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Descriptive over-representation, cliental accountability, and minority politics: the case of the Druze in Israel

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the relationship between descriptive representation, patrimonial voting, turnout, and voting patterns in small ethnic groups. It argues that the combination between patrimonial voting and descriptive representation marginalizes the importance of substantive representation, leading to a decline in turnout, but simultaneously to cliental loyalty networks among voters that shape voting preferences. It utilizes the case of the Druze in Israel and analyzes their voting patterns in order to establish the argument that the mechanism that leads to party preferences among minority voters, namely, clientalistic accountability, is the same mechanism that renders descriptive over-representation devoid of substantive impact on state policies directed towards the minority. Our aim is to enrich the literature on the affinity between minority descriptive representation, patrimonial voting, clientalist accountability, and political efficacy. We demonstrate that Druze candidates in Zionist parties, especially those close to decision-making circles by being part of the governmental coalition, establish a broad network of supporters based on family ties, personally benefiting voters by integrating them or their relatives into high-income jobs, making their cliental preferences rational. This creates the gap between mere descriptive representation of minority groups and the substantial representation of their communal interests in “patronage democracy.”

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KEYWORDS Descriptive representation; cliental accountability; patrimonial voting; patronage democracy; Druze minority; Israel; voting patterns; turnout

Introduction

This article explores the relationship between descriptive representation, patrimonial voting, turnout, and voting patterns in small ethnic groups. It argues that the combination between patrimonial voting and descriptive representation marginalizes the importance of substantive representation, leading to a decline in turnout, but simultaneously to cliental loyalty networks among voters that shape voting preferences. It utilizes the case of the Druze in Israel and analyse their voting patterns in order to establish the argument that the mechanism that leads to party preferences among minority voters, namely, clientalistic accountability, is the same mechanism that renders

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descriptive over-representation devoid of substantive impact on state policies directed towards the minority.

The triggers behind exploring this issue are multiple. On the theoretical and comparative level, it is the debate in the literature regarding voting as a rational choice and the role of self-benefit versus collective motivations in explaining turnout and preference.¹ More specifically, it is the elaboration of Kitschelt and Wilkinson's concept of "clientelistic accountability" and its deep affinity with descriptive representation that turn this study into an important contribution to the literature, especially in proportional electoral systems.² In this regard, the claim made by scholars that we are facing "the end of representative politics,"³ becomes crucial for minorities and necessitates reexamining the qualifications of representation in order to demonstrate the transformation of its meaning. Furthermore, the culminating literature on patrimonial voting, which focuses on how "what citizens own (or not) shape their material interests, which in turn shape their vote choice"⁴ raise questions regarding the centrality of patrimonial networks in shaping the preferences of minority groups, strengthening descriptive representation, but simultaneously emptying it from its substantive meaning.

The empirical motivation behind this study is the puzzling behaviour of the Druze community in Israel, the majority of whose voters cast their ballots for the same nationalist Zionist parties that a majority of them blame to promote policies, antagonistic to their civil rights and civic status in the state.⁵ The most prominent example is voting for the same parties that legislated the Basic Law: Israel – The Nation State of the Jewish People in 2018, which led to angry protests among the Druze, who argued that the law turns them into second class citizens, after decades of "shared fate" between them and the Jews.⁶ This pattern of voting is even more puzzling, when noting that the same parties stood behind the amendment of the Planning and Housing Law (the Kaminitz Law) in 2017, making it possible for administrative state officials to issue high fines for what the law defines as "illegal housing," without any legal process; a policy that has been heavily implemented in Druze villages since then and is greatly resented by them.⁷

Exploring the Druze case enables us not only to deconstruct the puzzle concerning their voting patterns, but also to enrich the literature on the affinity between minority descriptive representation,⁸ patrimonial voting,⁹ clientalist accountability,¹⁰ and political efficacy. This affinity establishes the argument that Druze candidates in Zionist parties, especially those close to decision-making circles by being part of the governmental coalition, establish a broad network of supporters based on their attributive characteristics (family ties), personally benefiting voters by integrating them or their relatives into high-income jobs, making their cliental preferences rational. That is why the common voting patterns in various Druze villages is for candidates from the village or who have established a cliental network in other Druze villages and are listed in a realistic slot in a party with high chances to be part of the coalition. This pattern of cliental voting which looks rational on the personal level, although it may not be so on the collective level, allows us to explain the gap between the mere descriptive representation of minority groups and the substantial representation of their communal interests in "patronage democracy."¹¹

We start with explicating the meaning of descriptive representation and its relationship with substantial representation on the one hand and patrimonial voting and cliental accountability on the other. We then briefly review the literature on Druze

political behaviour in Israel, demonstrating the lack of available explanations of the puzzle raised above. Only then do we introduce the data that have enabled us to explicate our argument that descriptive representation of minority groups, especially in majority parties could be heavily influenced by cliental networks that empty it from its substantial meaning. We conclude with a few insights regarding descriptive representation and its consequences for substantive minority interests.

Minority voting patterns, descriptive representation and patrimonial politics

Political participation and representation are at the core of modern democracy, since they enable social groups to participate in political life and promote their worldviews and interests.¹² Therefore, who is represented and by whom and to what effect have been important aspects of investigation in democratic studies.¹³ Attention has been given to the identity of representatives and the extent to which it corresponds with that of the represented, raising the importance of under-representation and its sectional relationship with socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural identities.¹⁴ This gap has brought the importance of minority representation to the fore, arguing that the representation of minorities empowers them and enables them to express their needs and become part of the democratic decision-making processes.¹⁵

Minority representation can take different forms.¹⁶ Whereas minorities can have their own representatives in legislative institutions through their own political parties, they can also be integrated into broad non-minority political parties and seek to influence the political process from within.¹⁷ The exact form of minority representation is not determined by legal and institutional factors alone, but is also deeply influenced by the minority, especially its size and main socio-historical characteristics.¹⁸ Whereas the demographic weight of large minorities allows them to institutionalize their parties to represent their interests and as a result may have more impact on decision-making regarding their rights, small groups in proportional systems must integrate into large parties, turning the attributive features of minority representatives into an important mobilizing force and an important factor in representing minority interests.¹⁹

