

The Political Mobilization of Ethnic and Religious Identities in Africa

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When elites mobilize supporters according to different cleavages, or when individuals realign themselves along new identity lines, do their political preferences change? Scholars have focused predominantly on the size of potential coalitions that leaders construct, to the exclusion of other changes that might occur when one or another identity type is made salient. In this article, I argue that changes in the salience of ethnicity and religion in Africa are associated with variation in policy preferences at the individual level. I test this claim empirically using data from a framing experiment in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. By randomly assigning participants to either a religious or an ethno-linguistic context, I show that group members primed to ethnicity prioritize club goods, the access to which is a function of where they live. Otherwise identical individuals primed to religion prioritize behavioral policies and moral probity. These findings are explained by the geographic boundedness of ethnic groups and the geographic expansiveness of (world) religions in the study area.

The now-standard convention in comparative politics holds that individuals possess a multitude of social identities—religion, ethnicity, caste, race, nationality—that might be leveraged toward political ends (Bates 1983; Laitin 1986; Posner 2005; Young 1979). Less well understood, however, are the political consequences of mobilizing one identity type versus another. When elites mobilize supporters according to different cleavages, or when individuals realign themselves along new identity lines, do their political preferences change? Do policy priorities shift in material ways based on oftentimes subtle changes in identity cues?

To this point, the accepted wisdom has answered those questions with an implicit no. Scholars have focused predominantly on the size of potential coalitions that leaders construct, to the exclusion of other changes that might occur when one or another identity type is made salient. Thus, in the mobilization of political support, a group is simply a group, and the number of supporters that leaders can amass determines the strategies they employ. This view helps to explain the widely accepted practice in political science of describing competition between religious, ethno-linguistic, racial, caste, and other social identity groups under the broad umbrella of *ethnic politics*¹ (Brubaker 2004; Chandra 2004; Kasfir 1979; Posner 2005; Rothchild 1997; Wilkinson 2004), but it insufficiently describes the heterogeneous effects of different identity types under that umbrella.

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¹ The semantic confusion has not gone unnoticed; the term *ethnic* is used to describe both the narrower descent-based groups and the broader collection of ascriptive identities (Varshney 2002, 4).

An alternative perspective, building on the conformity effects of social identity theory, suggests that preferences can indeed change as identity cleavages vary, owing to the social tendency to seek belonging (Hogg 2006; Shayo 2009; Tajfel and Turner 1979). Thus, for example, preferences over redistribution may diverge across national and class contexts, as individuals strive to belong and show support to a group of like members (Klor and Shayo 2010). This view introduces social and psychological considerations to the study of identity group politics, yet the identity types themselves remain content-free; political preferences depend on the composition of coalitional structures—who shares a group identity—rather than on which identity type they share.

This article builds on existing theories in an effort to construct a more thorough understanding of ethnic politics. It seeks an answer to the following question: do social identity types evoke distinct political preferences at the individual level? Focusing in particular on ethnic versus religious identities in Africa,² I argue that identity types differ critically in terms of their geographic bounds. Those geographic bounds alter the political goods that supporters—even the very same supporters—might prioritize when each identity type is mobilized: in the context of the ethnic identity, which tends to be geographically bounded in Africa, group members prioritize local club goods, the access to which is a function of where they live. In the context of religion, which is much less geographically bounded, club goods are distributed according to other, ancillary processes. Instead, group members tend to prioritize goods that are themselves less bounded, and that can be shared or withheld for reasons distinct from geographic location. Thus, religion elicits stronger interests in social and behavioral policies, and lifestyle guidelines based on sacred texts. Individual group members,

² “Ethnic” as it is used here is often coterminous with “ethno-linguistic group” and “tribe,” though tribe is frequently associated with backwardness (Southall 1970) or colonial control (Campbell 1997). With respect to religion, I focus in particular on the effects of affiliation with the world religions of Islam and Christianity. Up to 95 percent of Africans are at least nominally associated with these broad religious identities (see World Christian Database 2010). I draw an important distinction between world and traditional African religions below.

according to this logic, act in rational pursuit of their own interests, yet those interests are constrained by the identity context in which they operate. Metaphorically, we might imagine that with each distinct identity type that is mobilized politically, supporters are asked to wear a different hat. This argument suggests that the hat we wear determines the preferences we hold.

Observational evidence from around Africa lends preliminary support to these claims. In central Malawi, individuals who self-identify most strongly as members of the local ethnic group—as opposed to their religious or other groups—are more likely to support the political party with a local base, owing to a longstanding pattern of patronage distribution that has made the ethnic identity politically salient there (Ferree and Horowitz 2010). Public opinion data from Nigeria indicates that respondents who prioritize their ethnic identity are significantly more likely than those who prioritize their religious identity to view land disputes as a primary reason for conflict (0.25 vs. 0.16, $p = .0003$).³ Meanwhile, Nigerians who consider themselves first and foremost as members of their religious groups are more apt than those who self-identify in ethnic terms to view corruption as a central concern for the government (0.32 vs. 0.20, $p = .0001$). And in a Pew Forum poll from across Africa, a positive correlation appears in data aggregated at the national level between the proportion of respondents calling religion very important in their lives and the proportion who view Western culture as hurting morality in their country.⁴ Taken at face value, these findings suggest that when the importance of social identities like ethnicity and religion changes at the individual level, political preferences also vary. Ethnicity seems to evoke concerns for local material goods, while religion seems to elicit a stronger concern for moral and social behavior policies.

A challenge in this research agenda, however, is to demonstrate empirically that constitutive, mobilizational differences between these identity types, and not other confounding factors at the individual level, elicit those distinct priorities. Metaphorically, it is the challenge of evaluating the same individuals wearing different identity hats. First, religion and ethnicity are two of the most notable social markers in many parts of the world (including the sub-Saharan African context in which this study takes place), but determining which of the two motivates individual actors at any given time is problematic. In the central Malawian case, for example, it may be that those who self-identify as members of the local ethnic group are also particularly opposed to religious activity, and thus favor the party with a local base not because of a strong interest in local club goods but instead by dint of a particularly weak interest in the less geographically bounded matters on which other parties might make appeals. One possible solution would be to

examine preferences among the staunchest adherents from each set, such as a group of regular churchgoers on one hand and an association protecting ethnic or tribal protocols on the other. That solution, however, raises a problem of endogeneity: it would be difficult to discern whether certain priorities led individuals to become staunch adherents of those groups or whether membership in those groups generated certain priorities. Thus, while observational evidence gives reason to believe that political preferences may indeed differ in ethnic versus religious contexts, our research strategies have not yet demonstrated as much.

To address this challenge, I make use of results from an experimental study conducted in West Africa.⁵ Observational methods would leave us unable to overcome the problems of endogeneity and confounding variables outlined above. Instead, to evaluate the political priorities of otherwise identical individuals in different identity contexts, and thus to establish the baselines from which political elites mobilize supporters, the research strategy must force those individuals to wear randomly assigned identity hats. Using research sites in both Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, I artificially evoked either the religious or the ethnic identity among a random selection of over 1,300 individuals, a strategy intended to isolate those identities on an individual scale. I then evaluated political priorities using a survey instrument. The findings suggest that, when individuals respond in an ethnic context, they place greater priority on material concerns and local development. Conversely, otherwise identical individuals placed in a religious context indicate a relative preference for lifestyle- or morality-based social policies over development ones. The study also helps to explain the mechanism distinguishing ethnic preferences from religious ones: it is not a result of relative group size or a desire for belonging, but rather that the geographic boundedness of ethnic groups inspires an interest in local club goods, while the geographic expansiveness of (world) religions in the study area elicits preferences for less restricted, behavioral goods. These empirical findings refine our understanding of *ethnic politics*; they imply that political leaders and cultural entrepreneurs must consider substantively different individual-level preferences when ethnicity and religion are mobilized.

