

Racial or Spatial Voting? The Effects of Candidate Ethnicity and Ethnic Group Endorsements in Local Elections



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Abstract: *With the growth of Latino and Asian American populations, candidates frequently must appeal to diverse electorates. Strategies for doing so include emphasizing candidates' racial/ethnic identity and securing endorsements from racial/ethnic groups. While many scholars focus on candidates' racial/ethnic attributes, ethnic group endorsements are understudied. Whether such endorsements induce voters to choose ideologically similar candidates (spatial voting), or choose based on race/ethnicity (racial voting) is unclear. We address this question by examining elections in multiethnic local settings. Using original surveys and exit polls, we create comparable measures of candidate and voter ideology, and examine how race/ethnicity and ideology affect voters' choices. We also embed experiments that manipulate ethnic group endorsements. We find that ideology influences voters' choices, but that ethnic group endorsements weaken spatial voting. The latter effect among whites is driven by racial/ethnic stereotypes. These reactions explain why some candidates seek such endorsements and why others might prefer to avoid them.*

Replication Materials: The data, code, and any additional materials required to replicate all analyses in this article are available on the *American Journal of Political Science* Dataverse within the Harvard Dataverse Network, at: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/XYUWYJ>.

The rapid growth of Latino and Asian American populations in recent years has transformed the American electorate and led scholars to speculate about its political ramifications. Latinos account for over half of the total population growth in the United States between 2000 and 2010. The Asian American population grew 43% during this same period, over four times the national rate. While political participation by these groups continues to lag that of whites (Hajnal and Lee 2011; Wong et al. 2011), Latino and Asian American politicians have become a regular, albeit underrepresented, presence in local, state, and federal elections. According to the National Association of Latino Elected Officials, 5,850 Latinos serve in elective offices, and the Asian Pacific Studies

Center lists more than 4,000 Asian Americans holding public offices.

Nowhere has the growing strength of Latinos and Asian Americans been more visible than in America's largest cities. Latinos comprise nearly one-third of residents in America's 15 largest cities according to the 2010 census, including pluralities in Los Angeles, Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, and San Jose. Asian Americans make up fully 10% of residents in these same cities, up 26% from 2000. Austin, Denver, Los Angeles, Miami, and San Antonio have elected Latino mayors, whereas San Francisco and Oakland have elected Asian American mayors. In these and many other political settings, candidates must navigate electorates where no single racial/ethnic

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group predominates. Given that support from multiple racial/ethnic groups is often a necessary condition for winning, all candidates must decide how to reach out to different racial/ethnic communities, whether or not they share a common identity.

How do candidates appeal to different groups of voters in multiethnic settings? Scholars have extensively studied the effects of candidates' racial/ethnic identity on voters' choices (Barreto 2010; Fraga 2016; McConnaughy et al. 2010; Perez 2015;). Emphasizing a common racial/ethnic identity and shared experiences can help candidates appeal to particular racial/ethnic communities. However, such a strategy is available exclusively to minority candidates. An alternative strategy available to all candidates is to secure endorsements from public officials and interest groups that represent particular racial/ethnic communities. Scholars have paid little attention to such ethnic group endorsements.¹ Nonetheless, efforts to secure these endorsements are ubiquitous in local politics. For example, the 2007 mayoral election in San Francisco featured two liberal candidates, one white (Gavin Newsom) and one Latino (Matt Gonzalez), vying for support among the city's multiethnic electorate. Newsom secured endorsements from organizations representing the city's two largest nonwhite ethnic groups (Latinos and Chinese Americans) and ultimately won a close election.

Candidates' efforts to secure ethnic group endorsements in local elections reflect the expectation that the signals they communicate will translate into greater support on Election Day. However, what information they communicate is unclear. On the one hand, ethnic group endorsements might send ideological signals about which candidate is to the left/right of others (e.g., a Latino group's endorsement might convey that a candidate is liberal). On the other hand, such endorsements might send nonideological signals about a candidate's viability or commitment to issues that are important to racial/ethnic communities. However, while ethnic group endorsements might help candidates to attract support in particular racial/ethnic communities, they might also activate negative stereotypes among whites (Kam 2007; Key 1949; Piston 2010).

In this study, we offer the first systematic examination of whether candidates' race/ethnicity and ethnic group endorsements induce citizens to vote spatially (i.e., choose candidates with similar policy views) or racially (i.e., choose candidates on the basis of racial/ethnic identity or endorsements from particular racial/ethnic groups). We disentangle racial and spatial voting by conducting

two studies during nonpartisan local elections that lack a strong correlation between race/ethnicity and ideology. That is, the ideological positions of white, Latino, and Chinese American candidates in these elections span the liberal-conservative policy space, as do the positions of white, Latino, and Chinese American voters. To measure the candidates' ideological positions, we conduct original surveys that ask candidates to take positions on local policy issues during real-world election campaigns. For voters, we develop comparable measures of ideology by conducting exit polls that ask them about their positions on these same issues, as well as which candidates they voted for. We also embed experiments that manipulate ethnic group endorsements and examine their effects on voters' candidate preferences.

By creating comparable measures of candidate and voter ideology in these local elections, and by manipulating ethnic group endorsements, we overcome three limitations of previous research. First, most previous research examines voter decision making in elections that feature black versus white candidates. This limits our understanding of how voters respond to candidates from two politically relevant and quickly growing ethnic groups (Latinos and Asian Americans). Second, previous research investigates the effects of racial/ethnic cues by experimentally manipulating candidate attributes (e.g., surnames, skin tone) as opposed to ethnic group endorsements. Such endorsements are important to study because, unlike physical attributes, they are things candidates can control. These racial/ethnic cues might also be effective at conveying ideological information when they come from politically active groups with ideological reputations. Third, ideology and race/ethnicity are strongly correlated in the electoral contexts that most previous research examines; that is, minority voters and candidates are typically more liberal than white voters and candidates. This correlation makes it difficult to disentangle the effects of ideology and race/ethnicity on voters' choices.

