The Local Diversity Gap:
Assessing the Scope and Causes of Visible Minority
Under-Representation in Municipal Elections

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Abstract

This paper assesses the scope and seeks to understand the causes of disparities in descriptive representation in municipal politics in some of Canada's largest cities. It shows first that visible minorities are extremely under-represented in city councils in Ontario, relative to the representation of other groups at that level, and relative to minority representation in provincial and federal politics. It shows that the extreme representational deficit is not due to an unusual shortage of minority candidates at this level. The paper then explores voter bias as a potential explanation. Using a novel experiment involving a hypothetical candidate whose identity is systematically varied, and employing a diverse sample of respondents, it examines whether variations in vote choice and evaluations of the candidate may be a result of voter bias. Overall, the results point to a positive ethnic affinity effect, in which voters assess same-ethnic candidates more positively and different-ethnic candidates more negatively, and a negative sex affinity effect. However, there are distinctive patterns of vote choice, resulting from different ethnic and sex configurations among candidate and voter. The discussion links the two sets of findings, and speculates that the low information context of municipal elections may contribute to an activation of voter biases, that could be more readily over-ridden in the richer informational context of elections at the national and provincial level.

Introduction

While there has been considerable media and scholarly attention to diversity, descriptive representation and participation of migrants and minorities within Canadian national politics, the importance of political inclusion at the local level has been under-estimated. This is true among those who study explicitly electoral forms of immigrant and minority incorporation, but whose gaze has rarely strayed beyond national-level elections and legislative assemblies. But also those who focus on inclusiveness of Canadian cities have ignored diversity in electoral politics at this level. It is noteworthy that the trend in Canada runs counter to that in Europe and the US, where much research on immigrant participation and representation has focused on local electoral politics (on diversity in local electoral politics in European cities, see Martiniello 1998, Solomos & Back 2000, Garbaye 2002, Masclet 2003, Penninx et al. 2004, Heelsum 2005, Togeby 2008, Dancygier 2011, Morales & Guigni 2011; in the US, see Wolfinger 1965, Hero 1987, Jones-Correa 1998, Barreto 2007, Trounstine 2010).

Why we in Canada have failed to look at minority and immigrant incorporation through municipal electoral politics is not entirely clear. It may be related to our traditional view of municipal governments as weak "creatures of the province." Given their limited policy autonomy, the participation of diverse groups and the inclusiveness of elected assemblies at this level may seem an issue of lesser importance. (Though this has not prevented us from addressing the inclusion of women at this level). It may stem from a prevailing assumption that social and economic inclusiveness are the most fundamental areas of concern for local governments when it comes to immigrant and minority incorporation, whereas political integration (much like formal citizenship) is a concern principally at the national level. Our inattention to municipal electoral politics is likely also a consequence of the absence of political parties at that level in most Canadian cities. Specifically, the focus on diversity in electoral politics at the national level may be partly

driven by parties' increasing (or at least more open) engagement at that level in ethnically targeted strategies of voter mobilization.

The assumptions that have guided our attention away from diversity in municipal electoral politics seem increasingly misguided. Consider the 'limited policy autonomy' assumption. Today more than ever before, municipal governments in larger cities are engaged in a range of policy areas with profound implications for increasingly diverse local populations (Good 2009). Municipal issues are rising on the Canadian policy agenda, partly because of rapid population growth and demographic shifts in many of Canada's urban centres and suburban peripheries. One important example is the recent introduction of a series of federal-provincial accords on immigration, that have in turn opened new opportunities for municipal governments to develop and implement local immigration and settlement strategies. As at other levels of government, the incorporation of diverse groups in municipal electoral politics matters because it affects the capacity of those groups to formulate claims in the municipal policy domain – and it is clear that this policy domain is one of increasing relevance to immigrants and minorities.

Nor should we discount municipal politics on the grounds that they are 'too distinctive' from the partisan political systems at the federal and provincial levels. Rather, the distinctiveness of municipal politics presents us with a tremendous analytical opportunity. Insofar as municipal elections allow us to parse out the effects of parties, we are better able to see the effects of other mechanisms of political inclusion and exclusion that may be operating (here, and at other levels). In short, the changing relationship between municipal governance and immigration and diversity-related policy outcomes, as well as the distinctive characteristics of electoral politics at this level, makes it an important research site – both substantively and from an analytical perspective. The inclusiveness of diversity on local councils requires more attention than the matter has thus far received.

As is true for other levels of government, there is cause for concern about the quality of local democracy, when an elected city council appears to systematically exclude or seriously under-represent a portion of the eligible electorate. Municipal councils are often considered the most accessible level of government in Canada, not least with respect to aspiring candidates. Several of the important 'barriers' to recruitment and election to federal and provincial office in Canada are absent or relatively inconsequential at the municipal level. Campaigns for municipal office are less costly and electoral wards typically smaller. In most cases a person can enter a municipal contest directly, without having to first secure a party nomination and without a deep political resumé. And elected city councillors bear neither the burden of long-distance travel from the constituency to the assembly, nor the extended periods of absence from family and community. It seems reasonable to assume that the consequence would be better numerical representation in local politics of the less privileged members of society (including women and visible minorities), who may be less able to overcome the more formidable barriers to election at the national and provincial levels.

But is this the case? This paper seeks to address the gap in our knowledge regarding the scope of, and barriers to, diverse representation in local politics. It takes municipal politics in Ontario cities as the site for analysis, with particular focus on the political representation of visible minorities and women in the largest (and most multicultural) cities in the province. The paper presents a first cut at data collected through several methods, which I describe below. Its intent is first, to identify the scope of under-representation of both minorities and women, and second to investigate a few hypotheses about the causes of the problem for both groups. In its overall design, the project considers both 'supply-' and 'demand-side' factors that may contribute to

disparities in representation. On the supply-side, it asks whether women and visible minorities are less likely to run as candidates. Or if they do enter municipal elections in proportion to their size among the electorate, do they bring different (*i.e.*, fewer) resources and political experience to their campaigns, compared to other candidates? On the demand-side, it asks about voter and other kinds of 'selectorate' bias towards female and visible minority candidates.

Descriptive Under-representation in Ontario Municipalities: The Scope of the Problem

The first step in this study is to assess the scope of under-representation of diverse groups in local politics. To do this, I conducted an on-line survey of candidates for the October 2010 municipal elections in Ontario.[1] An invitation to participate in the Municipal Candidates Survey was sent to the approximately 1,500 declared candidates across the 23 largest cities in the province (cities of at least 100,000 inhabitants). Candidates were asked a series of questions regarding their personal background, including age, country of birth, ethnic origin, and family status (marital status, number of children). In addition to these demographic questions, the survey asked candidates about their political experience and campaign resources, including whether they had run for election previously, whether they had a paid campaign manager, and whether they had volunteers from a political or party organization. To my knowledge, this is the first such survey of municipal candidates conducted in Ontario (and possibly Canada). It thus provides the first systematic examination of the demographic and background characteristics of local candidates and elected councillors. This invitation to participate, along with follow-up phone calls, produced 702 completed surveys. For non-respondents, data on background characteristics were drawn from candidates' websites and local newspaper articles. Using these two approaches, data were collected on gender, visible minority status, place of birth, incumbency and electoral outcome for 1340 of almost 1500 municipal candidates.

The first row of Table 1 presents a summary of the data on female, visible minority and foreign-born candidates and elected members of city councils across these 23 cities, in the 2010 elections. To provide some comparative perspective for these data, Table 1 also presents (in the lower two rows) data on female and visible minority candidates and elected members at the level of the Ontario provincial legislature, and the federal parliament.

