

Party Competition in Western Europe

Parties' Identity Appeals

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Last week

We started the bloc on the supply side.

- inquired about the relevance of party behavior to understand political dynamics
- reviewed existing models to understand party behavior
- focused on party interaction regarding political issues with a focus on the environment
- accessed the Manifesto Project to conduct our own studies on supply-side behavior

Survey



Figure: Please fill out the following survey
(https://eui.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2fcaRrSEkF2LVJQ)

Plan for today

- last week, we focused on programmatic appeals
- this week, we zero in on group appeals
- we'll discuss how (whether) they differ from programmatic appeals
- ...and review how we could examine them

Identity Theory

Tajfel and Turner (2004):

- societies are characterized by different levels of inter-group conflict (cf. realistic group conflict) and social stratification
- the stronger the group conflict and stratification in society, the more likely that people develop group identities
- *social identity*: sense of belonging to a social group > for their own self-esteem, individuals will attach positive values to their social group

Self-Categorization Theory

Building on social identity theory, Turner et al. (1987) specified a theory that explains how groups come into play

- core assumptions:
 - individuals have a cognitive understanding of their own selves (yes, plural)
 - situation specific activation of self concept (different environment / different role)
 - relational grouping of oneself vis-à-vis other categories in society
 - three levels of self-concept: (1) human, (2) social, (3) personal

Survey on the readings



Beyond Policy: Social Group Appeals

How does Huber (2022) apply identity and self-categorization theory to the study of parties' group appeals?

Beyond Policy: Social Group Appeals

Huber (2022) tries to understand “how political parties capitalize on group attitudes to mobilize and persuade voters by appealing to different social groups” (1)

She develops a theory of *social group yield*:

- core expectation: citizens have feelings about social groups in society (not only their only one)
- parties can use that: they can send positive and negative messages linked to social groups to gain support from their supporters and the general electorate (cf. De Sio and Weber (2014))

Beyond Policy: Social Group Appeals

- those groups which are liked/disliked among their supporters **and** the general electorate are most likely to be referred to in party communication
- negativity bias: negative appeals are more common

Beyond Policy: Social Group Appeals

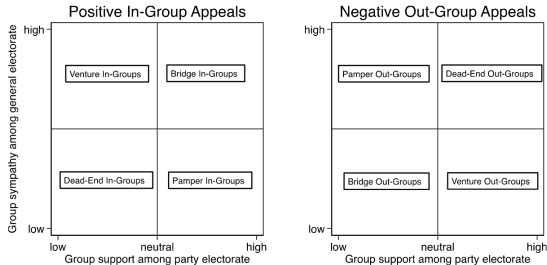


Figure: Four types of groups for strategic party communication (Huber 2022, p. 6)

Question by Julia: Can the backlash be disregarded for bride out-group appeals?

Data & Method

How does Huber (2022) scrutinize her research question?

- case: Austria (2013, 2017, 2019)
- combination of demand- and supply-side data
- demand-side: evaluation of social groups in society (survey conducted in 2019)
- supply-side: coding of party programmes → group emphasis

Findings

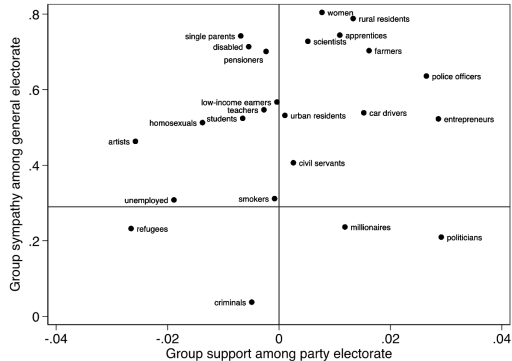


Figure: The group yield of the ÖVP

Findings

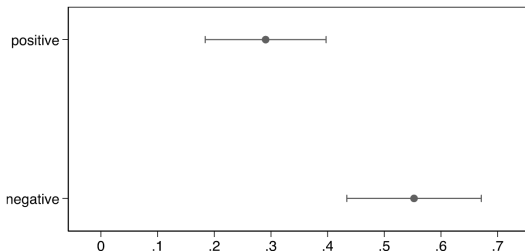


Figure: Group emphasis depending on group yield, by sentiment of appeal

In addition, party-specific effects.

