ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

Ethnic Campaign Appeals: To Bond, Bridge, or Bypass?

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This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Political Communication* on 6 October 2022, available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2022.2132331

Note on this version. It includes the author's own revisions made at the proof stage to the abstract, the discussion of the Figure 5 examples, and the discussion of Jakarta's 2017 election, so these passages match the published article. It does not include the publisher's copy-editing or citation corrections.

Please cite the published version:

Fox, Colm A. 2023. "Ethnic Campaign Appeals: To Bond, Bridge, or Bypass?" *Political Communication* 40 (1): 92–114. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2022.2132331

Replication data: https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/GINZOE

Ringkasan dalam Bahasa Indonesia

Mengapa sebagian calon kepala daerah menonjolkan identitas etnis atau agama dalam kampanye, sementara yang lain tidak? Artikel ini menganalisis lebih dari 1.500 poster kampanye dari hampir 250 calon dalam pemilihan kepala daerah (pilkada) di Indonesia. Saya membedakan tiga jenis seruan: mengikat kelompok sendiri (bonding), menjembatani antarkelompok (bridging), dan menghindari identitas etnis sama sekali (bypassing). Calon menyeru kelompok etnis atau agamanya sendiri jika kelompok itu "layak" secara politik, yaitu cukup besar dan tidak dihalangi oleh kendala sosial. Calon dari kelompok yang tidak layak cenderung menjembatani atau menghindari identitas etnis. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa keragaman etnis justru dapat menghasilkan politik etnis yang kurang eksklusif.

Ethnic Campaign Appeals:
To Bond, Bridge, or Bypass?

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Abstract: In a time of rising ethno-nationalist politics and polarization, efforts to understand why some electoral candidates choose to politicize ethnicity while others do not have become increasingly urgent. One factor inhibiting our understanding in this area is the paucity of systematic measures of ethnic appeals. To help in rectifying this gap, I present an approach to identifying and measuring different types of ethnic campaign appeals—termed bonding and bridging appeals, respectively. I then apply that approach to an original dataset of over 1,500 election posters from almost 250 candidates competing in Indonesian elections. The findings indicate that candidates made ethnic bonding appeals if their ethnic group was politically viable in terms of both size and the lack of social constraints on appealing to that group. Meanwhile, candidates from nonviable groups bridged across ethnic groups or bypassed ethnicity entirely. When candidates belonged to two ethnic categories, they used the simple heuristic that bonding trumps bridging to guide their appeal strategy. These findings illustrate the importance of looking beyond ethnic demographics and also casts doubt on the broadly accepted expectation that candidates will appeal to the ethnic group that is of minimum winning size. Ultimately, the article helps us understand candidates' communication strategies and why ethnic diversity actually results in less exclusivist ethnic politics.

Keywords: Indonesia, campaign appeals, ethnic diversity, religious diversity, election campaigns, election posters, campaign communications

Acknowledgements: I wish to thank Nathan Brown, Eric Lawrence, Bill Liddle, and Susan Sell for their comments on earlier drafts; Ines Cute, Husnul Isa, Eugene Tan, and Ibrahim Zafar for research assistance; and Firman Witoelar, all the Surveymeter researchers, and other researchers for help gathering election posters. For valuable comments and discussions, I thank participants who attended presentations at the Freedom Institute (Indonesia), the Center for Strategic and International Studies (Indonesia), and the Southeast Asian Research Group meeting (Vietnam). I especially thank Henry Hale for insightful comments, as well as my colleague, Jeremy Menchik, with whom I built the Indonesian election poster dataset and presented findings on several occasions. I am responsible for all errors.

The use of ethnic rhetoric to mobilize groups has always been a prominent part of election campaigns in old and new democracies alike. However, with the rise of populist and ethno-nationalist politics in recent years, there are indications that candidates are increasingly using explicit ethnic appeals to mobilize support from their ethnic kin (Schmuck & Matthes, 2017; Reny et al., 2019). This practice raises concerns because the politicization of ethnicity runs the risk of polarizing societies and eroding democracy (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019). Having said that, candidates can and often do use less divisive campaign strategies. Recent research has highlighted how candidates use inclusive cross-ethnic appeals to mobilize support from ethnic groups to which they do not belong (Gadjanova, 2021; Reilly, 2021). Alternatively, candidates can avoid invoking ethnicity altogether in their campaigns focusing on programmatic policies with broad appeal. Although these last two options can expand potential support beyond a candidate's ethnic group, they also limit candidates' ability to draw on shared psychological ethnic attachments with voting blocs (Valenzuela & Michelson, 2016). Given these options, how do we identify and explain candidates' choice of ethnic appeals in election campaigns? Why do some candidates use ethnic rhetoric to appeal exclusively to their ethnic kin while others reach out across ethnic lines or avoid politicizing ethnicity at all?

Candidates who draw on their ethnicity in campaigns—a form of self-personalization—prompt voters to evaluate them based on their ethnicity. Not all candidates, however, benefit from ethnic evaluations. To understand when and how candidates use ethnicity in campaigns, we need to consider the constituency to which they are appealing. Studies have found that candidates use ethnicity strategically: they mobilize ethnic groups that are large enough to achieve electoral victory but avoid politicizing ethnic groups that are too small to offer much help (Chandra, 2012; Dickson & Scheve, 2006; Huber, 2017; Posner, 2004, 2005; Reilly, 2000; Wilkinson, 2004). In addition, it has been broadly accepted that when multiple and overlapping ethnic identity categories are present, such as religion, race, and language, voters and candidates will mobilize around the ethnic category that is of "minimum winning size" (Chandra & Boulet, 2012, p. 234). This allows candidates to form a group of supporters capable of delivering electoral victory, but to share the economic and political spoils with the smallest possible number of group members (Bates, 1974; Posner, 2005). Existing systematic studies on ethnic politicization have invariably focused on the mobilization of a candidate's ethnic kin and measured it by using a single source: ethnic voting data (e.g., Houle, 2017; Huber, 2012; Posner, 2005). Unfortunately, systematic studies of subnational candidates' ethnic rhetoric are very rare.

One fundamental challenge in systematically studying ethnic rhetoric is a lack of measures designed to compare various types of ethnic appeals across candidates. Accordingly, this article begins by describing a new approach that can be used to measure and compare different kinds of ethnic appeals. I argue that when candidates consider politicizing ethnicity, they have three main choices. They can make exclusive appeals to their ethnic kin, or what I term ethnic bonding appeals; inclusive appeals to ethnic categories to which they do not belong, or ethnic bridging appeals; or eschew ethnic appeals altogether, thus engaging in ethnic bypassing.

A second challenge in studying ethnic rhetoric is how to feasibly identify and gather ethnic appeals from a large number of candidates for analysis. To overcome this challenge, I used a novel data source: election posters. During 2010 and 2011, a team of researchers and I photographed over 1,500 unique election posters from almost 250 candidates competing in regional head elections in one of the world's most populous and most ethnically diverse countries, Indonesia. This is the largest collection of unique election posters ever to be systematically gathered and analyzed. To understand when candidates made ethnic bonding, bridging, or bypassing appeals, I then developed an innovative method of coding the indigenous and religious appeals based on the visual and textual components of these posters.

Analyzing ethnic appeals directly from candidate's campaign materials provided two important insights which run counter to the prevailing wisdom in the scholarly literature. First, even though an ethnic group might be large enough to support a victory at the polls, social constraints often prevented Indonesian candidates from publicly appealing to these ethnic groups. Ultimately, candidates consider an ethnic group to be politically viable only when the group is large enough *and* when there are no social constraints on appealing to the group.

