Parties' Group Appeals as Representational Claims

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Introduction

A central tenet of modern politics is that "[D]emocracies, with their vast number of citizens, could not operate without representative institutions" (Shapiro et al., 2010: i). Central among these institutions are political parties, serving the crucial function of linking voters and the government (Katz, 2017). In fulfilling this representative function, parties appeal to voters by making different representational messages in various communication channels. While the most common form of party appeal examined by scholars is policy, a recently growing literature focuses on group appeals, which are substantively distinguished from policy appeals by their content. The latter refers to the part of parties' statements indicating support (or opposition) of some policy (Dolezal et al., 2014; Kriesi et al., 2008). The former refers to the social groups mentioned in parties' appeals (Dolinsky, 2021; Thau, 2019). For example**,** in the UK Conservative Party's 2019 manifesto, the party promised to "extend the entitlement of to leave for unpaid carers, the majority of whom are *women*, to one week." In 2012, the Dutch CDA's manifesto pledged to support families by introducing flexible working hours for both men and women, and in 2002, the German Greens promised to continue reforming laws that

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would benefit disabled people through integration assistance. In all these examples, the explicit mention of a social group makes up the group appeal.

Social groups were at the heart of political life in classic sociological theories of party system formation (Duverger, 1954; Kirchheimer, 1966; Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Sartori, 1969), and they remain influential for both party politics and voter behavior (Achen and Bartels, 2016; Caramani et al., 2014; Evans and Tilley, 2017; Tilley, 2014). Yet, few studies to date focus on group appeals as a distinct concept, and those that do approach it from a single and common perspective of party competition (Huber, 2021; Stückelberger, 2019; Thau, 2019). The scholarship on political representation also features little reference to parties' *appeals* (group or otherwise) per se. A link between social groups and political representation is found in accounts of the representation of presence. However, these primarily focus on macro- (composition of parliament, e.g., Bird et al., 2011; Krook, 2010), and micro-level (intra-party candidate selection (intra-party candidate selection, e.g., Hazan and Rahat, 2010; Krook and O'Brien, 2010) politics, with a notable absence of mezzo-level accounts—representation at the party *qua* party level. The representative claim framework (Saward, 2010) has introduced more overt references to social groups, but these analyses are new and far and few between (Heinisch and Werner, 2019). More importantly, no attempt has yet been made to bring together the literature on group appeals and political representation.

This paper seeks to address these gaps by departing from the extant accounts of group appeals that rely on a rational-actor, party competition approach. Instead, I base my approach on Michael Saward's (2010) *Representative Claim*—a theory that provides a constructivist account of party behavior. Defining group appeals as explicitly stated support for some social group category(ies), I argue that *in the course of acting in their role as representatives* of citizens in representative democracies, *parties make group appeals in the context of election campaigns* as an expression of their identity—we are the party that would best represent you.

Conceptualizing group appeals as *representational claims* views them as the first step in the process of political representation—the claim-making (Saward, 2010). Thus, these appeals are found not just in the legislative behavior of individual representatives or their characteristics but also in collective bodies' statements—political parties in our case—during election campaigns, irrespective of the characteristics of the individuals who compose the party.

Furthermore, group appeals are central to parties fulfilling their representative functions because of social groups' essential nature for the political process (Achen and Bartels, 2016; Caramani et al., 2014). Thus I argue that group appeals are not "just" a strategic decision in the context of party competition but are also an integral part of the representative process. This approach to parties' behavior envisions them as more than electoral machines pursuing office or vote maximization. Election campaigns are the site where representational claim-making takes place rather than merely the means to an end that is winning elections, allowing us to consider the very nature of the relationship between parties and voters in representative democracies—political representation—through political parties' behavior.

Finally, understanding group appeals as the first step in the process of political representation also means that we must examine group appeals because, arguably, at least some aspects of political representation break down without such claim-making. Within the world of political parties and election campaigns, if not a single party makes a claim to represent some social group, no representation of said group could happen in that arena. And while the idea that political representation is not confined to the relationship between elected officials and voters, and examined in the arena of elections, has grown in prominence in recent years (Disch et al., 2019; Guasti and Geissel, 2019; Montanaro, 2018), Schattschneider's famous argument that "modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties" (1942: 1) holds. This, along with elections being a central feature of properly functioning democracies, necessitates examining parties' appeals during elections.

To empirically support my theoretical arguments, I primarily rely on the Parties' Group Appeals Dataset (PGAD) that provides text-as-data information on group appeals derived from the elections materials and party names of 69 parties in Israel and the Netherlands between 1977 and 2015 (Dolinsky, 2022). Additionally, to facilitate examining the relationship between group appeals and party size and ideology, data on the latter are derived from the MARPOR dataset (Volkens et al., 2018). Using descriptive and statistical analyses, I test several propositions. First, following arguments of the rise in importance of identity politics at the expense of classic political cleavages based on class and economics (Fraser, 1997; Phillips, 1999), I expect appeals to economics-based groups to decline and appeals to identity-based groups to increase over time.

Second, given the increased importance of identity politics and subsequently a rise in the number of groups that ought to be represented, parties should expand the scope of groups to which they make appeals over time. Third, relying on common understandings of the relationship between party size and other party behavior, I expect larger "catch-all" parties that appeal to broader population segments to make more extensive group appeals (i.e., multiple supportive statements to numerous social groups). On the other hand, smaller parties that focus on more specific segments of the population are expected to make more limited group appeals (i.e., few supportive statements to few social groups). Finally, challenging theories that posit a relationship between group representation and the egalitarian versus individualistic bases of left-right ideologies (Caramani et al., 2014; Celis et al., 2016; Grossmann and Hopkins, 2016), I expect a weak relationship between group appeals and party ideology.

The empirical evidence shows that parties overall have increased the number of social groups to which they appeal. Smaller parties tend to appeal to fewer and more "marginalized" (e.g., ethnic or religious minorities), while larger parties tend to appeal to more groups that are also more "central" (e.g., workers or women). There is also some evidence, albeit inconclusive that

left-wing parties tend to make more extensive appeals (multiple supportive statements to numerous social groups) compared with right-wing parties.

Taking a constructivist approach to political representation as a multi-stage process and examining the first step of claim-making is important for gaining a proper understanding of the process itself and its result—the coming to be of political representation. This paper contributes to this effort by providing systematic empirical evidence of claim-making. Moreover, while the results are mixed, this paper sheds valuable light on parties' appeals to social groups *qua* groups, which is key for assessing the evolution of representative political systems, the quality of democracy, and a better account of the relationship between parties and voters.

Group appeals and appeals to groups

Social groups matter for political representation and political parties. Focusing on the supply side of politics, existing accounts of parties' group appeals as a distinct concept locate them within party competition. Understood as part of parties' electoral strategies, group appeals are inherently tied to voter demands and used primarily to maximize votes (Huber, 2021; Stückelberger, 2019; Thau, 2019).