Pitkin, who has claimed that representation is about “acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them,”²⁰ has also highlighted the importance of descriptive representation as depending “on the representative’s characteristics, on what he is or is like, on being something rather than doing something.”²¹ Notwithstanding this understanding, some scholars have argued that defining representation by the mere characteristics of the representatives does not take into consideration what they do.²² According to them, speaking for, acting for, and looking after the interests of minority groups is crucial for representation and it has a strong impact on turnout and preferences.²³

These arguments highlight the importance and efficacy of descriptive representation.²⁴ They also raise its relationship with regime type and the nature of the electoral system.²⁵ Many scholars have argued that proportional electoral systems facilitate the chances for more representation of minority groups, such as women and ethnic groups.²⁶ Bird has argued that “if the inclusion of visible minorities in elected bodies does not necessarily guarantee policies that are more sensitive to minority interests, their absence certainly points to the fact that something is amiss.”²⁷

As a result, there are those who view descriptive representation as empowering and as having a positive impact on turnout and political participation.²⁸ They argue that descriptive representation is supported by social empowerment theory, turning invisible leadership into an important factor in enhancing trust in government, efficacy, group pride and participation.²⁹ As Pantoja and Segura argue, “descriptive representation has a negative, significant, and important effect on political alienation.”³⁰ When speaking of Latino citizens, they argue that the “effect increases as the frequency of descriptive representation increases.”³¹ Accordingly, in many cases, minorities have shown that they vote more when there are candidates that originate from their national, ethnic or racial group.³²

In contrast, there are those who cast some doubt on the efficacy of descriptive representation and argue that this relationship is ambivalent.³³ Others view it in negative terms, arguing that descriptive representation is not correlated with turnout or trust in the system, as many studies of African-Americans have shown and could lead to more divisions in divided societies.³⁴ As Bird demonstrates, in some cases, minority representatives may be “disconnected from the ordinary classes of ethnic minorities they are supposed to represent.”³⁵ This possibility is most apparent when the political legitimacy of these representatives owes little to grassroots support or community activism and is fully dependent on the political calculations of the party in which they are listed.

This debate brings to the fore the importance of how minority representatives are chosen and whether they are chosen based on real electoral power or dependent on internal party calculations. When we deal with the case of small minorities that don't have much electoral power, such as the Druze in Israel, the issue of descriptive representation may take problematic shape. This is especially true when speaking of traditional and patriarchal minorities in which family loyalties play an important role.³⁶ Such a social structure turns the treatment of clientelism, as a strategy rather than as a historical given, into a necessary factor to consider in explicating minority turnout and preferences.³⁷ This treatment is especially important when we consider clientalism as an exchange rather than a relationship.³⁸ Piattoni has argued that clientalism is a “quid pro quo relation, ruled by economic principles.”³⁹ Berenschot and Aspinall view it “as the practice of exchanging a targeted, non-policy based contingent provision of material benefits (money, jobs, public services, government contracts, etc.) for political support (such as votes, campaign funding and other forms of campaign support)” (4). Kitschelt & Wilkinson speak of “clientalistic accountability,” which “represents a transaction, the direct exchange of a citizen's vote for direct payments or continuing access to employment, goods and services.”⁴⁰ This type of clientalistic relations is most apparent in what Chandra (2009) calls “patronage democracy.” As we shall demonstrate, in such cases, majority parties allow the development of cliental relation between minority candidates and voters in order to win their support.

This argument build on the literature on clientalism that highlights the relationship between informal institutions, such as “patterns of patron-client relations but [in] which power is also exercised.”⁴¹ or “socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside officially sanctioned channels”⁴² and personal interests. These patterns of relationships emphasize that in the patron-client type of linkage, personal rather than universalistic interests are pervasive and motivate political behaviour.⁴³ This is an important feature to take into consideration when seeking a better understanding of the impact of descriptive representation on the

voting behaviour of minority voters. It brings us closer to the common notion of patrimonial voting, which establishes a linkage between the “individual’s vote choice [and] possession (or not) of the means of economic production.”⁴⁴ Although the literature on patrimonial voting usually focuses on material assets and resources that voters already have, it allows us to consider potential assets or benefits that could be realized as a result of political loyalty. Such understanding turns it into an important factor in determining turnout and preference among voters, meaning that economic gains that are guaranteed by being embedded in the networks established by political candidates from political parties that have a strong impact on decision-making are important factors in determining voting patterns. The case under study is a prototype that will demonstrate these points.

Druze over-representation

The Druze community in Israel, an Arab-speaking religious and ethnic minority amongst Palestinian society in Israel, live in the Galilee and Mount Carmel areas,⁴⁵ and comprise around 2% of Israeli society. Nevertheless, it manages to be disproportionately over-represented in the Israeli Knesset, where, in some cases, there are 2–5 Druze MKs, mostly in Zionist parties. Furthermore, the voting patterns of the Druze are closer to Jewish society than to the Arab-Palestinian minority. Most Druze voters cast their votes in support of Zionist parties, including right-wing nationalist ones, mostly for those in which candidates from the community have been integrated.

In seeking to explain Druze political behaviour, Aboultaif argues that “in a society where political ideology did not establish itself as a means for mobilization, religion becomes the only motive for political mobilization. Accordingly, Druze religious doctrines determine their struggle for political representation and influence their political decision-making.”⁴⁶ However, despite the importance of the Druze faith in the life of the community members, it cannot explain the variance in turnout and preference. Therefore, Brake claims that

Druze generally vote out of utilitarian motives and sometimes their voting is clearly instrumental; voting for parties which include a relative or someone from their town, who might be able to grant a benefit, or voting influenced by relations with army personnel. Few vote out of ideological motives.⁴⁷

Brake’s sound argument does not explain the over-representation of the Druze. It does not explicate how voting patterns are related to manufacturing loyalty to specific candidates. This lacuna also characterizes Shanan and Eilat’s review of the main changes taking place in Druze voting patterns.⁴⁸ Although they address the constant drop in Druze turnout and the transition from loyalty to the Labor party to a concentration of voter support for parties in the centre of the political map, and even address the transition from voting according to ethnic affiliation to voting according to the place of residence of Druze candidates, they do not manage to provide a coherent explanation for such trends. They do not provide evidence as to how clientel relations are related to voting patterns.

