The (In)effectiveness of Populist Rhetoric: A Conjoint Experiment of Campaign Messaging[*]

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Abstract

Is populism electorally effective and, if so, why? While scholars agree that populism is a complex communication construct that combines anti-pluralist, people-centric, and moralist rhetoric with various political stances, it is unclear to what extent its appeal among voters is based on each of these components or their combination. Since populist rhetoric is always combined with other ideologies, it is also hard to separate the effects of populism from the hosting ideology. To address these questions, we conduct a novel conjoint experiment to determine which parts of populist communication and related policy messaging are most effective for candidate choice. Our US survey asks respondents to evaluate pairs of realistic campaign messages with varying populism-related characteristics given by hypothetical primary candidates. Although party-congruent policy positions are expectedly much more popular, we find that none of the rhetorical elements of populist speech have had an independent or a combined effect on candidate choice. We conclude by discussing the implications of our findings for understanding the role of populist rhetoric in politics and its apparent (in)effectiveness.

Keywords: Populism, Campaign Rhetoric, Conjoint Experiment, Vote Choice

Introduction

Over the past two decades, populist parties and candidates have been gaining increasing electoral support across the world. Existing interdisciplinary literature agrees that populist rhetoric is a complex communication construct with such necessary features as people-centrism, anti-pluralism, and moralism which can be combined with any political ideology or policy stance (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2018; Wuttke et al., 2020; Dai and Kustov, 2022). But is populist rhetoric actually effective compared to various non-populist alternatives and, if so, why? As of now, it is still unclear whether and to what extent the populist appeal among voters is based on each of these various components or their particular combination.

To determine which parts of populist communication and related policy messaging are most effective for candidate choice, we conduct a novel conjoint survey experiment. In particular, we ask our respondents from a nationally diverse US online survey (MTurk, N = 1004/8032) to evaluate four pairs of realistic campaign messages by hypothetical primary candidates for their party in the next U.S. House of Representatives elections. The campaign messages (paraphrased from real-world campaign ads) have been randomized to include the necessary components of populist rhetoric (people-centrism, anti-pluralism, and moralism), common economic and immigration-related policy stances and relevant candidate characteristics (profession, office experience). In line with the populism literature, our general expectation has been a positive interaction effect between various components of populist rhetoric so that they are especially effective when combined together. We have also expected that populist rhetoric might be especially effective among those voters who hold populist attitudes.

Overall, although party-congruent policy positions are expectedly much more popular among the respondents, we find that none of the rhetorical elements of populist speech have had an independent or a combined effect on candidate choice. As one may expect, Democratic respondents are much more likely to select candidates with

pro-immigration and liberal economic positions while Republican respondents are more likely to select candidates with anti-immigration and conservative economic positions. None of the rhetorical combinations, however, have made any difference for any respondents, including those who hold populist attitudes themselves. We conclude by discussing the implications of these findings for understanding the role of populist rhetoric in politics and its apparent (in)effectiveness.

Populist Rhetoric and Its Effectiveness

Although populism is still a contested concept, many scholars across disciplines have increasingly adopted a minimum "ideational" definition of populism over the past decade. According to such ideational definition, populism is primarily a set of ideas depicting society as divided into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups–the "good" people and the "corrupt" elites–and emphasizing that politics should reflect the general will of the people (Mudde, 2004; Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2018; Hawkins et al., 2018). Unlike classical ideologies such as socialism or nationalism, populism lacks programmatic content and cannot be considered a full belief system (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2018). It can thus be combined with a wide range of ideologies from across the left-right spectrum. When combined with nationalism, for instance, a more right-wing version of populism can target the country's immigrants, ethnic minorities, or the elites who side with these minorities as "the enemy of the people." At the same time, when combined with socialism, a more left-wing version of populism can instead portray the economic elites as the main culprit of society's problems.

As populist parties from the left and right have gained significant voter support worldwide in the past decades, scholars have exerted much effort in explaining the reasons behind the electoral success of populist parties and candidates. To that end, scholars have investigated various individual attitudes, such as dissatisfaction with

representative democracy, and structural factors, such as financial and immigration crises, that might fuel the demand for populism (Bakker et al., 2016; Assche et al., 2019; Akkerman et al., 2013; Huber and Ruth, 2017). However, since populism is always attached to other ideologies in practice, it has been difficult to disentangle its independent effects in observational studies.

For example, personal opposition to immigration is often found to predict support for right-wing populist parties, and lower socioeconomic status is often found to predict support for left-wing populist parties (Štětka et al., 2021). But these findings alone cannot say whether the electoral gains of populist parties have been accrued due to their related policy positions, populist rhetoric, or the combination of the two. In other words, it is unclear whether using populist rhetoric would benefit political parties more than using non-populist rhetoric for the same policy position, and whether the effect of populist rhetoric is conditional on the policy positions it is attached to.

