



# **Ethnic Solidarity and the Individual Determinants of Ethnic Identification**

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## Abstract

This paper examines the individual determinants of ethnic identification using large sample surveys (about 30,000 respondents) representative of seven capitals of West-African countries. A small model that relates ethnic identification to an investment in ethnic capital suggests that individuals initially deprived of social or human capital resort to ethnicity to get socially inserted, and do even more so if their ethnic group itself is well inserted. Empirical results are consistent with this simple theory. First, education lowers ethnic salience. Second, ethnic identification is higher for uneducated unemployed or informal workers who seek a new or better job, and is further raised by the share of the individual's ethnic group integrated on the job market. Third, ethnic identification is higher among migrants, and raised by the share of the migrant's ethnic group that is employed. Group solidarity makes ethnic identity more salient for individuals deprived of other means for upward mobility.

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JEL codes: A13, A14, D74, O17

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The salience of ethnicity in heterogenous societies has been shown to vary a great deal across time and space (Posner 2004a) (Chandra 2005). In the search for the reasons for this variation, the impact of political competition has drawn most of the attention so far<sup>1</sup>. Recently, Eifert, Miguel, and Posner (2010) show how ethnic identification raises around election times, to the detriment of class and occupation identities. This approach focuses on the role of elites which may manipulate or exploit the feelings of ethnic loyalty and rivalry to achieve their goals, and builds on a variety of studies dedicated to the relationships between ethnicity and politics (Brass 1976) (Salamone 1985). In this top-down setting, the elite's quest for power appears as the driving force that fosters the salience and mobilization of ethnic belongings. The focus is put on the *collective* determinants of ethnic salience.

However, little has been written on the individual, grassroots incentives to relate to one's ethnic group, so that within-group individual variation in ethnic identification may well be a missing link in our understanding of the determinants of ethnic salience. Reverting the perspective is consistent with a definition of identity that considers it as a fluid, multi-dimensional and context-specific notion, and therefore opens way to variations across individuals within the same ethnic group. Fearon (1999) defines identity as the specific way an individual positions himself in the multiple social stratifications, which may change along with the individual's interests at a certain point or in a certain context (Fearon 2003). There might therefore be important variations in ethnic identification across individuals, just as social and economic situations also vary. This understanding of identity underpins the present paper.

What kind of interests would then push individuals to emphasize their ethnic belonging? The persistence of ethnic identities in a changing world has led scholars to investigate what benefits ethnic groups provide to their members (Glazer and Moynihan 1963), as ethnic groups have proved to be functional not only for the elite or to the various contenders for power, but also for any group member in certain contexts. In a seminal paper, Bates (1974) suggests that ethnic groups persist "because of their capacity to extract goods and services from the modern sector and thereby satisfy the demands of their members for the components of modernity". The combination of this assertion and the definition of identity mentioned above suggests that ethnic identification might reflect the demand of individuals for ethnic-based goods and services, and not only manipulations by the political elite.

Identifying the channels through which ethnic groups may provide such amenities is key to isolate the microfoundations of ethnic identification at the individual level. The literature on social networks and social capital provides many useful insights here. Social proximity - due to common ethnicity or to any other common characteristic - has been shown to bring benefits to individuals in some specific social and economic contexts (Arrow 1972): solutions to agency problems in the enforceability of trade contracts (Greif 1993), formation of mutual insurance networks (Fafchamps 1992), financial decisions (Karlan 2007) or integration on the job market (Granovetter 1974). Ethnicity

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<sup>1</sup>See Norris and Mattes (2003), Miguel (2004), Posner (2004b), Miguel and Gugerty (2005), Posner (2006)

as a set of descent-based attributes (Chandra 2006), is efficient in building such social networks. Common ethnicity can be used as a "social focal point" (Habyarimana et al. 2006) that allows individuals to solve coordination problems, even if common membership does not carry pre-existing social rules or common tastes (Habyarimana et al. 2007). Ethnic membership appears as a resource in social capital that provides significant social and economic returns, and therefore pushes individuals to identify with their ethnic group.

In this paper I first present a simple model of investment in social capital<sup>2</sup> (Glaeser, Laibson, and Sacerdote 2002) and argue that ethnic identification reflects an individual demand for this particular form of capital. I refer to the notion of social capital as defined by Bourdieu (1986) as a measure of the individual's amount of relationships or size of networks. Individual stocks of social capital then aggregate (Brehm and Rahn 1997) to form the set of norms, attitudes and trust that characterize a community or society (Putnam 1995). The model suggests that the demand for ethnicity is higher when individuals are initially deprived of social capital, and therefore have high marginal returns to their investment. It is also higher for individuals whose ethnic group may effectively supply those ethnic-based amenities needed. This simple model predicts that individuals with a low education and limited local networks (such as recent migrants) have a higher probability of identifying with their ethnic group. It also predicts that the share of the ethnic group integrated on the job market raises the returns individuals get from their group membership, and will drive up the individual's identification.

I then test the predictions of this model on an original survey dataset that includes more than 30,000 respondents representative of seven major cities in West Africa. Consistent with the model, I show strong and robust evidence that being poorly educated, left out of the formal job market, and a migrant from rural areas increases ethnic identification. I also find that the level of integration of an individual's ethnic group on the job market drives up her level of ethnic identification, which again concurs with the hypothesis that ethnic identification reflects a demand for networks and social capital.

The article makes three important contributions. First, it directly examines the determinants of ethnic salience at the individual level, without using proximal variables that are only assumed to be related to ethnic salience. A nascent literature uses Afrobarometer data to do so (see notably Eifert, Miguel, and Posner (2010)), and it is primarily important to add a different data source to this body of research. Second, this article focuses on within-group variations in ethnic salience at the individual level, a dimension left aside in previous empirical studies. Here I focus on day-to-day ethnic identification at the grassroots level, which complements the elite-driven mechanisms by forming the demand side of ethnic salience. Third, I take advantage of the size of the sample to build robust estimates of ethnic group socio-economic characteristics at the local level, instead of nation-wide census data of dubious quality and uncertain relevance at the individual level. For the first time in this literature, I use interaction models to incorporate ethnic group socio-economic characteristics in my analysis of

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<sup>2</sup>For a comprehensive survey on this notion, see Coleman (1990), Putnam (1995) and Sobel (2002).

individual determinants, which allows a fine assessment of the relationship between individual and ethnic group characteristics.

