Varieties of Populist Attitudes and Their Link to Islamophobia in Switzerland

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to show whether distinct varieties of populist attitudes emerge within a society, and how they relate to citizens' Islamophobic attitudes. The study is based on a representative survey conducted in Switzerland in 2019. We used latent class analysis and multinomial regression analyses to identify latent subgroups, yielding five classes of populist attitudes: *Direct democracy devotees, individuals with populist tendencies, moderate populists, radical anti-elite populists* and *radical-universal populists*. Compared with the *direct democracy devotees* class, members of the *moderate* and the *radical-universal populists* classes are significantly more likely to hold anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant attitudes and to be politically right-wing, while *radical anti-elite populists* are not associated with either anti-Muslim attitudes or a right-wing ideology.

Keywords: populist attitudes, anti-Islam attitudes, anti-Muslim attitudes, latent class analysis, survey research, Switzerland

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Populism is probably the most widely used political buzzword of the past decade and has, in the meantime, become a synonym for the profound changes in the political landscape of Western democracies. It is therefore not surprising that the phenomenon has become a frequent subject of scientific studies. Although not easy to define, there is by now a broad scholarly consensus that populism is a multidimensional concept consisting of the three subdimensions: people-centrism, anti-elitism, and anti-pluralism (see Castanho Silva et al., 2019). Initially, the research on populism strongly concentrated on the "political supply side"—that is, on political actors and their communicative strategies or ideological traits (e.g., De Vreese et al., 2018), or on populism in the mass media (e.g., Ernst et al., 2018). However, studies that examine populism from the "political demand side" and focus on populist attitudes in the population recently experienced a major upswing.

In this respect, various contributions have addressed the question of how to appropriately measure populist attitudes (e.g., Akkerman et al., 2014; Hameleers & de Vreese, 2020; Schulz et al., 2017; Van Hauwaert et al., 2020; Wettstein et al., 2019). However, few of these studies take into account that—as Schulz et al. (2017, p. 317) aptly put it—there could be "varieties of populist attitudes" in society, not only in terms of their general intensity, but also in the sense that the different dimensions of populist attitudes can find varying degrees of support within certain groups of people (but see Bartle et al., 2020). In other words, previous research has not provided conclusive information on the extent to which populist attitudes are uniform or not and how, if at all, different varieties of populism are distributed within a society.

Nevertheless, the aforementioned research provides an important framework for studies that address the specific characteristics of people holding populist attitudes. Various contributions, for example, have shown that *the populist citizen* is by no means homogeneous

(Rovira Kaltwasser & Van Hauwaert, 2020), including studies on their sociodemographic characteristics and political attitudes (e.g., Bernhard & Hänggli, 2018; Rico & Anduiza, 2019), their vote choice (e.g., Marcos-Marne, 2020; Van Hauwaert & Van Kessel, 2018) and support for referenda (e.g., Jacobs et al., 2018; Rovira Kaltwasser & Van Hauwaert, 2020), as well as studies on their personality traits and psychological dispositions (e.g., Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016; Fatke, 2019), their media preferences (e.g., Hameleers et al., 2017; Schulz, 2019) and anti-media attitudes (Schulz et al., 2020).

When focusing on attitudinal covariates, a closer look at the manifestations of contemporary populism shows that the politicization of Islam has become a specific and recurring pattern of mobilization, especially among the populist radical right (Betz, 2018; Kallis, 2018). However, while the phenomenon of Islamophobic populism has been analyzed, for example, in the communication of political actors (e.g., Betz, 2007, 2013; Kallis, 2018), the oft-mentioned link between populism and Islamophobia has, so far, not been empirically investigated, and notably not at the attitude level. Going beyond the previous research, the aim of the present contribution is thus (1) to reveal whether distinct varieties of populist attitudes prevail within a society, and (2) to examine how varieties of populist attitudes relate to the Islamophobic attitudes of citizens while controlling for other attitudinal and sociodemographic characteristics.

On the basis of observed variables like survey responses, data-driven techniques such as latent class analysis (LCA) allow for an unbiased estimation of a population's potential underlying subgroups (Muthén & Asparouhov, 2006)—in our case the identification of clusters with individuals who are more strongly associated with some specific aspects of populist attitudes and less so with others. In order to answer our research questions, we build a latent class model based on survey data from Switzerland.