Druze descriptive representation, turnout and preferences patterns

In order to address the puzzle mentioned above, we start by presenting a descriptive analysis of the turnout of the Druze community in the last twenty-five years, beginning

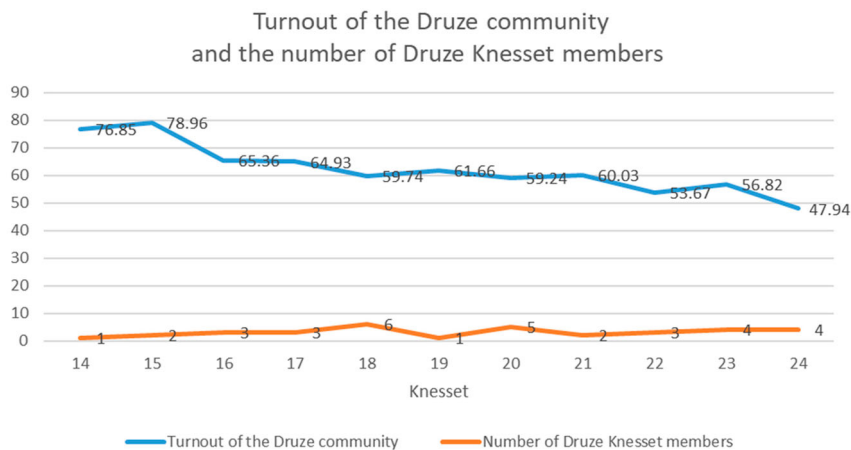


Chart 1. Druze turnout and number of Kneset members.

with the 1996 elections and until 2021. We are speaking of eleven election rounds. Since the Druze live in various villages, in some cases mixed with other Arab citizens (Moslems and Christians), and since it is hard to locate the Druze in these villages, we collected data from ten solely Druze villages – Beit Jann, Julis, Daliat al-Carmel, Horfesh, Yanuh-Jat, Yarka, Kisra and Sajur, Ein al-Asad and Bukaya’a.⁴⁹ We collected the data from the Central Election Committee and calculated the average of turnout over the years, by dividing the percentage of voters by the number of eligible voters in each village. As we see in [Chart 1](#), there is a constant decline in turnout and the percentage of those citizens that participate in the elections dropped to around 50% of the eligible voters in the last elections. This constant decline is surprising, especially when we consider that the Druze are over-represented in the Israeli parliament. As the chart demonstrates, the number of Druze MKs in the Kneset from 1996 until 2021 is much higher than the number of MKs that the Druze could have voted into the Kneset, if all

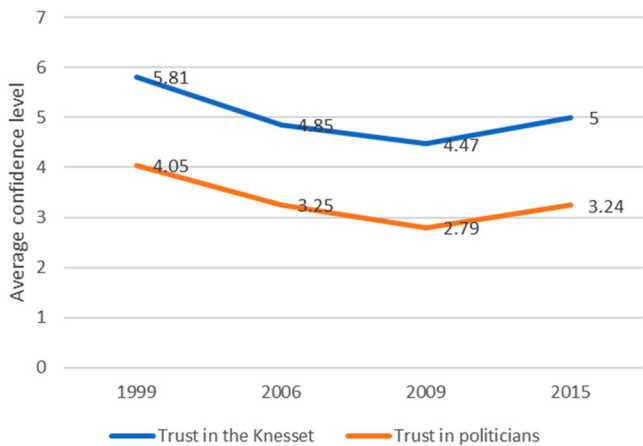


Chart 2. Level of trust in the Kneset and its members.

eligible Druze voters had participated in the elections. The gap between the number of Druze MKs and the turnout rate among the Druze shows that the former are not there as a result of their electoral power, but due to internal decisions made by the parties in which they are listed.

The constant decline in turnout, despite the presence of Druze candidates invites an explanation that may shed light on the meaning of descriptive representation. One possible factor that is considered in the literature and could be, at least partially, supported by some data in this research is the decline in trust in the political systems and the politicians. Although trust may mean different things to different people, it is important, since it reflects the level of expectation by voters that their representatives will keep their promises and faithfully promote their views and meet their expectations.⁵⁰

In order to explore the level of trust and its impact on turnout, we looked at the data of the European Social Survey (ESS) in the years 1999–2015. The ESS survey included questions regarding the level of trust of Israeli citizens, including Druze, in the Knesset and in politicians. The participants in the survey were asked to indicate their trust on a scale of 0–10, when 0 means “I don’t trust at all” and 10 means “I fully trust.” As we can see from [Chart 2](#), which includes Druze respondents only, the level of trust in the Knesset has declined from 5.81 to 5. Trust in politicians has also been declining, although not as much as trust in the Knesset from 4.05 to 3.24. This means that the Knesset and the politicians do not meet the expectations of the eligible Druze voters.

In order to verify this data, we examined the data of the Israeli National Elections Survey (INES) in the years 2006–2019, focusing on Druze respondents. We noticed a constant decline in the level of trust in politicians. Whereas in 2006 the level of mistrust reached 2.65 on a scale of five, it went up to 2.75 in 2019.

We decided to explore whether there was a difference in the level of trust between voters and non-voters⁵¹ and therefore, we ran a variance test based on the ESS data. We thus divided the survey participants based on the question, “Did you vote in the last elections,” between those who voted and those who did not. We found that the number of Druze who voted was $N = 195$ and the number of those who haven’t voted was $N = 119$. We ran a t-test between the two groups regarding trust in the Knesset and trust in politicians based on the level of trust questions we related to above. The results showed that there was no significant difference in the level of trust in the Knesset between those who voted and those who did not. In contrast, we found a significant difference between those who voted ($N = 184$) and those who did not vote ($N = 110$) in the level of trust in politicians [$t(275.2) = 3.32$, ($p < 0.005$)] when the level of trust of those who voted ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 2.592$) was higher than that of those who did not vote ($M = 2.64$ $SD = 1.976$). This means that it is not the trust in the parliament that influences the chances of voting or not, but rather the personal trust in specific politicians that makes people go out and vote.

