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Ethnic Visibility

by Amanda L. Robinson
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Ethnic groups — social identity groups in which membership is defined by descent-based attributes (Chandra, 2012) — are central to many theories of political behavior. Past research shows that shared ethnicity shapes interpersonal trust (Robinson, 2016), cooperation and social sanctioning (Miguel and Gugerty, 2005; Habyarimana et al., 2009; Jeon, Johnson and Robinson, Forthcoming), vote choice (Chandra, 2004; Posner, 2005; Ferree, 2006), the provision of public goods (Franck and Rainer, 2012; Burgess et al., 2015; Ejdemyr, Kramon and Robinson, Forthcoming), and government responsiveness (McClendon, 2016).

Many of the theoretical explanations for these empirical findings rely on the assumption that ethnicity is 'visible.'[1] That is, many theories assume the individuals can readily discern the ethnic identity of other individuals and can then use that information to condition their behavior (Hale, 2004). Habyarimana et al. (2009) define ethnic identifiability as the likelihood that someone else would classify an individual as a member of the same ethnic group with which that individual would associate herself, and Harris and Findley (2014) refer to the expectation that ethnicity is readily visible as the "identifiability assumption."

In some cases, ethnic visibility is not only assumed, it is posited as the key characteristic — along with 'stickiness' — that makes ethnicity politically and socially useful (Chandra, 2004; Hale, 2004; Chandra, 2012). For example, theories of ethnic patronage posit that ethnicity provides a useful cue for the coordination and enforcement of patronage networks in low information and weakly institutionalized political systems (Chandra, 2004; Posner, 2005). In this framework, ethnicity's stability and visibility help to coordinate whom a citizen should support politically and which constituents

[1] In using the term visibility, I do not mean to imply that ethnic markers must be physical, and in fact they may not be in many cases (e.g., language, accent, or name). I simply mean to capture the degree to which someone's ethnic identity is discernible, perceptible, legible, or identifiable.

a politician should favor materially (Fearon, 1999; Posner, 2005; Chandra, 2004, 2012).

But is ethnicity as visible as many theories assume? The empirical research on this question has produced two key findings. First, lab-based studies have shown that ethnicity is much less visible than we might expect. American undergraduates across several universities were able to identify Jewish students only 55% of the time (Allport and Kramer, 1946), and rates of correct ethnic attribution did not differ among Jews and non-Jews (Lindzey and Rogolsky, 1950). Habyarimana et al. (2009) report that Ugandans living in Kampala correctly classified their coethnics only about two thirds of the time, and incorrectly classified non-coethnics as members of their own group at a non-negligible rate (11%). Similarly, Harris and Findley (2014) report that South Africans correctly identified coethnics only 45% of the time, and non-coethnics significantly less often.

[W]hen ethnicity is highly salient in politics, ethnically visible citizens may participate at higher rates than their less visible coethnics because they have the most to gain and the most to lose in the outcome of an ethnically-charged election.

Second, past studies have identified characteristics associated with an improved ability to discern the ethnicity of others. In particular, a series of studies demonstrated that individuals with more prejudicial views of ethnic minorities were better able to identify members of that ethnic minority, which was typically attributed to their increased sensitivity to ethnic cues (Allport and Kramer, 1946; Lindzey and Rogolsky, 1950; Dorfman, Keeve and Saslow, 1971). Similarly, Harris and Findley (2014) find that the ability of South Africans to correctly classify the ethnicity of others increased with the strength of attachment to their own ethnic group. These studies thus demonstrate that individuals differ in their ability to ethnically identify others, with those most invested in ethnic distinctions performing the best.

But these studies raise a crucial question: how does variation in an individual's own ethnic visibility shape his or her political attitudes and behaviors?[2] Building on Habyarimana et al.'s (2009) conceptualization of ethnic identifiability at the individual-level, I address this question preliminarily within the context of four larger research projects. In so doing, I also highlight individual-level characteristics that are associated with increased ethnic visibility.

I. The Political and Social Implications of Ethnic Visibility

I draw on several of my past and ongoing research projects to provide preliminary evidence on the relationship between ethnic visibility and four politically relevant outcomes: (i) interethnic trust, (ii) political participation, (iii) ethnic party support, and (iv) politically relevant identification. This empirical exercise draws on four distinct research projects, including two in Malawi, one in Kenya, and one among African immigrants in the U.S. The degree to which ethnic visibility was central to the studies' designs varies quite a bit, and thus some of the measures of ethnic visibility that I employ below are better than others. In most cases, I can only report correlations between ethnic visibility and the outcomes of interest, despite positing a causal relationship. I discuss potential sources of endogeneity in the conclusion, and suggest avenues for future research to better understand the causal effect of ethnic visibility.