Thau defines group-based appeals as "explicit statements that link some political party to some category of people… involve(ing) a party associating or dissociating itself (or another party) with a particular category like workers, young people or women" (2019: 18), and argues that parties use these group-based appeals in the same way they would use "policy-based appeals"—with the clear and primary goal of attaining as many votes as possible in general elections. Using the same definition as Thau's, Huber argues that parties "strategically emphasize groups in their campaign communication… to mobilize the party's core voters and broader their support base among the general electorate" (2021: 2). Stückelberger provides a slightly amended definition of group appeals as "parties' or candidates' explicit stated support or criticism of group categories" (2019: 45), but they are nevertheless primarily employed by

parties as a strategic maneuver in targeting voters. Interestingly, Stückelberger also argues that one of the targeting functions of group appeals is representation—to signal to voters, based on ideological similarities, that they are the party that will support them.

Theories of democratic representation span many volumes and have been subjected to vigorous debate over the meaning of representation, proper representation and what it constitutes, and who has the right to represent and be represented. While the existing literature has not addressed group appeals as a distinct concept, theories of representation of presence and representative claims set the stage for my approach to group appeals. The former introduces the importance of group representation, and the latter the act of claiming to represent, affording parties with an agency in the process of political representation.

In Hanna Pitkin's canonical work, political representation is viewed as the "substantive acting for others… in a manner responsive to them" (1967: 209), so that representation is found when representatives reflect their voters' political beliefs and are responsive to those beliefs by supporting policies consistent with the platforms on which they were elected (1967: 90, 226). Shifting attention away from a focus on policy, Anne Phillips'(1995) seminal work three decades later brought *representation of presence* to the fore, arguing that what is important is not just a congruence between representatives' and constituents' beliefs but also a congruence of their demographic characteristics. At the core of this view of representation is the idea that democratic political institutions without representatives from historically disadvantaged groups are not adequately representative and are unjust (Dovi, 2002).

Elaborating on the concept of representation of presence, following works primarily dealt with two aspects. Descriptive representation—the actual congruence between the individual representative's characteristics and those she represents. Macro-level studies examined whether the demographic composition of legislatures accurately (or at all) reflects that of the population (e.g., Bird et al., 2011; Krook, 2010; Tremblay, 2008), while micro-level studies examined

intra-party candidate selection methods in general and mechanisms of quotas for women and/or ethnic minorities in particular (e.g., Hazan and Rahat, 2010; Krook and O'Brien, 2010; Reudin, 2009). Studies of substantive representation questioned whether representatives act on behalf of those with whom they share corresponding characteristics (e.g., Bühlmann and Schädel, 2012; Dovi, 2002; Wängnerud, 2009). Such studies examined the effectiveness of representation for women and minorities, focusing on legislation, priorities, and politicians' attitudes (e.g., Campbell et al., 2009; Diaz, 2005; Heidar and Pedersen, 2006; Lovenduski and Norris, 2003; Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Thomas, 1994; Wängnerud, 2006, 2009).

Thus, focusing on the macro and micro-levels of politics, the literature on political representation has not overtly referenced parties' *appeals* per se as part of the representative relationship between parties and voters (mezzo-level of politics). This omission is understandable given that the established conception of political representation views it "as a given, factual product" (Saward, 2006: 298) of the electoral process in representative democracies. Someone stands for election, and upon being successfully elected, they are the representatives of those who elected them conditional on either shared characteristics or legislative actions. This static understanding of representation has given way to a more dynamic, active understanding of political representation, that of Michael Saward's (2010) *representative claim* framework that "considers representation as neither a characteristic of a political system nor as guaranteed by elections" (Guasti and Geissel, 2019).

Here, political representation is set in terms of "claims to be representative… rather than… as an achieved, or potentially achievable, state of affairs as a result of elections" (Saward, 2006: 298). That is, the focus is on political representation as claim-making whereby "would-be political representatives… *make* claims about themselves and their constituencies… argu[ing] that they are the best representatives of the constituency…" (Saward, 2006: 302). In this way, the representative claim framework detached the notion of representation from Pitkin's formal

bounds and Philips' descriptive bounds between representatives and represented, expanding our understanding beyond legislative actions and corresponding characteristics to reimage the act of representation. Emphasizing the importance of the representative's role, Saward elaborates presents the five elements that make up a representative claim: maker, subject, object, referent, and audience. Thus, representation is produced "by processes of claim-making and consequent acceptance or rejection by audiences…" (Saward, 2006: 303).

Few empirical works have examined the act of representative claim-making in the electoral arena (e.g., de Wilde, 2013; Guasti and Geissel, 2019), with Heinisch and Werner (2019) a notable exception. Examining representative claims made by two radical right populist parties (RRPP), the Austrian FPÖ and the German AfD, Heinisch and Werner argue that since RRPPs are aware that populism "resonates with specific groups more strongly than with others… we may arguably expect them not to make broad appeals through their programmatic positions but reach out to certain constituent groups through representative claims" (2019: 3). While they do not connect representative claims to group appeals per se, they point to their relationship, illuminating a path for continued research.

Group appeals as representational claims

So what are group appeals? They are *explicitly stated support of some social group category(ies)*, operationalized as a combination of two forms of explicit group-based appeals: statements of support for a social group(s) and mentions of a social group in parties' names (Dolinsky, 2021). Thus, a social group must be explicitly named to constitute a group appeal. I focus on statements and party names because they are the most readily available and commonly used group-based appeals. Statements are found in various communication channels, including manifestos, print and broadcast ads, rallies, and debates, addressing a broad array of groups. Parties' names (should) appear in all forms of party communication and is the only form of appeal allowed even on the ballot.

Note that this definition differs from those used in previous studies because, so I argue, the existing definitions conflate two types of group-based appeals, implicit and explicit. Thau (2019) includes statements that associate a party with a group (explicit), and dissociate a party from a group (implicit). Stückelberger (2019) includes positive or supportive statements (explicit) and negative or critical statements (implicit). While it is undoubtedly important to examine both explicit and implicit group-based appeals, conceptual innovation requires analytical clarity, and a proper distinction between different elements of greater umbrella concepts. Incorporating an implicit appeal diminishes the clarity of the definition and increases the need to interpret the party's intention based on prior assumptions rather than merely taking the party's "word for it." That is, when a party explicitly states support of some social group(s) in its campaign materials, it stands to reason that said group is the one to which a party is appealing. But, if the party criticizes or disassociates itself from any given group, it is up to voters to interpret to whom the party is appealing, leading to either a correct or false assessment, even in cases of "known and commonly accepted" interpretations. Arguably, evaluating explicit and implicit appeals requires interpretation on the examiner's part since we cannot truly know what was in the minds of the message's crafters. But implicit appeals require an extra step that explicit appeals do not. The definition I proposed clearly distinguishes these elements and focuses on only one to increase conceptual coherence.

Additionally, I focus on *social groups* and not *political groups*. The former clusters people based on ascriptive and innate socio-demographic characteristics, including ethnicity, race, gender, age, territory, religion, class, and nationality. The latter clusters people based on political views/opinions and are therefore excluded from the operationalization.