In order to further verify if there are other factors than the personal trust in politicians that influence people’s decisions to vote or not, we examined the political positions of the respondents on a spectrum of 10, where 0 is left and 10 is right on various topics, including ideology, satisfaction with one’s life, economic satisfaction and religiosity. We found no difference between the two groups on these levels. The only variable in which we found a difference was in the level of political interest $p < 0.001$ (441.285) $t = 5.186$ between those who voted ($n = 192$) and those who did not vote ($n = 117$), as those who voted ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 1.083$) showed higher political interest

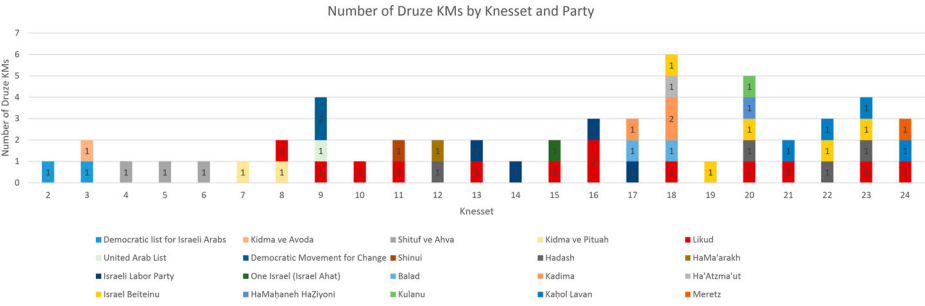


Chart 3. Number of Druze Knesset members by Knesset and party.

Notes: *In the 3rd Knesset a representative of the Democratic List for Arabs in Israel entered during the Knesset term. *In the 8th Knesset a representative of the Likud entered during the Knesset term. *In the 9th Knesset a representative of the United Arab List entered during the Knesset term. *In the 12th Knesset a representative of Hadash and another one of Labour entered during the Knesset term. *In the 16th Knesset a representative of the Labour entered during the Knesset term and left. *In the 17th Knesset a representative of the Labour and another of Balad entered during the Knesset term. *In the 18th Knesset a representative of Kadima and another of Atzmaut entered during the Knesset term. *In the 20th Knesset a representative of the Zionist Camp and another of Kulano entered during the Knesset term. An MK of Hadash left the Knesset during the term. *In the 24th Knesset, based on implementing the Norwegian law, an MK from Yisrael Beiteinu left the Knesset, one from Meretz and one from Kahol-Lavan entered the Knesset.

compared with those who did not vote ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 0.684$). This means that the data so far shows that the only significant difference between voters and non-voters, given that voters are more interested in politics, relates to the level of their trust in politicians. Given the social structure in Druze villages, especially family ties, trust in politicians becomes a personal rather than an ideological matter.⁵²

Delving deeper into the centrality of descriptive representation in explicating Druze voting patterns, we explored the number of Druze MKs between 1996 and 2021 and their party affiliation. As [Chart 3](#) demonstrates, it is not only that the Druze are over-represented in the Israeli Knesset, but that most of the Druze MKs are affiliated with Zionist parties.

The data in [Chart 3](#) made us explore whether there was a relationship between the presence of a Druze candidate in a party and voting patterns. We examined whether there was a correlation between the presence of a Druze candidate and the fluctuations we found in the party preference among Druze voters. This point is especially important since, even if we find a relationship between a Druze candidate and voting patterns, we still have to explain what determines party preference when there are Druze candidates in several parties. Since we are speaking of a long period of time, we decided to narrow the number of parties and organize them according to common parameters. We gathered the Arab parties (The Joint List, Hadash, Bald, Ra'am and Ta'al), Zionist nationalist parties (Mafdal, Yemena, Habayet Ha-Yehudi, Kulanu), centrist Zionist parties (Shinui, Kadima, Yesh Atid), left Zionist parties (Labor, Meretz, Zionist Camp), and ultra-Orthodox parties (Shas and Yahadut Hatora). The Likud and Yisrael Beiteinu were placed alone, since we found that they attracted most Druze votes, and exploring the variables that stand behind such preferences could shed light on the broader phenomenon of Druze voting patterns. Our assumption, to which we devote attention in the coming pages, is that the presence of a Druze candidate in a Zionist party that is part of the governmental coalition and therefore has more impact on policy making, influences party preference.

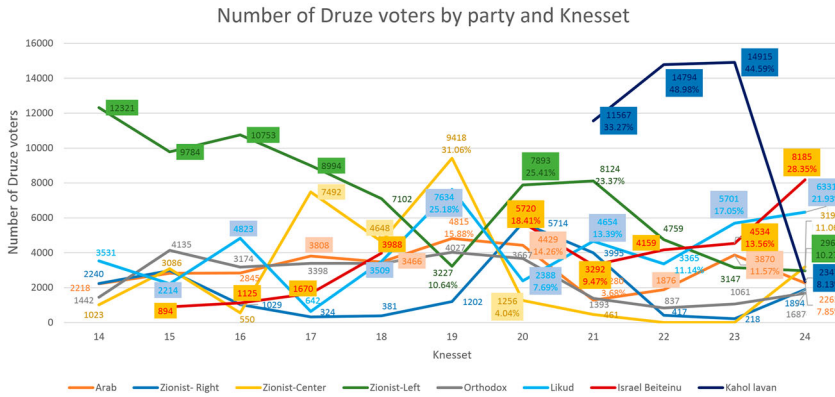


Chart 4. Number of Druze voters by party and Knesset term.

In [Chart 4](#), we present the number and percentage of voters in each of these categories in each Knesset term since 1996. We have clearly marked the presence of a Druze candidate in the party or category of parties to create differentiation between them and other categories that have not included Druze candidates. The data we analyse is based on the number of voters in the ten Druze villages we mentioned earlier.

The data presented in [Chart 4](#), which enables a comparison between the periods in which a Druze candidate was listed in the party or group of parties, and those periods in which no Druze candidate was listed, shows that the presence of a Druze candidate makes a difference in the voting patterns of Druze voters.

As we can see, in the 17th and 20th Knessets, when Said Nafa'a and Abdullah Abu Ma'aruf were candidates in Arab parties (Balad and Hadash respectively), the number of voters for these parties soared. The presence of Majali Wehbeh in Kadima in the 17th Knesset shifted many votes from the Likud to him. The presence of Hamad Amar in Yisrael Beiteinu in the 19th Knesset led to a major rise in the number of Druze voters, continuing until the 24th Knesset. In the 21st Knesset we see a major increase in the number of voters to Kahol-Lavan in which Gadeer Kamal-Mreeh was a candidate, who opposed the nation-state law, and we noted a major drop in support for the Likud, despite the presence of a Druze candidate, since the party supported the law. In contrast, the absence of a Druze candidate in Kahol-Lavan in the 24th Knesset led to a major drop in the number of voters and a clear rise in the number of voters for the Likud and Yisrael Beiteinu, in which the Druze candidates managed to reestablish trust with voters in the community.