Interethnic Trust. How does ethnic visibility relate to interethnic trust? In past research, I have documented a coethnic trust premium (Robinson, 2016, Forthcoming), meaning that individuals tend to trust coethnics more than non-coethnics. However, we might expect that this coethnic trust premium would be limited to, or stronger for, ethnically visible members of an ethnic group. This is because such visibility is required in order for others to be able to condition their trusting behavior on shared ethnicity.

To address this question, I rely on data collected in 2011 in a region of Malawi near the international border with Zambia. As part of a larger project on nationalism and interethnic trust, I surveyed 508 respondents from two different ethnic communities, the Chewa and the Tumbuka. The face-to-face survey collected information about respondent demographic characteristics, strength of ethnic and national identification, interper-

[2] One exception is recent work by Harris (2017) on racial typicality in South Africa. He finds that individuals who are less phenotypically typical for their group have weaker social identification with that group because they are less likely to be treated as a member of that group.

sonal trust, and social networks. Following the completion of the survey, respondents were invited to take part in a later study session in which they played trust games with both Malawians and Zambians from both ethnic communities. I used these data to demonstrate that national identification can foster interethnic trust (Robinson, 2016).

Within the survey, respondents were asked which of the following statements they agreed with more: "I see myself as quite similar to most Chewas (Tumbukas)" or "I see myself as quite different from most Chewas (Tumbukas)." While this question was not designed to capture ethnic visibility, it is likely that individuals who see themselves as more typical of their ethnic group also anticipate that their ethnicity is more visible to others. By this measure, 75% of respondents reported being ethnically visible. While there were no differences by gender, members of the Tumbuka ethnic group reported much higher rates of ethnic visibility (82%) than members of the Chewa ethnic group (69%, $z = 3.05, p < 0.01$). This ethnic difference is consistent with my own (admittedly anecdotal) experience working in Malawi since 2009: members of the Tumbuka ethnic group are perceived to be more visible than other groups, due to the widespread use of the Chitumbuka language — and the resulting 'Tumbuka accent' when speaking English or Chichewa (the national language) — and the relative uniqueness of Tumbuka surnames. I also find that ethnic visibility is higher among the 350 respondents who reported that all four of their grandparents were members of the same ethnic group (80%), than it is among the 158 respondents with mixed ethnic heritage (65%, $z = 3.81, p < 0.001$).

To assess the effect of ethnic visibility on interethnic trust, I evaluate its relationship to reported expectations of being cheated by different kinds of strangers. In particular, respondents were asked about how much they would worry in four different hypothetical situations, with each hypothetical situation asked for each of four different types of individuals (Malawian Chewa, Malawian Tumbuka, Zambian Chewa, and Zambian Tumbuka):

1. If you were traveling, would you worry about accepting food and accommodation from a [Malawian Chewa] whom you did not know?

2. Would you worry about getting cheated if you were to change currency with a [Malawian Chewa] whom you did not know?

3. If a [Malawian Chewa] traveler whom you did not know came near your home, would you be scared to invite him or her into your home?

4. Would you worry about getting cheated if you were buying goods at the market from a [Malawian Chewa] whom you did not know?

I then aggregated negative (more trusting) responses to these four questions by the stranger's identity to produce an overall measure of trust in each type of stranger for each respondent.

In the types of face-to-face interactions to which these questions refer, we would expect that differences in ethnic visibility should matter, as strangers can condition their behavior towards the respondent on coethnicity more if the respondent's ethnicity is visible. Coethnics are indeed trusted in more of these hypothetical contexts than non-coethnics (72% vs. 50%, $t = 11.92$, $p < 0.001$), but this trust in coethnics is slightly stronger among those who are ethnically visible (73% vs. 68%, $t = 1.43$, $p < 0.10$, one-sided). There is no comparable difference in trust in non-coethnics by ethnic visibility, suggesting that ethnic visibility facilitates *intra*ethnic trust more than it inhibits *inter*ethnic trust.

There is no effect of ethnic visibility on relative trust in coethnics vs. non-coethnics under conditions of anonymous interaction (an anonymous trust game). This suggests that ethnic visibility is not shaping perceptions of coethnic trustworthiness, in general, through, for example, stronger in-group identification (Harris, 2017). Instead, these results are more consistent with the interpretation that ethnic visibility shapes trust in coethnics only in contexts where an individual knows that his coethnics could potentially discern that he is indeed a member of their group.

