Ethnic Politics, Social Identity, and Affective Polarization: What can Ethnic Conflict Dynamics tell us about Comparative Affective Polarization?

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Title:

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Abstract:

Affective polarization, the concept that captures the extent to which members of a given society dislike and distrust their fellow citizens who do not share their partisan preference, has received a lot of attention in US scholarship. However, relatively few studies analyse this phenomenon from a non-US/comparative perspective. Thus far, such research has primarily focussed on the ideological origins of affective polarization. This paper engages with the other side of the debate, which emphasizes the social origins of affective polarization. Incorporating theoretical insights from the field of ethnic politics and employing a wide range of cross-national data, I first show that in countries where ethnicity is considered politically relevant, there will be, on average, higher levels of affective polarization. Building on this insight, I then show that in such countries, as the share of the population who are members of an ethnic group in power increases, there will be, on average, a corresponding fall in affective polarization. These results highlight the ethnic origins of affective polarization and speak to the broader claim that affective polarization is rooted in social identity.

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1. Introduction

The acclaimed anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski highlighted the universality of family, and by extension marriage, within human societies. In the 'Sexual Life of Savages' (1927), he argues that there are two irrefutable facts regarding the institution of marriage. First, that there is a "clear and spontaneous desire" on the part of individuals to enter into such a union, and second "that there is a customary pressure towards it" which frames the wider societies view that "certain people are well suited to each other and should therefore marry" (Malinowski 1927, 78). Identifying the 'dividing lines' that these "customary pressures" fall along can tell us something important about society.

Scholars of US politics have identified such a 'dividing line' in the form of partisan affiliation. In the 1960s only 5% of Americans stated that they would be "displeased if their child married someone from the other party" (Iyengar et al 2012). By 2010, this had increased to 50% of Americans. This example of partisan animosity seeping into the social context vividly highlights the main focus of this paper, affective polarization.

Affective polarization (hereafter AP) captures the extent to which members of a given society dislike and distrust their fellow citizens who do not share their partisan preference. Traditionally polarization has been seen in issue-based, or ideological, terms. However, dynamics in the US highlighted the need to extend the study of political polarization beyond a simply ideological 'issues' lens to one that examines partisanship more broadly.

Iyengar et al (2012) conceptually constructed AP as a means of assessing the feelings of partisans, specifically their favourability/trust in their own party (in group) and their favourability/trust in the opposition party (out group). In this way the concept has its theoretical genesis in Tajfel's 'Social Identity Theory', which posits that regardless of whether formation occurs on ascriptive or voluntary lines, under conditions of competition this dynamic will result in feelings of loyalty towards the in-group and animosity towards the out-group (Tajfel and Turner 1979).

While it is clear that AP exists and is increasing in the US, there has been relatively little research on the phenomenon in a comparative context, particularly on its root causes. Indeed, while 50% of Americans would be displeased to see their child marry an opposing partisan, this pails in comparison to the 79% of Turkish families who would be disappointed to see their daughter marry a member of the other party (Erdogan and Semerci 2018). This shows us that AP is clearly not limited to the US context. Indeed, the few comparative studies that have been

conducted find that the US exhibits only average levels of AP (Gidron, et al 2018, Reiljan 2019, Wagner 2021). Therefore, we need more comparative, cross-national research to advance our understanding of what drives AP.

Attaining a wider understanding is important for a number of reasons. High levels of AP have clear negative implications for the 'Social Capital' within a society, with the risk of corrosive spillover effects from the political world into the social world, as exhibited by the new 'dividing line' we have seen in both US and Turkish marriages. Furthermore, research from the US has illustrated how rising polarization can lead to lower levels of trust in government, particularly when the opposition party holds power (Hetherington and Rudolph 2015). This has potentially meaningful implications for both younger democracies, where trust in government has been traditionally low, and established democracies, which have experienced increasing mistrust in institutions and rising support for populist leaders/parties.

There are two competing schools of thought in the US literature on what drives AP. One group of scholars argue that ideological polarization (IP) is the decisive catalyst (Rogowski and Sutherland 2016, Webster and Abramowitz 2017). Another group, while acknowledging that IP plays a role, emphasize the social origins of AP. Much research highlights the increasing alignment of social identities with partisan identities, or *social sorting*, as an important root cause of AP (Mason 2015, Huddy et al 2015).

Some comparativists have investigated the link between IP and AP, finding mixed results (Gidron et al 2018, Reiljan 2019). This indicates that the second group of scholars, who emphasize *social sorting*, are likely correct in thinking something more than ideology is at play. This paper engages with this line of thought by drawing on theoretical insights from the ethnic politics literature. If AP does indeed have its roots in social identity, then logically there must be lessons to be gleaned from a field primarily concerned with political outcomes related to diversity.

In *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Donald Horowitz (1985, 36-41) hypothesizes about how ethnic demographics may influence the likelihood of conflict within a given country. He argues that in highly homogenous and highly heterogenous societies the likelihood of conflict erupting along ethnic lines is low. It is when there are a relatively small number of ethnic groups competing for political power that the likelihood of conflict increases. Particularly when there is small majority group facing a large minority group.

Building on this theoretical insight and utilizing one of the gold-standard datasets on ethnic diversity, the EPR-core, this paper asks: *What is the relationship between ethnic diversity and levels of affective polarization in a comparative context?*

Using a cross-national quantitative analysis, I conduct a two-stage test to first show that in countries where ethnicity is considered politically relevant, there will be higher AP on average. Building on this basic insight, I conduct the second stage of my analysis, excluding all countries where ethnicity is not considered politically relevant. I do this to generate more accuracy when measuring the effect of ethnic power configurations on AP. I then illustrate a statistical relationship which indicates that as the share of the population that is a member of an ethnic group in power (hereafter EGIP) increases, there will be a corresponding fall in AP. These results lend weight to the claim that AP is partially rooted in social identity. This claim is buttressed by the fact that these results hold when controlling for both IP and multiple electoral institutional variables. These findings highlight the potentially fruitful link between the AP and ethnic politics fields, particularly related to how ethnic demographics and power structures may play an important role in shaping the level of political polarization across societies.

The paper is presented as follows. Section two is a wide-ranging theoretical discussion, touching on the ideological origins argument, the social identity argument, and finally, a discussion on the theoretical links between ethnic politics and AP. Section three outlines the dataset and measurements I use in order to conduct my quantitative analysis. Section four presents the models used and the results of the research alongside some brief commentary. Section five directly addresses questions relating to causality, as well as using the cases of Turkey and the US to highlight some shortcomings with the data and potential future avenues for research.

2. Theoretical Discussion

2.1 The relationship between Ideological Polarization and Affective Polarization

Recalling that AP was conceptualized by Iyengar et al (2012) in order to move beyond the ideological aspect of political polarization into a new realm of understanding, rooted in Social Identity Theory. Why then do some scholars argue that IP is the main driver of AP? The core theoretical argument here is that AP is merely a reflection of IP. How might this work?