The data in [Chart 4](#) also shows that the fluctuations in party preference among Druze voters are not only related to the presence or absence of a Druze candidate, but also concerns who this candidate is and whether s/he is part of the coalition or has a good chance of being in the coalition. The shift of votes from Likud to Kadima in the 19th Knesset in 2006 and the shift from Likud to Kahol-Lavan in the 20th Knesset in 2019 are good examples to support the argument that the presence of a Druze candidate in a party that will most likely be part of the coalition is heavily correlated with party preference among Druze voters.

Going beyond the descriptive data shown in [Chart 4](#), we analysed different datasets available in INES and ESS regarding the attitudes of voters concerning their

preferences. The INES⁵³ dataset enabled us to analyse Druze voting patterns in the election rounds 1996–2020. Given that the percentage of Druze who participated in the survey is low and given that not all participants answered all questions, we are aware of the validity problem we encounter. Nonetheless, looking at the data enabled us to indicate trends that may provide us with a possible answer that should be better verified in future research.

Again, we assumed that there were various possible factors that could influence the voting patterns of the Druze voters. These factors do not necessarily supplant the descriptive factor but may actually add to it. The INES survey is usually conducted before each election and aims to examine the attitudes of the voters in Israel. We relate to eight surveys conducted before 1996, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2013, 2015, and 2019 elections. In each of the surveys, except for 1999 in which it was not possible to separate the Druze from other participants, we focused on the question: “What is your religion (Jewish/Moslem/Christian/Druze/other) in order to identify the Druze participants”.

In each of the surveys, people were asked: In case the elections were to take place today, to which party would you vote? Only 157 people out of 223 answered this question. In each of the elections, we sorted out the parties according to those in which a Druze candidate was nominated in a realistic position on the list, taking into consideration that some parties included Druze MKs while other parties had not nominated a Druze candidate. When sorting out the parties, we differentiated between Zionist parties with a Druze candidate, Zionist parties without a Druze candidate and Arab parties. The analysis of the answers we found in the survey shows the following.

The data in Table 1 show that the number of potential voters for Zionist parties with a Druze candidate was much larger (102) than those who said that they would vote for a Zionist party without a Druze candidate (44). The number of those who said they would vote for an Arab party is very small (11), even when these parties had a Druze candidate. These data add up to the descriptive statistics we provided above, showing that, based on the patterns of voting and the attitudes of Druze voters, it can be argued that the presence of a Druze candidate in a party that is most likely to be part of the coalition influences their preference. Since Arab parties don’t traditionally join the coalition, they don’t win much support. This is strongly so when they don’t nominate a Druze candidate in a realistic place.

This argument is supported by another set of data we have taken from the ESS.⁵⁴ The ESS survey is usually conducted every two years, and for this research, we took

Table 1. Distribution of potential Druze voters according to party with/without Druze candidate.

Year	N (Druze participants)	Party		
		Zionist with a Druze candidate	Zionist without a Druze candidate	Arab Parties
1996	56	36	15	1
2003	16	9	0	3
2006	26	18	4	1
2009	51	18	14	0
2013	24	1	3	3
2015	19	6	3	1
2019	15	7	2	0
2020	16	7	3	2
Total	223	102	44	11

Table 2. Druze voting patterns according to party with/without Druze candidate.

Year	Survey Version	N (Druze Participants)	Zionist with a Druze candidate	Zionist without a Druze candidate	Arab Parties
2015	2016ESS8	37	5	7	6
2015	2014ESS7	53	12	7	2
2009	2012ESS6	48	12	7	2
2009	2010ESS5	74	15	7	0
2006	2008ESS4	62	27	7	1
1999	2002ESS1	55	19	4	6
Sum		329	90	39	17

six surveys that corresponded to four elections in Israel in the years 1999, 2006, 2009, 2015 (for the 2009 and 2015 elections there were two surveys and the for 2013 elections no survey was conducted). We sorted out the Druze based on the question: What is your religion (Jewish/Moslem/Christian/Druze/other)?

In each survey the question was posed: Which party did you vote for in the last elections? Only 141 people out of 329 answered this question. We sorted the parties in accord with our earlier three categories: Zionist parties with a Druze candidate, Zionist parties without a Druze candidate and Arab parties. The distribution we received was as follows.

As we can see from Table 2, the data regarding voting patterns support the conclusions we have drawn based on the data from INES, namely, that Druze voters prefer Zionist parties with Druze candidates and those who are likely to be part of the coalition, when compared with Zionist parties without a Druze candidate or Arab parties with a Druze candidate, but which have no chance of being part of the coalition.

In order to make sure that it were the identity of the candidate and not other characteristics of the supported parties that was the main factor behind the voters' preferences, we looked at the voting patterns for the same parties, once when they had a Druze candidate and in other cases, when they did not. The descriptive statistics show that Arab parties win much more support when they list a Druze candidate compared to when they do not. This is also true for Zionist parties, such as the case of the Labor party in the elections for the 22nd Knesset, compared with the 21st Knesset six months earlier. Another clear example is the tremendous shift in the patterns of voting for the Likud in the 16th (2003) and 17th (2006) Knesset elections. In the 16th Knesset two Druze candidates were elected and became MKs (Ayub Kara and Majaleh Wehbeh). When the Likud was split by Ariel Sharon in 2005, leading up to the 19th Knesset elections in 2006, and Sharon established Kadima, MK Wehbeh moved with him. Because Kadima and not the Likud became the party with the greatest chances of forming the government, a large number of Druze voters supported the party in comparison to the drop in the support for Likud. The location of Wehbeh on the Kadima list was realistic, and he ended up being elected. Kara's placement at the bottom of the list, in an unrealistic place, in which, according to the polls of the period he had no chance of being elected, led to a major drop in the number of voters for the party. A similar shift took place with Kahol-Lavan before the 24th Knesset election (2021). While the party had a Druze candidate in a realistic place in the elections to the 21st, 22nd, and 23rd Knesset elections, the candidate Gadeer Kamal-Mreeh then left the party and, as a result, the percentage of Druze who voted

for the party dropped dramatically in the 2021 elections. These shifts in voting rates for the same parties when they have a Druze candidate or not, is indicative not only of the centrality of descriptive representation for preference, but also the importance of the placement of the Druze candidate and the chances of being part of the coalition or not.