In our first study, we show that ideology strongly influences voters' choices in a multiethnic local election. However, ethnic group endorsements weaken, rather than enhance, such spatial voting. Instead of helping voters to identify candidates who share their policy views, the endorsements trigger identity-based responses among Latinos and Chinese Americans, increasing support for candidates endorsed by their ethnic group irrespective of those candidates' ideological positions. In our second study, we show that these endorsements also trigger race-based responses among whites, decreasing (increasing) support for candidates endorsed by ethnic groups for whom these voters hold negative (positive) stereotypes.

¹An exception is Benjamin (2017).

Together, these results offer good and bad news about race relations and representation. On the plus side, the strong spatial voting we observe across racial/ethnic groups suggests that candidates for local offices can and do appeal to voters based on their policy views. Candidates' efforts to appeal to different racial/ethnic groups through endorsements can increase support within those communities and among whites who view these groups positively without wholly eliminating spatial voting. On the minus side, some voters' negative reactions to ethnic group endorsements may discourage candidates from seeking support from particular racial/ethnic groups. This may undermine minority participation in politics.

Spatial and Racial Voting

Two theoretical frameworks have guided empirical research on voting behavior. The theory of spatial voting posits that candidates take positions in an ideological space and that voters choose the candidate who is closest to their own ideological position (Black 1948; Downs 1957; Enelow and Hinich 1984). Thus, spatial voting theory predicts a close alignment between voters' policy views and those of the candidates they choose. Alternatively, theories of racial voting predict that voters will choose candidates on the basis of racial, not policy, considerations (Glazer, Grofman, and Owen 1998; Hutchings and Valentino 2004; Key 1949). According to these theories, minority voters prefer candidates of (or supported by) their own racial/ethnic group and disfavor candidates of (or supported by) other racial/ethnic groups. Similarly, white voters' candidate preferences are driven by their views toward particular racial/ethnic groups (Abrajano and Hajnal 2015; Piston 2010; Tesler and Sears 2010).

Distinguishing racial from spatial voting in real-world elections requires scholars to surmount two challenges. One challenge is developing comparable measures of voter and candidate ideology. A second challenge is the observational equivalence of racial and spatial voting in many real-world elections. That is, race/ethnicity and ideology are often strongly correlated because minority candidates/voters tend to be more liberal than white candidates/voters. Thus, voting based on racial considerations (i.e., choosing a candidate because he or she is a member of a voter's own racial/ethnic group) and voting based on spatial considerations (i.e., choosing a candidate because he or she is more/less liberal and, therefore, similar ideologically) lead to the same observable choice. Indeed, a candidate's race/ethnicity can provide a proxy for ideology in these settings (McDermott 1998; Sigelman et al. 1995).

Scholars in recent years have developed methods for creating comparable measures of candidate and voter ideology (Boudreau, Elmendorf, and MacKenzie 2015a, 2015b; Jessee 2009; Joesten and Stone 2014; Shor and Rogowski 2018).² One method combines candidates' known policy views with surveys that ask voters whether they support those policies. Using scaling techniques, these scholars estimate ideal points for candidates and voters from their views on the same or overlapping sets of policy issues. Consistent with spatial voting theory, they observe a strong, positive relationship between voters' ideological positions and those of the candidates they choose in presidential, congressional, and local elections.

In contrast, empirical tests of racial voting yield mixed results. Some studies find that whites discriminate against minority candidates in real-world elections (Grofman, Handley, and Lublin 2001; Piston 2010; Tesler and Sears 2010), whereas others show that they do not (Citrin, Green, and Sears 1990; Hajnal 2001; Highton 2004). However, it is often difficult to know whether whites react against minority candidates because of their race/ethnicity or ideology, given the strong correlation between these two factors in these contexts. To address this issue, scholars conduct experiments that manipulate fictional candidates' race/ethnicity and policy-relevant attributes (Jones 2014; McConnaughy et al. 2010; Sigelman et al. 1995). These experiments exercise tight control over candidates' race/ethnicity and policy positions, providing a clean test of these factors. One disadvantage is that these experimental results might not generalize to real-world elections, where other information about the candidates is available. Another disadvantage is that these studies typically manipulate personal attributes (e.g., surname, skin tone) that candidates in the real world cannot easily control.

Local settings that lack a strong correlation between race/ethnicity and ideology provide an opportunity to distinguish racial from spatial voting in real-world elections. This is especially true in nonpartisan settings where voters cannot use party labels to guide their decisions. In such settings, spatial and racial voting frequently lead to different observable choices. Voting based on race/ethnicity should produce a weak relationship between voters' ideological positions and those of the candidates they choose. In contrast, voting based on candidates' policy views should yield a strong relationship between voters' and their preferred candidates' ideological positions. The presence of endorsement-making

²Like these scholars, we conceive of ideology as the extent to which voters and candidates take consistent positions across multiple policy issues (Converse 1964).

groups representing racial/ethnic communities in such settings provides an opportunity to use experiments that manipulate actual ethnic group endorsements to determine whether they enhance racial or spatial voting.

