instead, we treat the EP as an important supranational political venue in its own right, which includes a large variety of national parties with diverse ideological positions.

4. We thank Sven-Oliver Proksch and Jonathan Slapin for sharing their data.

5. Because they often contain moral language concerning elites in non-European countries, foreign affairs speeches are more like to generate false positives in our automated text analysis. We remove from the sample any speech that contains references to countries outside of the EU, with the exception of Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and the United States. We excluded speeches concerning Turkey, because populist language in those speeches tended to reference human rights issues internal to Turkey.

6. For more information about the structure of EP debates, see Proksch & Slapin (2010).

7. We double-checked the group-based ideological classification by cross-tabulating the CMP party ideology measure by parliamentary group. The groups unambiguously fall into the three ideological camps outlined above.

8. All text analyses were carried out in Python using the pattern.vector module.

9. Our dependent variable is binary only at the speech level; at the level of MEPs, national parties, and parliamentary groups, the quantity of interest is the continuous proportion of populist speeches. This is important to note, lest our use of a binary measure is mistaken as inconsistent with our claim that populism should not be viewed as a categorical attribute of political actors. We experimented with continuous speech-level measures of populism and they produced substantively similar results that were less readily interpretable.

10. Populism targeting intellectual or cultural elites may be less prone to the same constraints, which could make it a preferred strategy of centrist MEPs. While our initial dictionary term search included a number of terms that could identify this type of populist rhetoric (e.g. intelligentsia, ivory tower), we found very few instances of it in the corpus. Because these terms failed to consistently classify populist speeches, they were omitted from the final dictionary.

11. Even though we are working with a population rather than a random sample of speeches, our figures include confidence intervals to reflect uncertainty related to potentially omitted speeches, possible translation problems, coding errors, and other case selection and measurement problems. The correct interpretation of the confidence intervals is that if our data collection, coding, and analysis were repeated a large number of times, in the long-run, the true point estimates would be located within the intervals 95 percent of the time.

12. The high proportion of populism on the radical left is driven primarily by Greek MEPs. Though Greece may appear to be an outlier in the data, it is important to remember that its presence in the EP is part of the daily reality of the assembly: because of the populist predilections of the Greek Communist Party members, MEPs are *more* likely, on average, to hear populist claims made on the radical left than on the radical right. Nonetheless, to ensure that Greece was not driving all of our findings, we repeated all the analyses in this paper without Greek MEPs' speeches. Though some of the findings on the radical left were less dramatic, this did not substantively change the conclusions of our analyses; the tests of the four hypotheses remained unaffected.

13. Indeed, the common language of populism may create opportunities for cooperation between the radical left and right around their opposition to European neo-liberalism, despite their otherwise divergent ideological proclivities (as illustrated, for instance, by the French National Front's and British UKIP's enthusiasm for Syriza [Walker, Douglas, & Horobin, 2015]).

14. To detect class-based language, the program looked for the following terms: "workers," "working class," and "working people."

15. We did not recode these speeches, because doing so would have biased our results for the radical left. We expect a 24 percent false-positive rate across all subsets of the data, as indicated by our validation results. As long as the misclassifications are uncorrelated with other variables of interest, it can be treated as simple measurement error.

16. A small number of speeches referenced other categories such as "women," "the elderly," and "young people." Given the broad and inclusive nature of these categories, we classified these as

instances of populism. Whether or not these speeches are retained in the analysis, however, does not significantly alter our results.

17. That we would find broadly populist—rather than strictly class-based—discourse among radical-left parties is consistent with past research on this party family. In the 1990s, as Social Democratic parties moved to the center of the political, a new space opened on the far left. To take advantage of this opportunity, parties of the radical left came to "downplay Marxist ideological purity and present themselves as the *vox populi*, not just the vanguard of the proletariat" (March, 2007, p. 67; see also Pauwels, 2014). With the decline of the industrial working class, radical left claims have increasingly cast "the people" not in narrow class-based terms but as a broadly inclusive social category (Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014), represented by such symbolic labels as "the common man" (van Kessel, 2015).

18. We omitted all stop words and terms of little substantive value from the search. We did this through an iterative process of examining initial search results and adding further words to the exclusion list.

19. In specifying the models, we cluster standard errors on party due to the considerable ideological heterogeneity of speeches within countries.

20. Even though the linear term is only marginally significant in Model 2, the linear and quadratic terms are jointly statistically significant at the 0.001 level.

References

Bale, Tim, & Taggart, Paul. (2005). Finding their way: The socialisation of freshmen MEPs in the European Parliament. Paper presented at the European Union Studies Association, Austin, Texas.

Bale, Tim, & Taggart, Paul. (2006). First-timers yes, virgins no: The roles and backgrounds of new Members of the European Parliament. SEI Working Paper No 89. Sussex European Institute.

