



## **Drivers of Populism**

A four-country comparison of party communication  
in the run-up to the 2014 EP elections

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# Research Question

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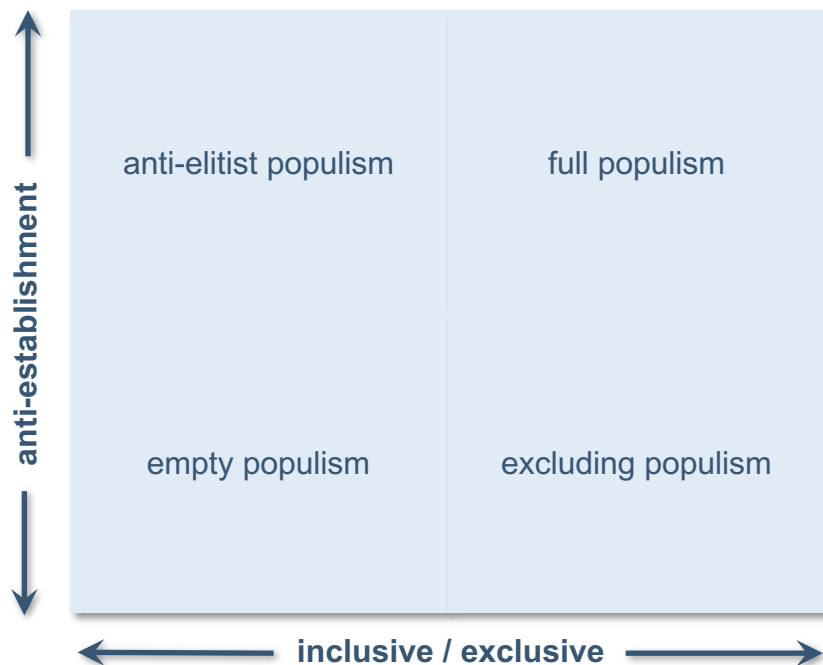
- > What different types of populist communication styles emerged during the 2014 European Parliament elections, and under which conditions did political parties select specific populist communication styles?

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# Definition

- > Populism as a political **communication style**
  - following Jagers & Walgrave (2007)



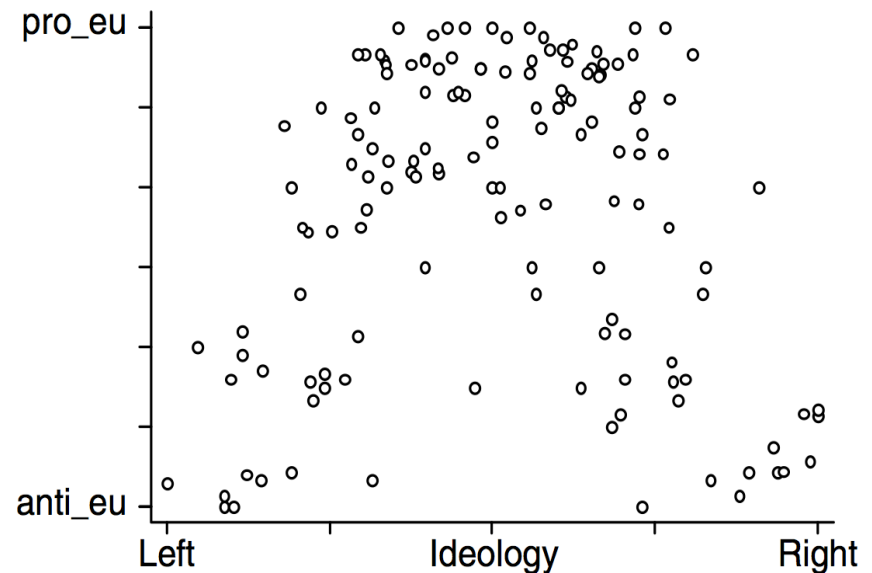
- > 3 components:
  - alleged proximity to and identification with the population  
*appeal to the people*
  - criticism of and distrust in the (political) elites  
*elite-critique*
  - ostracism of 'the others'  
*exclusion*