Rogowksi and Sutherland (2016) find that an increase in ideological differences and political extremism at the elite/party level has a direct positive effect on AP at the individual level. Webster and Abramowitz (2017) illustrate the link between opinions on social welfare policy and the feeling of partisans towards the opposing party, identifying this phenomenon as 'ideological sorting'. However, while some studies do show that there has been an upward trend in the 'sorting' of partisans into identifying more closely with the party that most closely resembles their ideological beliefs (Levendusky 2009), there is a competing argument put forward by other scholars who view AP and IP as largely distinct concepts and conclude that increasing polarization in 'issue opinions' is not necessary for a rise in AP (Mason 2015, Iyengar et al 2019).

From the limited comparative work available, two empirical studies do find a correlation between IP and AP (Reiljan 2019 and Wagner 2021). However, both conclude that despite a clear correlation, there are further factors at play beyond AP simply reflecting IP. Gidron et al (2018) confirm this suspicion, finding strong evidence that while AP is more intense when unemployment and income inequality are high, there is inconclusive evidence regarding the effect of elite ideology on AP. These results further add to the chorus of US scholars who view AP and IP as distinct. That is not say there is no relationship between the two concepts, IP clearly plays some role in AP. However, we must ask the question, what else can explain a rise in AP?

Perhaps thinking about the underlying conditions that structure IP may provide an answer. For instance, high levels of income inequality, "beget negative moral emotions" and this ultimately leads to envy from the bottom towards the top and to scorn from the top towards the bottom (Hitlin and Harkness 2018). This 'bottom vs top' dichotomy may be too simplistic, but it is representative of a divide commonly studied in political science, the social class cleavage and the traditional power divide that implies. Thinking about negative economic conditions in these terms allows us to open up our horizons to hypothesizing about how other social cleavages/identities may impact AP.

2.2 Partisanship, Social Identity and Social Sorting

The preceding discussion brings us to the second school of thought, and the core theoretical underpinning of this paper, the claim that AP can be linked to the increasing salience of partisanship as a social identity (Iyengar and Westwood 2015, Mason 2015, Huddy et al 2015).

This contention stems directly from 'Social Identity Theory', specifically the concept of 'group identity', which stipulates that parties form to advocate for specific groups in society. This helps to explain individual level party choices, and the emergence of a defined 'party identity' (Huddy et al. 2015).

The 'us versus them' dynamic can arise when a society is riven with deep cleavages that do not cross-cut or overlap to any great extent (Lijphart 1968). This phenomenon can have a particularly corrosive effect on society when the salience of a highly polarizing cleavage rises above all other societal cleavages. Sunstein (2015) highlights how previous studies have neglected partisanship as a distinct identity and argues that it can take on the role of an overarching societal cleavage. This 'partyism' can be seen in the US where evidence shows that polarization is stronger along partisan lines, compared with race and social class (Iyengar and Westwood, 2015).

Why is partisanship such a salient identifier? Partisan loyalty is generally acquired at young age and often remains static throughout the course of ones life (Sears 1975). This loyalty is periodically intensified via election campaigns, which are increasingly characterized by divisive rhetoric, illustrated by evidence that AP fades the further removed society is from an election (Hernandez, Anduiza, and Rico 2020).

Let me briefly engage in a useful oversimplification and think a little bit more about elections. Who generally contests them? Political actors/parties. How do they generate support? Often by appealing to various groups within society via policy proposals that they claim will benefit said group. This is commonly conceptualized as happening along a left/right ideological spectrum. However, this ignores the actors/parties who explicitly appeal to, or indeed reify, groups of voters along ethnic, religious, linguistic etc., lines (Brubaker 2002)[1]. In this way we must recognize the relevance of identity cleavages when teasing out the drivers of AP.

Indeed, strong evidence from US scholarship supports this claim. *Social sorting* occurs when there is an increasing link between political identities and other social identities (Levendusky 2009). In the US, increased *social sorting* and the associated decline in cross-cutting identities has driven higher levels of AP over time (Mason 2015). When individuals are more sorted it enables partisans to make more generalized inferences regarding the views of their opposing

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[1] I acknowledge that Brubaker would be highly critical of my flippant use of 'group' and 'identity'. However, sufficiently addressing this is a task for another day.

partisans, which are often more extreme than reality (Levendusky and Malhotra 2016b, Mason 2015).

There is little comparative work on the social origins of AP. Westwood et al (2015) show a greater attachment to political parties than to the social groups these parties represent in four Western European states, with this relationship mediated by ideological proximity. Harteveld (forthcoming) provides the first comparative analysis of *social sorting* to my knowledge. Using panel data his results are in line with the US scholarship, showing increased *social sorting* as associated with higher AP.

It seems clear that, to some extent, AP has social origins. However, given the dearth of comparative work, there is a need to widen our understanding of the processes at play here. Thus, lets dip our toes into the rich field of scholarship on ethnic politics to see what insight may be gained.

2.3 Ethnic Politics and Affective Polarization

Many scholars in the field of ethnic politics frame their research around various questions that ask how ethnic groups interact. For instance, what can the demographic configuration of ethnic groups within a society tell us? To what extent do these groups cross-cut? How does the degree of cross-cuttingness impact on society? I argue that such questions should also frame investigations into the social origins of AP.

Once we recognize that partisanship is a distinct identity, just like ethnicity, then we can begin to see the linkages that already implicitly exist between these fields. Looking at the three questions posed above, we can see how work on *social sorting* is framed by at least the second and third questions. If social identities are more aligned with partisan identities, then we can infer that the degree of cross-cuttingness in society is likely lower. Furthermore, on average this leads to higher AP, thus impacting society. By this logic the two fields are already somewhat intertwined, highlighted further by the fact that Harteveld's (forthcoming) measure of *social sorting* is inspired by Selway's (2011) cross-cuttingness measure[2].

Selway's measure is just one example of how scholars try to capture ethnic diversity and its effect on political outcomes with many others employing ethnolinguistic fractionalization

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[2] Hateveled's SS score measure is essentially the reverse of Selway's CC score.

measures (Alesina et al 2003, Fearon 2003 etc). Such studies are primarily concerned with answering the first framing question I posed, what can the demographic configurations of ethnic groups within society tell us? It is this, most fundamental, question that I want to bring into the realm of AP. However, in order to do this we must acknowledge that fractionalization measures only provide us with a first order understanding of diversity within a polity and do little to describe how these groupings interact on a political and social level (Posner 2004). The key issue being that they do not account for the political relevance of each ethnic group, which is important to account for when thinking about partisan identity and AP.

This raises two fundamental points, at both the macro and micro level. First at the macro level, thinking about the political relevance of ethnic groups raises the broader question of whether ethnicity is even a politically relevant factor in the state as a whole. If AP is at least partially rooted in social origins, then we might expect it to be higher when ethnicity is a politically relevant factor within the country in question. Indeed, if ethnicity is a salient cleavage along which groups compete for political power it will be more likely that individuals will identify with a political party that explicitly aims to represent said individuals ethnic group. If ethnicity is not a salient factor within a polity, then the incentives for parties to appeal directly to voters along ethnic lines will be lower. In the words of Donald Horowtiz in *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (1985, 12), "In societies where ethnicity suffuses organizational life, virtually all political events have ethnic consequences. Where parties break along ethnic lines, elections are divisive". As such, I first hypothesize:

H1: Affective polarization will be higher in countries where ethnic identity is relevant in terms of competing for political power

The second fundamental point comes at the micro level, <u>within</u> countries where ethnicity is a politically relevant factor. In such cases it is the political relevance of specific groups which is the important distinction. Once we account for this, we can begin to think about how the demographic structure of these groups influences AP.