Apart from those empirical findings, the article makes several theoretical and methodological contributions. In keeping with literature that stresses psychological benefits from identity associations (Hogg 2006), it adds a new consideration to the perspective that ethnic politics is simply a numbers game, providing insight into the actual strategies that elites might employ to keep a coalition of supporters together via specific policy promises. This study also offers a distinction from the social identity perspective: whereas both note systematic patterns across broad identity types, this study adds substantive content to important social cleavages, instead of treating those identity types only as conduits for status and belonging.

³ Data drawn from the Afrobarometer Round 2 survey, which asked respondents which identity group they felt they belonged to first and foremost (Q54). The two outcomes noted here rely on Q72a and Q45j. Data available at <http://www.afrobarometer.org/data/round-2-merged>.

⁴ Data drawn from the Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project, located at www.globalreligiousfutures.org.

⁵ IRB protocol #G09-01-056-01. Data available for replication upon request.

Another contribution the article makes is to highlight the constitutive, systematic norms that identity types evoke without appealing to essentialist characteristics of specific groups therein, which are subject to reinterpretation and change across times and places.⁶ Finally, from a methodological standpoint, the study replicates a full experiment across multiple research sites, and it complements the experimental data with observational evidence that bolsters the external validity of the study.

EXPLAINING ETHNIC GROUP MOBILIZATION

The trend in political science has not been to address religious or ethnic political choices as problems in their own right. Kasfir (1979) writes: “The concept of ethnicity . . . may be fundamentally ethnic, class, religious or—it is worth stressing—a combination of these identities.” Rothchild (1997) describes ethnic groups as “formed along ethnic, racial, religious, regional, or class lines—they have distinct origins and appeals, but they share common features . . .” Posner (2005) argues that, “linguistic, tribal, and religious communities . . . are all ethnic options.” The rationale for conflating these identity types in theories of political mobilization is straightforward: the individual-level preferences that derive from those identity types are taken as homogeneous. Thus, the calculus of political entrepreneurs need not include information about the characteristics of different identity types *per se* (or about the different outcomes those identity options might elicit), but only about the general characteristics of identity groups as groups, such as their size. Arguments of this sort leave little room for differential affect across identity types, for nonmaterial utility from identity associations, or for unique benefits that might accrue to group members in some identity contexts but not others. A group is simply a group, and differences across specific identity types within the broad conception of ethnicity are left underexplored as potential sources of political mobilization.

In a different line of research, Shayo and his colleagues (Klor and Shayo 2010; Sambanis and Shayo 2013; Shayo 2009) draw on social identity theory—an approach that articulates group membership as a central feature of individual identity (Hogg 2006)—to suggest that changes in the salience of broad identity types can indeed alter preferences over policy. Identification with potentially salient identity groups, they argue, is a function of two factors: similarity in relevant features and status of the group. Members then find equilibria in contexts in which the individual’s behavior is consistent with the broader interests of the group. Thus, in the context of national and class identities, the tax rate preferred by a poor actor is lower if she identifies with the nation than if she identifies with her

class (Shayo 2009). In the context of national and ethnic identities, factors that bolster the status of nations, such as the accumulation of noncontestable resources, strengthen attachments to the national identity over attachments to ethnicity (Sambanis and Shayo 2013). Even when group labels are very weak (e.g., fields of study among university students), wealthy members of a poor group tend to prefer higher rates of redistribution than wealthy individuals who belong to a higher status group (Klor and Shayo 2010). Generally stated, the perceived benefits of belonging to a coalition of like members can shape political preferences in measurable ways.

This work advances the role of social psychological considerations in the study of ethnic and identity politics. Particularly with respect to democratic and modern, industrial societies (in which nation and class generate particular resonance), recognizing the importance of belonging adds new insight into the strategic calculations of group members. What that literature does not address is the possibility that distinct identities generate exogenous norms that shape members’ behavior and preferences irrespective of the choices other members make or the status of the group. From the social identity perspective, identity types are content-free: they explain political preferences only endogenously, as members aim to fit in with like individuals and in higher status groups. Arguments of this sort are thus helpful in elucidating one aspect of affective behavior—belonging—but less helpful in clarifying how one identity type might be constitutively different from another. In an effort to move beyond umbrella classifications of ethnic politics, then, an additional set of steps is needed.

A limited literature does seek to address differences in identity types writ large. Sambanis (2001) distinguishes ethnic from nonethnic conflict, and Esteban and Ray (2008) argue that ethnic conflict differs from class conflict as a result of in-group economic heterogeneity. Baldwin and Huber (2010) note that groups differ both culturally and economically, and that the economic distinctions between them better explain variation in public goods provision. The choice between ethnic and national identities may be a matter of institutional constraints (Penn 2008), and support for political party identities over caste identities may be a function of the channels through which resources flow to constituents (Dunning and Nilekani 2013). These studies, however, focus little on the characteristics of identity types themselves; like Shayo (2009), they rely on who one’s co-members are rather than on what the identity category is.⁷

Finally, a literature drawing on the psychology of identity types explores the behavioral effects of religiosity in particular, generally noting a tendency in religious contexts toward prosocial behaviors such as increased generosity (Shariff and Norenzayan 2007),

⁶ A separate literature, not reviewed here, ascribes differences in political outcomes to the attributes of specific groups within religious, ethno-linguistic, or other social identity types, such as Muslims or warring ethnic groups (Bertsch 1977; Horowitz 1985; Huntington 1996). Those arguments are limited in their capacity to explain differential outcomes among the same groups in different settings.

⁷ Bormann et al. (2013), Chandra (2006), Fearon and Laitin (2000), and Laitin (2000) constitute some of the few examples of studies that endeavor to disaggregate narrow ethnicity from other ascriptive groupings based on characteristics of the identity types themselves.

community-mindedness (Sachs 2010), and respect for laws (Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales 2003). That literature remains divided, however, over the mechanism linking religion to positive social outcomes—Shariff and Norenzayan propose individual-level motivations and the power of a “supernatural watcher” (2007, 807), while Sachs (2009) explains religious prosociality as a function of efforts to seek status and belonging—and some scholars suggest instead that attention to religion and morality actually inspires compensatory, immoral preferences (Jordan, Mullen, and Murnighan 2011; Sachdeva, Iliiev, and Medin 2009). Here, I test individual-level preferences across religious and ethnic contexts experimentally, to advance a theory of exogenous, constitutive differences based on the geographic bounds of those identity types.

A THEORY OF MOBILIZATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN RELIGION AND ETHNICITY

I focus on the narrow ethnic identity and the religious identity in Africa for two reasons. First, ethnic and religious identities constitute the two most important social markers in the study region: over 90 percent of respondents to surveys in the region indicate that religion is important in their lives, and the same surveys indicate that the ethno-linguistic identity is the most common mode of self-identification (Afrobarometer 2009).⁸ Furthermore, conflictual political outcomes are increasingly described in ethnic or religious terms (Olzak 2011), so, while this article is not limited to explaining conflict, efforts to understand the roots of this particular type of political expression have taken on renewed importance. The goal in distinguishing religious mobilization from ethnic mobilization is thus to generate a starting point for disaggregating identity types based on the specific outcomes or consequences they engender; similar exercises can then be undertaken to evaluate these identity types in other places, or different identity types altogether. I address some complications of the ethnic-religious comparison in the Conclusion section below.