Swiss survey data provide an excellent opportunity to study populist attitudes and their connection to Islamophobia for two reasons. First, in Switzerland's concordantly structured system, the right-wing populist Swiss People's Party (SVP) not only participates in government but is also the country's strongest party, against which liberal, middle, and left-wing parties must assert themselves. This implies that there are sufficient populist attitudes in this sample to detect a *variety* of attitudes at all.[1] Second, the Swiss sample offers an excellent starting point for investigating the connection between populist attitudes and Islamophobia: In Switzerland's unique popular plebiscite system, several Islamophobic initiatives or referenda have already been successful, which were launched or at least backed by (substantive parts of) the right-wing, populist SVP but ultimately supported by a much broader section of the population than just their core electorate.[2] While populism is in principle detached from a predefined ideology (Mudde 2004) and populist citizens can thus have any political or ideological orientation, their ideology is likely to be shaped by the supply side (e.g., Wettstein et al., 2019). Thus, Switzerland with only one significant source of populist party communication provides an optimal setting to examine the extent to which populist attitudes tend to coincide with other "populist supply" political positions.

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study comparing the prevalence of Islamophobic attitudes across latent subgroups of Swiss residents distinguished by different types of populist proclivities. In addition, it is the first to investigate different manifestations of populist attitudes by applying LCA. Hence, this article fills a research gap and analyzes the relationship between specific populist attitudes and negative attitudes toward Islam and Muslims on the micro-level of individual voters, thereby making a differentiated contribution to the literature of "populist citizens" (as cited in Rovira Kaltwasser & Van Hauwaert, 2020).

Literature Review

Research on Populist Attitudes

One of the most broadly shared definitions—that of Mudde (2004, p. 543)—perceives populism as a "thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus the 'corrupt elite,'" arguing that politics is nothing but "an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people." In addition to the emphasis on the people–elite antagonism, populism thus implies an unconditional advocacy of direct popular sovereignty that is as "untainted" as possible by the principles of representativeness. While populism is defined as thin-centered (i.e., not a full ideology), it can become a thick-centered ideology when it is combined with more complete ideologies, such as nativism in exclusionary right-wing populism or socialism in more inclusionary left-wing populism (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013).

Against the background of the current scientific focus on researching populist attitudes, several studies show that populist proclivities are widespread in society (see Rovira Kaltwasser & Van Hauwaert, 2020). In recent years, numerous scales for measuring populist attitudes in society have been introduced and refined (e.g., Akkerman et al., 2014; Hameleers & de Vreese, 2020; Schulz et al., 2017). Other important contributions have focused on comparing or assessing the performance of existing populist attitudinal scales (e.g., Castanho Silva et al., 2019; Van Hauwaert et al., 2020; Wettstein et al., 2019; Wuttke et al., 2020). As these studies show, populism is widely understood as a multidimensional concept that consists of three subcomponents: people-centrism, anti-elitism, and anti-pluralism (see Castanho Silva et al., 2019). However, there is some discrepancy on the exact designation and content of these components. The well-established scale of Akkerman and colleagues (2014, p. 1331) specifies the three core features of populist attitudes as "sovereignty of the people," "opposition to the elite," and a Manichaean division between "good" and "evil." It consists of six items, and its one-dimensionality as well as its distinction from elitist and pluralist ideologies is demonstrated by means of a principal component analysis.

A more recent aim to catch the essence of populist attitudes is the three-dimensional scale of populist attitudes by Schulz et al. (2017), who, closely following the definition of Mudde (2004), extracted the following three dimensions: (1) *anti-elitism*, with elites seen as corrupt, betraying, and deceiving the people; (2) the *belief in unrestricted popular sovereignty* that leaves the power to the people, meaning that “the people” should rule because—in contrast to the elites—they have common sense and are inherently good; and (3) an understanding of *the people as being virtuous and homogenous*. According to Schulz et al. (2017, p. 318), the third dimension is indispensable for a thorough inventory of thin-centred populism (also see Marzouki & McDonnell, 2016), as it encloses the idea of an inherently good, unified, and inseparable people who share the same values and interests. It clearly distinguishes the scale from the one of Akkerman et al. (2014), whose conception focuses on the Manichaean distinction between the good people and the bad elites instead. By explicitly characterizing the people as “virtuous” and emphasizing homogeneity, Schulz and colleagues open up the friend–enemy antagonism and imply that all elements that do not belong to this homogeneous entity are, in principle, to be considered bad (or worse) and potentially dangerous for the people. Because they leave open the particular embodiment of the people’s “evil” antipole, their scale allows more peculiarities of populist attitudes to be grasped.