The paper is organized as follows. I first lay out this small theoretical framework and derive a set of predictions (section 1). After having presented the data in section 2, I examine the individual characteristics that raise the importance of ethnic identification (section 3). The impact of low education, migration and unemployment stand out. Taking advantage of the presence of several respondents in a same household, I introduce household fixed effects and show that those results hold when household idiosyncracies are canceled out. In section 4, I then turn to the effect of the position of the ethnic group on the job market, which might determine how valuable it is to claim one's attachment to it. When individuals are willing to experience occupational mobility, they identify to their ethnic group if its insertion on the job market may help them reach a better job. I discuss this set of results, their link to sociological literature and possible alternative interpretations in section 5. Section 6 concludes.

## 1 A small model of investment in ethnic capital

I consider an individual who belongs to an ethnic group  $\epsilon$ . Her well-being depends positively on her level of human capital, which is a combination of an initial stock  $K_0 \geq 0$  and of a flux of social capital on which decisions are made.  $K_0$  typically depends on the individual's family background, level of education or social insertion, and is exogenous. The flux of social capital critically depends on the involvement of individuals in ethnic networks, which can be thought of as an investment in ethnic capital and is denoted  $\theta \geq 0$ . It corresponds intuitively to the number of persons contacted for help on the ground of common membership, the time spent in meeting other members of the ethnic group, or the energy spent on seeking information from the ethnic group. The returns to such an investment are determined by the extent to which the ethnic group is well positioned on the socio-economic ladder, typically on the job market.  $S_\epsilon$  is the share of the ethnic group  $\epsilon$  that is effectively in a position to help the individual. This parameter is exogenous. In my framework, ethnicity is similar to a non-rival public good. The returns to investment are not affected by any queuing effect.

The level of human capital is given by

$$R(K_0, \theta) = (K_0^{\frac{1}{S_\epsilon}} + \theta)^{S_\epsilon} \quad (1)$$

Note that the returns of investments in ethnic capital are positive and marginally decreasing:  $\frac{\partial R}{\partial \theta} \geq 0$ ,  $\frac{\partial^2 R}{\partial \theta^2} \leq 0$ . The intuition for this is quite simple. Imagine an individual who seeks an increase in social capital and gets in touch with all the persons he can think of on the ground of common membership to the ethnic group. The first person will presumably help him make the first steps in the ethnic network, give him

the basic information he has to know about the job market for instance, and may open many doors. If the individual continues to invest in ethnic capital and increases  $\theta$ , the next person contacted may help but the bulk of the information would have been already transmitted. The tenth person might provide little returns, even if it happens that she is the one who provides the marginal surplus that helps the individual go beyond the threshold required for, say, getting a job in the formal sector. It is thus sensible to assume that returns are marginally decreasing.

Without any investment in ethnic capital ( $\theta = 0$ ), a person can rely on an amount of human capital corresponding to the initial stock accumulated  $K_0 > 0$ , which might include literacy, diplomas, people already part of the network, integration to neighborhood or community life. Conversely, an individual who has never been to school and doesn't have any pre-existing social relationships can only rely on the returns to his investment in ethnic capital.  $K_0$  and  $\theta$  are therefore substitutes in a marginally decreasing production function. The higher  $K_0$ , the lower the returns to a given amount of  $\theta$ : investment in ethnic capital only helps to reach out to the people who are not already part of the network initially accumulated.

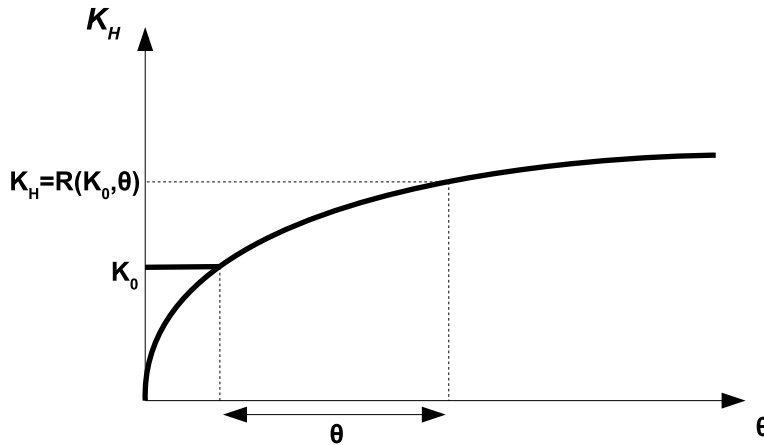


Figure 1: Returns of  $\theta$  for a positive  $K_0$

Resorting to ethnic investment, however, has costs: it is necessarily time and energy-consuming, so there is an opportunity cost attached to it. It also creates an obligation to reciprocate. Being involved in social networks and taking advantage of them also implies that the individual might later be asked to also give some of his time, information, contacts etc. The cost  $C(\theta)$  of investment  $\theta$  corresponds intuitively to the sum of a cost of opportunity and of a series of future reimbursements. The cost of opportunity is proportional to the investment, and I assume the series of reimbursements convergent to a finite limit - an infinite limit would imply an infinite obligation to reimburse and thus deter any use of ethnic networks.

$$C(\theta) = c\theta \tag{2}$$

For simplicity, I assume that the cost function is linear, contrary to the returns function: when the individual establishes a contact with any relationship or relative, he opens a form of drawing right for this person, no matter if he or she is the first or tenth person contacted. The time and energy spent in such an increase in ethnic capital have no strong reason to increase or decrease, and the liability created is the same for the individual, whatever the low level of returns provided.

The individual's program is the following:

$$\max U(\theta) = R(\theta, K_0) - C(\theta) = (K_0^{\frac{1}{S_\epsilon}} + \theta)^{S_\epsilon} - c\theta$$

The first-order condition determines the optimal level of investment in ethnic capital  $\theta^*$ :

$$\theta^* = \begin{cases} \left(\frac{S_\epsilon}{c}\right)^{\frac{1}{1-S_\epsilon}} - K_0^{\frac{1}{S_\epsilon}} & \text{if } K_0 \leq \left(\frac{S_\epsilon}{c}\right)^{\frac{S_\epsilon}{1-S_\epsilon}} \\ 0 & \text{if } K_0 > \left(\frac{S_\epsilon}{c}\right)^{\frac{S_\epsilon}{1-S_\epsilon}} \end{cases} \quad (3)$$

It may easily be verified that  $\theta^*$  is a negative function of  $K_0$  and a positive function of  $S_\epsilon$ . Beyond a certain threshold of initial social capital  $\left(\frac{S_\epsilon}{c}\right)^{\frac{S_\epsilon}{1-S_\epsilon}}$ , investment in ethnic capital would only provide negative returns because costs outweigh returns<sup>3</sup>. Individuals with a high initial stock of capital do not invest in their ethnic relationships, but rather rely on the high level of integration they already reached and avoid the costs attached to an investment in ethnic capital.