First, regarding the individuals who constitute potential sources of support for political elites, I assume utility maximization as an explanation for individual-level choices. However, we might easily imagine sources of utility that are neither material nor related to political access.⁹ Instead, consistent with Shayo (2009), nonmaterial or psychological benefits may accrue differently based on the identity context in which the individual operates, in the form of righteousness, belonging, salvation, honor, blood ties, and so on. As noted, the ethnic and religious identities stand out in the sub-Saharan context in which this research was conducted: both have historical links to political outcomes, and they represent the two most common modes of self-identification among African citizens. In this sense,

the theory contributes an additional motivating factor to studies of ethnic politics that rely only on group size as the explanation for competition over resources. Individuals act instrumentally, but their instrumental behavior is constrained by the fact that they calculate utility from different baselines, depending on the identity type that is most salient in the world around them. Thus, people may prioritize distinct outcomes in religious versus ethnic contexts.

Second, consistent with both constructivist and instrumentalist accounts of identity formation, this argument asserts that individuals can move across identity types with little cost.¹⁰ Changing groups *within* an identity type—from Muslim to Christian, for example, or from Nigerian to British—entails both administrative and social costs, as actors forfeit membership in one community when joining the other. Moving *across* identity types, however, by prioritizing one’s group within the religious cleavage (e.g., Muslim) and later one’s group within the ethnic cleavage (e.g., Yoruba), does not necessarily require the forfeiture of community. New associations may crosscut previous ones, but membership in any particular group is not explicitly threatened by the personal reprioritization of identities within one’s repertoire. The upshot of this assumption is that political preferences rooted in identity attachments may change fluidly.

Third, and critically, I argue that constitutive differences exist in ethnic and religious identities, such that individual priorities differ across the two contexts. The ethnic identity in the study region of sub-Saharan Africa is typically rooted in common descent. Contemporary scholarship less frequently cites physical markers or social obligations but nevertheless distinguishes ethnic groups on the basis of perceived lineage (Chandra 2006; Horowitz 1985; Laitin 1998). As Fearon and Laitin suggest (2000), when it comes to one’s ethnic group, you are what your parents are.

Furthermore, African ethnicity is closely related to geographic territory. Colonial powers placed administrative trust in ethnic groups for precisely this reason, leading scholars of the time to define “tribes” as cultural groups with “political unity, speech uniformity, and *geographical continuity*” (Wissler 1923, 48–49, italics added). Geographic areas, native villages, and traditional city-states are thus synonymous with ethnic identities for many groups (Laitin 1986; Staniland 1975). Bates (1974, 464) suggests that it is the “clustering in space” that explains the salience of ethnicity in politics, as physical proximity to the resources of power and modernity generates winners and losers. Historically, chiefs, headmen, and land priests in the traditional hierarchy have overseen the distribution of land for farming, creating a quasi-official link between ethnicity and land (Lawry 1990).

We can thus think of the ethnic identity in Africa as geographically bounded: membership implies a

⁸ Excludes occupation-related responses.

⁹ This assumption is not new; see Opp (1989) and Simon (1985), among others.

¹⁰ See Horowitz (1985) and Young (1979) for foundational explanations of identity salience, types, and change. Using different language, Posner (2005, 7) distinguishes identity *construction* from identity *choice*.

special, lineage-based entitlement to local territory and resources in the ethnic group's stronghold.¹¹ Psychologically, scholars suggest that the ethnic identity increases feelings of territoriality, rooted in emotional attachments to land perceived as property of the group (Dustmann and Preston 2001; Green 2006; Toft 2005). Those effects, moreover, extend beyond protection of the land to concerns over local development: because African socioeconomies maintain a heavy reliance on local markets and an informal economy, ethnic groups become the loci of economic progress (Barkan, McNulty, and Ayeni 1991). Barkan et al. (1991) describe ethnic groups in Africa as providing development assistance and local public goods as a function of individual-level attachments to place. Thus, despite widespread understanding of African ethnic groups as constructed, individuals in those groups feel attachments that evoke special concern for land and local development.

That feature of ethnic identity suggests that, when placed in a context in which ethnicity is salient, members are more likely to prioritize matters related to local resources: club goods of low rivalry and high excludability, such as local development projects and community improvement. Ethnic group members—or more appropriately, individuals subjected to mobilization along ethnic lines—should therefore extract relatively greater utility from defending their club goods.

Religion as a social identity inspires different political priorities. World religious identities, such as Islam and Christianity, are ascriptive identities yet are not determined purely by birth or lineage: members have at least the perception that their membership in any particular religious group may be a matter of choice.¹² Choice over one's religious identity, moreover, is underpinned by formal doctrine and sacred texts in a way that one's ethnicity is not, largely precluding members from blending group identities as they might in the ethnic context. Scholars thus refer to world religions as “exclusive” and “non-negotiable” (Fox 2004; Reynal-Querol 2002), and note that, while individuals might easily change their religions, they have much greater difficulty in being “bi-religious” (Huntington 1996; Laitin 2000). Choice and exclusivity in this combination tend to divorce the religious identity from geographic continuity.

With choice underpinned by formal doctrine comes an implied process of ranking one's own group against others, based on superiority. This suggests a division in the religious context unlike intergroup divisions in the ethnic context, especially given the role of sacred texts in delineating priorities for religious practitioners. The presence of guiding texts, relatively unique among social identities, should also inspire individuals in reli-

gious contexts to prioritize goods that are behavioral rather than geographically local, related to concerns such as morality, world views, salvation, and justice—broadly put, focused on proper living.¹³

World religions, furthermore, are exactly that—transnational identities unlike any other social identity type. The freedom of religion from geographic bounds is particularly noteworthy in sub-Saharan Africa, where Islam and Christianity spread to many areas relatively recently and where members recognize the sacred centers of their beliefs as located elsewhere.¹⁴ World religion is thus, in a constitutive sense, a landless identity type in Africa. The implication is that coordination can occur among in-group members absent any shared local incentives. Individuals form special ties with religious communities owing nothing to the lands they live on, the languages they speak, or their biological lineage. Given that distinction, religious group members—that is, individuals subjected to mobilization along religious lines—might place less emphasis on club goods like development, preferring to free-ride rather than engage in political contestation over those matters. Instead, their incentives to engage politically would be stronger when ties to exclusive doctrine or behavior-based policies are evoked.¹⁵

Finally, I argue that religious and ethnic identities are distinct social identities that can be recognized and described as such. Almost all individuals in the study region possess both; here, I stipulate that one or the other can be activated discretely. I consider the nuance of this assumption in the Conclusion section below.

Several observable implications emerge from this theory. First, if individuals are placed in different identity contexts (ethnic vs. religious), we should observe systematically different priorities among them—even when we account for the particular groups to which they belong, the political conditions under which they live, or the mobilization efforts that political elites employ. I refer to these as mobilizational differences between ethnicity and religion, and I examine them in the context of the experimental results presented below.

Second, recalling the observational approach of evaluating regular churchgoers against members of a tribal council, we should observe that members of particularly committed or “strong” ethnic or religious groups¹⁶ demonstrate priorities in the same direction as (and likely stronger than) the experimentally manipulated subjects. Third, given the theoretical proposition that

¹¹ Diaspora communities in the West emigrate but sustain an identity with the land and group they left. That some pastoralist ethnic groups in the region—the Tuareg and Fulani, for example—are labeled nomadic or semi-nomadic only reinforces the narrative of ethnicity as an identity type tied to the land; these groups are viewed as exceptional in reference to their own itinerant relationship with the land.