The two recent studies that have managed to separate populist frames ("thin populism") from the policy positions of populist parties ("hosting ideology") in conjoint experiments find that policy positions, in and of themselves, have much larger effects on respondents' vote choice than populism (Neuner and Wratil, 2020; Silva et al., 2022). However, we still lack empirical evidence on the interaction between the various components of populist rhetoric and their hosting ideologies. Building on this new strand of experimental research, in this paper we seek to further disentangle the effect of populism from the hosting ideology or particular policy positions, as well as explicitly test the possible interaction effect between the two. Besides the difficulty of separating populism from the hosting ideology in studying its effects, another complication concerns the multi-dimensional nature of populism. In particular, one may wonder whether and to what extent the potential electoral benefits of using populist rhetoric are due to a particular combination of some or all of its features.

When defining or measuring populism, scholars now agree that it is comprised of at least several necessary and sufficient conditions and that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Wuttke et al., 2020; Dai and Kustov, 2022). Parties or voters can only be considered "populist" if they express or hold all of the core component ideas of populism including people-centrism, anti-pluralism, anti-elitism, and moralism (Wuttke et al., 2020; Hawkins et al., 2018). However, when one considers real-world political campaigns, the presence of all dimensions is much less common than the various combinations of two dimensions (Engesser et al., 2017). Similarly, only the most politically sophisticated voters hold consistent populist or anti-populist ideology (Spruyt et al., 2021). In other words, it is possible that it might be beneficial for political parties and candidates to only utilize or emphasize certain combinations of populism's main components.

Several recent experimental studies have investigated the effects of these components of populism on voter support and mobilization. Some scholars find that the morally charged anti-elitist rhetoric is the most appealing aspect of populist candidacies, especially to those who are low in agreeableness (Silva et al., 2022; Bakker et al., 2021; Bos et al., 2020). At the same time, other scholars find that people-centrism is the most appealing aspect among the core components of populism (Neuner and Wratil, 2020). However, it is still unclear whether each of these components can be more effective with the presence of other components, or whether the combination of all these components together is the most beneficial.

Data and Methods

To test the effectiveness of populist rhetoric and its various components vis-a-́vis its non-populist alternatives, in April 2022 we administered a nationally diverse US online survey experiment on Amazon MTurk (N = 1004) with a number of quality controls

recommended in the literature (Kennedy et al., 2020). While the U.S. political system offers much less opportunity for organized populist parties compared to countries with proportional representation, it still provides ample opportunities for populist candidacies (Lee, 2019). Although populism is not a stable or consistent feature among the main parties in the U.S., populist campaigns have been common among political candidates across all parties in the U.S. (Bonikowski and Gidron, 2016; Dai and Kustov, 2022). Therefore, the U.S. case arguably provides a good opportunity to create realistic candidate profiles with a combination of various populist rhetorical components and policy positions in a single experiment.

The survey, which was fielded as a part of the broader omnibus study, first presented our respondents with a conjoint task vignette and four pairs of candidate choice, and, following a few unrelated questions, asked about their demographic characteristics and populist attitudes. Our conjoint experiment asked our respondents to choose their preferred candidate from four realistic U.S. House primary candidate profile pairs for their party with randomized attributes (so that each respondent in turn selects 4 out of 8 distinct candidates).[1] In line with similar probability-based samples, 36% of our respondents identified as Republicans and 58% as Democrats (including leaners). At the same time, 56% of our respondents could be categorized as displaying populist attitudes (by at least weakly endorsing all three of populism's rhetorical components).

Compared to previous conjoint experiments on the topic that introduce populism in a form of candidate's listed policy priorities (Neuner and Wratil, 2022; Silva et al., 2022), our study embeds populist rhetoric in a form of candidate's campaign message features. Since the idea of populism as a thin ideology implies that it itself lacks specific policy content, our approach constitutes an important methodological innovation that arguably makes the overall conjoint procedure more realistic. Our approach also enables us to better disentangle the potential electoral effects of populist rhetoric and

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[1]According to our calculations, the resulting effective sample size of 8032 provides an adequate statistical power (0.80) to detect a small effect (AMCE > 0.06) of the target 3-level attributes and their interaction effects at $\alpha = 0.05$ (Schuessler and Freitag, 2020).

its components with various policy content from this content itself.

All candidate attributes were randomly selected from discrete, predefined levels indicating standard candidate characteristics (age, profession, office experience, current polling), as well as the use of populist rhetoric (people-centric, anti-pluralist, moralist, and anti-establishment elements) and policy positions (immigration and economy). The main binary outcome was a forced choice from a given pair of candidate profiles (Hainmueller et al., 2014). The list of all attributes and their possible levels is presented in Table 1 below (for an example of a random conjoint pair, see Figure A4 in Appendix):

Table 1: List of conjoint speech attributes

Background:

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

[Populist features]

Anti-Pluralist (people-centric)	*Pluralist (people-centric)*	*Pluralist (non-people-centric)*
• I believe we, the people, share the same values and interests. • This campaign is not about me, it is about the American people. • I believe the government is to respond to the will of the people. • I am running to represent the voice of the American people.	• I will make sure to listen to all the different voices of the people. • I am running to defend all our rights, no matter our differences. • I will serve everyone in America regardless of their convictions. • I am running to represent our diverse American voices.	• I'll do what is best for America even if the people disagree. • I'm running to bring expertise back to politics in Washington. • I'll bring the best people to solve our problems in America. • As your representative, I will make sure to listen to the experts.

