

# Electoral Preferences Among Multiethnic Voters in Africa

Comparative Political Studies

1–32

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DOI: 10.1177/0010414020926196

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**Boniface Dulani<sup>1</sup>, Adam S. Harris<sup>2</sup>,  
Jeremy Horowitz<sup>3</sup> , and Happy Kayuni<sup>1</sup>**

## Abstract

Intermarriage is transforming Africa's ethnic landscape. In several countries on the continent more than a fifth of all marriages now cut across ethnic lines. As a result, there is a growing population of multiethnic citizens who descend from diverse family lineages. The growth of Africa's mixed population has the potential to affect politics in a variety of potentially far-reaching ways. In this article, we focus on one possible implication by examining the electoral preferences of multiethnic voters in contexts where ethnic bloc voting is commonplace. Drawing on survey data from Malawi and Kenya, we find that mixed individuals are less likely to support the party associated with their stated ethnic group, relative to mono-ethnics. We outline several possible explanations related to identity measurement, the link between identities and preferences, and social networks.

## Keywords

African politics, race, ethnicity and politics, elections, public opinion, and voting behavior

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<sup>1</sup>University of Malawi, Zomba, Malawi

<sup>2</sup>University College London, UK

<sup>3</sup>Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH, USA

## Corresponding Author:

Jeremy Horowitz, Dartmouth College, HB 6108, Hanover, NH 03755, USA.

Email: [jeremy.horowitz@dartmouth.edu](mailto:jeremy.horowitz@dartmouth.edu)

## Introduction

Ethnic intermarriage is rapidly changing the social landscape in Africa's diverse societies. However, standard measures used in the ethnic politics literature continue to treat individuals as descendants of singular ethnic lineages. This is true both of macro-level indicators, such as ethnic and linguistic fractionalization indices (Alesina et al., 2003; Fearon, 2003; Posner, 2004), and individual-level identity measures used in surveys conducted in Africa, including the Afrobarometer. Scholars in recent years have highlighted the importance of the multidimensionality of ethnicity both for how ethnic identities are conceptualized and measured (Chandra, 2004; Posner, 2004, 2005; Wimmer et al., 2009). Yet, despite some excellent work on bi-racial individuals in the United States and South Africa (Davenport, 2018; Harris, 2020) and studies of the political effects of intermarriage among politicians in Africa (Adida, 2015; Adida, Combes, et al., 2016), scholars of ethnic politics have yet to come to terms with the implications of intermarriage and the concomitant growth of multiethnic voters for theories of ethnic politics and measurement strategies.<sup>1</sup> Questions about ethnic intermixing are particularly important for Africa, the world's most diverse region, where a substantial share of marriages now cut across ethnic lines and a growing population of multiethnic individuals can no longer be coded according to a single ethnic lineage.

Whether scholars need to account for ethnic intermixing remains an open question. Although there is good reason to think that mixed voters may differ in how they conceptualize their identities, the strength of identity attachments, and the links between identities and political behaviors, it is equally plausible that mixed individuals may think and act in ways that mirror mono-ethnics. In this article, we explore whether multiethnics are distinct along one particular dimension: electoral preferences in contexts where ethnic bloc voting is common. Consistent with standard practice in survey research, we ask respondents in two countries—Malawi and Kenya—to report their ethnic identities using a question format that does not encourage mixed respondents to offer multiple affiliations. Then, to identify multiethnics, we ask for the ethnic identities of respondents' parents. The analysis explores whether multiethnics who self-identify as members of a particular group are less likely than mono-ethnics from the same group to support the party most closely associated with the group. The implications are straightforward. If, on one hand, we find that multiethnics express similar preferences as mono-ethnics, then we can be assured that current measurement practices and theoretical approaches are justified despite the growth of Africa's mixed population. If, on the other

hand, we discover that multiethnics are distinct, then we will have good reason to update theoretical approaches and measurement strategies to take account of multiethnicity.

Using data from a large national survey in Malawi and a smaller urban survey in Kenya, we find that multiethnics in both countries are consistently less likely than mono-ethnics from the same self-identified group to support the party associated with their ethnic community, by about 8 percentage points in both Malawi's national and Kenya's urban sample. These differences are especially pronounced among multiethnics whose parents' ethnic groups cut across the ethno-partisan divide. The results are robust to the inclusion of a wide range of controls that account for individual and contextual factors, and to various specifications that code group-party affiliations by more or less stringent criteria. The consistency of the effect—observed in two cases with differing levels of ethnic intermixing—suggests that the results likely have relevance to other cases in Africa and elsewhere.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows. First, to examine the prevalence of multiethnicity in Africa we turn to data from Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) conducted since the late 1980s. Although the DHS data do not provide a direct measure of the mixed population, we are able to examine intermarriage—a correlate of and precursor to multiethnicity—across a large sample of African countries. The DHS data show that the median country-level rate of ethnic intermarriage for a sample of 23 African countries is over 20%, and that intermarriage rates are increasing over time.<sup>2</sup> Second, we outline a set of theoretical expectations for whether and how multiethnics might differ from mono-ethnics in adhering to group-level norms of ethnic bloc voting. We focus on identity measurement, the linkages between identities and political preferences, and the diversity of social networks. Third, we turn to survey data from Malawi and Kenya to show that multiethnics are distinct in their political orientations. We then draw on additional analysis from the survey data and focus groups conducted in one country (Malawi) to explore possible mechanisms. The results indicate that multiple mechanisms are likely at work and suggest avenues for future research. The final section concludes by discussing the implications of the findings for measurement strategies, research on ethnic voting, and broader theories of ethnic political behavior.

## **Intermarriage and Multiethnicity in Africa**

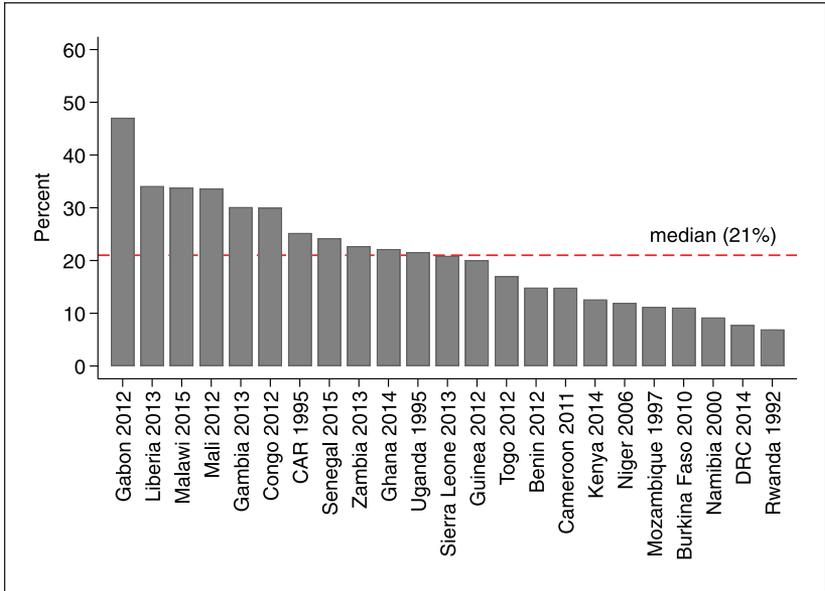
To explore how intermarriage is changing the ethnic landscape in Africa, we turn to data from DHS surveys. Ideally, we would like to track the prevalence

of multiethnics across countries and over time. This, however, is not possible because the DHS—like most population surveys—only captures singular ethnic affiliations for respondents and does not record the ethnic identities of respondents' parents. Instead, we focus on intermarriage rates, which can be tracked by comparing the ethnicities of couples included in the studies. Nonetheless, because intermarriage and multiethnicity are directly related (albeit with a time lag), the DHS data provide a useful window into the changing nature of ethnicity in Africa.