# European Context

> **Euroscepticism** provides a favourable environment for populism

> activated issues within the Eurosceptic discourse:

- democratic deficit of the EU
- distance citizens – EU-elites
- bureaucracy of institutions
- free movement of persons
- EU accession negotiations



Left-right ideology and EU position in 1999 (EU 15)  
Source: Ray (2007)

# Assumption

## *Euroscepticism*

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H1:

- > Parties settled either on the right or the left pole of the traditional political spectrum use more populist communication styles than mainstream parties.
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# European Context II

	Eurosceptic Left
<i>political dimension</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• democratic deficit of the EU<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ <b>critique of political elites</b></li></ul></li></ul>
<i>economic dimension</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• market-liberal nature of the EU<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ <b>critique of economic elites</b></li></ul></li></ul>

(e.g. Bartolini 2005; Heine 2010; Hooghe et al. 2002;  
Reungoat 2010; Scharpf 1996, 1999)

# European Context II

	Eurosceptic Left		Eurosceptic Right
<i>political dimension</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• democratic deficit of the EU               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>critique of political elites</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<i>political dimension</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• democratic deficit of the EU</li> <li>• bureaucracy and corruption               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>critique of political elites</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<i>economic dimension</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• market-liberal nature of the EU               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>critique of economic elites</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<i>cultural dimension</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• opposition to               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (more) immigration</li> <li>- free movement of persons</li> <li>- prospective enlargement</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ <b>exclusion of others</b></li> </ul>

(e.g. Bartolini 2005; Heine 2010; Hooghe et al. 2002; Reungoat 2010; Scharpf 1996, 1999)

(e.g. Betz 1994; Börzel & Risse 2000; Hooghe et al. 2002; Kitschelt 1995; Risse-Kappen 1996; Taggart 1998)

# Assumption

## *Euroscepticism and Party Ideology*

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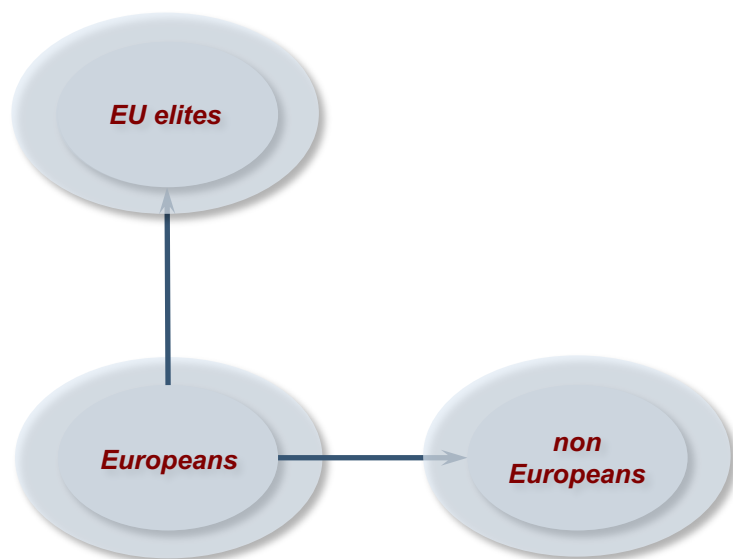
H2:

- > In addition to the classical anti-elitist type of populism, right-wing Eurosceptic parties apply the element of exclusion more visibly (i.e. an exclusive or full type of populism).
-



# European Context III

- > transnational nature of the EU
  - ➔ national and European level
- > question of **identity perception**



- > representation of identity perceptions:
  - inclusive European identity
    - mainstream parties*
    - left-wing parties*
  - exclusive national identity
    - right-wing parties*

# Assumption

## *Party Ideology*

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H3:

- > People references of right-wing Eurosceptic parties are mostly directed to their own national community and their elite critique is predominantly directed at the EU elites.
-

# Assumption

## *Government Participation*

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- > Populist parties **tone down** their messages and become more responsible when presumably or effectively in power.  
(Kriesi & Pappas 2015)
- > governing parties *are* the (national) establishment

H4:

- > Parties in government use less populism in general, and in particular they apply significantly less criticism on the national elites than parties without government participation.
-

# Assumption

## *Affectedness by Crisis*

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- > economic and political crises **reinforce populism**  
(e.g. Knight 1998, Kriesi & Pappas 2015)
- > crisis intensifies feelings of ostracism and **exclusion**  
(e.g. Hartleb 2012)
- > crisis generates **nationalism**  
(e.g. Brubaker 2011)

H5:

- > Parties in countries heavily affected by the sovereign debt crisis use more populism in their party communication.

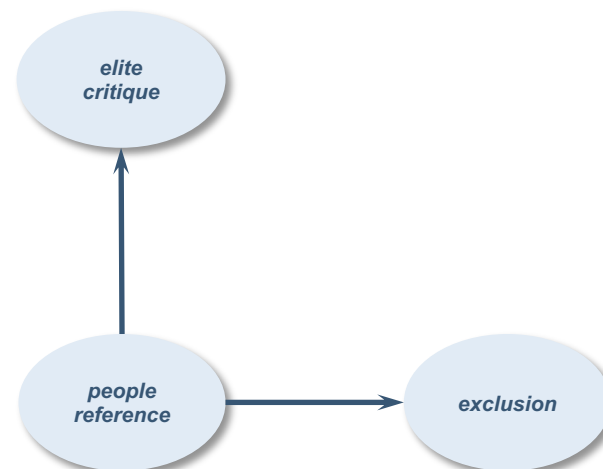
In particular they use the exclusive element more visibly and predominantly appeal to the national community compared to parties that are only mildly affected by the sovereign debt crisis.