Moralist (anti-establishment)	*Non-moralist (anti-establishment)*	*Non-moralist (pro-establishment)*
• But there're bad people in Washington who don't care about Americans. • Sadly, the corrupt Washington elites only listen to special interests. • Sadly, Congress is full of insiders who only care about themselves now. • I'll protect Americans against all evil in Washington.	• I'll fix the mess in Washington for the sake of America. • Unfortunately, the government has created more problems than it has solved. • I believe politicians in Congress talk too much and take too little action. • Sadly, so many in Washington are out of touch with the American people.	• I believe that Washington needs more qualified people like me at the moment. • I believe our government is there to help people, even though it's not easy. • I trust our Congress is mostly full of honest people who care for Americans. • I'll work with all my colleagues in Congress who want what's best for Americans.

[Immigration]

Anti-immigration	*Pro-immigration*
• I strongly believe illegal aliens should be deported. • I believe American immigration laws are too generous. • I'm committed to securing American border at all cost. • I will make sure our immigration laws are enforced.	• I believe there should be a path to citizenship. • I believe our American immigration laws are too cruel. • I'm committed to making our immigration system more open. • I will make sure American immigration laws are humane.

[Economy]

Right: Low tax, low public goods	*Left: High tax, high public goods*
• I believe current tax rates discourage investment and they must be lowered. • I strongly believe America should encourage innovation by cutting taxes. • When I'm in office, we will boost our businesses by lowering taxes. • When I'm in office, we will get Americans off of welfare and back to work.	• I believe the richest 1% percent should pay their fair share of taxes. • I'll increase the current minimum wage to a living American wage. • When I'm in office, we will limit the unfair tax advantages for the rich. • When I'm in office, we will increase our efforts to help the poor in America.

As can be seen, each theoretically-distinct category of rhetorical elements had four distinct manifestations. These rhetorical examples have been selected from real-world political campaigns. Overall, this helped us ensure the relative realism of our experiment despite the fictitious nature of our candidates (for a discussion of the benefits of abstraction in social experiments, see Brutger et al., 2022).

To test our main empirical expectation regarding the effectiveness of populist rhetoric, we follow the conventional empirical approach and estimate average marginal component effects (AMCEs) of various attributes on candidate choice using simple linear regression with robust standard errors clustered by respondent. The AMCE represents the average difference in the probability of being chosen when comparing two different attribute values (e.g., a candidate who worked as a lawyer compared to a candidate who worked as a firefighter) where the average is taken over all other possible attribute combinations. To make sure our results are not driven by our choice of reference categories and to make valid subgroup comparisons, we also provide the estimates of marginal means in addition to AMCEs (Leeper et al., 2020).

To simplify the presentation of our results, in our main specifications we recode pro-immigration and liberal economic stances as party-congruent for those who identify as Democrats and anti-immigration and conservative economic stances as party-congruent for those who identify as Republicans. We also decompose our two complex populist-related conjoint attributes into the four simpler binary variables.

Analysis and results

Our main results are summarized in the Figures below. Figure 1 (left panel) indicates the average marginal component effects of various components of populist rhetoric alongside other factors. Figure 1 (right panel) indicates the average choice probabilities given these factors. Tables A1-3 provide the detailed coefficients for the models in Figures A1-3, and additional models with the hypothesized interaction effects.

Figure 1: Effects of using various features of populist rhetoric and other attributes
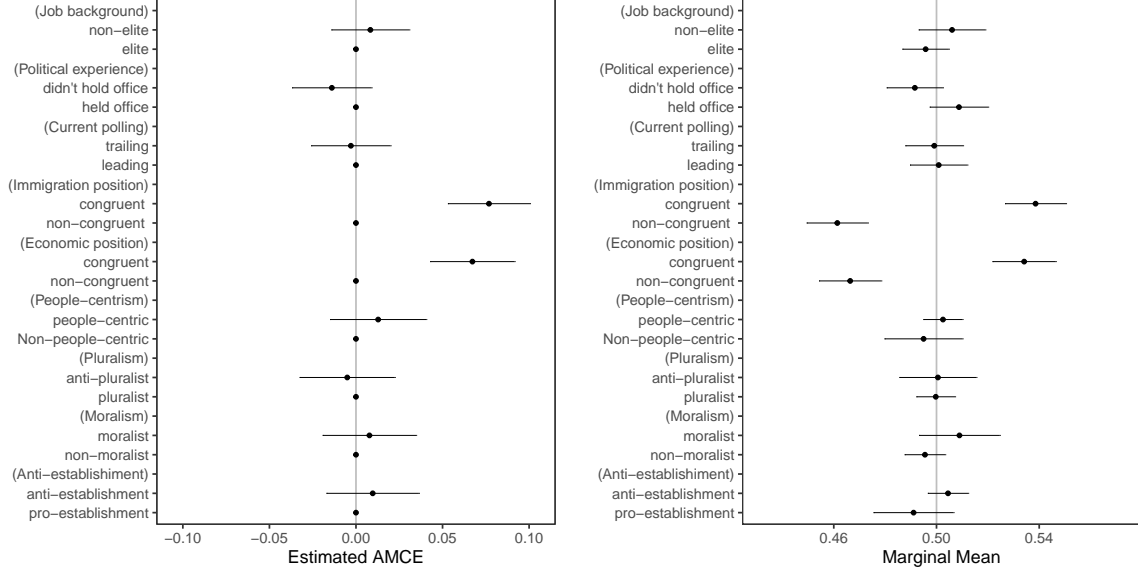
The plot shows the AMCE and marginal mean estimates of the randomly assigned profile and speech attributes on candidates' probability of being selected. Estimates are based on the baseline OLS model of the original MTurk sample. Bars represent 95% CIs. For variable descriptions, see Appendix. Robust standard errors are clustered by respondent.