In contexts where trust is quite low (Robinson, Forthcoming; Nunn and Wantchekon, 2011), shared ethnicity may facilitate interpersonal trust. However, this section suggests that this benefit of ethnic commonality is stronger for those individuals whose ethnicity is visible to others. This is because they anticipate that other members of the group will be able to tell that they

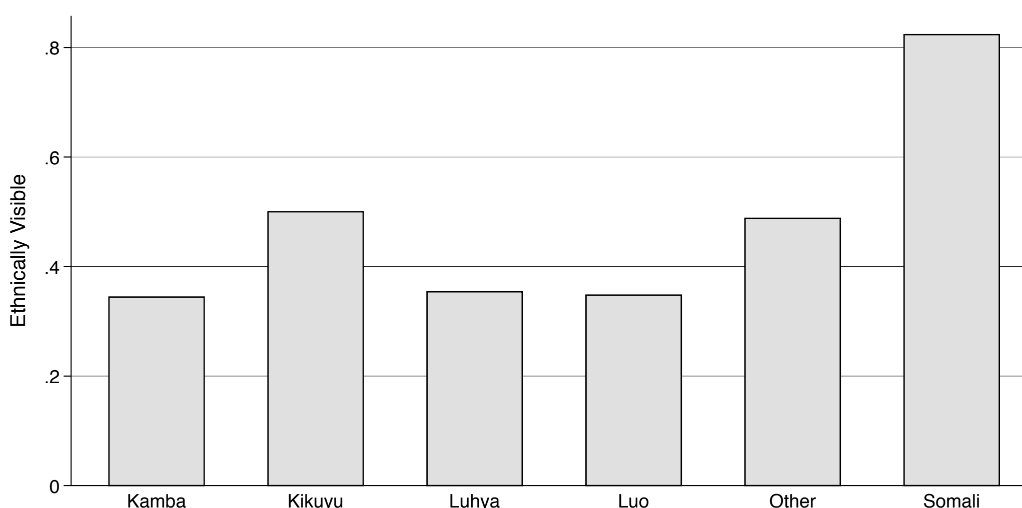
are also members of the same group, and therefore condition their trustworthy behavior on their shared ethnicity.

Political Participation. How does ethnic visibility affect political participation? In contexts where ethnicity is highly correlated with electoral politics, we might expect that ethnically identifiable citizens will be more likely to be actively engaged in politics for two reasons. The first is that the most ethnically visible could be more likely to benefit from the patronage rewards if one's own ethnic party is elected. The second reason that ethnic visibility might induce political participation is through the prospect of collective accountability. In particular, if a party is closely associated with a particular ethnic community, then the individuals who are identifiable as members of that ethnic community can be held collectively responsible for the party's political actions. Under such conditions, the most ethnically visible members of an ethnic community have strong incentives to actively support their ethnic party, even if that support is not genuine (de Figueiredo Jr and Weingast, 1997; Padró i Miquel, 2007). This is because the most ethnically visible are at the highest risk of being victimized in ethnically-targeted violence, like the kind that followed the disputed 2007 Kenyan elections. For both these reasons, when ethnicity is highly salient in politics, ethnically visible citizens may participate at higher rates than their less visible coethnics because they have the most to gain and the most to lose in the outcome of an ethnically-charged election.

To evaluate this expectation, I rely on data collected in Nairobi, Kenya in 2016, in collaboration with Rachel Beatty Riedl. The goal of the project was to understand the myriad ways in which Nairobians are connected to rural areas in Kenya, and the political implications of these different forms of urban-rural linkage (Riedl and Robinson, 2016). With the help of a team of enumerators, we recruited and interviewed 472 respondents face-to-face within sixteen different neighborhoods and locations throughout Nairobi. The resulting sample was ethnically diverse — 29% Kikuyu, 20% Luo, 14% Luhya, 14% Kamba, 4% Somali, and 19% other, including Kalenjin, Kisii, Meru/Embu, Masai/Samburu, MijiKenda, and Taita. The sample also varied in terms of urban generation, with 76% born outside Nairobi and the remainder being second (15%), third (5%), and even fourth generation Nairobians (3%).

To measure ethnic visibility, respondents were asked, "Can strangers within Nairobi tell your ethnicity?" Based on this measure, 44% of our sample were ethnically visible. However, this rate was significantly higher for men (48%) than women (38%, $z = 2.12$, $p < 0.05$), and also varied widely across ethnic communities (Figure 1), with Somali residents in Nairobi being the most ethnically visible. However, visibility did not differ significantly by urban generation or the strength

Figure 1: Variation in Ethnic Visibility by Ethnic Group among Residents of Nairobi, Kenya.