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# Procedure

## Austria, Germany, France, Greece

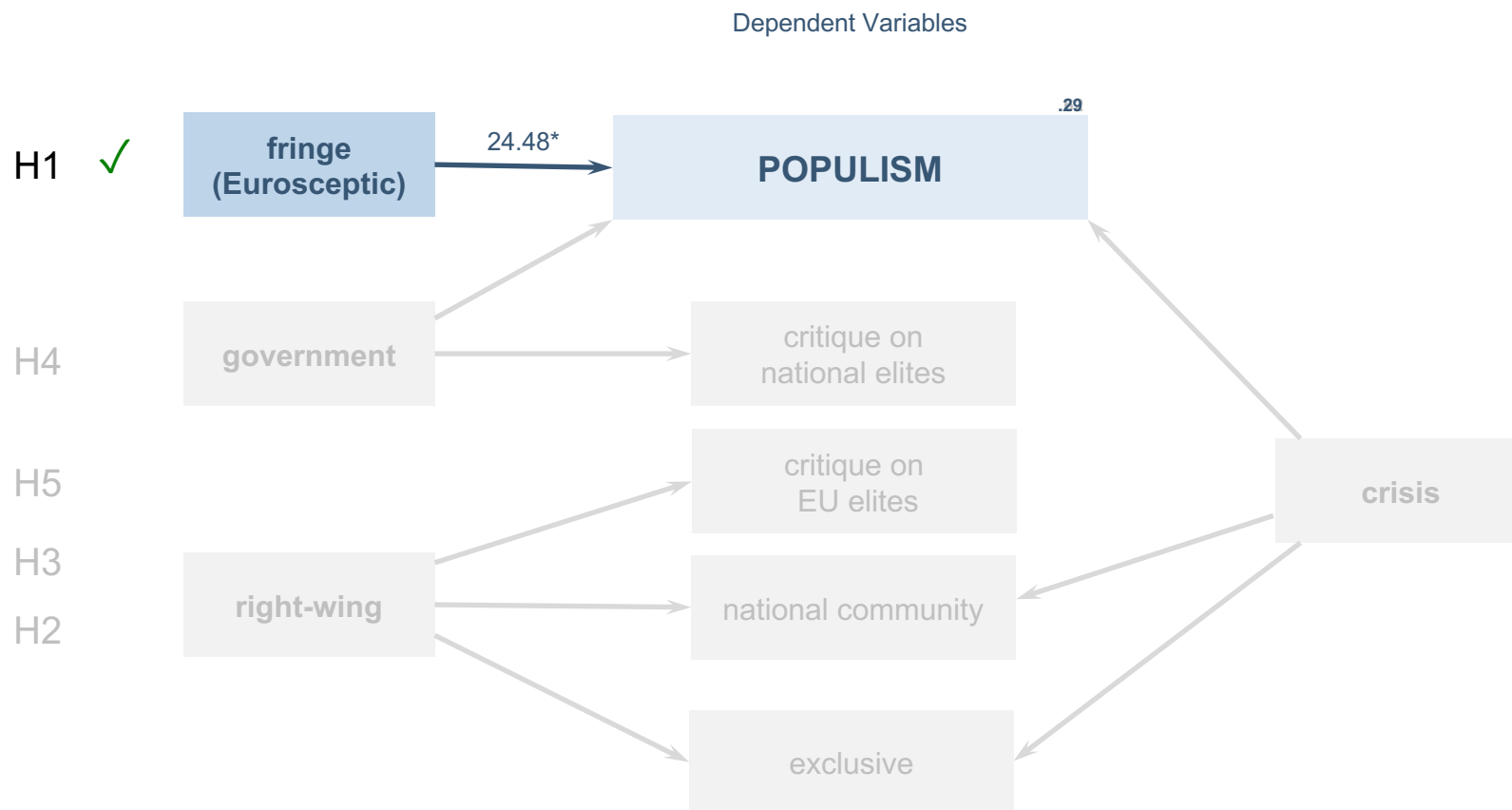
- > quantitative content analysis of press releases
  - all political parties that reached more than 3% in the last elections
  - Europ\* / europ\* / EU and relevant acronyms (2x)
  - 12 weeks prior to the 2014 EP elections
- > 1 Greek, 3 German, 2 French coders
- > indices for degree, type and level of populism for each of the 28 parties
- > linear OLS regressions



Krippendorff's $\alpha$	German	French	Greek
peopref	0.91	0.85	0.93
antiestab	0.76	0.76	0.73
exclusion	0.64	0.84	0.87