A good place to start is with a simple question, why would ethnicity <u>not</u> be politically relevant in a given society? Horowitz (1985, 36-41) argues that in societies which are highly homogenous or highly heterogenous the likelihood of ethnic conflict erupting is much lower. It is in societies where there are a relatively small number of competing ethnic groups that the potential for conflict is high. Particularly when an ethnic majority that holds power faces a large ethnic minority. The logic here being that the larger the minority group(s), the more likely

they will be to mobilize based on exclusion from power. This implies that when the majority ethnic group(s) with access to power is larger, the likelihood of conflict is reduced. Ultimately, the more individuals within a society that identify with an ethnic group which has access to political power the less incentive there will be for those individuals (and groups) to mobilize based on the logic of political exclusion.

It is this link between group size and access to power that provides the bridge to AP. If as the evidence tells us, partisanship increasingly reflects social identities such as ethnicity, then we may assume that ethnic conflict dynamics partially mirror AP dynamics in a given society.

This line of investigation is partially predicated on *H1*. The logic here being that if we are to make an inference regarding how ethnicity relates to AP within a society, this necessarily entails that ethnicity be politically relevant. However, we have to go one step further and think about how relevant ethnicity is. This is where Horowitz's ethnic demographic logic comes in, as if an overwhelming majority of individuals are members of an EGIP, then this should dissipate the influence of ethnicity on AP. Thus, I offer my second hypothesis:

H2: In countries where ethnicity is a politically relevant factor, affective polarization will be lower when a larger share of the population is a member of an ethnic group(s) that is both politically relevant and has access to political power.

I offer these hypotheses with some caveats. It is important to acknowledge that this research is essentially basic in nature. As I attempt to establish a link between the literature on ethnic politics and AP, I feel it is necessary to start in the broadest terms possible, which may inevitably obscure more nuanced dynamics at play. This is particularly relevant to non-traditional cleavage structures, such as the winners and losers of globalization (Kriesi et al 2006), which focus on non-ascribed identities.

It is also important to think about institutional factors, as observational evidence indicates that AP is lower in electoral systems characterized by more parties (Gidron et al 2018). However, new experimental evidence shows lower AP in plurality versus proportional systems, while also showing that, within proportional systems only, the greater the number of effective parties the lower AP (Fischer, Lee, and Lelkes 2021). Thus, we can see that the dynamics created by a system are, at least partially, distinct from those relating to the number of parties. As such, I will control for both in my analysis.

3. Data and Measures

To test these hypotheses, I follow the few comparative studies of AP in utilizing the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) as a data source (Gidron et al 2018, Reiljan 2019, Wagner 2021). This project has spanned 5 survey rounds running from 1996 to 2021 and includes 196 election surveys in 55 countries. As I exclude surveys that only examine Presidential elections[3], this leaves me with 179 elections across 51 countries as a base sample. However, due to missing data and variation across measures employed in my analysis this will invariably change per model, as is clear from the descriptive statistics presented in Appendix 2.1. It should also be noted that previous work has mostly focused on understanding AP in a 'Western' context. While this is partially a function of the CSES data being largely made up of election surveys from such countries, there is scope to extend our understanding of AP beyond the 'Western' lens by including data from Eastern Europe, Latin America, and South/East Asia. Given that my analysis aims to link the literature on ethnic conflict and AP this seems to be a particularly pertinent coding decision.

3.1 Dependent Variable: Affective Polarization

I use three different variations, building on the work of two scholars: Reiljan (2019) and Wagner (2021). Both utilize the party like-dislike questions from the CSES data. Essentially, what the questions gauge is each respondent's feelings towards each party[4] that is active in their electoral system on a scale from 0 (strongly dislike) to 10 (strongly like)[5].

The respondent answers for Party A, Party B, Party C, etc. As each participant is asked about each party this allows us to gauge the feelings of respondents towards both their in-group and their out-group(s), which will be all the other parties in the system. AP is then computed as the distance between the scores given to the in-party and out-party(s) (Iyengar et al 2019). For example, when scores are, on average, higher towards the in-party and lower towards the out-party there will be higher AP.

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[3] Reiljan (2019) argues that as party vote-shares are used to calculate AP scores this renders Presidential elections unsuitable, as votes are attributed to candidates and not parties.
[4] Coding decisions on what constitutes an active/relevant party varies widely by country survey. Please see: https://cses.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/cses_imd_codebook_part3_parties_coalitions_numerical_codes.txt
[5] See Appendix 1.1

I first note that like-dislike scores are an indirect measure of AP (Knudsen 2021). However, recent work shows that like-dislike measures tend to correlate strongly with most other AP measures (Druckman and Levendusky 2019). This finding buttresses the other main advantage of using the CSES data, namely the consistent and systematic asking of questions concerning affective reactions to parties (Wagner 2021). The framing of these questions can also help with social desirability concerns as respondents may be more candid in response to questions gauging their feelings towards a 'faceless' party as opposed to those investigating their feelings towards specific individuals.

However, Druckman and Levendusky (2019) provide evidence that these questions better capture attitudes towards party elites rather than other voters. Indeed, other scholars have expressed concerns regarding the inherently general nature of using survey responses, arguing that each individual respondent may choose to make their evaluations based along different lines, eg: ideological, identity etc (Lelkes 2019). To account for this more direct measurement has been used in the form of implicit attitude tests and trust games (Iyengar and Westwood 2015, Westwood et al 2018). Unfortunately due to data and resources restrictions such techniques are beyond the scope of this study. Thus, when using an indirect measure it is important to control for other influencing factors beyond the main lens of focus.

One such factor is the multiparty nature of many political systems. The measures I employ all account for both the in-party and out-party evaluations of a respondent, as well the relative size of each party's support.

Reiljan (2019) constructs his *Affective Polarization Index (API)* as an aggregate-level measure of AP. Formally, the *API* indicates the average divergence of partisan affective evaluations between in-party and out-parties, weighted by the electoral vote share of each party (Reiljan, 2019). This is constructed as follows; the first step is to isolate partisans via a series of question from the CSES that identify which (if any) party an individual feels closest/closer to, which is then designated as that individuals in-group[6]. Secondly, AP scores are calculated for each partisan group by subtracting the average out-party evaluations from the average in-party evaluations. These scores are then weighted by the vote share of the relevant out-party, giving us weighted averages, which are then summed to give us the relative AP score of each party in the electoral system. Once the relative AP score is calculated for each party, the penultimate step is to weight each party's AP score by their own vote share. These are then summed to give

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[6] Questions in Appendix 1.2

us the *API*, which is calculated as being somewhere in a range from 0 (low AP) to 10 (high AP).

While *API* scores are useful for comparing AP across multiparty systems, there are a number of issues to mention. First, it is not a direct measure of individual respondent attitudes and as such cannot be used to make comparisons or draw inference at the individual level. Furthermore, the measure only includes respondents who indicated that they were partisans, which is logical in the sense that AP is directly concerned with partisan feeling. This coding decision helps provide a useful contrast with the two other measure I use, which incorporate all respondents. However, excluding non-partisans may be problematic as partisan ties are typically less strong in newer democracies (Lupu and Stokes 2010).