DHS surveys are conducted across a wide range of developing countries in Africa and elsewhere. The surveys collect data from nationally representative samples of women and men of reproductive age (typically women 15–49 years and men 15–59 years) and date back to the late 1980s, making it possible to track trends in intermarriage over time.<sup>3</sup> Most DHS surveys conducted in Africa record ethnicity information for respondents, though in several countries the surveys omit ethnicity questions for some or all years (e.g., Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Uganda in some years, and Rwanda after 1992), making these data sets unsuitable for inclusion here. In most cases, the ethnic coding schemes used by DHS are similar to other common measures (we use Fearon (2003) as a benchmark). However, in some instances, the ethnicity codes are substantially more disaggregated and would artificially exaggerate the extent of intermarriage. In such cases, we aggregate the ethnicity coding scheme to match Fearon (2003) as closely as possible, excluding surveys that could not be aggregated. Also, in some countries the ethnicity coding schemes used by DHS changed from one survey to the next. In these cases, we aggregated the coding for all surveys to match the least-disaggregated scheme used in any of the surveys. In total, our sample includes data from 58 surveys in 23 countries. Additional details are provided in Section 12 of the Supplemental Information (SI).

Figure 1 plots intermarriage rates from the most recent DHS survey for countries included in the sample (Table SI.12 reports intermarriage rates across time by country).<sup>4</sup> Most estimates are from surveys conducted between 2010 and 2015, but in some instances we rely on earlier data because more recent surveys either did not contain ethnicity information (e.g., Rwanda) or the DHS ethnicity coding scheme used in more recent surveys could not be matched to standard convention (e.g., Niger).

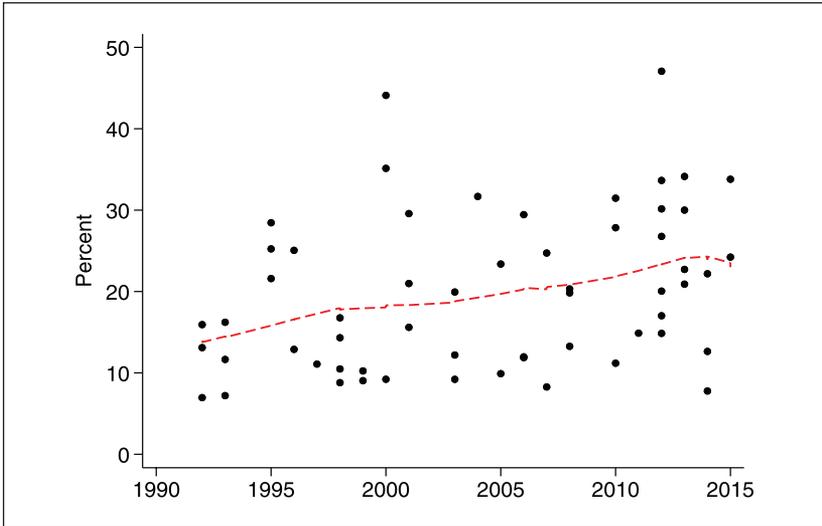
The median country-level intermarriage rate is 21%, and we observe considerable variation across countries.<sup>5</sup> At the higher end, several countries, including Gabon, Malawi, and Liberia, register intermarriages rates above 30%, whereas at the lower end, countries like Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Namibia are below 10%. Our two cases of interest, Malawi and Kenya, fall at opposite ends of the spectrum, which



**Figure 1.** Intermarriage Rates, Demographic and Health Surveys (most recent years).

increases the likelihood that findings from these countries will generalize to other parts of Africa. Figure 2 provides a scatterplot of country–year observations. The trend line (estimated with a lowess smoother) indicates an upward trend in country-level intermarriage rates for the sample. It is noteworthy that Africa is often characterized as a continent cleaved by ethnic differences though one in five marriages now bridge ethnic divides in several countries.

Although we are unable to explore the connection between intermarriage and multiethnicity for the full sample of DHS countries, we observe a close correlation in the two countries—Malawi and Kenya—for which we can make such a comparison using national survey data.<sup>6</sup> In Malawi, data from a 2016 survey show that multiethnics make up 20.0% of the adult population, relative to an intermarriage rate of 32.8% in the 2015 DHS survey. In Kenya, data from a 2012 survey show that multiethnics make up 8.3% of the adult population, relative to an intermarriage rate of 12.6% in the 2014 DHS survey. Higher rates of intermarriage, in comparison with multiethnicity, likely reflect the natural time lag between intermarriage and when multiethnic offsprings are born and are included in national surveys that typically sample only the adult population.



**Figure 2.** Intermarriage rates over time.

Figure is based on data from 58 national surveys in 23 countries between 1992 and 2015. Details are provided in Section 12 of the SI. The dashed line is based on a loess smoother (bandwidth = .8).

## Multiethnics and Ethnic Bloc Voting

A large body of scholarship documents a connection between ethnicity and voter behavior in diverse settings in Africa and elsewhere (Carlson, 2015; Chandra, 2004; Chauchard, 2016; Ferree, 2011; Posner, 2005). To account for this connection, the literature develops both instrumental explanations that trace ethnic voting to the desire to secure access to state-controlled resources (Carlson, 2015; Chandra, 2004; Posner, 2005; Wantchekon, 2003), and expressive explanations that build on social identity theory (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979) to argue that the preference for co-ethnic leaders may also stem from the psychological need to affirm the status of one's ethnic community (D. L. Horowitz, 1985). Missing from these treatments of ethnic voting, however, is a discussion of how multiethnicity may affect electoral preferences.

The omission of multiethnicity from the ethnic politics literature likely reflects the fact that much of the foundational scholarship on ethnic politics emerged at a time when ethnic intermarriage was less common and multiethnics made up only a small share of electorates in diverse societies. Moreover, despite the rapid growth of survey research in recent decades, many surveys—including the Afrobarometer—continue to rely

on traditional ways of measuring ethnicity as singular lineages. The increasing rates of intermarriage across Africa documented in the prior section indicate that multiethnicity deserves greater attention. In this article, we examine whether mixed voters differ in political outlooks and behaviors from mono-ethnic citizens, exploring specifically whether multiethnics are more likely to deviate from bloc voting patterns. We focus on contexts where ethnic bloc voting is commonplace, as is the case for many (though not all) electoral systems in Africa.<sup>7</sup>

How might electoral preferences differ for mixed individuals relative to mono-ethnics? One answer is that multiethnics *may not differ* from mono-ethnics in their political preferences. Self-reported identities may reflect the strength of identification with the various sides of one's family lineage, as is commonly assumed in work on the identity choices of bi-racials in the United States (Campbell & Rogalin, 2006; Davenport, 2016a, 2016b; Francis & Tannuri-Pianto, 2013; Lee, 1993; Nagel, 1995; Nobles, 2000). This may be especially true in cases like Malawi where social customs play an important role in structuring patterns of ethnic belonging. In Malawi, where most ethnic communities are matrilineal, it is generally assumed that children from matrilineal groups will identify as part of their mother's community and will often-times support the party associated with that group, with expectations reversed for children from patrilineal groups (on kinship traditions see Davison, 1997; Schneider, 1961). When multiethnics are asked to report their ethnic identities on household surveys, the answers they provide may represent the social definitions of ethnicity as determined by lineage traditions and as internalized by the respondent. For example, a voter with a Lomwe mother and Yao father (both matrilineal) might report her identity as Lomwe and support the party or candidate associated with the Lomwe, much like mono-ethnic Lomwes. In other contexts, where cultural traditions may not govern patterns of identification as forcefully—as in Kenya—stated identities may nonetheless reflect the strength of internal identity attachments. Thus, for example, a Luo–Kamba woman in Kenya who reports her ethnic identity as Luo may do so because she feels closer to the Luo side of her lineage and thinks of herself first and foremost as a Luo. Given this identification, in politics she may throw her lot in with the Luo side of her family, so to speak, and may, as a result, hold political preferences that mirror those of mono-ethnic Luos.