# Results

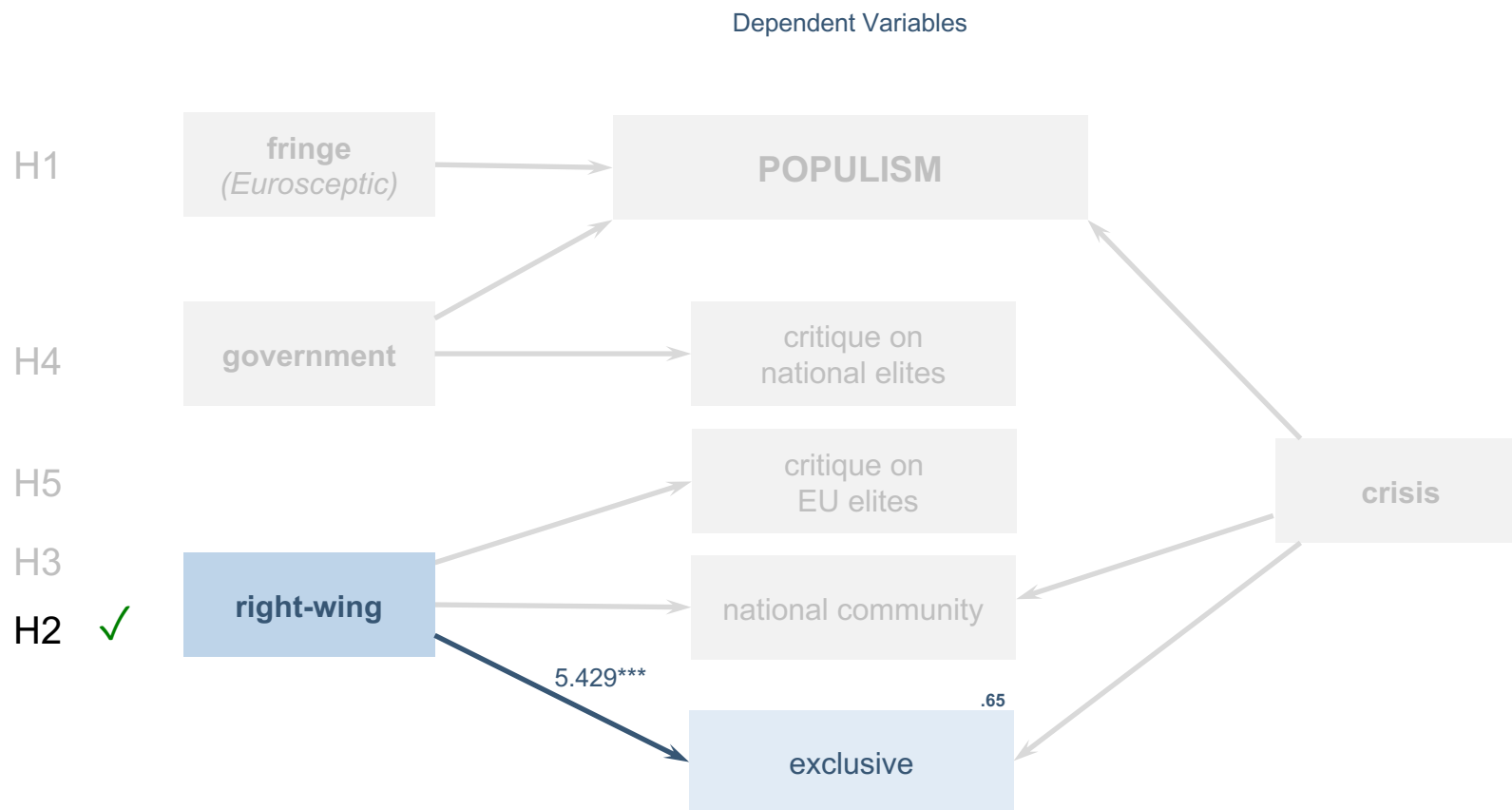
## *Drivers of Populism*



N=28 parties; linear OLS regressions: numbers besides arrows indicate non-standardized regression coefficients; numbers near boxes indicate explained variances; all regressions have high tolerance values (>40) and low values for VIF (<2.5), indicating that severe multicollinearity effects are not present; \* p<0.05; \*\* p<0.01; \*\*\* p<0.001