Overall, as can be clearly seen, populist rhetoric has a consistent null effect on candidate choice. This is true both for each of the components such as people-centricity, anti-pluralism, moralism, or anti-establishment separately, as well as any possible interaction of those. At the same time, the effects of policy stances are both statistically and substantively significant. A candidate with a party-congruent stance on immigration and the economy has a respectively 7-8% higher probability of being chosen. Importantly, this holds true regardless of the use of populist rhetorical elements in their campaign message.

We then test whether the effects of populist rhetoric are more pronounced among certain subgroups of voters such as among those who hold populist attitudes. We measure the respondents' populist attitudes using a set of questions from Akkerman et al. (2013) and Spruyt et al. (2021) adjusted for the U.S. contexts.[2] In line with Wuttke et al. (2020), we define "populists" as only those respondents who at least weakly en-

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[2]For the full list of questions, see Appendix.

dorse all three major components of populism (anti-pluralism, people-centrism, and moralism). As can be seen from Figure 2, however, such people are not statistically more responsive to populist rhetoric.

To further test whether there is an interaction effect between populism and various policy positions, we interact populist rhetoric with the original immigration and economic policy positions in Model 1, Table A2, and interact populist rhetoric with the recoded party congruent positions in Model 2, Table A2. We also report results from models with interaction terms between the components of populism and policy positions in Table A3. We find no interaction effects between populist rhetoric and policy positions (regardless of their operationalization). There are also no interaction effects between any of populism's components and policy positions. All in all, populist rhetoric of any form does not seem to impact the electoral effectiveness or attractiveness of immigration and economic policies.

Figure 2: Effects of using various features of populist rhetoric by populist attitudes
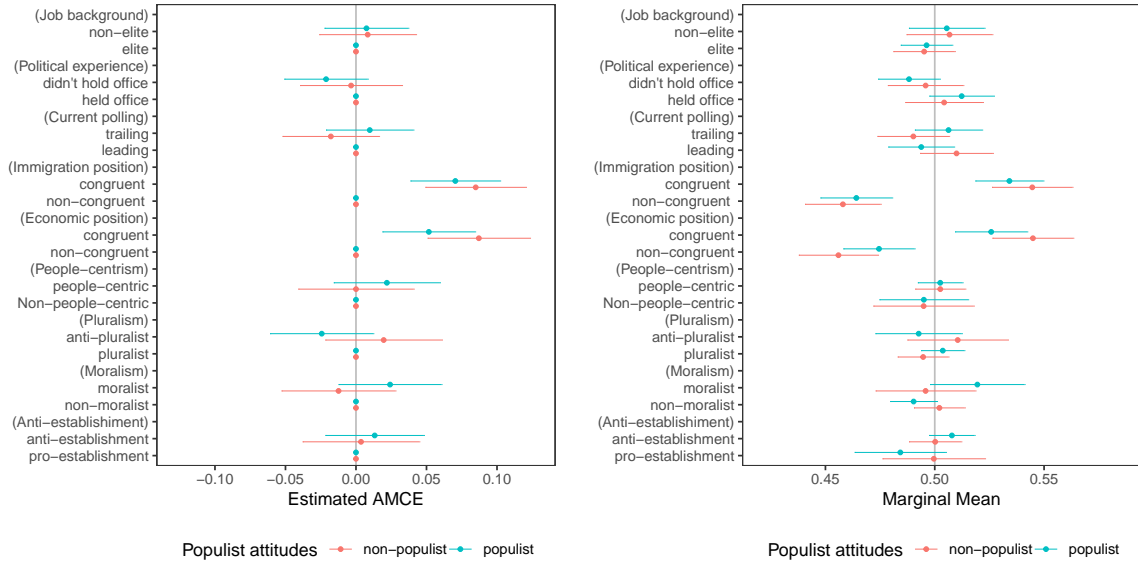
The plot shows the AMCE and marginal mean estimates of the randomly assigned profile and speech attributes on candidates' probability of being selected by respondents' populist attitudes. Estimates are based on the baseline OLS model of the original MTurk sample. Bars represent 95% CIs. For variable descriptions, see Appendix. Robust standard errors are clustered by respondent.