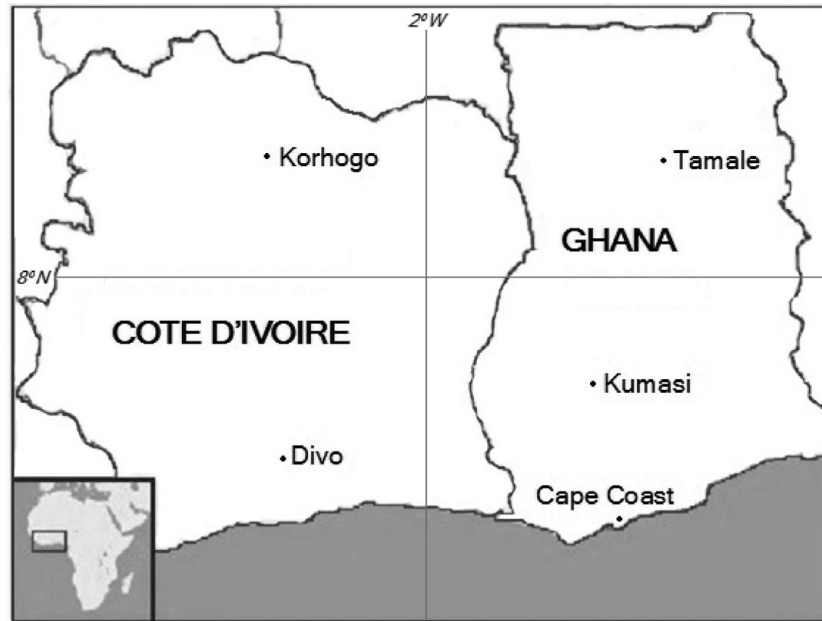
¹² In the American context, Putman and Campbell (2010) note that as much as 30 percent have changed their religious identification since birth.

¹³ Many religious entities provide local club goods, such as schools, health programs, and community space. This study suggests that actors nevertheless place a relative priority on moral matters when religion is mobilized.

¹⁴ In Mecca, Rome, or Jerusalem, for example. Aside from traditional African religions, an exception to which I return below, the sacred lands of religious practice in Africa lie outside of Africa itself.

¹⁵ Political elites may exploit this feature of religion not only to mobilize supporters to optimal outcomes domestically but also to generate support from in-group members abroad. In this article, I focus on the political consequences of identity group mobilization among the local group members who might lend active support in terms of votes or other forms of political engagement.

¹⁶ See Almond et al. (2003).

FIGURE 1. Research Sites

Notes: Korhogo is predominantly Muslim religiously (68 percent in the data for this study) and Senoufo/Malinke ethnically. Divo is predominantly Christian (67 percent) and Dida. Tamale is 74 percent Muslim and the territory of the Dagomba ethnic group. Cape Coast is 83 percent Christian and predominantly Fante. Kumasi is a cosmopolitan city included in the study for the purposes of a robustness check.

suggests ties to local lands as the mechanism linking ethnic identity to concerns for local development, we should expect to find that local, land-oriented traditional religions, which lack the characteristics of world religions outlined above, inspire priorities more in keeping with patterns of ethnic identification than religious identification. These findings would support the central claim of this article—that changes in the salience of religion and ethnicity are associated with material differences in specific political preferences.

RESEARCH DESIGN

In what follows, I describe the location, setup, and output measures of a randomized framing experiment designed to evaluate potential differences in individual-level priorities under settings of ethnic versus religious mobilization. The boundedness of the ethnic identity should inspire preferences for defending local club goods when ethnicity is mobilized, while the expansive, text-based nature of religion should generate concerns over moral behavior and lifestyle choices rather than local development.

Sites

The experiment was conducted in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana on West Africa's Gulf Coast, sites that hold ethnic and religious diversity relatively constant but that also allow for both intracountry variation in iden-

tity group affiliations and variation in national-level political factors. The data from Ghana serve also as a robustness check described later.

Within each country, I employed a design aimed at systematically replicating the research protocols across the most diverse contexts possible, locating one enumeration area in the predominantly Muslim North and one in the predominantly Christian South. In Ghana, those sites are Tamale and Cape Coast, respectively, and in Côte d'Ivoire they are Korhogo in the North and Divo in the South. In view of the geographic patterns of ethnic group settlement, the design also ensures variation in terms of ethnicity: Korhogo in northern Côte d'Ivoire is home predominantly to the Malinké and Senoufo; in southern Côte d'Ivoire, Divo is the territory of the Dida; Tamale in northern Ghana is the land of the Dagomba; and the Fante predominate in the Cape Coast area of southern Ghana. Although the northern and southern research sites have predominant religious and ethnic groups, there are sufficient off-diagonal observations to distinguish between the effects of predominant religion, individual religious affiliation, predominant ethnicity, and individual ethnic affiliation.

In each enumeration area, participants were drawn from the provincial capital itself and four surrounding rural villages. In Ghana, in addition to the sites in the North and South, I added a centrally located, cosmopolitan research site—Kumasi, the country's second largest city—for purposes described below. [Figure 1](#) maps the research sites.

Subjects and Treatments

Approximately 300 subjects were randomly selected from each enumeration area using a multistage, clustered sampling procedure with stratification by gender.¹⁷ Trials were conducted between January and June 2009. Participants were exposed to one of two treatments, the intention of which was to artificially prime either the religious or the ethnic identity. Priming an identity experimentally provides two benefits: it isolates preferences along different dimensions in a way that respondents may be unable to truthfully do themselves, and it controls for contextual factors. For these reasons, priming experiments have gained traction and have proven to be an effective means of varying inputs in other political studies (Banks and Valentino 2012; Iyengar, Peters, and Kinder 1982; Sachs 2010; Weber and Thorton 2012). Assignment of subjects to one of the two treatment groups (or to a control group, which I explain below) was also done randomly, ensuring balance in demographic characteristics across the two treated groups and the control group. A descriptive summary of covariates by treatment and control groups is presented in Table 1, along with results from Hotelling joint tests of balance that compare the control group to each of the two treatment groups. *F*-tests fail to reject the assumption of balance, so systematic differences in the outcomes from subjects across the treated and control groups can therefore be attributed to exposure to treatments. More detail on the randomized trial procedures can be found in the CONSORT checklist for design-based inference, located in the Online Appendix.¹⁸

Treatments consisted of 5-minute radio news reports regarding local society, followed by a series of questions regarding the content of the reports. The news reports, which subjects listened to on handheld digital music players, were performed by professional radio personalities; they were realistic yet concocted solely for the purposes of the experiment.¹⁹ The manipulation came in a subtle change to the content of these reports: the two treatments were identical, only with changes to the names of groups mentioned in the reports. Those receiving the RELIGION²⁰ treatment heard references to religious groups in their society, and those receiving the ETHNIC treatment heard mention of ethno-linguistic groups in their country. The hired radio reporters simply read the same report twice, switching out the names of religious groups for the names of ethnic groups. A third set of participants, the CONTROL group, did not re-

ceive exposure to a report on local social identity groups.²¹

To develop content for the reports, focus groups were first organized to ascertain salient issues affecting both religious and ethnic groups, in order to develop a report that would appear realistic and timely to listeners of either report. The reports, the transcripts of which are located in the Online Appendix, focused on four key points:

- the active roles that both leaders and group members play;
- disagreements between groups over a key policy domain (Education was chosen);
- occasional mistrust between groups and the ever-present potential for conflict;
- the general feeling that religious/ethnic diversity is necessary and important.

Thus, the treatments involved both identity group labels and various themes of sociopolitical importance, tailored in subtle ways to match contemporary discussions in religious versus ethnic contexts.²² The detail of the reports, along with delivery from professionals, helped to guard against both ineffective priming and possible Hawthorne effects. The content of the reports was designed to be group-neutral; the aim was not to favor one group over another or to manipulate intergroup (i.e., Muslim-Christian or Akan-Senoufo) views themselves. Rather, the objective of the experiment was to manipulate the salience of either religion or ethnicity and to then measure priorities in each of those contexts. To return to the metaphor from above, receiving the treatments forced subjects to wear either a religious hat or an ethnic hat, regardless of their predispositions toward religion or ethnicity in their everyday lives. Subjects assigned to the control group were assumed to respond from the standpoint of whatever social predispositions they typically maintain, absent any manipulation.