This last point makes it necessary to relate to another factor that influences party preference, namely, the position of the Druze candidate concerning substantive issues related to the Druze community. This factor assists in explaining the preference for a specific party versus another when both have a Druze candidate in a realistic position. When the Druze candidate of the Likud party lost the trust of the Druze voters after supporting the nation-state law in 2018, we witnessed a serious drop in the percentage of those who supported the Likud. At the same time, we noted a serious rise in the percentage of those who supported Kahol-Lavan since its candidate opposed the law. Another important example drawing attention to the fact that not every Druze candidate is deemed worthy of winning Druze support is the return of supporters to the Likud and Yisrael Beiteinu in the elections to the 24th Knesset. This shift showed that, when the head of Yisrael Beiteinu expressed his view that the nation-state law was a mistake and violated the sentiments of the Druze community, the percentage of voters went up. In contrast, the Likud did not express this view and the percentage of Druze supporters did not go up as much. These examples demonstrate that descriptive representation and the chances of being part of the coalition or not are very strong factors in determining voting patterns, but in extreme cases, when the parties to join the coalition are not clearly determined one cannot dismiss the importance of substantive differences between candidates.

For the sake of clarity and to make sure that our interpretation of the data was correct, we sought to verify whether there was any unique characteristic that might cause the difference between voters for Zionist parties with Druze candidates and voters for Zionist parties without Druze candidates. We thus ran a t-test to help us determine what factor/s would influence the difference. In order to conduct the test, we chose the INES questions that relate to socio-economic status, personal economic situation, and political and economic beliefs. We took thirteen questions that were repeated almost every year. Although our sample was relatively small, our results still showed that there was no statistically significant variance between the two groups, thereby demonstrating that no factor other than the presence of a Druze candidate in a Zionist party most likely to be part of the coalition, determined party preference among Druze voters.

Notwithstanding this argument, which has been inductively and counterfactually demonstrated, we still have not yet verified the cliental dimension of candidate preference, given the fact that there are various Druze candidates in various Zionist parties which may potentially join the coalition, such as in the case of the Likud and Yisrael Beiteinu. To explicate this phenomenon and verify how the cliental accountability argument works, we turned to examine the fluctuating voting patterns in the villages in which a candidate was present in comparison to the voting patterns in the same villages when no such candidate was listed.

Cliental accountability and patrimonial voting

In this part, we demonstrate that the identity of candidates, especially their affiliation with a certain locality and their ability to facilitate the economic interests of voters by

Table 3. Druze voting patterns in five Druze villages.

Julis																
Resident	BYT	Notes	Labour Zionist Union	Labour	Right	Center parties	Religious	Arab-Labor Union	Arab-Labor Union	Arab-Labor Union	Arab-Labor Union	Arab-Labor Union	Arab-Labor Union	Arab-Labor Union	Arab-Labor Union	Arab-Labor Union
14	2516	1987	896		137	1		318	107	62						
15	2712	2097	944	4	86	5	1	202	150	311	70	105	6	224		
16	3007	2206	966	30	13	1	8	568	48	88	152	272		50		
17	3265	2062	587	222			1	628	85	54	322	19		50		
18	3574	1862	384	128	1	12	599	356	14	71	242					
19	4008	2494						352	22	193	269		84	278		
20	4233	2497	1036										332	140		
21	4606	2549	15					291	198	70	98	52	1426	130	180	
22	4660	2850	97					244	78	40	508	1839	13	4	14	
23	4710	2815	108					319		317	354	1564	43	88		
24	4814	2756	27					317	535	91	486	795	334	101	35	
Yarka																
14	5145	3531	1385		15	308		486	536	382						
15	5739	4572	685	125	152	405	291	196	134	1454	138	464	96	335		
16	6436	4008	813	30	99	445	77	526	126	1052	122	506	12	51		
17	7071	4850	944	154	6	337	1298	86	179	1394	285	26	16	89	5	
18	7742	5062	850	194				502	385	449	14	1355	1058	12	195	
19	8766	5882	127	195	190	2304	122	1277	25	1469	13	47	84	16		
20	9340	6025	685					261	56	1602	658	53	123	10	316	2226
21	10483	7074	95					2483	445	674	617	92	2051	102	189	
22	8534	4273	116					1351	131	185	521	1677	5	256		
23	10719	6325	205					1860	313	904	1993	19	997			
24	11014	5522	71					146	1945	257	364	1777	337	102	478	10
Beit Jann																
14	4460	3282	1372		0	284	434	1	1017	311	122					
15	4942	4001	1004	512	437	235	65	291	171	192	197	332	94			
16	5504	3894	765	337				1	1504	152	136	149	605			
17	6035	4412	1134	896				96	1295	37	125	228	469			
18	6620	4678	668	971				94	1143	463	148	425	698			
19	7364	4221	954	278	791	143	358	846	96	649						
20	7819	4158	1962					207	242	99	727					
21	8565	4897	1931					159	3375	80	115	115	254	30	69	
22	8658	4499	1833					218	124	2	438	1676	20		155	
23	8713	4277	948					5	316	7	586	1950	3	2	432	
24	8907	3399	92					484	470	520	31	1165	276	113	149	
Daliyat el-Karmel																
14	7227	4942	2507		18	215		401	917	313						
15	7916	5415	1232	155	166	98	180	990	404	624	80	553	435	168		
16	8750	4859	1313	115	124	77	280	748	110	647	180	1280	31			
17	9444	4416	1046	279	16	80	1185	72	149	527	91	31	5			
18	10240	4399	990	236	52	141	1088	1031	190	333	199	30	1			
19	11066	6330	526	113	337	219	2998	814	323	355						
20	11579	6666	2556					519	126	379	627	23	411	16	2506	460
21	12488	7494	144					396	446	38	162	4101	5	1769		
22	12579	7436	223					300	406	76	401	5420	8	333		
23	12693	7302	481					407			272	5200	32	650		
24	12939	5136	326					357	465	511	106	1327	1305	243	389	
Hurfeish																
14	2220	1737	880		3	57		347	124	80						
15	2521	1968	635	65	49	19	172	148	56	268	78	79	159	225		
16	2845	1951	719	64	12	26		476	84	276	90	103	75			
17	3111	2515	1636	102				14	369	38	39	59	189	41		
18	3404	2301	1331	48	49	20	274	237	32	76	177			34		
19	3845	2067	151	26	219	63	429	719	37	303				54	133	
20	4086	2145	345					200	40	214	324	131	121			
21	4469	2356	49		287			52	475	101	352	41	821	60	45	
22	4539	2518	176					158	100	76	570	1251	43	139		
23	4571	2364	166					1215	157	75	431			29	274	
24	4690	2117	85					577	136	146	166	457	146	263	127	

being positioned in a realistic slot in a political party that has high chance to be part of the governing coalition play an important role in explaining party preference. This pattern of cliental loyalty, namely the chances that a Druze candidate will be able to facilitate the economic interests of the voter, such as promises of employment or facilitating the promotion of relatives, is assumed to explicate the patterns of voting in the Druze villages.

