

# Pre-Analysis Plan: The People as ‘Volk’ or ‘Bürger’? The Implications of Ethnic and Civic Conceptions of the People for the Measurement of Populist Attitudes

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# 1 Expectations

**Ethnic Conception hypothesis ( $H1$ ):** All things equal, agreement with the constitutive items of the populist attitude construct containing a reference to ‘the people’ is lower for an ethnic conception of the ‘the people’ (i.e., *das Volk*) than for a civic conception of ‘the people’ (i.e., *Bürger*).e.

**Exclusive National Identity hypothesis ( $H2a$ ):** All things equal, agreement with the constitutive items of the populist attitude construct containing a reference to ‘the people’ is higher for an ethnic conception of ‘the people’ (i.e., *das Volk*) than for a civic conception of ‘the people’ (i.e., *Bürger*) when the respondent adheres to an exclusive national identity.

**Far Right Party ID hypothesis ( $H2b$ ):** All things equal, agreement with the constitutive items of the populist attitude construct containing a reference to ‘the people’ is higher for an ethnic conception of ‘the people’ (i.e., *das Volk*) than for a civic conception of ‘the people’ (i.e., *Bürger*) when the respondent votes for a far right party.

## 2 Research Desing and Protocol

### 2.1 Sample

We will conduct the survey experiment in Germany in October 2021 – approximately three weeks after the general elections of 26 September 2021. The sample, recruited through [Respondi](#), will consist of 8,000 participants (based on the power analysis presented in Figure 1) of 18 years and older. Respondi works with opt-in respondents, so we have implemented quota on age, gender, and education. Moreover, we measure some more demographic background variables (see [Section 3.2](#)). Balance checks will be conducted to demonstrate whether certain categories are over represented in a certain experimental group. The study has been approved by the [Research Ethics Review Committee](#) of the *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam* (see the approval [here](#)). To ensure good quality of our data, two attention checks (discussed in more detail in [Section 3.3](#)) are included. Each respondent failing the attention check will be excluded and replaced with another ‘good’ response.

### 2.2 Experimental Protocol

The study is conducted online and in German. Participants are told that they are taking part in a survey to get an overview of how German people form their views on politics. After reading an informed consent message participants are forwarded to the main questionnaire (or the survey will be terminated if they do not agree to the consent form).

First, participants complete a set of demographic variables (i.e. income, employment, and degree of urbanization). This block ends with one of the two attention checks included in this survey. When participants fail this attention check, a warning appears asking them to read the question again carefully and to answer again. Thereafter, a set of background variables are asked on their stances on the political issues, some are used in the experiment (i.e. top tax, speed limit, education, legalization of Cannabis), their political interest and knowledge, as well as on their ideological position – the full codeboek can be viewed [here](#).<sup>1</sup> Before entering the experimental condition, respondents get a second attention check. Only when they have answered it correctly, they enter the first round of the experiment – if they fail to answer the question correctly, they are thrown out of the survey. The stimuli in the experiment are to translate the word *people* into it’s civic conception (i.e. *Bürger*) or it’s ethnic conception (i.e. *Volk*) for the items 2, 3, and 4 of the populism attitude scale (Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove 2014).

### 2.3 Power Analysis

As detailed in [Section 4](#), we conduct an OLS regression for each of the dependent variables (i.e. items 2–4): a) “The people, not politicians, should make the most important political decisions”; b) “The politicians in the German Bundestag need to follow the will of the people”; and c) “The political differences between elites