Second, despite the broadly accepted expectation that a candidate will appeal to the ethnic group that is of minimum winning size, most Indonesian candidates did the opposite, appealing to the ethnic group they belonged to that had the most members. Therefore, in place of the argument based on minimum winning size, I present a new explanation of candidates' communication strategies in an environment with multiple salient dimensions of ethnicity (i.e., religion, race, tribe). I propose that candidates consider the range of ethnic categories they belong to and which ones they should either bond with or bridge across. They then use a simple heuristic: bonding trumps bridging. Candidates focus their resources on an ethnic identity they can bond with, if possible, because bridging is a more demanding and riskier strategy.

Ethnic Appeals

Following the prevailing political science convention, I use the term ethnicity to broadly define an identity category in which descent-based attributes are necessary for membership. Descent-based attributes, such as skin color and religion, are given at birth for most group members and are relatively difficult to change. Types of ethnicities include region, religion, race, language, caste, indigeneity, tribe, and nationality.[1]

Candidates' use of ethnicity is often portrayed in a narrow, unfavorable light. Sensational statements by political candidates make the headlines, and terms such as "exploiting ethnicity" or "playing the ethnic card" are freely bandied about, creating the impression that ethnicity is a fixed, unidimensional, and inherently divisive concept. In recent years, the literature on ethnic politics has taken into account ethnicity's multidimensional and more fluid nature, casting doubt on simplistic notions of its divisiveness (Hale, 2004). Furthermore, it has been recognized that connecting with constituents in ethnic terms is actually a more complicated matter than we

1 Horowitz (1985, p. 53) and Chandra (2011, p. 154) also follow this convention.

previously imagined (Chandra, 2012). The ethnic identity of candidates (and voters) is multidimensional, involving a range of ethnic relationships. Ethnic dimensions (e.g., religion, race) are the broadest classification tool; within these dimensions lie ethnic categories (e.g., Islamic, Christian, Black, White) and sub-ethnic categories (e.g., Protestant, Catholic). Given this wide range of affiliations, candidates have numerous options available for making ethnic appeals. They can aim narrowly (at relatively exclusive categories) or more broadly, and they can appeal to categories to which they themselves do or do not belong.

Unfortunately, systematic measures of ethnic politicization often fail to capture the wide array of options available to candidates. In systematic studies, scholars have taken two approaches to measuring the politicization of ethnicity. The first approach uses proxies for ethnic politicization, relying on data on ethnic voting or the ethnic composition of political parties and their leaders (Houle, 2017; Huber, 2012; Posner, 2005; Wimmer et al., 2009). But these data provide no information on the appeals made by candidates or parties in elections. We can only assume from the results that candidates and parties must have actively politicized ethnicity in some way if their support comes overwhelmingly from a certain group.

The second approach involves using campaign materials or media coverage of elections to identify whether candidates or political parties target particular ethnic groups and what kinds of appeals they make.[2] Party manifestos, newspaper articles, and campaign advertisements and speeches are commonly used as sources. These materials do enable direct measures of ethnic politicization, but the data are usually limited to political parties and appeals made by national party leaders. Political parties are treated as homogeneous groups, and the variety of positions taken and appeals made by individual candidates within a party is glossed over. In highly institutionalized and disciplined parties, this method might be suitable, but appeals by individual candidates can diverge markedly from the official party line in situations marked by candidate-centric electoral rules, undisciplined internal party structures, or strong regional differences.

I begin with a broad definition of an ethnic appeal as an explicit or implicit message intended to mobilize support by deliberatly invoking an ethnic dimension, category, or subcategory. Explicit appeals are clear, direct, and perceived easily; implicit appeals are perceived either unconsciously or only by select individuals who understand the coded nature of the appeal. Furthermore, ethnic appeals can be deployed through words, visuals, or actions, and they can be interpreted in either positive or negative ways.[3]

2 Prominent examples include the Manifesto Research on Political Representation, Posner's (2004) Politically Relevant Ethnic Groups dataset, and Chandra's (2005) Constructivist Dataset on Ethnicity and Institutions.

3 See Berinsky et al. (2020, pp. 514–516) for a brief overview of literature ethnic appeals used in a negative and positive sense, as well as how appeals can be used to merely associate a candidate with a particular group.

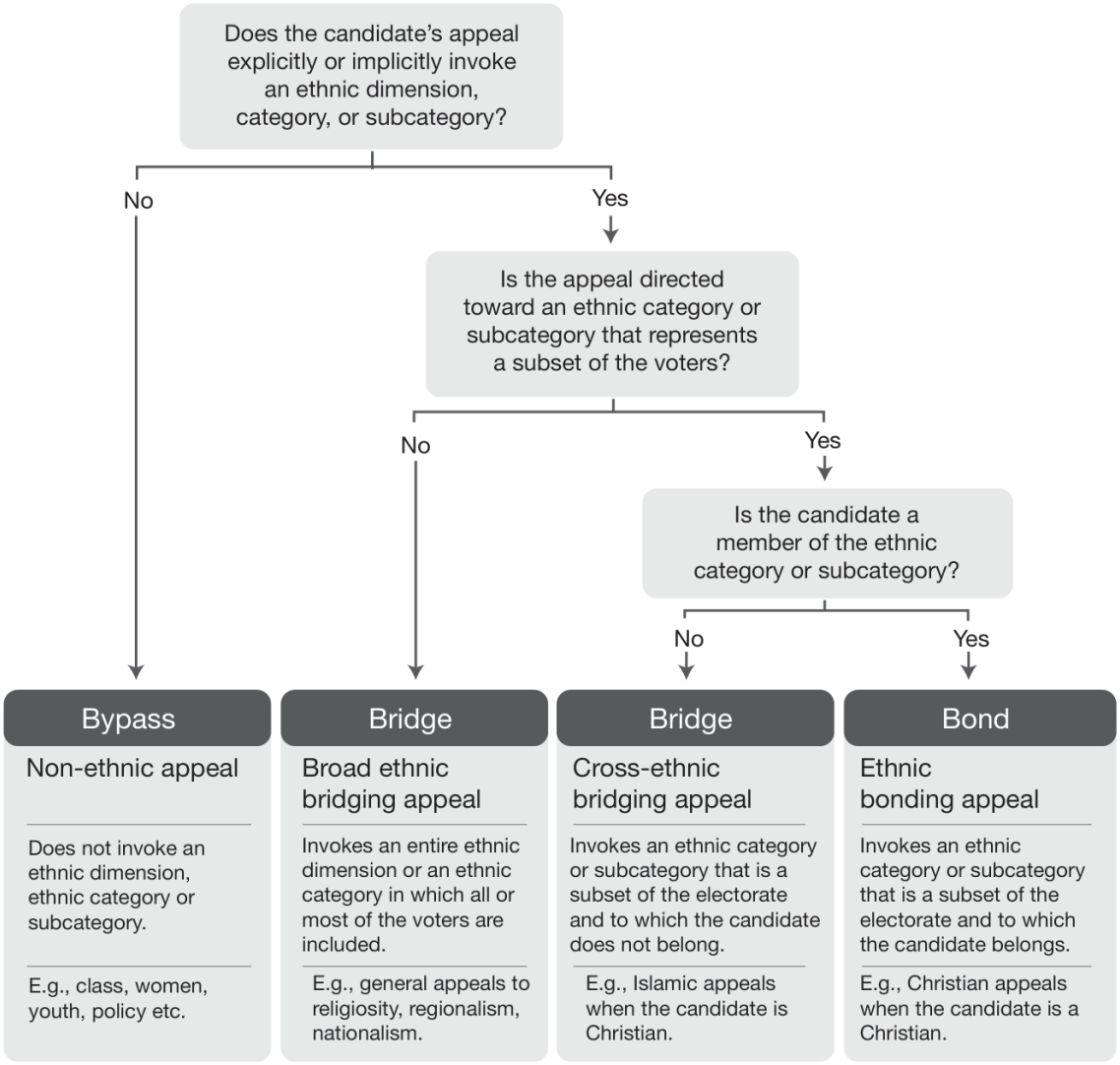


Figure 1. Classifying candidates' ethnic appeals.