An additional measurement issue arises due to variation in the CSES's partisan ID questions. Thus, rounds 1 and 2 are necessarily excluded from *API* calculations. In order to widen my sample I calculated *API* scores for most election surveys that were excluded by Reiljan in rounds 3 and 4, as well as all those published thus far in round 5. This brings my total *API* sample to 103 elections across 48 countries[7]. This expanded sample should provide more precise results. However, in order to assuage other concerns with the *API*, I also employ two further measures.

Wagner (2021) constructs *affpolwght (Wagner 1)* and *likedistwght (Wagner 2)* to measure AP for all available election surveys across the CSES. The most important difference versus the *API* is the inclusion of the responses for <u>all</u> survey respondents, thus providing a 'wider' understanding of AP. Including 'non-partisans' creates an interesting measurement distinction which allows for greater flexibility around the assumption that an individual only identifies strongly with one party. This assumption is likely a result of AP's conceptual birth in US scholarship and ignores the possibility that some individuals will have multiple positive identifications with ideologically similar parties in multiparty systems (Weisberg 1980).

In this vein, *affpolwght/Wagner1* measures the spread of like-dislike scores for each individual by taking the absolute average party like-dislike difference relative to each respondents average party-dislike score (Wagner 2021). These polarization scores are weighted by party vote shares. As the measure is a spread of scores, and does not assume one 'in-party', this allows for the possibility of multiple positive party identifications.

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[7] API calculations in Appendix

In contrast, *likedistwght/Wagner2* provides a hybrid of the two previous measures. It includes <u>all</u> respondents and assumes positive identification with <u>one</u> party (Wagner 2021). This is borne out in Table 1 which shows there is a high degree of correlation between all three measures. However, there is some variation that allows for a look at AP across three different dimensions: strict/self-identifying partisans for *API*, broad partisans for *Wagner 2*, and broad/multi partisans for *Wagner 1*.

Table 1: **Pearson Correlations for AP DVs**			
	API	Wagner 1	Wagner 2
API	--	0.692**	0.791**
Wagner 1	--	--	0.948**

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01

3.2 Independent Variables

Here I describe the two key independent variables (IVs) used in my analysis. I also briefly outline the other control variables, with detailed descriptions and a table outlining the descriptive statistics for my analysis presented in Appendix 2.

For my two key IVs I utilize the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) Core Dataset 2019. The EPR provides data on politically relevant ethnic groups, specifically relating to their size and access to power, for all sovereign states[8] during the period 1946-2019. The dataset broadly defines ethnicity in the constructivist tradition as a "subjectively enriched sense of commonality based on a belief in common ancestry and shared culture", with this including linguistic, racial, and religious groups (Wimmer, Cederman, and Min 2009, 325). Furthermore, it is stipulated that ethnic categories can be hierarchical in nature with many smaller groups nested within a broader coalition. Intuitively this means some categories are considered as not being politically relevant. The distinction the dataset uses is that for an ethnic group to be politically relevant there must be at least one political actor that claims to represent the group in the national (or regional) political sphere (Wimmer, Cederman and Min 2009).

The first variable I employ is *ctry_relevant* which is a dichotomous variable indicating whether ethnicity is considered politically 'relevant' or 'irrelevant' in the context of a given country's politics. I have coded the variable to be Yes/Relevant=1; No/Not-Relevant=0, which is

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[8] All overseas colonies and failed states are excluded. Each state must also have had a population of at least 500,000 by 1990.

reflected in Appendix 2.1. The EPR defines 24 states where no ethnic group is considered politically relevant. In these cases, national placeholder groups, such as Germans in Germany, are coded as politically irrelevant and thus ethnicity is not considered a central part of the country's politics (Wimmer, Cederman and Min 2009). Interestingly, in my sample 10 out of 54 countries are considered to have placeholder groups. This reflects the relatively large number of ethnically homogenous Western European countries in my dataset[9].

The key IV is *egippop* which is a metric scale variable that gives the sum of the population of all EGIP as a share of the total population in a given country. Essentially, this variable provides some insight into the broad ethnic power structure of a polity within which ethnicity is deemed politically relevant. As such, these two independent variables work together as a two-stage test given that *egippop* will be effectively irrelevant when *ctry_relevent* = 0. I expand on this in the next section.

I include a widely used variable for IP based on public perceptions of ideology (Dalton 2008, Reiljan 2019). I constructed additional scores for this measure that were unavailable in other literature[10].

Recalling evidence that the number of parties and the type of electoral system influence AP in different ways, I include a variable for the *effective number of electoral parties (ENP)* and dummy variables for the for three types of electoral systems in my analysis: *majoritarian, mixed, and proportional* (Fischer, Lee, and Lelkes 2021). Finally, I include the control *PolityDem,* which is a dichotomous variable that indicates whether a country is an electoral democracy (1) or not (0).

4. Method and Results

4.1 Model Specifications

The first methodological issue to address concerns the observations in my sample, which come from 179 election surveys across 51 countries for which I have measures of AP. This can be considered a cross-section of panel data. However, as there are certain countries for which there is only one observation (i.e., not panel data) this raises some questions around the best statistical approach. Further questions arise when we look at the two key independent variables,

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[9] South Korea is an interesting outlier here
[10] See Appendix

ctry_relevance and *egippop,* which both display little variation within countries over the period of the study. This lack of variation renders the use of country fixed effects in any model effectively useless (Bell and Jones 2015). Ignoring country fixed effects raises two potential problems concerning possible specification issues related to omitted variable bias and measurement problems in terms of the cross-national comparability of my three AP measures (Gidron et al 2018).

In order to address these issues, I use three models. The first two aim to address the concerns surrounding the lack of uniformity in observations across countries. Following the strategy of Ferree (2010), I first treat each AP score as an independent observation, giving me a pooled sample which I run as a *Pooled Sample Model (PSM).* This model allows me to control for unobserved factors that influence individual elections. It also yields a higher sample size, which helps with validity. However, an issue arises here due to the time-invariant nature of some of my key independent variables which will be consistently repeated across countries, which could potentially skew my results.

Alternatively, I take the average AP measure for each country, giving me a single cross-section of data which I run as a *Country-Average Model (CAM).* I also take the average for each of my independent variables, specifically the *IP-Dalton* and *ENP* variables. I acknowledge that this strategy will reduce my sample size and potentially obscure variation related to individual elections that may bias the results. However, it also ensures that my sample size is not artificially inflated. Furthermore, it helps me address country-specific effects that may be present in the data.

In many ways the *PSM* and *CAM* act as counterbalances for one another. Hence, I present both in Tables 2 and 4 below. I also present one final model, a *Random Effects Model (REM)*, in Tables 3 and 5. The main benefit of this model is that it does not falter in the face of time-invariant independent variables. Thus, it provides an alternative to the fixed effects model. As such, REMs allow for a more precise analysis of how the effects of time-invariant variables differ between countries. In this way, it also helps me solve issues relating to the PSMs as I can run REMs for all of the observations in my sample, without worrying as much about an artificially inflated sample size.