As discussed above, the extant scholarship on group appeals primarily views it as part of parties' electoral strategies. Even in Stückelberger's (2019) argument that group appeals serve a targeting function of representation, it is a means to end that is electoral vote maximizing. I

depart from these works to examine group appeals from the perspective of political representation. While a natural starting point within the vast literature on political representation may be descriptive and substantive theories of representation of presence, these are insufficient. They account for the ways representation manifests in legislative behavior of individual representatives or their characteristics, but not for the explicit act of stating, "*we are the party that best represents you.*" We are still missing an account of the behavior of parties *qua* parties rather than of the behavior of the individuals that compose parties and of the act itself of explicitly saying, "*we are the party that best represents you.*"

To fill this gap and focus on the act of stating itself, I conceptualize group appeals as *representational claims* based on a constructivist understanding of party behavior whereby group appeals are not viewed as a strategic act aimed at winning office or votes, but rather as acts of representational claim-making inherent to their function as representatives. Drawing primarily on Saward's (2010) *representative claim* theory, I examine the act of claim-making rather than what is going on in representation or what form representation takes. Such an approach affords political parties with agency in the representation process—an active role in making the claims to be representative. Thus, election campaigns are viewed as the site where representational claim-making occurs rather than merely the means to an end that is winning elections, allowing us to consider the very nature of the relationship between parties and voters.

It is important to note that my conceptualization of group appeals uses the term *representational claim* rather than Saward's (2010) original *representative claim*, for two reasons. The first is to emphasize that the part of the representation process relevant to my argument is only that initial act of *saying that the party stands for someone*. It is the part of the process over which parties have agency since they determine what and whom they will claim to stand for. The second and related reason is that it clarifies a distinction between Saward's original intention when he developed the concept and my use of it here. For Saward,

"representative claims can only work or *even exist*, if audiences acknowledge them in some way, and are able to absorb, reject, or accept them, or otherwise engage with them" (Saward, 2010: 48). My argument, however, is more straightforward: a party makes a group appeal, and that appeal is its literal claim to be the representative of some group. I use the language of claims literally because what matters for my argument is the claim's very existence. If we look at parties' statements and see a group appeal, the representational claim exists.

With so few existing studies on group appeals as a distinct concept and few studies to empirically examine the act of representative claim-making, there is little to guide our empirical expectations. However, previous studies have shown that group appeals are found in parties' communications across time and that in multiparty systems, nearly all parties make at least some group appeals (Dolinsky, 2022; Huber, 2021; Stückelberger, 2019; Thau, 2019).

But which groups do parties appeal to? The scholarship sometimes distinguishes between "old" or "traditional" groups versus "new" or "newer" groups. The former speaks of classic representative relationships traced back to the formation of mass parties based on class and denomination and the cleavages at the heart of the European party system (Duverger, 1954; Kirchheimer, 1966; Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). Here we find categories like workers, farmers, and religion-based groups (Caramani et al., 2014). The latter speaks of historically marginalized groups like women, ethnic minorities, pensioners, LGBT, and immigrant minorities (Celis et al., 2016; Phillips, 1999). The literature on political representation also provides some basis for expecting appeals to "traditional" groups to be replaced by appeals to "newer" groups. Tied with the changing political environment where the classic cleavage politics strongly linked to class and economics declined and post-materialism rose, understandings of inequality, previously based mainly on redistribution, also changed. Thus, as Fraser (1997) and Phillips (1999) argued, recent decades witnessed the rise of recognition politics centered on identity, highlighting the importance of representing groups based on, for

example, gender, race, or ethnicity. Suppose parties are making group appeals to express their representative role, and notions of representation have shifted from economics-based groups to identity-based groups. In that case, I expect this to manifest in parties' appeals. Thus:

> H1: Appeals to economics-based groups should decline over time (fewer supportive statements to fewer groups), while appeals to identity-based groups should increase (multiple supportive statements to numerous groups).

Given the rise in importance of identity politics and the increase in the number of groups that ought to be represented, parties should expand the scope of groups to which they make appeals. Examining both the overall number of groups to which parties appeal and the effective number of individual group categories in parties' appeals, Dolinsky (2022) and Thau (2019) show that parties have indeed expanded the number of groups to which they appeal over time, with less attention devoted to each group. Reproducing the results from Dolinsky (2022) supports to the argument that parties seek to represent a growing number of groups over the years, which also fits the theoretical expectation of the rise in awareness for inclusiveness of more social groups and the importance of providing them with political representation.

Additional questions arise as to whether these appeals differ by party size and ideology, two features that are frequently examined as affecting other party behavior.[1] While the literature does not offer a theoretical argument as to why party size might affect group appeals (which is not surprising given the early stages of this area of research), it is possible, based on a general understanding of parties' behavior, to posit the following relationship. Party size matters

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[1] Previous studies have yet to examine these relationships using longitudinal and cross-country data, the data available here is also limited, making it more difficult to establish proper causal relationships, mainly because the "chicken-and-egg" problem cannot be resolved without further extensive analysis that is beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, following Stückelberger's (2019) findings albethey time-limited, the present analysis will shed further light on the matter, serving as a comparison for future work.

because larger "catch-all" parties appeal to the population's larger swaths, thus making claims to represent a broader audience. Meanwhile, smaller parties "focus" on more specific segments of the voter population, making claims to represent fewer groups. Thus:

> H2: Smaller parties would make more limited group appeals (few supportive statements to few social groups) while larger parties would make more extensive group appeals (multiple supportive statements to numerous social groups).

Existing literature does offer a theoretical argument as to why party ideology might affect group appeals. In a study of MPs' attitudes towards the representation of groups, Caramani, Celis, and Wauters (2014) argue that for MPs from left-wing party families, representing social groups is more important than for MPs from right-wing party families. The authors attribute this difference in attitude to the egalitarian versus individualistic bases of left-right ideologies. The former conceived politics as an inclusive enterprise, expanding the ideas of equality from economic groups (classic redistributive politics) to identity-groups based on gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, etc. (Celis et al., 2016; Phillips, 1999). The latter, especially liberal and radical right parties, rely on individualist and nationalist ideologies that view society as unitary rather than group-based (Caramani et al., 2014). Grossmann and Hopkins (2016) make a similar argument for American politics: Democrats (party and voters) focus attention on groups, forming coalitions and cooperation between different parts of society. Republicans (party and voters) are driven by ideological considerations irrespective of social groups. Stückelberger (2019: 22) also expects left-wing parties to use positive appeals more frequently than right-wing parties.

   There are, however, reasons to question these expectations. First, the commonly used Left-Right scale usually arranges parties based on their positions on economics. While this may

very well be the dominant political dimension, it is limited in scope and does not capture all aspects of the party system. This makes this scale less suitable for assessing group appeals on a more general basis than economics. Second and perhaps more important, while it is logical that some social groups take left-leaning positions on economics while others take right-leaning positions, and that parties may appeal to groups on this basis, the core argument in this paper is that group appeals as representational claims are made based on groups' demographic characteristics and not their positions on the left-right dimension.

Finally, Stückelberger (2019) pointed to another connection between group appeals and ideology, finding that the use of group appeals with the targeting function of representation as part of an electoral strategy is dependent on the party family to which a party belongs. He expected that only parties from certain party families would appeal to groups because of differences in voter preferences. If we look at group appeals from a pure party strategy perspective in which parties seek to maximize their voters (as Stückelberger (2019) does), these findings might make sense. But, as I argue in this paper, changing the perspective altogether to focus on representation as one of the vital and inherent functions of political parties means that we can also look at group appeals as representational claims in and of themselves rather than as a means to an end. From this perspective, group appeals should not be dependent on party families but are a common feature of political parties across the political system. Thus:

H3: The relationship between parties' group appeals and parties' ideology will be weak.