Ethnic appeals can also be viewed as having either a bonding or bridging function. These terms have been adapted from Robert Putnam, who viewed bonding and bridging as the most important lines along which social capital varies. He favored bridging social capital, defining it in terms of outward-looking networks with connections to different kinds of people from diverse backgrounds, whereas bonding social capital involves inward-looking networks of similar individuals (Putnam, 2002, p. 11). Bonding and bridging have also been used as loose terms to describe how parties connect with social groups in election campaigns (Norris, 2004; Reilly, 2006). However, I believe that I am the first to apply the terms specifically to candidates' ethnic appeals.

Figure 1 classifies campaign appeals in terms of their ethnic bonding, bridging, or bypassing functions. It also illustrates the logical progression of steps used to identify these appeal types. The four types of appeals are mutually exclusive, making it possible to quantify the frequency of

appeals of each type in a candidate's speech or published message. Such quantitative data could also be aggregated in various ways for comparative analysis—e.g., during a candidate's entire campaign or with regard to all candidates in a particular party.

Before I present the argument, two points on interpreting appeals should be noted. First, campaign appeals that reference out-groups are not always ethnic bridging appeals. Appeals that stereotype or denigrate out-groups or portray them as threatening serve as an ethnic bonding appeal for the in-group. For example, the British politician Nigel Farage promoted a poster showing a large queue of mostly non-white migrants with the slogan "Breaking Point." By inciting fear of out-groups, the poster sought to mobilize the largely white supporters of Farage's right-wing party, UKIP (Stewart & Mason, 2016). Even seemingly non-ethnic policy appeals must be scrutinized for ethnic content. For instance, a message about being tough on crime, juxtaposed with images of an ethnic minority, can activate negative stereotypes of minorities, thereby functioning as an implicit ethnic bonding appeal with the in-group (Mendelberg's 2001). In sum, due to the existence of negative appeals, we must understand the social makeup of the community and the policy issues closely associated with certain ethnic groups in order to interpret appeals properly.

Second, although I have defined an ethnic appeal as a deliberate effort to invoke ethnicity, candidates who wish to bypass ethnicity might still unavoidably communicate their ethnic identity (e.g., through their skin color). Despite this fact, a candidate's deliberate effort to bypass ethnicity by excluding additional references to it still matters. Bypassing ethnicity provides a space to promote alternative identities or issues, deflecting attention away from ethnicity. If all candidates in an election choose to bypass ethnicity, a high degree of ethnic politicization is unlikely, even if candidates' ethnicities are readily observable.

Self-Personalization and Ethnic Appeal Strategies

The use of ethnic appeals is often a personalistic approach to campaigning, particularly when candidates invoke their own ethnicity or personal connections with ethnic groups. To understand the causes and effects of personalistic campaigns, we can examine research on the personalization of politics, especially self-personalization, which occurs when candidates present themselves as individual actors and highlight aspects of their professional and personal life, independent from their political party (McGregor, 2017; Metza et al., 2019). A number of scholars have highlighted an increase in personalization in recent years (e.g., McAllister, 2007). This rise is often attributed to the introduction of television and, more recently, online media—highly visual communication technologies that have increased the emphasis on candidates' image, character, and private lives (Lang & Lang, 2002; McGregor, 2017). Another line of research has found that personalization is often driven by candidate-centric electoral rules (Carey & Shugart, 1995). Under these rules, voters are most concerned with the candidate's character, responsiveness, and ability to meet their needs, and candidates have considerable independence in how they run their campaigns. Ultimately, with these rules, electoral success depends largely

on whether a candidate can foster personalistic relationships with constituents through their campaigns.

Studies have found that self-personalization strategies which use more personal communications, personal stories, and revelations concerning a candidate's private life, increase voter engagement (Metza et al., 2019), foster credibility and trust (Arbour, 2014), and create impressions of closeness and imagined relationships with the candidate (McGregor, 2017). Ultimately, self-personalization in election campaigns crowds out policy and political party concerns, causing voters to evaluate candidates based on their character, traits, and private lives.

Clearly, self-personalization offers many benefits for candidates. One way to tap into these benefits is by promoting ethnic identity, *if* they want voters to evaluate them based on their ethnicity. However, to understand whether a candidate wants voters to evaluate them based on ethnicity, we must consider two important mediating factors: the constituency's demographics and social constraints on ethnic appeals. These factors help us understand candidates' choice of ethnic bonding, bridging, or bypassing appeals.

The literature on the impact of ethnic demography on important outcomes such as government policy and the provision of public goods has been growing in recent years (e.g., Kasara 2007; Tajima et al., 2018). Ethnic demography has also been found to affect the politicization of ethnicity during elections, with scholars specifically focusing on the size of ethnic groups. Broadly, this research has shown that candidates choose to mobilize their ethnic group by politicizing ethnicity when their ethnic group is large enough to form a winning political coalition (Chandra, 2012; Huber, 2017; Posner, 2004, 2005; Wilkinson, 2004). Drawing on these insights, we might expect candidates to use ethnic bonding appeals to mobilize their ethnic kin when the group is large enough to propel the candidate to victory through its support. Essentially, they appeal to their ethnic group if it is of winning size.

Although this may often be the case, an important missing component is how the constraints of social norms can influence candidates. Various kinds of restrictions, rooted in history, psychology, or social norms, can block the politicization of ethnicity. For example, Laitin (1986) showed how colonial discourse restricted the politicization of religious identities among the Yoruba in Nigeria. In Chandra's (2012) edited volume, scholars described various restrictions on the politicization of ethnic groups and coalitions. For instance, Petersen (2012) argued that social stigmas and negative emotional content attached to the identity group can prevent ethnic identities from becoming politicized. Often rooted in particular histories and social norms, country-specific social constraints are not necessarily generalizable to other countries. Furthermore, they are not always fixed; they can be challenged and can change over time. Incorporating this factor into my theory, I argue that candidates will make ethnic bonding appeals if their ethnic group is of winning size and there are no social constraints on appealing to their group. In such instances, a candidate's group is politically viable.

What happens, then, if a candidate belongs to a "losing" ethnic group, one whose support is insufficient to secure victory for the candidate? In this scenario, the literature has indicated that

candidates will simply avoid politicizing ethnicity (Dickson & Scheve, 2006; Posner, 2004; Reilly, 2000). Based on these studies, we might expect candidates to bypass ethnicity and use non-ethnic types of appeals. However, another option, ignored in the literature, is also available to candidates—namely, they can reach out to ethnic groups they do not belong to with ethnic bridging appeals. When the size of candidates' ethnic group is too small to secure victory, or when there are social constraints on appealing to their ethnic group, they will either engage in ethnic bridging or bypass ethnic appears entirely (see Figure 2).

The scheme presented in Figure 2 assumes only one ethnic dimension. In reality, candidates belong to ethnic categories from multiple dimensions of ethnicity (e.g., religious, indigenous, linguistic) and can draw on their repertoire of ethnic categories from different dimensions. In recent years, constructivist approaches to ethnic politics have begun to take into account this multidimensional nature of ethnicity. One key argument that has emerged proposes that when voters and candidates have multiple ethnic identities (such as religion and race) around which they can mobilize to achieve electoral victory, they will choose the one that is of "minimum winning size" in order to share the spoils of victory with the smallest number of group members (Posner, 2005). Notably, this argument is relevant only to the strategic decisions made by candidates who happen to be members of multiple potentially winning ethnic groups. Moreover, to date, it has not been systematically tested relative to how candidates actually mobilize ethnic groups through their campaign rhetoric.