Berezin, Mabel. (2009). *Illiberal politics in neoliberal times: Culture, security and populism in the new Europe*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Bonikowski, Bart, & Gidron, Noam. (2016). The populist style in American politics: Presidential campaign discourse, 1952-1996. *Social Forces, 94*(4):1593-1621.

Brack, Nathalie. (2012a). Euroscepticism at the supranational level: The case of the untidy right in the European Parliament. *Journal of Common Market Studies, 51*(1):85–104.

Brack, Nathalie. (2012b). Eurosceptics in the European Parliament: Exit or voice? *Journal of European Integration, 34*(2):151-168.

Daniel, William T. (2015). *Career behavior and the European Parliament: All roads lead through Brussels?* New York: Oxford University Press.

de la Torre, Carlos. (2000). *Populist seduction in Latin America: The Ecuadorian experience.* Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.

de la Torre, Carlos. (2015). Introduction: Power to the people? Populism, insurrections,

    democratization. In Carlos de la Torre (Ed.), *The Promise and Perils of Populism: Global*

    Perspectives (pp. 1-30). Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press.

de Lange, Sarah L. (2012). New alliances: Why mainstream parties govern with radical right-

    wing populist parties. *Political Studies, 60*(4):899–918.

Deegan-Krause, Kevin, & Haughton, Tim. (2009). Toward a more useful conceptualization of

    populism: Types and degrees of populist appeals in the case of Slovakia. *Politics &*

    Policy, 37(4):821–841.

Dietterich, Thomas G. (2000). An experimental comparison of three methods for constructing

    ensembles of decision trees: Bagging, boosting, and randomization. *Machine Learning,*

    40(2):139–157.

Döring, Holger, & Manow, Philip. (2012). Parliament and government composition database

    (ParlGov). University of Bremen. Retrieved October 2, 2014 (http://

    http://citesource.trincoll.edu/asa/asawebnews_002.pdf).

Fella, Stefano, & Ruzza, Carlo. (2013). Populism and the fall of the centre-right in Italy: The end

    of the Berlusconi model or a new beginning? *Journal of Contemporary European*

    Studies, 21(1):38–52.

Hall, Peter A. (2016). The political sources of social solidarity. In Keith Banting & Will

    Kymlicka (Eds.), *The Strains of Commitment: The Political Sources of Solidarity in*

    Diverse Societies. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Hawkins, Kirk A. (2009). Is Chavez populist? Measuring populist discourse in comparative perspective. *Comparative Political Studies*, *42*(8):1040–1067.

Hawkins, Kirk A. (2010). *Venezuela's Chavismo and populism in comparative perspective*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Heinisch, Reinhard. (2003). Success in opposition – failure in government: Explaining the performance of right-wing populist parties in public office. *West European Politics, 26*(3):91–130.

Hetland, Gabriel. (2014). The crooked line: From populist mobilization to participatory democracy in Chávez-era Venezuela. *Qualitative Sociology, 37*(4):373-401.

Hibbing, John R. (1986). Ambition in the House: Behavioral consequences of higher office goals among US Representatives. *American Journal of Political Science, 30*(3): 651-665.

Hibbing, John R. (1999). Legislative careers: Why and how we should study them. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, *24*(2):149–171.

Hix, Simon, & Høyland, Bjørn. (2013). Empowerment of the European Parliament. *Annual Review of Political Science, 16*:171–189.

Hix, Simon, Noury, Abdul G., & Roland, Gérard. (2007). *Democratic politics in the European Parliament.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hopkins, Daniel J., & King, Gary. (2010). A method of automated nonparametric content analysis for social science. *American Journal of Political Science, 54*(1):229-247.

Høyland, Bjørn, Hobolt, Sara B., & Hix, Simon. (2013). Career ambitions and legislative participation: The moderating effect of electoral institutions. Presented at the 13th biennial conference of the European Union Studies Associations, May 8-11, Baltimore, MD.

Ivarsflaten, Elisabeth. (2008). What unites right-wing populists in Western Europe? *Comparative Political Studies, 41*(1):3-23.

Jagers, Jan, & Walgrave, Stefaan. (2007). Populism as political communication style: An empirical study of political parties' discourse in Belgium. *European Journal of Political Research, 46*(3):319–345.

Jansen, Robert S. (2011). Populist mobilization: A new theoretical approach to populism. *Sociological Theory, 29*(2):75–96.

Joachims, Thorsten. (1998). Text categorization with support vector machines: Learning with many relevant features. In C. Nédellec & Céline Rouvierol (Eds.), *Machine Learning ECML-98* (pp. 127-142). New York: Springer.

Kriesi, Hanspeter. (2014). The populist challenge. *West European Politics, 37*(2):361–378.