Note: Figure 1 shows the proportion of individuals from different ethnic groups who responded positively to the question, "Can strangers within Nairobi tell your ethnicity?" The survey data come from 472 residents of Nairobi, Kenya in 2011 (Riedl and Robinson, 2016).

or nature of urban-rural linkages. Respondents who reported that their ethnic identity was visible to strangers were also asked *how* others could identify them. Respondents attributed their visibility to language or accent (76%), name (46%), physical appearance (45%), and religion (6%).

> Demonstrating variability in ethnic visibility does not mean that existing theories that assume ethnic visibility should be discarded. Instead, a consideration of ethnic visibility should, at a minimum, provide scope conditions to the applicability of such theories to the individuals, groups, and ethnic boundaries for which ethnicity is indeed observable.

To evaluate the effect of ethnic visibility on political participation, I use an indicator of having voted in the last national election, which was adapted from the standard Afrobarometer question.[3] While 68% of our respondents overall reported having voted, participation differed by ethnic visibility. In particular, ethnically visible Nairobi residents were significantly more likely to report having voted (73% vs. 65%, $z = 1.86, p < 0.10$). While visibility is correlated with both gender and ethnicity, the effect of visibility on political participation is not driven by either factor, as the effect of ethnic visibility is even larger once we control for ethnic group and gender (nine percentage points, $p < 0.05$).

These empirical patterns lend support to the expectation that ethnic visibility will be associated with increased political participation in contexts where ethnicity is politically salient. While it remains to be determined whether these patterns generalize beyond urbanites, we might expect that ethnic visibility is less consequential for political participation in rural areas where ethnoregional segregation makes political targeting — of goods or violence — less reliant on individual signals of ethnic group membership (Robinson, Forthcoming; Ejdemyr, Kramon and Robinson, Forthcoming).

Ethnic Party Support. The same logic that induces ethnically visible citizens to participate in politics at a higher rate when ethnic differences are politically salient may also make ethnic appeals by political elites more effective. To assess whether ethnic appeals are indeed more effective among the ethnically visible, I draw on survey data from Malawi that is part of a larger project on the political logic of cultural revival (Robinson, 2017). The Lhomwe ethnic group — a historically stigmatized and politically marginalized group — has been mobilized on the basis of their ethnicity by political elites only very recently. This mobilization has been spearheaded by a new ethnic association, Mulhako wa Alhomwe, established in 2008, and a new political party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), founded in 2005. Because the mobilization of the Lhomwe population is quite recent and ongoing, it offers a unique opportunity to address fundamental open questions about the process of ethnic mobilization as it evolves, and to collect the attitudes, motivations, and behaviors of those targeted.

I fielded an original survey targeted at members of the Lhomwe ethnic group across three districts in Malawi in October and November 2016. 1,254 individuals were interviewed face-to-face in their homes, of which 892 self-identified as Lhomwe. The survey collected standard demographic characteristics, measures of ethnic practice and identification, and political attitudes and behaviors. It included four different measures of ethnic identifiability. First, respondents were asked whether they are often mistaken for a member of a different ethnic group. This question was reverse coded so that it indicated ethnic visibility, in the form of rarely being misidentified. By this measure, 86% report being identifiably Lhomwe, with the remaining saying they were often mistaken for members of the Chewa, Mang'angja, or Yao ethnic groups, the other three main groups in the region. Second, respondents were asked the same question used in the project on interethnic trust discussed above: whether respondents see themselves as similar or different to most other Lhomwes. Here, only 56% are ethnically visible via typicality. Third, respondents were asked, "If a stranger heard your first or given name, could he know that you are Lhomwe just based on that name?" and just over a third of respondents (34%) said they could. Fourth,

[3] "Understanding that some people were unable to vote in the most recent national election in 2013, which of the following statements is true for you? You voted in the elections, You were not registered to vote, You were too young to vote, You decided not to vote, You could not find the polling station, You were prevented from voting, You did not have time to vote, You did not vote because you could not find your name in the voter registry, You did not vote for some other reason."

we asked the same question about surnames, with 47% possessing Lhomwe surnames. While these four indicators all capture some facet of ethnic visibility, they seem to be tapping into different components of visibility, as seen in the correlation matrix in Table 1. Across all four indicators, ethnic visibility is higher for respondents with four Lhomwe grandparents than for those with more mixed ethnic heritage (by ten to thirteen percentage points).

