

Appendix A

Item measures dependent variables and moderators of study 1

The dependent variable issue agreement was measured on an averaged scale consisting of the following items: (1) our safety is threatened by immigrants; (2) our country's crime rates are increasing due to the government's failing policies on crime; (3) immigrants are mostly responsible for problems related to crime ($M = 4.61$, $SD = 1.48$; Cronbach's alpha = .765). Item measures were based on research on anti-immigration communication in right-wing populist communication (see e.g., Matthes & Schmuck, 2017). Credibility was simply measured with the item: "How credible was the item about crime rates you just read?" ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 1.69$). The measure was based on research measuring the credibility of disinformation (Schaewitz et al., 2020). Populist attitudes were measured with the following items: (1) the ordinary people instead of politicians should make our most important policy decisions; (2) most politicians in government are corrupt; (3) most politicians in government make decisions that harm the common interests of the ordinary people ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 1.47$; Cronbach's alpha = .825). The items were based on earlier studies measuring populist attitudes (e.g., Akkerman et al., 2014; Schulz et al., 2018). Media distrust was measured with the following statements that formed a one-dimensional scale: (1) the media do not offer an accurate worldview; (2) the media are an unreliable source of information and (3) you cannot rely on the media to understand reality ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 1.59$; Cronbach's alpha = .873). Finally, more explicit fake news perceptions were measured with the following statements: (1) The media deliberately try to deceive people; (2) The media are an enemy of the people and (3) The media are responsible for spreading fake news ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.62$; Cronbach's alpha = .876). These items are based on conceptualizations of mis- and disinformation as individual-level attitudes (Hameleers et al., 2022), and studies that explored the affinity between disinformation beliefs and populist perceptions (also see Schulz et al., 2018). In particular, the item measuring beliefs related to the media as an enemy of the people relates to populist disinformation beliefs in which the established press is framed in opposition to the in-group of ordinary citizens.

Appendix B

Item measures dependent variables and moderators of study 2

As central dependent variables, we focus on participants' agreement with the claims made in the storyline and the perceived accuracy/trustworthiness of the news message people were exposed to. Agreement was measured with two items: "I feel that the consequences of climate change could affect me personally" and "I feel that the consequences of climate change affect the global community" ($M = 4.75$, $SD = 1.85$; Cronbach's alpha = .862). Perceived credibility/trustworthiness was measured with the following items: "The message reflects reality", "The message is fake news (reverse-coded)", "The message reflects the reality we are facing", "The message is accurate" and "The message is close to the lives of everyday people" ($M = 4.86$, $SD = 1.51$; Cronbach's alpha = .857). These items were based on prior research measuring the credibility of politicized (dis)information (e.g., Hameleers et al., 2020) and adjusted for the context of this study.

Support for conspiracy beliefs was measured with the following items: "Climate change is made up to finance left-wing agendas", "Global warming is a fictional story that is not based on expert knowledge", "Scientists are paid to spread fake news on climate change" ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.93$; Cronbach's alpha = .938). These items aim to capture denialist attitudes toward climate change and global warming, including the belief that this is a 'fictional narrative' fabricated by hidden forces of power and the elites. Climate change skepticism was measured with the following items: "We can't do anything about climate change, it's just a natural phenomenon" and "Climate change is a left-wing hoax" ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 2.06$; Cronbach's alpha = .867). Conspiracy beliefs and climate change denialism are strongly related in both theoretical and empirical terms. Considering their high correlation ($r = .824$) and a Confirmatory Factor Analysis indicating that model fit increases significantly when both latent scales are merged, we combined both measures as a 'conspiracist climate change denialism' scale ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.89$; Cronbach's alpha = .950). The items used are based on earlier research on conspiracist thinking and climate change denialism (e.g., Miller et al., 2015) as well as research on science-related populism that cultivates distrust in the scientific community (e.g., Mede & Schäfer, 2020).

Mainstream media trust was simply measured with "To what extent do you trust the mainstream media as a source of information" ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 2.05$). Alternative media trust was measured with the item: "And to what extent do you trust alternative online media as a source of information (alternative media can be regarded as all types of (online) media that are not part of the mainstream news supply)" ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.87$). These trust measures were based on earlier research using one-dimensional measures of trust (e.g., Brosius et al., 2021).