Data and Method

The Descriptive and statistical analyses rely on two datasets. The first is Parties' Group Appeals Dataset (PGAD), which provides text-as-data information on group appeals derived from the elections materials and party names of 69 parties in Israel and the Netherlands between

1977 and 2015 (Dolinsky, 2022). The second is the MARPOR dataset (Volkens et al., 2018), providing data on party size and ideology.[2]

Israel and the Netherlands are good cases for the analysis in this paper because they share several relevant characteristics, the most important being multi-party systems which feature 5.79 and 4.83 average effective number of parties in the examined period, respectively.[3] Moreover, Israel and the Netherlands operate an almost identical electoral system of proportional representation using a single nationwide constituency and are composed of complex multi-minorities societies, providing a fertile ground to examine variation in appeals to different social groups. The Netherlands is also often compared with other European countries in party politics studies. Thus, these two countries are a good setting for this paper aiming to illuminate the role of group appeals in political representation in multi-party systems.

Using a simplified *thematic* content analysis (Pennings et al., 2006) that measures the incidences of group mention, the PGAD provides manually coded information on group appeals from manifestos, print campaign advertisements, and party names for 269 party-year data points.[4] Both manifestos and print campaign advertisements are produced by parties themselves, usually for each general election, and therefore are authoritative, direct, and unfiltered statements of party preferences. As party names are perhaps the most easily visible aspect of parties' communication with voters, they also constitute a direct appeal revealing parties' explicit championing of group(s) interests (Chandra, 2011). Thus, incorporating all three sources makes the PGAD particularly illuminating because it captures a comprehensive picture of parties' group appeals.

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[2] The data are available in the supplementary materials.
[3] Calculated using Laakso and Taagepera (1979)'s formula where s_i is the proportion of seats of the i-th party:

$$N = \frac{1}{\sum s_i^2}$$

[4] Full details on the construction of the dataset including codebook, coding procedures, and reliability tests are found in Dolinsky (2022).

A total of 37 social group categories are included in the analysis (see Table 1A in the Appendix), subdivided into five larger categories: economic, ethnic, identity politics, life cycle, and religious.[5] The complete list of groups was arrived at inductively, starting with an initial list of common socio-demographic groups, with additions made during the coding process to capture the groups that parties actually mentioned in their materials.

To measure group appeals, the main variable of interest, each social group mention was counted once as one of three mutually exclusive instances of party statements: (1) Explicit supportive mention of a social group(s); (2) Explicitly stated all-encompassing supportive mentions of social group(s);[6] and (3) Explicitly mentioned social group(s) as those whose interests are important or more important than any other group. Together with the social group categories that appeared in parties' names, these four elements make up the count variable *Group appeals*, ranging from one to 20 with a mean of 8.4. The values of observations vary with the extent of parties' group appeals. A higher score indicates a more extensive group appeal (multiple supportive statements to numerous social groups), and a lower score indicates a more limited appeal (few supportive statements to few social groups) (Dolinsky, 2022). Finally, *Party Size* is measured as the number of seats each party gained in the legislature (range of 1 to 54). *Party ideology* is measured first by party families,[7] and second as RILE, which places parties on a left-right economic scale and ranges from - 62.5 for the left-most party to 91.89 for the right-most party.[8]

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[5] See Table 1A in the Appendix for a full list of social groups.
[6] For example, "we are the party of the workers" or "we are an immigrants' party"
[7] The variable captures the following party families: Ecological/Green Parties (10); Socialist/Left-wing Parties (20); Social Democratic Parties (30); Liberal Parties (40); Christian Democratic Parties (50); Conservative Parties (60); Nationalist/Right-wing Parties (70); Agrarian Parties (80); Ethnic and Regional Parties (90); Special Issue Parties (95); Parties Not Coded in CMP (99).
[8] This measure is based on a content analysis of manifestos using "quasi-sentences" that produce 56 broad issue categories (Budge et al., 2001; Klingemann et al., 2006).

Analysis

I begin by examining the patterns of parties' group appeals to distinct group categories, comparing appeals to economic-based and identity-politics-based categories. Figure 1 shows how these appeals change over time, supported by fitted trend lined based on linear and smoothed, kernel-weighted local polynomial regressions (see: Fan and Gijbels, 1996). The top panels support H1, with appeals to Economic groups declining in the overall and Dutch data. While the trends are more moderate in the Israeli data, the slope nevertheless declines. On the other hand, in the bottom panels, appeals to Identity Politics groups do not behave as expected in H1. In the overall and Dutch data, the trend is flat, and in Israel, the trend increases slightly. These mixed results indicate that the data only partly supports the first hypothesis. While appeals to Economic groups have indeed declined over time, appeals to Identity Politics groups have not increased. Yet, observing that the frequency of appeals to Economic and Identity Politics groups had been quite similar at the start of the examined period lends some support to the idea of a rise in the importance of identity-centered politics (Fraser, 1997; Phillips, 1999).
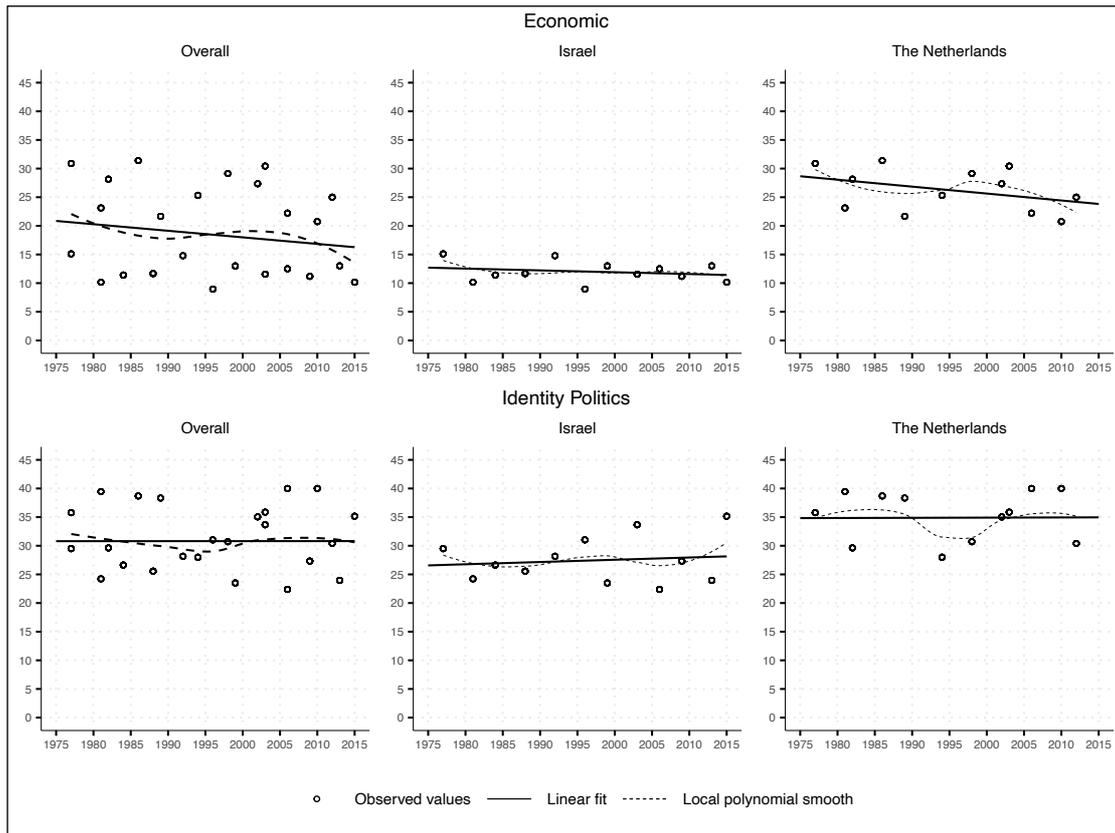
Figure 1. Percentage of appeals over time to Economic and Identity Politics group categories overall, in Israel and in the Netherlands. *Solid line*: fitted trends based on OLS linear regression. *Dashed line*: smoothed trend based on kernel-weighted local polynomial regression.