In addition, their measuring instrument differentiates between support for each of the individual dimensions, as they only use items that exclusively tap into a dimension without reference to any of the other dimensions. This is especially crucial if one intends to examine the respective intensity of the individual attitudes’ dimensions with regard to different varieties of a populist mindset. In contrast, the Akkerman et al. scale (2014) assesses all dimensions simultaneously, as it contains single items that refer to two or three dimensions at the same time. The consequence of forming an additive index with all questions is that higher values in one dimension can compensate for lower values in another, so that an individual

may have very low or no agreement on one of the aspects but still achieve a relatively high level of populism (see Castanho Silva et al., 2019). As Wuttke et al. (2020) point out, this is rather problematic, as many populism researchers (including Castanho Silva et al., 2018; Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016; and many more) emphasize that—in theory—populism at the mass level should explicitly be seen as an attitudinal *syndrome* defined by the simultaneous presence of the constituent components of the concept. This implies non-substitutable subdimensions. The Schulz et al. (2017) scale, on the other hand, rightly presumes that the presence of all dimensions is necessary to consider someone as populist, and that only the correlation between the three dimensions fully constitutes the concept (see Castanho Silva et al., 2019).

Populism and Islamophobia

When specifically focusing on the relationship between Islamophobic and populist attitudes, one must first take a step back from attitudinal research and look at the general populist logic: As described above, at the center of populism lies the naturally decent, pure people, who are deprived by the dishonest elites of their rightful sovereignty (Mudde, 2004; Taggart, 2000). As a distinct feature of right-wing populism, however, the people are often also confronted by the "dangerous others," who do not "fit" (or who reject) the category of the pure people and thus threaten the idealized people in their inherent homogeneity and purity (e.g., Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). The concept of nativism as a constituting feature of right-wing populism proclaims that "states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group and that nonnative (alien) people and values are perceived as threatening to the nation state" (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013, p. 168). It manifests itself in the conceptual exclusion of the "others," who, in Western democracies, are usually embodied by immigrants. In consequence, populism from the right calls for a restriction of immigration, a

deportation of all criminal immigrants, and—especially if combined with nativism—a strict policy of assimilation (in contrast to multiculturalism).

In the course of the challenges posed by the integration of Muslim immigrants into Western Europe's liberal capitalist democracies (Betz, 2013, p. 72), the main "others" are almost always Muslims, who take on "the role of the transnational, demonic, and existentially threatening 'other' to the Western 'we'" (Kallis, 2018, p. 55; Marzouki & McDonnell, 2016). In other words, Islamophobic stances are a specific—if not the dominant—variant of the exclusion of "others" in contemporary Western right-wing populism. We assume this, of course, to be the nature of the link between Islamophobic and populist attitudes: The stronger an individual's belief in the homogeneity of the people, the more strongly he or she perceives this homogeneousness to be threatened by the "othered" Muslims.

As discussed by Kallis (2018), Islamophobic proclivities were, until the beginning of the 1980s, merely a current within the general populist anti-immigration stances. However, over the following years, and especially after the turn of the millennium and in the wake of the events of 9/11, *Islamophobic populism* became a central element of radical right-wing populist mobilization efforts, shifting the perception of threat from an ethnonational to an ethnoreligious basis (e.g., Betz, 2007, 2013; Kallis, 2018; Oztig et al., 2020).

Although not yet systematically studied at the level of attitudes, the phenomenon has often been described in the communications of populist political actors (e.g., Betz, 2007, 2013; Kallis, 2018; Marzouki & McDonnell, 2016; Oztig et al., 2020). Islamophobic populism refers to a native (usually Christian) collectivity "invaded" by Muslims who have a "secret plan for the Islamization" of the Western world. These Muslims are allegedly supported by liberal elites—promoters of multiculturalism and political correctness—who have encouraged or at least turned a blind eye on Muslim immigration and place the rights of minorities above those of the people (Betz, 2013, 2018; Marzouki & McDonnell, 2016). In

recent years, the focus of right-wing populism has shifted away from preventing immigration to the issue of the successful integration (i.e., assimilation) of migrants already in the host country (Betz, 2007, 2018). In this context, right-wing populists largely deny the Muslims' willingness and ability to integrate because Islam is seen as fundamentally incompatible with Western values. Behind the right-wing populist stance of successful "integration before immigration" is the view that new immigrants are even less able to integrate than those of the first generation, because they can connect and merge with already existing immigrant communities. Mosques, often used as community centers, are seen as a driving force for culturally segregated societies within the host country, and it is assumed that by building them, Muslim countries are trying to further expand Islam, which would pose a fundamental threat to liberal Western societies (2007). Consequently, Islamophobic populism often advocates the restrictions of religious rights for Muslims, like a ban on the construction of mosques or on publicly worn headscarves and veils, because this allegedly threatens the purity and identity of the native community (e.g., Marzouki & McDonnell, 2016; Oztig et al., 2020).