Looking first at those elected at the municipal level, we see that visible minorities held fewer than 8 percent of council seats in these 23 municipalities, despite comprising over 32 percent of the general population across these cities. For women and foreign-born, the level of under-representation is also notable, though less extreme: 28 percent of council seats were held by women, while 19 percent were held by citizens born outside of Canada. The calculated ratio of proportionality shows us that these latter two groups each have a little more than half of the seats that would be expected if city councils 'mirrored' the diversity in the population (ratio of proportionality for women 0.55; for foreign born 0.52) . By comparison, visible minorities hold less than one-quarter of seats relative to their proportion in the population (ratio of proportionality 0.23).

Turning our attention to candidacies adds another dimension to our assessment of the scope and probable sources of visible minority under-representation in local politics. It seems that there is no exceptional supply-side deficit in terms of visible minority

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candidacies. Certainly visible minorities are under-represented among candidates (ratio of proportionality 0.55), but it is noteworthy that visible minorities are actually *more* likely than women (ratio of proportionality 0.39) to run as municipal candidates in Ontario, relative to each group's respective numbers in the population. But while women move closer towards proportionality among elected members (0.55), visible minorities fall dramatically further away (0.23). Furthermore, the magnitude of the gap in visible minority disproportionality among candidates versus elected members is considerably larger for municipal politics, than for the provincial or federal levels. These findings strongly suggest that we need to look beyond simple supply-side explanations. There may be something on the demand-side of the selection process that accounts for the extreme under-representation of visible minorities, compared to women, among city councilors.

But before proceeding to demand-side explanations, there are a few further supply-side issues that merit consideration. One of these is incumbency. Given the absence of parties in Ontario municipal politics, name recognition and incumbency tend to be enormous advantages to candidates. It is quite probable, given the strong pattern of incumbency within city politics and in light of the demographic shifts in Ontario cities that I have outlined above, that visible minorities who run as candidates are overwhelmingly non-incumbents. One possible explanation for the enormous representational deficit in terms of the proportion of visible minorities who were elected in 2010, may simply be that visible minority candidate were disproportionately (indeed, almost all) non-incumbents. This is another supply-side argument, somewhat more complex than the simple matter of the number of people from a particular group who present as candidates. It addresses, in some degree, the competence, political experience and resources of the candidates who emerge from among any group.[2] I address this argument in Table 2, which looks at the electoral success rate of candidates from various groups. The results show that the rate of electoral success of visible minority candidates is systematically lower than the success rate of other groups, after controlling for incumbency.

Another possible explanation for the observed decrease in proportionality, as visible minorities move from the candidacy stage to seats in elected assemblies, may be a tendency toward so-called 'colour coded' electoral districts. This refers to a pattern in which parties nominate visible minority candidates (or such candidates choose to run) disproportionately, and perhaps even exclusively, in constituencies with exceptionally high proportions of visible minority residents. Where this occurs, we would find a persistent pattern of visible minority candidates competing against each other for a single seat. And this could, in part, explain the disproportionate lack of electoral success among visible minority candidates. Simply put, it might be the result of their tendency to all run in the same few wards in any given city. This explanation could also account for why the trend among visible minorities is different than that among women – insofar as we have less reason to expect a strong pattern of 'gender coded' electoral districts. However, it still remains unclear why visible minorities fall so dramatically from proportionality among elected members at the local level, whereas the drop is much less steep at the provincial and federal legislatures. As one step in addressing this question, future work needs to assess whether there is a more pronounced tendency toward 'colour coded' wards at the local level, compared to the provincial and federal constituencies.

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[2] Future analyses will compare other resource-related hypotheses, including possible differences in levels of campaign experience and support among diverse candidates.

TABLE 1
Statistical Representation of Diverse Groups:
Ontario Municipal Councils, Ontario and Federal Legislatures (2010/2011)

		Women	Visible Minorities [c]	Foreign Born
2010 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS 23 largest Ontario cities	Population [a]	50.6 %	32.4 %	36.9 %
	Elected to City Council	27.9 %	7.6 %	19.3 %
	Ratio of Proportionality [b]	*0.55*	*0.23*	*0.52*
	Candidates for City Council	19.6 %	18.0 %	25.0 %
	Ratio of Proportionality	*0.39*	*0.55*	*0.68*
2011 PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS 107 Ontario ridings	Population	51.2%	22.8 %	-
	Elected to Parliament	28.0%	12.1 %	-
	Ratio of Proportionality	*0.55*	*0.53*	*-*
	Candidates for Parliament	24.9%	17.8	-
	Ratio of Proportionality	*0.49*	*0.78*	*-*
2011 FEDERAL ELECTIONS 47 Greater Toronto Area Ridings	Population	-	40.3 %	-
	Elected to Parliament	-	17.1 %	-
	Ratio of Proportionality	*-*	*0.42*	*-*
	Candidates for Parliament	-	21.3	-
	Ratio of Proportionality	*-*	*0.53*	*-*

a – All population figures are based on 2006 Census data.

b – Ratio of Proportionality is calculated as a group's proportion within an elected assembly (or its proportion among electoral candidates) divided by its proportion in the population. A score of 1.0 indicates a perfect ratio of representation, while a score above 1 indicates that a group is overrepresented, and a score less than 1 that it is numerically underrepresented relative to its share of the relevant population.

c – Data on visible minority candidates and elected parliamentarians for 2010 municipal elections are from the Municipal Candidate Survey. Data on visible minorities in the 2011 Ontario elections and 2011 Federal elections are drawn from Siemiatycki (2011).

TABLE 2
2010 Electoral Success Rate of Municipal Candidates,
in Ontario's 23 Largest Cities (%)

	Incumbents	Non-incumbents
Men	79.3	8.7
Women	78.3	15.5
Canadian-born	79.1	11.0
Foreign-born	77.8	9.2
Non-minorities	79.5	11.9
Visible minorities	70.0	0.9
OVERALL	*79.0*	*9.2*

To summarize the findings thus far, the data presented in Table 1 reveal that visible minorities were *extremely* under-represented in municipal politics across Ontario's most cosmopolitan cities, following the 2010 municipal elections. In terms of elected members, visible minorities are clearly less well represented (relative to their numbers in the population) than are women and the foreign-born. Furthermore, the under-representation of visible minorities among elected members is far more pronounced at the municipal level, than at the provincial or federal levels. Finally, across all levels, visible minority under-representation is more pronounced among elected members than among candidates. However, the gap between proportionality of visible minority candidates and visible minority members is far wider at the local level, than at the provincial or federal levels. Table 2 explores one explanation for the representational deficit among visible minorities: it shows visible minorities, whether incumbent or non-incumbent, have a distinctively lower rate of electoral success than other demographic groups. So while the data point to candidacy as a major barrier to municipal election for a number of diverse groups (women, foreign-born and visible minorities), there is evidence that visible minorities may face *additional* obstacles once they become candidates. The remaining sections of this paper look at demand-side explanations – specifically voter bias – as a possible explanation for the relative absence of visible minorities within Ontario city councils.

Voter Bias?