The predictions of this small framework are twofold. First, the negative effect of  $K_0$  implies that educated individuals would tend to identify less with their ethnic group, as they don't need this investment to have access to good jobs or other opportunities. Conversely, people who are initially deprived of social capital, because they are less educated or left out of the job market, might exhibit higher levels of ethnic identification. This effect might also play out for individuals who have left their local networks and are in need of accumulating social capital in their new place of living. I should therefore see a higher propensity to ethnic identification among migrants. Further, as the accumulation of social capital is a life-long process, youngsters who are just getting started in their work career may invest more in ethnic capital than more mature individuals who have already established their networks. There may also be a gender effect: if I assume that men tend to have more relationships to their community than women who are more confined to their household or immediate neighborhood, then men should show a lower level of ethnic identification. Finally, social capital is very much determined by intergenerational transmissions. An important reason for initial deprivation of social capital is that the father himself has little social capital. Since my empirical setting is

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<sup>3</sup>The cost related to the duty to reciprocate is very similar to the argument raised by Luke and Munshi (2006), who explain that high-ability individuals are less likely to get married because they do not really need marriage to get employed but would nevertheless bear the cost of high remittances to be sent to the extended family.

urban, having a father farmer would indicate an initial deprivation of connections in the urban world and therefore push up the level of ethnic identification.

Second, the positive impact of  $S_\epsilon$  means that the share of the ethnic group that is in a position to help the individual drives up the level of ethnic identification. The relevant characteristics of the group might well depend on the position of the individual himself. While the share of one's group integrated on the job market may be an asset irrespective of one's particular position, an informal worker may be more specifically interested in the share of his group in the formal sector, a formal worker may be interested in the share of this group in the public sector, etc.

## 2 Data and Methodology

In this paper I use a set of seven "1-2-3" surveys that were carried out by DIAL, AFRISTAT and the National Institutes of Statistics in the main cities of seven West-African countries: Cotonou (Benin), Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire), Bamako (Mali), Niamey (Niger), Dakar (Senegal) and Lome (Togo). These surveys are identical and therefore strictly comparable. They were carried on in the early 2000s on large samples representative of the urban population.

The surveys all include the following question: "*which group (or community) are you the most proud to belong to?*". Two answers are possible: the ethnic group or the nation. The survey in Dakar is the only one which includes religion as a third possible answer. This may not be mixed up with ethnicity, all the more as 92% of the sample in Dakar declares being Muslim. I thus considered that religious identification may more accurately be aggregated to national identification. This leads to quite homogeneous rates of ethnic identification in the seven main cities (Figure 2). In this paper I refer to ethnic identification, or ethnic salience, as the likelihood that individuals mention their ethnic group as the group or community they are proud to belong to.

The question confines the respondent to a choice between two possibilities (ethnic group or nation). This bars individuals from claiming pride in class, occupation, gender, religion etc. Though restrictive, this question interrogates the interactions between ethnicity, nation-building and democracy, a critical research field in political science (Charney 2003). Ever since the independence and the creation of heterogeneous, often artificial nation States, a looming interrogation pertains to the conditions for ethnic groups in Africa to merge and dissolve into a national political field where national interest would subsume ethnic identities (Miles and Rochefort 1991). The dual choice offered to survey respondents may therefore shed light on a burning question. In their study, Eifert, Miguel, and Posner (2010) face the exact opposite problem as their survey question offers several possible identification groups, but not the nation. My paper may be seen as a useful complement to that extent as well. It is reassuring to see that the levels of absolute ethnic identification (Figure 2) are quite similar across surveys (31% across 10 countries in the Afrobarometer data, 24% here). This suggests that ethnic identification is little dependent of alternative choices. The great advantages of this



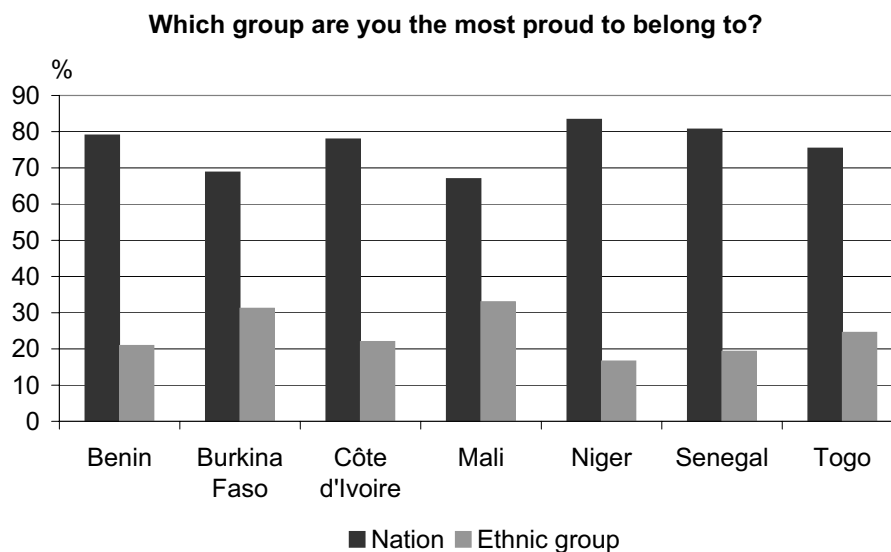


Figure 2: Frequency of ethnic identification in the main cities of seven countries

data are well described in Eifert, Miguel, and Posner (2010), as well as their limitations. The survey methodology and purpose being similar in this case, I refer to their remarks. I would add that in both sets of surveys, the question leaves the respondent free to mentally refer to any ethnic group or sub-group of which he considers to be a member, which avoids the pitfall of imposing ethnic categories often at odds with the reality of ethnic structures and perceptions.

I then include a range of variables that describe the individual's situation in terms of education, occupation and migration status, along with classical demographical information. To study the alternative between national identification and ethnic identification, it makes sense to restrict the sample to adults - individuals older than 18 - who have the nationality of the country considered. My final sample includes 30,042 individuals older than 18. Descriptive statistics are provided in Table 1.