Our studies are the first to create comparable measures of candidate and voter ideology in nonpartisan multiethnic local settings and then compare the effects of ideology alongside race/ethnicity on voters' choices. We also provide the first experimental tests of ethnic group endorsements in real-world elections. In doing so, we make four contributions. First, we study the effects of ethnic group endorsements on racial and spatial voting, not just how candidate race/ethnicity affects voters' choices. Second, we examine elections that feature Latino, Chinese American, and white candidates. Previous research has focused mostly on voters' responses to black candidates. Third, we test predictions derived from theories of racial and spatial voting in nonpartisan local settings that lack a strong correlation between ideology and race/ethnicity (that is, where these theories lead to different observable choices). Fourth, we shed light on the psychological mechanism that underlies whites' reactions to ethnic group endorsements. In doing so, we clarify whether and when voters choose candidates based on their ideology or their race/ethnicity in local elections.

Hypotheses

Racial and spatial voting theories make different predictions about the relative influence of race/ethnicity and ideology on voters' decisions. Theories of racial voting begin with the premise that racial/ethnic cues evoke identity-based considerations (Barreto 2010; McConnaughy et al. 2010; Perez 2015). In local elections, these cues may come from a candidate's race/ethnicity or endorsements from groups representing racial/ethnic communities. Such identity-based considerations can induce voters to view candidates who share their race/ethnicity (or who receive endorsements from those who do) as members of their ingroup, and those who do not share their race/ethnicity (or who receive endorsements from other ethnic groups) as members of the outgroup. Such ingroup/outgroup distinctions can translate into greater support among minority voters for coethnic candidates and candidates endorsed by groups that represent them. This leads to the following prediction:

H1: Minority voters will be more likely to support candidates who share their race/ethnicity (or who are endorsed by their racial/ethnic group)

than candidates who do not (or who are not endorsed by their racial/ethnic group).

Theories of racial voting also make predictions about how racial/ethnic cues will affect white voters. Although whites may consider all minority candidates as members of the outgroup, their reactions likely depend upon whether they view particular racial/ethnic groups favorably or unfavorably (Kam 2007; Piston 2010; Sigelman et al. 1995). Tesler and Sears (2010) argue that whites' reactions to minority candidates are heterogeneous. Whites who harbor negative views about minority groups tend not to support minority candidates. In contrast, whites who hold positive views about minority groups support minority candidates even over white candidates. Thus, minority candidates can simultaneously serve as symbols of racial/ethnic assertion to coethnic voters and symbols of racial harmony or inclusiveness to whites (Sonenshein 1993). Applying this logic to our multiethnic context yields the following prediction:

H2: White voters will be more likely to support candidates of or endorsed by racial/ethnic groups that they view favorably and less likely to support candidates of or endorsed by racial/ethnic groups that they view unfavorably.

If white voters' positive reactions to ethnic group endorsements stem from the signals they send about racial harmony, then the effects of these endorsements might depend on the characteristics of the candidates receiving them and the groups making them. For example, if an Asian American candidate is endorsed by a group representing Asian Americans, whites could perceive this as a signal of racial/ethnic favoritism and react negatively or not at all.³ However, if an Asian American candidate receives a cross-ethnic group endorsement (e.g., from a group representing Latinos), whites who view Latinos and Asian Americans positively could perceive this as a signal of racial harmony. In this way, cross-ethnic group endorsements might be especially meaningful to whites who view particular racial/ethnic groups favorably. This yields the following prediction:

H3: The effects of cross-ethnic group endorsements will be greater than the effects of coethnic group endorsements among white voters who view these racial/ethnic groups favorably.

If voters' race/ethnicity and ideology are weakly correlated (i.e., minority and white voters are well distributed across the liberal-conservative policy space),

³Coethnic endorsements might also communicate little new information to whites.

then choosing candidates based purely on racial/ethnic considerations will weaken spatial voting. For example, if Asian Americans support candidates who represent their race/ethnicity regardless of their ideology, then even liberal Asian Americans may support a conservative Asian American candidate or a conservative non-Asian-American candidate who is endorsed by a group representing Asian Americans. In the aggregate, this will weaken the relationship between Asian Americans' ideological positions and those of the candidates they choose. Similarly, if whites react against (incline toward) candidates endorsed by a racial/ethnic group that they view unfavorably (favorably), then they should do so irrespective of the candidates' ideological positions. This leads to the following prediction:

H4: In electoral contexts in which race/ethnicity and ideology are weakly correlated, ethnic group endorsements will weaken the relationship between minority and white voters' ideological positions and those of the candidates they choose.

In contrast, spatial voting theory predicts that voters will choose candidates based on their ideology, not their race/ethnicity. In principle, this suggests we should find little evidence for Hypotheses 1–4. That is, minority voters will be no more likely to choose candidates who share their race/ethnicity or who are endorsed by groups representing them, and white voters will not condition their support on whether they favor or disfavor particular racial/ethnic groups. Rather, voters will choose candidates whose ideological positions best resemble their own, regardless of racial/ethnic considerations. This leads to the following prediction:

H5: Minority and white voters will be more likely to support a candidate as the ideological distance between themselves and the candidate decreases, relative to the ideological distance between themselves and that candidate's opponents.

Racial/ethnic cues might also convey ideological information to voters, as opposed to identity-based signals of which candidate to support (McDermott 1998; Sigelman et al. 1995). Indeed, some racial/ethnic groups have distinct ideological reputations, and as such, their endorsements might convey that one candidate is to the left/right of another. In particular, Latinos and African Americans are perceived as left-leaning or liberal, whereas Asian Americans are often viewed as more right-leaning or conservative.⁴ If voters use endorsements from these

racial/ethnic groups as ideological signals and if these ideological signals are “correct” (e.g., a Latino [Asian American] group supports candidates who are more liberal [conservative]), then they could enable voters motivated by policy considerations to choose candidates whose policy views resemble their own. This yields the following prediction:

H6: Endorsements from racial/ethnic groups with distinct ideological reputations will strengthen the relationship between minority and white voters' ideological positions and those of the candidates they choose.