4.2 Results

Before presenting the results of my models, I want to quickly re-iterate that the two main IVs essentially act as a two-stage test, with the models including *ctry_relevance* being reported in Tables 2 and 3 and *egippop* in Tables 4 and 5. The logic behind this strategy is as follows. To directly address whether, at the most basic level, there is a positive relationship between countries in which ethnicity is a politically relevant factor and AP (*H1*), I analyse *ctry_relevance* alone.

This separation is also necessary for the second stage of the analysis, which is essentially predicated on an interaction between ethnicity being a political relevant factor and the ethnic power demographic structure within a given country. In this vein, I exclude the 10 countries in my sample where *ctry_relevance* = 0 from the models measuring *epippop*. This then allows me to more accurately ascertain whether the relative share of the population being a member of an EGIP impacts the level of AP (*H2*).

Looking at Table 2, there is a positive relationship across all models between *ctry_relevance* and AP, indicating that when ethnicity is a politically relevant factor in a country there will be, on average, higher levels of AP. Given that these models control for a wide range of variables, such as IP, which previous literature has identified as having a statistical relationship with AP, these results indicate some support for *H1*.

However, this finding must be tempered with caution as while this relationship is statistically significant across all the PSMs, there is only a significant relationship with the *API* measure in the CAMs. This is an interesting difference in significance, as for the *Wagner 1 and 2* models across both the PSM and CAM the coefficients are of a similar magnitude.

The coefficients on the *IP-Dalton* variable may help explain this discrepancy. As expected from the literature, IP shows a consistently positive and statistically significant relationship with AP across both sets of models for all AP measures. In Models 5 and 6, we can see relatively large (when compared with Models 2 and 3) coefficients for *IP-Dalton*, with very high significance levels of $p < .001$. This indicates that *IP-Dalton* seems to be doing the heavy lifting in this model. Indeed, having run both models again without *IP-Dalton*, the R square of drops from .329 to .059 in Model 5 and from .356 to .073 in Model 6[11].

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[11] See Appendix 3

Table 2: **Country Relevance Fully Specified OLS Regression Models of Affective Polarization**						
	Pooled Sample Models			*Country-Average Models*		
	Model 1 (API)	**Model 2 (Wagner 1)**	**Model 3 (Wagner 2)**	**Model 4 (API)**	**Model 5 (Wagner 1)**	**Model 6 (Wagner 2)**
ctry_relevance	0.426**	0.162**	0.333**	0.561*	0.188	0.408
	(0.163)	(0.061)	(0.120)	(0.265)	(0.125)	(0.245)
IP-Dalton	0.117*	0.095***	0.178***	0.176*	0.176***	0.330***
	(0.058)	(0.022)	(0.044)	(0.087)	(0.041)	(0.080)
ENP	-0.075*	-0.018	-0.086**	-0.083	0.014	-0.037
	(0.030)	(0.013)	(0.026)	(0.058)	(0.025)	(0.050)
Polity IV	-1.646***	-0.201	-0.651**	-1.799**	-0.078	-0.410
	(0.300)	(0.107)	(0.212)	(0.568)	(0.173)	(0.340)
Electoral System						
- Prop.	0.264	0.092	0.315	0.300	0.003	0.212
	(0.223)	(0.089)	(0.176)	(0.325)	(0.149)	(0.292)
- Mixed	-0.394	0.035	0.090	-0.550	-0.057	-0.061
	(0.247)	(0.094)	(0.185)	(0.395)	(0.167)	(0.328)
Constant	5.712***	2.095***	4.385***	5.668***	1.599***	3.441***
	(0.521)	(0.168)	(0.332)	(0.854)	(0.320)	(0.628)
N	100	164	164	45	50	50
R^2	.454	.177	.253	.413	.329	.356

Standard Errors Reported in Parentheses; ***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$

While it could be argued that perhaps this dynamic is something idiosyncratic to the CAMs, this argument is confounded by the results from the REMs, as seen in Table 3. Here we see again that *ctry_relevance* has a positive relationship with all AP measures, but only a statistically significant one with API. The coefficients for *IP-Dalton* also follow the same trend we have seen in Table 2, positive relationship and statistically significant across all measures. This consistent discrepancy across DVs indicates we need to look at the differences in approximation across measures.

The *API* measure only accounts for self-identifying partisans, whose partisan identity will likely be highly activated relative to the general population. As such, these results indicate that

in countries where ethnicity is politically relevant, AP will be higher amongst these self-identifying partisans. This is borne out in both the p values and the size of the effect across all three model types. Furthermore, these results hold while controlling for *IP-Dalton* which accounts for nearly all the predictive power in the other models. As such, these results point towards AP being partially grounded in social identity, at least among self-identified partisans.

Table 3: **Country Relevance Random Effects Models of Affective Polarization**			
	Random Effects Models based on Pooled Sample		
	Model 1 **(API)**	**Model 2** **(Wagner 1)**	**Model 3** **(Wagner 2)**
ctry_relevance	0.512*	0.149	0.285
	(0.226)	(0.119)	(0.251)
IP-Dalton	0.173**	0.091***	0.149***
	(0.061)	(0.022)	(0.043)
ENP	-0.046	-0.024	-0.059*
	(0.031)	(0.013)	(0.024)
Polity IV	-1.619***	-0.042	-0.239
	(0.395)	(0.103)	(0.201)
Electoral System			
- Prop.	0.190	0.055	0.186
	(0.286)	(0.145)	(0.303)
- Mixed	-0.412	0.032	0.216
	(0.331)	(0.158)	(0.329)
Constant	5.373***	2.017***	4.042***
	(0.633)	(0.216)	(0.443)
Number of Subjects	46	51	51

Standard Errors Reported in Parentheses; ***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$

However, for the *Wagner 1 and 2* measures, which account for all respondents, including those who <u>do not</u> self-identify as partisan, the results are mixed. On balance, given than both the CAMs and REMs show no statistical relationship between *ctry_relevance* and AP, this would indicate weak support for *H1*.

What to make of these mixed results? Five out of nine models show a statistically significant, positive effect, with all models showing a positive coefficient. While it is dangerous to read anything into non-significant results, I will make one broad observation. The dichotomy between ethnicity being politically relevant, or <u>not</u> relevant, likely obscures more than it reveals in some instances. Surely, we need to think about <u>how</u> relevant ethnicity is?

For instance, if ethnicity is deemed politically relevant but the vast majority of individuals are a member of the EGIP then surely this would dissipate the influence of ethnicity on AP in the wider population. Thus, accounting for ethnic demographics, and the conflict dynamics theoretically implied, is the next natural step for this analysis.