At the same time, multiethnics may differ in various ways that lead to preferences that diverge from mono-ethnics. We suggest four distinct possibilities relating to the meaning of self-reported identities, the link between identities and preferences, and the diversity of social networks. Although these mechanisms are not mutually exclusive, we outline each individually to emphasize the distinctions between them.

## *Identity Measurement*

First, there is good reason to expect that for at least some multiethnics, stated identities in household surveys will not fully capture felt identity attachments, particularly when respondents are asked to provide only one identity answer. In these cases, there is likely to be a rough but imperfect correspondence between expressed identities and internal self-perceptions for mixed respondents.<sup>8</sup> The potential mismatch between expressed and felt identities stems from multiple sources. Consider how social conventions may matter. In Malawi, cultural practice may lead a multiethnic whose parents are both from patrilineal ethnic communities to report her ethnicity as her father's group even if she feels closer to her mother's side of the family. Enumerator effects may also come into play. Recent work in Africa has shown that enumerator ethnicity alters how participants answer a variety of common survey questions (Adida, Ferree, et al., 2016). One particularly relevant study from Malawi (Dionne, 2014) documents a tendency by survey respondents to report their ethnicity to match that of the enumerator. This tendency may be especially pronounced in contexts where survey respondents believe that they stand to gain materially from signaling their identification as part of the group(s) that holds power.<sup>9</sup> Although mono-ethnics may strategically misrepresent their identities too, the proclivity to do so may be especially pronounced among multiethnics, for whom "passing" as a member of multiple ethnic groups may be easier. Finally, multiethnics may alter their expressed identities to signal belonging to the locally dominant ethnic community out of a desire to fit in and gain acceptance, even if they do not strongly identify with the dominant local group (Albrecht et al., 2015; Nagel, 1994).

For these reasons, stated ethnicities may not reflect actual ethnic attachments for multiethnics. Accordingly, we would not expect multiethnics who self-identify as members of particular groups to hold identical preferences to mono-ethnics from those same groups. A Chewa-Yao respondent in Malawi who reports her identity as Yao due to convention—or because she was interviewed by a Yao enumerator—may feel herself to be more closely allied with the Chewa branch of her family. Politically, she may lean toward the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), the party long associated with the Chewa, rather than the United Democratic Front (UDF), the party associated with the Yao in recent elections.

## *Ethnic Salience*

Second, multiethnics may attach less weight to ethnicity than their mono-ethnic counterparts, increasing the likelihood of deviating from group voting

norms. Multiethnics, of course, descend from parents who have chosen to enter into relationships with non-co-ethnic spouses or partners. These individuals may be atypically progressive in their outlook on ethnicity and may transmit such values to their children. In work on bi-racials in the United States, Davenport (2016a, 2018) proposes that children of bi-racial families come to adopt, through family socialization, a progressive orientation toward the place of race and ethnicity in society and politics. Bi-racial couples may also come into conflict with societal prejudices by virtue of being in mixed marriages, experiences that could lead to the rejection of prejudicial views that are then transmitted to children (Davenport, 2016a, 2018). Along these lines, we might expect multiethnics in Africa to hold especially strong disdain for ethnic politics, leading them to give less weight to ethnic considerations when forming electoral preferences.

Ethnicity may also matter less to multiethnics because they will be less inclined to view co-ethnic candidates (those who share their stated ethnic identity) as “ethnic champions”—faithful representatives of communal interests. Instrumental approaches to ethnic voting suggest that voters prefer the candidate or party that they believe will best represent the interests of their ethnic community, relying on candidate ethnicity and the broader ethnic profiles of parties as cues that signal likely future behavior—which groups will be favored and which will be neglected (Chandra, 2004; Ferree, 2011; Posner, 2005). For multiethnics, however, ethnicity may serve as a weak signal, as they have a foot in two different communities. Thus, a Luo–Luhya voter in Kenya may see Raila Odinga, the long-time Luo leader, as a less faithful representative of her “ethnic interests” than someone with two Luo parents. For expressive reasons, too, mixed individuals may have weaker ties to parties associated with either parent’s ethnic group: by aligning with one parent, the individual denies the other side of her identity. For mixed individuals, then, ethnicity might exert a less powerful influence on voting decisions, leading multiethnics to give greater weight to other considerations and to deviate from bloc voting patterns more often than mono-ethnics.

### *Identity Repertoires*

Third, multiethnics may be less likely to vote with their self-reported identity groups, not because ethnicity matters less, but because multiethnic voters have a wider array of options for ethnic voting. Here, we draw on the concept of identity repertoires developed by Posner (2005), that notes that voters typically have multiple ethnic identities that may serve as the basis for coordinated political action (e.g., tribal and linguistic identities in Zambia). Multiethnic voters may also be able to choose between multiple ethnic

affiliations—mother’s group or father’s group—for strategic reasons. Thus, we might expect that multiethnics whose parents’ groups are associated with different candidates or parties will strategically select the option that has the greater chance of winning or securing benefits after the election. As a result, multiethnics may deviate from the voting patterns of their stated ethnic groups by politically aligning with their non-stated ethnic community. By this account ethnicity is no less salient politically for multiethnics; what differs is merely that mixed individuals have a wider menu of options for political affiliation when it comes to ethnic voting.

### *Social Networks*

Finally, multiethnics may differ from mono-ethnics due to the distinct character of information and opinion flows within family and social networks. A large body of scholarship from a variety of contexts demonstrates that the diversity of family and social networks can affect individual preferences (Baker et al., 2006; Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995; Iyengar et al., 2018; Jennings et al., 2009; Jennings & Niemi, 1976). Multiethnics are likely to be situated in more diverse networks, particularly when their parents come from groups associated with different political parties. Thus, a Luhya–Kikuyu voter in Kenya’s 2017 election would likely find herself exposed to competing arguments and social pressures in her routine interactions with family members, as Luhyas and Kikuyus typically held opposing preferences in that race—whereas mono-ethnic Luhyas and Kikuyus likely would not.

### **Context and Data**

To explore whether multiethnics hold distinct preferences, we draw on survey data from Malawi and Kenya. Both are highly diverse countries in which no single ethnic group makes up more than about 20% to 30% of the population, as is true of most African countries.<sup>10</sup> In both countries ethnic and regional bloc voting has been routine since the re-introduction of multiparty political competition in the early 1990s (Dulani & Dionne, 2014; Ferree et al., 2014; Ferree & Horowitz, 2010; Tsoka, 2009).

Our analysis employs data from large-scale household surveys. The Malawi data come from a nationally representative survey carried out by the Governance and Local Development (GLD) program in March to April 2016 (Lust et al., 2016). The sample size is 7,668 and covers 15 of Malawi’s 28 districts in all three of Malawi’s regions. The survey oversampled Malawi’s Northern Region, and in all analyses we weight the data to match the population distribution across regions based on the 2018 census. The Kenya data

**Table 1.** Multiethnic Respondents by Self-Reported Ethnicity.

Malawi	Percent	Kenya	Percent
Chewa	16.4	Kikuyu	11.7
Lomwe	23.6	Luo	21.4
Yao	14.5	Kamba	7.9
Ngoni	24.1	Kisii	12.7
Tumbuka	15.2	Luhya	12.4
Mang'anja	32.8	Kalenjin	17.5
Sena	15.0	Meru	15.4
Tonga	19.6		
Lambya	25.8		
Nyanja	16.1		
Total	20.0	Total	13.7

come from a more limited survey conducted in Nairobi County, the area that contains the nation's capital, in June to July 2016 ( $N = 2,203$ ). Additional details on sampling for both surveys can be found in Section 2 of the SI.

### *Multiethnics in the Survey Data*

Both surveys include a variant of the standard ethnicity question (“what is your ethnic group?”) used in micro-level research throughout Africa and other parts of the world. In keeping with common practice, we did not prompt respondents to offer more than one answer. Our own experience using this question in various settings across Africa suggests that multiethnics have little difficulty responding to such questions and rarely offer multiple responses, perhaps indicating that multiethnicity as an identity category is not widespread. The surveys then asked respondents about their parents' ethnic groups. We code multiethnics as those whose parents are from different groups. While the data do not allow us to explore the diversity of family lineages further back, the approach used here provides a useful way of differentiating respondents in terms of proximate descent.