While these studies show that Islamophobia and populism are linked to each other in political communication, no such research has been done to our knowledge at the attitudinal level. However, before we focus on how attitudes toward Muslims and Islam are related to populist proclivities, we need to discuss in brief what "Islamophobic" attitudes are. We draw on the following definition by Bleich (2011, p. 1582), who perceives Islamophobia as "indiscriminate negative attitudes (or emotions) directed at Islam or Muslims." This definition contains three aspects that are central for our study's purpose: First, Islamophobia is about attitudes (or emotions), and thus can clearly be distinguished from action and behavior, which are a direct consequence rather than a central aspect of Islamophobia. Second, these attitudes must be indiscriminately directed at Islam and Muslims, with people

making generalizations about a religion or believers based on certain traits that can be at best attributed to a minority of the many interpretations of Islam or its followers (e.g., that Islam is inherently violent, or that Muslims are fundamentalists or even terrorists). And third, these attitudes are directed very specifically toward Islam or Muslims, not just an outgroup in general (e.g., immigrants, as in the case of xenophobia). Thus, the target is either a specific religious doctrine or the people who follow this specific religious doctrine. This last aspect furthermore allows a distinction to be made between "general" and "more specific" Islamophobia (as, in the latter, a specific group of individuals/people is involved). As recent research emphasizes, prejudices against Muslim groups and Islam do not necessarily go hand in hand (e.g., Adelman & Verkuyten, 2019; Helbling & Traunmüller, 2018). Accordingly, we distinguish in our study between two different attitude objects, namely more general attitudes toward Islam as a religion and, second, toward Muslims living in the same country.

Data, Operationalization, and Method

Data

Our empirical analysis relies on a representative online survey among the Swiss resident population conducted in spring 2019 by the professional Swiss survey institute DemoSCOPE (11.03.2019–08.04.2019). After excluding Muslims (n = 9), who were seriously underrepresented in the sample, we obtained a sample of 967 respondents representing the German- and French-speaking populations of Switzerland, which were selected by using quotas for age (between 15 and 74 years, with an average of 45.9 years), gender (49.3% male and 50.7% female), and language region.

Measures

Populist attitudes. For measuring populist attitudes, we used 12 items of the scale for populist attitudes developed by Schulz et al. (2017), which has also been validated for Switzerland and successfully tested for cross-national measurement invariance (see Wettstein

et al., 2019). Our study is thus guided by the concept of a populist "syndrome" in which individual dimensions must occur simultaneously to some degree. The scale represents the three essential dimensions for populist attitudes, namely the demand for people's sovereignty, anti-elitism, and the idea of people's homogeneity. Four items can be assigned to each of the respective dimensions. For each item, respondents were asked to which extent they agree with the statements on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 *"totally disagree"* to 5 *"totally agree"* (see Supplementary Appendix for wording and descriptive statistics).[3]

Attitudes toward Islam and Muslims. Relying on studies on Islamophobia and anti-Arab prejudices (e.g., Elchardus & Spruyt, 2014; Kunst et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2009), we examined people's attitudes on two dimensions: Islam in general and Muslims living in Switzerland in particular. In order to obtain variance in the answers, we fell back on a practice frequently used in, for example, the European Social Survey and formed opposite pairs of statements on different aspects of Islam and Muslims, such as culture, values, gender equality, and security. On a scale from 0 (e.g., "Women are respected in Islam") to 10 (e.g., "Women are oppressed in Islam"), respondents could indicate which statement more closely corresponded to their opinion (see supplementary Table A2 for wording and descriptive statistics). We then compiled the items into two indices, one including four items and representing respondents' negative attitudes toward Islam in general (M = 5.8, SD = 2.2, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.76$) and a second one including three items representing negative attitudes toward Muslims living in Switzerland (M = 5.1, SD = 2.3, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.78$).