An important question to ask is whether or not the treatments actually had the desired effect on subjects; in short, did the treatments “take”? Evidence from the survey (independent from the actual outcomes that I seek to measure) suggests that they did. Subjects were asked, post-treatment, which of their various identity groups—nation, religion, ethnicity, gender, occupation, etc.—they feel that they belong to first and foremost. Answers indicate that the treatment a participant received had a notable effect on his/her tendency to prioritize certain identities: whereas just under 30 percent of respondents in the control group

¹⁷ The sample size in the Kumasi area is smaller, $n = 118$.

¹⁸ The CONSORT statement is a multidisciplinary initiative to improve the reporting of randomized controlled trials. See Schultz et al. (2010).

¹⁹ Actual on-air radio reports were ruled out due to the requirement that identical reports be heard in a multitude of languages. The reports were recorded in a total of eight different languages (see footnote 25 for details).

²⁰ I capitalize the treatments throughout this article, to distinguish them from more general reference to identity types.

²¹ Some control group members listened to music and content-free radio banter in place of the reports on social groups, and others were not provided with any listening treatment. This approach was used to test the exposure effects of listening to radio (regardless of content) as a determinant of outcomes. No differences in outcomes were observed between the two types of controls.

²² For example, the ETHNIC script cited the language of education (local vs. colonial), whereas the religious script mentioned secular versus religious content in education. See the transcript in the Appendix.

TABLE 1. Descriptive Statistics and Covariate Balance across Treatment and Control Groups

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Urban					
Religion treatment	446	0.751	0.433	0	1
Ethnic treatment	450	0.731	0.444	0	1
Control group	388	0.691	0.463	0	1
Male					
Religion treatment	446	0.498	0.501	0	1
Ethnic treatment	450	0.482	0.500	0	1
Control group	388	0.526	0.500	0	1
Age					
Religion treatment	446	37.40	13.73	18	80
Ethnic treatment	450	38.23	12.98	18	80
Control group	388	39.84	13.64	18	95
Education					
Religion treatment	446	2.859	1.377	1	6
Ethnic treatment	450	2.931	1.388	1	6
Control group	388	2.825	1.374	1	6
Std. of Living					
Religion treatment	446	3.072	0.778	1	4.75
Ethnic treatment	450	3.111	0.778	1	5.00
Control group	388	3.053	0.790	1	4.75
Muslim					
Religion treatment	446	0.460	0.499	0	1
Ethnic treatment	450	0.433	0.496	0	1
Control group	388	0.438	0.497	0	1
Religion-Control 2-group Hotelling		$F(6,827) = 1.7885$ Prob > $F(6,827) = 0.0985$			
Ethnic-Control 2-group Hotelling		$F(6,831) = 1.0465$ Prob > $F(6,831) = 0.3936$			

Notes: Education was measured on a scale from 1 (no formal education) to 6 (post-university). Standard of living was calculated as a composite measure based on 5-point scales for (1) access to necessities, (2) household amenities, (3) a subjective measure of one's relative socioeconomic wellbeing, and (4) job status.

selected religion as their primary identity—a figure in keeping with other survey results from Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire²³—50 percent of those who received the RELIGION treatment did so. Similarly, 24 percent of the control group, compared to 43 percent of those who received the ETHNIC treatment, selected ethnicity as their primary identity. Both differences are significant at the 99-percent confidence level in two-tailed tests. Furthermore, in post-survey debriefing sessions, 94 percent of those polled stated that they referenced the appropriate group (religion or ethnic) “with no confusion” when responding to the survey questions.²⁴

Post-treatment, subjects were asked a battery of background questions and several questions regarding

sociopolitical priorities.²⁵ The survey included three hypothetical vignettes. First, respondents were asked to evaluate candidates for political office:

- Imagine two identical candidates for parliament who have only one difference: Candidate A promises to improve local development, and Candidate B promises to fight moral decay in society. Which would you prefer as your representative?

Subjects could choose Candidate A (development), Candidate B (morals), or neither. Respondents were informed that fighting moral decay could mean working to prevent substance abuse, adultery, promiscuous dress, and disrespect between community members. Improving local development could mean fixing roads, improving health and education services, and building a technology infrastructure.²⁶ The goal was to assess

²³ See Afrobarometer Round 2, in which 33 percent of Ghanaians selected religion. A separate study conducted by the author in Northern Côte d'Ivoire found that 28 percent of selected respondents listed religion first and foremost.

²⁴ I cannot rule out the possibility that respondents altered the group with which they identify foremost based on a desire to meet enumerator expectations. However, to the extent that respondents thought they were telling interviewers what they wanted to hear, that tendency itself would suggest effective priming of the key identity types. Furthermore, the outcome measures do not reference the identity types of interest in any way, thus reducing concerns that respondents might surmise the purpose of both the primes and the outcome measures.

²⁵ Trials lasted approximately 40 minutes from beginning to end and took place in either the official language (French in Côte d'Ivoire, English in Ghana), a frequently used regional language (Dioula in Côte d'Ivoire, Twi in Ghana), or the predominant local language (Senoufo in Korhogo, Dida in Divo, Dagbani in Tamale, Fante in Cape Coast).

²⁶ These examples were developed in the pre-experiment focus groups.

priorities regarding club goods versus moral behaviors. Order was reversed for a random subset of participants.

Second, participants were asked to select a hypothetical community in which to live:

- If the world were divided into three, in which community would you prefer to live: the community where everyone is wealthy, the community that is peaceful, or the community where everyone has strong moral values?

Subjects could choose any of the three or none; in addition, subjects were asked to rank their preferences from first to third. “Morality” was defined using the same examples as above. The purpose was to again gauge attachments to local club goods versus less geographically constrained moral goods.

The third measure does not address preferences over local development *per se* but squarely pits the priority of moral probity against material interests at the individual level. Subjects were asked about their willingness to pay a bribe:

- Here is a scenario: your child just missed the grade necessary to advance to the next class at school. The headmaster informs you that the child can advance if you give him a small sum as a token of appreciation. Would you accept the request so that your child can advance?

Responses were coded on a five-point scale from “definitely not” (indicating a refusal to engage in corruption of this sort) to “definitely” (a strong indication of a willingness to place material advancement over integrity). The vignette focuses most explicitly on the moral dimension, insofar as bribes are typically viewed through the lens of a “moral economy” in the region (Olivier de Sardan 1999) and family educational opportunities relate only tangentially to local development. The measure uses the education context since independent analyses (Reinikka 2006) and focus groups conducted for this study suggest that small-scale corruption of this sort is of widespread practice in the region. Furthermore, educational opportunities may be considered a local club good, since consumption does not deplete the resource yet not all communities or individuals have equal access. Thus, this third measure aims primarily to distinguish the priority that respondents in a religious versus an ethnic context place on moral probity—proxied by aversion to a specific form of corruption—though it also helps to adjudicate between the priorities of proper living and material advancement.