# Results

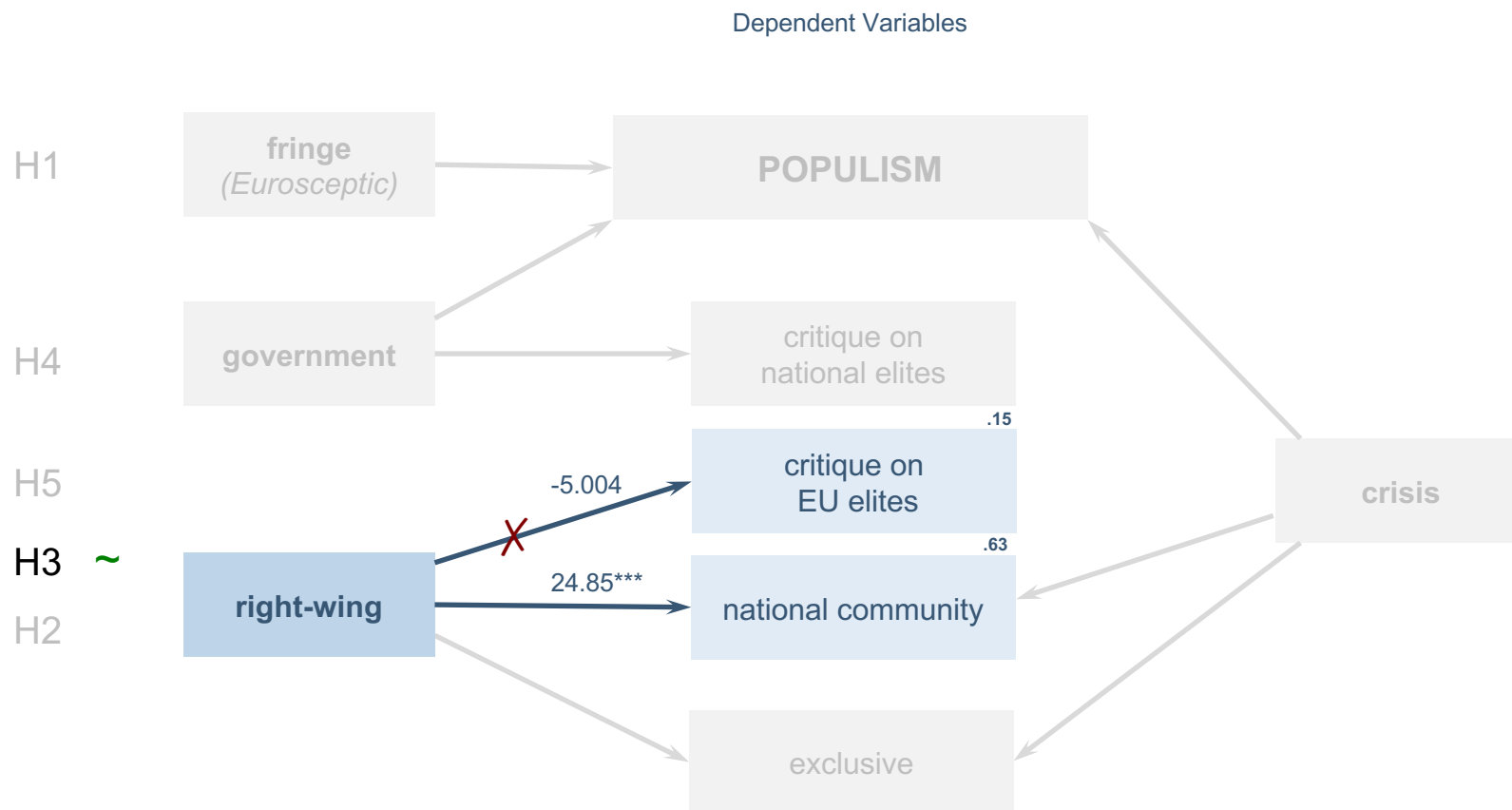