As we see in Table 3, which introduces the voting patterns in five villages in which candidates were listed in a realistic place in a Zionist party, the locality of a candidate played a major role in mobilizing more people to vote for his/her party. To illustrate the relationship between the presence of a candidate and the rise in the number of voters for his/her party, it suffices to look at the changes in the number of votes for the Likud in the 16th Knesset in Beit Jann (1504) compared to the votes in the 17th Knesset (37), when Majalli Wahabe moved from the Likud to Kadima, which then won 1295 votes as a result. Another example is the tremendous rise in the number of voters for the Likud in the 21st Knesset (2481) when Fatin Mula, a candidate from Yarka village was listed in a realistic place, compared with the 20th Knesset elections (261) when no candidate from the village was listed. Another example is the rise in the number of voters for the Labor Party in Hurfeish when Shakib Shanan was listed in a realistic place in the 17th and 18th Knesset elections. A similar pattern can be seen when Gadeer Kamal-Mreeh joined Kahol-Lavan and was listed in a realistic place in the elections to the 21st, 22nd, and 23rd Knesset.

To support the argument about the centrality of the cliental relationship between candidates and voters, we sought to examine the correlation between the level of trust in politicians and the satisfaction people have with their economic situation. We assumed that, since the motivations behind economic satisfaction are self-interest rather than collective motivations, when satisfaction correlates with trust in politicians, it could be telling about the motivations of voters when considering whom to vote for. In order to follow this line of thought, we returned to the ESS surveys.

In these surveys, respondents were asked to rank their level of satisfaction with the economic situation in Israel. The scale ranged between 0 = not satisfied and 10 = very satisfied. The development of this scale ranges from 1999 until 2015. We notice that when it comes to satisfaction with the economic situation there is almost a constant rise, despite the slight drop in the years 2006-2009. To explore the relationship between satisfaction with the economic situation in Israel and political behaviour, we examined where respondents placed themselves politically between right and left. Both topics were examined on a scale of 0–10.

Our data demonstrate that an increasing number of people identify themselves with the right-wing of the political scene, where the candidates and the parties they vote for are located. As Table 4 shows, we also found that, among the respondents ($N = 277$), there was a significant correlation between satisfaction with the economic situation and political position ($r = 0.253$, $p < 0.01$). This means that the more people are satisfied with the economic situation, the more they tend to be on the right of the political map and vice versa. When examining whether there was any connection between satisfaction with the economic situation and trust in politicians, we found that there was a significant correlation ($r = 0.300$, $p < 0.01$). This means that the higher the satisfaction with the economic situation, the higher the trust in politicians. This correlation allows us to argue that the politicians that get more trust, win it from those who are

Table 4. Correlation between satisfaction with economic situation, political position and trust in politicians.

	Political position (Right)	Trust in politicians
Satisfaction with the economic situation	0.25*	0.29*
N	277	304

* $p < 0.01$.

more satisfied with their economic situation. Such a correlation makes the chances higher than usual that people who are more economically satisfied will vote for a certain party, having a candidate that they trust and can promote their economic interests. This correlation also allows us to argue that politicians who can guarantee more jobs and facilitate economic interests are likely to have greater chances to win support than others; otherwise, how can we explain the fluctuations in voting patterns in each of the villages sampled, and the correlation between trust in politicians and economic satisfaction. In other words, it may be argued that economically satisfied eligible voters are more likely to vote for Zionist parties that are supportive of the neo-liberal economy and include a Druze candidate. In order to better emphasize this point, we compared the support for Druze candidates in Arab parties or opposition parties with candidates from parties that have been in power or have better chances to be in power. This means that there is a variance between different Druze candidates based on their network in centres of power and their ability to translate their influence into either problem-solving or integrating voters in the job market.

It is important to note that we have not found a positive correlation between trust in politicians and political ideology. This means that we cannot establish the argument that a right-winger trusts politicians more. However, we did find that there is a positive correlation between political ideology and economic satisfaction, and between the latter and trust in politicians. These correlations do not provide a full explanation of patrimonial voting, but nevertheless show that chances are very high that there is a strong overlap between the three variables, namely, those who are economically satisfied mostly vote for right-wing parties since they trust candidates of these parties who end up supporting their interests.

Furthermore, these results make it difficult to verify the cliental accountability argument based on the statistical data available. Nevertheless, when looking at the cumulative data presented so far, it is possible to argue that we have not found any explanation for the voting patterns in Druze villages other than the presence of a Druze candidate in a Zionist party that is or could be part of the governing coalition. That is an important factor that makes this candidate influential, and positioned close to policymaking, especially regarding what concerns the candidates, namely, the ability to win the trust of their supporters in their villages or in other villages in which they have their own familial network. In other words, it is possible to argue with greater certainty that descriptive representation is important, but it should be combined with another important element in order to explicate the variance in voting patterns when there is more than one Druze candidate. The correlations presented above could shed light on this variance, leading us to the cliental accountability argument. This argument means that cliental voting does not contradict rational choice on the personal level and even when it is based on ethnic favouritism, it may overrule communal interests.

Conclusion

The data regarding the Druze community's turnout and voting patterns refute the argument made in the literature that descriptive representation determines turnout, but reiterates the argument made by many scholars that it is a major motivation behind party preference.⁵⁵ As the data demonstrates, the majority of Druze voters vote for Zionist parties with a Druze candidate in a realistic slot on the party list.

Notwithstanding its centrality, descriptive representation has to be supplemented by other factors in order to explain the variance in supporting different Druze candidates in various Zionist parties, and between them and Druze candidates in Arab parties. As we have demonstrated, these factors are the chances of a Druze candidate to become part of the governing coalition and the familial ties the candidate has in his village or other Druze villages. In such cases, exchanging patrimonial interests for personal loyalties nourish cliental accountability and become strong motivation behind voting patterns. When representatives with attributive features similar to their voters run for office, they are most likely to be supported when they have the ability to utilize their power in their party to facilitate the patrimonial interests of their supporters.⁵⁶ This pattern seems to explain the low number of Druze voters for Arab parties, even when they include a Druze candidate, let alone when they don't.