---

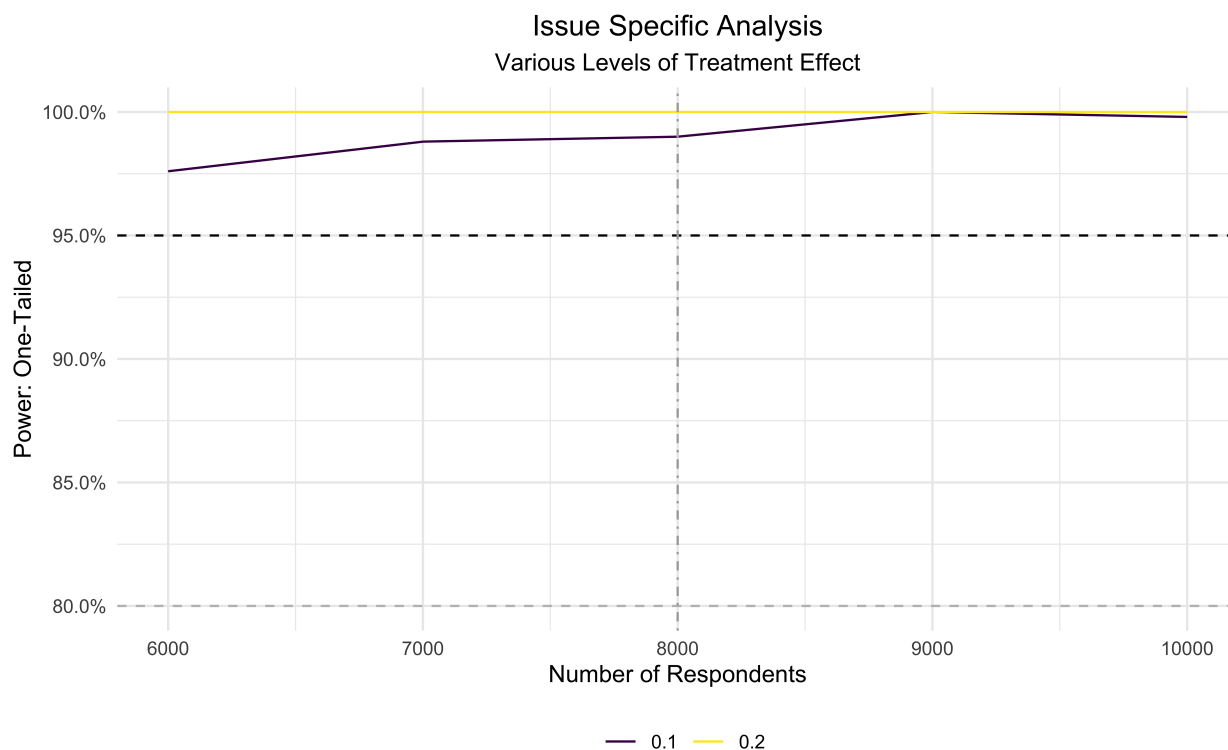
<sup>1</sup>Participants are also part of another experiment – see details [here](#).

and the people are greater than the differences among citizens”. The manipulation, i.e. the civic conception (i.e. *Bürger*) or the ethnic conception (i.e. *Volk*) as well as respondents’ national identity and far right party ID are the main independent variables.

To calculate power for the hypotheses, the R package `DeclareDesign` is used (Blair et al. 2019). The effect sizes are between  $b = 0.2$  and  $b = 0.1$  – i.e. a small effect visualized by the purple and blue lines in Figure 1. The hypotheses are directional, Figure 1 therefore displays one-tailed tests with  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The power analysis shows that testing hypotheses 1 and 2 requires a sample size of 8,000 participants (x-axis) to reach very high levels of power, i.e.  $> 95\%$ , (indicated by the black dashed line in Figure 1).

```
source(here::here("docs/pre-analysis-plan/poweranalysis.R"))
```

Figure 1: Power Analysis



### 3 Measures

#### 3.1 Dependent Variables

We rely on the three items in the populism scale that mention the people: a) “The people, not politicians, should make the most important political decisions”; b) “The politicians in the German Bundestag need to follow the will of the people”; and c) “The political differences between elites and the people are greater than the differences among citizens”. All items are measured on a 5-point Likert-scale: **very much disagree**, **disagree**, **neutral**, **agree**, **very much agree**.

See Table 1 for the exact phrasing of the question.

#### 3.2 Treatment

Respondents are randomly assigned to the populism items translated into German using either the civic conception (i.e. *Bürger*) or the ethnic conception (i.e. *Volk*).