To summarize, the framing experiment was designed to randomly force otherwise identical subjects to prioritize either their ethnic or their religious identity (or neither, in the control group). Radio reports that differed only in their reference to ethnic or religious groups primed listeners to those respective contexts, after which the subjects responded to a set of hypothetical vignettes aimed at pitting concerns for local development against concerns for moral probity. The

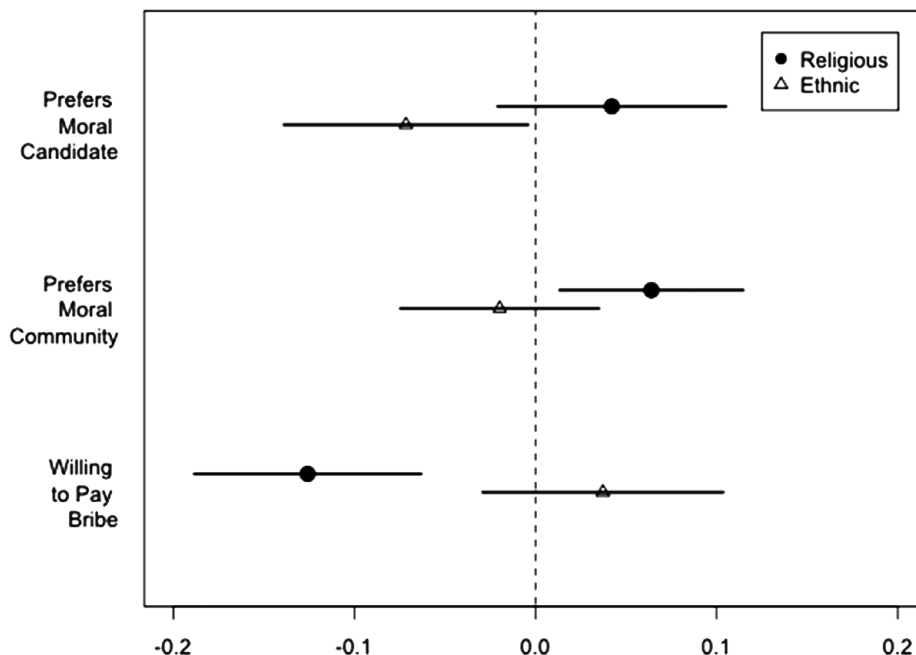
theory advanced in this article suggests that the exogenous status of (narrow) ethnicity as a geographically bounded identity type generates norms in support of local club goods, whereas the unbounded, largely voluntary nature of the religious identity, rooted in sacred texts rather than geographic territory, evokes a relative concern for behavioral and lifestyle choices, or proper living.

RESULTS

I first present results from the pooled, two-country sample for each of the outcomes of interest; I then consider potential covariates and provide evidence in support of the observable implications outlined above. Concerns of bias due to the self-reported nature of the outcomes are mitigated in three ways. First, the surveys were conducted confidentially in private settings (the respondents’ homes), by enumerators with no affiliation to a government or political party and with no clear indication of religious or ethnic group membership. These data collection protocols help to insulate the study from concerns that respondents felt pressured to answer questions in any particular way. Second, there is no clear expectation regarding socially desirable responses, since no obvious stigmas are attached to either local club goods or social behavior policies. Finally, even a systematic bias toward socially desirable responses could not explain the variation in outcomes across religious and ethnic contexts; by virtue of the process of random assignment, there is no reason to suspect that bias in self-reported outcomes would be correlated with assignment to treatment.

Regarding preferences for a “moral” candidate versus a “development” candidate, 64 percent of all survey respondents selected the former and 34 percent the latter. Disaggregating by treatment, however, 70 percent of those receiving the RELIGION treatment preferred the moral candidate, whereas only 59 percent of those receiving the ETHNIC treatment did so, a difference that is significant at $p < .001$ in a two-tailed test and robust to disaggregation by specific religious and ethnic affiliation. Conversely, just 29 percent of those treated with RELIGION, versus 40 percent of those treated with ETHNIC, favored the development candidate ($p < .001$). The top cluster in Figure 2, which illustrates treatment effects with mean CONTROL group outcomes set at zero, indicates a four-percentage point boost in support for the moral candidate in a religious context and a seven-percentage point drop in support for the moral candidate in the ethnic context. These results lend support to the notion that ethnicity fosters a relatively stronger emphasis on the improvement of local land and territory, while religion fosters an emphasis on good behavior. In a post-trial focus group, one respondent tellingly revealed that he would have to prefer the moral candidate because, “I’m not in my home region, so why bother with the development?”

With respect to preferences among hypothetically wealthy, peaceful, and moral communities, the majority of respondents (68 percent) listed their first priority as

FIGURE 2. Treatment Effects

Notes: The x axis depicts differences in the proportion of affirmative responses among treated groups, compared to the control category (control means set at zero). In Question 1, the moral candidate is pitted against a development candidate (control group mean = 0.662). In Question 2, the figure indicates the proportion selecting a community in which everyone has strong morals over one in which everyone is wealthy (control group mean = 0.798). In Question 3, the figure indicates the proportion stating a willingness to pay a small bribe for schooling (control group mean = 0.378). Bars indicate 95-percent confidence intervals.

a peaceful community; just three percent mentioned a wealthy community first and 29 percent prioritized the moral community. To distinguish between the interests in a manner that would be fruitful to this study, I took advantage of the rankings that respondents provided, generating a dummy variable coded 1 if the respondent listed the moral community ahead of the wealthy community and 0 otherwise. Again, the results conform to a theory suggesting that religion cultivates an emphasis on good behavior over wealth accumulation: the second cluster in Figure 2 illustrates a six-percentage point boost in the proportion favoring the moral community among those exposed to the RELIGION treatment (86 percent vs. 80 percent in the CONTROL category) and a two-percentage point decline among those exposed to the ETHNIC treatment. The difference between RELIGION and ETHNIC is again significant at $p = .001$; though the outcome is not large in substantive terms, it is notable given the tendency not to prioritize wealth in explicit responses.

Regarding corruption, 34 percent of all participants stated that they would probably or definitely be willing to pay the small bribe to enable their child to advance in school. As the bottom cluster in Figure 2 illustrates, however, the inclination to do so depends on which identity context was primed: just 25 percent of those receiving the RELIGION treatment, versus 42.5 percent who received the ETHNIC treatment, expressed a willingness to pay the bribe ($p < .001$), generating

treatment effects against the CONTROL category of -12 and $+4$ percentage points, respectively. Again, the finding suggests that in religious contexts, individuals are relatively more inclined toward the choice that implies moral integrity, whereas their otherwise identical counterparts placed in an ethnic context tend toward the choice that prioritizes material outcomes. An interesting implication of this particular outcome is that actors interested in combatting corruption, or at least in generating expressed rejection of corrupt practices, may do best to channel their efforts through religious leadership and organizations rather than relying on political or ethnic actors. The rationale for doing so, according to the argument advanced here, would have nothing to do with any perceived rectitude of religious leaders versus their ethnic or political counterparts, but would instead turn on the exogenous norms that religion evokes.

The regression table in Appendix A addresses the possibility that other covariates have a substantive effect on these outcomes, beyond the effects of the framing treatments.²⁷ Column 1 reveals that, even when controlling for demographic factors and religious

²⁷ Multivariate regression analysis unnecessarily imposes parametric assumptions on the experimental data; for that reason, the results are relegated to the Appendix. I take note of the outcomes, however, because they serve to test one of the observable implications below (regarding the effects of membership in traditional religions).

group membership, ethnicity and religion foster different preferences regarding material development and morals: subjects receiving the ETHNIC treatment are eight percent less likely than the control group to support the moral issues candidate over the development candidate ($p < .05$), whereas those receiving the RELIGION treatment are more likely than the control group to do so ($p < .05$). Males are also significantly more likely than females to favor a development candidate over a moral candidate. In Column 2, those primed to religion are eight percent more likely to prefer the moral community over the wealthy community. Turning to Column 3, receiving the RELIGION treatment makes subjects 14 percent less likely than the control group to express a willingness to pay a bribe to support a family member's educational advancement; those receiving the ETHNIC treatment express a greater likelihood of engaging in corruption, though the effect does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance. Females and more educated respondents also express a systematic aversion to the bribe, as do Ivoirian residents.