Finally, we conduct a number of additional exploratory and robustness analyses with no change in the underlying substantive conclusions. First, we follow the established practice in the literature and break down our results by partisanship (Figure 3). Overall, there is some indication that Democrats are relatively more sensitive to policy positions vis-a-vis populist rhetoric. Specifically, unlike those who lean Democrat, the choices of Republican respondents appear to be almost equally driven by candidates' economic positions and anti-establishment rhetoric. However, none of these subgroup differences are statistically significant when one accounts for multiple comparisons (not shown). Second, we replicate all our analysis with the original coding of conjoint attributes in Figures A1, A2, A3. Third, we replicate our subgroup analysis in Figure 2 with the stronger, more exclusive definition of populist attitudes in which the respondents have to strongly agree with all six populist items (not shown).
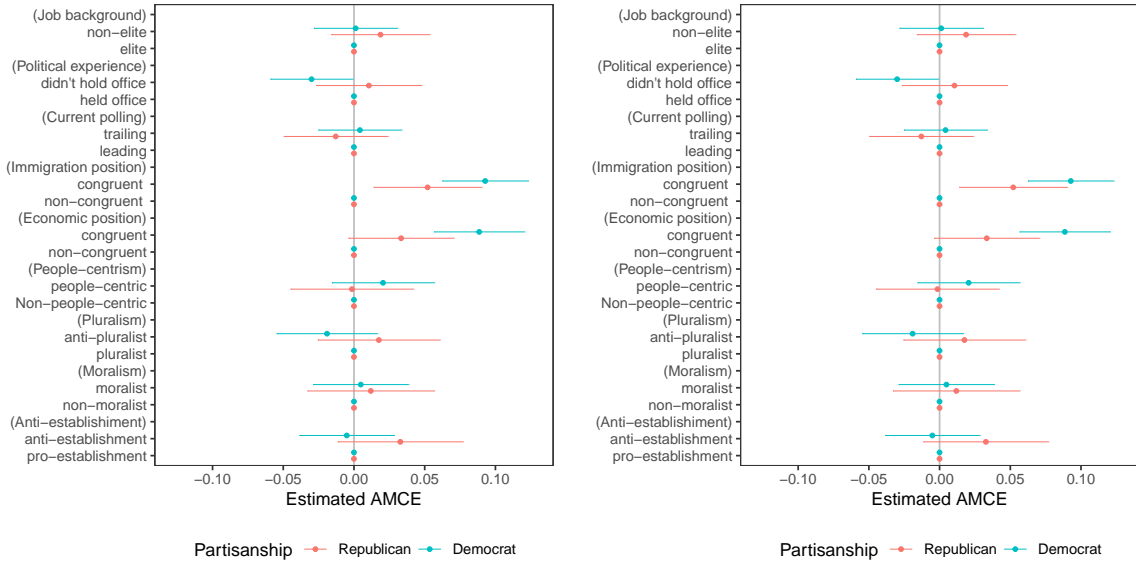
Figure 3: Effects of using various features of populist rhetoric by partisanship

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

Discussion

These findings have important implications for our understanding of the role of populist rhetoric in politics and its apparent (in)effectiveness. Fascinated by the rise of populism over the last several decades, many commentators have attributed its success to a particular rhetorical style that may be appealing to a substantial part of the electorate. Our experimental results suggest that a substantial part of the appeal that populists have may actually lie in their substantive policy positions (which are hard to disentangle in available observational data). In that sense, while some attributed the electoral success of Donald Trump in 2016 to his populist style, it is possible that his appeal was more related to his (rhetorical) moderation on economic issues and the emphasis on immigration issues.

Similar to previous conjoint experiments on populism (Neuner and Wratil, 2022; Silva et al., 2022), we also do not find that populist rhetoric is particularly appealing to those who hold populist attitudes. Importantly, our study was conducted during the Biden administration (while these previous studies were conducted during the Trump administration), which indicates that the null effects hold regardless of whether the incumbents themselves are populist (Jungkunz et al., 2021). In line with previous research on democratic attitudes (Graham and Svolik, 2020), our paper also suggests that congruent substantive policy positions rather than a certain rhetorical or procedural style is the most important factor for vote choice.

Of course, our research is not without limitations. First, our sample is arguably not large enough to detect small three-way interaction effects even when they exist. Second, our results may be potentially driven by the conjoint design choices, including the paired task and/or particular speech examples. While it is important to see further replications of our study, the current results do suggest that populist rhetoric is unlikely to be effective in itself, especially compared to candidate issue positioning. In this respect, future research would benefit from considering larger and/or more targeted samples, as well as other possible conjoint and vignette experimental designs.