Table 1 reports the share of multiethnics in each sample, disaggregating results by self-reported ethnic group for all communities for which we have a sufficiently large sample (50 or more respondents). It shows that 20.0% of respondents in the Malawi sample are from mixed-ethnicity families, and the prevalence of mixed individuals ranges from 14.5% for those who self-identify as Yao to 32.8% for those who self-identify as Mang'anja. The Kenya sample shows that 13.7% of respondents in Nairobi County are from mixed

backgrounds, with a range from 7.9% for those who self-identify as Kamba to 21.4% for those who self-identify as Luo. These findings are interesting in their own right, indicating that a substantial share of individuals conventionally coded as members of particular communities in fact have more diverse lineages. Whether this matters for our theories of ethnic political behavior, of course, depends on whether multiethnics differ politically from their mono-ethnic peers.

While the data do not allow for a comprehensive examination of the factors that affect how multiethnics self-identify in survey settings, the patrilineal/matrilineal distinction appears to play an important role, though not uniformly so. In Kenya (Nairobi), where all groups are patrilineal, most multiethnics (73%) report their identity as their father's ethnic group, though just over a quarter deviate from what appears to be standard convention. In Malawi, where several major ethnic groups are matrilineal, only 46% of multiethnics identify with their father's ethnic group, and we observe the expected variation across patrilineal and matrilineal groups, though again the patterns are not uniform. We expect that mixed individuals whose parents are both from patrilineal groups should be more likely to identify as part of their father's group, while those whose parents are both from matrilineal groups should be more likely to identify with their mother's community. Consistent with this expectation, 79% of multiethnics whose parents are both from patrilineal groups identify with their father's group, while only 32% of those whose parents are both from matrilineal groups do so. Among multiethnics who have one parent from a matrilineal group and another from a patrilineal group, the majority (67%) identify with their father's group. Whether these patterns reflect the strength of identity ties and/or some degree of convention remains a question for future research.

### *Group-Party Linkages*

To examine whether multiethnics deviate from the bloc voting patterns of their self-reported ethnic groups more often than mono-ethnics, we first match groups to parties. For each ethnic group, we identify the most-preferred candidate or party at the time of the survey (using data from mono-ethnic respondents only). Group-party linkages are reported in Tables 2 and 3 for Malawi and Kenya, respectively. The leading party for each group is shown in bold. In Malawi, we measure electoral preferences using a retrospective question on vote choice in the 2014 presidential elections ("Whom did you vote for president in the 2014 presidential elections?"), which was posed only to those who reported that they had voted in the election (82% of the sample). In Kenya, we measure electoral preferences using a prospective question about the 2017

**Table 2.** Electoral Preferences by Ethnic Group—Malawi (percentages).

Ethnic group	N	DPP	PP	MCP	UDF	Other	DK/RTA
Chewa	703	28.9	7.5	<b>55.9</b>	1.3	0.3	6.1
Lomwe	507	<b>86.9</b>	5.1	2.6	3.7	0.4	1.4
Yao	696	29.8	10.4	2.5	<b>50.8</b>	0.1	6.4
Ngoni	472	<b>67.0</b>	10.2	17.4	2.8	0.6	1.9
Tumbuka	1,143	<b>44.0</b>	36.5	15.4	1.1	0.3	2.7
Mang'anja	337	<b>86.1</b>	9.1	0.0	3.6	0.3	0.9
Sena	419	<b>83.2</b>	9.0	1.8	3.8	1.0	1.2
Tonga	181	22.4	<b>56.5</b>	11.9	4.6	2.0	2.3
Lambya	138	<b>50.0</b>	42.8	6.5	0	0	0.7
Nyanja	107	<b>65.2</b>	24.1	1.0	9.8	0	0

Most-preferred party shown in bold.

**Table 3.** Electoral Preferences by Ethnic Group—Kenya (percentages).

Ethnic group	N	Jubilee	CORD	Other	None	DK/RTA
Kikuyu	439	<b>74.7</b>	0.9	4.6	6.6	13.2
Luo	305	14.8	<b>48.5</b>	8.5	14.4	13.7
Kamba	255	<b>38.0</b>	34.9	5.1	7.8	14.1
Kisii	138	26.8	<b>32.6</b>	10.9	12.3	17.4
Luhya	325	28.3	<b>30.7</b>	12.9	11.4	16.7
Kalenjin	47	<b>57.5</b>	4.3	14.9	8.5	14.9
Meru	44	<b>55.6</b>	0.0	11.4	13.6	20.5

Most-preferred party shown in bold.

presidential election (“Who would you vote for in the next election if it were held now?”).<sup>11</sup> Our measure of electoral preferences for Kenya shows higher rates of uncertainty, no preference, and refusal to answer than in the Malawi data, likely due to differences in question format.

In Malawi (Table 2), most groups expressed a clear first preference (50% or more), the exception being the Tumbuka. In Kenya (Table 3), bloc voting is less common in the survey data, likely because the question used to measure electoral preferences was prospective rather than retrospective and because ethnic alliances were in flux at the time of the survey.<sup>12</sup> While ethnic bloc voting is less than uniform across ethnic groups in both surveys, the tests below include all ethnic groups. As a robustness test, we exclude groups with a weak first preference—that is, those for which the most-preferred party is

**Table 4.** Electoral Preferences (% Voting for Group's Most-Preferred Party).

	Malawi	Kenya (Nairobi)
Mono-ethnics	66.7	52.9
Mixed	59.5	44.6
Difference	-7.2***	-8.3**

Two-sided *t* tests. \**p* < .10. \*\**p* < .05. \*\*\**p* < .01.

supported by less than 50% of the group (results reported in Section 5 of the SI). Also, for several groups the most-preferred party is ambiguous, as the gap between the most-preferred and second-preferred party is small and in some cases not significant (e.g., the Tumbuka in Malawi and the Kisii and Luhya in Kenya). For groups that do not have a clear first preference, we might not expect to observe a difference in voting behavior between mixed respondents and mono-ethnics. Including these groups in the main tests reported below likely biases the results toward a null finding. As a robustness test we re-run the main models without ethnic groups for which the gap between the most-preferred and second party is less than 10% (results reported in Section 5 of the SI).

## Results

Our measure of vote choice comes from the questions used above in Tables 2 and 3 to probe electoral intentions in presidential contexts, retrospectively in Malawi and prospectively in Kenya (question wording for all items used in the analysis is in Section 1 of the SI). The dependent variable is a dichotomous measure that takes a value of 1 for respondents who reported voting for (or in Kenya, intending to vote for) the party associated with their stated ethnic group, and 0 otherwise—based on the group-party linkages in Tables 2 and 3.<sup>13</sup> The key independent variable—*mixed ethnicity*—is an indicator variable that takes a value of 1 for respondents who report parents of different ethnicities, and 0 for those who report parents from the same group (we exclude those who do not provide ethnicity information for both parents, or for themselves).<sup>14</sup> Our tests ask whether mixed members of each group are more likely to deviate from group voting norms by supporting a party/candidate other than the one supported by the plurality of the group. For example, we examine whether multiethnics who self-identify as Chewa in Malawi or Kikuyu in Kenya are less likely to support the parties associated with those groups (the MCP and Jubilee, respectively) than mono-ethnic Chewas and Kikuyus.<sup>15</sup>

Table 4 shows that mixed-ethnics in both Malawi and Kenya (Nairobi) are less likely to support the party associated with their self-reported ethnic group than mono-ethnics, by 7.2 percentage points in Malawi and 8.3 points in urban Kenya (for urban Malawi the difference is 16.1 points). These differences are significant at the 5% level.