### 3 Individual social position and ethnic identification

The survey data enables me to test several key predictions of my simple model. I regress the binary variable "to be more proud of one's ethnic group", a measure of ethnic identification, on the set of individual characteristics presented above. I include country fixed effects to control for national specificities, but my results hold without including them. My method is similar to the one used by Eifert, Miguel, and Posner (2010). I use logit estimations. Results are displayed in Table 2.

|   | Benin        | Burkina Faso | Côte d'Ivoire | Mali         | Niger        | Senegal      | Togo         | Total         |
|---|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| <b>Demographical background</b>             |              |              |               |              |              |              |              |               |
| Father farmer (%)                           | 36.2         | 52.2         | 47.8          | 37.2         | 47.7         | 28.2         | 40.7         | <b>40.7</b>   |
| Female (%)                                  | 51.6         | 45.1         | 49.3          | 48.8         | 50.8         | 55.6         | 46.3         | <b>50.8</b>   |
| Age   | 34.5         | 35.2         | 31.9          | 35.2         | 35.0         | 35.4         | 35.5         | <b>34.0</b>   |
| Size of the household                       | 5.8          | 7.1          | 6.8           | 7.9          | 8.0          | 9.9          | 4.7          | <b>7.5</b>    |
| <b>Migration</b>                            |              |              |               |              |              |              |              |               |
| Born in the same place (%)                  | 50.4         | 43.6         | 32.6          | 48.1         | 43.0         | 60.9         | 39.0         | <b>47.63</b>  |
| Migrant from an urban area (%)              | 29.4         | 43.8         | 58.7          | 35.0         | 31.5         | 28.5         | 46.4         | <b>35.81</b>  |
| Migrant from a rural area (%)               | 20.2         | 12.6         | 9.1           | 16.9         | 25.5         | 10.7         | 14.6         | <b>16.56</b>  |
| <b>Education</b>                            |              |              |               |              |              |              |              |               |
| Never attended school (%)                   | 21.5         | 42.1         | 21.5          | 48.0         | 43.4         | 35.2         | 17.5         | <b>30.5</b>   |
| At least attended primary school (%)        | 30.2         | 22.8         | 25.1          | 15.3         | 19.9         | 33.4         | 32.2         | <b>26.1</b>   |
| At least attended secondary school (%)      | 36.6         | 28.1         | 39.4          | 30.1         | 27.9         | 25.3         | 43.4         | <b>33.4</b>   |
| At least attended post-secondary school (%) | 11.6         | 6.9          | 14.0          | 6.6          | 8.7          | 6.2          | 6.8          | <b>10.0</b>   |
| <b>Occupation</b>                           |              |              |               |              |              |              |              |               |
| Inactive excl. students (%)                 | 11.9         | 12.2         | 9.7           | 17.7         | 22.9         | 22.3         | 8.8          | <b>15.1</b>   |
| Student (%)                                 | 11.2         | 6.2          | 10.4          | 8.2          | 7.9          | 6.4          | 4.8          | <b>8.7</b>    |
| Unemployed (%)                              | 5.8          | 13.4         | 15.6          | 9.9          | 16.0         | 15.9         | 9.7          | <b>13.4</b>   |
| Formal private sector (%)                   | 7.9          | 7.4          | 14.4          | 8.2          | 6.6          | 8.8          | 8.3          | <b>10.3</b>   |
| Informal private sector (%)                 | 56.0         | 49.6         | 43.8          | 48.1         | 36.1         | 41.7         | 60.9         | <b>45.6</b>   |
| Civil servant (%)                           | 7.1          | 9.6          | 6.1           | 7.5          | 10.1         | 4.6          | 7.3          | <b>6.6</b>    |
| <b>Observations</b>                         | <b>6,028</b> | <b>1,642</b> | <b>3,752</b>  | <b>4,399</b> | <b>6,050</b> | <b>6,668</b> | <b>1,503</b> | <b>30,042</b> |

Table 1: Country-wise description of the survey sample

My small model of investment in ethnic capital leads me first to examine the effects of the individual amount of social capital ( $K_0$ ) on the level of ethnic identification. The main determinants of this initial stock of social capital are the level of education, the migration status, the father's level of social capital, and the position on the job market. I also examine the impact of demographic variables such as gender and age.

Education stands out as a very robust and significant deterrent of ethnic identification, with the highest magnitude: whatever the specification of the model, being educated has a strong negative effect on the propensity to refer to the ethnic group. All education modalities included in the regression have significant negative impacts as compared to the omitted variable "having never attended school" (which concerns between 17.5% of the population in Lome, Togo, and 48.0% in Bamako, Mali). This finding is robust to shifts in the definition of education levels. Including the continuous variable "*number of school years*" instead of education classes yields the same result. Furthermore, the impact increases with the level attained: absolute values of marginal effects increase with the level of education attained. When all other parameters are controlled for (column 4), having attended primary school lowers the probability of referring to the ethnic group by 2 percentage points, having attended secondary level lowers it by 6 percentage points and post-secondary education (a level reached by less than 10% of the sample) by more than 8 percentage points.

|                                     | (1)               | (2)                | (3)                | (4)                | (5)                |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Female                              | 0.04***<br>(0.04) | 0.04***<br>(0.04)  | 0.03***<br>(0.05)  | 0.03***<br>(0.05)  | 0.08***<br>(0.05)  |
| Age*10                              | -0.01**<br>(0.02) | -0.01***<br>(0.02) | -0.01***<br>(0.02) | -0.01***<br>(0.02) | -0.00<br>(0.02)    |
| Father farmer                       | 0.05***<br>(0.05) | 0.03***<br>(0.05)  | 0.02*<br>(0.05)    | 0.02*<br>(0.05)    |                    |
| Migrant from a rural area           |                   | 0.03***<br>(0.07)  | 0.03**<br>(0.07)   | 0.03**<br>(0.07)   | 0.06**<br>(0.11)   |
| Migrant from an urban area          |                   | 0.04***<br>(0.05)  | 0.04***<br>(0.05)  | 0.04***<br>(0.05)  | 0.02<br>(0.08)     |
| Attended primary school             |                   |                    | -0.02**<br>(0.06)  | -0.02**<br>(0.06)  | -0.03<br>(0.07)    |
| Attended middle or secondary school |                   |                    | -0.06***<br>(0.06) | -0.06***<br>(0.06) | -0.07***<br>(0.08) |
| Attended post-secondary school      |                   |                    | -0.09***<br>(0.10) | -0.08***<br>(0.10) | -0.13***<br>(0.13) |
| Inactive                            |                   |                    |                    | 0.02<br>(0.12)     | 0.02<br>(0.13)     |
| Student                             |                   |                    |                    | 0.02<br>(0.13)     | 0.04<br>(0.14)     |
| Unemployed                          |                   |                    |                    | 0.04*<br>(0.12)    | 0.08**<br>(0.13)   |
| Private informal sector             |                   |                    |                    | 0.04*<br>(0.10)    | 0.04<br>(0.12)     |
| Private formal sector               |                   |                    |                    | 0.04*<br>(0.12)    | 0.02<br>(0.14)     |
| Fixed effects                       | country           | country            | country            | country            | household          |
| Observations                        | 21596             | 20789              | 20733              | 20733              | 7923               |
| Pseudo $R^2$                        | 0.02              | 0.02               | 0.02               | 0.02               | 0.02               |