Kriesi, Hanspeter, & Pappas, Takis S. (Eds.). (2015). *European populism in the shadow of the Great Recession*. Colchester, UK: ECPR Press.

Laclau, Ernesto. (1977). Towards a Theory of Populism. In *Politics and ideology in Marxist thought: Capitalism, fascism, populism* (pp. 143-199). London, UK: New Left Books.

Laclau, Ernesto. (2005). *On populist reason*. New York: Verso.

Madrid, Raúl L. (2008). The rise of ethnopopulism in Latin America. *World Politics, 60*(3):475–508.

March, Luke. (2007). From vanguard of the proletariat to vox populi: Left-populism as a shadow of contemporary socialism. *SAIS Review, 27*(1):63-77.

March, Luke, & Mudde, Cas. (2005). What's left of the radical left? The European radical left after 1989: Decline and mutation. *Comparative European Politics, 3*(1):23–49.

Mayhew, David R. (1974). *Congress: The electoral connection*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Meserve, Stephen A., Pemstein, Daniel, & Bernhard, William T. (2009). Political ambition and legislative behavior in the European Parliament. *The Journal of Politics, 71*(3):1015-1032.

Moffitt, Benjamin, & Tormey, Simon. (2014). Rethinking populism: Politics, mediatisation, and political style. *Political Studies, 62*(2):381-397.

Mols, Frank, & Jetten, Jolanda. (2015). Explaining the appeal of populist right–wing parties in times of economic prosperity. *Political Psychology, 37*(2):275-292.

Mudde, Cas. (2004). The populist zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition, 39*(4):542–563.

Mudde, Cas. (2007). *Populist radical right parties in Europe*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Pappas, Takis S. (2013). Populist democracies: Post-authoritarian Greece and post-communist Hungary. *Government and Opposition, 49*(1):1–23.

Pappas, Takis S., & Aslanidis, Paris. (2015). Greek populism: A political drama in five acts. In Hanspeter Kriesi & Takis S. Pappas (Eds.), *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession* (pp. 261-285). Colchester, UK: ECPR Press.

Pauwels, Teun. (2014). *Populism in Western Europe: Comparing Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands*. London, UK: Routledge.

Pierson, Paul. (2016). Power in historical institutionalism. In Orfeo, Fioretos, Tulia G. Falleti, & Adam Sheingate (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Historical Institutionalism* (pp. 124-141). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Poblete, Mario E. (2015). How to assess populist discourse through three current approaches. *Journal of Political Ideologies, 20*(2):201-218.

Proksch, Sven-Oliver, & Slapin, Jonathan B. (2010). Position taking in European Parliament speeches. *British Journal of Political Science, 40*(3):587–611.

Rooduijn, Matthijs, & Akkerman, Tjitske. (2015). Flank attacks: Populism and left-right radicalism in Western Europe. *Party Politics*. Forthcoming.

Rooduijn, Matthijs, & Pauwels, Teun. (2011). Measuring populism: Comparing two methods of content analysis. *West European Politics, 34*(6):1272–1283.

Sartori, Giovanni. (1976). *Parties and party systems*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Savage, Ritchie. (2000). Populist elements in contemporary American political discourse. *The Sociological Review, 58*:167-188.

Scarrow, Susan E. (1997). Political career paths and the European Parliament. *Legislative Studies Quarterly, 22*(2):253-263.

Skocpol, Theda, & Williamson, Vanessa. (2012). *The Tea Party and the remaking of Republican conservatism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Stavrakakis, Yannis, & Katsambekis, Giorgos. (2014). Left-wing populism in the European periphery: The case of SYRIZA. *Journal of Political Ideologies, 19*(2):119–142.

Subramanian, Narendra. (2007). Populism in India. *SAIS Review of International Affairs, 27*(1):81–91.

Swidler, Ann. (1986). Culture in action: Symbols and strategies. *American Sociological Review, 51*(2):273–286.

Van Kessel, Stijn. (2015). Dutch populism during the crisis. In Hanspeter Kriesi & Takis S. Pappas (Eds.), *European populism in the shadow of the Great Recession* (pp. 153-180). Colchester, UK: ECPR Press.

Volkens, Andrea, Bara, Judith, Budge, Ian, McDonald, Michael, & Klingemann, Hans-Dieter. (2013). *Mapping policy preferences from texts: Statistical solutions for manifesto analysts*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Walker, Marcus, Douglas, Jason, & Horobin, William. (2015). Europe's populists hail Syriza win in Greek elections from left and right. *The Wall Street Journal,* January 27.

Wodak, Ruth. (2015). *The politics of fear: What right-wing populist discourses mean*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Appendix A. Dictionary Development and Validation.