To reiterate, the full experiment was replicated across multiple sites in two countries, producing similar results across research contexts. The data by country and by site, discussed below and presented by site in the Online Appendix, add an important degree of generalizability to the finding that priming the ethnic identity evokes concerns for local material well-being while the religious identity is associated with a relative concern for moral issues.²⁸

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Committed Religious and Ethnic Group Adherents

If the distinctions between religious and ethnic preferences elucidated in the experiment are consistent with real-world outcomes, we should expect that members of the most committed or strong identity groups, who consistently wear only a religious or an ethnic hat, epitomize the distinct preferences of religion and ethnicity when evaluated observationally. As noted at the outset, the potential for selection bias undermines the leverage that can be gained from analyzing committed group members, but a check of their preferences provides some important external validity. If the argument is correct, we should expect to see the same patterns among the most ardent religious and ethnic group members.

To compare results from the experiment to committed group adherents in the real world, I conducted the same survey among 194 individuals belonging to either a Pentecostal-Charismatic Christian Church ($n = 60$), the *Ahlu Sunnah wal Jama'ah* (Wahhabi) Muslim organization ($n = 76$), or an Ashanti ethnic group

association ($n = 58$), all in their group meeting spaces in Kumasi, Ghana. To ensure that the findings are not driven by something unique about the Kumasi area, I included 118 randomly selected respondents from Kumasi in the experimental sample (as noted above).²⁹

Survey questions were identical to those posed to experimental subjects in the randomized component of the study; the only difference was that the committed group adherents were not exposed to an experimental treatment prior to the survey. The intention was that their active participation in those organizations, along with the context in which the surveys were conducted, would serve to mobilize the appropriate identity. As Figure 3 illustrates, the differences that were apparent between experimental subjects in religious versus ethnic contexts are all greater between committed religionists and committed ethnic group members: strong religionists are relatively more likely than committed ethnic group members to favor the moral candidate over the development candidate, they demonstrate a stronger desire to live in a community with strong moral foundations as opposed to a wealthy community, and they express less willingness than their ethnic group counterparts to engage in corruption. The last of these findings is tempered somewhat by the fact that the Ashanti association members have a higher level of education than the average respondent, by virtue of an affiliation with the university in Kumasi, and education correlates negatively with support for corruption.

Randomly selected Kumasians responded to the experimental treatments in largely the same patterns as participants from the Northern and Southern sites in Ghana (see the Online Appendix for details), so the outcomes from strong group members cannot be attributed to something idiosyncratic about Kumasi. Instead, the results reinforce the claim that, at least in the study region, membership in religious versus ethnic groups is associated with different key priorities of group members. Notwithstanding the potential for endogeneity, that the participants in this component of the study were not exposed to any artificial treatments but instead brought their own life choices to bear on their survey responses adds a measure of external validity to the experimental findings.

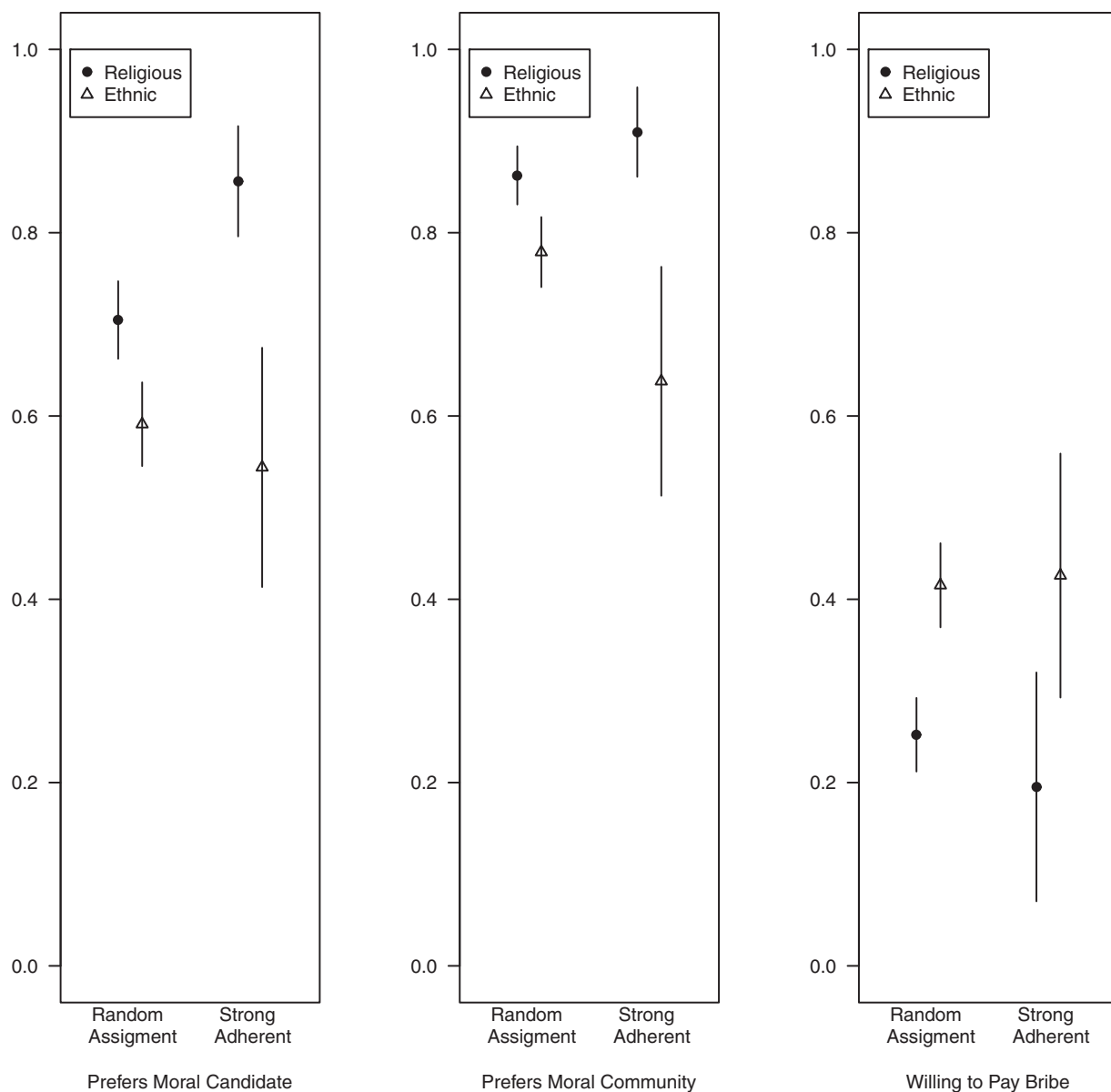
Traditional African Religions

An analysis of traditional African religious group members lends support to the causal mechanism outlined in this study. If the geographic boundedness of ethnicity and the rule-based, geographically unbounded nature of religion are the mechanisms driving preferences when these identities are prioritized, it should be the case that a religion with no formal behavioral codes and with greater attachments to local lands actually inspires preferences similar to ethnic groups. Traditional religions in Africa are exactly this: the belief

²⁸ The findings are robust to disaggregation by country. That they are slightly stronger in Côte d'Ivoire may suggest that respondents there are influenced both by the experimental treatments and by the sharper identity-related mobilization efforts that political elites have undertaken over the past two decades.

²⁹ Participants from the strong group samples were solicited via a convenience sampling procedure. Pentecostal-Charismatic group members were drawn from the In Him Is Life Church and the Ebenezer Miracle Church.