Study design.
        The possibility that visible minority candidates encounter negative bias from non-minority voters is explored via analyses of a unique on-line survey, conducted in the midst of Ontario's municipal elections in October 2010.[3] Two features of the study design are of central importance. First, embedded within the Municipal Voter Survey was an experiment designed to gauge variations in voter support for a fictitious municipal candidate, based on the candidate's ethnicity, sex, and ideology. In this experiment, respondents saw a photo of a single candidate, and read an accompanying biography/platform for that candidate, whom they were told was running in the current

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municipal elections. The ethnicity (South Asian or white), sex (male or female) and platform statement (right-wing/business focused versus left-wing/service focused) were systematically varied, so as to produce eight distinctive conditions. Respondents were asked to rate the candidate on a number of competency, and trait-stereotype dimensions, as well as to indicate how likely it was they would vote for such a candidate, were he or she running for council in the respondent's own city. The second crucial feature of the study design concerns the sample of respondents. The sample includes 910 voting age citizens living in Ontario, and was drawn in a manner that produced equal numbers (approximately 300-305 each) of self-identified 'whites,' 'South Asians,' and other (non-South Asian) 'visible minorities.' The sample also includes approximately equal numbers of men and women within each ethnic group. The eight candidate conditions were distributed randomly across the three ethnic groups, allowing us to assess variations resulting from 48 (8 X 6) distinctive candidate (sex X ethnicity X ideology) by voter (sex X ethnicity) combinations.

Each respondent thus saw one candidate photo and accompanying statement. Two statements – the first for the female, South Asian, right-wing/business oriented candidate, the second for the male, white, left-wing/service-oriented candidate – are presented in the appendix, in order to provide the reader with the overall context of the experimental conditions. The four photos, which were pretested for similarity in age, attractiveness, and ethnic group membership, are also included in the appendix. The names assigned to candidates were also vetted to ensure that they signalled the appropriate ethnic origin.

While the study design permits a wide range of analyses, the main goal of this paper will be to test for *ethnic affinity* effects, or the degree of preference that voters show towards a candidate from their own ethnic group. We also look at *sex affinity effects* and *ideological affinity effects*. These are, respectively, the extent to which voters exhibit a preference towards same-sex candidates, and towards candidates who share the same ideological outlook as the voter.[4] Finally, we will consider the *interaction effects* of respondent sex and ethnicity with candidate sex and ethnicity.

Dependent variables.

Respondents evaluated the presented candidate on a number of dimensions. For the purposes of the analyses to follow, we will consider four main dependent variables, each measured along a 0 to 10 point scale. These questions are as follows: "How qualified do you think (candidate name) is to serve as a municipal councillor?"; "If elected, do you think that (candidate name) would tend to work for narrow interests within the city, or would tend to work for the broad interests of the entire city"; If elected to your Municipal Council, how likely is it that (candidate name) would speak on behalf of you and your concerns?"; and "If (candidate name) were a candidate in your municipality, would you vote for (him/her)?"

In addition to these main dependent variables, the survey also included a set of "competence" questions asking, for example, "What is your impression of (candidate name)'s competence in promoting honesty, transparency and integrity in local government?" And it included a set of trait-stereotype questions, asking respondents how

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[4] Respondents' ideological orientation is measured using three items, each scored on a 0 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree) point scale: "The welfare state makes people less willing to look after themselves;" "Protecting the environment is more important than creating jobs;" and "The government must do more to reduce the income gap between rich and poor Canadians." The index is therefore a measure of left-right wing orientation with respect to public provision of social services and free-market/fiscal conservatism. In the experimental treatment, the candidate's ideological position is varied along this same dimension (see Appendix).

well phrases such as "compassionate," "provides strong leadership," or "conservative" fit the presented candidate.

Before moving to the analysis, it is important to note that experiments do have certain weaknesses, especially with respect to external validity. In the case of a voter experiment, it can be quite problematic to say that respondent impressions and choices formed under a set of contrived and fairly artificial conditions can be generalized to the context of a real election. Indeed, the main weakness of this experiment is that respondents are not presented – as they would be in an actual election – with a choice between competing candidates. I have strived to compensate for this, by implementing the study in the context of an actual election, and by presenting the hypothetical candidate as much as possible as a real candidate running for municipal office in a city in Ontario. Moreover, to the extent that municipal elections are generally low interest, low information events, it is reasonable to think the candidate information presented to subjects, and the kind of 'vote choice' they are asked to make, is not entirely unlike the real context. It is not a great stretch to imagine that many voters (as well as non-voters) have little to no knowledge about the candidates, and may have heard the name or be familiar with the face of only the incumbent. The advantage of the experimental design, of course, is that it allows us to isolate the effects of the independent variables, and to be certain that these – and not other confounding factors present in the buzzing, blooming complexity that is real life – are responsible for the outcomes observed.

Data Analysis and Findings.

In the first cut at the data from the experimental study, we examine aggregate effects of the candidate's sex, ethnicity and ideological orientation. Because we are looking at results across the whole sample of respondents, we will not pick up affinity effects in this analysis. Rather the analysis is intended simply to show whether voters overall tend to form different impressions of a candidate's particular strengths or weaknesses, based on the candidate's sex, ethnic background, and ideological orientation. Following this logic, Table 3 presents mean difference tests on each of the candidate competence and trait stereotype questions.

Across the whole sample, the ideological platform of the candidate appears to be the most effective stimulus insofar as it generates significant variations in responses across six of the fifteen indicators. Voters who evaluated the left-wing/service oriented candidate were significantly more likely to find him or her to be someone who "would speak on behalf of me and my concerns" compared to those who evaluated the right-wing/business oriented candidate. Similarly, the left-wing candidate was perceived as having greater competence in addressing local social issues and infrastructure needs, and as having less competence in addressing local economic issues. The left-wing candidate was also viewed as more compassionate, and as less conservative compared to the right-wing candidate.

The visual characteristics of candidate sex and ethnicity appear to be weaker stimuli, at least in terms of their general effects across respondents. Across the sample, those who evaluated a female candidate saw her as more compassionate and more honest/transparent, compared to those who evaluated a male candidate. The South Asian candidate was viewed as more compassionate, and as more competent in addressing local social issues, compared to the white candidate. Notably, Table 3 shows that, across the whole sample of diverse respondents, the visual characteristics of the candidate had no impact on any of the four main dependent variables related to voter choice. These findings are not surprising if we expect that there may be significant ethnic affinity and sex affinity effects in voter choice. We turn to this matter next.

TABLE 3
Candidate Characteristic Effects on Candidate Evaluation

	Mean difference when candidate is…		
	Female v. male	*South-Asian v. White*	*Service v. business focus*
Candidate…			
is well qualified	.11	-.02	.09
would work for broad interests of entire city	.02	-.18	.19
would speak on behalf of me and my concerns	.16	.12	.31**
Respondent would vote for candidate	.23	-.13	.04
Candidate competence in…			
promoting honesty, transparency and integrity in local gov't	.30**	.05	.09
addressing local economic issues	.02	.01	-.74***
addressing local social issues	.19	.29*	.83***
addressing local infrastructure needs	-.12	.18	.33**
making decisions in time of crisis	.04	.11	-.09
Candidate traits…			
Knowledgeable	.20	.20	-.02
Hard working	.16	.16	-.15
Compassionate	.33***	.27**	.35***
Provides strong leadership	.14	.08	-.03
Honest	.23*	.20	.17
Conservative	.11	.01	-.24*
N=910			

All candidate evaluation measures based on 0-10 scale

*Difference of means test: *p <.10 **p <.01 ***p<.05*

Table 4 reveals the nature of these affinity effects. A few features stand out. First, the overall ethnic affinity effect is positive, whereas the overall sex affinity effect is negative. That is, the general trend among respondents is towards *more favourable* ratings of same-ethnic candidates compared to different-ethnic candidates, and *more negative* ratings of same-sex candidates compared to different-sex candidates. A second finding is that there is no significant ideological affinity effect. Or if ideological affinity is operating, it appears to be overwhelmed by the previous two effects. This null finding for the ideological affinity effect is especially notable given that respondents did have clearly distinctive impressions of a candidate based on that candidate's ideological profile (as shown in Table 3). So it does not seem that the null finding for ideological affinity is the result of a too weak stimulus with respect to our manipulation of the candidate's ideological orientation.[5]