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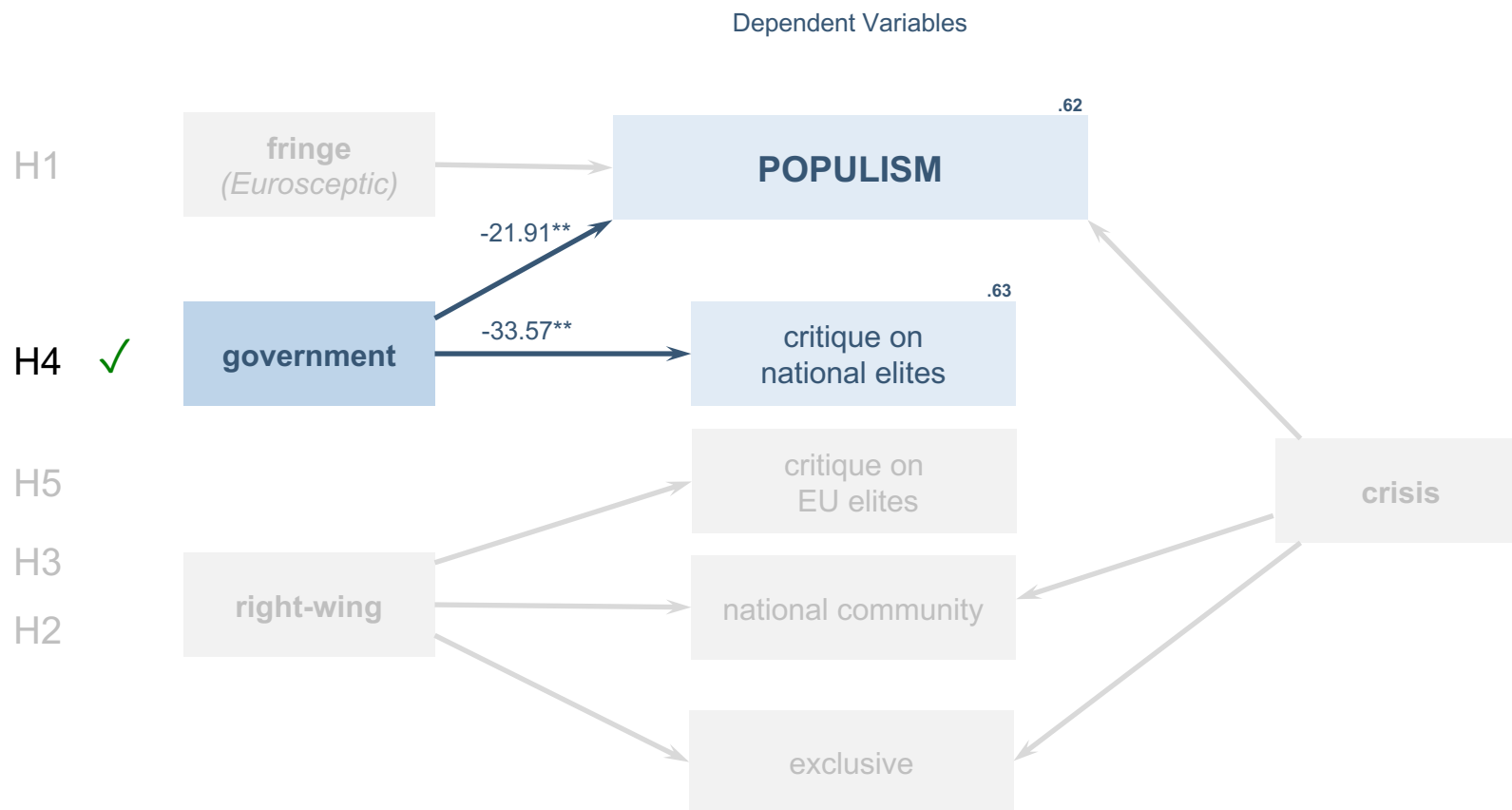