Extensive validation is an essential element of any automated text analysis strategy (Grimmer and Stewart 2013). Computational content analysis methods should not be viewed as substitutes for careful interpretive work—they are merely supplemental tools that help reduce the time and effort necessary to code vast amounts of data. To ensure that our automated text analysis methods captured populist discourse as accurately as possible, we carried out a detailed validation procedure that involved the manual coding of 1,150 speeches. We began with the English dictionary used by Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011), removed any terms that clearly did not apply to the EU context, and added terms that appeared to us to be typical of populist speeches (initially, the additional terms were based on a reading of a small sample of populist speeches from our data, but we continued adding more terms as we read more texts during subsequent rounds of dictionary validation). We then ran the dictionary-based algorithm to generate a list of speeches that contained the dictionary terms and sorted the results by each dictionary term. As we will explain further, this was merely the first step in the iterative dictionary validation, which was repeated multiple times until no new terms were found.

To validate the accuracy of each term, we read the speeches identified by each term. In cases where the term was present in 20 or fewer speeches, we read all the speeches; in cases where the term was present in more than 20 speeches, we read a random sample of either 20 speeches or 20 percent of the speeches containing the term, whichever was greater. Speeches that did contain populist language were coded as 1 and those that did not were coded as 0. Our hand-coding decision rules required that in order for a speech to be coded as populist, it had to (a) use morally charged language that assigned negative qualities to a target actor; (b) the target actor had to be a specific elite group (and not simply an individual politician, an organization, or an

institution); and (c) the speaker had to make some reference to the victimization of the people by the elite group, using either terms that were either explicit (e.g., "the people," "the taxpayers") or implicit ("us," "we").

We ensured that the hand-coding procedure was robust by conducting an intercoder reliability test that compared the classification of a ten-percent subset of the data across both coders (we did the coding ourselves). The coefficient of agreement for the subset of speeches was 0.87. To account for consistent ratings produced by chance, we also calculated a Cohen's kappa (Cohen 1960), which is a more conservative measure of inter-coder reliability; the result was 0.75, which meets the threshold for "substantial" (Landis and Koch 1977) or "excellent" (Fleiss 1981) level of agreement.

Having coded all the terms in the first round of validation, we retained those that captured populism with an accuracy of at least 50 percent and removed those that did not meet this threshold. For terms that were removed, however, we retained the hand-coding classification of the associated speeches, including those that were determined to be populist and those that were determined not to contain populist language. In the process of validating the speeches, we also noted down any new terms that appeared to be associated with populist claims and included them in subsequent rounds of validation. The entire process was then repeated iteratively until we could no longer identify any new populist terms that met the 50 percent accuracy threshold. In a final step, the dictionary was applied to the entire corpus in order to identify populist speeches beyond those that were hand-coded in the course of validation.

The complete list of terms tested in the validation procedure is presented in Appendix B. As the appendix demonstrates, our dictionary search was extensive: it involved the validation

211 terms, 51 of which performed well enough to be retained in the final dictionary and 160 of which were ultimately discarded.

It is important to note that in the course of iteratively improving the dictionary, we made every effort to privilege terms that were not inherently ideological, such as "elite" and "propaganda." While reading through the speeches, however, it became clear that a number of ideologically laden terms were highly accurate in identifying populist speeches. Consequently, we hand-coded every speech that contained these terms to ensure that our final data did not include any false positives. We then discarded the terms from the final dictionary.

In order to obtain validity measures for all the terms combined applied to the entire corpus, we sorted the speeches identified as populist in descending order of two measures: the speech-level unique term count (i.e., the number of unique terms that appeared in the document) and the speech-level sum of relative frequencies of each term (i.e., the number of times each term appeared divided by the total word count of the speech). We then calculated the mean of the hand-coded values for each 100 speeches, omitting those speeches that had not been included in our manual validation. The accuracy measures are presented in Table A1 below.

[Insert Table A1 about here.]

Not surprisingly, the accuracy of the automated text analysis results is positively correlated with the unique term count and sum of relative term frequencies: speeches that contain multiple unique terms and those where the terms have a high frequency relative to speech length are, on average, more likely to be accurately identified as populist than those that contain only one unique term with a low relative frequency. The cumulative accuracy of the algorithm is as

high as 91 percent for the top 100 speeches and decreases gradually to 58 percent when all 1,413 speeches containing dictionary terms are taken into account.

It is important to note, however, that the overall accuracy of our populism measure is considerably higher than 58 percent. The reason for this is simple: of the 1,413 speeches that contain dictionary terms, 801 have been hand-coded in the course of our validation procedure. Of those, 337 are hand-coded as non-populist—that is, they have been shown to be false positives. When we generate our final populism measures used in all the analyses, we assign these speeches values of 0, thereby overriding any measures generated by the algorithm. By taking these 337 speeches out of the set of speeches identified as populist by the algorithm, we considerably increase the accuracy of our populism measures. As illustrated in the third and fourth column of Table A1, the removal of the 337 false positives increases our overall measurement validity to 76 percent, assuming a base accuracy rate of 58 percent for the full set of populism speeches. (Our measurement validity is in fact even higher, because we also assign positive populism scores to 38 speeches that were hand-coded as populist during validation but were not classified as populist by the algorithm using the final dictionary. Taking these into account, the final validity estimate for our populism measures is 0.77.)