Table 1: Survey Questions - DV

Variable	Wording ENG	Wording DE
Item 2 (DV1)	The people, not politicians, should make the most important political decisions	[Die Bürger/Das Volk], und nicht die Politiker, sollte(n) die wichtigsten politischen Entscheidungen treffen
Item 3 (DV2)	he politicians in the German Bundestag need to follow the will of the people	Die Abgeordneten des Deutschen Bundestags müssen dem Willen [der Bürger/des Volkes] Folge leisten
Item 4 (DV3)	The political differences between elites and the people are greater than the differences among citizens	Die politischen Unterschiede zwischen den Eliten und [den Bürgern/dem Volk] sind größer als die Unterschiede (zwischen Bürgern)

### 3.3 Control Variables

As control variables, the following *demographics* are measured: gender, age, education, geographical region, level of urbanness, vote choice in the 2021 parliamentary elections, employment, and income. For the analysis, only variables that are unbalanced over the experimental conditions will be included. Table 2 gives an overview of the questions asked in the survey as well as their English translations.

- *Gender* is measured as **sex** based on the advice of Kieskompas. The answer categories are **Male** (value of 1), **Female** (value of 0), and **No answer** (value of 999).
- *Age* is measured using 6 categories: **17 or younger**, **18--29**, **30--39**, **40--49**, **50--59**, **60--74**.
- *Education* is measured as the highest successfully completed level of education, recoded into four categories: **low**, **middle**, **high**, and **none**. I create dummy variables for each level of education with the lowest category as base category.
- *Urbanness* Respondents are asked for what the type of location they live: **big city**, **suburb of a large city**, **middle-sized or small city**, **rural village**, **detached house in the countryside**, **don't know/won't say**.
- *Vote Recall* Respondents were asked which party they voted for in the last election with their second vote. Answering categories were: **CDU/CSU**, **SPD**, **AfD**, **FDP**, **DIE LINKE**, **BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN**, **Other party**:, **I didn't vote/wasn't eligible to vote**, **Don't know/won't say**.
- *Employment* Respondents were asked which category of employment – **Full-time employed**, **Part-time employed**, **Entrepreneur**, **Unemployed and searching for a job**, **Unemployed and not searching for a job or incapacitated**, **Housewife/Househusband or else**, **Retired**, **Student or full-time education** – applied most to them.
- *Income* Respondents were questioned on their monthly income in bins of €500 – **€500 or less**, **€501–€1000**, **€1001–€1500**, **€1501–€2000**, **€2001–€2500**, **€2501–€3000**, **€3001–€3500**, **€3501–€4000**, **€4501–€7500**, **€7501 or more** – as well as giving them the options of **won't say** and **don't know**.
- *Geographical region* is measured using the same questions as the [German Longitudinal Election Study](#), asking respondents where they are born and currently live, differentiating between the different German provinces (*Bundesländer*): **Baden-Württemberg**, **Bavaria**, **Berlin**, **Brandenburg**, **Bremen**, **Hamburg**, **Hessen**, **Lower Saxony**, **Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania**, **North Rhine- Westphalia**, **Rhineland-Palatinate**, **Saarland**, **Saxony**, **Saxony-Anholt**, **Schleswig-Holstein**, and **Thuringia**.

In addition, pre-treatment, respondents' ideological position, political knowledge, interest, and attitude towards national identity are measured (see Table 3). Those variables will only be included in the analyses if