Columns 1-4: Logit estimations; Column 5: Conditional logit estimation with household fixed effects. Marginal-effect estimates are presented (at mean values for the explanatory variables). Standard errors in parentheses. Significantly different than zero at 90% (\*), 95% (\*\*), 99% (\*\*\*) confidence levels. Omitted migration status: "born in the city". Omitted education level: "never attended school". Omitted occupation: "civil servant".

Table 2: Individual determinants of ethnic identification

Those results on education contradict certain predictions of the second generation of modernization theories that suggest education would raise ethnic identification as a result of increased competition in the modern sector (Bates 1974). In these theories, education is viewed as an attribute of modernity, along with urbanity, inclusion in the formal sector, or political empowerment. Since competition is said to be higher in the modern world, educated individuals appear to develop more ethnic-based strategies. A first reason for this discrepancy may be that the surveys used in this paper are urban, located in the main cities of each country, and regressions include controls for the employment status. So my results on education are not driven by other correlates of modernity like urbanity or inclusion in the formal sector, and may therefore be interpreted as "all other aspects of modernity being equal". I show that *within* the urban world, conditional on other observable variables, education weakens ethnic identification, although I can not exclude that a different result may be found at a national

level. A second reason may be that modernization theories underestimate the level of competition at the grassroots level, and the fact that in social competition, ethnic strategies may be substitutes to qualification and diplomas, rather than complements. My results concur to the idea that competition raises ethnic identification, but suggest that competition is fiercer in other segments of the population.

Another interpretation of the results on education is that there is a straightforward impact of education on values and identities, through the provision of knowledge and openness that enable people to relate to their nation. Studies, especially higher education, are also a time where interactions with people of different backgrounds are more frequent, which may decrease the sense of ethnicity. Education would directly decrease the subjective relevance of ethnicity, not its instrumental use. My empirical strategy does not allow me to separate out this effect from the fact that being educated makes it less necessary to rely on ethnic solidarity to reach one's objectives, typically of finding a good job. But the instrumental interpretation finds support in many earlier studies and in my other results.

Given the extent of intergenerational transmission of social capital (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979), a second key determinant of the initial amount of social capital is the family background. The surveys allow us to incorporate this dimension as they include a question on the father's occupation when the respondent was 15 years old. Having a father farmer at the age of 15 arguably indicates a low level of inherited social capital in the urban world. Results show indeed that having a father farmer increases ethnic salience by 5 percentage points when this variable is introduced along with demographical indicators only (column 1), even though the magnitude and significance decrease when educational variables are added to the regression (columns 3 and 4). There is therefore both a direct effect of familial legacy of social capital, and an indirect effect of intergenerational rigidity in schooling opportunities, as having a father farmer impacts negatively on educational attainment in Africa (Bossuroy and Cogneau 2008).

The impact of migration status is well aligned with those results. Three categories may be constructed from the results of the survey: people born in the main city, people born in another urban area (excluding the main city) and people born in a rural area. Table 1 shows that natives represent about a half of the population of the capitals, while urban migrants represent between 30 and 50% of the rest. Being a migrant, regardless of origin, appears as a strong determinant for salience of ethnicity. A first explanation may be that for cultural reasons, people born in the main city have a different set of values and feel prouder of their nation, maybe as an effect of living in open, cosmopolitan cities as opposed to isolated hamlets. But in the baseline regressions with country fixed effects (columns 2 to 4), being a migrant from an urban area shows a similar impact as being a migrant from a rural area. Ethnic identification might thus reflect the use of ethnic ties to get inserted in a new community, which is necessary for migrants who left their established local networks irrespective of where they come from.

Including the individual's occupation status (column 4) reveals that the lower the level

of integration on the job market, the higher the level of ethnic identification. With the most stable and protected occupational status - civil servant - taken as a reference, every modality appears to determine positively and significantly the level of ethnic identification. One may argue that I only capture the fact that civil servants have a certain *ethos* that makes them more prone to refer to the nation for which they work on a daily basis. But it is striking that being out of the job market (either as student or with any other kind of inactive status) does not have any significant impact on ethnic identification when compared to being a civil servant. Inactivity is specific in that it is a situation where low competition prevails, since individuals are not (or no more) competing in the job market. Competition does hold among students, but being successful in the studies is not the same as being integrated on the job market: in principle, interpersonal connections and social networks are less necessary. So it may be that the level of precariousness that individuals experience on the job market determines their degree of ethnic identification, because of the will to experience an upward occupational mobility and the efficiency of strategies based on ethnic networks. The insertion of the ethnic group itself should therefore be examined, which I do in section 4. Interestingly, introducing a revenue variable does not help to explain the salience of ethnicity (results not shown), a finding that is consistent with the notion that the occupational status is the driving force.

The strategic dimension of ethnic identification for occupational mobility is tough to identify, since the effect is endogenous by nature: being in a precarious situation may lead people to strategically mobilize their ethnic membership, which in turn is supposed to improve their situation. However, the possible bias would cause the effects to be underestimated and not overestimated: since ethnic identification reduces the probability of, say, unemployment, the impact of unemployment on the propensity to refer to one's ethnic group should be even more important than what I observe. The job market status thus appears to have an influence, which might be related to the strategic use of ethnic ties for upward mobility and will be investigated further in section 4.