Given that in the process of validating our results we manually coded 1,150 speeches, one may ask what advantages were gained through the use of automated text analysis. The simple answer is that without the dictionary-based algorithm, we would have had no way of knowing which of the 24,339 speeches in the complete corpus had the potential for containing populist language. The only way we could generate reasonable measures of populism would be to read all of those speeches—a task that would require considerable time and labor. Because such an undertaking would necessitate the reliance on multiple coders, it would also considerably

increase the risk of measurement error due to problems of inter-coder reliability. By automatically selecting potentially populist speeches, the algorithm considerably reduced the complexity of our manual coding procedure; once we perfected the dictionary, our only task was to simply identify false positives generated by the algorithm.

To verify whether our approach missed any populist speeches in the remainder of the corpus (i.e., produced false negatives), we used a random sample of speeches coded using the dictionary method to train five supervised machine-learning classifiers: two-class and one-class support vector machines and random forest classifiers with 10, 50, and 100 decision trees. While all five algorithms performed well in a cross-fold validation using the pre-coded data, they failed to correctly identify populist speeches in the remainder of the corpus (as revealed by a close reading of random samples of speeches that were consistently coded as populist by three or more of the classifiers). This is likely due to the sparseness of populism in the data, the high quality of our dictionary (which left virtually no remaining populist speeches in the unclassified corpus), and the small number of consistently co-occurring terms in populist speeches. In light of these results, we are all the more confident in the validity of our dictionary and the appropriateness of the dictionary-based approach for the study of populism in EP plenary speeches.

References for Appendix A

Cohen, Jacob. 1960. "A Coefficient of Agreement for Nominal Scales." *Educational and Psychosocial Measurement* 20:37-46.

Fleiss, Joseph L. 1981. *Statistical Methods for Rates and Proportions*. New York: Wiley.

Gattermann, Katjana, and Sofia Vasilopoulou. 2015. Absent Yet Popular? Explaining News

      Visibility of Members of the European Parliament. *European Journal of Political*

      Research 54:121–40.

Grimmer, Justin, and Brandon M. Stewart. 2013. "Text as Data: the Promise and Pitfalls of

      Automatic Content Analysis Methods for Political Texts." *Political Analysis* 21:1–31.

Landis, J. Richard, and Gary G. Koch. 1977. "The Measurement of Observer Agreement for

      Categorical Data." *Biometrics* 33:159-74.

Appendix B. Dictionary Terms.

The following terms were used to identify populism in the EP speeches. The terms were stemmed in order to capture all relevant inflected and derived words, as is commonly done in automated text analyses. In a few cases where stemming would have produced problematic results, only the unstemmed term was used. For instance, "internationalism" would have been stemmed as "internation," which would have erroneously captured the non-populist term "international." The first group of terms includes those that were retained in the final dictionary, because they passed the threshold of accuracy in our validation procedure. The second group includes those that proved inadequate in identifying populist language, as well as those that were overly ideological (thus creating the risk of conflating populism with specific political ideologies).

Terms retained in the final dictionary:

anti-democratic, anti-grass-roots, aristocrat, authoritarianism, autocratic, bosses, coopt, corrupt system, cronies, desire for power, elite, elitist, eurocracy, eurocrats, euroglobalist, europe of people, exploitation of the masses, exploiters, fewer rights, financiers, foist, greed, greedy for power, imperialism, imperialist, internationalism, internationalist, jewish circles, lackey, less democracy, more union, oligarch, oligarchy, on the backs of, ordinary people, out of touch, pillage, plutocracy, police state, political class, power grab, power play, propaganda, ruling circle, ruling class, subjugate, taken hostage, technocrats, thirst for power, unelected, worship