Control variables. In addition, several variables are included as covariates in the multinomial regression analyses. We controlled for basic *sociodemographic variables*, such as the respondent's gender, age, and education (mandatory school being classified as "low," advanced training as "medium," and tertiary education as "high"), as well as their *political interest*, measured from 1 *"hardly interested"* to 5 *"very interested."* More than half the

respondents (53.2%) were very or quite interested in politics, while 13.8% had little or no political interest (M = 3.6, SD = 1.0). *Political ideology* was measured by a single item, which asked respondents to place themselves on a left–right scale ranging from 0 *"left"* to 10 *"right"*. Of our participants, 46% positioned themselves as left of the center and 35% as right of the center (M = 4.7, SD = 2.3). Moreover, we took into account the *right to vote* in the Swiss direct-democratic system, as this may influence the extent and nature of populist attitudes, especially with respect to the dimension of popular sovereignty. The proportion of voters was 89.8%, while 9.5% of the respondents did not have the opportunity to participate in Swiss politics. Lastly, we controlled for *attitudes toward immigration*. Using the same approach as for the anti-Islam and anti-Muslim items, the respective items asked whether immigration undermines (or enriches) cultural life in Switzerland, whether it costs more than it contributes to the public weal, and whether it should be more (or less) restricted. Based on the mean score of these three items, an overall index for anti-immigration attitudes was built (M = 4.7, SD = 2.2, Cronbach's α = 0.82).

Method

We relied on LCA to identify "underlying unobserved categorial variable[s] that divide[s] a population into mutually exclusive and exhaustive latent classes" (Lanza & Rhoades, 2013, p. 159).[4] In other words, LCA assigns individual cases to their most likely latent subgroups, which form the categories of the categorical latent variables. The number of categories represent the number of latent classes in a sample (Vermunt & Magidson, 2004). We estimated the model parameters using maximum likelihood estimation (ML) via the EM algorithm and the three-step methods as proposed by Bakk and Vermunt (2015). The optimal number of classes were identified by running a sequence of latent class models ranging from one to seven classes and evaluating each model based on information-heuristic comparisons of relative fit, such as the Bayesian information criterion (BIC; Schwarz, 1978) and the

sample-size-adjusted Bayesian information criterion (SABIC; Sclove, 1987). In addition, we considered the content-oriented interpretability of the seven estimated latent class solutions (Lubke & Muthén 2005; for further details, see Methodological Appendix). To explore the belonging to a specific class in more detail, attitudinal and sociodemographic variables were entered as covariates into our latent class model. For a better interpretation of the classes regarding the relationship between populist attitudes and Islamophobia, we considered both the differences between each class and the reference class as well as the differences between *all* classes in relevant paired comparisons (see Supplementary Appendix).

Results

Varieties of Populist Attitudes

As shown in Table 1, the fit evaluation criteria do not clearly indicate the most appropriate solution. The lowest values relative to the other latent class models are exhibited by the BIC for the three-class solution (26007.62) and the SABIC for the six-class solution (25266.52). We therefore identified those models for which the difference to the theoretically optimal model is as small as possible when considering all criteria simultaneously and evaluate all generated models according to their interpretability. Guided by this rationale, we selected the five-class model, whose parameter estimates represented a solution with the most logical and substantial interpretability (for further details, see Methodological Appendix).

[Table 1 about here]

For the first class (N = 163; 20.2%), it is striking that—with a quite high probability of at least 79%—group members tend to rather or completely *dis*agree with any of the homogeneity items (Figure 1). On the other hand, they are moderately likely to *agree* with criticism of the elites (on average a probability 44% in the “partly” to “totally” range; see Figure 2). With an average of 64%, agreement is even more pronounced for items related to the promotion of direct democratic procedures. However, since the idea of the people’s

homogeneity is virtually absent in the respondents' minds, and they thus do not support each of the attitudinal dimensions at least to some degree, this class cannot really be considered populist. Instead, members of this subgroup are labeled as *direct democracy devotees*.

The second class (N = 189, 23.4%) is characterized by a moderate to high probability of either partly, rather, or totally agreeing to any of the populist attitude items, that is, with a probability between 39% and 97%. On all items (except perhaps the one that states that "politicians need to follow the will of the people"), however, the probability of "total" agreement is very low to nonexistent. We therefore label the members of this class as *individuals with populist tendencies*. Thus, while *direct democracy devotees* do not agree with the idea of a homogeneous people and therefore do not show a fully populist syndrome, *individuals with populist tendencies*—even if they rarely *fully* support populist positions—sympathize at least partially with populist ideas within all dimensions.