Additionally, reproducing findings from Dolinsky (2022) in Figure 2 below shows an increase over time in the range of group categories found in parties' appeals and the effective number of group categories, supported by trend lines based on linear and kernel-weighted local polynomial regressions. In the top panels, we see that the range of appeals—the average number of unique group categories—increased in the overall data from 7.1 (1970s) to 9 (2010s), with similar patterns in the country data (Israel—6.9 to 9, the Netherlands—7.3 to 9). Examining how concentrated parties' appeals are, the bottom panels show the trends in the average effective number of groups mentioned. Unlike the range measure, the effective number of groups is a diversity measure. Like the measure of the effective number of parties counts how many parties there are in parliament, for example, taking into account their relative strength, the effective number of groups tells us how many groups are appealed to, taking into
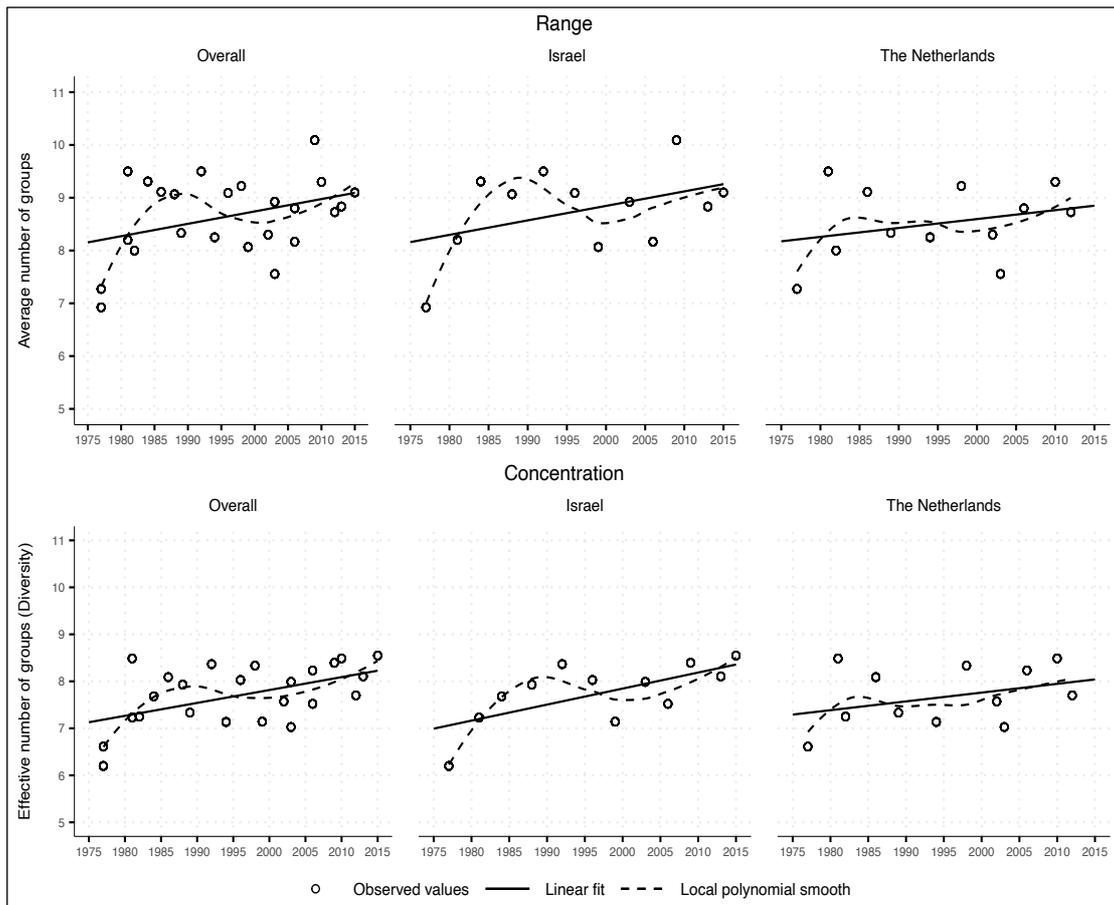
Figure 2. Reproduced from Dolinsky (2022). Range and concentration of group appeals by election year. *Top panels*: average number of group categories mentioned by parties. *Bottom panels*: average effective number of group appeals using Greene's (2015) diversity measure. *Solid line*: fitted trend based on OLS linear regression. *Dashed line*: smoothed trend based on kernel-weighted local polynomial regression.

account the relative concentration of each party's appeals to a small or large number of groups. I adapt Greene's (2015) Effective Number of Manifesto Issues (ENMI) diversity measure, which uses Shannon's H entropy index (estimating uncertainly of a text mentioning a category) to represent the distribution of a given category in a document while giving more weight to small categories to better account for their presence. Thus, larger scores mean increased diversity—more groups are being mentioned with less focused attention to each. The data show that diversity has increased over time from 6.4 average effective number of groups in the 1970s

to 8.2 in the 2010s, with similar by-country trends (from 6.2 in 1977 to 8.3 in 2015 in Israel and 6.6 in 1977 to 8.1 in 2021 in the Netherlands).

These patterns suggest that parties across systems behave similarly, increasing the number of groups appealed to and decreasing attention to individual groups over time. For political representation, this suggests that parties seek to represent a growing number of groups over the years, a finding that fits the theoretical expectation of the rise in awareness for inclusiveness of more social groups and the importance of providing them with political representation (Fraser, 1997; Phillips, 1999). The increase in the effective number of groups mentioned by parties further supports this argument. It indicates that the relative emphasis on the groups appealed to has declined over time to accommodate attention to a growing number of groups.