Terms tested but ultimately discarded:

alienat[ed/ion], anti-national, antisocial, at the service of, attack on, back-room, behind closed doors, betray, big business, bleeding heart, brussels, brutal, bureaucra[cy/ts/tic], capitalist, capitalist class, capitalist companies, capitalist europe, centralised, centralism, cheat, citizens want, civilisation, class war, closer to the people, collides, commercial interests, confederation , corrupt, criminal, daily way of life, decei[t/ve], decentralisation, defend[ing] the values, demagogue, democratic deficit, democratic europe, destr[oy/uction of] public services, destroy jobs, dictatorship, dirty work, disenfranchise, dishonest, diversity, dogma, dominant class, duped, economic warfare, emp[eror/ress], encroachment, establishment, euro-anthem, euro-nationalism, euroglobal, europe of brussels, europe of citizens, european voters, euroroyalist, evil, financial groups, floodgates, folk, free-market, fundamentalis[m/t], greater power, groups of experts, have no say, hearts and minds, hidden agenda, hijacked, hordes, hostility, hypocrisy,

ideology, immigration on a massive scale, immoral, in the hands of a few, intelligentsia, interests of capital, interference, into the hands of, involvement of people, ivory tower, lack of democracy, little people, lives of citizens, lobbyists, lust for power, machiavellian, manipulat[e/ion], mass immigration, masters, mendacious, miserable, monopolies, monopoly groups, more eu, more power to, most powerful, most wealthy, multinational, national freedom, neoliberal, neoliberal state, new world order, ordinary, ordinary citizens, ordinary folk, ordinary voters, over-regulated, panopticon, parasit[e/ic], people's wealth, political interests, power game, power hungry, power of brussels, pro-european, pro-monopoly, property-owning, protest, public wealth, pulling the strings, rabble-rousing, real people, remove power, repressive, scandal[ous], scapegoat, selling off, service of humanity, service of people, shame, siphoning off, social europe, sovereignty, squander, steal, stealth, super-europe, superstate, supranational, surrogate, the european people, the powerful, the streets, threat to sovereignty, transparency, truth, tyranny, ultraliberal, undemocratic, vehement, voters, warped understanding, warped view, wealthy people, will of the people, working people, world of brussels, yes men

Table 1. Proportions of Populist Speeches

	Prop. Populist	95% Confidence Interval		N of Speeches
All speeches	0.029	0.027	0.031	24,339
Parliamentary group				
GUE/NGL	0.124	0.113	0.134	2,816
EDD	0.058	0.046	0.070	1,014
Indep	0.043	0.036	0.050	2,067
UEN	0.022	0.016	0.028	1,486
PES	0.012	0.010	0.015	5,544
EG-EFA	0.011	0.008	0.015	2,362
EPP-ED	0.009	0.007	0.011	7,134
ELDR	0.009	0.005	0.012	1,916
Country (top 5)				
Greece	0.181	0.164	0.199	1,292
France	0.052	0.047	0.058	3,795
Denmark	0.051	0.037	0.065	668
UK	0.020	0.016	0.024	3,073
Luxembourg	0.018	0.005	0.032	271
Party (top 5)				
Communist Party of Greece	0.464	0.427	0.502	478
Lutte Ouvriere	0.294	0.231	0.356	143
National Front	0.223	0.161	0.285	121
UK Independence Party	0.198	0.127	0.269	86
Flemish Block	0.167	0.063	0.270	36

Table 2. Top thirty words in populist speeches, by ideology.

Left		Center		Right	
Term	Freq.	Term	Freq.	Term	Freq.
workers	205	market	96	economic	43
business	199	work	86	subsidies	39
system	194	financial	71	public	62
market	155	economic	71	policy	60
economic	146	business	48	social	47
employment	129	development	45	community	47
capitalist	121	euro	40	services	35
profits	116	employment	38	democracy	63
companies	110	social	93	citizens	62
working	104	policy	92	legal	62
unemployment	102	public	83	government	45
work	96	community	55	democratic	42
development	86	services	48	constitution	41
trade	80	citizens	118	majority	36
financial	77	institutions	51	freedom	33
social	318	legal	44	parliaments	31
policy	304	rules	40	institutions	31
public	174	democracy	39	governments	30
health	125	democratic	38	national	124
education	106	government	49	nations	37
policies	103	national	80	brussels	37
society	99	enlargement	44	integration	36
services	99	must	232	people	136
human	78	should	198	must	92
national	110	people	180	should	83
people	282	need	121	against	56
against	231	against	64	power	54
should	189	common	51	propaganda	36
interests	152	united	46	common	32
must	124	power	43	peoples	31

Category	Prop. of top 30	Category	Prop. of top 30	Category	Prop. of top 30
Economic	0.435	Economic	0.215	Dem. / rep. institutions	0.305
Social / policy	0.319	Dem. / rep. institutions	0.164	Social / policy	0.161
National / supranat.	0.025	Social / policy	0.161	National / supranat.	0.150
Moral	0.222	National / supranat.	0.054	Economic	0.052
		Moral	0.406	Moral	0.333