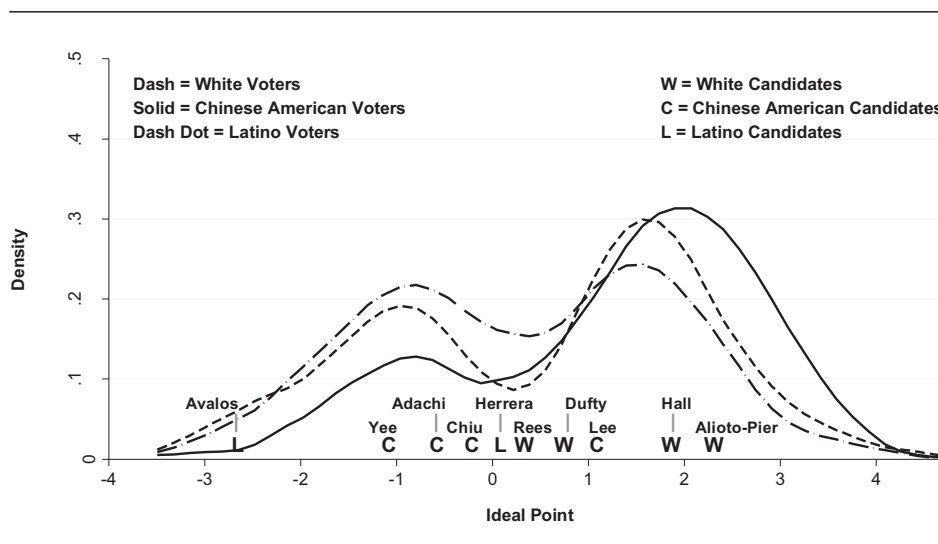
Testing Racial and Spatial Voting: San Francisco Elections

We tested these hypotheses by conducting original surveys and exit polls during the 2011 mayoral (Study 1) and 2012 supervisorial elections (Study 2) in San Francisco. We selected these settings for several reasons. First, ideology and race/ethnicity are weakly correlated in these settings (see Figure 1). Like many large American cities, San Francisco features a real ideological divide among its political elites, who favor quite different local policies (see the supporting information [SI]). Specifically, seasoned observers portray the city's political elite as divided between so-called “progressives” (the local left) and “moderates” (the local right). However, these ideological differences are cross-cutting with respect to the city's three major ethnic groups—whites, Latinos, and Chinese Americans. That is, knowing that a candidate is a member of one of these groups provides little information about whether that candidate is a progressive or moderate. Indeed, the two elections we examine feature white, Latino, and Chinese American candidates on both sides of the local ideological spectrum. White, Latino, and Chinese American voters similarly span the local ideological space (see Figure 1).

Second, San Francisco uses rank choice voting (RCV), which allows voters to rank up to three candidates in order of preference. The city's RCV system serves our purposes in several ways. First, it diversified the field of candidates. There were 11 serious candidates in the 2011 mayoral race (all Democrats), including four Chinese Americans (Jeff Adachi, David Chiu, Ed Lee, Leland Yee), and two Latinos (John Avalos, Dennis Herrera). There were nine candidates in the 2012 supervisorial race in District 7 (also all Democrats), including one Chinese American (Norman Yee) and one Latino (Mike Garcia). Further,

⁴Jones (2014) and Visalvanich (2017) show that voters perceive Latinos as more liberal than whites and/or Asian Americans.

FIGURE 1 Ideological Distribution of San Francisco Voters and Mayoral Candidates



the RCV system gives politically interested groups an incentive to endorse multiple candidates. In the 2011 mayoral election, the Latino Democratic Club⁵ endorsed two candidates, whereas the Chinese American Citizens Alliance endorsed two other candidates. In the 2012 supervisorial election in District 7, these two groups endorsed the same candidate. This natural variation in the endorsements from Latino and Chinese American groups enables us to conduct experiments that truthfully manipulate different endorsements and examine their effects on voters' choices. That these two groups endorsed the same candidate in the 2012 supervisorial election enables us to hold the candidate receiving the endorsement constant, while manipulating whether that endorsement is from a Latino or Chinese American group.

Finally, San Francisco features a unique convention that enables us to overcome the difficulty of measuring candidates' ideological positions. Specifically, political party organizations, newspapers, and interest groups in San Francisco distribute questionnaires to candidates for local offices. It is considered bad form for a candidate not to answer a group's questionnaire. Answers to questionnaires are often made public and scrutinized for inconsistencies. Thus, it is risky for candidates to refuse to answer or to dissemble. Typically, these questionnaires use open-ended questions that allow candidates to elaborate (or obscure) their views. In the 2011 mayoral election, however, we collaborated with two groups, which agreed to ask candidates the yes/no policy questions we developed to measure candidates' local ideological positions.

⁵In the SI, we show that the Latino Democratic Club conveys a racial, not partisan, signal.

In the 2012 supervisorial election, we collaborated with one of these groups again to develop similar measures of candidates' ideological positions.

Beyond San Francisco: The Broader Implications of Our Study

Although we examine racial and spatial voting in two elections in one city, important similarities between this context and other large American cities testify to the broader relevance of our study. Like San Francisco, many large cities (e.g., Chicago, Seattle, Boston) are overwhelmingly Democratic and liberal when it comes to national politics. These cities also tend to be racially/ethnically heterogeneous, with large blocs of minority voters (e.g., Latinos, Asian Americans, blacks) and significant white populations. To the extent that partisan homogeneity coupled with racial/ethnic heterogeneity weakens spatial voting and strengthens racial voting, it should do so in these other settings, too. Like San Francisco, these other cities also feature relatively high income and education levels (see the SI). To the extent that high income and education levels make spatial voting more likely and racial voting less likely in our context, they are likely to do so in these other local settings. Further, elite ideological divisions like those we observe surface in other large cities, and many of the issues at stake in San Francisco (e.g., housing, taxes) are issues commonly at stake in other cities. Residents of other cities are also ideological when it comes to local policies (Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2014). In light of this, it is important to examine whether ideology actually influences voters' choices in local elections.