The findings in Table 4 are quite interesting, insofar as they suggest that voter choice is generally unaffected by the degree of match or mismatch between voter and candidate ideology; whereas the visual characteristics of candidate sex and ethnicity do matter – albeit in different ways for different groups of voters. Nevertheless, we should be cautious in making inferences from the experimental data to voter choice in real electoral

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[5] As a future step in the analysis, we do need to investigate possible interaction effects between candidate and voter ideology on the one hand, and candidate sex and ethnicity on the other. For example, we might hypothesize a difference between a right wing voter's impression of a right-wing female candidate, versus a right-wing male candidate.

contests. Though sex and ethnicity may be more salient in the experimental design, it would be wrong to assume that an actual candidate's ideology and platform matter less to real voters than that candidate's sex and ethnicity. The differences between ideological approaches and candidate platforms may become more apparent, and also may come to matter more in terms of voter choice, when voters have the opportunity (as they do in real elections) to assess more than one candidate.

TABLE 4
Sex, Ethnic and Ideological Affinity Effects on Candidate Evaluations

| | Mean difference when candidate and respondent are… | | |
	Same sex	*Same ethnicity v. different*	*Same ideology*
Candidate…			
is well qualified	-.23*	.24**	.10
would work for broad interests of entire city	-.25*	.32**	.22
would speak on behalf of me and my concerns	-.31**	.48***	.21
Respondent would vote for candidate	-.40***	.55***	.03
N=910			

All candidate evaluation measures based on 0-10 scale

*Difference of means test: *p <.10 **p <.01 ***p<.05*

Table 4 is relatively straightforward to interpret, however it masks the more detailed nature of these affinity effects. We only know that there is an overall tendency towards ethnic affinity. The table does not tell us, for example, whether the ethnic affinity bias is comprised of an overwhelmingly positive bias for South Asian candidates among South Asian voters, and a somewhat more neutral regard for white candidates among white voters – or some other combination of sub-group by candidate effects. To examine sub-sample differences, it is necessary to regress all voter ethnicity by candidate ethnicity combinations (interactions) on the dependent variable, and then calculate predicted values for each combination. The results of this procedure for ethnic affinity effects are summarized in Figure 1, while the results for sex affinity effects are summarized in Figure 2.

Figure 1 shows that the ethnic affinity effect is consistently more positive for the South Asian candidate-voter combination, than for the white candidate-voter combination. The bar heights in Figure 1 represent predicted values resulting from regressing a set of dummy variables representing all candidate/voter combinations, onto each of the four dependent variables. The OLS regression results also produce significance tests of the relative effect of each candidate/voter combination on the dependent variable. These are not presented in the figure, but can be understood as testing whether the difference in height between each pair of bars is beyond what we might see by chance. These tests reveal that predicted candidate evaluations in the case of the South Asian candidate-voter combination are significantly higher than evaluations resulting from the white candidate-voter combination, for two of the four dependent variables: "R would vote for the candidate" (p<.06); and "Candidate would speak on behalf of me and my concerns" (p<.10). At the other end of the spectrum, predicted candidate evaluations are significantly lower in the case of the South Asian candidate-Other Visible Minority voter combination, compared to both the white-white and SA-SA reference categories, for

all four dependent variables (p<.05). Statistical tests, in the case of the dependent variable "R would vote for candidate" can be interpreted substantively as follows: While South Asian candidates tend to get a large boost in support among South Asian voters, support drops (significantly) among white, and especially among other visible minority voters. In comparison, white candidates also get a boost from white voters, though it is significantly lower than the effects of the SA candidate-voter combination. Moreover, support for the white candidate is not significantly different among white, South Asian or other visible minority voters.

Another finding that stands out in Figure 1 concerns the substantive composition and nature of the observed ethnic affinity effect. Two main points can be made here. First, while it is clear that both South Asian and white respondents demonstrate a preference for candidates of their own ethnicity over those of a different ethnicity, the same-ethnic bias is significantly stronger for the SA-SA voter-candidate combination than for the white-white voter-candidate condition. Second, this predominant South Asian ethnic affinity effect is strongest (and statistically significant) on two of the four dependent variables, these being whether the respondent would vote for the candidate if s/he were running in R's municipality, and whether the respondent felt that the candidate would, if elected, "speak on behalf of you and your concerns." Together, these findings are noteworthy in that they speak to a particular desire among South Asian respondents to *elect to city council* someone who is ethnically similar to themselves. That is, the findings suggest a desire for enhanced political representation, above and beyond a generic positive bias towards an ethnic in-group member. This ethnic affinity with respect to political representation is observed most vividly among a group (South Asians) that has been historically under-represented in comparison to the majority/reference group (whites).

This brings us to our 'other' (non-South Asian) visible minority respondents. The study design did not present these respondents with a same-ethnicity candidate, so we can only assess their degree of bias towards candidates from ethnic out-groups (either white or South Asian). What we find (in Figure 1 and again in Figure 5) is that on the vote choice question, these 'other' visible minority voters responded *less* positively to the South Asian than to the white candidate. We speculate that this might reflect a tendency for these voters to live in ethnically very diverse communities, and to have experienced – possibly in their federal and provincial ridings – some non-negligible amount of 'representation' by South Asian elected members.[6] If these voters do tend to share such experiences, they may feel some resentment towards the larger and/or more politically influential South Asian community, and they may see South Asian representatives as being too exclusively responsive to the interests of a fairly mobilized South Asian community. Where this is the case, 'other' visible minority respondents in the experiment might judge a South Asian candidate as relatively non-responsive to their needs and interests, and be less disposed to vote for that candidate (compared to a white candidate). This interpretation remains highly speculative, insofar as we cannot estimate the degree or direction of bias that 'other' visible minorities express towards a same-ethnic

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[6] Both Siemiatycki (2011) and Matheson (2005) report that while South Asians are numerically under-represented relative to their numbers in the population, they are nevertheless the best represented among all visible minority groups, and across all levels of politics in Canada. Indeed, this was the reason for choosing a South Asian identity for the "visible minority" candidate in the present study. Given that there are a number of highly visible South Asians elected to the Ontario provincial and the federal parliament, I felt that introducing a South Asian candidate in the visible minority candidate condition would present a harder test, and thus a more conservative estimate of negative ethnic bias among non-South Asian voters.

candidate.[7] Exploration of the mechanisms at work here requires a more encompassing research design with respect to assessing inter-ethnic minority rivalries and their impacts on political life.

Figure 2 shows that the sex affinity effect is consistently more negative for male-male and female-female candidate-voter combinations (the first two bars in each column), compared to mixed sex combinations (the last two bars in each column). But overall, we can see that female candidates (the second and fourth bars) are somewhat preferred relative to male candidates (the first and third bars) – and that it is male voters who give female candidates the most positive evaluations. Here, OLS regression results generate significantly higher ($p<.05$) evaluations for the male voter-female candidate combination as compared to the male voter-candidate combination, on three of the four dependent measures: candidate is well qualified; candidate would speak on behalf of respondent's concerns; and respondent would vote for candidate. Predicted values for the female voter-male candidate combination are also significantly more positive ($p<.05$) compared to the male voter-candidate combination, for two of the four dependent measures: candidate would speak on behalf of respondent's concerns; and respondent would vote for candidate.