Table 3. Logistic Regressions Predicting Presence of Populism in EP Speeches

|	1	2	4	5	6
	Ideology (CMP)	Ideology (EP group)	Party in government	National office	Full model
Ideology	0.975				
Ideology sq.	1.001 **				
Ideology: left		7.138 **			5.499 **
Ideology: right		4.668 ***			3.084 **
In government			0.238 ***		0.527 *
National office				2.513 **	1.940 *
Speech length	1.008 **	1.012 **	1.008 **	1.008 *	1.013 **
Speech length sq.	1.000 *	1.000 **	1.000 **	1.000 *	1.000 **
Intercept	0.008 ***	0.004 ***	0.022 ***	0.011 ***	0.004 ***
N (speeches)	20,669	24,339	24,243	24,339	24,243
Pseudo R^2	0.055	0.084	0.035	0.024	0.102

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Note: All coefficients are expressed as odds ratios. All standard errors are clustered at the party level. Reference categories for dummy variables are as follows: ideology - center, party not in government, did not run for national office. Odds ratios for the quadratic speech length term are less than 1.0 but have been rounded up.

Table A1. Validation Statistics

Speech Number Interval	All Populist Speeches		Populist Speeches with False Positives Removed	
	Interval Accuracy	Cumulative Accuracy	Interval Accuracy	Cumulative Accuracy
1 - 100	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96
101 - 200	0.91	0.93	0.95	0.95
201 - 300	0.73	0.87	0.86	0.93
301 - 400	0.57	0.80	0.91	0.92
401 - 500	0.28	0.73	0.65	0.88
501 - 600	0.45	0.70	0.72	0.85
601 - 700	0.59	0.69	0.72	0.83
701 - 800	0.64	0.68	0.73	0.82
801 - 900	0.61	0.68	0.74	0.81
901 - 1000	0.47	0.66	0.68	0.80
1001 - 1100	0.28	0.64	0.63	0.78
1101 - 1200	0.27	0.62	0.65	0.77
1201 - 1413	0.32	0.58	0.68	0.76