To the extent that aspects of our setting are unique, they may stack the deck *against* observing spatial voting and *against* observing a backlash among whites in response to ethnic group endorsements. To the first point, while San Francisco features the elite ideological divisions necessary for spatial voting, the use of RCV, the large number of candidates with diverse ideological positions, and the absence of party labels should make it more difficult for voters to identify ideologically similar candidates. To the second point, San Francisco is one of the least racially polarized big cities in the country, where whites, Latinos, blacks, and Chinese Americans are regularly elected to local offices. Thus, our results may understate the extent of spatial or racial voting in other cities that lack one or more of these other features.

Study 1: 2011 Mayoral Election

To assess the extent of spatial and racial voting in the 2011 mayoral election, we first develop comparable measures of candidate and voter ideology. To measure the candidates' ideological positions, we take advantage of the unique convention in San Francisco politics described above. We wrote binary policy questions for candidates based on divided roll call votes in the San Francisco Board of Supervisors (the city's legislative body) and other issues that had been in the news. We approached several groups about including our questions on their candidate questionnaires, and two agreed to do so. One is a local club of Democratic voters; the other is the *San Francisco Public Press* (*SF Public Press*), a nonprofit news outlet. Virtually all of the candidates answered at least one of these groups' questionnaires. We scaled candidates' ideal points from their responses to our survey questions and answers to yes/no policy questions found in other candidate surveys in the public domain.

To measure voter ideology on the same scale as candidate ideology, we asked voters a subset of the survey questions candidates answered using written exit polls. Table 1 summarizes these questions and the candidates' and voters' answers. To conduct our exit polls, we recruited 117 student pollsters and assigned them to 41 teams. We randomly chose polling places from the San Francisco Department of Elections' list of precincts, oversampling majority-minority precincts (Chinese American and Latino) because of the historically low turnout levels among these voters. We randomly assigned morning or afternoon/evening coverage to each polling place, with each team of pollsters working a 3.25-hour shift.

As voters left their polling places, our pollsters asked whether they would be willing to complete a short, written survey. Voters could complete the survey in English, Spanish, or Chinese, and pollsters fluent in these languages staffed the majority-minority precincts. If a voter agreed to take the survey, pollsters escorted him or her to a nearby table with chairs so that the voter could take the survey comfortably. The survey asked voters to report their first, second, and third choices for mayor. It also included 13 of our yes/no policy questions, which we chose based on succinctness and utility for distinguishing the candidates' ideological positions (see the SI for the survey). In this election, 1,593 voters filled out our survey. These voters' demographic characteristics resemble San Francisco's voting and general populations in many respects, including partisan affiliation, sex, age, race/ethnicity, education, and income (see the SI).

To examine how ethnic group endorsements affect voters' propensity to vote racially or spatially, we experimentally manipulated endorsements. The experimental manipulations were included in a later section of the survey that asked voters to express their preferences for the leading candidates, considered pairwise. That is, we asked voters to make a series of one-on-one comparisons between the five leading candidates for mayor. Voters were asked to indicate which candidate in the pair they would prefer to be the mayor, *regardless of whom they had actually voted for*. In this way, we follow Alvarez and Kiewiet (2009) in using voters' pairwise comparisons to measure their sincere preferences. By manipulating endorsements in an exit poll, we likely understate their effects because we assess their impact *after* voters may have acquired other information. Voters may also be reluctant to reconsider their preferences for candidates for whom they just voted, although our results are similar when we analyze only candidate pairs that do *not* include candidates whom voters reported ranking on their ballots (see the SI).

Voters were randomly assigned to a control or treatment group. Voters in the control group answered these pairwise comparison questions without additional information about the candidates. For example, when comparing candidates John Avalos and Ed Lee, voters in the control group were asked, "How about John Avalos or Edwin Lee? Do you prefer Avalos over Lee or Lee over Avalos?"

In the treatment group, we provided ethnic group endorsements that the five leading candidates actually received.⁶ Specifically, voters in the treatment group were

⁶This enhances external validity and avoids deception. A potential concern is pretreatment from the campaign. This should make it more difficult to observe treatment effects.

TABLE 1 Policy Questions with Mayoral Candidates' and Voters' Answers

| Policy Proposal | 2011 Mayoral Candidates | | | | | | | | | | Voters Y-N-DK (%) |
|--|-------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------|--------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| | John Avalos | Leland Yee | Jeff Adachi | David Chiu | Dennis Herrera | Joanna Rees | Bevan Dufty | Ed Lee | Tony Hall | Michela Alioto-Pier | |
| Charge entry fees to nonresidents for use of botanical gardens | N | N | N | Y | n/a | N | N | Y | N | Y | 40-48-12 |
| Base school admissions primarily on proximity to schools | N | N | Y | N | N | Y | N | N | Y | Y | 36-58-6 |
| Support "Care Not Cash" program | N | n/a | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | Y | 67-12-21 |
| Require strict nutritional standards when selling food with toys | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | Y | N | N | N | 66-28-6 |
| Impose fee on distributors of alcohol to pay for health costs | Y | Y | N | Y | N | Y | N | Y | N | n/a | 50-41-9 |
| Ban new buildings more than 40 feet tall that cast shadows | Y | Y | Y | N | N | Y | Y | N | n/a | N | 54-31-15 |
| Prohibit loitering outside nightclubs | N | N | Y | Y | N | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | 53-32-15 |
| Rent control for all tenants, not just those who cannot afford market-level rents | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | N | 53-35-12 |
| Prohibit sitting or lying on public sidewalks between 7:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m. | N | N | N | N | Y | Y | N | Y | Y | Y | 54-40-6 |
| Exempt Twitter from 1.5% city payroll tax for six years | N | N | N | Y | Y | N | Y | Y | Y | Y | 57-32-11 |
| Increase tax on sales and leases of properties worth over \$5 million | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | Y | Y | 76-15-9 |
| Delay Central Subway project until MUNI shortfalls are eliminated | N | N | Y | N | Y | N | N | N | Y | Y | 44-42-14 |
| Require AT&T to undergo full environmental review before installing boxes on sidewalks | Y | Y | Y | Y | n/a | Y | N | N | Y | N | 56-27-17 |