This brings us back to the puzzling voting patterns of many Druze for the same Zionist parties that have disappointed them by supporting the nation-state law. The patron-client accountability explicated above provides us with an explanation to the mismatch between broad communal interests and narrow personal benefits. This mismatch problematizes the meaning of descriptive representation. Given the familial social structure in the Druze community, the ability of individuals whose interests are at stake to mobilize voters to support candidates from political parties that have a strong influence on allocation policies and on the integration of people in the job market, turns out to be a strong factor in determining voting patterns. This means that Druze voters tend to support Druze candidates in right-wing Zionist parties that are most likely to be part of the coalition and a result has the best chances to influence their self-interests. This pattern of voting, despite ethnic favouritism, refutes the argument that faith alone explains the political behaviour of the Druze. The data show that personal utility rather than common communal interests provides a rationale behind the fact that most Druze have voted for Likud and Yisrael Beiteinu, despite the fact that these parties were behind the legislation of the nation-state law and the Kaminitz Law. This voting pattern problematizes the literature on descriptive representation of minority groups and on rational voting. It shows how patrimonial interests and cliental accountability subordinate representation to patron-client deals that empty substantive representation from its genuine meaning.

Notes

1. Wolkenstein, "Epitemic Barriers to Rational"; Eldin, Gelmand, and Kaplan, "Voting as a Rational"; Dowding, "Is it Rational to Vote".
2. Brenauer, Giger, and Rosset, "Mind the Gap"; Huber, "Measuring Ethnic Voting".
3. Tormey, *The End of Representative*.
4. Foucault, Nadeau, and Lewish-Beck, "Patrimonial Voting".
5. Jamal and Kenisicki, "Theorizing Half-statelessness".
6. Zeedan, "Reconsidering the Druze Narrative".
7. For more details see: https://www.acri.org.il/post/_343.
8. Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*.
9. Foucault, Nadeau, and Lewish-Beck, "Patrimonial Voting".
10. Kitschelt and Wilkinson, *Patrons, Clients, and Policies*.
11. Chandra, "Why Voters in Patronage-Democracies"; Berenschot and Aspinall, "How Clientalism Varies".
12. De Wilde, "The Quality of Representative"; Montanaro, "The Democratic Legitimacy".
13. West, "Descriptive Representation and Political".

14. Brenauer, Giger, and Rosset, "Mind the Gap"; Ruedin, "Ethnic Group Representation".
15. Bird, "Ethnic Quotas and Ethnic"; Saggat and Geddes, "Negative and Positive Racialization".
16. Mansbridge, "Rethinking Representation".
17. Saward, *The Representative Claim*.
18. Ruedin, "Ethnic Group Representation".
19. Geddes, "Explaining Ethnic Minority Representation".
20. Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, 209.
21. Ibid, 61.
22. Rehfeld, "Toward a General Theory".
23. Sanders et al., "The Calculus of Ethnic"; Teney et al., "Voting Patterns Among Ethnic"; Bird, "Ethnic Quotas and Ethnic".
24. Bird, "Ethnic Quotas and Ethnic".
25. Huber, "Measuring Ethnic Voting".
26. Brenauer, Giger, and Rosset, "Mind the Gap".
27. Bird, "Political Representation of Visible Minorities," 455.
28. Just, "Race, Ethnicity, and Political"; Banducci, Donovan, and Karp, "Minority Representation, Empowerment"; Gilliam and Kaufman, "Is There an Empowerment".
29. Banducci, Donovan, and Karp, "Minority Representation, Empowerment".
30. Pantoja and Segura, "Does Ethnicity Matter," 455.
31. Ibid.
32. Merolla, Sellers, and Fowler, "Descriptive Representation, Political Efficacy"; Pantoja and Segura, "Does Ethnicity Matter"; Brace et al., "Minority Turnout".
33. Martin, "Ethnic Minority Voters"; Griffin and Keane, "Descriptive Representation".
34. Cowley, "Descriptive Representation and Political"; Griffin and Keane, "Descriptive Representation".
35. Bird, "Political Representation of Visible Minorities," 439.
36. Miles, "Minority Arab Voting".
37. Piattoni, *Clientalism, Interests and Democratic Representation*.
38. Berenschot and Aspinall, "How Clientalism Varies".
39. Piattoni, *Clientalism, Interests and Democratic Representation*, 11.
40. Kitschelt and Wilkinson, *Patrons, Clients, and Policies*, 2.
41. Bratton, "The Democracy Barometers," 97.
42. Helmke and Levitsky, *Informal Institutions and Democracy*, 5.
43. Choi, "Democracy and Patrimonial Politics".
44. Foucault, Nadeau, and Lewish-Beck, "Patrimonial Voting," 558.
45. Firro, *Druze in the Time*; Halabi, "Invention of a Nation".
46. Aboultaif, "Druze Politics in Israel".
47. Brake, "The Druze Vote," 9.
48. Shanan and Eilat, "From a Community".
49. We assume that the patterns of voting in mixed Druze villages are similar to Druze villages (The Druze in the Golan Heights has not been taken into consideration).
50. Cox, "When Trust Matters"; Carreras and Iregopl, "Trust in Elections, Vote".
51. We focused our attention on voters rather than non-voters to establish the main arguments of this paper. Exploring non-voters deserve attention in a separate article.
52. Miles, "Minority Arab Voting".
53. It is hard to establish empirical arguments and get significant statistical results based on the Druze represented in the national survey, since they are a very small group, many of whom did not reveal their party preference in the surveys. Therefore, the analysis presented here is illustrative rather than empirically conclusive.
54. The European Social Survey (ESS) is an academically driven cross-national survey that has been conducted across Europe since 2001. Every two years, face-to-face interviews are conducted with newly selected, cross-sectional samples.
55. Just, "Race, Ethnicity, and Political"; Bird, "Ethnic Quotas and Ethnic"; Banducci, Donovan, and Karp, "Minority Representation, Empowerment"; Gilliam and Kaufman, "Is There an Empowerment"; Merolla, Sellers, and Fowler, "Descriptive Representation, Political Efficacy"; Pantoja and Segura, "Does Ethnicity Matter"; Brace et al., "Minority Turnout".
56. Foucault, Nadeau, and Lewish-Beck, "Patrimonial Voting".

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