

## INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH SEMINAR



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# A Party for “Someone like Me” – Towards a Theory of Party Competition and Group Identities

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### Abstract

This project examines how political parties in European democracies leverage group identities to increase their electoral support. We propose a novel framework of dynamic identity appeals in which parties try to make salient different identities that are associated with stronger party support. Building upon recent contributions, we argue that voters have a “mental map” that links various societal groups with a higher affinity for specific parties. We propose that when political actors make one of these group identities salient, this map activates, leading voters to feel a stronger connection to both the group and the associated party. This, in turn, increases their likelihood of voting for that party. We argue that this identity-based linkage between voters and parties operates independently of policy preferences. We provide some first evidence for this theory based on original survey experiments conducted in the United Kingdom and Germany and present plans for further data collections in other European democracies. Our contribution is twofold: first, we introduce and empirically test a novel theory of party competition in European multiparty systems, and second, we theorize the existence of party-voter linkages that extend beyond programmatic and clientelistic frameworks.