told which candidate(s) in each pair the Chinese American Citizens Alliance and/or the Latino Democratic Club endorsed. In San Francisco, the Latino Democratic Club has endorsed progressive (i.e., left-of-center) candidates in recent years, whereas the Chinese American Citizens Alliance has supported moderate (i.e., right-of-center) candidates. This was also true in this election. Further, an original survey of local experts that we conducted shows that experts place the Latino Democratic Club to the left of the Chinese American Citizens Alliance, and the differences are large and statistically significant (see the SI). Thus, the ethnic group endorsements provided ideologically “correct” signals. When comparing John Avalos and Ed Lee, voters in the treatment group were asked, “How about John Avalos or Edwin Lee? (Avalos is endorsed by the Latino Democratic Club; Lee is endorsed by the Chinese American Citizens Alliance.) Do you prefer Avalos over Lee or Lee over Avalos?”

Data Analysis

To estimate candidates’ and voters’ ideal points, we use the item-response model developed by Clinton, Jackman, and Rivers (2004). To enhance the precision of our estimates, we combined the policy questions we asked candidates and voters with other binary policy questions gathered from publicly available candidate questionnaires distributed during this election. In bridging candidate and voter responses to our policy questions with candidate responses to these other questions, we make it more likely that the ideological dimension described by our ideal point estimates accurately reflects candidates’ and voters’ ideological preferences (Shor and Rogowski 2018).⁷

We first use the estimated ideal points to examine whether and to what extent racial and/or spatial voting occurred in the election. Our dependent variable in this analysis is coded as 1 if voters reported ranking John Avalos (a Latino progressive) ahead of Ed Lee (a Chinese American moderate) on their ballots and 0 otherwise.⁸ We use voters’ reported choices between these two candidates as our dependent variable for several reasons. First, these candidates were the top two finishers in the election and clear frontrunners during the campaign. Thus, both candidates were equally viable. Second, the election ultimately came down to a choice between Avalos and Lee, as the ballots of voters who did not rank one of these candi-

dates were exhausted before the final stages of counting. Third, a vote for Avalos over Lee indicates a preference for a progressive Latino candidate, whereas a vote for Lee over Avalos reflects a preference for a moderate Chinese American candidate. Because Latino, Chinese American, and white voters span the progressive–moderate local policy space (see Figure 1), this candidate comparison enables us to assess whether voters’ reported choices between Avalos and Lee are based on racial and/or spatial considerations.

Our main independent variable (*Spatial Advantage*) quantifies for each voter how much closer the progressive candidate, Avalos, is to his or her own ideal point than the moderate candidate, Lee. Specifically, for candidates Avalos and Lee with ideal points x_p and x_m , respectively, and each voter with ideal point x_i this variable is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Spatial Advantage} = |x_m - x_i| - |x_p - x_i|$$

Positive values of *Spatial Advantage* indicate that the progressive candidate, Avalos (with ideal point x_p), is closer to the voter’s own ideal point than the moderate candidate, Lee (with ideal point x_m). Conversely, negative values indicate that the moderate candidate, Lee, is closer to the voter’s ideal point than the progressive candidate, Avalos. We include interactions between *Spatial Advantage* and dummy variables that reflect voters’ race/ethnicity to assess whether whites, Latinos, and Chinese Americans choose candidates who are closer to them ideologically. We also control for other factors thought to influence voting in local elections—voters’ age, gender, income, interest in the election, local political knowledge, and evaluations of local government performance.

In our experimental analyses, we use the pairwise comparisons that voters made between the five leading candidates to test our hypotheses about the effects of ethnic group endorsements. Our dependent variable is coded as 1 for voters who prefer the candidate who received the Latino Democratic Club’s endorsement in each pair and 0 otherwise.⁹ In the candidate pairs we analyze, the Latino Democratic Club always endorsed the more progressive (left) candidate, whereas the Chinese American Citizens Alliance endorsed the more moderate (right) candidate.

Our main independent variables are dummy variables that separately identify Latino, Chinese American, and white voters in our control and ethnic endorsement treatment groups. We interact these dummy variables with a *Spatial Advantage* variable. *Spatial Advantage* is calculated as described above, except in this analysis, positive values of *Spatial Advantage* indicate that the candidate who received the Latino Democratic Club’s endorsement

⁷We estimated a one-dimensional model with uninformative priors. The first dimension correctly classifies 73.8% of candidate and voter responses in 2011. Adding a second dimension produces only mild improvement (see the SI).

⁸We exclude voters who reported ranking neither candidate.

⁹We omit those who say, “Don’t know” or refuse to answer.

in a pair is closer to the voter’s own ideal point. We test our hypotheses by comparing the probability of supporting the candidates endorsed by the Latino Democratic Club in our treatment and control groups for Latino, Chinese American, and white voters. We also examine whether and when the endorsements induce Latinos, Chinese Americans, and whites to choose candidates whose ideological positions are most similar to their own.