The third class (N = 226, 33%) has the highest membership, with about one-third of the respondents. It is characterized by a high average probability of agreeing to the items of the Anti-Elite dimension (77%; from "partly" to "totally"). With at least 91%, the four Sovereignty items are most likely to be at least partially approved, followed by the three items criticizing the elites as inactive (87%), aloof (84%), and different (84%) from the people. Beyond that, respondents have an average probability of 66% of acceding to the idea of a homogenous people. Individuals belonging to this class are thus called *moderate populists*.

[Figure 1 about here]

The fourth class (N = 109, 13.5%) is characterized by a comparatively low average probability of partial, inclined, or total agreement to any of the Homogeneity items (54%), whereas the corresponding approval of items promoting the notion of a conspiring elite (94%) and agreement to the Sovereignty-items (97%) is very likely. While the latter appears

to be clearly pronounced in all subgroups, in this class even a *total agreement* to the respective items is very probable. For example, there is an 82% probability of totally agreeing with the item that "the people should have the final say on the most important political issues by voting on them directly in referendums" and an 83% probability of fully supporting the statement that "the politicians in Parliament need to follow the will of the people." Considering that respondents, in comparison, are less intensely attached to the notion of a homogenous people, members of this class are best described as *radical anti-elite populists*.

Finally, the fifth class (N = 80, 9.9%) comprises just under 10% of the respondents and is characterized by a very high probability of partially, rather, or fully agreeing with each of the 12 items assessing populist attitudes. As in the fourth class, those items that express criticism of the elites are approved with a very high average probability of 94%, and items that belong to the Sovereignty dimension are even approved with an extraordinarily high probability of 99% on average. In contrast to the radical *anti-elite populists*, however, the average probability of partially, rather, or completely agreeing to items expressing the idea of a homogeneous people is also remarkably high (97%) among the members of this subgroup. Individuals belonging to this class are thus labeled as *radical-universal populists*.

Thus, the key difference between the two "radical" groups, which together make up almost a quarter of the respondents, is that the *radical universal populists* agree with the positions in all three dimensions, while *radical anti-elite populists*—also with strong support of direct-democratic procedures and accusations against the political establishment—only share the idea of a monolithic people to a limited extent.

[Figure 2 about here]

Characteristics of Latent Classes

As anti-Islam attitudes show no significant variation from the reference class (*direct democracy devotees*), apparently only negative attitudes toward Muslims are associated with a populist mindset. It furthermore emerges that a relationship with anti-Muslim attitudes only applies to certain varieties of populist attitudes. Neither the group of *radical anti-elite populists* (0.1019, $p>0.1$) nor that of *individuals with populist tendencies* (0.0447, $p>0.1$) differ significantly from the reference class in terms of their attitudes toward Muslims (Table 2). However, attitudes toward Muslims are significantly more negative in the classes of both *moderate* and *radical-universal populists*. The odds ($1-e^{(-0.3151)}$, $p<0.001$) are 37% higher for people with negative attitudes toward Muslims to end up in the *radical-universal populists* class (and not in the reference class) than for people with positive attitudes toward Muslims. Likewise, the odds of being a member of the *moderate populists* group is 1.16 times higher for people with negative attitudes toward Muslims than for people with positive attitudes toward Muslims.

Turning to attitudes toward immigration, we see that, compared to members of the reference class, respondents in the classes *moderate populists* and *radical anti-elite populists* are more likely to have higher negative attitudes toward immigration. Again, this effect is even stronger for members of the *radical-universal populists* class. For people with the most negative attitudes toward immigration, the odds of ending up in the *radical-universal populists* class (and not in the *direct democracy devotees* class) is 1.75 times that of people with the most positive attitudes toward immigration.

[Table 2 about here]

Regarding the ideological position, *individuals with populist tendencies*, *moderate populists*, and—to a greater extent—*radical-universal populists* locate themselves significantly more to the right on the political spectrum than members of the *direct democracy devotees* class. However, a pairwise comparison of the classes shows that these

are the only statistically significant differences between all five classes in terms of left–right self-assessment. Compared to men, women are significantly less likely to be in the groups of the *moderate* or *radical (anti-elite* or *universal) populists* than in the *direct democracy devotees* class.