While we will not delve far in this paper into the sex affinity findings, the observed negative effect is noteworthy in that it appears to contradict findings in a number of other studies. Notably, there is fairly widespread evidence in U.S. elections that women voters are more likely to support women candidates (Dolan 2008, King & Matland 2003, Sanbonmatsu 2002). However, it is not clear that such support is automatic, and it seems that the causal mechanisms involved are both complex and conditional on factors that vary across political systems, and across particular election contexts. Indeed, Goodyear-Grant and Croskill (2011) find that there is very little evidence of sex affinity effects between women voters and candidates in Canadian national elections. Rather, consistent with the observations of our study, male voters were more likely than female voters to support women candidates in the 2004 and 2006 Canadian federal elections. One plausible reason why we do not see a positive sex affinity effect in the female voter-candidate condition in the present study is that we have introduced salient information about the candidate's social policy positions that potentially disrupts a voter's assessment of the candidate on the basis of their shared sex. There is good reason to think that social policy positions are one of the key mechanisms that drives a positive gender affinity effect (Eagly *et al*. 2003). Specifically, it may be women voters' more left-leaning policy concerns, *coupled* with the belief that women candidates are more likely than male candidates to prioritize social policy and/or hold liberal positions on the issues, that leads women to be more likely to vote for women candidates. But where these conditions are not met – as is the case when female voters are presented with an evidently *conservative woman* candidate, or with an evidently *liberal male* candidate – the sex affinity effect is presumably disrupted. It may even become negative, suggesting that women voters are responding more antagonistically to a woman candidate than to a male who contradicts women's more liberal social policy attitudes. Further analysis of these experimental data needs to be undertaken in order to test this conjecture.

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[7] It is possible that visible minorities who are more profoundly marginalized from Canadian politics than are South Asians might respond more negatively and with lower trust towards *any* candidate standing for elected office.

FIGURE 1
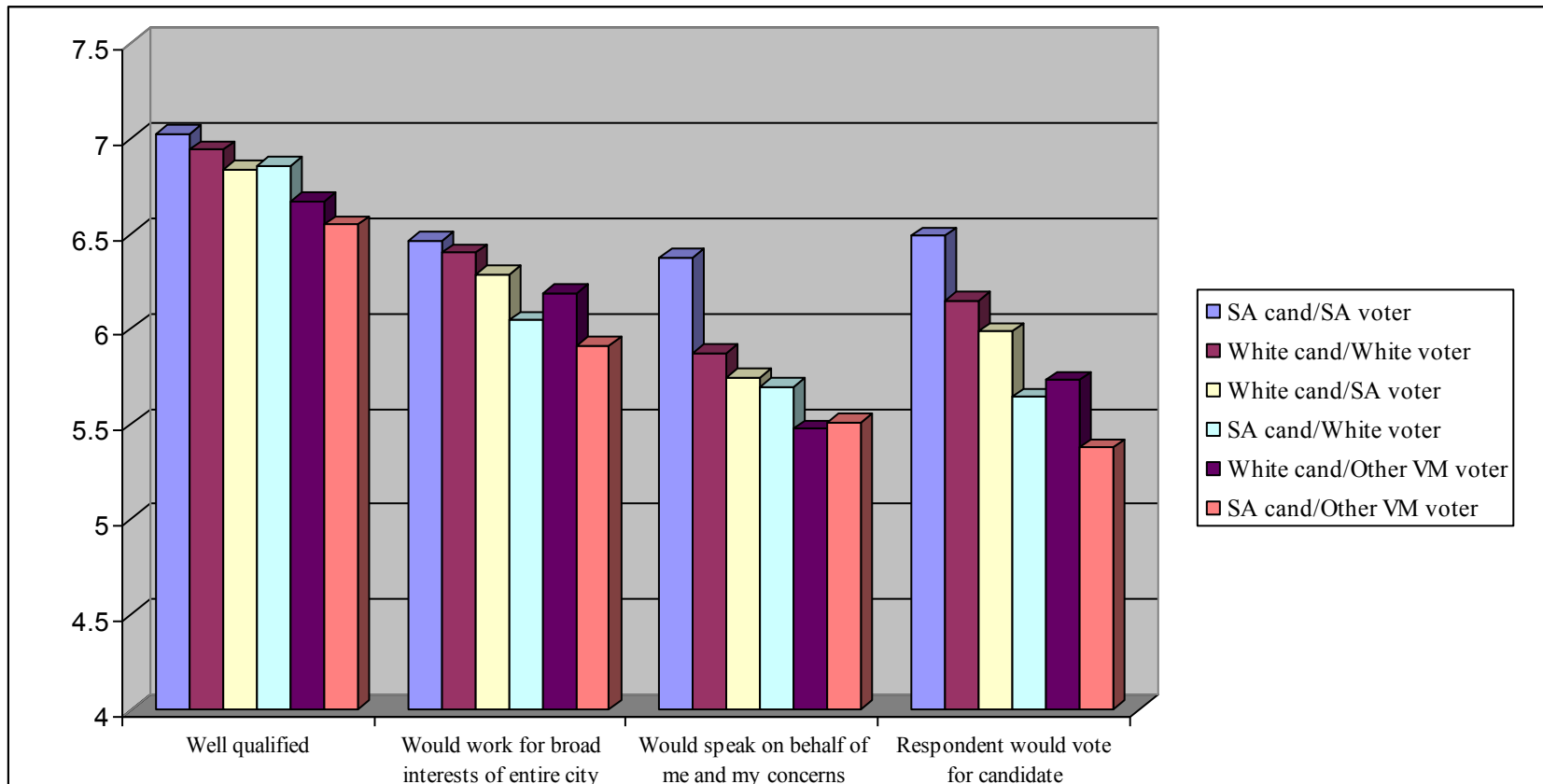Ethnic Affinity Effects: Predicted Values on Candidate Evaluations