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Online Appendix

Survey instrument

Populist attitudes (binary, defined as 1 if and only if respondents on average agree with all three subcomponents of populism)

[How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Strongly disagree; Somewhat disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Somewhat agree; Strongly agree]

Anti-pluralism:

- Ordinary people share the same values and interests

- Ordinary people are of good and honest character

People-centrism:

- The people, not the elites, should make our most important policy decisions

- The politicians need to follow the will of the people

Moralism:

- The government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves

- Quite a few of the people running the government are crooked

Partisanship (binary, include leaners)

[Which of the following categories best describes your political affiliation? Democrat; Republican; Independent; Other]

[Would you say that you are Independent, lean Republican; Independent, do not lean towards either party; Independent, lean Democrat]

Tables and Figures

Figure A1: Effects of using various features of populist rhetoric (original coding)
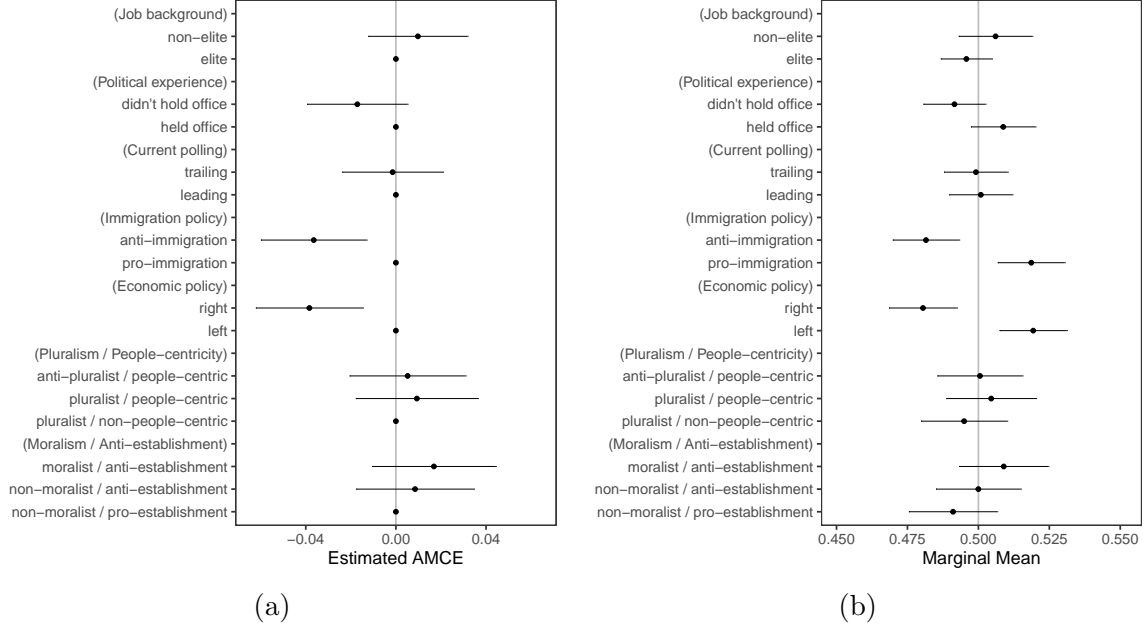
(a)   (b)

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

Figure A2: Effects of using various features of populist rhetoric by populist attitudes (original coding)
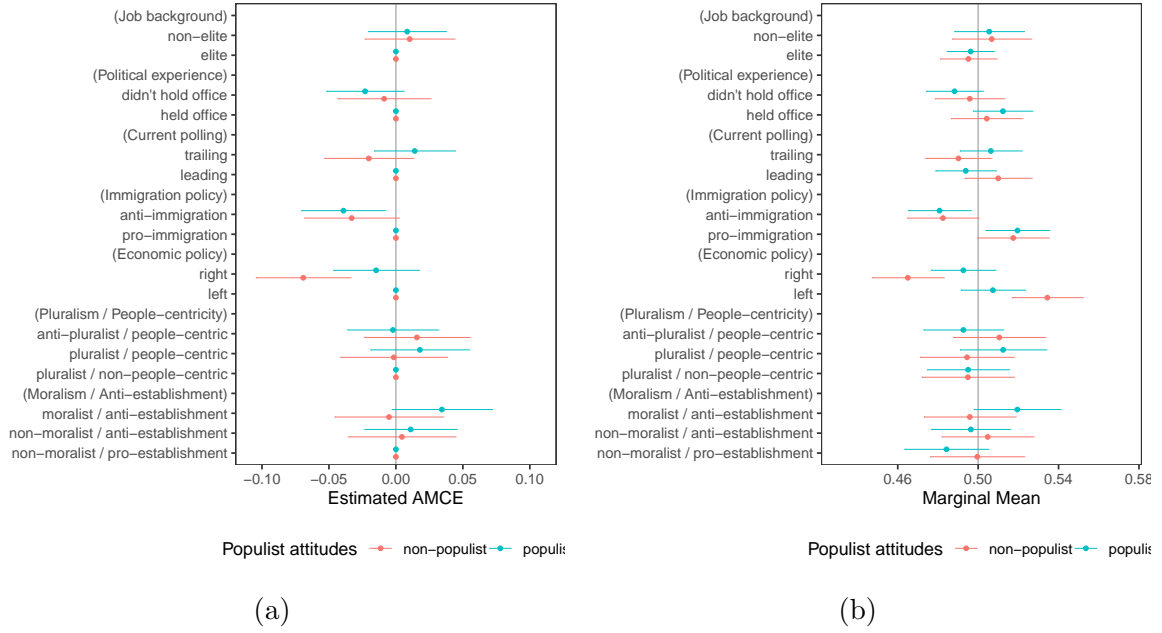
(a)   (b)