For people with the right to vote, the odds of belonging to the *radical anti-elite populists* and not to the *direct democracy devotees* are only 0.04 times that of respondents without the right to vote in Switzerland (i.e., 96% lower for those with the possibility to participate in the Swiss popular plebiscite system). To a lesser extent, this also applies to the members of the other attitude groups: Swiss citizens with voting rights are significantly more likely to end up in the *direct democracy devotees* class than in the groups of *populist tendencies* and *moderate* or *radical anti-elite populists*. Furthermore, the odds are 91% lower for people with high education to end up in the *radical-universal populists* class (and not in the reference class) than for people with low education. And finally, compared to the *direct democracy devotees*, *individuals with populist tendencies* are significantly less likely to be fairly interested in politics. For people who are "quite" or "very" interested in politics, the odds of ending up in the *populist tendencies* class rather than in the reference group are 0.31 times that of people with only moderate, little, or no interest in political affairs.

Discussion

While Rovira Kaltwasser and van Hauwaert emphasize that focusing on the political demand side allows one to "grasp how many citizens share the populist set of ideas" (2020, p. 2), our approach of using LCA reveals that there is no such thing as *the* populist set of ideas. Rather, the analysis shows that there indeed are *varieties* of populist attitudes and reveals five clearly distinguishable attitude groups in Swiss society. Instead of lumping together all class members as "individuals with populist traits," LCA's differentiation into individual groups shows that, while about 20% of the respondents can be described as clearly unpopulist,

almost a quarter of the respondents reveal populist tendencies. Remarkably, more than every second participant exhibits *moderate* or even *radical* populist attitudes, with the most extreme group in this respect, the *radical-universal populists*, accounting for close to 10% of Swiss society. These radicals may well have been underestimated—as a first limitation of this study—due to the social desirability of answers and the fact that our sample is representative but slightly left-leaning. However, future studies could shed more light on which of the classes identified by our group-level approach count as *populist* by using alternative non-compensatory individual-level approaches in a preceding step (see Wuttke et al., 2020).

Strikingly, the statements that "people like me have no influence on what the government does" and "the people, not the politicians, should make our most important political decisions" find less approval across all classes than the other items assigned to the respective attitude dimensions. Conceivably, these response patterns reflect the peculiarities of Switzerland's political system, which has two specific instruments for direct political influence: The Swiss Sovereign takes the final decision on new laws with the instrument of the referendum, while a federal popular initiative allows citizens to request an amendment to the federal constitution. Consequently, respondents may have less of a feeling that they cannot influence political decisions. Moreover, experience with past popular votes, where controversial initiatives with sometimes far-reaching implications were adopted by a narrow, unqualified popular majority, seems to have dampened the desire to leave very important decisions exclusively to the people. As outlined in the introduction, this focus on Switzerland is an asset for this specific study, but it also means a significant limitation in the interpretation of the results because they cannot be generalized. We thus strongly encourage the study of varieties of populist attitudes in other countries as well as aiming for cross-national comparisons to identify specific contexts that favor these attitudes.

Another potential weakness of this study might be the use of the Schulz et al. (2017) scale, despite our thorough consideration of the options available at the time of study. Their scale is derived from the minimal definition of a thin populist ideology (Mudde 2004), which is very valuable, since it allows the measurement of the nature of populism independent of a specific culture or political context (Wettstein et al., 2019). However, Mudde's definition does not explicitly account for the exclusion of supposed outsider groups in addition to the contempt for elites. As for our second interest in the relationship between anti-Islam/Muslim attitudes and populist stances, a scale like the one of Hameleers and de Vreese (2020), which also covers ostracism of "the others," might have grasped this relationship more precisely. However, we at least partially cover such an exclusionary element through anti-immigration attitudes, whose negative pole is equivalent to three of Hameleers and de Vreese's six exclusionist items.

Our analysis reveals that, while anti-Islam attitudes are not related to populist attitudes, negative attitudes toward Muslims clearly are. Furthermore, the latter are significantly more negative in the classes of both *moderate* and *radical-universal populists*, suggesting that these attitudes are particularly prevalent among populist individuals exhibiting pronounced support for homogeneity. This reflects the idea that the belief in the virtue and homogeneity of one's own people (and thus the construction of an ingroup) is the premise for excluding others who do not fit the criteria of the "pure people" and—if in combination with nativism—should not make up the nation-state. This notion, in turn, is typical of exclusionary right-wing populism (e.g., Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013), which is the one primarily associated with Islamophobia.