Table 2: Survey Questions - Demographics

Variable	Wording ENG	Wording DE
gender (D1)	Which gender do you feel you belong to?	Welchem Geschlecht fühlen Sie sich zugehörig?
age (D2)	To which of the following age groups do you belong?	Zu welcher der nachfolgenden Altersgruppen gehören Sie?
education (D3)	What is your highest educational qualification?	Was ist Ihr höchster Bildungsabschluss?
geographical-region (D4)	Which of the following categories best describes where you live?	Welche der folgenden Kategorien beschreibt am besten, wo Sie wohnen?
vote-recall2 (D6)	Which party did you vote for with your second vote in the last federal election in September 2021?	Welche Partei haben Sie bei der letzten Bundestagswahl im September 2021 mit Ihrer Zweitstimme gewählt?
employment (D7)	Now we would like to ask you something about your employment. Which of this list applies to you?	Nun möchten wir Sie gerne etwas zu Ihrer Erwerbstätigkeit fragen. Was von dieser Liste trifft auf Sie zu?
income (D8)	What is the total monthly net income of your household? This refers to the sum that remains after deducting taxes and social security contributions.	Wie hoch ist das monatliche Netto-Einkommen Ihres Haushaltes insgesamt? Gemeint ist die Summe, die nach Abzug von Steuern und Sozialversicherungsbeiträgen übrig bleibt.
living-place (D9)	In which federal state or on the territory of which present federal state do you currently live?	Im welchen Bundesland bzw. auf dem Gebiet welches heutigen Bundeslandes wohnen Sie derzeit?
birth-place (D10)	And in which federal state or on the territory of which present federal state were you born?	Und in welchem Bundesland bzw. auf dem Gebiet welches heutigen Bundeslandes wurden Sie geboren?

balance checks indicate they are necessary. Moreover, the variables will be used to explore heterogeneous relationships.

- *Ideological position* is measured using an 11-point scale ranging from left (0) to right (10).
- *Exclusive national identity* is measured with four statements (“being born in Germany”, “having German ancestors”, “being able to speak German”, “adhering to German traditions and customs”) on a 5-point Likert-scale: **very much disagree**, **disagree**, **neutral**, **agree**, **very much agree**. If Cronbach's  $\alpha \geq 0.8$ , we will construct an additive scale for this measure. When Cronbach's  $\alpha < 0.8$ , we will add the statement as separate dependent variables in the multiverse analysis.
- *Political knowledge* is measured with three items. First, respondents are asked which of the two votes is determinative for the seat distribution in parliament: **first vote**, **second vote**, **both**, **don't know**. Secondly, respondents are asked about the electoral threshold. Last, respondents are asked whether or not the unemployment rate is over ten percent.
- *Political interest* is measured by asking people how strongly they are interested in politics using a 5-point Likert-scale (**very strong**, **strong**, **medium**, **less strong**, **not at all**) and a **don't know/won't say** option.

### 3.4 Attention Checks

We include two attention checks in the survey. The first one is after the demographic covariates, the second one is asked just before respondents enter the round of the experimental treatments. The attention checks are taken from Berinsky, Margolis, and Sances (2014) and adapted to the German context by the authors. If

Table 3: Survey Questions - PreTreatment Questions

Variable	Wording ENG	Wording DE
political-knowledge1 (PT4)	In the federal election, you have two votes, a first vote and a second vote. How is that actually, which of the two votes is decisive for the distribution of seats in the Bundestag?	Bei der Bundestagswahl haben Sie ja zwei Stimmen, eine Erststimme und eine Zweitstimme. Wie ist das eigentlich, welche der beiden Stimmen ist ausschlaggebend für die Sitzverteilung im Bundestag?
political-knowledge2 (PT5)	Now we would like to know from you, from what percentage of the second votes a party can send deputies in any case in the Bundestag?	Jetzt möchten wir gerne von Ihnen wissen, ab wie viel Prozent der Zweitstimmen eine Partei auf jeden Fall Abgeordnete in den Bundestag entsenden kann?
political-knowledge3 (PT6)	And can you say approximately what the current unemployment rate is in Germany? Is it lower or higher than 10 percent?	Und können Sie ungefähr sagen, wie hoch die derzeitige Arbeitslosenquote in Deutschland ist? Ist sie niedriger oder höher als 10 Prozent?
political-interest (PT7)	Once speaking in general terms: How interested are you in politics - very strongly, strongly, moderately, less strongly, or not at all?	Einmal ganz allgemein gesprochen: Wie stark interessieren Sie sich für Politik – sehr stark, stark, mittelmäßig, weniger stark oder überhaupt nicht?
RILE (PT8)	In politics, people often talk about 'left' and 'right.' Where would you classify yourself?	In der Politik reden die Leute häufig von 'links' und 'rechts'. Wo würden Sie sich selbst einordnen?
Exclusive national identity (HT4)	Some people think that the following points are important to be truly German. Others do not think they are important. How important do you think the following points are to being German?	Manche Leute meinen, dass die folgenden Punkte wichtig sind, um wirklich deutsch zu sein. Andere halten diese nicht für wichtig. Für wie wichtig halten Sie die folgenden Punkte, um deutsch zu sein?
Exclusive national identity (HT4-1)	being born in Germany	in Deutschland geboren sein
Exclusive national identity (HT4-2)	having German ancestors	deutsche Vorfahren haben
Exclusive national identity (HT4-3)	being able to speak German	deutsch sprechen können
Exclusive national identity (HT4-4)	adhering to German traditions and customs	sich an deutsche Traditionen und Gepflogenheiten halten