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

Figure A3: Effects of using various features of populist rhetoric by partisanship (original coding)

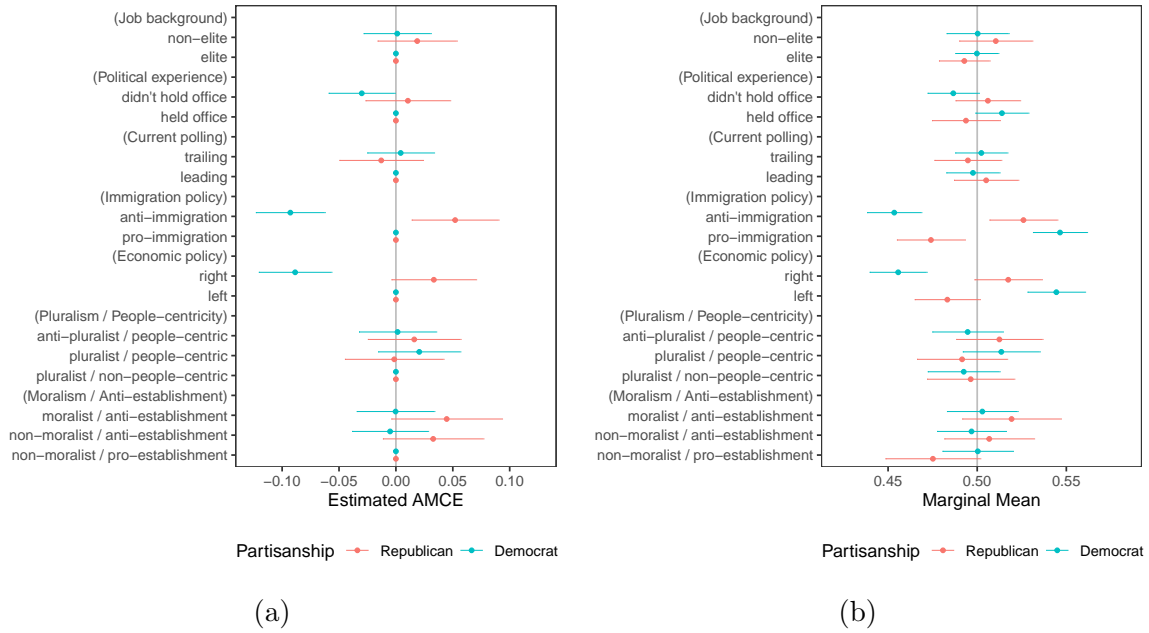(a)   (b)

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

Table A1: Effects of various candidate and speech characteristics on vote choice (original coding)

	Probability of selection			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Job background (non-elite)	0.010	0.010	0.007	0.010
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.011)
Political experience (none)	−0.017	−0.017	−0.012	−0.017
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.011)
Current polling (trailing)	−0.001	−0.002	−0.001	−0.001
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.011)
Immigration policy (anti)	−0.036*	−0.037*	−0.037*	−0.037*
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Economic policy (right)	−0.038*	−0.038*	−0.041**	−0.039*
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.012)
Pluralist / People-centric	0.009	0.012	−0.005	0.002
	(0.014)	(0.024)	(0.031)	(0.029)
Anti-pluralist / People-centric	0.005	0.010	0.017	0.020
	(0.013)	(0.024)	(0.029)	(0.028)
Non-moralist / Anti-establishment	0.009	−0.007	0.016	−0.012
	(0.013)	(0.023)	(0.030)	(0.028)
Moralist / Anti-establishment	0.017	0.039	0.063+	0.017
	(0.014)	(0.023)	(0.031)	(0.028)
Partisanship (Democrat)			0.021	
			(0.024)	
Populist Attitudes (Populist)				−0.015
				(0.022)
Pluralist / People-centric : Non-moralist / Anti-establishment		0.037	0.036	0.037
		(0.034)	(0.035)	(0.034)
Anti-pluralist / People-centric : Non-moralist / Anti-establishment		0.012	0.010	0.012
		(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.033)
Pluralist / People-centric : Moralist / Anti-establishment		−0.044	−0.042	−0.046
		(0.034)	(0.035)	(0.034)
Anti-pluralist / People-centric : Moralist / Anti-establishment		−0.024	−0.016	−0.024
		(0.034)	(0.035)	(0.034)
Pluralist / People-centric : Democrat			0.027	
			(0.029)	
Anti-pluralist / People-centric : Democrat			−0.013	
			(0.027)	
Non-moralist / Anti-establishment : Democrat			−0.034	
			(0.028)	
Moralist / Anti-establishment : Democrat			−0.043	
			(0.030)	
Pluralist / People-centric : Populist				0.019
				(0.028)
Anti-pluralist / People-centric : Populist				−0.019
				(0.026)
Non-moralist / Anti-establishment : Populist				0.009
				(0.027)
Moralist / Anti-establishment : Populist				0.041
				(0.028)
Observations	8,032	8,032	7,616	8,032
Adjusted R²	0.002	0.003	0.002	0.003