A possible explanation for the fact that *radical-universal* and *moderately populist* attitudes are associated with anti-Muslim but not with anti-Islam attitudes could be that, because the actual "way of life" of local Muslims in society is tangible and real, these

Muslims are much more threatening (and more easily excludable) to individuals than Islam as an abstract religious concept. In addition, anti-Islam attitudes are widespread among large segments of the population and not primarily related to ideological positioning. Not only right-wing nationalists pursue an anti-Islam agenda, but also left-wing feminists and (originally antinationalist) neoliberals, both of whom firmly oppose Islam as patriarchal and oppressive of women (Farris, 2017). In this vein, the political left and cultural liberals also tend to be critical of *Islam*, while right-wing and conservative citizens have a much more negative attitude toward (immigrant) *Muslims* (Helbling & Traunmüller, 2018). All in all, our study shows that a distinction between anti-Islam and anti-Muslim attitudes is justified and that the latter is the relevant one when it comes down to the connection between Islamophobia and populist attitudes.

Taking the covariates into account, we can tentatively specify the distinctively populist groups more precisely. The attitude pattern of *radical-universal populists* largely corresponds to Islamophobic populism. Individuals in this group are not only strongly populist, but also clearly positioned to the ideological right and associated with stronger anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim attitudes. Since the latter also predict group membership to a great extent, one can assume that nativist attitudes are at play here. Among *moderate populists*, by contrast, anti-immigration attitudes predict group membership more clearly than anti-Muslim attitudes, suggesting a more generalized exclusionary populism that is not necessarily associated with nativism (and immigrants are accordingly seen as both an economic and cultural threat; see Hameleers & de Vreese, 2020). *Radical anti-elite populists*, for their part, are only slightly exclusionary and not specifically associated with anti-Muslim or right-leaning attitudes. Their strongly populist stance regarding the anti-establishment and sovereignty dimensions could therefore reflect the populism of the radical left. Interestingly, however, a paired comparison of groups shows that they do not differ significantly from the *radical universal populists* in

terms of their ideological position. Yet, it is conceivable that these findings are specific to Switzerland, where only marginal left-wing populism prevails and thus the class of *radical anti-elite populists* has not been sufficiently "filled-up" with strong left-wing individuals. At this point, we may also discuss the extent to which populist attitudes go together with the populist supply's policy positions. Indeed, a correspondence between the right-leaning tendencies of the SVP and those of populist citizens seems to be evident—at least regarding the three groups of *radical* and *moderate populists* (see paired comparisons). However, this supply-demand transition is not as conclusive with respect to anti-Muslim positions: While the two *radical populist* groups hardly differ in this regard, *moderate populists* appear to be significantly less anti-Muslim than *radical universal populists*. Although this tentatively suggests, that not all political positions of a populist source are automatically reflected in populist attitudes, further research in different contexts is clearly needed to confirm these preliminary evidence.

Despite all reservations, our study offers a significant gain in knowledge compared to previous studies. In addition to revealing the extent to which a society is permeated by populist proclivities, it is also, to our knowledge, the first to highlight the many varieties of populist attitudes in a society. Illuminating the facets of populism that are at play in different social groups not only enables a more differentiated understanding of a society's "populist demand" but ultimately a more precise assessment of the potential for social conflict. Finally, this kind of analysis offers an insight into the underlying conflicts that exist in a society with regard to fundamental political issues, such as satisfaction with the performance of the elite and the possibilities of democratic participation, as well as the degree of demarcation and inclusion in a society—the latter being particularly important in connection with the current challenge of Islamophobic populism in Western democracies.

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Footnotes

[1] While populist voters should not be confused with populist citizens, populist attitudes do not only correlate with voting for populist parties (e.g., van Hauwaert & van Kessel, 2018); also, “the populist potential vastly outweighs the populist vote in any society” (Rovira Kaltwasser & van Hauwaert, 2020, p. 4).

[2] For example, the initiative for a nationwide ban on minarets (accepted in November 2009; see Betz, 2013), the cantonal initiative and the cantonal referendum for a ban on veiling in the cantons of Ticino (accepted in September 2013) and St. Gallen (accepted in September 2018), as well as the initiative for the introduction of veiling ban at the national level (accepted in March 2021).

[3] Explanatory factor analysis revealed the expected three-dimensional structure of populist attitudes and all items were significantly related to their respective factors when subjected to confirmatory factor analysis (see Supplementary Appendix).

[4] For latent profile analysis as an alternative analytical approach, see the discussion at

the end of the Methodological Appendix.