FIGURE 2
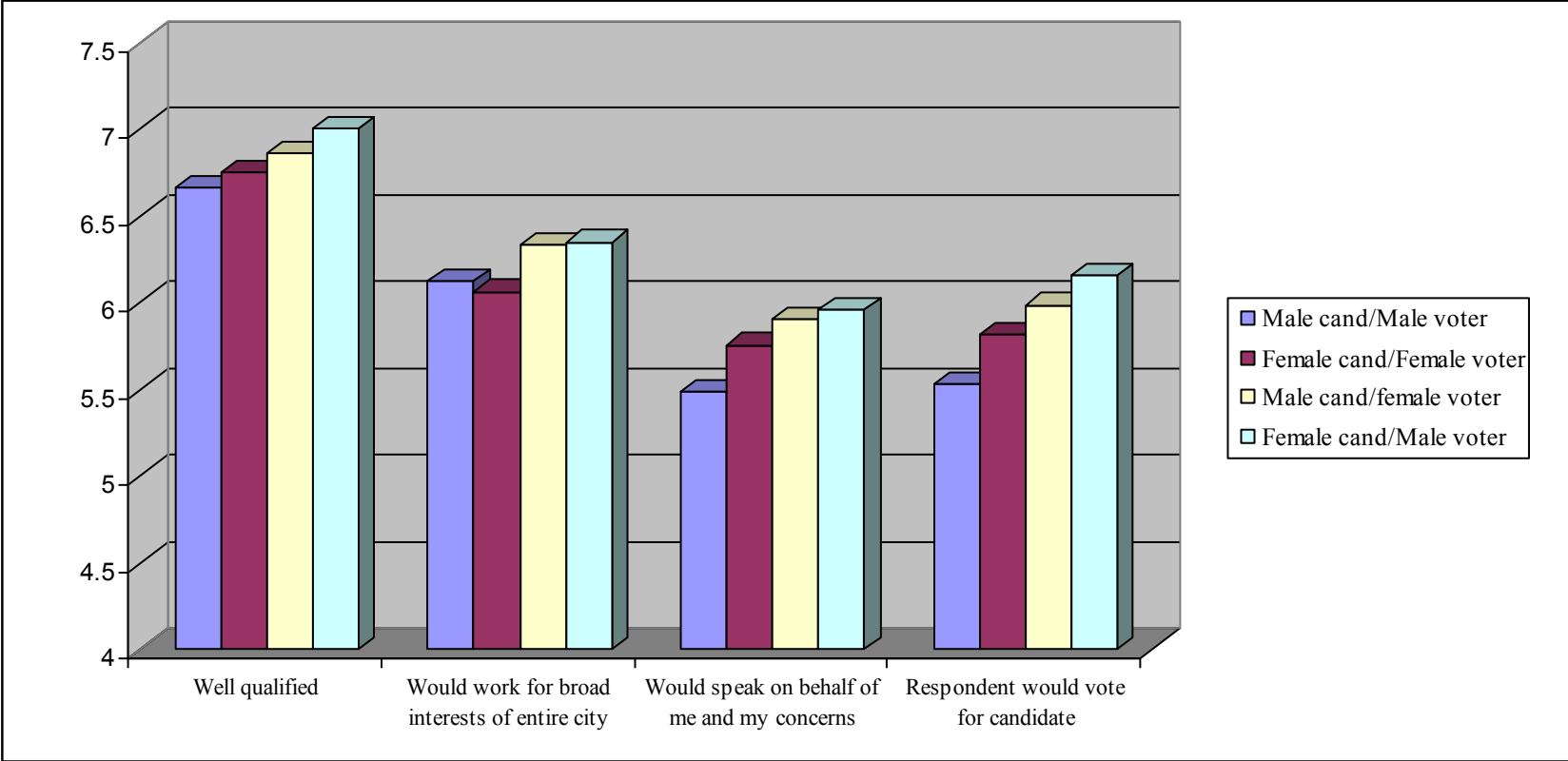Sex Affinity Effects: Predicted Values on Candidate Evaluations

FIGURE 3
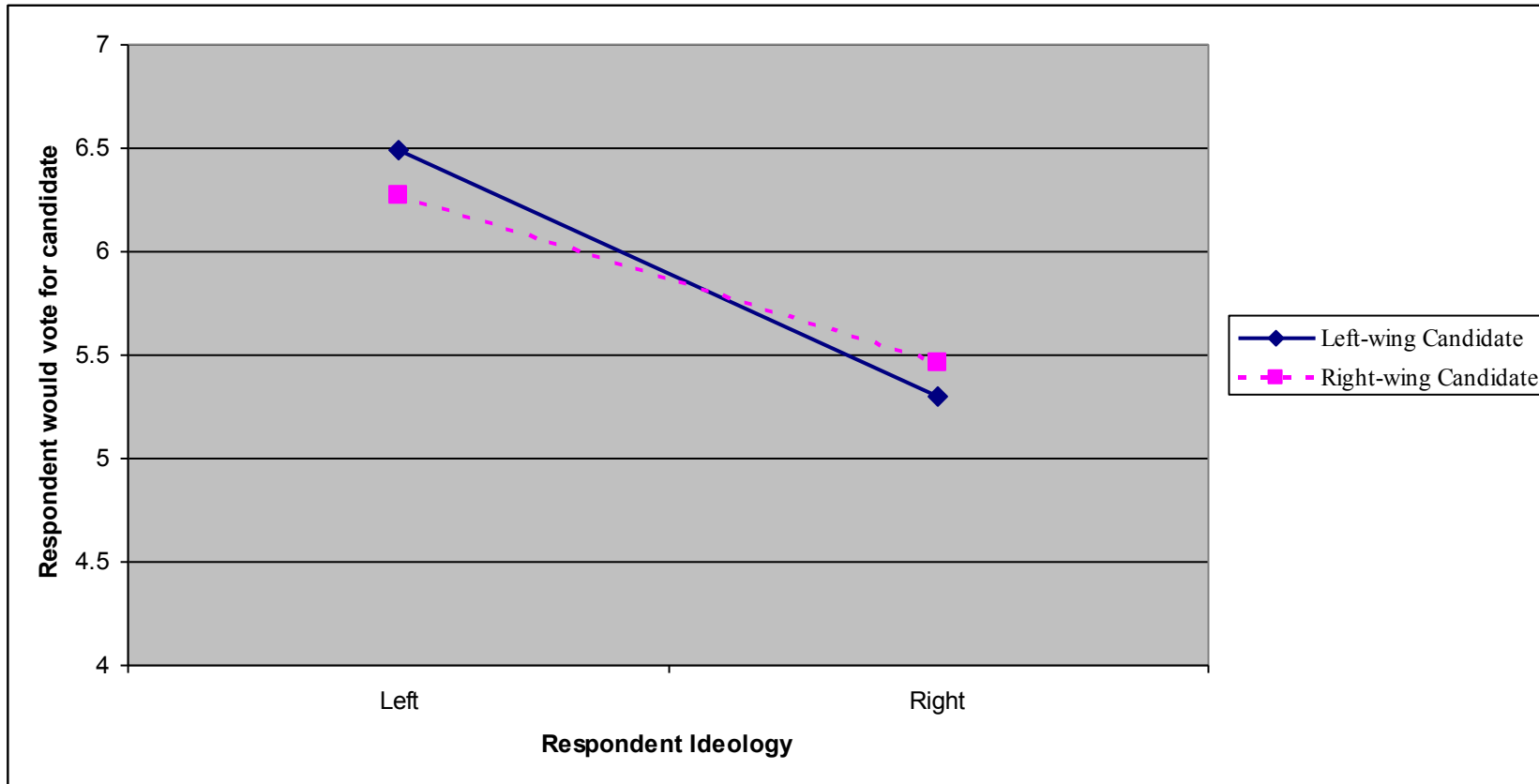Ideological Affinity Effects: Predicted Values on Candidate Evaluations

Figure 3 presents results of the same procedure testing for ideologic
effects. As expected, the results show that the interaction between candidate
ideology has no impact on any of our dependent variables. Respondents sco
extremely leftward 6 out of a possible 30 points on the left-right index, have
predicted value of 7.1 (out of 10) on likelihood of voting for the left-wing/s
oriented candidate, compared to 6.5 for the right-wing/business focussed ca
At the other end of the scale, respondents scoring 20 out of 30 on the ideolo
spectrum (making them strongly right-leaning) have a predicted score of 5.4
likelihood of voting for the business focused candidate, compared to 5.3 for
focused candidate. The results are statistically non-significant.

The final step in this analysis explores the full effects of the experim
design with respect to ethnicity and sex. Here, we are interested to see varia
evaluation and support for the four main candidate types (white/South Asia
male/female), across all categories of voter (white/South Asian/other visible
male/female). As in the previous steps, the procedure to examine sub-sampl
differences involves regressing all voter ethnicity/sex by candidate ethnicity
combinations (interactions) on the dependent variable, and then calculating
values for each combination. This required creating a full set of dummy var
represent every candidate-voter combination. The reference category is the
male candidate-voter combination. The OLS regression results for all four d
variables are presented in Table 5. In the interests of brevity, I will focus m
on the results for the most pivotal measure of candidate support: R would v
candidate. Figure 4 plots the predicted values on this measure, while partial
coefficients and significance tests are reported in Table 5.