The impact of demographic variables is consistent with the predictions of my model. Females appear to identify more to their ethnic group. As I also include other covariates in the regression, this result is not driven by the fact that being a woman is associated with some specific characteristics on education, migration, integration on the job market, etc. As suggested above, this may be due to the fact that women are often less active in the social life of the extended community and are less naturally in touch with "useful" ethnic mates than men. Ethnic identification decreases significantly with age, though by a small magnitude (1 percentage point per decade). Older people show a lower propensity to ethnic identification, although they are often thought to be more attached to traditional values, while younger people are seen as vectors of modernity. This might reflect the need for youngsters to build their networks and find their way in the social hierarchy, whereas older people have accumulated social capital for a longer period of time and need less support from ethnic networks. These results on age are robust to changes in specification like introducing age in a quadratic function, introducing a discrete variable of age classes or dropping the education variables

that could interact with the effect of age, in a context where schooling rapidly increases over generations in Africa.

Values and identities are very much influenced by other household members. A regression run on the sub-sample of households where fathers and sons are both respondents shows that the father's ethnic identification is strongly correlated with the son's (the estimated impact is about 30 percentage points - results not shown). To control for this background family effect, I use a conditional logistic regression and introduce household fixed effects (column 5). This estimation strategy skims off what drives the individual's deviation from the household average. It is therefore restricted to households where there is intra-household heterogeneity in the variable of interest, hence the smaller number of observations. Results show that the critical drivers are migration from a rural area, high levels of education and unemployment. The impact of being a woman obviously stays unaffected by controlling for household fixed effects.

My results on individual characteristics are quite consistent with the predictions of the model of investment in ethnic capital. Being deprived of other dimensions of human capital (low education, migration) drive ethnic identification, as well as having a precarious job situation. The insertion of the ethnic group on the job market, a key parameter for individuals to try and take advantage of their group membership, is yet to be examined.

## **4 Ethnic group position on the job market and ethnic identification**

Occupational position determines the level of ethnic identification because individuals may take advantage of their ethnic belonging to make their way on the job market. People who do not have a sufficient amount of human capital or social capital may play the ethnic card to find a new job or have a promotion. When asked how they found their job, 38.5% of employed respondents answer that they found it "through personal relationships (friends, family members)", as opposed to job advertisements, public placement services, direct contact with employers or competitive entrance exams. This number is as high as 67.1% of unemployed respondents when asked how they are looking for a job. Social networks clearly matter a great deal for job search.

The will to find or change job may be observed in the survey data. In a section on occupational perspectives, the respondent declares whether she intends to find a job, or find a new job in the same firm - having a promotion - or find a new job in a different firm, or to keep her position (including unemployed or inactive). In the first three cases, the individual is asked in how many years she thinks she will obtain this new position. I define people "eager to change job" as those who want to change their position and intend to obtain it within a year. The other ones are said "non eager" either because they are not looking for mobility or because it is a long-term, somewhat abstract, desire. The distribution of individuals eager to change job across different sub-groups is presented in Table 3.

|              |      |              |      |               |      |
|--------------|------|--------------|------|---------------|------|
| All sample   | 30.7 | Female       | 32.2 | Unemployed    | 65.9 |
|              |      | Male         | 29.4 | Informal      | 24.7 |
|              |      |              |      | Formal        | 27.4 |
|              |      |              |      | Civil servant | 15.3 |
| Non-educated | 27.6 | Father       |      | Father        |      |
| Primary      | 30.5 | non-educated | 29.3 | farmer        | 29.0 |
| Middle / sec | 33.5 | Father       |      | Father        |      |
| Post-sec     | 31.7 | educated     | 33.6 | non-farmer    | 32.4 |

*Coverage: active people*

Table 3: Eagerness to find/change job across demographic and occupational categories (%)

The share of people eager to find or change their job - around 30% of active people - is quite homogenous across educational, occupational or gender sub-groups, except for the sub-group of unemployed who of course are massively willing to change their situation. Not surprisingly, civil servants also stand out with a lower will to change their position. Aside from those two exceptions, eagerness to move cross-cuts categories and does not seem to reflect any of those other observable characteristics.

The model predicts that individuals with little initial social capital would use ethnic ties to change or find a job. I test this possibility by introducing interaction terms in the regression (Table 4). Results show that being unemployed or working in the informal sector significantly raises the probability that an individual identifies with his ethnic group provided that he is not educated and that he is willing to find a job rapidly or to obtain a promotion. For those who don't long for occupational mobility, being unemployed or an informal worker does not push them to identify with their group. Educated individuals might have other ways to get a (better) job when they are eager to, so that a precarious occupational status does not push to identify along ethnic lines. In sum, a poor insertion on the job market fosters ethnic identification for those people who want to improve their situation and use this ethnic strategy because of a lack of human capital.

| <b>Uneducated</b>           | <b>Yes</b>       | <b>Yes</b>     | <b>No</b>      |
|-----------------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Eager to change job</b>  | <b>Yes</b>       | <b>No</b>      | <b>Yes</b>     |
| Unemployed                  | 0.54**<br>(0.02) | 0.07<br>(0.35) | 0.02<br>(0.80) |
| Private informal sector     | 0.52**<br>(0.02) | 0.06<br>(0.25) | 0.06<br>(0.17) |
| Private formal sector       | 0.48*<br>(0.06)  | 0.10<br>(0.17) | 0.03<br>(0.60) |
| Individual-level covariates |                  | yes            |                |

*Logit estimations with interaction terms. Marginal effects are presented.  $P > \chi^2$  in parentheses. Coverage: active people.*

Table 4: Individual job market status and ethnic identification

The model also predicts that the insertion of the ethnic group itself on the job market matters a lot for the individual. People will all the more ask for help in their job search as their co-ethnics actually are in position to do something for them. I examine the effect of certain characteristics of the ethnic groups on the propensity of their members to identify with them. For doing this, I use the ethnic group classification used in the surveys and compute ethnic group characteristics. This is made possible by the large sample size of the surveys and their representativeness. To ensure robustness of these indicators, I only include in the analysis ethnic groups represented by more than 50 persons in the survey. Table 5 presents the 42 ethnic groups retained across the seven countries.