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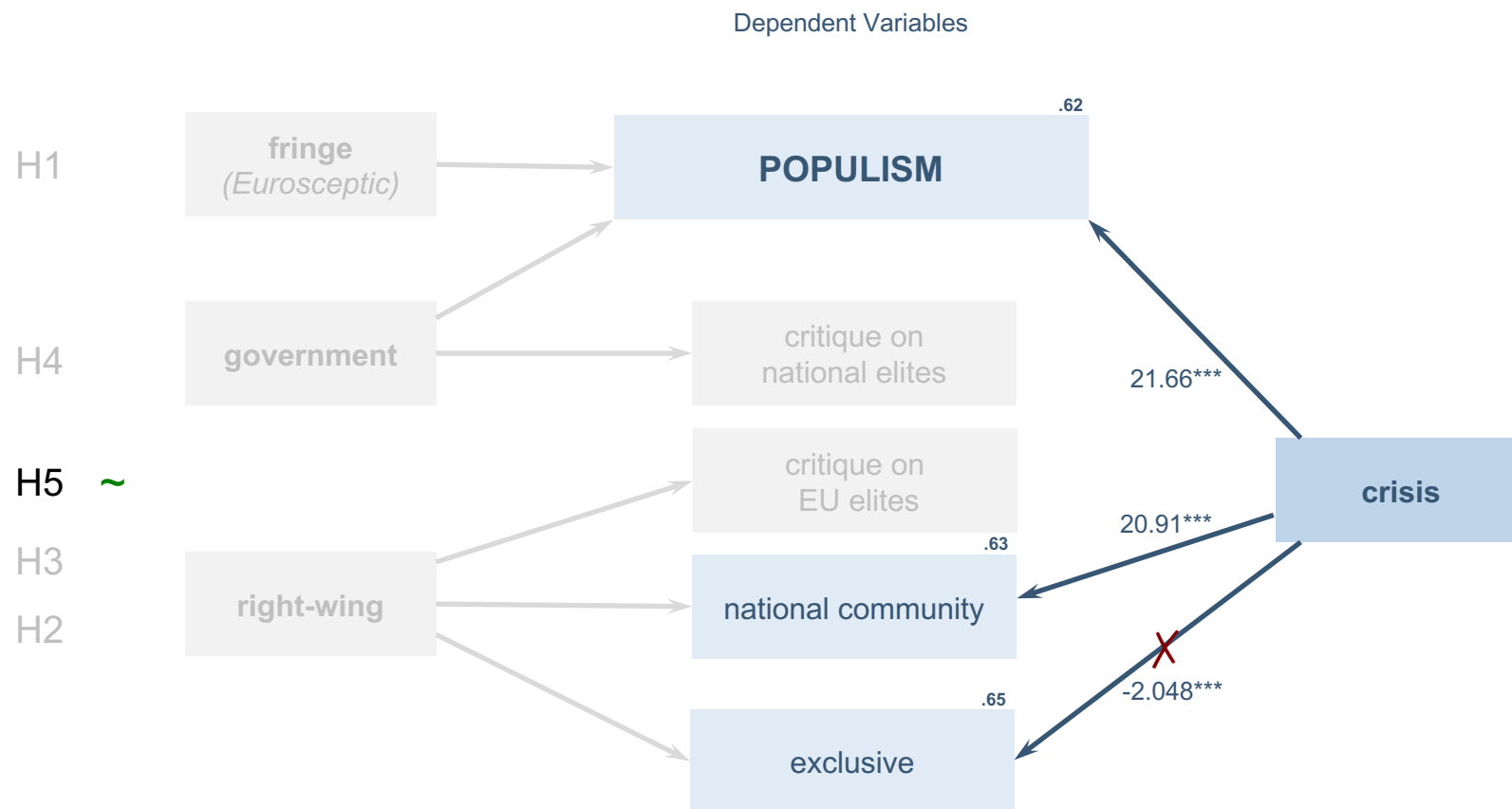
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# Conclusion

- > Right-wing parties use a specific populist communication style:
  - full populism  
(anti-elitist & **excluding** elements)
  - nationally-oriented populism  
(appeals to the **national** community)
- ➔ *Can the success of right-wing populist parties in Europe be explained by their exclusive and national populist communication styles?*
- > The exclusive element in general is applied very rarely...  
... and not used more often within a crisis-ridden environment.
- > Parties in crisis-hit countries have a strong national focus when applying populist communication styles.
- ➔ *How are the parties' populist communication styles reflected by the media?*
- ➔ *What effects have these populist communication styles on vote intention?*

Thank you!

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