Substantively, there are a few findings that stand out as especially n
First, looking at the levels of overall support for different candidates, it app
white female candidates are somewhat advantaged, relative to others. They
high levels of support from all respondent categories – though most notably
white men. Voter support for white female candidates among all respondent
categories stays consistently well above the 5.0 midpoint on the 0-10 scale.
male candidates also receive relatively steady levels of support across all re
categories. With the notable exception among other visible minority male
respondents, their support also remains safely above the 5.0 midpoint amon
voter groups. Support for South Asian candidates varies much more widely
depending on respondent sex and ethnicity. Male South Asian candidates re
strong support from male and female South Asian voters, but their support p
among white and visible minority male respondents. Likewise, female Soutl
candidates receive strong support from male South Asian voters (though we
support from female co-ethnics), while support plummets among female wh
other visible minority voters.

Looked at from the perspective of respondent categories, white male
show greatest variability in their propensity to vote for a candidate based on
candidate's sex and ethnicity – with predicted scores ranging almost 2 full p
from a low of 4.8 for the South Asian male candidate, to 6.6 for the white fe
candidate. White female voters are also somewhat fickle in who gets their su
with predicted scores ranging from 4.8 for the female South Asian candidat
for the white male candidate. In contrast, South Asian voters appear to discr
less on the grounds of a candidate's sex and ethnicity. The predicted levels
for different candidates among male and female South Asian voters never v
more than 1 point.

TABLE 5
OLS Regression: Interaction Effects of Candidate and Voter Ethnicity and Gender on Candidate Evaluations

	Dependent Variables			
	Well qualified	*Would work for broad interests*	*Would speak on behalf of my concerns*	*R would vote for candidate*
Main effects				
Female candidate	.853**	-.240	.297	.626
Female voter	.295	-.273	.273	.250
South Asian candidate	-.437	-1.159***	-.606	-1.131**
South Asian voter	.205	-.455	-.364	-.318
Other visible minority voter	.027	-1.002**	-.916*	-.681
1st order interaction effects				
Female candidate and female voter	-1.164**	-.027	-.747	-1.213*
Female SA candidate	-.208	.718	.203	.419
Female candidate and SA voter	-.743	.549	.348	.000
Female candidate and VM voter	-.382	1.146*	1.033	.458
SA candidate and female voter	.823	1.136*	.674	.972
SA candidate and SA voter	.630	1.760**	1.530**	2.124***
SA candidate and VM voter	.213	1.271*	1.057	.928
Female SA voter	-.212	.621	.344	.501
Female VM voter	-.781	1.130*	.213	.293
2nd order interaction effects				
Female candidate and female SA voter	.637	-.982	-.395	.099
Female candidate and female VM voter	1.179	-1.336	-.355	.015
Female SA candidate and female voter	.068	-.570	-.133	-.031
Female SA candidate and SA voter	.011	-1.712*	-1.030	-1.203
Female SA candidate and VM voter	-.324	-.760	-1.208	-.928
SA candidate and female SA voter	-1.064	-1.923**	-1.191	-1.973*
SA candidate and female VM voter	-.099	-1.938**	-.968	-1.166
3rd order interaction effects				
Female SA candidate and female SA voter	.803	2.428*	1.617	1.565
Female SA candidate and female VM voter	-.127	.811	1.031	.847
Constant	6.659***	6.659***	5.773***	5.909***

Note: unstandardized slope coefficients
*p <.10 **p <.01 ***p<.05

FIGURE 4
Interaction Effects of Candidate and Voter Ethnicity and Gender: Predicted Values on Candidate Evaluations
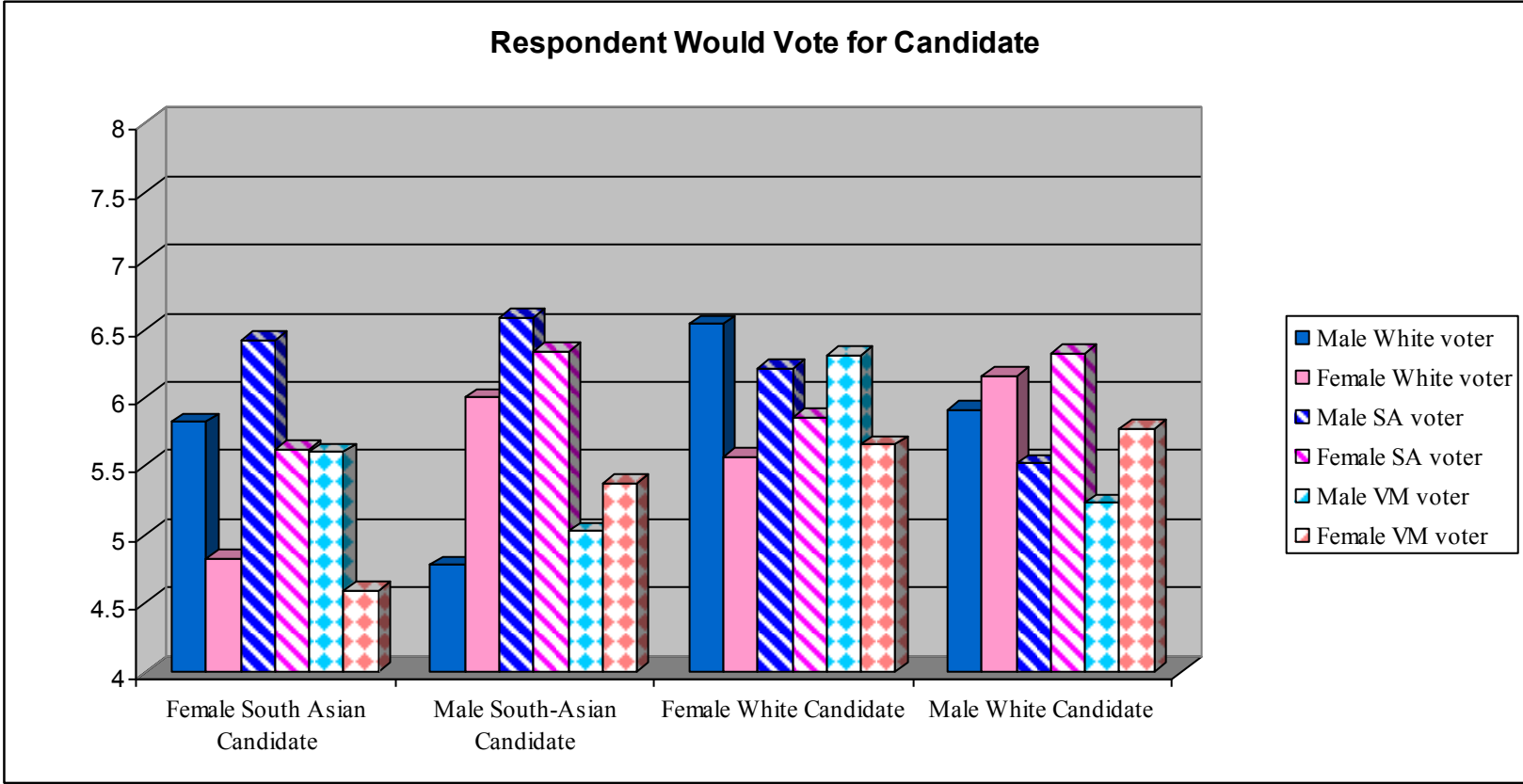
Discussion and Conclusions

Visible minorities are severely under-represented in municipal coun[...] Ontario's large and medium-sized cities. While other groups – notably wom[...] also underrepresented, the magnitude of the problem of under-representatio[...] visible minorities (and also its potential sources) appears to be much differe[...] paper has considered factors that might explain the exceptional deficit in vis[...] minority representation at this level. Part of the problem does appear to beg[...] deficit in candidacies. However this cannot explain why visible minorities a[...] likely (than women, and other underrepresented groups) to get elected when[...] run. Nor can it explain why the representation gap among visible minorities[...] pronounced at the local level, compared to the provincial and national level[...] main hypothesis investigated here is whether voter bias might be a factor. T[...] method of this investigation involved an experiment to test variations in vot[...] for a hypothetical candidate for city council, depending on the ethnicity and[...] the candidate and that of the voter. The results of the experiment show rathe[...] that there is a significant ethnic affinity bias, such that voters prefer same-et[...] different-ethnic candidates. In this concluding section, I want to speculate b[...] about the mechanisms that might link the behavioural tendencies of voters [...] the experimental study, and the real-life outcomes in terms of the massive g[...] descriptive representation on city councils.