Next, I examine the relationship between group appeals and party size using Pearson's correlation between the total number of appeals and party size, measured as the number of seats each party gained in the legislature (range of 1 to 54). The results reveal a very weak and statistically non-significant relationship for the overall (0.08) and the Dutch data (-0.01). The correlation is statistically significant for the Israeli data but remains weak (0.19), indicating no relationship between group appeals and party size.[9] Examining the relationship between party size and range (average number of groups mentioned) and concentration (effective number of groups) of appeals finds a somewhat different pattern, as seen in Figure 3. First, the clustering of appeals at the smaller end of the party size scale corresponds to the structure of the party systems in the data. As mentioned above, both Israel and the Netherlands feature fragmented

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[9] As a robustness checks, I ran two additional tests. The first transformed party size from a continuous to ordinal variable based on number of legislative seats: very small parties < 6 (*N*:136); small parties 6-10; medium-small parties 11-15; medium parties 16-20; medium-large parties 21-25; large parties 26-30; and very large parties > 31 seats (*N*:38). The correlations results are substantively the same across the data specifications. The second transformed group appeals into a categorical variable where 1 = limited appeals (including a total number of appeals ranging from 1 to 9), 2 = medium extent (including a total number of appeals ranging from 10 to 18), and 3 = extensive appeals (including a total number of appeals ranging from 19 to 28). Predictive probabilities show that the largest parties are only one per cent more likely to have medium and extensive appeals and only two per cent less likely to have limited appeals, compared with the smallest parties. These results further indicate that the relationship between group appeals and party size is not as expected in H2.
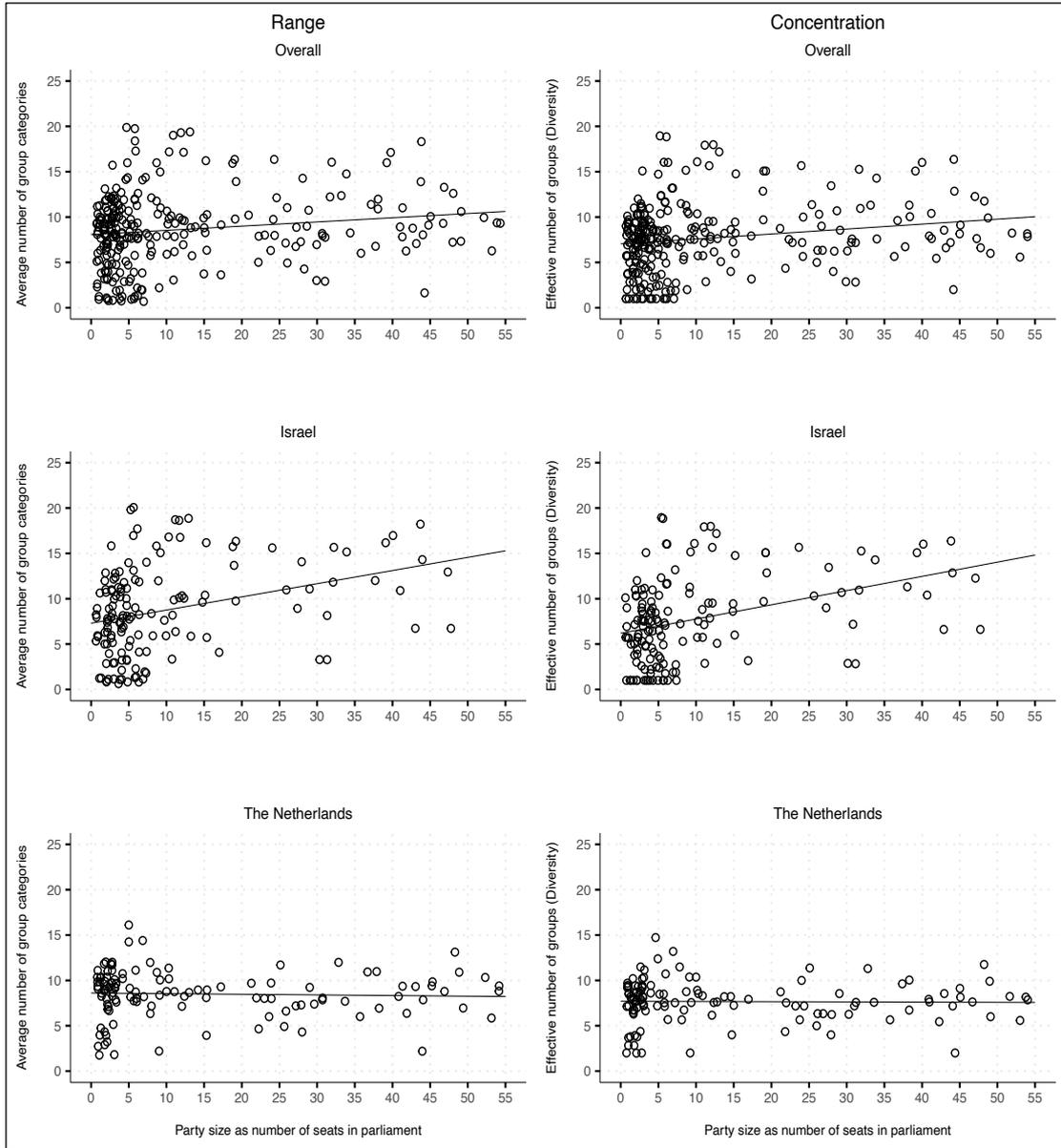
Figure 3. Relationship between party size (measured as number of seats held by a party in parliament) and the range (average number of group categories) and concentration (average effective number of group categories) of appeals. *Solid line*: fitted trend based on OLS linear regression.

multi-party systems, with 5.79 and 4.83 average effective number of parties in the examined period, respectively. Second, both for the overall and the Israeli data, an upwards trend is found in the range and concentration of appeals, suggesting that the appeals of larger parties mention more group categories (range), with less attention devoted to the individual categories (concentration). Looking at the specific correlations for appeals overall and the Israeli data with the range of appeals, the results are statistically significant at 0.16 and 0.33, respectively.

For the effective number of groups, results are quite similar with positive and statistically significant scores in the overall (0.2) and Israeli data (0.38). Looking at the bottom-most plots, the same relationship is not found in the Dutch data alone, with very weak and not statistically significant correlations in the opposite direction (-0.04 for range, -0.02 for concentration).

These results suggest a mixed relationship between party size and group appeals, underlying the argument that it is worth examining group appeals as we seek to understand how parties make representational claims to voters. To that end, I also examine a relationship between party size and appeals to particular groups, with small parties supposedly appealing to more "marginalized" groups (e.g., ethnic or religious minorities) and larger parties appealing to more "central groups" (e.g., workers or women).

Pearson's correlation analyses (reported, not shown) reveal six negative and statistically significant relationships, all with either Ethnic or Religious group categories. While all these correlations are weak (below 0.23), they provide some indication that smaller parties indeed appeal to more "marginalized groups." Ten correlations are positive and statistically significant, all with Economic, Identity Politics, or Life Cycle groups. Here the correlations are also weak (below 0.28), but they further indicate that some relationship exists between appeals to specific group categories and party size. The remaining relationships are not statistically significant but predominantly fall into the expected directions.

These mixed results suggest that H2 proposing that smaller parties would make more limited group appeals (few supportive statements to few social groups) while larger parties would make more extensive group appeals (multiple supportive statements to numerous social groups) is only partly supported. The data show that the relationship between the general frequency of appeals and party size is predominantly weak. Still, larger parties tend to appeal to a greater range of groups, and the groups they appeal to are "more central," suggesting that these parties seek to represent a broader audience. On the other hand, smaller parties tend to

appeal to a more limited range of groups, and the groups they appeal to are "more marginalized," suggesting that these parties seek to represent a narrower audience.