To explore these results more carefully, we estimate linear probability models using ordinary least squares (OLS) that control for a variety of potential confounds. First, we control for local ethnic geography. Recent work from Ghana shows that voters are more likely to deviate from ethnic voting norms when they live in more diverse areas in which their own community makes up a smaller share of the local population (Ichino & Nathan, 2013; Nathan, 2016). Multiethnics in both Malawi and Kenya disproportionately reside in diverse localities.<sup>16</sup> While including controls for local ethnic geography runs the risk of soaking up variation in the dependent variable that might be due to the effects of mixed ethnicity, we take the more conservative approach by opting to include such measures. In Malawi, we use census data to estimate the ethnic composition of localities. Following Ichino and Nathan (2013), we measure local ethnic geography as the spatially weighted proportion of each respondent's ethnic group in a 30-km radius around the respondent's enumeration area (EA) in rural areas and a 0.5-km radius in urban areas.<sup>17</sup> In Kenya, where disaggregated census data are not publicly available, we generate estimates for local ethnic composition using survey data. Because the Kenya sample is urban only, we measure co-ethnic share within 0.5-km circles around each respondent. Given that random selection was used to identify respondents, we expect that these estimates should be noisy but not biased.<sup>18</sup> The results for both countries are robust to alternative measures of local ethnic geography estimated with different sized radii (not shown).

Models include controls for education, wealth (using household asset indices for each country), age, gender, and a measure of the length of time respondents have lived in their current location (defined as a categorical variable: 0–5, 6–10, 11 years or more). We control for whether respondents were interviewed by a non-co-ethnic enumerator to account for potential enumerator effects (Adida, Ferree, et al., 2016). For mixed respondents, this is based on whether the enumerator matches their *stated* ethnicity. Note that for Malawi, where information on enumerator ethnicity is not available in the survey, we use data from a question that asked respondents what they believed the interviewers' ethnicity to be, excluding those who were uncertain (13.9% of the sample).<sup>19</sup> We also include a set of country-specific controls. For Malawi, these include a measure of whether respondents live in urban areas and a measure of whether respondents' self-identified ethnic group is matrilineal.<sup>20</sup>

The Kenya model includes a control for whether respondents were affected by inter-ethnic violence in the 1992, 1997, and/or 2007 elections. All models include ethnic group fixed effects to account for different base rates of ethnic bloc voting across communities, and the Malawi models cluster standard errors by district.

The results are reported in Table 5. The estimated effect of *mixed ethnicity* is similar to the uncontrolled results in Table 4: Multiethnics in Malawi are less likely to support their stated group's most-favored party by 7.8 percentage points in the full sample (Model 1) and 8.0 points in urban areas (Model 2). Results for Kenya's urban-only sample show that multiethnics are 8.1 points less likely to register an intention to vote for the party most closely associated with their stated ethnic group (Model 3).

Regarding control variables, we find that older respondents are more likely to support the party associated with their ethnic community.<sup>21</sup> Consistent with Ichino and Nathan (2013) and Nathan (2016), we observe a positive association between local ethnic geography and ethnic party support, with respondents in both rural and urban localities being more likely to register support for the party associated with their stated ethnic community in more ethnically homogeneous areas. Other control variables are either unrelated or are not systematically associated with the likelihood of voting with one's stated group.

We present additional results and robustness tests in the SI. First, we re-estimate the results by ethnic group for each country and show that the negative effect of mixed ethnicity holds across most of the larger communities in each case, confirming that the results are not driven by any one group in either country (Section 4 of the SI). Second, we exclude in turn groups that do not have a clear first preference and groups that have an ambiguous first preference and find that the results are robust to each of these exclusions (Section 5 of the SI). Third, we probe the role of matrilineality in Malawi and find that mixed ethnicity is associated with a reduced propensity to vote for the party associated with one's stated group both among mixed respondents whose mother's lineage is matrilineal and for those whose mother's group is not, though the effect is only significant for the former group (Section 6 of the SI). Fourth, we test the expectation that the negative effect of mixed ethnicity should be greater when mixed lineages cut across ethno-partisan divisions. Results in Section 7 of the SI confirm that the overall reductive effect is larger for mixed respondents whose parents' groups are associated with different parties than for those whose parents' groups are not. For mixed individuals whose parents' groups are linked to the *same* party, we observe varied effects across groups and find that in some instances mixed respondents are *more likely* to support the party associated with their stated ethnic group than their

**Table 5.** Models of Vote Choice.

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Malawi	Malawi	Kenya
	(National)	(Urban)	(Urban)
Mixed ethnicity	-0.078** (0.029)	-0.080** (0.020)	-0.081** (0.036)
Time lived in area	-0.010 (0.018)	-0.046 (0.021)	-0.027* (0.015)
Age	-0.002*** (0.000)	-0.002*** (0.000)	0.005*** (0.001)
Education	-0.021* (0.010)	-0.021*** (0.002)	-0.006 (0.006)
Male	-0.010 (0.017)	-0.062*** (0.011)	-0.013 (0.024)
Wealth (asset index)	-0.016*** (0.005)	-0.013 (0.009)	0.010 (0.010)
Co-ethnic share	0.205** (0.095)	0.330** (0.082)	0.097* (0.056)
Non-co-ethnic interviewer	0.009 (0.022)	0.020 (0.016)	-0.067** (0.030)
Constant	0.675*** (0.073)	0.834*** (0.141)	0.551*** (0.090)
Country-specific controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic group FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	5,066	693	1,542
R <sup>2</sup>	.121	.201	.151

OLS models of vote choice in which the dependent variable takes a value of 1 for respondents who report voting for (in Kenya, intending to vote for) the party most-preferred by their stated ethnic group, and 0 otherwise. *Co-ethnic share* is defined as the share of co-ethnics in a 30-km radius in rural areas and a 0.5-km radius in urban areas, based on census data for Malawi and survey data for Kenya. Country-specific controls for Malawi include a measure of whether respondents' stated ethnic group is matrilineal and an urban indicator (full sample only), and for Kenya an indicator for whether respondents were affected by inter-ethnic violence related to elections in 1992, 1997, or 2007. Note that respondents who identify as Mang'anja in Malawi (about 8% of the sample) are dropped from the analysis because *co-ethnic share* is missing for these respondents (the census data do not report Mang'anja share at the EA level). The Malawi data are weighted to adjust for regional oversampling. Details for other survey-based items are in Section I of the SI. Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered by district for Malawi models.

\**p* < .10. \*\**p* < .05. \*\*\**p* < .01.

mono-ethnic counterparts. These varied effects appear to be driven by differential base rates of ethnic voting across the ethnic communities among which intermarriage is common, especially in Malawi (see Section 7 of the SI for additional discussion).

Finally, we address measurement bias. Given that the data used here are based on self-reported vote choice/intentions—rather than actual voting behavior—bias is a potential concern. As noted, to address possible bias introduced by enumerator effects, we control for interviewer ethnicity in all models (based on perceived ethnicity in Malawi and actual ethnicity in Kenya). In addition, we show in Section 11 of the SI that the negative effect of multiethnicity obtains both among those interviewed by non-co-ethnics and co-ethnics, though in Kenya the results are not significant in the latter case due to the reduced sample size (only 22% of the Kenyan sample—437 respondents—were interviewed by a co-ethnic enumerator). A separate concern is that respondents may over-report support for the incumbent party (Adida et al., 2019), which could bias the survey data in problematic ways if multiethnics are systematically more likely to misrepresent their electoral choices in this way. However, comparing district-level estimates of vote choice from the Malawi survey to official returns shows that while bias in favor of the incumbent appears to be widespread, the magnitude of the bias does not differ appreciably across mono- and multiethnics (see Section 11 of the SI).

## **Discussion**

Why are multiethnics different? While our data are not sufficiently rich to allow for definitive conclusions, additional analysis of the survey data from both countries and focus groups conducted in Malawi provide suggestive evidence that multiple mechanisms are at work. We examine each mechanism in turn.