To assess the effect of Lhomwe visibility on support for the political party associated with the Lhomwe cultural revival (DPP), I utilize two questions on party support borrowed from the Afrobarometer. Respondents were first asked "Do you feel close to any particular political party?" and then, if so, which party. Overall, 62% of Lhomwe respondents felt close to the DPP party (compared to 55% of non-Lhomwe respondents in the same communities), with the vast majority of the remainder not feeling close to any party (i.e., very few Lhomwe reported feeling close to political parties other than the DPP). Across all four measures, ethnic visibility is positively associated with support for the DPP political party. Figure 2 plots the increase in the predicted probability of DPP support for each indicator of Lhomwe visibility. Effect sizes range from an increase of seven percentage points for having a Lhomwe surname to an increase of ten percentage points among those who see themselves as 'typically Lhomwe.'

These results suggest that ethnic visibility is indeed associated with greater support for a political party engaging in ethnic appeals. In the larger research project, I argue that the ongoing Lhomwe cultural revival, symbolically led by the DPP, is strategically aimed at increasing the visibility of ethnic origins among Lhomwe citizens in order to bind this population to the party in future elections. While past research has noted that cultural change often results from political mobilization, as elites emphasize some cultural features over others (Brass, 1979; Chandra, 2012), this change is typically treated as an epiphenomenal byproduct of mobilization rather than its strategic aim. Instead, I argue that the reification of cultural differences between Lhomwe and neighboring groups, and the resulting increase in visibility of Lhomwe ethnicity, is the express aim of the elite-led Lhomwe cultural revival in Malawi.

Strategic Self-Identification and Boundary Maintanance. Ethnic *in*visibility may also shape political and social incentives. In particular, when individuals are easily mistaken for members of another group — especially a group with lower social standing — we might expect to see stronger in-group identification and greater investment in the maintenance of boundary markers.

To evaluate this expectation, I draw on ongoing research with Claire Adida on African immigrant assimilation in the United States (Adida and Robinson, 2017b,a). Sociologists and political scientists have long documented black immigrant resistance to assimilation in the U.S., typically attributed to the fact that the segment of the host population into which they would most likely assimilate — black Americans — is itself a marginalized minority. The primary form of resistance, as documented by Waters (1999), is an insistence on an ethnic or national identity that differentiates black immigrants from black Americans. In particular, Waters found that "by evoking their foreign status" black immigrants aim to "'exit' from the stigmatized black category" (p. 151). Subsequent work on black immigrants has tended to echo this finding, showing that black immigrants strategically reject black racial identity in an effort to distance themselves from black Americans and avoid exposure to race-based discrimination (Foner, 1998; Chacko, 2003; Portes, 2004; Rogers, 2006; Greer, 2013; Treitler, 2013; Imoagene, 2017). Immigrants who are successful in doing so are granted a form of "elevated minority status" (Greer, 2013), in which they are still subject to race-based discrimination, but of a less extreme form: they are viewed as "different, special, and good" blacks (Rogers, 2006).

Maintainence of a non-racial national or ethnic identity is thus a strategic response to racial discrimination in the U.S., and the risk that such discrimination poses to black immigrants who are perceived to be black American. Yet black immigrants in the United States are a diverse group, and not all are equally 'mistaken' for black Americans. While the recent foreign heritage of some black immigrants is highly visible, the differences between other black immigrants and black Americans are 'invisible.' In our ongoing research, Adida and I argue that resistance to assimilation among black immigrants will vary with immigrants' visibility *as immigrants*, with more disincentives to assimilate among those less visible as 'foreign.' We evaluate this expectation in the context of African immigrants, and propose that those who could plausibly 'pass' as black American