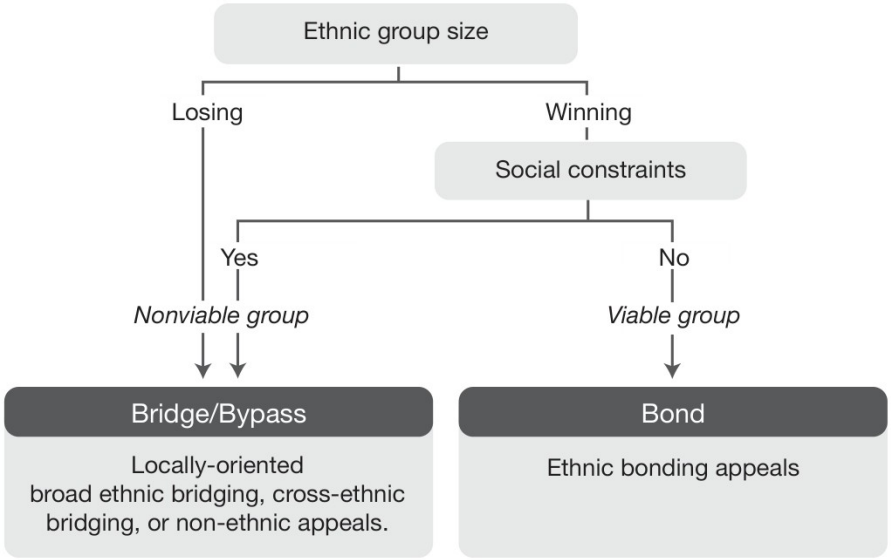


Figure 2. Candidates' ethnic appeal choice.

To explain how candidates mobilize ethnic groups through their campaign appeals in constituencies with multiple dimensions of ethnicity, I introduce an alternative argument. I propose that a candidate's choice of bonding or bridging appeals is guided by a simple heuristic:

bonding trumps bridging. If, for example, a candidate belongs to a politically viable religious group and a nonviable indigenous group, that candidate will focus on bonding with the viable religious group. Less time will be spent bridging across indigenous groups, because appealing across ethnic lines is a particularly demanding and risky strategy—for multiple reasons.

The first reason is that material factors can inhibit the success of cross-ethnic bridging. Due to expectations of ethnic favoritism, candidates cannot effectively or credibly target non-ethnic kin with material benefits (Huber, 2017, pp. 3–4). Studies have found that clientelistic appeals and vote buying are more effective with members of one's own group (Kramon, 2017; Wantchekon, 2003). Second, social and psychological factors can also inhibit cross-ethnic bridging. Often, politicians face social pressures to take care of their own ethnic group lest they lose status and prestige (Lindberg, 2010). Voters may also have a psychological predisposition to vote for their ethnic kin due to an expressive voting logic (Barreto, 2007; Horowitz, 1985). Additionally, research has shown that the social environment of networks can influence voting choices (Nickerson, 2008; Sokhey & McClurg, 2012). These findings suggest that individuals may be influenced to vote for co-ethnics by the ethnic networks in which they are embedded. In contrast, when candidates appeal to non-ethnic kin, they cannot rely on shared psychological ethnic attachments or social networks, so the chances of voter desertion are greater. Finally, intergroup rivalries, competition, and distrust may also undermine the effectiveness of cross-ethnic bridging, as a public appeal to one group may antagonize another group from whom the candidate is also seeking support (Nteta & Schaffner, 2013).

Research Design and Data

Indonesia

For several reasons, Indonesia is an excellent case study for testing arguments on ethnic politics and electoral competition. First, Indonesia is a vibrant emerging democracy. It transitioned in 1999 after the fall of the autocrat Suharto, who ruled for over three decades. Today, Indonesia is the third-largest democracy in the world, and although its elections have generally been free and fair, issues of money politics and corruption are also prevalent.

Second, Indonesia is one of the world's largest and most ethnically diverse countries. There are over 1,000 indigenous groups, and although many of them are small, 15 indigenous groups have at least two million members each. In terms of religion, 88% are Muslim, and there are significant Protestant, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucian religious minorities. Indigeneity and religion are also salient dimensions of ethnicity in daily social and political life. Practically all Indonesians identify with a religious and an indigenous ethnic category, and social life often revolves around ethnic rituals, ceremonies, prayer groups, and festivals (Bowen, 2003; Davidson & Henley, 2008; Fealy & White, 2008). The impact of ethnicity has also been prominent in politics. Since Indonesia's transition to democracy in 1999, politicians have increasingly drawn on religion and indigeneity to mobilize support for religiously inspired policies, the creation of new administrative districts, and electoral candidacies (Aspinall, 2011; Buehler, 2016;

Hamayotsu, 2011; Pepinsky et al., 2012). Candidates thus have various choices of ethnic appeals, and their choices permit us to test the present argument in a situation with multiple ethnic dimensions.

Third, Indonesia provides an ideal opportunity to test the argument across regional head elections in provinces and sub-provincial districts. These direct elections of governors and district heads have been held since 2005 and are single-seat elections, with a two-round system. Candidates run for election in pairs, composed of a head and a deputy. Importantly, in these elections, candidates have the freedom to pursue their own particular ethnic appeal strategy. In fact, they have considerable control of their own campaigns, with political parties and party leaders tending to play only minor roles. Candidates can seek support from a coalition of different parties of their choosing, or they can run as independents. They personally raise most of their campaign funds and can decide whom to target for support. As a result of the candidate-centric nature of these elections, we can expect high levels of personalistic campaigning.

Election Posters

In Indonesia, candidate-specific data could be gathered from websites, campaign advertisements, or news coverage of campaigns. However, due to problems of comparability and patchy coverage, these materials proved unreliable for measuring ethnic appeals. In contrast, one other form of campaigning is readily comparable across candidates, inexpensive, low-tech, used by all regional head candidates, and relatively accessible: election posters. Though seldom studied rigorously, posters are a unique and revealing source of information on campaign appeals, especially in Indonesia where they are frequently used to appeal to voters' sense of identity.

The visual nature of Indonesian election posters gives candidates the opportunity to engage in self-personalization.[4] They can highlight salient personal features about themselves by dressing in Islamic, indigenous, or political party clothing, and by including images of mosques, indigenous houses, regional monuments, or the Indonesian flag. These visuals are often supported by short, emotive messages, identity-related words, and the use of indigenous languages or Arabic. Coding these images and messages can identify with reasonable certainty the ethnic groups to which candidates seek to appeal. Candidates often spend a considerable portion of their campaign budget on posters, and studies have found that they play an important role in promoting policies, increasing public participation, raising candidates' name recognition, and signaling candidates' competitiveness (Dumitrescu, 2012; Fox, 2018; Kam & Zechmeister, 2013; Panagopoulos, 2009). In Indonesia, voters frequently consider election posters and brochures as influential as or even more so than television, newspapers, radio, or vote buying (Hill, 2009).

Photographing regional head campaign posters in Indonesia is challenging, given the size of the country and the rolling schedule of elections. A convenience sample of election posters was

4 Metza et al. (2019) found that self-personalization is often deployed through visual communications.

gathered in 2010 and 2011, in two waves. In the first wave, a network of researchers living in regions across Indonesia took photographs of posters displayed during campaigns in their vicinity. Because many of these districts had Islamic-majority populations, I subsequently photographed a second wave of election posters in districts with larger Christian populations. This collection of posters from a large number of districts, which ranged from very heterogeneous to very homogeneous in terms of both indigenous and religious demographics, provided a suitable dataset on which to test my theory. After duplicate election posters (i.e., posters with the same design) were removed, the final dataset contained 1,501 election posters of 246 candidates from 49 constituencies across 13 provinces.