The voter biases revealed by the Voter Survey could be playing a ro[...] aggregate outcomes produced from the Municipal Candidate Survey across[...] Ontario cities. The overall patterns in Figure 4 are certainly consistent with[...] outcomes in Table 1, insofar as (male and female) visible minority candidat[...] to be relatively disadvantaged at the voting booth, while (white) women app[...] have quite positive electoral outcomes relative to their presence as candidat[...] Furthermore, we see that the ethnic affinity effect observed in the experime[...] is much stronger on the question "would you vote for this person?" than on[...] other candidate evaluation measures. The response we are seeing therefore [...] actual preference to *elect to city council* someone who is ethnically similar t[...] and this is a preference over and above the generally more positive assessm[...] same-ethnicity candidate as qualified, likely to work for the broad interests [...] entire city, and likely to speak for the respondent's interests. The results, in[...] words, suggest that respondents (and South Asians in particular) want descr[...] and/or symbolic political representation and that the ethnic affinity effect in[...] political context is something more than an automatic or general preference[...] members of a same-ethnic group.

Conceptually, it is important to ask whether the effects we find refle[...] 'pride or prejudice?' That is, to what extent is the preference for a same eth[...] candidate over a different ethnicity candidate a reflection of pride in one's o[...] versus prejudice against other groups? In the current social context, in whic[...] Ontario's municipal councils remain almost exclusively white, I think there[...] cause for concern that white male and female voters are so strongly inclined[...] for a white candidate and so disinclined to vote for a South Asian. In the cas[...] Asian voters, it seems normatively less problematic – more like pride than p[...] to demonstrate a strong preference to elect one of their own, and thereby fin[...] or at least symbol of political inclusion in a municipal arena that has thus fa[...] elusive.

Finally, what are the possible mechanisms though which voter biases become relevant factors in the descriptive outcomes of municipal elections? The most obvious point concerns the demographic distribution of ethnic minority and majority voters. The results of the Voter Study suggest that the ethnic affinity bias operates in a similar way across all ethnic groups – members of ethnic groups, of whatever stripe, tend to be more positively disposed towards a same ethnic candidate, and more negatively disposed towards a candidate of a different ethnic background. Even though the bias might be greater among ethnic minorities than among the ethnic majority, the results at the aggregate societal level will tend to be distinctively negative for ethnic minority candidates, and distinctively positive for ethnic majority candidates. From ward to ward, outcomes may depend on the proportion of different ethnic groups among the voting population. When South Asian (or other visible minority) candidates run for election, the additional support that they might generate among co-ethnics will be offset – and in most places, likely overwhelmed – by the negative dispositions manifest in the much larger population of non co-ethnic voters. To the extent that such a bias exists, it makes sense that ethnic minorities would prefer to run as candidates in wards with exceptionally high proportions of same-ethnic residents. Ethnic affinity biases will therefore contribute to the 'ghettoization' of ethnic minority candidates into ethnic minority wards and seats. Visible minority electoral representation will thus continue to suffer, in the face of increasing concentrations of visible minority candidates.

Perhaps a more crucial mechanism that may explain the extreme diversity gap at the local level is related to the low informational context of municipal elections. As briefly mentioned above, these are political contests that take place without formal party organizations. Typically, there is also fairly limited media coverage of candidates, outside of the front-runners for the mayoral election. Voters' knowledge of the candidates' names and platforms tends to be very limited, and typically does not extend beyond the incumbent councillors. There are at least two important consequences of this exceptionally low information context. First, turnout tends to be lower, and lower turnout elections have been shown to produce electorates that are less representative (with regard to race, education, age, income and employment) of city populations (Hajnal 2010, Trounstine 2010). Second, the lack of partisan electoral cues enhances the power of other kinds of heuristics such as race and ethnicity (see Trounstine 2010). In low information contexts, when voters have little else on which to form an evaluation of candidates, voter biases in terms of ethnic affinity and sex affinity effects are likely to play a much greater role in vote choice. In contrast, these biases may be readily over-ridden in the richer informational context of elections at the national and provincial level.

Finally, without political parties as a mobilizing and informational vehicle, candidates must rely heavily on local news coverage to get their message out. Local media are thus especially crucial in terms of the type of information that they may transmit about municipal candidates. To a significant degree, media thus play the role of 'selectorate' in communicating to the voter who is a serious or worthy candidate, and who is not. There is emerging evidence that race structures the media's reporting on candidates in Canadian national elections, positioning visible minorities in terms of their socio-demographics, novelty and interest in more marginal policy issues (Tolley 2011). In my own exploratory interviews with a number of local visible minority candidates, the role of the media and the overall lack of coverage afforded to these candidates is a theme that has consistently emerged. The tendency of media to exclude from coverage all but a few high profile candidates tends to compound the

effect of the informational deficit upon visible minority candidates – almost none of whom are incumbents or media-annointed 'frontrunners.' It is worth exploring, in future research, whether (and how) biases regarding visible minority candidates might be manifest through local media.

Appendix: Candidate Manipulations

Candidate statement 1: Female, South Asian, right-wing/business oriented

> Farida Khan is a first-time candidate for Municipal Council. Farida has lived in the community since moving here with her family at the age of 10. She completed her elementary and secondary education here, before earning a B.A. in Economics. Farida has strong connections to the city and its residents. She has worked for 15 years as a local business owner. She has been an active participant in the local Collaborative Partnership for Economic and Cultural Development. Farida also started up an innovative Youth Entrepreneurs Program to equip young people with business and financial skills, and encourage them to create their own job opportunities. Farida's many contributions were recognized recently, as she was honoured with a nomination for a local Business Leadership Award. Farida promises to bring a fresh perspective to local council. Her first priority, if elected to office, is to control spending and promote greater fiscal responsibility in local government. Farida and her husband Imran have been married 14 years, and have three children.

Candidate statement 2: Male, white, left-wing/service oriented

> Jim Stevenson is a first-time candidate for Municipal Council. Jim has lived in the community since moving here with his family at the age of 10. He completed his elementary and secondary education here, before earning a B.A. in Economics. Jim has strong connections to the city and its residents. He has worked for 15 years as a local community organizer. He has been an active participant in the local Collaborative Partnership for Economic and Cultural Development. Jim also started up an innovative Youth Leaders Program to equip young people with civic and leadership skills, and encourage social responsibility and democratic engagement. Jim's many contributions were recognized recently, as he was honoured with a nomination for a local Civic Leadership Award. Jim promises to bring a fresh perspective to local council. His first priority, if elected to office, is to improve public services so that all residents can share in the best quality of life the municipality can offer. Jim and his wife Sandra have been married 14 years, and have three children.

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