Table 4: **Egippop Fully Specified OLS Models of Affective Polarization**						
	Pooled Sample Models			*Country-Average Models*		
	Model 1 (API)	**Model 2 (Wagner 1)**	**Model 3 (Wagner 2)**	**Model 4 (API)**	**Model 5 (Wagner 1)**	**Model 6 (Wagner 2)**
egippop	-1.045	-0.902***	-1.816***	-1.159	-0.996*	-1.991*
	(0.582)	(0.242)	(0.479)	(0.844)	(0.396)	(0.777)
IP-Dalton	0.145*	0.119***	0.229***	0.215*	0.207***	0.394***
	(0.064)	(0.027)	(0.054)	(0.090)	(0.044)	(0.086)
ENP	-0.097**	-0.036*	-0.122***	-0.093	-0.001	-0.067
	(0.032)	(0.015)	(0.029)	(0.059)	(0.026)	(0.052)
Polity IV	-1.537***	-0.135	-0.524*	-1.778**	-0.019	-0.299
	(0.300)	(0.110)	(0.217)	(0.576)	(0.175)	(0.343)
Electoral System						
- Prop.	0.245	0.039	0.211	0.253	-0.057	0.095
	(0.216)	(0.094)	(0.185)	(0.320)	(0.150)	(0.294)
- Mixed	-0.402	0.057	0.121	-0.600	-0.051	-0.064
	(0.251)	(0.101)	(0.200)	(0.411)	(0.172)	(0.338)
Constant	6.925***	2.971***	6.150***	7.114***	2.562***	5.401***
	(0.581)	(0.238)	(0.471)	(0.964)	(0.418)	(0.821)
N	73	115	115	35	40	40
R^2	.519	.254	.341	.460	.437	.461

Standard Errors Reported in Parentheses; ***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$

Moving on to the models that include *egippop* as the key IV. The results in Tables 4 and 5 indicate that as the share of the population who are a member of an EGIP increases there is, on average, an associated fall in AP. This finding is statistically significant across seven out of nine models and lends strong support to H2. For the significant findings the coefficients are relatively large, ranging from -0.811 (Table 5, Model 2) to -1.876 (Table 4, Model 3), thus indicating that the ethnic demographic structure within a society does seem to play a relatively strong role in the levels of AP experienced. This result holds while controlling for IP, both the number of parties and the electoral system, and whether or not a country is considered an electoral democracy.

Table 5: **Egippop Random Effects Models of Affective Polarization**			
	Random Effects Models based on Pooled Sample		
	Model 1 **(API)**	**Model 2** **(Wagner 1)**	**Model 3** **(Wagner 2)**
egippop	-0.723	-0.815*	-1.593*
	(0.689)	(0.335)	(0.694)
IP-Dalton	0.173*	0.091***	0.149**
	(0.069)	(0.027)	(0.053)
ENP	-0.057	-0.035*	-0.081**
	(0.033)	(0.015)	(0.028)
Polity IV	-1.585***	-0.026	-0.207
	(0.367)	(0.108)	(0.210)
Electoral System			
- Prop.	0.149	0.013	0.101
	(0.264)	(0.145)	(0.305)
- Mixed	-0.425	0.045	0.236
	(0.311)	(0.159)	(0.333)
Constant	6.51***	2.900***	5.779***
	(0.702)	(0.336)	(0.689)
Number of Subjects	36	41	41

Standard Errors Reported in Parentheses; ***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$

These results support the argument that, while IP does play a role, AP is also grounded in social identity. Remembering that *egippop* is coded to only include ethnic groups that are politically relevant, these findings also lend support to the theoretical expectations laid out above. The basic point outlined by Horowitz (1985), that the demographic configuration of ethnic groups within in a society does matter for feelings of animosity or conflict, seems to hold in relation to AP. Specifically, that the more individuals within a society that identify with an EGIP, the less incentive there will be for those individuals to foster feelings of animosity towards their opposing partisans, all else equal.

This finding has potentially important implications for how we think about AP. It suggests that in some cases, the propensity for higher levels of AP may be built into the core demographic structure of a nation. This will of course be mediated by, among other factors, the degree of *social sorting* at play, which ethnic groups have access to political power, and which social identities are currently activated within a given society. Nevertheless, this finding, combined with my tentative conclusions regarding *H1*, gives a clear indication that AP does, at least partially, have its origins in social identity.

4.3 DV Discrepancies

Before diving into a deeper look at the causality of these findings, there is one interesting statistical pattern to discuss. In the models that include the IV *ctry_relevance* (Tables 2 and 3), there is a consistently strong and significant relationship with the *API* measure but not with the *Wagner 1 and 2* measures. This trend is reversed for the models including the IV *egippop* (Tables 4 and 5), with a consistently strong and significant relationship with the *Wagner 1 and 2* measures but not with the *API* measure. This could simply be a function of the difference in sample size between the measures, which is relatively large in the PSMs. However, given that this differential drops significantly in the CAMs and the trend persists, perhaps something else is going on?

As we saw in Table 1 these measures all correlate strongly. However, the *API* only accounts for self-identifying partisans, whereas the *Wagner 1 and 2* measures encompass the whole respondent base. All three of these measures skilfully re-approximate the classic like-dislike measurement of AP for a 'multiparty world'. However, it is possible they also fail to account for a potential distorting factor, the 'strong-partisan', with the *API* over-approximating and *Wagner 1 and 2* under-approximating.

There may be lessons in the original US scholarship here. Historically, US partisan affiliation has remained relatively consistent over time[12]. Iyengar et al (2012) accounted for this by including dummy variables for strong partisans or to create party dummies.

However, things become messier in the non-US context with evidence showing partisan ties being generally less strong in newer democracies (Lupu and Stokes 2010). Perhaps the best strategy going forward would be to utilize the *Wagner 1* variable that captures the spread of AP within a system, while also pursuing the dummy strategy followed by Iyengar et al (2012). This would provide the broadest picture of AP, while also accounting for the potentially skewing influence of 'strong partisans' within a society.

Another option would be to move beyond like-dislike scores all together. For instance, Knudsen (2021) takes a more direct measure of AP, the inter-party marriage measure, into a comparative context showing a divergence in results with the standard like-dislike measures. As always with comparative measurement it is a question of having the appropriate survey data available.

5. Discussion

*5.1 Causality Discussion/ Robustness Checks*

This paper makes several important contributions to the comparative literature on AP. Building on work from US scholars on the social origins of AP and incorporating insights from the ethnic politics literature, I have highlighted a link between ethnic diversity and AP. Utilizing work from Horowitz (1985) and Posner (2004), I hypothesized how ethnic demographic structure, when linked to politically relevant groups, can influence dynamics of animosity and conflict within a given society.

The empirical results lend some weight to these theoretical claims. At the macro level, there is some indication that AP will, on average, be higher in countries where ethnicity is considered politically relevant. Building on this, the second stage of the analysis indicates that when ethnicity is a politically relevant factor within a country, the larger the share of the population that is a member of an EGIP, the lower AP will be on average. This result holds while controlling for a number of key influencing factors of AP, most notably IP.

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[12]See 17-year trend here: https://news.gallup.com/poll/15370/party-affiliation.aspx

How causal are these findings? Figures 1 and 2 show that the basic relationship between *egippop* and *Wagner 1 and 2* is relatively weak (0.042 and 0.045), yet there is a statistically significant relationship in my fully-specified models. This highlights a number of potentially distorting factors to investigate, the first being the presence of outliers/influential cases in my data. However, having excluded all such cases and re-run my models, I still find a strong and significant relationship for *egippop*[13].