a respondents fails the first attention check, a warning appears and the respondent can only continue with the survey once the respondent has correctly answered the question correctly. The second attention check also has a warning – meaning that respondents have to select two options – but if they fail to correctly pass the check, they are excluded. Each excluded respondent due to failing an attention check is replaced with another “good respondent”.

**Attention Check 1** When a big news story breaks people often go online to get up-to-the-minute details on what is going on. We want to know which websites people trust to get this information. We also want to know if people are paying attention to the question. To show that you have read this much, please ignore the question and select *BILD-Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* as your two answers. When there is a big news story, which is the one news website you would visit first? (Please only choose one). Eight (German) news outlets are provided to choose from. Respondents pass the attention check if they select *BILD-Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

**Attention Check 2:** We would like to get a sense of your general preferences. Most modern theories of decision making recognize that decisions do not take place in a vacuum. Individual preferences and knowledge,

along with situational variables can greatly impact the decision process. To demonstrate that you've read this much, just go ahead and select both red and green among the alternatives below, no matter what your favourite color is. Yes, ignore the question below and select both of those options. What is your favourite color? Six colors are provided to choose from, respondents pass the attention check if they select red and green.

### 3.5 Exclusion Criteria

Participants are required to respond to each question. Participants who fail the second attention check will be excluded but replaced by another participant.

## 4 Analysis

We test the hypotheses formulated in [Section 1](#) by fitting linear multivariate regressions separately for the two issues. In each model, we will estimate the coefficient for whether the party compromised or remained steadfast (H1), whether or not the coalition talks continued (H2), and the interaction of compromise and the outcome (H3). We will only add control variables in the analyses that are unbalanced, as explained in [Section 4.1](#).

### 4.1 Balance Checks

We will conduct a balance test based on demographics (age, gender, education, geographical region, level of urbanness, employment, and income), vote choice in the 2021 parliamentary elections, ideological self-placement, political knowledge, political interest, party identity strength, and positions on and salience of the three issues, using the `cobalt` R package (Greifer 2021). If the groups are unbalanced on one of these variables – i.e. standardized mean differences  $< 0.05$  – I will add the covariates to the analyses. I will use the code below to conduct the balance tests (see [here](#) for the R script).

```
covs <- d %>%
  mutate(treatment = populism) %>%
  select(populism, D1:D10, PT1:PT8, HT4)

balanced <- bal.tab(treatment ~ factor(D1) + D2 +
  factor(D3) + D4 + D5 +
  factor(D6) + D7 + D8 + D9 +
  D10 + PT4 + PT5 + PT6 + PT7 +
  PT8 + HT4,
  data = covs,
  thresholds = c(m = 0.05))[[1]]
```

### 4.2 Hypothesis 1

We test the *Ethnic Conception hypothesis*, we will conduct a difference in means for the group who received the ethnic and the civic question wording, for all populist items containing a reference to *the people* – see code chunk below.

```
source(here::here("src/lib/functions.R"))

df %>%
  mutate(ethnic == if_else(populist=="Volk", "Ethnic", "Civic")) %>%
  select(`POST-2`, `POST-3`, `POST-4`, ethnic) %>%
  gather(key = variable, value = value, -ethnic) %>%
  group_by(ethnic, variable) %>%
  summarise(value = list(value)) %>%
  spread(ethnic, value) %>%
```

```
group_by(variable) %>%
mutate(p_value = t.test(unlist(Ethnic), unlist(Civic))$p.value,
       t_value = t.test(unlist(Ethnic), unlist(Civic))$statistic)
```