Finally, I test the relationship between group appeals and party ideology. Pearson's correlation provides some support for the proposed hypothesis, finding a moderately strong, statistically significant negative relationship (-0.44) between the frequency of appeals and party family.[10] More left-wing party families tend to make more extensive group appeals (numerous supportive statements to multiple group categories). Similar results are found in the by-country data, with patterns stronger for the Israeli data than the Dutch data. However, Figure 4 shows no clear left-right pattern in the relative frequency of appeals by party family, and the patterns found differ somewhat across the data specifications.
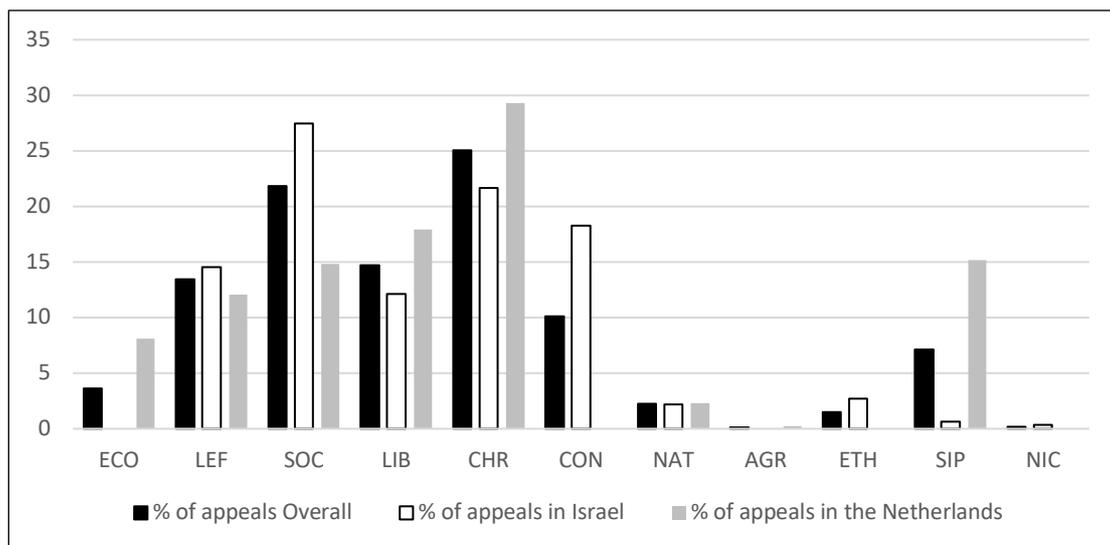

Figure 4. Relative frequency of appeals by party family in the overall (*N*: 3513), Israeli (*N*: 1947) and Dutch data (*N*: 1566).

In the overall and the Israeli data, Christian Democrats, situated on the center-right, and Social Democrats on the center-left, are the party families with the highest relative frequencies of appeals, suggesting that parties in these families make the most extensive group appeals. In

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[10] Similar results are found when examining the relationship between party family and range of appeals (-0.39) and party family and concentration of appeals (-0.4).

the Dutch data, the party families with the highest relative frequencies of appeals are Christian Democrats and Liberals. The findings regarding Christian Democratic parties are consistent with Stückelberger's findings (2019: 141) but not consistent with the expectation in the literature (Caramani et al., 2014) that parties on the left, whose ideology is based more on group politics, would make more extensive group appeals. The same is true of the Liberal parties, lending further support to H3. That said, the findings regarding Social Democratic parties and the observation that Nationalist parties indeed make limited appeals across all data specifications is more consistent with the expectations in the literature, as opposed to the suggested in H3.

To further probe the relationship between group appeals and party ideology, I also examine it using parties' placement on a left-right scale. The tests here are done on only a subset of the PGAD data to ensure compatibility between the measures. Ideally, data on parties' placement on the left-right scale would be derived from the same sources as the data on group appeals (manifestos, campaign ads, and party names), with data on group appeals structured in a similar way to MARPOR to allow maximum compatibility. However, due to the limited resources available during the data collection and coding phases of the project from which the PGAD data are derived, parties' policy positions were not collected from campaign ads or party names. That said, examining the relationship between group appeals and party ideology is important, so I do so here using OLS regression, albeit in a limited way.

Figure 5 and Table 2A in the Appendix show that across the data specifications, there is a negative and statistically significant relationship between group appeals and party ideology: the further to the right a party places on the left-right scale, the more limited its appeals, as expected in the literature, and opposite to H3. That said, the R-squared scores indicate that parties' placement on the left-right scale explains a very small proportion of parties' group
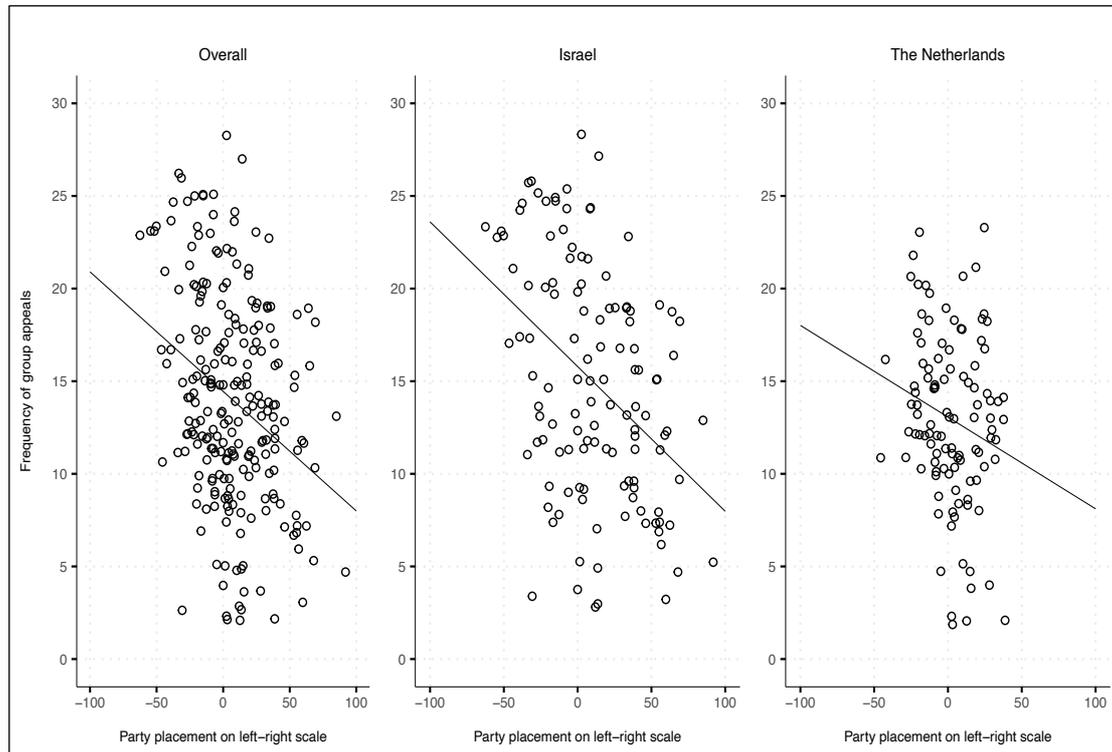
Figure 5. Group appeals versus party ideology using the frequency of appeals and parties' placement on the left-right scale. *Solid line*: fitted trend based on OLS linear regression.

appeals. Ultimately, the data appears inconclusive regarding the relationship between group appeals and party ideology, suggesting that H3 cannot be rejected. Contrary to the literature's expectations, there is no clear relationship between parties' appeals and ideology.