Although this was a convenience sample, every effort was made to ensure that the selected posters did not differ in any material way from the posters not photographed. The 13 provinces covered included all of Indonesia's main islands. Additionally, the number of urban versus rural districts with posters was also proportional to the national average. Each researcher was paid on a per-poster basis, incentivizing team members to photograph as many posters as possible. They were not told that the study was on ethnic politics, so there was no reason to prefer certain posters over others.

To quantify ethnic appeals from the posters I used content analysis. Unfortunately, early in my fieldwork, it became apparent that no individual Indonesian research assistant had the knowledge to code the content of posters for all their elements. Coding the clothing, symbols, and languages of the wide variety of indigenous groups that were invoked in posters was particularly challenging. As a result, while continuing to photograph posters in different parts of the country, I began consulting with local residents and campaign team members, from different parts of the country and various ethnic groups, to identify unknown elements in the posters and thereby interpret the nature of the appeals.

During this time I developed a codebook and coded each poster for candidate clothing, imagery, and textual content. With regard to clothing, I coded every poster using descriptive options for the candidate's clothing and headdress—e.g., Islamic, indigenous Batak, secular suit and tie, etc. When both the head and deputy candidate appeared on a poster (as was often the case), I coded the clothing of both candidates. For imagery, I coded the inclusion of supporting institutions and elites, as well as any other images such as mosques or indigenous houses. These clothing and imagery descriptions where then reviewed and coded for the specific religious or indigenous group they invoked. As a reliability test, a research assistant coded all the posters again, but only for the religious elements. Unlike indigeneity, religious elements are easy to identify without detailed local knowledge, so levels of intercoder reliability were high, with an average Krippendorf alpha of 0.9 for the coding of clothing and imagery.[5] For the textual content, I transcribed all the text from each poster and exported all the transcribed words (and their frequencies) from the poster dataset. I then reviewed these words and developed dictionary

5 After reliability testing, I identified all the inconsistent codings and determined the correct code. These corrections were reflected in the posters used in the analysis. See the Appendix for the codebook and intercoder reliability tests.

lists of words that invoked various religious and indigenous identities.[6] Finally, I used these dictionaries to machine-code the poster dataset for their religious and indigenous words.[7]

To carry out the analysis, I also needed to know the indigenous and religious identity of the candidates. I gathered this information from the electoral commission, local informants, and online searches. Drawing on the types of appeals illustrated in Table 1, each poster was first classified with regard to the presence of an indigenous bonding, bridging, or bypassing appeal. Following the same logic, posters were then classified for religious bonding, bridging, or bypassing appeals. The frequency of bridging appeals was low overall, so for the analysis I combined broad ethnic bridging and cross-ethnic bridging into aggregate measures for indigenous and religious bridging. Interpreting the nature of appeals was not complicated by negative appeals, as Indonesian candidates are constrained by electoral regulations from casting out-groups in a negative light.

Table 1. Coding posters for indigenous bonding, bridging, and bypassing appeal types

Appeal	**Poster contains**
Indigenous bonding	One or more references to the candidate's indigenous group and none to any other indigenous group.
Indigenous bridging	One or more references to an indigenous group(s) to which the candidate did not belong (this is cross-indigenous bridging) or a general reference to indigeneity but no reference to a specific indigenous group (this is broad indigenous bridging).
Indigenous bypassing	No references to indigeneity or any specific indigenous group.

Note: Following the same logic, posters were coded for religious appeal types.

Finally, levels of indigenous and religious bonding, bridging, and bypassing were calculated for each candidate's poster campaign. Candidates had multiple posters, so I calculated the average percentage of posters that contained each of these types of appeals for every candidate. This classification resulted in a final set of six dependent variables (three indigenous and three religious), ranging from zero to 100%, for each of the 246 candidates.

In terms of indigenous bonding, there was great variety in the indigenous categories to which candidates made bonding appeals. In contrast, religious bonding appeals were overwhelmingly Muslim. This was the case even though many of the constituencies where posters were photographed had Christian majorities. Overall, this pattern indicates the presence of broad social constraints on publicly appealing to Indonesian religious minorities. Both historical precedent and more immediate strategic concerns can help explain these constraints. Since independence, Islamic parties have always been an important feature of Indonesia's party

6 A total of 88 relevant words were identified, of which 23 were associated with religion broadly, 45 with Islam, 11 with Christianity, and 9 with indigeneity broadly. See the Appendix for details.

7 Muddiman, McGregor and Stroud (2018) used a similar approach for social media comments.

system, but religious minority parties have not. Instead, religious minorities have found political representation though nationalist–secular political parties that have traditionally appealed to nationalism rather than religion in campaigns. Also, religious minority candidates and voters have little incentive to politicize their religion. Religious minority candidates with aspirations to run for higher office will need broad support in the future from Muslim voters and party leaders, so heavy appeals to a religious minority would likely hurt their careers in the long run. Additionally, as some incidents of religiously motivated violence have occurred recently in Indonesia, minority voters may feel particularly vulnerable if religious minority candidates attempt to politicize their religion.

Model and Covariates

My argument predicts that whether a candidate is a member of a viable group will affect the use of bonding, bridging, and bypassing appeals. In the context of Indonesia, I was concerned only with a candidate's indigenous and religious identities. Although candidates run for election in pairs; in my analysis I focus on the identity of the head candidates and their ethnic groups. This is because head candidates hold the most important position for voters and select their running mate as part of their election strategy. They might for instance, choose a deputy from a different ethnic group to bridge across other groups, or a co-ethnic to signal an ethnic bonding strategy.

For the first key variable, since there are no broad constraints on any particular indigenous groups, I simply used the size of the head candidate's indigenous group. This variable, called *viable indigenous group* and was defined as 1 if the head candidate's indigenous group represented more than 50% of the constituency's population and 0 otherwise. The threshold of 50% is appropriate because these are single-member districts. For the second key independent variable, social constraints that inhibit non-Islamic religious bonding appeals, I set the *viable religious group* variable equal to 1 only if the head candidate's religious group was over 50% of the district population *and* the head candidate was Muslim.

Potentially, voters' strong allegiance or attachment to their ethnic group could be associated with more ethnic bonding appeals by candidates (Valenzuela & Michelson, 2016). To control for ethnic allegiances, I included variables that measured the strength of indigenous and religious attachment. For religious attachment, a variable called *places of worship* represented the number of worship locations of the candidate's religion per 1,000 constituents from that religion. For indigenous attachment, I included a variable representing the percentage of villages in the district that used traditional indigenous law (*Adat*).[8]

Ethnic appeals could also be influenced by levels of modernization. Cultural modernization theorists such as Gellner (1983) have emphasized the salience of ethnic identities in traditional agrarian societies. However, more recent research has highlighted how modernization actually

8 Adat is used to manage interpersonal relations and resolve conflicts, and its prevalence is an indication of salient indigenous identities (Davidson & Henley, 2007).

strengthens and politicizes ethnic identities due to the competitive nature of modern urban sectors (Eifert et al., 2010). To control for any potential effect of modernization, I included variables representing the percentage of people living below the poverty line (*poverty*) and the percentage of gross regional domestic product derived from farming or fishing (*fishing/farming GRDP*). More modern districts should have lower levels of poverty and should be less reliant on farming.

Finally, three other control variables were included. The first was the number of candidates completing in the election, which ranged from 2 to 10. This variable was included because ethnically diverse elections tended to attract more candidates. Second, I included a binary variable for the candidate's gender (1 if female) to control for female candidates who wore a Muslim headscarf on their posters. Although the headscarf is an Islamic symbol (and was coded as such), there is also a social convention calling on Muslim women to wear it. As a result, including a gender variable helps to control for possible artificial inflation of religious bonding appeals. Lastly, to control for population size, I used the natural logarithm of the population in each constituency.