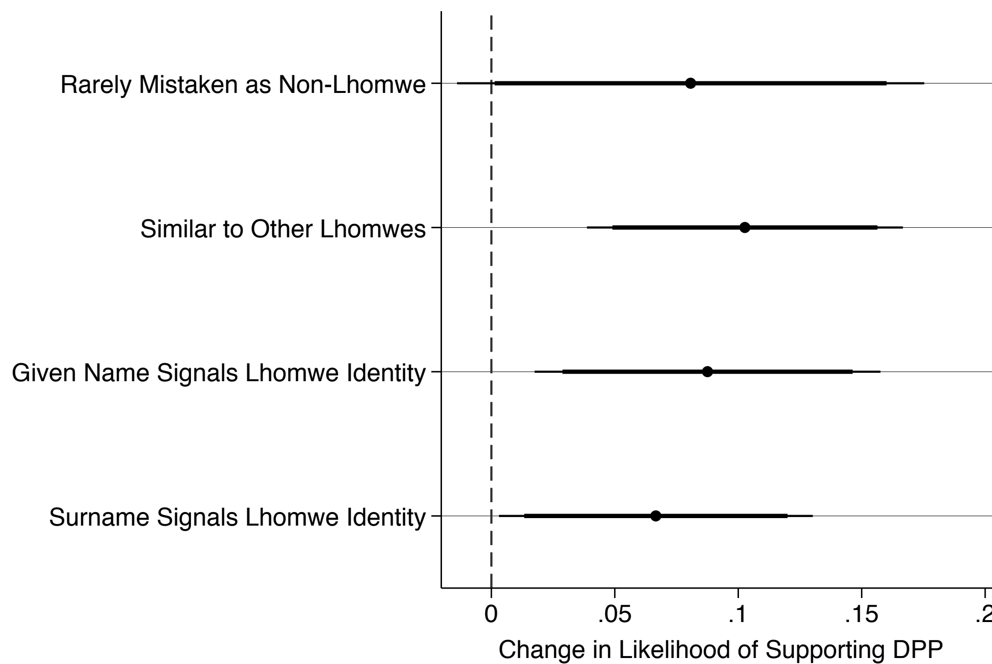
Table 1: Correlation Matrix of Lhomwe Visibility Indicators

	Rarely Mistaken	Similar to Others	Lhomwe First Name	Lhomwe Surname
Rarely Mistaken as Non-Lhomwe	1.00			
Similar to Other Lhomwes	0.01	1.00		
Given Name Signals Lhomwe Identity	0.07*	0.07	1.00	
Surname Signals Lhomwe Identity	-0.01	0.10**	0.48***	1.00

$^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$

Note: Survey data are from 892 Lhomwe Malawians in 2016 across three districts in Malawi (Robinson, 2017).

Figure 2: Effect of Ethnic Visibility on Ethnic Party Support



Note: Coefficients were estimated in four separate linear probability models that included enumerator fixed effects. Confidence intervals are shown for 90% and 95% confidence levels. Survey data are from 892 Lhomwe Malawians in 2016 across three districts in Malawi (Robinson, 2017).

are more likely to resist identifying as black and more likely to insist on an identification that differentiates them from black Americans. In contrast, African immigrants who are already more visible as immigrants — because they wear Muslim garb, or are perceived as physically distinct from African Americans — face less incentives to resist assimilation. In sum, we expect immigrant visibility to facilitate black identity formation.

In May 2016, we conducted in-depth interviews with 33 first and second generation African immigrants (self or parent born in Africa), as well as twenty black Americans (all four grandparents born in the U.S.), all of whom were university students. To gauge identifiability, we asked all African immigrant respondents how often they were mistaken for black Americans by strangers in the U.S. on a five point scale from "never" (high visibility) to "always" (low visibility). I will refer to the reverse coded version of this variable as "subjective identifiability." However, we also wanted a more objective measure of immigrant visibility. So, after the interviews, we took photos, videos, and names of willing respondents (83% of the interviewee sample), and showed them to 165 undergraduate students in the lab. Lab participants were asked to guess whether each of the 25 randomly assigned photos, videos, or names they viewed was an African immigrant or black American, and correct classification was monetarily incentivized. When these judgements are aggregated by immigrant interviewee, this gives us a measure of identifiability that ranges from 0 (always miscategorized as black American) to 1 (always categorized correctly as an immigrant), which I will refer to as "objective identifiability."

We observed significant variation in subjective identifiability, as shown in Figure 3. Those who have high visibility told us things like "people say I'm black, but not 'Black' " (2nd generation Ethiopian-American) and "people say 'you look foreign' " (2nd generation Somali-American). In contrast, immigrants with low visibility said things like "when you first see me, you see black, you don't see that I'm African" (2nd generation Ivorian-American) and "people looking at me on the outside without looking at my name are going to be like 'oh she's black American'" (2nd generation Nigerian-American). We observed similar variation in objective identifiability: overall, immigrants were correctly identified 70% of the time, but this ranged from 28% to 94% among the immigrants we interviewed. Subjective and objective identifiability were closely related: while interviewees who said they were never mistaken for black Americans were correctly identified 81% of the time that their photo was shown, this figure was only 51% for those who said they were always or usually mistaken for black Americans.