Conclusions

As political representation is the bedrock of modern democracies, examining how parties engage in these processes is essential for understanding representation and democracy. Conceptualized as representational claims, group appeals illuminate the crucial first step in the process of political representation—the claim-making—and provide empirical grounding to theoretical arguments based on an examination of several propositions.

First, it was expected that appeals to certain groups, specifically Economic ones (e.g., workers), would decrease over time, while appeals to other groups, specifically Identity Politics ones (e.g., women or immigrant minorities), would increase over time (H1). The analyses

produced mixed results: appeals to Economic groups have indeed declined over time, but appeals to Identity Politics groups have been rather stable. Notably, however, the starting level of appeals to these groups had been quite similar at the beginning of the examined period, suggesting that parties prioritize appeals over time to the latter groups.

Second, the increased importance of identity politics and rise in the number of groups recognized as needing representation led to two expectations. The range of appeals—the number of groups parties appeal to—should increase, and the concentration of appeals—how much of parties' appeals are devoted to a given group—should decrease over time. Reproducing findings from Dolinsky (2022) confirmed both expectations: parties have indeed increased the range of groups appealed to and have decreased the concentration of their appeals. These findings suggest that parties are aware of the need to represent a growing number of groups over time so that these opposite trends logically go together. With a finite attention span, more groups mean that attention to each of them must decrease if parties want to accommodate more groups into their representational claims.

Third, the paper also examined the effects of party size and party ideology on group appeals. For party size, larger, "catch-all" parties were expected to make more extensive appeals than smaller parties expected to make more limited appeals (H2). Here too, the results are mixed. While the relationship between the general frequency of appeals and party size is predominantly weak, suggesting that the hypothesis cannot be confirmed, larger parties tend to appeal to a greater range of groups, and the groups they appeal to are "more central." Additionally, smaller parties were found to appeal to a more limited range of groups, and the groups they appeal to are "more marginalized." These findings support a variation of the proposed hypothesis: larger parties seek to represent a broader audience while smaller parties seek to represent a narrower audience.

Regarding party ideology, the literature expected left-wing parties to make more extensive appeals because they supposedly espouse a more egalitarian conception of society than right-wing parties that espouse a more individualistic vision of society. I expected a weak relationship based on reservations regarding the left-right scale's appropriateness to analyze group appeals (H3). Similar to the findings for party size, the data are inconclusive regarding the relationship between group appeals and party ideology. On the one hand, left-wing parties tend to make more extensive appeals than right-wing parties, supporting some existing accounts (e.g., Caramani et al., 2014; Grossmann and Hopkins, 2016). On the other hand, a closer examination of the specific party families shows that some do not behave as the literature expected, with, for example, Christian Democrats situated on the center-right, making the most extensive appeals.

Additionally, the paper provides one of the first systematic empirical accounts of the first step in the process—the claim making—over an extended period and across countries. While the limitations of the data make it difficult to reach generalizable conclusions, the cross-country longitudinal analysis spanning nearly four decades supports the claim that the observed patterns are not limited to these cases alone. This evidence is important for our examination of political representation because, in their absence, we would arguably not be able to properly understand the end of the process—the coming to be of political representation.

Throughout the paper, I have emphasized that group appeals are claims of representation. In that vein, I used the language of "seeks to be" rather than "is" in describing parties' representation to maintain this consistent understanding of political representation as something that results from the acceptance of an audience rather than as the results of the announcement of the vote tally on election night (Saward, 2010). As these claims are merely the first step in the process of political representation, we gain only a partial understanding of

political representation. The paper does not provide insight into whether political representation indeed results from these claims or its quality.

Therefore, a natural course of future study would be to evaluate whether political representation indeed results from these claims and what the quality of this representation is. To do this, we need to follow the representational chain and examine whether audiences accept or reject these claims. Historically, this can be done using large survey datasets like the CSES (the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems), the ESS (the European Social Survey), and Eurobarometer that provide extensive data on voters' party preferences. While, to my knowledge, no data available allows us to directly examine whether someone voted for a party because of its group appeals, and following Heinisch and Werner (2019), I would suggest using survey respondents' declared party support and descriptive characteristics as a proxy. Such an approach assumes that if a party appeals to a social group, say Arabs or Disabled People, and people of these groups support this party more than other parties, we can infer that these social groups accept this party's claim to represent them.

Moreover, the group appeals analyzed in this paper are but one type in a broader umbrella of things that parties do to make group-based appeals. Approaching these appeals as a count variable that can range from the most limited to the most extensive of appeals means that we could gain a fuller understanding of parties' "group orientation" if we take a similar approach to other implicit forms of groups-based appeals. Analyzing, for example, the identity of the candidates chosen to stand for parties in general elections (Huddy, 2003; Scarrow, 2004), and the symbols and images used in campaign ads (Holman et al., 2015; Mendelberg, 2001) would illuminate just how much attention parties pay to the representation of certain groups. The more elements of parties' group-based appeals are found to be limited, the more limited the appeal overall. Similarly, the more elements focus on one specific group, the more representative of the said group a party seeks to present itself.

Finally, a note on voters. Political supply and demand are two sides of the same coin, and it is undoubtedly important to understand the relationship between these two sides. But this paper focuses on the supply side only to shed light on parties' appeals and examine them from the perspective of political representation rather than that of party competition. While I do not dispute the inherent connection of parties and voters, I emphasize the need to distinguish them analytically and empirically. Such a separation allows us to gain a better, more direct understanding of political parties themselves, based on what they say rather than through the voters' eyes. Thus, this study of group appeals as representational claims sets the ground for future work to examine the relationship between supply and demand and evaluate the process of political representation as a whole.

Appendix

Table 1A. Frequency of appeals to individual group categories		
Collapsed category	**Individual group category**	**Frequency**
Economic	Worker(s)	336
	Farmers	154
	Unemployed	152
Ethnic	Jews as Ethnic Group	207
	Arab(s)	193
	Sephardim	62
	Druze	50
	Bedouin	28
	Surinams	24
	(South) Moluccans	24
	Dutch Caribbean	18
	Cherkes	15
	Ashkenazim	14
Identity Politics	Women	317
	Immigrants (general category)	260
	Disabled People	209
	Russian Immigrants	95
	LGBTQ	85
	Ethiopian Immigrants	38
	Men	23
	Sephardic Immigrants	22
	Turkish Immigrants	11
	Moroccan Immigrants	11
	French Immigrants	7
	Religious Immigrants	6
Life Cycle	Pensioners	339
	Students	189
Religion	Religious Jews (Kippa Seruga)	157
	Ashkenazi Ultra-Orthodox Religious Jews	106
	Reformed	105
	Christian	85
	Secular Jews	82
	Sephardic Ultra-Orthodox Religious Jews	32
	Muslims	32
	Jews as a religious group	14
	Evangelical	9
	Catholic	2

Table 2A. Bivariate regression analysis of group appeals and party ideology

	Model 1 *overall*	Model 2 *Israel*	Model 3 *The Netherlands*
Parties' Positions on the Left-Right Scale	-0.06*** (0.013)	-0.08*** (0.016)	-0.05*** (0.024)
R-squared	0.1	0.17	0.04
Observations	231	123	108

Note: Standard errors in parentheses; *** $p < 0.01$.

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