To test the impact of being a member of a viable group on ethnic appeals, I used a linear probability model (OLS) with robust standard errors for each of the dependent variables, which ranged continuously from 0 to 100. I used the candidate's poster campaign (all their posters) as the unit of analysis (N = 246). This fits with the argument, which is centered on the overall appeal strategies of individual candidates. Numerous alternative specifications are included in the appendix materials.[9] The results for all these alternative models were very similar to those for the OLS model. Since the OLS model offered more conservative estimates for the coefficients and is more easily interpreted, I report only on the OLS results below.

Results

Candidates' Ethnic Appeals

To see how belonging to a viable group affected the kinds of appeals that candidates made, I ran regressions on each of the six dependent variables using the full set of covariates. Based on these regressions, the predictive margins are presented visually in Figure 3. The bars show the predicted percentage of a candidate's poster campaign that contains bonding, bridging, or bypassing appeals, depending on whether the candidate belongs to a viable group. For candidates belonging to a viable indigenous or religious group, approximately 40% of all campaign posters were bonding posters, as compared to only 2% to 5% for members of a nonviable group. Candidates in this latter category engaged in more bridging and bypassing appeals. All these results were statistically significant.

Overall, the findings supported the theory. Bonding appeals were substantially and

9 They included rerunning OLS regressions using the poster as the unit of analysis; clustering on the constituency; adding dummy variables for each of the indigenous groups, and running logit, ordered logit, Tobit models to deal with any issues of non-normal distribution of the dependent variables, and mixed models which use the poster as the dependent variable with random intercepts for candidates.

significantly more common among candidates who were members of viable groups, whereas bridging and bypassing were more prevalent among candidates from nonviable groups. These patterns and percentages of appeals were remarkably similar for indigenous and religious appeals.

We can also use the data to examine how candidates chose between politicizing their indigenous or religious identity groups, as well as test the widely accepted "minimum winning size" concept. Of the 246 candidates, 134 were from an indigenous and a religious group that were both of winning size. If candidates wanted to choose the "minimum winning size" ethnic category, we would expect them to target their appeals toward the smaller of these two groups. The evidence, however, points in the opposite direction. On average, only 29% of their posters targeted the smaller group with ethnic bonding appeals, whereas 34% targeted the larger group. This pattern was most acute among the 33 candidates who had a "minimum winning" Christian group to appeal to. They overwhelmingly appealed to their larger indigenous group, as 54% of their posters contained indigenous appeals and only 5% contained religious appeals. In short, the "minimum winning size" concept failed to explain the behavior of 134 candidates who were in a position to form a minimum winning coalition.

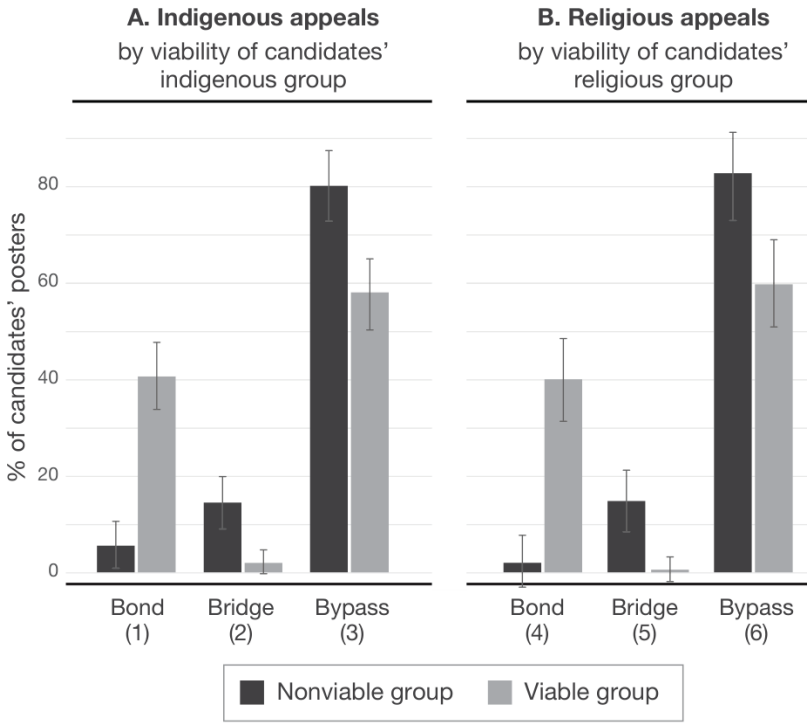


Figure 3. Predicted probabilities of appeals by candidates who were members of viable versus nonviable ethnic groups. See the appendix for the full results of each regression model.

In contrast, the "bonding trumps bridging" heuristic helped to predict the kinds of ethnic

appeals that candidates made. In the dataset, 62 candidates belonged to a viable indigenous group but not a viable religious group; 64 other candidates were members of a viable religious group only. Figure 4 presents the appeal data for these candidates. Each bar represents one type of ethnic appeal for either situation concerning ethnic group viability. The height of the bar measures the degree to which the frequency of the ethnic appeal was above or below the average for all other candidates. This difference between the means is also written below each pair of bars and is followed by the statistical significance, which was computed by testing the equality of the means (t-statistic and p-value).

Candidates from a viable indigenous group largely used indigenous bonding (44% above average), with lower levels of religious bridging appeals (5% above average). The pattern was reversed among candidates who were members of a viable religious group only. They primarily used religious bonding appeals (27% above average), coupled with some indigenous bridging appeals (13% above average).

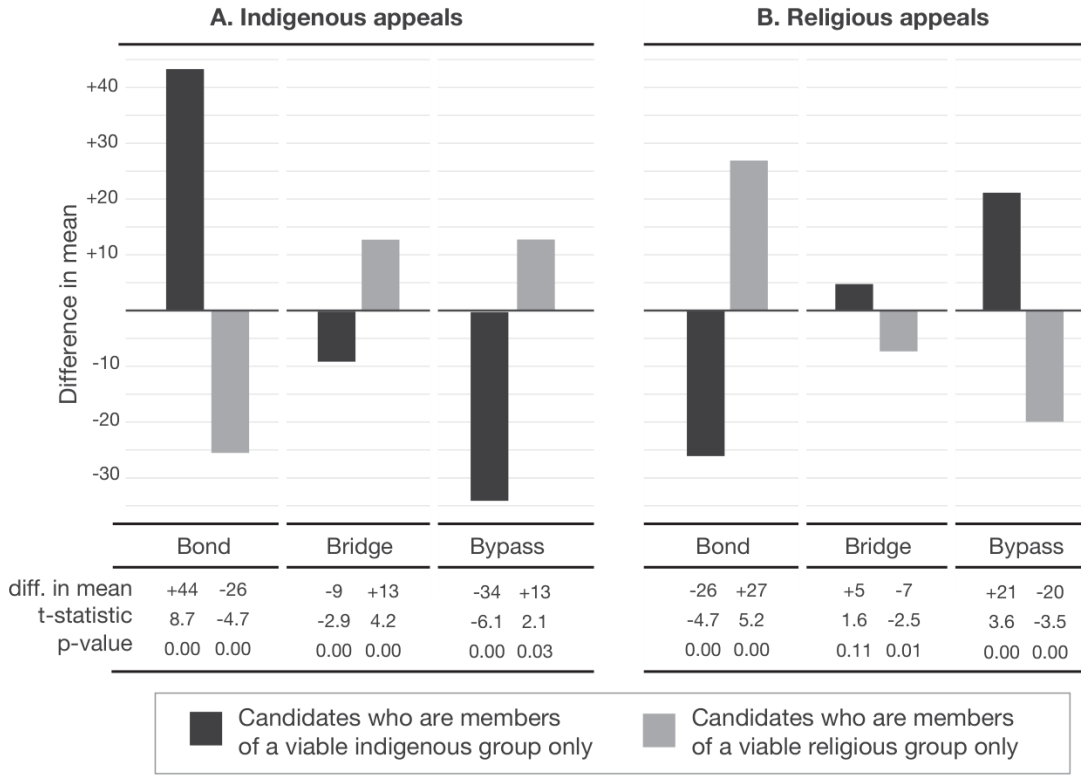


Figure 4. Frequency of appeals by candidates who are members of one viable ethnic group. Black bars refer to candidates from a viable indigenous group only. The bar height is the "difference in mean." It represents the percentage of their poster campaigns that contained a particular type of appeal, minus the percentage of all other candidates' poster campaigns with the same appeal. The same logic applies to the gray bars, which refer to candidates who are from a viable religious group only.