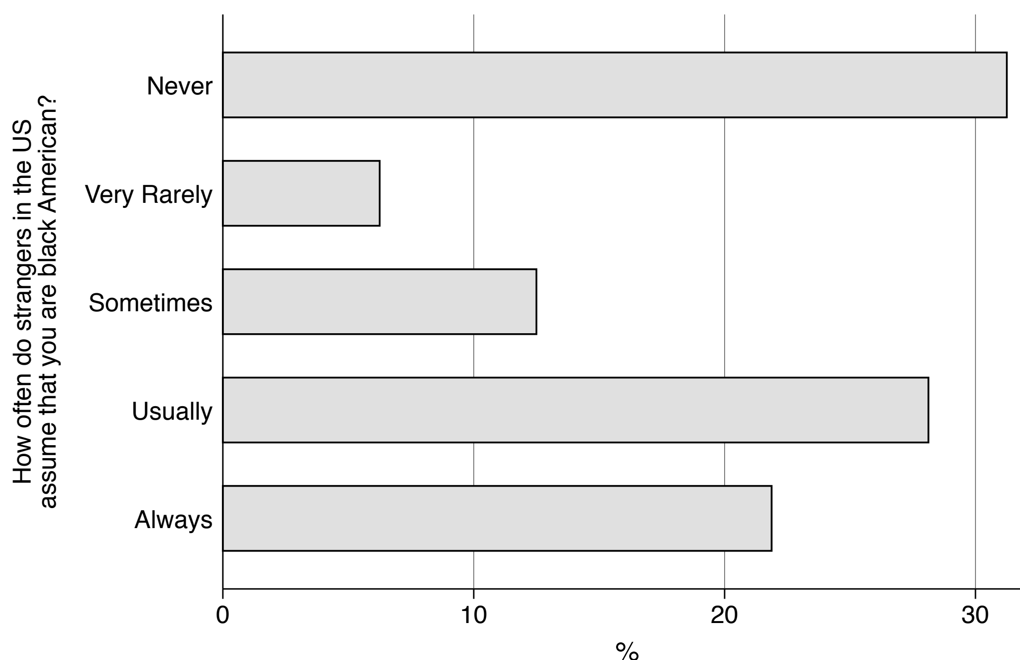
The two strongest correlates of immigrant visibility were geographic origins and religion. First, interviewees from the Horn of Africa region — Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia — were much more identifiable, both subjectively (4 vs. 2.5 on a five-point scale, $t = 2.70$, $p < 0.05$) and objectively (75% vs. 51%, $t = 2.77$, $p < 0.01$). This is because immigrants from the Horn of Africa are comprised primarily of Afroasiatic peoples who are, on average, phenotypically distinct from the Bantu and Nilotic groups that comprise the majority of the rest of the continent and from which most black Americans descend (Tishkoff et al., 2009). Second, Muslims reported being less often mistaken for Black American (1.56 vs. 3.50, $t = 3.91$, $p < 0.01$), but this difference was confirmed by objective identifiability only for women (79% vs. 60%, $t = 2.05$, $p < 0.10$).[4] This is consistent with our focus on visible markers of recent immigrant heritage, as women are more likely to be visibly marked as Muslim by wearing a *hijab* or other head covering.

We indeed find that immigrant visibility is related to patterns of group identification. Respondents were asked the identity to which they felt the strongest in an open-ended question. Controlling for generation (1st vs. 2nd), we find that objective immigrant visibility increases the likelihood of identifying primarily as "black" ($p = 0.13$): a one standard deviation increase in visibility more than doubles the likelihood of black identification from 10% to 21%. This increased racial identification comes at the expense of identifying primarily in terms of an African or national (e.g., Nigerian or Eritrean) identity ($p = 0.01$): a one standard deviation increase in identifiability translates into a reduction in the likelihood of African or national identification from 65% to 43%.

These patterns of group identification are important because racial group identification and the development of racial group consciousness are important in shap-

[4] Horn of Africa origins and Islam are not capturing the same thing, as we had Christians from Ethiopia and Eritrea and Muslims from Guinea, Liberia, and Sudan.

Figure 3: Variation in the “Subjective Identifiability” of African Immigrants in the United States



Note: Results are based on interviews in 2016 with 33 first and second generation African immigrants to the United States (Adida and Robinson, 2017b).

ing race-related political attitudes and behaviors among black Americans (McClain et al., 2009; Smith, 2014). In the larger project, we link the effect of immigrant visibility on racial identification to political attitudes and behaviors, including racial resentment, support for racially-progressive policies, and political engagement in the U.S. (Adida and Robinson, 2017b,a).