Change my mind

Please form groups of 4. Your goal is to develop an argument against social group yield. Why do you think it does not matter?

Change my mind

- Core assumption: voters actually care about other social groups → you may indicate that you don't like the group but this does not mean that you are responding to group appeal
- Huber (2022) concludes, parties do not use 'their full potential on high yield groups' → but parties may be constrained in their social group appeals if conflicting with policy appeals (e.g. FPÖ and female voters vs. conservative gender policies)
- Parties are in competition to each other; instead of the highest group yield, they need to follow the group yield which distinguishes them from their competitors

Our results

Let's see how our survey turned out...

Wrapping things up

- **Research Question:** How do parties use group appeals to attract voters?
- **Main Argument:** Parties strategically refer to those groups which are simultaneously liked/disliked by their voters and the general electorate
- **Data and Method:** Austrian party programmes and survey data
- **Results:** Voters have different feelings towards groups; parties follow (partly) their voters
- **Implications:** Not only policy matters, parties can also appeal to groups directly

Parties and their politicians

What do Costa and Pereira (2025) add to the study of social groups in politics?

Parties and their politicians

- prior focus on group appeals: simply addressing a group may move voters
- here: representatives of occupational groups can also strategically be selected to justify policy

Argument

Core argument is based on cueing literature

- idea: individual voters are confronted with massive information
- heuristics and cues (such as party labels) help to simplify reality
- occupational groups are simple cues: someone who has worked in a profession may have more competency/expertise to decide on related policy

Which follow-up arguments do Costa and Pereira (2025) derive from this?

Argument

- politicians of a certain occupational group have more legitimacy and need to make fewer compromises
- group cues also affect the supply side

Data and Methods

	Location	Subjects	N	Policy area	Goals
Study 1	Germany	Citizens	2,602	Education	(1) Test H1–H3; (2) Mechanism test: credibility or social status.
Study 2	United States	Citizens	2,000	Healthcare	(1) Test H1–H3; (2) Whether better arguments can substitute for occupational experience (H4).
Study 3	Sweden	Politicians	1,250	Healthcare	Test H1–H3 among politicians; (2) How partisanship moderates occupational background effects

Multi-study design to test the expectations both on the demand and supply side

- variation of the context
- variation of issue area

Findings

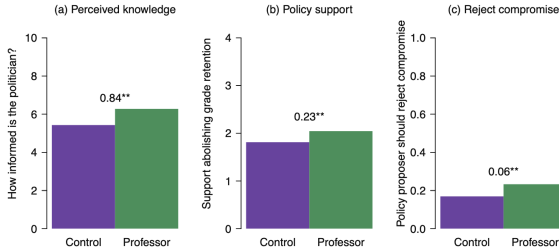


Figure: Group cues and policy competency, support and willingness to compromise in Germany

Question by Christian: Might the observed expert edge just reflect voters' dislike of career politicians instead of a real preference for specialised know-how?

Findings

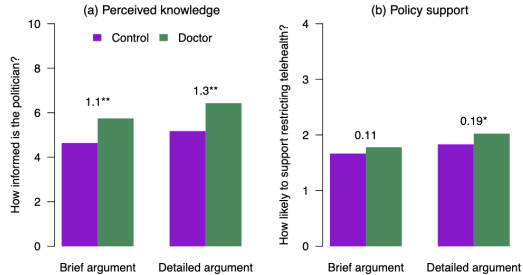


Figure: Type of Argument and Group Cues in the US

- How do they vary argument strength?

Findings

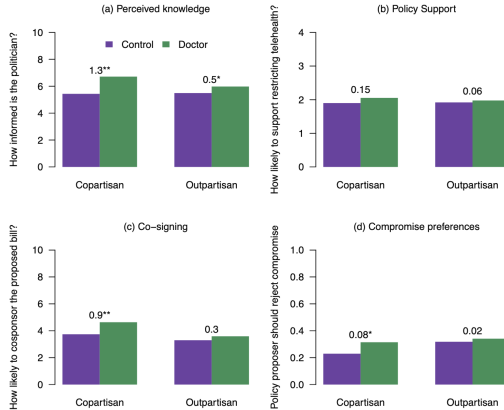


Figure: Effects on the supply side in Sweden

Follow-up research

What are missing parts in the overall story you could imagine to study?