Figure 1: **Scatterplot of Egippop against Wagner 1 (Model 5 in Table 4)**
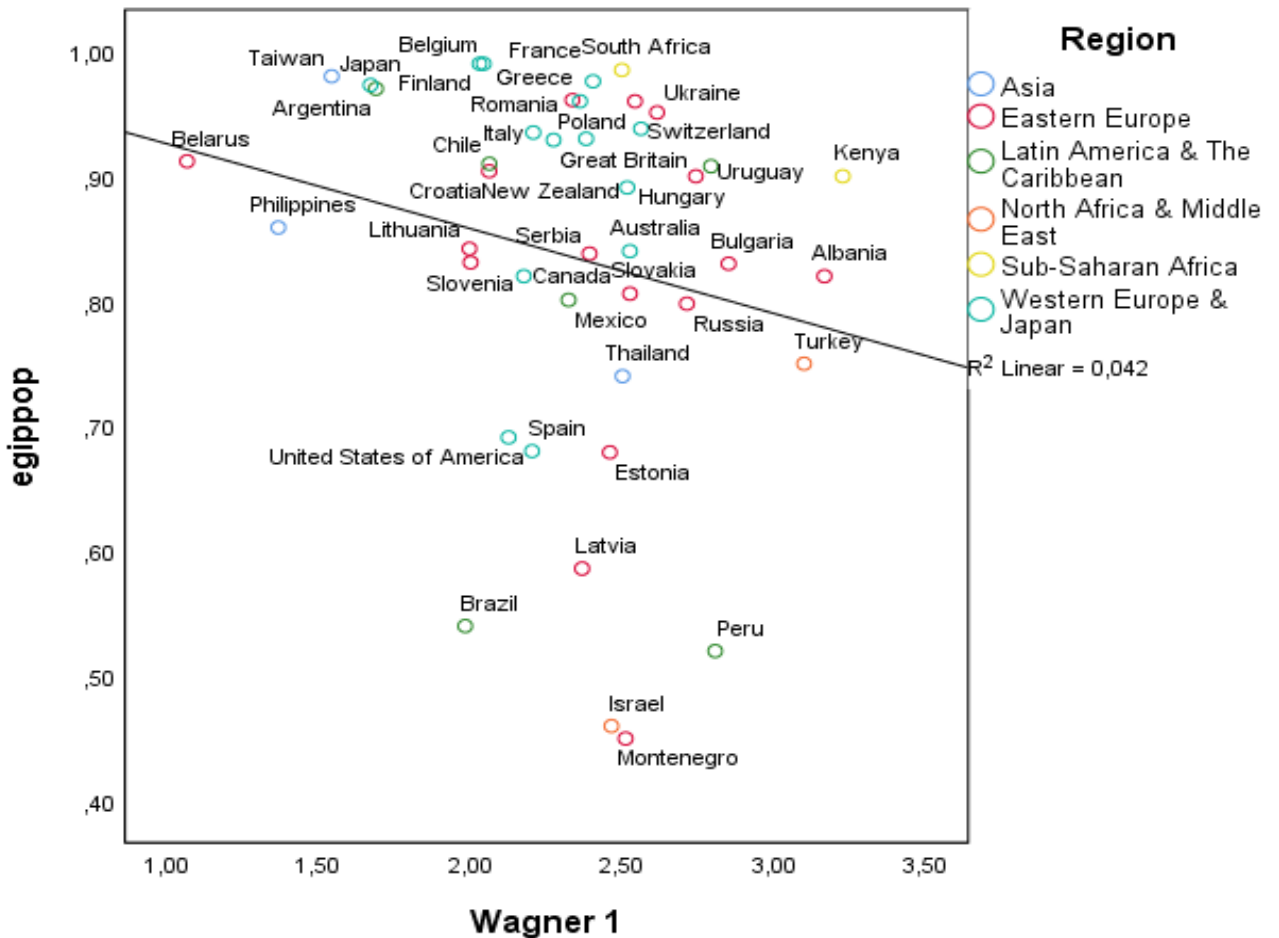
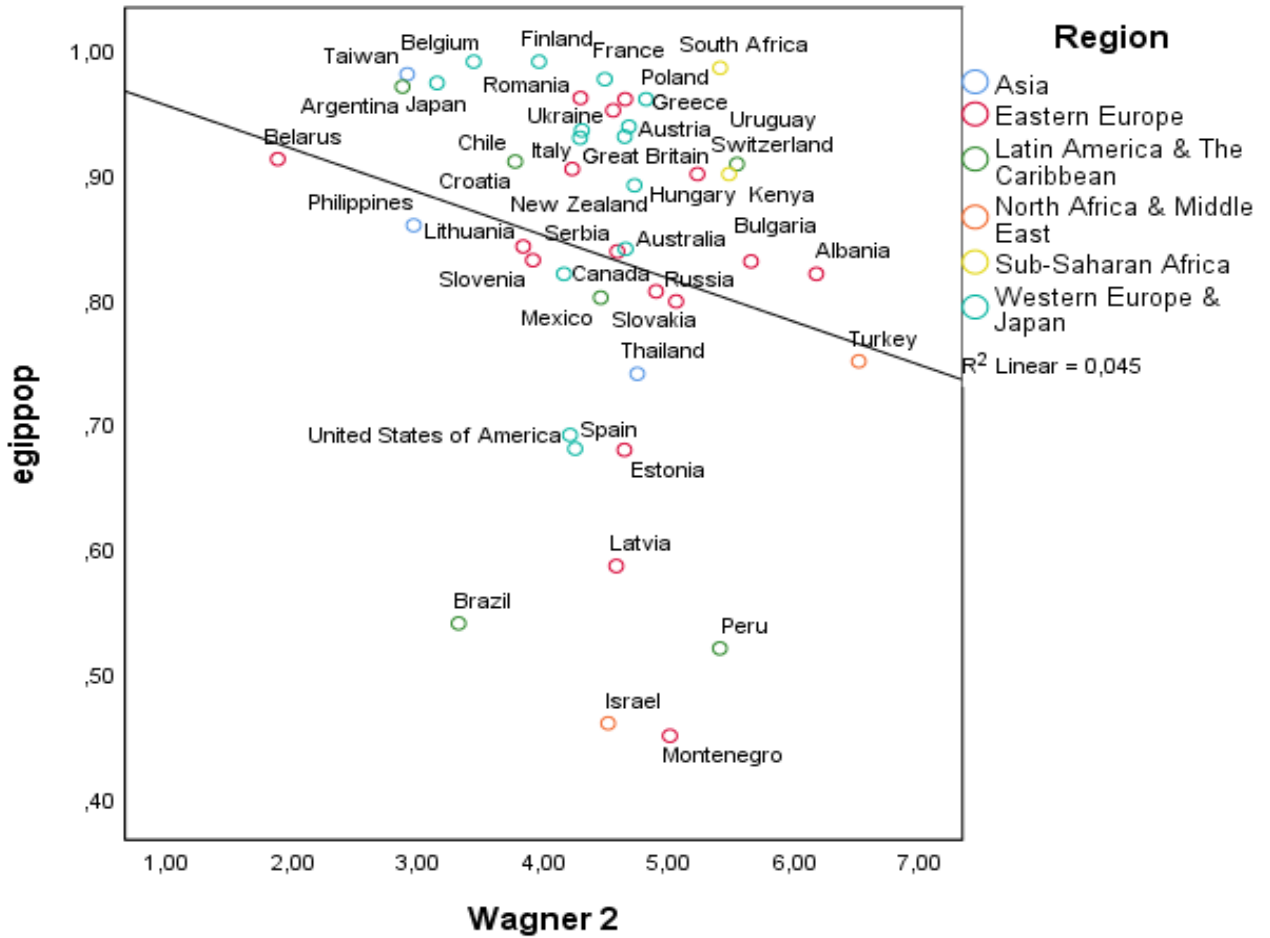***Figure 2:*** **Scatterplot of Egippop against Wagner 2 (Model 6 in Table 4)**