### *Identity Measurement*

To probe patterns of identification and identity expression, we conducted 10 focus groups in Southern Malawi in September 2017. A total of 80 participants were involved, including both mixed and mono-ethnic individuals. The focus groups were conducted by local research assistants and supervised by one of the authors (Dulani). While the sample was not intended to be representative of Malawi's multiethnic population, the focus groups provide useful insights regarding the fluid and context-specific nature of identity expression. Participants indicated that multiethnics hold complex identities that are not captured well by standard survey questions. In the following

examples, multiethnics in Malawi describe themselves as “between” two cultural communities, suggesting that singular answers to identity measures used in household surveys do not represent the dual-nature of felt identities for at least some respondents:

Each parent in the house, they mind about their cultural heritage; in so [doing], leaving the children divided. The parents try to raise the children in one cultural heritage, but it is hard for them both to do this. The children are like in between there. (Participant 2, Zomba)

Each cultural heritage is of importance because when the father is telling the children [about his ethnic heritage], he is sure that he is doing the right thing; same with the mother that she is telling the children the right thing [when she emphasizes her ethnic heritage]. So we cannot say that one is [more] important than the other. All is equal. (Participant 1, Zomba)

Focus group participants indicated that expressed identities may change according to location. Speaking about multiethnics, one participant reported that, “They go to matrilineal and they are Yao there. The other day they go to patrilineal and they are Lomwe there” (Participant 1, Zomba).<sup>22</sup> Others noted that identification varies across localities according to local custom. Finally, others suggested that even in the South of Malawi, where most groups are matrilineal, it is common to identify with the father’s tribe due to the father’s customary leadership role in the family. For example, one respondent reported that, “We identify ourselves with the tribe of the father because he is dominant in the family” (Participant 3, Zomba).

To gain some leverage on whether and how self-reported ethnicities for mixed individuals vary according to context, we examine the association between stated identities in Malawi (where we have a larger mixed sample than in Kenya) and enumerator ethnicity. Analysis reported in Table SI.8 shows that enumerator ethnicity is associated with a clear pattern in self-reporting, with mixed respondents on average more likely to report their ethnicity as their father’s or mother’s group by 11 to 13 percentage points when the enumerator is perceived to be from either group (relative to an enumerator perceived to be from neither). Because enumerators were not randomly assigned, we cannot infer a causal effect; yet the pattern is consistent with the notion that individuals may alter how they self-identify in response to contextual factors.

To the extent that stated identities vary across context rather than capturing stable self-images, we should not be surprised to find that multiethnics are less likely to adhere to the group voting patterns of their self-reported ethnic groups. A priority for future research will be to investigate the connection

between stated identities and internal identity attachments, and the factors that influence self-reported identities among multiethnics.

### *Ethnic Salience*

Multiethnics may be distinct because they attach less weight to ethnicity—relative to other considerations—than mono-ethnics in political decision making. Although measuring the electoral salience of ethnicity with survey data is no simple task, the Malawi survey provides relevant evidence from two indicators that probe beliefs about how important it is that: (a) the members of one's ethnic group vote together and (b) one's ethnic group elects a co-ethnic representative to office.<sup>23</sup> We find that mixed respondents are about 4.9 percentage points ( $p = .06$ ) less likely than mono-ethnics to feel that it is important for members of their stated ethnic group to vote together (54.6% vs. 59.5%) and about 6.0 points ( $p < .01$ ) less likely to believe it is important that their stated ethnic group elects a co-ethnic representative to office (70.1% vs. 76.1%).<sup>24</sup> However, when we regress vote choices on these salience measures using the full sample (see Table SI.9 in Section 9 of the SI), we do not observe a systematic reduction in bloc voting among those for whom ethnicity is less politically salient. Thus, the data only partially support the notion that mixed-ethnics are less likely to vote with their stated ethnic group because they are less inclined than mono-ethnics to value coordinated political action or ethnic representation.

### *Ethnic Repertoires*

Multiethnics may deviate from the bloc voting norms of their stated ethnic groups because they have a wider “choice set” for ethnic voting. We explore this proposition by examining the voting behavior of multiethnics who do not support the party associated with their stated ethnic group in Malawi.<sup>25</sup> We expect that if the proposition is correct, such voters should: (a) prefer the party associated with their non-stated identity group over parties associated with neither side of their family lineage, and (b) be especially likely to support the party associated with their non-stated identity when the party associated with their stated group is not viable.

We find support for both propositions. First, Table 6 displays vote choices in Malawi's 2014 presidential election from our survey data. It shows in Column 2 that multiethnics who chose not to support the party associated with their stated ethnic group were slightly *less* likely to vote for the party associated with their non-stated group than for parties associated with neither group (17.6% vs. 22.9%)—a finding that appears to be at odds with the ethnic

**Table 6.** Vote Choice—Malawi 2014 Presidential Election (percentages).

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Mono-ethnics	Multiethnics (all)	Multiethnics (groups cross)
Vote for party associated with . . .			
Stated ethnic group	66.7	59.5	45.0
Non-stated ethnic group	n/a	17.6	34.2
Neither	33.3	22.9	20.8
Observations	4,556	1,046	497

Column 2 includes all multiethnic respondents. Column 3 includes only multiethnics whose parents’ ethnic groups are associated with different political parties.

repertoires hypothesis. However, it is important to note that about half of all multiethnics in the sample have parents whose ethnic groups are associated with the same party. Our coding scheme counts such individuals as voting for the party associated with their stated ethnic group, though of course in doing so they are also voting for the party associated with their non-stated group. A better test of the ethnic repertoires mechanism is offered in Column 3, which examines only multiethnics whose parents’ communities are associated with different parties. Among this subset, we observe that voters who do not support the party associated with their stated ethnic group are considerably more likely to vote for the party associated with their non-stated identity than for parties not associated with neither group: 34.2% vs. 20.8%, a difference of 13.4 percentage points ( $p < .01$ ). Although only suggestive, this finding is consistent with the notion that multiethnics may deviate from the bloc voting patterns of their stated ethnic groups because they have alternative options for identity voting.

Second, we find some evidence that multiethnics are particularly likely to abandon the party associated with their stated ethnic group in favor of the party associated with their non-stated group when the first option is not viable. Due to the complex nature of Malawi’s 2014 election, in which a crowded field of candidates competed for the presidency amid shifting partisan allegiances (Dulani & Dionne, 2014), assessing the viability of one’s preferred candidate was likely a challenge for most voters. Nonetheless, we observe that multiethnic voters from groups linked to the parties that ultimately proved least successful in the election were more prone to deviate from the bloc voting norms of their stated ethnic groups. Consider the Yao and the Tonga. The Yao were the only major group associated with the UDF, whose candidate, Atupele Muluzi, came in fourth, winning only 13.7% of

the popular vote according to the official results. The Tonga were the only group associated with the People's Party, whose candidate, the incumbent president Joyce Banda, came in third, securing 20.2% of the official vote. Results in Table SI.3 show that mixed Yaos and mixed Tongas were substantially more likely to deviate from group voting patterns relative to mixed respondents whose stated ethnic communities were aligned with other more viable parties—by 19.4 and 13.1 percentage points, respectively, relative to 4.5 points for mixed respondents in all other groups. And among both the Yao and Tonga, multiethnics whose parents' groups were linked to different parties were more likely to support the party associated with their non-stated identity group than parties associated with neither side of their lineage.<sup>26</sup> While these patterns are again only suggestive, they indicate that having a diverse “menu of options” for ethnic voting may help to explain why multi-ethnics more frequently deviate from the group voting norms of their stated groups than mono-ethnics.

### *Social Networks*

Multiethnics may also hold different preferences than mono-ethnics because they are situated within more diverse social networks and are therefore more likely to encounter a wider array of partisan opinions, information, and social pressures. The Kenya survey data confirm that multiethnics have more diverse social networks, finding that only 33% of multiethnics report that all or most of their “close friends and family members” are from their stated ethnic group, relative to 49% for mono-ethnics, a difference of 16 percentage points ( $p < .01$ ).<sup>27</sup> In part, this difference may reflect educational disparities (79% of multiethnics in the Kenya sample report having completed secondary school or beyond, relative to 73% of mono-ethnics) and the fact that multiethnics in Nairobi are more likely to have been born in Nairobi (32% vs. 21%). Yet, in regression models the difference in social network diversity remains significant after accounting for differences in birth location and education, as well as the larger set of controls included in Table 5 (results not shown). When we regress voting intentions on this measure of the diversity of social networks for the full sample (see Table SI.10), we find that Kenyan respondents are less likely to adhere to the bloc voting norms of their self-reported ethnic groups when they are situated in more ethnically diverse social networks. While these data obviously cannot demonstrate that greater network diversity affects preference formation, they provide suggestive evidence for a mechanism that merits further exploration.