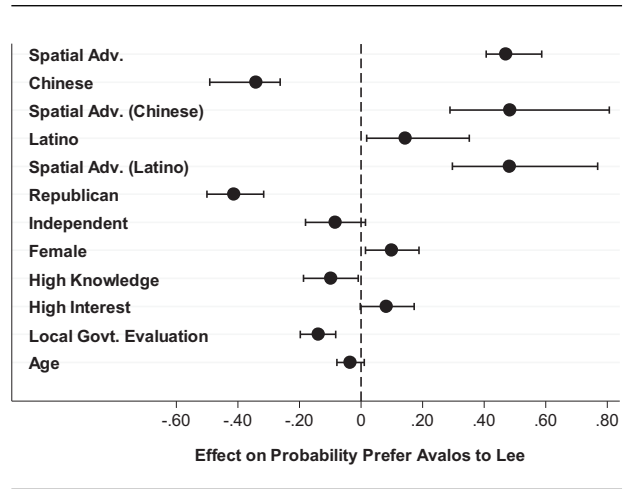
Results

The distribution of ideal points shows that candidates and voters have real ideological differences that are weakly related to their race/ethnicity. Figure 1 plots the estimated ideal points of candidates and voters in the 2011 mayoral election. The candidates’ ideological positions span the local policy space, with Latino (Avalos, Herrera), Chinese American (Yee, Adachi, Chiu, Lee), and white candidates (Rees, Dufty, Hall, Alioto-Pier) dispersed along a dominant first (progressive–moderate) dimension. Voters’ ideological positions are also distributed relatively evenly across the local policy space. The weak correlation between race/ethnicity and ideology is evident in the similar densities and substantial overlap of Latino, Chinese American, and white voters’ ideal points.

To determine the influence of race/ethnicity in the election, we estimated a probit model of voters’ reported choices (see Table A4 in the SI) and converted the coefficients into first differences. Figure 2 shows the effect of shifting from a white voter to a Latino or Chinese American voter on the probability of preferring Avalos, a Latino, over Lee, a Chinese American. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, we find that Latinos and Chinese Americans prefer candidates who share their ethnicity. Latinos are more likely than whites to choose Avalos over Lee (an increase of 0.14 in the probability of preferring Avalos; $p < .05$). Conversely, Chinese Americans are much less likely than whites to choose Avalos over Lee (a decrease of 0.34 in the probability of preferring Avalos; $p < .05$).

Figure 2 also shows the effect of shifting *Spatial Advantage* from the 25th to 75th percentile (which indicates that the more progressive candidate, Avalos, becomes relatively closer to a voter’s ideological position) among white, Latino, and Chinese American voters. For both Latinos and Chinese Americans, changing *Spatial Advantage* from the 25th to 75th percentile significantly increases the probability of choosing Avalos over Lee (an increase of 0.48 for Latinos and 0.48 for Chinese Americans; $p < .05$). Thus, the large effects of race/ethnicity that we observe do not crowd out ideological considerations. Indeed, both Latinos and Chinese Americans vote

FIGURE 2 Effects of Ideology, Race/Ethnicity, and Other Factors on Mayoral Vote Choice



Note: Predicted first differences with 95% critical intervals from Table A4 in the SI are shown. The baseline probability of preferring Avalos to Lee with all variables set to their medians is 0.43.

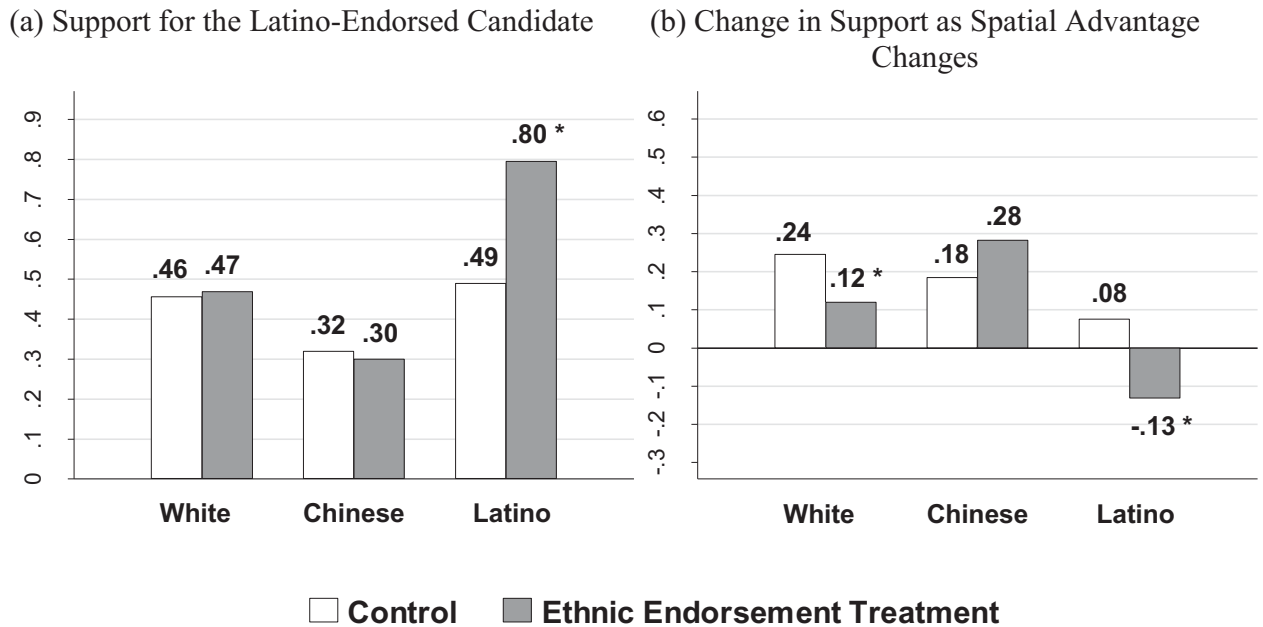
spatially, albeit with significant bias toward the candidate who shares their racial/ethnic identity.