| <b>Benin</b> |      | <b>Burkina Faso</b> |       | <b>Côte d'Ivoire</b> |      | <b>Mali</b> |      |
|--------------|------|---------------------|-------|----------------------|------|-------------|------|
| Fon          | 61.9 | Mossi               | 80.8  | Akan                 | 45.3 | Bambara     | 35.1 |
| Adja         | 20.3 | Other Mandings      | 4.4   | North Mande          | 19.2 | Malinke     | 18.1 |
| Yoruba       | 10.8 | Bissa               | 4.1   | Kru                  | 18.9 | Fula        | 17.0 |
| Other        | 3.3  | Gurunsi*            | 3.0   | Gur                  | 9.7  | Sarakole    | 11.4 |
| Dendi        | 1.5  | Other*              | 1.9   | South Mande          | 6.9  | Senufo      | 4.2  |
| Yoa/Lopka    | 1.1  | Fula*               | 1.8   |                      |      | Dogon       | 4.0  |
| Bariba*      | 0.6  | Dagari/Lobi*        | 1.3   |                      |      | Songhai     | 3.6  |
| Betamaribe*  | 0.3  | Gurmanche*          | 1.2   |                      |      | Bobo        | 3.1  |
| Fula*        | 0.3  | Bobo*               | 1.1   |                      |      | Other       | 1.9  |
|              |      | Senufo*             | 0.5   |                      |      | Arab        | 1.3  |
|              |      |                     |       |                      |      | Tuareg*     | 0.3  |
| <b>Niger</b> |      | <b>Senegal</b>      |       | <b>Togo</b>          |      |             |      |
| Zerma        | 52.0 | Wolof               | 41.28 | Adja/Ewe             | 74.0 |             |      |
| Hausa        | 32.0 | Fula                | 18.87 | Kabye/Tem            | 15.8 |             |      |
| Fula         | 7.4  | Serer               | 13.06 | Para/Gurma/Akan      | 5.0  |             |      |
| Tuareg       | 5.0  | Lebou               | 7.63  | Ana/Ife*             | 2.7  |             |      |
| Other        | 1.6  | Jola                | 5.19  | Akposso/Akebou*      | 1.9  |             |      |
| Kanuri       | 1.4  | Other               | 4.8   | Other*               | 0.7  |             |      |
| Gurma*       | 0.5  | Mandinka            | 3.86  |                      |      |             |      |
| Tubu*        | 0.1  | Sarakole            | 2.88  |                      |      |             |      |
| Arab*        | 0.1  | Mandyak/Balanta     | 2.43  |                      |      |             |      |

Table 5: Ethnic groups and their size (percentage of country samples)

\*: ethnic group represented by fewer than 50 individuals in the sample, subsequently dropped from the analysis

The parameter of interest for an individual is the share of his ethnic group that is in a good position on the job market *relatively to him* and could therefore help him. The relevant group characteristic might vary from one individual to another. For example, if identification is strategic, the unemployed could all the more identify with their group as the employed share of this group is high, since their primary objective is to find a job. And they may be less influenced by the share of ethnic group that is employed in the public sector. But while finding a job in the public sector appears as a second-order aspiration for the unemployed, it might be of first order for informal workers. Conversely, the share of employed people would be less important for them since they are already employed.

In line with the predictions of the model, I also showed in section 3 that migrants have a specific relationship to ethnic identification. I therefore separate migrants and people who were born in the city. If groups of migrants actually develop a specific



solidarity, the migrant’s strategic identification might depend on whether his ethnic group is represented by an important share of migrants in the city. The larger it is, the more likely the individual would be to play the ethnic card.

In order to test these hypotheses, I run regressions including the relevant shares of the ethnic group (one by one for they are embedded) in my baseline regression along with interaction terms involving the migration status, the will to find or change job, and the occupational status. Results are displayed in Table 6.

|                                    | Share of<br>the ethnic group<br>employed | Share of<br>the ethnic group<br>in the civil service | Share of<br>the ethnic group<br>migrant and employed |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>Native eager to change job</b>  |  |  |  |
| Unemployed                         | 0.65**<br>(0.01)                         | 0.49<br>(0.64)                                       | -0.00<br>(0.98)                                      |
| Informal worker                    | 0.51**<br>(0.01)                         | 1.29*<br>(0.08)                                      | 0.21<br>(0.19)                                       |
| Formal worker                      | -0.16<br>(0.77)                          | 4.55***<br>(0.00)                                    | 0.27<br>(0.32)                                       |
| <b>Migrant eager to change job</b> |  |  |  |
| Unemployed                         | 0.84***<br>(0.00)                        | -2.34**<br>(0.03)                                    | 0.53**<br>(0.02)                                     |
| Informal worker                    | 0.45**<br>(0.01)                         | -0.33<br>(0.60)                                      | 0.43***<br>(0.00)                                    |
| Formal worker                      | 0.94**<br>(0.05)                         | -2.26<br>(0.23)                                      | 0.56<br>(0.12)                                       |
| Individual-level covariates        |  | yes  |  |
| Observations                       |  | 18698  |  |

*Logit estimations with interaction terms. Marginal effects are presented.*

*Lower panel:  $P > \chi^2$  in parentheses.*

*Coverage: active people.*

Table 6: Ethnic identification and group’s insertion on the job market

The share of co-ethnics employed is a powerful incentive to identify along ethnic lines for people eager to find or change their job (first column). This pattern is clearer among unemployed people. The share of employed co-ethnics has a strong, statistically significant effect on the ethnic identification of unemployed people if they declare being active in looking for a job. This holds both among migrants and natives. Among native people eager to change or find a job, the share of co-ethnics working in the civil service (middle column) has a strong effect on the ethnic identification of employed workers, either informal or formal. But it has no effect on the unemployed, for whom the decisive variable is the share of employed people. For all people non eager to find or change their job (migrant or native), the share of co-ethnics in the civil service does not have any impact (not shown). The share of co-ethnics who are employed migrants has a strong positive effect on the people who themselves are migrant, either unemployed or working in the informal sector, and who are looking for a (better) job. Individuals

craving occupational mobility are pushed to identify with their ethnic group by the precariousness of their job, and they do even more so as an important share of co-ethnics is positioned on the rung of the ladder just above them, and may help climb it.

The methodology used here accounts for the novelty of those results. In their paper, Eifert, Miguel, and Posner (2010) attempt to measure the impact of individual characteristics on ethnic identification, by examining the impact of being young, male, or a political activist. The fact that they do not find significant results might be due to the crudeness of the categories retained, which do not accurately capture the mechanisms at stake in ethnic identification (unemployment, poor education, migration). My results also emphasize the need to take group characteristics into account. Large survey samples make it possible to compute group characteristics that are locally accurate and contemporary to the survey, which ensures their relevance for the individuals surveyed. It is then essential to analyze the interactions between individual and group characteristics, as the process of instrumental identification essentially brings both dimensions together. Failing this, aggregate impacts of individual or group characteristics may even out and be insignificant.