Note: Intervals are based on an ordering of speeches in descending order of unique term counts and total relative term frequency. Estimates of accuracy for speeches with false positives removed are based on an overall accuracy rate of 0.58 (i.e., the cumulative rate for all populist speeches as indicated in the last row, third column of the above table).
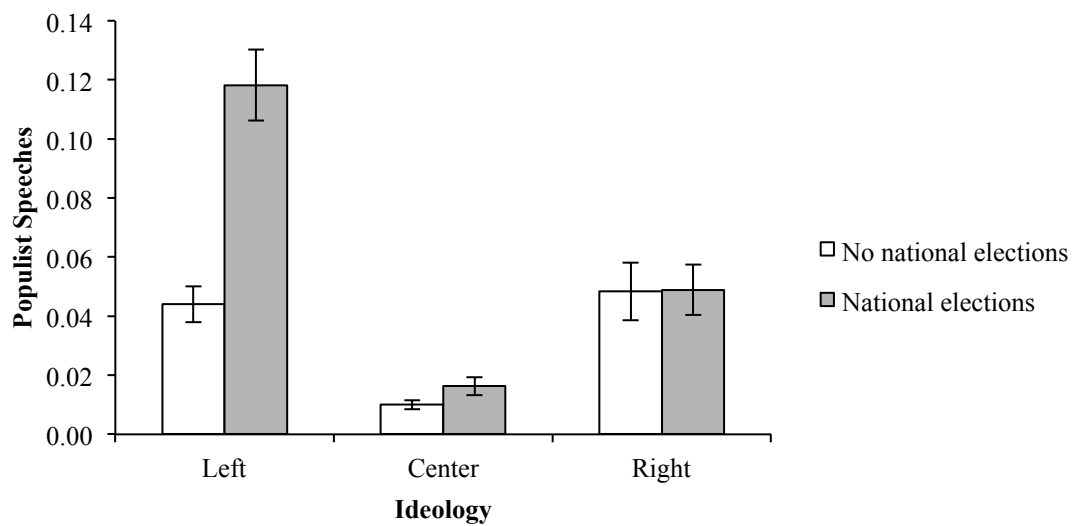
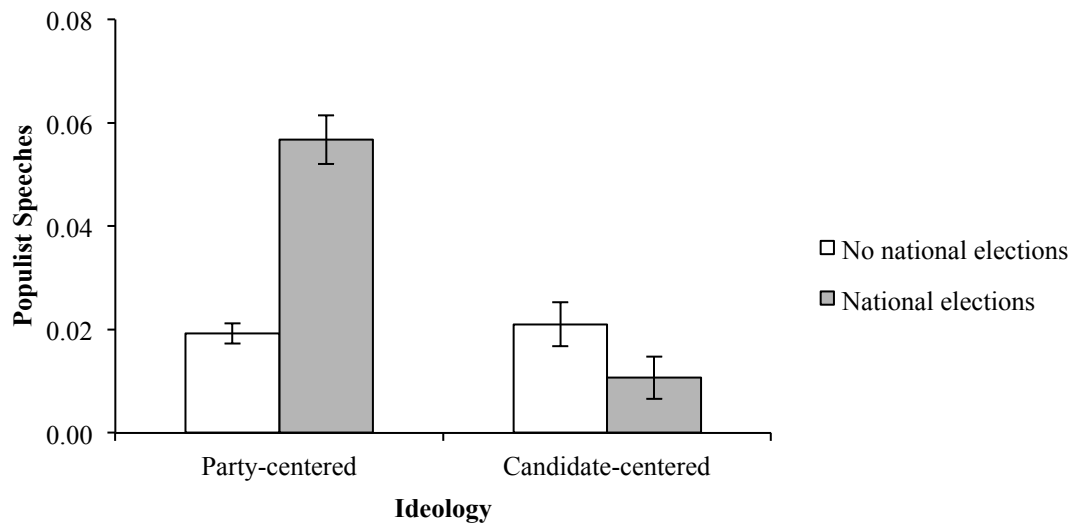**Figure 1. Proportion of Populist Speeches by Party Ideology**
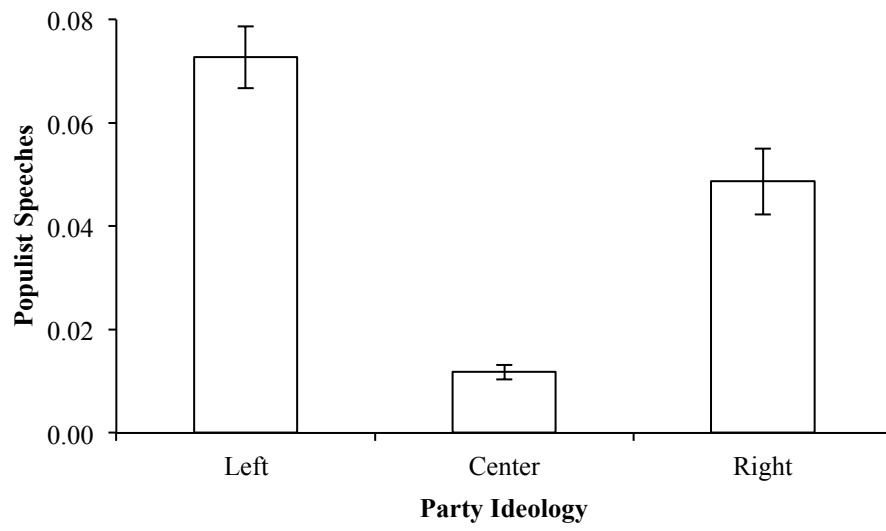
Figure 2. Prevalence of Populism by Status of Party in Government and by Ideology
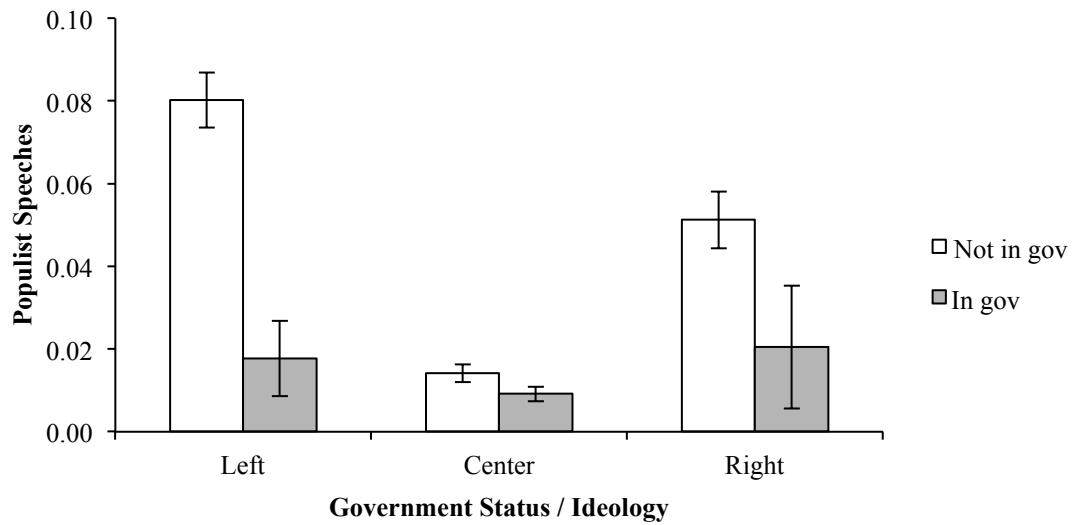
Figure 3. Prevalence of Populism by Post-EP Participation in National Elections and by Ideology

Figure 4. Prevalence of Populism by Type of Electoral System.

Figure 5. Prevalence of Populism by Type of Electoral System and Ideology.