II. Conclusion

Consistent with past research (Habyarimana et al., 2009; Harris and Findley, 2014), the results presented here demonstrate that ethnic visibility cannot by universally assumed. However, these results suggest more than just low or variable rates of identifiability — they demonstrate that variation in ethnic visibility is potentially consequential for politically relevant attitudes and behaviors.

However, while I have posited a causal relationship between ethnic visibility and four politically relevant outcomes, most of the reported results are correlational. The study that comes the closest to causal identification is the one focused on African immigrants to the U.S., because we have the lab-based measure of immigrant identifiability. However, even in that case, it is possible that interviewees were able to signal their immigrant heritage in photos and videos, based on their degree of identification (although this endogeneity would probably work against our hypothesis, with those who identify as black being less and not more likely to signal foreign heritage). In the other three cases that rely on self-reports of ethnic typicality and identifiability, there is even more reason for concern. It may be that intergroup contact, political engagement, and exposure to ethnic appeals *shape* rather than result from perceived identifiability. Thus, an important avenue for future research is to better measure identifiability and to evaluate the factors that shape its variation across individuals, groups, and ethnic cleavages.

Demonstrating variability in ethnic visibility does not mean that existing theories that assume ethnic visibility should be discarded. Instead, a consideration of ethnic visibility should, at a minimum, provide scope conditions to the applicability of such theories to the individuals, groups, and ethnic boundaries for which ethnicity is indeed observable. My hope, however, is that an increased focus on ethnic visibility might do more. Recognizing ethnic visibility as a political resource, and

one that can be influenced by political and social action, should motivate us to develop a better theoretical understanding of the political processes that manipulate, constrain, or leverage ethnic identifiability.

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Revisiting the Relationship between Ethnic Diversity and Public Goods Provision

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Ethnic diversity is frequently treated as a problem for development. Whether it is popular literature, public policy circles, or social science scholarship, there appears to be convergence around the idea that both economic growth and social welfare are more difficult to achieve in ethnically heterogeneous settings. At first glance, there would appear to be good reasons for such an understanding. A large and influential body of scholarship argues that ethnic diversity impedes the provision of a wide range of public goods across countries, regions, cities, and communities from sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia to North America. These findings have led scholars working in this research tradition to increasingly focus on the micro-logics of this connection (Baldwin and Huber, 2010; Lieberman and McClendon, 2013; Habyarimana et al., 2009, 5).

In contrast, we make a case for pausing to reexamine the foundations of this scholarship and suggest that this might provoke a step back from the conventional wisdom. Specifically, we contend that the case for the so-called 'diversity-development deficit thesis' is overstated. For one thing, a rapidly expanding body of work questions whether the supposedly negative impact of diversity on public goods provision is really as straightforward and robust as the political economy scholarship suggests. There is empirical evidence that ethnic diversity might not dampen state provision of public goods in U.S. cities (Hopkins, 2011; Lee, Lee and Borcherding, 2016; Rugh and Trounstine, 2011), Indian provinces (Singh, 2011, 2015), Russian regions (Foa, 2014), countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Majerovitz, 2015), Tanzania (Miguel, 2004), Zambia (Gibson and Hoffman, 2013), and subnational units across the world (Gerring et al., 2015) and in Africa (Gisselquist, Leiderer and Niño-Zarazúa, 2014). Scholars also find contradictory results for the impact of ethnic diversity on different kinds of public services (Gisselquist, 2014), and for the effects of different kinds of heterogeneity on public goods provision (Chaves and Gorski, 2001). Furthermore, as we hope to delineate in this essay, the theoretical edifice of the political economy scholarship rests on a shaky theoretical foundation, in particular, a neglect of time and temporality.

Drawing on our own work, in combination with substantive contributions to a double special issue of *Comparative Political Studies* we have edited on this topic (Singh and vom Hau, 2016),[1] we argue that a close attention to history and politics is necessary and can provoke a reexamination of the conventional wisdom about the negative relationship between ethnic diversity and public goods provision.

Specifically, we suggest that the lion's share of evidence for the diversity-development deficit thesis comes from studies that use a measure of ethnic diversity constructed with data from the 1960s (Alesina, Baqir and Easterly, 1999; Easterly and Levine, 1997; La Porta et al.,

[1] See also Cramsey and Wittenberg (2016), Darden and Mylonas (2016), Gao (2016), McDonnell (2016), Soifer (2016), and Wimmer (2016).