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

Table A2: Effects of policy and populist rhetoric on vote choice

	Probability of selection	
	(1)	(2)
Job background (non-elite)	0.010	0.008
	(0.011)	(0.011)
Political experience (none)	−0.017	−0.014
	(0.011)	(0.012)
Current polling (trailing)	−0.001	−0.002
	(0.011)	(0.012)
Immigration policy (anti)	−0.036*	
	(0.013)	
Economic policy (right)	−0.038*	
	(0.013)	
Immigration (congruent)		0.073**
		(0.013)
Economic policy (congruent)		0.072**
		(0.013)
Populist	0.016	0.020
	(0.031)	(0.031)
Immigration policy (anti) : Populist	−0.006	
	(0.035)	
Economic policy (right) : Populist	−0.006	
	(0.036)	
Immigration (congruent) : Populist		0.029
		(0.036)
Economy (congruent) : Populist		−0.040
		(0.036)
Observations	8,032	7,616
Adjusted R^2	0.002	0.010

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

Table A3: Effects of policy and populist characteristics on vote choice

	Probability of selection	
	(1)	(2)
Job background (non-elite)	0.010	0.009
	(0.011)	(0.012)
Political experience (none)	−0.017	−0.014
	(0.011)	(0.012)
Current polling (trailing)	−0.002	−0.002
	(0.011)	(0.012)
Immigration policy (anti)	−0.049	
	(0.025)	
Economic policy (right)	−0.051⁺	
	(0.026)	
Immigration (congruent)		0.087**
		(0.025)
Economic policy (congruent)		0.080*
		(0.026)
Pluralist / People-centric	0.024	0.026
	(0.032)	(0.031)
Anti-pluralist / People-centric	−0.008	0.018
	(0.031)	(0.030)
Non-moralist / Anti-establishment	−0.037	−0.031
	(0.032)	(0.030)
Moralist / Anti-establishment	0.032	0.058
	(0.031)	(0.031)
Pluralist / People-centric : Non-moralist / Anti-establishment	0.040	0.038
	(0.034)	(0.034)
Anti-pluralist / People-centric : Non-moralist / Anti-establishment	0.015	0.021
	(0.033)	(0.034)
Pluralist / People-centric : Moralist / Anti-establishment	−0.043	−0.037
	(0.034)	(0.035)
Anti-pluralist / People-centric : Moralist / Anti-establishment	−0.023	−0.008
	(0.034)	(0.035)
Immigration policy (anti) : Pluralist / People-centric	0.013	
	(0.027)	
Immigration policy (anti) : Anti-pluralist / People-centric	0.043	
	(0.027)	
Immigration policy (anti) : Non-moralist / Anti-establishment	0.006	
	(0.027)	
Immigration policy (anti) : Moralist / Anti-establishment	−0.025	
	(0.028)	
Economic policy (right) : Pluralist / People-centric	−0.041	
	(0.028)	
Economic policy (right) : Anti-pluralist / People-centric	−0.010	
	(0.027)	
Economic policy (right) : Non-moralist / Anti-establishment	0.051	
	(0.028)	
Economic policy (right) : Moralist / Anti-establishment	0.038	
	(0.028)	
Immigration (congruent) : Pluralist / People-centric		−0.005
		(0.028)
Immigration (congruent) : Anti-pluralist / People-centric		−0.017
		(0.027)
Immigration (congruent) : Non-moralist / Anti-establishment		−0.003
		(0.028)
Immigration (congruent) : Moralist / Anti-establishment		−0.005
		(0.028)
Economy (congruent) : Pluralist / People-centric		−0.024
		(0.029)
Economy (congruent) : Anti-pluralist / People-centric		−0.013
		(0.027)
Economy (congruent) : Non-moralist / Anti-establishment		0.047
		(0.028)
Economy (congruent) : Moralist / Anti-establishment		−0.047
		(0.029)
Observations	8,032	7,616
Adjusted R²	0.003	0.011

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

Figure A4: Example of a random conjoint task

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

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

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

○ Candidate A

○ Candidate B

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