In sum, we find suggestive evidence in favor of all four proposed mechanisms. Although the findings in this section are preliminary, it is worth noting

that the alternative mechanisms outlined here have distinct implications for expectations regarding whether and how multiethnicity alters broader patterns of ethnic political behavior in multiparty systems. Identity voting is often characterized as an impediment to democratic accountability. Thus, to the extent that ethnic intermixing reduces the propensity for voters to follow group bloc voting norms, prospects for election-based accountability may be enhanced. This, however, depends on *why* multiethnics deviate from group norms. If, on one hand, they do so because ethnicity matters less in their electoral calculations or the greater diversity of their social networks leads to more sustained engagement with alternative perspectives, the growth of multiethnicity may contribute to a shift away from identity as the foundation for electoral behavior. If, on the contrary, the explanation has more to do with a broader choice set for ethnic political organization or the imperfect nature of common survey items used to measure ethnic identities among multiethnics, the increasing electoral weight of multiethnics will likely have little effect on ethnic political dynamics. Our exploration of mechanisms, limited as it may be, suggests that both interpretations are correct. A priority for future research will be to explore these competing accounts more fully.

## Conclusion

This article documents the widespread prevalence of ethnic intermarriage and the concomitant rise of multiethnicity across Africa. It explores one implication of the blurring of ethnic lines by demonstrating that multiethnics in Malawi and Kenya are less likely to conform to the group voting patterns of their stated ethnic communities than mono-ethnics. The consistency of these results across two contexts with different rates of ethnic intermarriage suggests that these findings may generalize to other cases. Although our ability to probe the mechanisms is limited, we provide suggestive evidence in favor of multiple explanations related to identity measurement, the salience of ethnicity, identity repertoires, and the diversity of social networks. We conclude by discussing implications and avenues for future research.

The results have several implications for the study of ethnic politics. First, with regard to measurement, scholars of ethnic politics should amend standard practices used to measure ethnicity on surveys. At a minimum, it would be useful to include questions regarding the ethnicity of respondents' parents (and perhaps grandparents) that will allow one to distinguish mixed individuals from mono-ethnics, and to test whether theories of ethnic political behavior apply equally well to both. In addition, future research could profitably explore alternative ways to measure ethnicity, for example, by (a) using survey questions that encourage multiple identity responses (Nathan,

2016), (b) allowing respondents to report whether they self-identify as being from the same ethnic group as a particular leader or candidate (Adida et al., 2017), or (c) measure ethnic attributes that are associated with group membership (Harris, 2020). Each approach has potential benefits and limitations depending on the specific research question and context; all improve upon standard practice that implicitly views individuals as belonging to a single ethnic lineage. Relatedly, the effects documented here pose a challenge for aggregate measures of social diversity—for example, ethno-linguistic fractionalization, politically relevant ethnic groups, and ethnic segregation—that are used throughout the ethnic politics literature. Should such measures be amended to reflect the growth of mixed populations? If so, what coding procedures are appropriate? To answer these questions scholars must develop an improved understanding of how ethnic intermixing affects perceived identities. In addition, these findings suggest that it will be important to control for mixed ethnicity in a variety of research agendas. For example, work by Ichino and Nathan (2013) and Nathan (2016) has recently drawn attention to the importance of local ethnic geography. Given that local ethnic diversity is associated with ethnic intermixing, future research on ethnic geography should strive to disentangle these related factors.

Beyond measurement, there is work to be done on understanding patterns of self-identification for mixed respondents across Africa's diverse contexts. Our limited exploration suggests that tradition (particularly the matrilineal/patrilineal distinction) plays a role. But we also find that such factors leave much unexplained. As a result, we know very little about what drives mixed respondents to provide the answers they do to identity questions. Do such answers reflect the strength of individuals' self-conceptions, social norms governing identification, social context, or something else entirely? Particularly important for future research will be efforts to measure the strength of self-perceived identity attachments separately from expressed identities to better understand the extent to which conventional measures accurately capture internal self-perceptions.

The findings also raise questions for the literature on ethnic voting. Standard practice is to define ethnic voting as voting for the party or candidate associated with one's ethnic group (e.g., D. L. Horowitz, 1985; Huber, 2012; Nathan, 2016). This approach works less well for multiethnics. If we define ethnic voting only as supporting the party associated with voters' stated ethnic groups, we run the risk of under-estimating ethnic voting among mixed respondents. Likewise, if we conceptualize ethnic voting for mixed individuals as supporting the party associated with either side of one's lineage, we run the risk of exaggerating the extent of ethnic voting among multiethnics. And in cases like Kenya's 2017 presidential elections, where there were only two major-party candidates, all voters would be

treated as ethnic voters as multiethnics who did not support the candidate associated with one parent's ethnic group by definition support the candidate associated with the other side of their family lineage. Clearly, better approaches are required. At present, however, we lack sufficient understanding of how identity affects the electoral motivations of multiethnics to propose improved strategies. Given the increasing weight of multiethnic voters in African electorates, a priority for future research will be to improve our conceptual framework for understanding what ethnic voting means for multiethnics and how to measure it in practice.

More fundamentally, increasing rates of intermarriage and ethnic mixing raise a series of deeper questions for theories of ethnic politics. Africa is often described as a continent where ethnicity reduces cooperation, entrenches political rivalries, and breeds distrust and conflict. As ethnic intermarriage continues, scholars will do well to consider its effects on the relationships they seek to explain. If ethnic diversity undermines public goods provision, can increases in intermarriage and multiethnicity reduce barriers to cooperation? As the prevalence of multiethnicity grows, should we expect to see a general decrease in ethnic bloc voting as ethnic political rivalries are bridged? Will patterns of electoral mobilization continue unchanged as these trends continue, or will basic political dynamics shift in more fundamental ways as the lines between ethnic groups blur? These questions will only grow in importance in coming years, as multiethnics continue to make up an increasing share of African electorates.

### **Acknowledgments**

For comments and suggestions, we thank Sarah Brierley and participants at the 2018 MPSA annual convention, members of the Program on Governance and Local Development at the University of Gothenburg, and three anonymous reviewers. We thank Amanda Robinson for sharing census data from Malawi and Sebastian Nickel and Noah Nathan for help with estimating local ethnicity measures for Malawi.

### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### **Funding**

The authors disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: The authors would like to thank the Program on Governance and Local Development (GLD) at Gothenburg University, which funded the data collection in Malawi. The larger GLD project was funded by the Swedish Research Council (<https://www.vr.se/english.html>) and FORMAS (<https://formas.se/en/start-page/about-formas.html>).