Figure 5 presents examples of election posters from a variety of candidates. Each poster contains the head candidate on the left and the deputy candidate at the right. The top left poster displays Martua Sitanggang, a head candidate who was a member of a viable indigenous group and a nonviable religious group in the Samosir constituency in North Sumatra. As expected, he made indigenous bonding appeals in his posters, appealing to his majority Batak Toba indigenous group through the use of indigenous Batak symbolism. He wore a traditional Batak Toba cloth (an ulos) slung over the shoulder, and the poster includes the distinctive Batak Toba traditional houses in the background. In the top middle poster, Sigit Pramono Asri, a Muslim Javanese candidate in Medan, North Sumatra, was a member of a viable religious group and a nonviable indigenous group. In line with expectations, he appealed to the Muslim majority by including Medan's famous mosque (Mesjid Raya) and dressing in white Islamic clothing.

In cases where candidates were members of two viable groups, they often made bonding appeals targeting both groups. For example, Bambang Supriyanto, a candidate from the Muslim Javanese majority in Salatiga, Central Java, blended both Islamic and Javanese appeals. In his posters, his running mate wore a conservative Islamic headdress that fully covered her hair, but they also used phrases from the Javanese language such as iki sing tak pilih ("These are my choices") and included Islamic calligraphy in some of their posters (see Figure 5, top right poster).



Figure 5. Poster examples. The head candidates and their ethnic affiliation, from top left to bottom right: Martua Sitanggang, Samosir (member of a viable indigenous group only); Sigit Pramono Asri, Medan (member of a viable religious group only); Bambang Supriyanto, Salatiga (member of two viable ethnic groups); Sofyan Tan, Medan (not a member of any viable ethnic groups). In the final two posters, Siti Perangin-Angin and Usman Siregar diverged from the usual ethnic appeal patterns.

The most interesting set of candidates was those who belonged to no viable indigenous or religious group. Due to the small size of their ethnic groups and/or the presence of social constraints, they made far more ethnic bridging and bypassing appeals and fewer bonding appeals than other candidates. Sofyan Tan, a Buddhist of Chinese descent and a candidate in Medan, North Sumatra, provides a good example. More than any other candidate, Tan made bridging appeals central to his campaign. He had the highest combined level of religious and

indigenous bridging appeals among all candidates in the dataset. His posters were among the few that used images of multiple religious places of worship side by side—a mosque, a church, and Hindu and Buddhist temples (Figure 5, bottom left poster); furthermore, a number of his posters included indigenous Karo symbolism. Finally, 80% of Tan's posters contained nationalist symbols such as the Indonesian flag. In the context of Indonesia, nationalism is a broadly inclusive form of identity, used to bridge across indigenous and religious groups.

Although the evidence for the argument is strong, I also explored one alternative explanation: that the ethnic appeals are derived from candidates' political parties rather than the viability of their ethnic groups. Investigating this possibility is difficult because candidates can run as independents or be supported by one or more political parties. Nonetheless, after ruling out the approximately 26% of all candidates who campaigned as independents, I examined whether a candidate's ethnic appeals aligned with the ethnic group championed by their supporting party (or parties).[10] Indonesia lacks parties who represent indigenous groups, so party support could not explain indigenous appeals.[11] However, there are distinctly Islamic parties in Indonesia, so we might expect to find more religious bonding appeals by candidates supported by Islamic parties. On inspection, only 3% of candidates were supported exclusively by Islamic parties. As a result, I created a binary variable, *Islamic party support*, which was equal to 1 for the 28% of candidates who were supported by one or more Islamic parties (along with non-Islamic parties in most cases). Statistical analysis showed no association between this Islamic party support variable and a candidate's religious appeals.[12] The fact that political parties play only a limited role in these elections becomes even more evident when we look at the inclusion of party symbols (such as party clothing, logos, and leaders) on posters. Over 76% of posters contained no party symbolism.

Overall, political parties had little effect on candidates' appeals in regional head elections. This should not be surprising since, as I highlighted earlier, these elections operate under highly candidate-centric rules, providing strong incentives for candidates to engage in personalistic campaigns, which are often crafted around the viability of ethnic groups within their constituency.

Ethnic Diversity

Ultimately, aggregating the many individual campaign strategy decisions made by candidates should yield a predictable pattern of ethnic appeals across constituencies. To explore the relationship between ethnic diversity and ethnic appeals, I calculated the levels of bonding and bridging appeals in comparison to group size, using fractional polynomial plots (Figure 6). In

10 Party logos are not legally required on election posters, but I managed to gather party information on 213 of the 246 candidates in the dataset.

11 After Indonesia's transition, the new electoral rules required political parties to establish branches across the country. Because indigenous groups are regionally concentrated, this provision blocked the formation of indigenous political parties.

12 See Appendix Table A9.

Figure 6A, the percentage of candidates' posters using bonding, bridging, and bypassing appeals is indicated for different sizes of the largest indigenous group in the dataset. (The size of the largest indigenous group can be used in each case, since there are no major social constraints on appealing to any indigenous group.) In Figure 6B, bonding, bridging, and bypassing appeals are shown for different sizes of the Muslim population, which is selected here due to constraints on non-Islamic appeals. Because the vast majority of religious bonding appeals are Islamic, the size of the Muslim population is the only religious group that matters for this purpose.

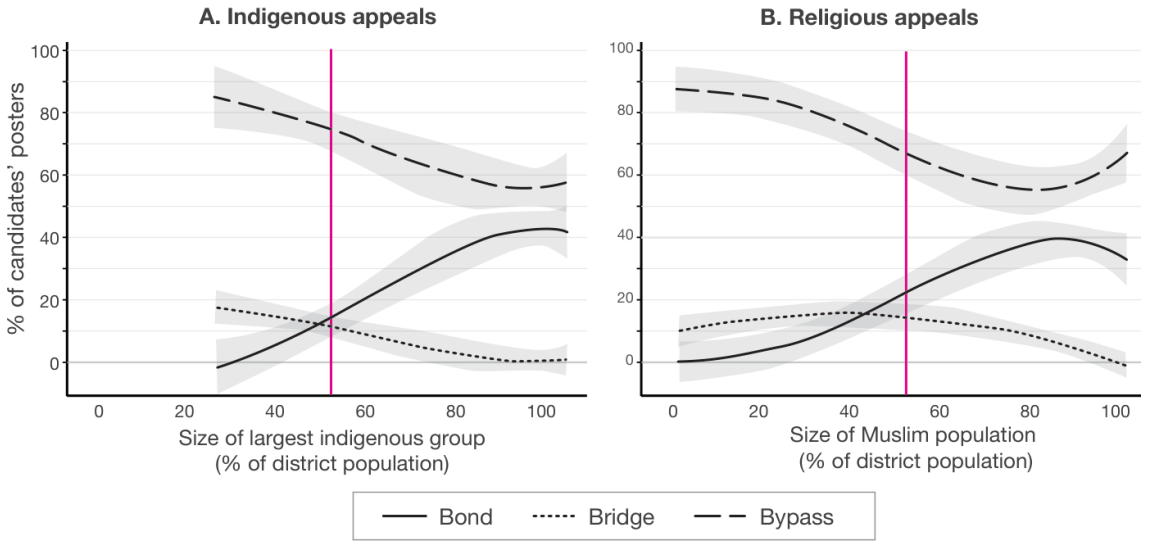


Figure 6. Fractional polynomial plots of appeals based on the size of ethnic groups. Shading represents 90% confidence intervals.