### 4.3 Hypothesis 2a

We test the *Exclusive National Identity hypothesis* using the equation and the code chunk below. The coefficient of  $\beta_1$  denotes the difference in populist attitude for civic and ethnic conceptions of the people. The coefficient of  $\beta_2$  denotes the difference in populist attitude for different levels of national identity. The coefficient of  $\beta_3$  is the interaction of the  $\beta_1$  and  $\beta_2$ . If the Average Marginal Effect of  $\beta_1$  is positive and statistically significant for higher values of  $\beta_2$  (i.e. stronger national identity), then H2a will be confirmed.

$$\hat{Y}_{item} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Ethnic} + \beta_2 \text{National Identity} + \beta_3 \text{Ethnic} * \text{National Identity} + \beta_4 \text{Unbalanced Covariates} + \varepsilon$$

```
source(here::here("src/lib/functions.R"))

df <- d %>%
  mutate(ethnic == if_else(populist=="Volk", "Ethnic", "Civic")) %>%
  select(`POST-2`, ethnic, HT4)
h2a_1 <- lm(`POST-2` ~ ethnic * HT4,
           data = df)

df <- d %>%
  mutate(ethnic == if_else(populist=="Volk", "Ethnic", "Civic")) %>%
  select(`POST-3`, ethnic, HT4)
h2a_2 <- lm(`POST-3` ~ ethnic * HT4,
           data = df)

df <- d %>%
  mutate(ethnic == if_else(populist=="Volk", "Ethnic", "Civic")) %>%
  select(`POST-4`, ethnic, HT4)
h2a_3 <- lm(`POST-4` ~ ethnic * HT4,
           data = df)
```

### 4.4 Hypothesis 2b

We test the *Far Right Party ID hypothesis* using the equation and the code chunk below. The coefficient of  $\beta_1$  denotes the difference in populist attitude for civic and ethnic conceptions of the people. The coefficient of  $\beta_2$  denotes the difference in populist attitude for whether or not a respondent has voted for a far right party. The coefficient of  $\beta_3$  is the interaction of the  $\beta_1$  and  $\beta_2$ . If the Average Marginal Effect of  $\beta_1$  is positive and statistically significant for higher values of  $\beta_2 = 1$  (i.e. voted for a radical right party), then H2b will be confirmed.

$$\hat{Y}_{item} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Ethnic} + \beta_2 \text{Far Right Party ID} + \beta_3 \text{Ethnic} * \text{Far Right Party ID} + \beta_4 \text{Unbalanced Covariates} + \varepsilon$$

```
source(here::here("src/lib/functions.R"))

df <- d %>%
  mutate(afd_vote == if_else(`D6-3`==1, 1, 0),
         ethnic == if_else(populist=="Volk", "Ethnic", "Civic")) %>%
```



```

    select(`POST-2`, ethnic, afd_vote)
h2a_1 <- lm(`POST-2` ~ ethnic * afd_vote,
           data = df)

df <- d %>%
  mutate(afd_vote == if_else(`D6-3`==1, 1, 0),
         ethnic == if_else(populist=="Volk", "Ethnic", "Civic")) %>%
  select(`POST-3`, ethnic, afd_vote)
h2a_2 <- lm(`POST-3` ~ ethnic * afd_vote,
           data = df)

df <- d %>%
  mutate(afd_vote == if_else(`D6-3`==1, 1, 0),
         ethnic == if_else(populist=="Volk", "Ethnic", "Civic")) %>%
  select(`POST-4`, ethnic, afd_vote)
h2a_3 <- lm(`POST-4` ~ ethnic * afd_vote,
           data = df)

```

## 4.5 Statistical Significance

All the hypotheses are directional, and therefore all of the tests will be one-tailed. We will use an  $\alpha$ -value of 0.05 as the value for statistical significance in all models above.

## References

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