**ORCID iD**

Jeremy Horowitz  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9443-1295>

**Supplemental Material**

Supplemental material for this article is available online at the *CPS* website <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/suppl/10.1177/0010414020926196>

**Notes**

1. We use “multiethnic” and “mixed-ethnic” interchangeably in this article.
2. See Bandyopadhyay and Green (2019) and Crespin-Boucaud (2020) for more on inter-ethnic marriage and its correlates in Africa.
3. Estimates of intermarriage rates include couples living together who are not married.
4. Our estimates of intermarriage rates may be biased upward—relative to the full adult population in each country—due to the nature of the sample frame used in the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS). Because the DHS samples include only individuals of reproductive age, older people are excluded, which will likely bias our estimates of intermarriage upward if intermarriage is becoming more common over time. To get a sense of the size of the excluded population, the Afrobarometer Round 6 surveys (conducted in 36 countries in 2014–2015) shows that 14.7% of the adult population (18+) falls outside of the DHS sample frame.
5. Country-level estimates were weighted (using the women’s weights) to account for regional oversampling within countries.
6. Survey data for Malawi are from the 2016 GLD survey ( $N = 7,668$ ) described below; survey data for Kenya ( $N = 1,246$ ) are from a 2016 survey (for details see J. Horowitz, 2019).
7. We do not examine—theoretically or empirically—the effects of intermarriage on vote choice due to the practical challenge of disentangling selection effects from treatment effects. For multiethnics, by contrast, we can be more confident that because parents’ ethnicity precedes that of their children, the effects of mixed lineage can be treated as causally prior to political attitudes and behaviors (Davenport, 2016a).
8. The difficulty of capturing perceived self-identities for ethnically mixed individuals using single-answer questions has been studied extensively in the United States, where the census allowed respondents to select only a single racial identity prior to 2000 (e.g., Hickman, 1997).
9. Participants in household surveys in Africa routinely report that they think the survey is sponsored by the government. For example, in the Afrobarometer Round 6 surveys conducted in 36 countries in 2014 and 2015, 32% of respondents indicated that they thought the survey was sponsored by the national government. Given this, survey respondents may strategically self-identify as members of the president’s ethnic group (or other groups that make up the president’s broader coalition) to increase the perceived likelihood of receiving government benefits.

10. The Afrobarometer Round 7 surveys conducted in 34 countries between 2016 and 2018, for example, found only seven countries where at least half of respondents identified with one ethnic group. For the remaining 27 countries, there was no majority ethnic group.
11. For Kenya, we code respondents who indicated an intention to vote for Uhuru Kenyatta as Jubilee supporters, and those who indicated an intention to vote for either Raila Odinga or Kalonzo Musyoka (CORD's top two leaders at the time of survey) as supporters of CORD.
12. Data from an exit poll conducted during Kenya's prior election in 2013 show that bloc voting rates at election time are substantially higher than observed in our survey data. The mean bloc voting rate (the vote share of the leading party in each ethnic community) in 2013 for the 10 largest ethnic groups was 69.4%, a number that likely under-estimates the actual bloc voting rate as 12% of respondents in the exit poll refused to provide an answer (see Ferree et al., 2014).
13. We code "don't know/refused to answer" as missing values in the Malawi data. For Kenya, we code only "refused to answer" as missing, and code "don't know" as 0, as these two answer options were recorded separately in the Kenya survey.
14. We also exclude respondents from the Malawi data whose reported ethnicity matches neither that of their mother or father, about 4% of the sample.
15. This approach relates to the conceptualization of ethnic voting in D. L. Horowitz (1985), which treats ethnic voters as those who support the party associated with their ethnic group, regardless of whether the party's candidate is a co-ethnic or not (see also Huber, 2012; Nathan, 2016). We do not, however, characterize our analysis as a test of ethnic voting as it is unclear whether mixed respondents should be treated as engaging in ethnic voting only when they support the party associated with their *stated* ethnic group or also when they support the party associated with their *non-stated* group (see "Conclusion" for additional discussion).
16. In the Malawi survey, 28% of those living in more diverse areas (localities with village-level ethno-linguistic fractionalization [ELF] scores above the median) are mixed compared with only 14% in less diverse areas ( $p < .000$ ). In the Kenya survey the association is more muted as the data come only from an urban area: in more diverse parts of Nairobi County (ELF scores above the median), 15.8% of respondents are mixed, relative to 12.1% in less diverse areas ( $p < .05$ ).
17. We are able to estimate this measure for respondents from the 12 ethnic groups that are included in the census data. Its inclusion in the regression analysis means that respondents from smaller ethnic groups (including the Mang'anja) are excluded from the analysis due to missing data on this variable. The results for Malawi are robust to excluding these measures and to using alternative measures of ethnic composition: dummy variables indicating whether or not the respondent's group is an ethnic minority in the Enumeration Area, Traditional Authority area, or district based on the census data, and a local (village/neighborhood) measure of ELF based on the survey data (results available upon request).
18. The median number of respondents used to estimate local ethnic geography for individuals in the Kenyan survey was 17.

19. Although this measurement strategy differs from standard practice, we note that respondents' perceptions of interviewer ethnicity may matter more than actual ethnicity, as biases related to enumerator ethnicity would likely come into play only when respondents believe the enumerator to be a non-co-ethnic, regardless of whether he or she actually is from a different ethnic community.
20. The matrilineal nature of ethnic groups is determined by secondary sources (Berge et al., 2014; Peters, 1997). The results are robust to a measure of matrilineal heritage based on the survey question, "If you have children, would your children belong to the mother's side or the father's side?"
21. In the Supplemental Information, we present results from models that iteratively add control variables.
22. Although both Yao and Lomwe are matrilineal communities, this quote suggests that identification may vary across localities where maternal and paternal groups reside.
23. The questions were: (a) How important do you believe it is for members of your ethnic group/tribe to vote for the same candidate? and (b) How important is it to you that your ethnic group elects a representative to the parliament from your constituency? For each, we create a dichotomous measure that takes a value of 1 for respondents who said it was "somewhat" or "very important," and 0 for those who chose "not important" or "not at all important."
24. The difference related to the perceived importance of co-ethnic representation holds after accounting for the set of controls used in Table 5, while the difference for voting together falls below conventional levels of significance when controls are added.
25. Kenya does not allow for a test of this proposition because there were only two major parties at the time of the Kenya survey. In this case, not voting with one parent's group by default entails voting with the other.
26. Among mixed Yaos whose parents' groups were linked to different parties, 39.3% reported voting for the party associated with their non-stated ethnic group, relative to 33.6% for the party associated with neither group. For mixed Tongas, the results were 44.1% versus 18.4%.
27. Data from a separate nationwide study conducted in Kenya in 2012 (see J. Horowitz, 2019) show that the greater diversity of social networks increases the likelihood of discussing politics with members of groups other than one's stated ethnic community. The survey, conducted on a national basis ( $n = 1,246$ ), asked respondents to identify up to four individuals with whom they discuss "politics and elections" and to report the ethnic identity of each named individual. Multiethnics were more than twice as likely to list one or more non-co-ethnic discussion partner compared with mono-ethnics (17.4% vs. 8.2%,  $p = .001$ ). These data, moreover, indicate that the greater propensity among multiethnics to discuss politics with non-co-ethnics comes not only from having more diverse families but also from having more diverse friend networks. The survey recorded the nature of respondents' relationships with each stated discussion partner. When we exclude family members and spouses, multiethnics

are still more likely than mono-ethnics to report discussing politics with one or more non-co-ethnics (13.9% vs. 7.4%,  $p = .03$ ).

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## Author Biographies

**Boniface Dulani** is a senior lecturer in Political Science in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies, Chancellor College of the University of Malawi. He has published extensively in the areas of presidential term limits, presidential successions, tolerance, democracy and democratization, social movements, elections, gender and politics, among many areas of interest. He holds a PhD from Michigan State University and a Master of Philosophy (MPhil.) degree from the University of Sussex.

**Adam S. Harris** is a lecturer (assistant professor) in Development Politics in the Political Science Department at UCL. He is also a member of the steering committee

for the Governance and Local Development (GLD) Program at the University of Gothenburg. In addition to ethnic politics and voting behavior, his research investigates aid and corruption, the resource curse, and local governance and development in Africa.

**Jeremy Horowitz** is an assistant professor of Government at Dartmouth College. His research examines electoral politics and policy making in Africa's emerging democracies. He holds a PhD from the University of California, San Diego.

**Happy Kayuni** is a professor in the Department of Political & Administrative Studies in the University of Malawi. He has authored (or co-authored) over forty peer reviewed publications in the following areas: trans-border ethnic identity, international cooperation/development policy, party politics, public sector management/reforms and gender in politics. He holds a PhD in Political Science from University of the Western Cape in South Africa.