## 5 Discussion

Although this study is the first to establish a link between ethnic identification and social insertion, the intuition behind it is far from new. It builds on sociological studies that emphasize the instrumental role of interpersonal ties for various aspects of social and economic lives of individuals. For instance, since the seminal work by Granovetter (1974), the importance of extended individual relationships (the "weak ties") has been shown critical for job search. Kinship networks are a typical example of such weak ties, and have been shown to be part of individual strategies to integrate into the job market (Luke and Munshi 2006). My results show that his framework fully applies to the role of ethnicity for job search in African urban contexts, the "weak ties" of co-ethnicity being strategically mobilized to reach a more protected position.

The role of ethnic solidarity among migrants has also been extensively studied since the American urban sociology of the 1920s. The Chicago School of Sociology typically studied how ethnic groups would help migrants to integrate themselves in American cities, be it Jews (Wirth 1927), Italians (Whyte 1943) or others. Recently, rigorous empirical studies have highlighted the role of ethnic networks to help Mexican workers integrate into the job market in the US (Munshi 2003). Moving to the city entails a shift in the reference group and a disruption in social connections: individuals leave their relationships and a familiar environment, and have to reconstruct a network in order to meet the challenges of urban life and income generation. In an urban multi-ethnic environment, ethnicity becomes a distinctive element that helps uprooted individuals rebuild the social capital necessary for successful social interactions (Habyarimana et al. 2006).

The interpretation of the results relies on the fact that ethnic identification reflects an instrumental use of ethnic belonging, in line with recent literature on ethnicity. An alternative, culturalist interpretation may claim that individuals feel proud of their ethnic group when the latter is more successful than themselves. This may explain why jobless, uneducated individuals are more prone to ethnic identification, and why the share of employed co-ethnics drives it up as well. However, a number of results are inconsistent with this interpretation. First, in this interpretation we would expect inactive individuals, most of whom are housewives, to present high ethnic identification too. They do not. Second, the share of public servants in an ethnic group should be a matter of pride irrespective of the individual status. We saw that it is true for formal workers only, with the unemployed being pushed rather to identify with their ethnic group by the share of employed. Results on the migrants are also very difficult to interpret with a culturalist view, while being consistent with the instrumental understanding of ethnic identification. To further rule out this alternative interpretation, I ran regressions with other indicators of success for the ethnic group, like the share of educated or literate people. They do not show any impact on the individual level of ethnic identification (not shown).

The results I present here complement those on political drivers of ethnic identification, without contradiction. Indeed, if I run similar regressions as Eifert, Miguel, and Posner (2010) on my (much smaller) set of surveys, I find a similar relationship between the timing of elections and the level of ethnic identification, even if the sample size makes the results very rough. Eifert, Miguel, and Posner (2010) offer two possible mechanisms for their theory, both of which are very much compatible with my results. First, politicians may "play the ethnic card" around election times to mobilize ethnic vote banks. My study suggests that this strategy might be particularly successful with those of their co-ethnics who are economically and socially struggling, and therefore likely to be involved in ethnic networks. A second interpretation is that voters themselves anticipate ethnic-based patronage and therefore think along ethnic lines around election times. Consistently, I suggest here that this identification mechanism is even likelier for those who depend largely on patronage and hands-out to survive, because they are destitute and have limited capacity to get socially inserted.

## 6 Conclusion

The results of this paper suggest a new understanding of the relationship between development and group identities. Individuals left behind in the dynamic transition may drive ethnic salience up, as ethnic groups take a particular significance as a natural bond between individuals who benefit from the spread of education, urbanity and job protection, and individuals who yearn for those. The salience would be peak when a large share of a given ethnic group is deprived of the benefits of development and depends on intra-group solidarity from their better-off co-ethnics to have access to some of those benefits.

The history of conflicts in Congo or Ivory Coast illustrate the process by which a weak economic system unable to open perspectives to individuals, engenders ethnic mobilization and nurtures conflict. In both countries (as in most of Africa), the 1980s have seen a long economic stagnation that translated into a contraction of public spending and a raise in unemployment. The coverage and quality of education deteriorated dramatically after severe cuts in education programs, and diplomas depreciated on the job market (Proteau 2002). Education was no longer a valuable resource for individual progress. Large sections of urban youth were left unemployed in the big cities and engaged in informal, network-based activities to earn some basic livelihood. In cities, solidarity associations, most of them with an ethnic base, were created to provide the citizens with such benefits as credit, saving, information, transport to home villages, etc. (Willame 1998). Networks were also used for extracting rent from cocoa or minerals, in patronage networks. With export farming being less profitable due to fluctuations in international prices, rural-urban migrations intensified and migrant populations gathered in ethnically homogeneous neighborhoods (Antoine and Coulibaly 1989). The resurgence of ethnic salience fostered inter-group resentment in a context of economic difficulties, which led to radical antagonisms and got further manipulated by elites. The urban unemployed youth in particular could be very effectively mobilized by political leaders, the "Jeunes Patriotes" in Ivory Coast (Banégas 2007) or militia in Congo (Bazenguissa-Ganga 1999) being notorious examples.

Identities therefore appear to be shaped by the inclusiveness of a society. The lack of openness of the job market and access to education are critical to understanding why individuals cling to their ethnicity to improve their situation. Much has been said about politics being a determinant of the salience of ethnic cleavages. We suggest that the interaction may as well be analyzed the other way round. To a large extent, ethnic identities might be shaped by social and economic contexts and, in turn, determine critical political variables such as participation (Siegel 2009), the patterns of patronage (Kasara 2007), inter-group conflicts (Gibson and Gouws 2000) or cooperation (Transue 2007) and voting motivations (Wantchekon 2003). The capacity of the State to provide its citizens with a fluid job market or widespread education partly determines the citizen's attitude to the nation (see Hayward (2003) in the American urban context). In this respect, the openness of a society, as measured by open access to education and protected jobs, appears not only as an expected product but as a condition for the construction of a nation. Active policies in that area therefore not only serve well-being and equity, but also promote conscious citizenship and inclusive democracy.

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