FIGURE 3. Responses from Experimental Subjects Compared to Strong Ethnic and Religious Adherents



Notes: The y axis represents proportions who responded affirmatively. Random assignment refers to experimental subjects who received either the religious or the ethnic prime. Strong adherent refers to members of the Charismatic churches, the *Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'ah* Muslim group, or the Ashanti associations.

system is typically not adoptable by outsiders, and natural, land-based icons such as hills, springs, and notable trees feature prominently (Onaiyekan 1983). The direction of influence of traditional religion on measured outcomes, even when controlling for the experimental treatments those subjects received, is illuminating. Table 2 shows a comparison of the signs and magnitude of impact for the RELIGION treatment, the ETHNIC treatment, and membership in traditional African religions, extracted from the multivariate regression outcomes shown in Appendix A. For each

outcome, the sign on the coefficient for traditional religion matches the sign on the ETHNIC coefficient and is opposite the sign on the RELIGION coefficient. If this pattern can be taken as suggestive of the fact that local religions with land-based worship sites but missing doctrinal codes and voluntary entry equate more closely with ethnicity, then traditional religion in Africa is the exception that proves the rule: world religions and African ethnic groups are fundamentally different types of identity that elicit different political priorities.

TABLE 2. Comparison of Treatment Effects and Traditional Religion on Dependent Variables

	(1) Prefers Moral Candidate	(2) Prefers Moral Community	(3) Willing to Pay Bribe
RELIGION treatment	+0.04 (0.015)	+0.08 (0.022)	- 0.14 (0.030)
ETHNIC treatment	- 0.08 (0.027)	- 0.01 (0.033)	+0.04 (0.029)
Traditional religionists	- 0.12 (0.045)	- 0.21 (0.128)	+0.05 (0.057)

Notes: Symbols represent the direction of coefficients on the RELIGION and ETHNIC treatments and on the dummy variable for Traditional religionists, drawn from the multivariate logistic regressions. Standard errors in parentheses.

One concern that bears mention is that membership in a traditional African religion may act as little more than an ethnic prime: those who label themselves traditional religionists may do so to reaffirm the importance of their ethnic status. In that case, the fact that the regression coefficients on traditional religious membership and the experimental ETHNIC treatment share the same signs would reveal little about the distinction between religion and ethnicity, since both are just priming ethnicity. One way to address this concern is to note the correlation between respondents' stated membership in a traditional religion and their tendency to prioritize their ethnic identity first and foremost. Because the correlation coefficient is just -0.002 ($p = .954$), it is safe to argue that those who identify themselves as traditional religionists are not generally among the most ardent supporters of the ethnic identity. Furthermore, just 3.5 percent of the Ashanti ethnic group association members listed their religion as traditional African. If traditional religion were only a synonym for ethnicity or "tribe," we would expect to see stronger relationships between traditional religious practice and the importance that individuals attach to their ethnicity.

CONCLUSION

This article argues that *ethnic politics* does not stop at a simple accounting of group sizes, but rather that it must consider the consequences that result from mobilizing supporters according to one identity type or another. The starting point for that claim is that ethnicity and religion inspire different priorities among potential supporters.

I have argued that, in the African context, a distinction in the geographic boundedness of identity types inspires differences in the goods that group members seek under ethnic and religious contexts. Those features emerge exogenously, as a function of the roles that ethnicity and religion serve over time, so that political preferences in each context cannot be explained only by a desire for belonging. The research strategy of artificially manipulating the lens through which respondents view politically important questions produced moderate but clear effects: when individuals in the study area are assigned to a religious context

as opposed to an ethnic context, they express a relative preference for candidates focused on moral policy, for communities that prioritize moral living, and for rejecting small-scale corruption. I attribute this to the rule-based, voluntary nature of world religions, which inspires a preference for geographically unbounded, behavioral outcomes. In an ethnic context, otherwise identical respondents demonstrate a relative preference for candidates who focus on local development, for wealthy communities, and for individual advancement over transparency, which I attribute to their pursuit of local club goods. Evidence from committed ethnic and religious group members and from traditional religionists is consistent with these claims.

The individual-level findings have important implications for political entrepreneurship and mobilization in the region. In short, political elites may use policy promises and priorities to mobilize the identity coalitions that serve their own optimal outcomes. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, restrictions on non-native access to land in the 1990s and 2000s propelled former presidents Henri Konan Bedié and Laurent Ghagbo to victory while ushering in a period of "ethno-national" politics (Bassett 2003; Dozon 2000). The use of Sharia law in northern Nigeria (Falola 1998) and laws against homosexuality in Uganda (Kaoma 2009) to mobilize supporters along religious lines, or appeals to indigenous Hutu rights to land in Rwanda (Prunier 1995) and Igbo control of oil fields in southern Nigeria (Badru 1998) to elicit support along ethnic lines, can similarly be viewed as mobilization efforts that exploit the differential preferences associated with ethnicity and religion at the individual level.

One objection to the premise of the study is that, in keeping with the ambiguous nature of religion as an identity,³⁰ some individuals may treat their religion as their ethnicity. This is largely true of Arab Muslims in Chad, for example, and other predominantly Muslim countries in the region show comparatively low levels of ethnic favoritism, which might suggest that the religious identity is used in place of an ethnic one (see Franck and Rainer 2012). If this were broadly true,

³⁰ Chandra (2006) argues that religion is in some cases "ethnic" and in some not, depending on whether the identity is passed down through family or adopted via conversion.

there would be little need to explain heterogeneity in identity types. One response to that objection is to assert that, in fact, the vast majority of sub-Saharan Africans view these identity types as distinct. Instead, the research design accounted for this complication simply by allowing respondents themselves to self-categorize: the treatments did not delineate the groups to which respondents belonged, they simply primed religion or ethnicity. Respondents then answered the battery of questions on social and political preferences according to whatever sentiment had been primed in the context of the experiment. Thus, while this study uses blunt divisions to address an exceedingly complex issue, the empirical results suggest that doing so can teach us new things about the mobilizational differences between ethnicity and religion.

The research does not suggest that religious and ethnic identities inspire any particular beliefs or behaviors on a consistent basis, as both are subject to interpretation and change and can generate very different responses in different places. Rather, the findings highlight distinctions in the broad priorities that ethnicity and world religions elicit in one particular study region

of Africa, and they suggest important effects regarding the strategic mobilization of identities for political purposes: when elites contemplate mobilizing populations along either religious or ethnic lines, they begin that process of politicization from different baselines. Additional studies might build on this one to answer a number of related questions: what policy priorities are associated with other identity types? What outcomes might we expect in other parts of the world, where the religious identity may be taken as more geographically bounded? When ethnic communities migrate on large scales, how do their attachments to the land and the identity group change? These questions are important ones for further refining our understanding of *ethnic politics*, but treating identity types like religion and ethnicity as distinct in the political context constitutes an important starting point.

Supplementary materials

To view supplementary material for this article, please visit <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0003055414000410>

APPENDIX A. Multivariate Regression Results			
	(1) Prefers Moral Candidate	(2) Prefers Moral Community	(3) Willing to Pay Bribe
RELIGION treatment	0.04* (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)	-0.14*** (0.03)
ETHNIC treatment	-0.08* (0.03)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)
Ghana resident	0.04 (0.06)	0.02 (0.04)	0.11*** (0.02)
Northern resident	0.06 (0.06)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.03* (0.02)
Urban	0.01 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.02)
Male	-0.06*** (0.02)	-0.04 (0.03)	0.06† (0.04)
Age	-0.01*** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01* (0.01)
Education	-0.01 (0.01)	0.05* (0.02)	-0.10*** (0.03)
Standard of living	0.01 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.02)
Muslim	-0.01 (0.02)	0.03 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.02)
(Pseudo) R^2	0.02	0.05	0.08
N	1256	1273	1246
Pr (RELIGION = ETHNIC)	0.0004	0.0010	0.0000

Notes: Logit estimations with standard errors in parentheses. † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Coefficients represent marginal effects. Religious group fixed effects calculated but not shown (except for Muslim); the omitted religious category is Protestant.

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