It's a wrap...

- **Research Question:** Does politicians' occupational experience bolster political persuasion?
- **Main Argument:** Occupational background of politicians serves as cue, increasing competency and ultimately leading to higher policy congruence among citizens and politicians
- **Data and Method:** Three survey experiments (Germany, Sweden, US) on different policy issues and target groups
- **Results:** Occupational experience increases perceived competency and, on the demand side, policy agreement
- **Implications:** Expertise can rebuild trust in political decisions; parties can strategically nominate politicians to justify policy

To prepare for next week...

- Next week will be our final session on the supply-side, focusing more on challenger-mainstream interactions.
- **Main reading:**
 - **Vries CE and Hobolt SB (2020)** *Political Entrepreneurs: The Rise of Challenger Parties in Europe*. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press. ISBN: 978-0-691-20654-7
 - **Abou-Chadi T and Krause W (2020)** The Causal Effect of Radical Right Success on Mainstream Parties' Policy Positions: A Regression Discontinuity Approach. *British Journal of Political Science* **50** (3), 829–847. ISSN: 0007-1234. DOI: [10.1017/S0007123418000029](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123418000029)

To prepare for next week...

- **Complementary readings**

- **Benedetto G, Hix S, and Mastrorocco N** (2020) The Rise and Fall of Social Democracy, 1918–2017. *American Political Science Review* **114** (3), 928–939. ISSN: 0003-0554, 1537-5943. DOI: [10.1017/S0003055420000234](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055420000234)
- **Gessler T and Hunger S** (2022) How the Refugee Crisis and Radical Right Parties Shape Party Competition on Immigration. *Political Science Research and Methods* **10**, 524–544. DOI: [10.1017/psrm.2021.64](https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2021.64)
- **Hjorth F and Larsen MV** (2022) When Does Accommodation Work? Electoral Effects of Mainstream Left Position Taking on Immigration. *British Journal of Political Science* **52** (2), 949–957. ISSN: 0007-1234, 1469-2112. DOI: [10.1017/S0007123420000563](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123420000563)

To prepare for next week...

- **Meguid BM (2005)** Competition between Unequals: The Role of Mainstream Party Strategy in Niche Party Success. *American Political Science Review* **99** (03), 347–359. ISSN: 0003-0554. DOI: [10.1017/S0003055405051701](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055405051701)

Thank you for your attention!
Any further questions?

Literature



Abou-Chadi T and Krause W (2020) The Causal Effect of Radical Right Success on Mainstream Parties' Policy Positions: A Regression Discontinuity Approach. *British Journal of Political Science* **50** (3), 829–847.



Benedetto G, Hix S, and Mastrorocco N (2020) The Rise and Fall of Social Democracy, 1918–2017. *American Political Science Review* **114** (3), 928–939.



Costa M and Pereira MM (2025) Why Parties Can Benefit from Promoting Occupational Diversity in Legislatures: Experimental Evidence from Three Countries. *American Journal of Political Science* **n/a** (n/a) ().



De Sio L and Weber T (2014) Issue Yield: A Model of Party Strategy in Multidimensional Space. *American Political Science Review* **108** (4), 870–885.

Literature



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Hjorth F and Larsen MV (2022) When Does Accommodation Work? Electoral Effects of Mainstream Left Position Taking on Immigration. *British Journal of Political Science* **52** (2), 949–957.



Huber LM (2022) Beyond Policy: The Use of Social Group Appeals in Party Communication. *Political Communication* **39** (3), 293–310.



Meguid BM (2005) Competition between Unequals: The Role of Mainstream Party Strategy in Niche Party Success. *American Political Science Review* **99** (03), 347–359.

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Tajfel H and Turner JC (2004) The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior. *Political Psychology*. Ed. by JT Jost and J Sidanius. Psychology Press, 2004, 276–293.



Turner JC et al. (1987) *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory*. Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory. Cambridge, MA, US: Basil Blackwell, 1987, x, 239.



Vries CE and Hobolt SB (2020) *Political Entrepreneurs: The Rise of Challenger Parties in Europe*. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020.