The plots show that bridging and bypassing appeals were most frequent, and that bonding appeals were least common, when the largest indigenous group (or the Muslim population) was a minority. Ethnic diversity effectively promotes bridging and bypassing appeals and has a dampening impact on bonding appeals. As the size of the largest indigenous group (or the Muslim population) rises, bridging and bypassing appeals decline and bonding appeals increase. Bonding peaks when the largest indigenous group or the Muslim population reaches 80–85%. At this relatively homogeneous point, candidates abandon bridging altogether. Again, these charts illustrate how the patterns and percentages of appeals were remarkably similar for indigenous and religious appeals.

Overall, the evidence indicates that the viability of a candidate's ethnic groups largely drives his or her ethnic appeal choice, but the findings are probabilistic. Some candidates did not follow the predicted strategy. Anecdotal evidence from my fieldwork suggests that intra-candidate competition can prompt candidates to diverge from the usual pattern. In some elections, multiple candidates try to bond with the same large group. In these cases, anticipating that the vote would

be split among these competitors, one candidate might occasionally appeal to a smaller group or partisan identities.

For instance, Usman Siregar competed in a crowded field in the 2011 Medan election, with many candidates appealing to the large Muslim or indigenous Batak populations. Usman, however, chose a different strategy. He appealed to young people through his youthful dress, hand gestures, and slang (see Figure 5, bottom middle).[13] Similarly, in Karo, Siti Perangin-Angin faced a field crowded with candidates appealing to their indigenous Karo identity. Although candidates rarely used party symbolism on their posters, Siti was an exception. A prominent local leader of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), she chose to draw on her party label, with posters that included a prominent party logo as well as images of PDI-P's leader, Megawati, and her late father and Indonesia's former president, Sukarno (see Figure 5, bottom right). Together with her running mate, they dressed in professional business attire rather than the indigenous clothing common among the other candidates. Riding on the PDI-P's popularity in Karo, Siti made it to the second round of the election but was then beaten comfortably by Surbakti, a candidate who crafted bonding appeals with the indigenous Karo through his use of clothing, imagery, and messaging on almost all his election posters.

These occasional divergent strategies can help to explain a certain leveling off of bonding appeals when the largest indigenous group (or Muslim population) exceeds 80%. At this point, all candidates tend to be from the dominant indigenous (or Muslim) group, making ethnic bonding so prevalent that it loses its utility, forcing some candidates to try other appeal tactics.

Conclusion

Although the data on regional head elections were gathered in 2010–2011, the argument remains relevant. Regional head elections still operate under candidate-centric electoral rules,[14] and there has been little change in regional head constituencies. Election posters also continue to be a popular from of campaign advertising. In recent years, surveys found that voters were more exposed to election posters than to other campaign methods (Muhtadi, 2019, p. 237), and in interviews, candidates routinely list posters as one of their major expenses.[15] The use of ethnicity in Indonesian elections has also endured.

One prominent example, which attracted worldwide attention for its divisive use of ethnicity, was Jakarta's 2017 regional head election campaign. Early in the campaign, a popular Indonesian Chinese Christian candidate, nicknamed Ahok, was accused by conservative Muslim groups of insulting the Qur'an and committing blasphemy. Massive demonstrations led by Islamic groups and a contentious election campaign followed. Ahok, with no viable ethnic groups to appeal to, tried to bypass ethnicity and run on his governance record. However, a

13 Ultimately, Usman never obtained enough signatures to run as an independent candidate.

14 The only significant change is that candidates are now elected based on a simple plurality, except in Jakarta where 50% of the vote is needed to avoid a runoff.

15 Personal communication with Edward Aspinall.

moderate Muslim candidate, Anies Baswedan, quickly embraced the anti-Ahok Islamic movement and its leaders, and won the election by successfully mobilizing Jakarta's Muslim majority. In the following month, Ahok was found guilty of blasphemy and inciting violence and was sentenced to two years in prison.

This article contributes to the literature on political communications in two important ways. First, it develops concepts, measures, and new methods to study candidates' communication strategies in mobilizing ethnic identity groups. Rather than relying on ethnic voting data to study the mobilization of ethnic kin, I have sought to identify and measure the various ways in which ethnic rhetoric can be used to target different ethnic demographics. Beyond Indonesia, the ethnic bonding, bridging, and bypassing concepts introduced can be used to study ethnic rhetoric in other cases and countries. In addition, the article presents an innovative method of coding these measures. Drawing on a large unique dataset of election posters, it illustrates how the visual and textual components of these posters can be coded for ethnic appeals and classified according to their bonding, bridging, and bypassing functions.

Second, the article offers an explanation of why candidates run personalistic campaigns and use particular kinds of ethnic rhetoric. Whereas the personalization literature focuses on how voters' attention is diverted away from traditional institutions to candidates' character and private lives (e.g., Van Aelst et al., 2012), this study has emphasized how self-personalization can be used to mobilize voters based on more historically established and often deeply held ties of ethnic kinship. The use of ethnicity is complicated, however, by the fact that candidates have a repertoire of ethnic categories to which they belong. I have shown that the decision to invoke one of their ethnic categories is based on its viability. If a candidate belongs to a viable group—based on its size and a lack of social constraints on appealing to it—they have incentives to bond with that group. If the group is not viable, they have stronger incentives to engage in ethnic bridging or to bypass ethnic appeals altogether. Furthermore, using the "bonding trumps bridging" heuristic helps us understand candidates' appeal strategies in multi-ethnic environments. Although the evidence from Indonesian candidates' ethnic appeals casts doubt on the widely accepted "minimum winning size" concept, this paper also expands on previous work, demonstrating that the effect of group size is contingent on a lack of social constraints.

Overall, the argument presented here provides the micro-foundations to understand the kinds of ethnic appeals candidates make and why high levels of ethnic diversity lead to more ethnic bridging and bypassing and to fewer exclusivist ethnic bonding appeals. One important implication is that if boundaries can be redrawn to make constituencies so ethnically diverse that no viable ethnic groups exist, all electoral candidates will be ethnic minorities and will likely resort to ethnic bridging and bypassing appeals. The findings provide some direct support for this implication, as in ethnically diverse constituencies, ethnic bridging and bypassing appeals dominated and bonding appeals were rare.

Two such constituencies stand out: Pematangsiantar in North Sumatra and Ambon in Maluku. Although these cities differ in many ways, both are very ethnically diverse, lacking

viable religious or indigenous groups. Compared to all other elections studied, the candidates in these elections had the lowest level of religious and indigenous bonding appeals and were more likely to engage in bridging strategies or to bypass ethnicity altogether. What makes this outcome even more surprising is that Ambon experienced explosive interreligious riots, which caused hundreds of deaths and destroyed much of the city, just a decade earlier during Indonesia's transition to democracy. Although ethnic tensions persist in Ambon and some actors still seek to exploit them, candidates for the regional head position lack incentives to mobilize voters along ethnic lines—a situation has helped usher in a more peaceful era.

In sum, changing political boundaries to promote ethnic diversity could help to depoliticize ethnicity, in terms of the rhetoric and mobilization strategies deployed by electoral candidates. Ultimately, the research suggests that in countries with salient ethnic identities and candidate-centric electoral rules, highly diverse constituencies could function as a bulwark against divisive, unidimensional forms of ethnic electoral competition.

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