Table 6: **Pearson Correlations for IVs**			
	egippop	IP-Dalton	ENP
egippop	--	0.294**	-0.321**
IP-Dalton	--	--	0.198*

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01

Perhaps then it is an approximation issue with *egippop*? Remembering that a key part of the theoretical structure of this paper is the emphasis on the political relevance of a given ethnic group and how membership of said group influences AP. Is this a necessary distinction? Would the results not hold if I simply used a standard measure of diversity? I re-ran my models using

Fearon's (2003) fractionalization scores[14]. While there is some significance across the PSMs and CAMs, the REMs show no statistical relationship. This indicates that *egippop* is an appropriate approximation of diversity for this analysis.

Maybe then the issue lies in the interaction between *egippop* and my other IVs? Table 6 shows strong correlations between all three of my key IVs. This suggests there may be an issue with multicollinearity in my models. However, having run diagnostics tests to investigate this I find normal VIF scores[15]. While this is a positive indication that multicollinearity is not skewing my results, it does not rule out the possibility of interactions between my IVs.

In this vein, I centred each of my key IVs and created interaction terms. However, when including these terms in my models, I find a very weak and insignificant relationship[16]. While this means there is no statistical interaction between my variables, I cannot conclude that there is no interaction at play between ethnic diversity and IP more generally. My sample N is likely too small to accurately tease out any interaction between my IVs. This highlights one of the logical next steps in this line of research, moving to the individual level.

Using individual level data would allow for greater precision in teasing out any interaction effects. It would also enable a more accurate conceptualization of how being a member of an EGIP structures an individuals feelings towards their opposing partisans (and vice versa). Ultimately, with any country-level analysis involving ethnicity, it must be acknowledged that there are many idiosyncrasies and levels of complexity that cannot be accurately captured empirically. This is the crux point when it comes to making causal claims, specifically that it is very difficult to do so based on research of this type. While my findings point towards AP being grounded in social identity and being linked to ethnic power demographics, what it is truly contributing amounts to finding the corners of a 1000-piece jigsaw puzzle. That is not to disparage my results, it is simply an acknowledgment that, as Brubaker (2002) would argue, I am engaging in 'groupism'. However, let's not forget that building a jigsaw is much easier when the corner pieces are in place.

5.2 Data Drawbacks and New Opportunities – A focus on Turkey and the US

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[14] See Appendix 4
[15] See Appendix 5
[16] See Appendix 6

The case of Turkey highlights how coding salient ethnic divisions can pose difficulties. Turkey shows consistently high levels of AP across the three data points in my sample (2011, 2015, and 2018). As highlighted in the introduction, 79% of Turkish families would be displeased to see their daughter marry an opposing partisan (Erdogan and Semerci 2018).

Following the theoretical logic underpinning *H2*, we might expect Turkey to have a relatively low proportion of the population as part an EGIP. Looking at the EPR-Core data, it codes the 'Turkish' ethnic group as the EGIP, making up 75% of the population. The other main ethnic group is the Kurds, who are coded as having no access to political power. In Figures 1 and 2, we can see Turkey almost perfectly sits on the goodness of fit lines. So why does this represent a potential problem?

While the Turkish-Kurd cleavage has been a salient division throughout Turkish history, over the past 20 years it has been superseded by the Islamist-Secularist cleavage (Aydin- Düzgit 2019). This shift occurred with the ascent to power of the AKP/Erdogan in the mid-2000s, and is encapsulated in the 2018 general election results which yielded 54% for Islamist parties versus 46% for secularists (Somer 2019). This is not to say that the Turkish-Kurd cleavage is no longer relevant. Rather, this change highlights the inherent complexity in measuring identity configurations.

Thinking again about Figures 1 and 2, if Turkey had been coded along the Islamist-Secularist cleavage it would be positioned far below the goodness of fit line. Furthermore, as is highlighted in the scatterplots, my sample is heavily skewed towards European countries, which generally display lower levels of ethnic diversity. Accounting for such coding discrepancies and sample limitations simultaneously lends stronger support to my findings while highlighting the core weakness of this analysis; that data limitations hold back a truly representative understanding of comparative AP.

The case of Turkey also highlights the multifaceted nature of identity. I have restricted this analysis to one dimension of ethnicity, choosing to focus on the political relevance of ethnic groups as a key distinction. However, this clearly obstructs many other factors at play. An interesting future direction may be in employing Harteveld's (forthcoming) measure of *social sorting*, while accounting for the political relevance distinction. This could be useful at both the macro-level (between cleavages) and the micro-level (within cleavages).

In terms of addressing data limitations, some fruitful avenues may lie in both the new EPR-Ethnic Dimensions and the forthcoming EPR-Organizations datasets. The former provides

information on the linguistic, religious, and racial cleavages that internally divide the ethnic groups in the EPR-Core data, while the latter maps various ethno-political organizations across all the groups from the EPR-Core. Such data may enable the construction of more precise measurements, particularly the *ENP* variable, with scope for an 'Ethnically Effective Number of Parties'.

One final point relates back to the shift in cleavage salience in Turkey, from Turkish-Kurdish to Islamist-Secularist, which happened over approximately 20 years. The relative slowness of this shift is not uncommon, with most changes in identity logic happening generationally. Unfortunately, the AP data I have for Turkey only spans 2011-2018, while the EPR data goes back to 1946. This relative lack of AP data means we are missing an opportunity to see how shifts in cleavage salience/structure may be impacting AP over time.

A good example of why this is relevant is the U.S., where we have AP data going back to 1978 (Iyengar et al 2019). The EPR data shows us how Whites went from being a 'Monopoly' group in 1946, to a 'Dominant' group in 1966, and finally to a 'Senior Partner' in 2009, sharing power with African Americans and Latinos as 'Junior Partners'. This is a fundamental shift in the racial political power structure that has coincided with an approximate doubling in levels of AP (Iyengar et al 2012).

In this vein, new research may look to try and build a better understanding of AP beyond the scope of the CSES data. Admittedly, this may be a difficult and time-consuming process as access to relevant survey data is likely to be sparse. However, just like completing a 1000-piece jigsaw puzzle, in order to understand structural change, patience and perseverance are often required.

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Appendix Links:

Core File:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/13sU2yvQ5DUuMNrEwSWCoDwi8ahBn9KFNpFo6pomM-m0/edit?usp=sharing

GoogleDocs file for DV/AP matrix's/scores:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1PAl40WjMihzikIKNznpeHO50aKXSQ2kWWZIGlOJMm70/edit?usp=sharing

GoogleDocs file for IP matrix's/scores:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/13AbaTNYGTEyP-QN5XABfNlbpCK9AsprDCj2gvnjdxkQ/edit?usp=sharing