

# Ethnic Power Dynamics and Public Provision

Ronald Choy | QAC201

## BACKGROUND

### PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

- Hong Kong's growing ethnic diversity but varying levels of public provision and infrastructure depending on the ethnic composition of each district

### GLOBAL OBSERVATIONS

- Ethnically diverse countries like India and the US have subpar infrastructure and provision compared to ethnically homogenous countries like Japan and Sweden, who have quality infrastructure and strong social safety nets.

## THEORY

### ALESINA ET AL. 1999

- Spending on public goods like education and infrastructure are inversely related to the US localities' ethnic fragmentation

### GISSELQUIST ET AL. 1999

- Ethnic heterogeneity can foster distrust, suspicion, and norms that discourage collaboration in public provision among ordinary citizens and legislature

### VACARRO 2022

- Ethnic heterogeneity can lead to adverse policy and state outcomes, but what really matters is the distribution of political power among ethnic groups

## RESEARCH QUESTION

How does the majority ethnic group's (MEG) access to executive state power affect public provision?

## DATA / METHODOLOGY

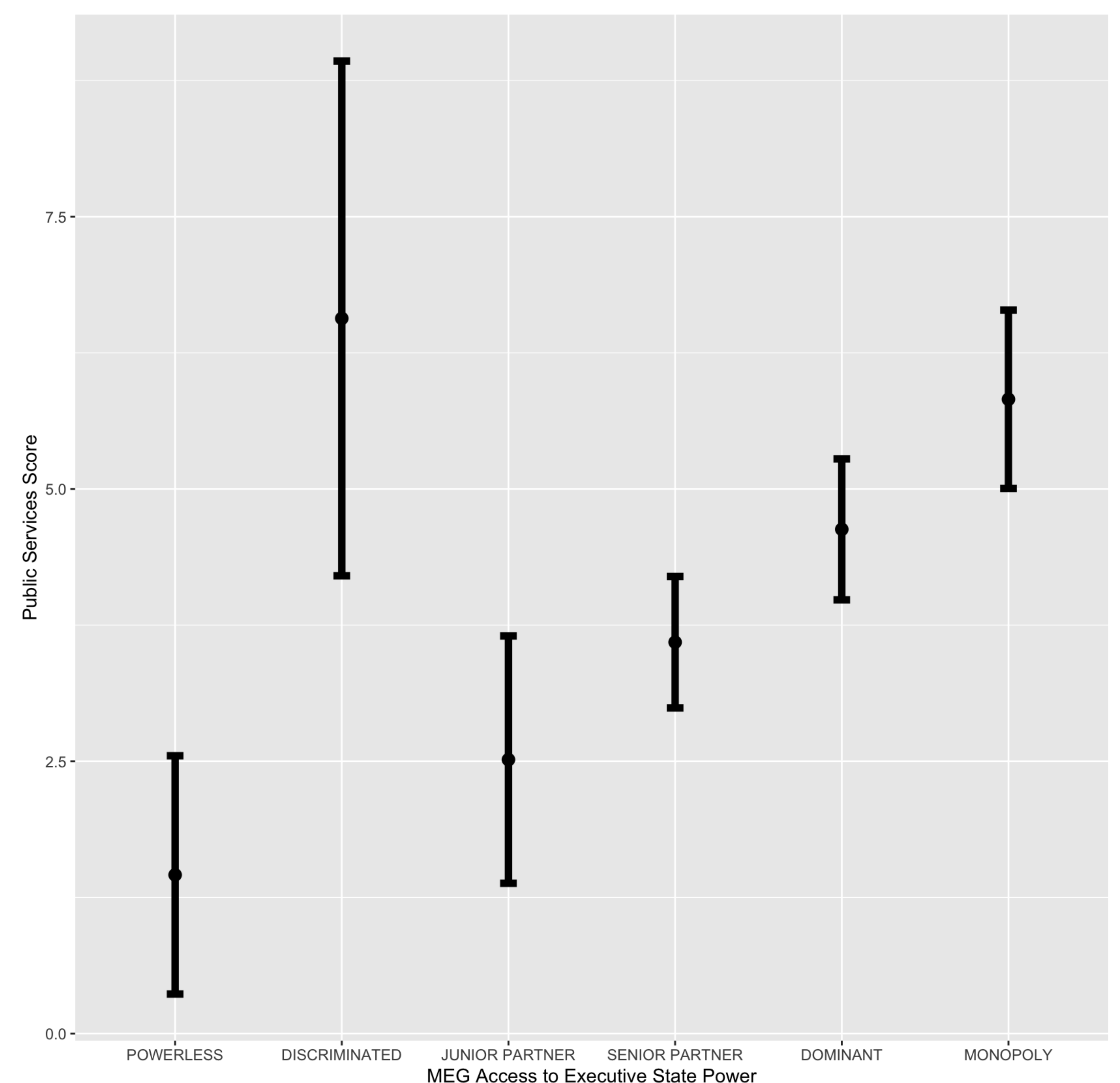
### INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

- **Monopoly** - MEG holds monopoly state executive power to the exclusion of all other ethnic groups
- **Dominant** - MEG holds dominant state executive power but with limited inclusion of other ethnic groups who don't have real decision-making power
- **Senior Partner / Junior Partner** - MEG participate as senior / junior partners in power-sharing arrangements where executive power is divided among ethnic groups who have real decision making power.
- **Discrimination** - MEG is explicitly discriminated against when accessing executive state power
- **Powerless** - MEG is subjected to active, intentional, and targeted discrimination by the state with the intention of exclusion from political power.

### DEPENDENT VARIABLE

- **Public Services Indicator:** A 1(worst) to 10 (best) scale that measures the state's ability to provide and maintain essential services like health, education, transport infrastructure, electricity etc. and to protect its citizens, while factoring in provision inequality.

## RESULTS



## DISCUSSION

- **POSITIVE** correlation between MEG power in the executive state and the state's estimated mean public services score.

- **OUTLIER** - Mean public services score when MEG is discriminated against is statistically significantly greater than MEGs who are junior and senior partners in the executive state.

- **STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT** difference in estimated mean public services score only between every other power level, excluding when MEG is discriminated against.

- **STATISTICALLY INSIGNIFICANT** difference in estimated mean public services score between every progressive power level

## EVALUATION

- **CROSS SECTION DATA** - further exploration needed with panel data to examine instances across time

- **SUBNATIONAL LEVEL DIFFERENCES** - analysis discounting differences in public provision and ethnic power dynamics between localities like counties, municipalities and districts

- **ETHNIC AFFILIATION** - Some localities may enjoy significant public provision from the national government because it is ethnically and politically affiliated with a powerful MEG party.

- **DIFFERENT** electoral systems and delegation of public provision funding and power between national and sub-national levels