Among whites, the baseline probability of choosing Avalos over Lee is 0.43. Consistent with Hypothesis 5, the effect of *Spatial Advantage* is positive and significant. Changing *Spatial Advantage* from the 25th to 75th percentile increases whites’ probability of choosing Avalos over Lee by 0.47 ($p < .05$). These effects of ideology are mostly larger than other factors thought to influence voters’ choices in local elections, including partisanship, race/ethnicity, and evaluations of local government performance.

In light of these strong effects of ideology, determining whether and how ethnic group endorsements change the weight voters give to spatial considerations is an important task. To this end, we estimated a probit model of voters’ pairwise choices in the experiment (see Table A5 in the SI) and converted the coefficients into predicted probabilities and first differences. Figure 3a plots the probability of supporting the candidate endorsed by the Latino Democratic Club in pairs in which the other candidate is either endorsed by the Chinese American Citizens Alliance or does not receive an endorsement.¹⁰ The endorsements have a large effect on Latinos, whose probability of supporting the candidate endorsed by the Latino Democratic Club is 0.49 in the control group and

¹⁰We combine pairs in which both candidates or only one candidate receives an endorsement because analyzing them separately produced similar results.

FIGURE 3 Effects of Ethnic Group Endorsements on Support for Mayoral Candidates



Note: Numbers are predicted probabilities and first differences from Table A5 in the SI using pairs in which one candidate is endorsed by the Latino Democratic Club.

*Difference with control is statistically significant ($p < .05$, one-tailed).

0.80 in the ethnic endorsement treatment group ($p < .05$). This increase supports Hypothesis 1.

In contrast, the ethnic group endorsements do not affect levels of support among whites or Chinese Americans. This null effect among whites could reflect either an absence of racial voting or heterogeneous responses to ethnic group endorsements. We did expect the endorsements to reduce support for the candidate endorsed by the Latino Democratic Club among Chinese Americans (in favor of the candidate endorsed by the Chinese American Citizens Alliance or the unendorsed candidate). The null effect among Chinese Americans might reflect the lack of new information conveyed by the Chinese American Citizens Alliance’s endorsements, as the group’s endorsements went to the two most prominent Chinese American candidates in the race.¹¹

Figure 3b plots the effects of changing *Spatial Advantage* from the 25th to 75th percentile (i.e., the candidate endorsed by the Latino Democratic Club becomes relatively closer to a voter’s ideological position) within the treatment and control groups. *Spatial Advantage* does not significantly affect Latinos in our control group, and providing the endorsements actually weakens spatial voting

among Latinos ($p < .05$). The endorsements have this effect because they prompt a large increase in support for Latino-endorsed candidates even among moderate Latinos whose ideological positions are closer to the other candidate.

In contrast, spatial considerations modestly influence Chinese Americans’ candidate preferences in the control group. The same change in *Spatial Advantage* increases Chinese Americans’ probability of supporting the candidate endorsed by the Latino Democratic Club by 0.18 ($p < .05$). Providing the endorsements does not significantly change this effect. This is consistent with the notion that the Chinese American Citizens Alliance’s endorsements conveyed little new information. Together, these results provide little evidence for the enhanced spatial voting predicted by Hypothesis 6. Instead, they indicate that ethnic group endorsements weaken spatial voting among Latinos, which supports Hypothesis 4.

Among whites, ethnic group endorsements also significantly weaken spatial voting. Whereas changing *Spatial Advantage* from the 25th to 75th percentile increases whites’ support for the candidate endorsed by the Latino Democratic Club by 0.24 in our control group ($p < .05$), this same change increases support by only 0.12 in our treatment group. This decrease is statistically significant ($p < .05$). What explains the puzzling pattern of results for

¹¹In the SI, we show that this null effect also reflects the inclusion of pairs in which the Chinese American Citizens Alliance made no endorsements.

white voters—weaker spatial voting but no overall change in support for the candidates? Our follow-up study during the 2012 supervisorial elections addresses this question.

Study 2: 2012 Supervisorial Elections

To shed light on the psychological mechanism that underlies white voters' reactions to ethnic group endorsements, we conducted follow-up experiments during the 2012 supervisorial election in District 7. These experiments are important because if whites react against ethnic group endorsements, such reactions may reflect racial animus or stem from other nonideological factors (e.g., protest votes against special interests backing particular candidates).

To determine whether white voters' reactions to ethnic group endorsements are driven by racial considerations, we use procedures similar to those used in Study 1. As before, we developed comparable measures of candidate and voter ideology by conducting original surveys that asked candidates to take positions on important local policy issues during the campaign. We then asked voters a subset of these survey questions on a written exit poll and estimated ideal points for candidates and voters based on their positions on these policy issues. Importantly, we also included questions that the American National Election Study (ANES) uses to measure whether voters hold positive or negative stereotypes of particular racial/ethnic groups. Specifically, we asked voters to rate Latinos and Chinese Americans on three scales ranging from 1 to 7 (*hardworking* [1] to *lazy* [7]; *intelligent* [1] to *unintelligent* [7]; *trustworthy* [1] to *untrustworthy* [7]).

Another unique feature of our follow-up study is that the Latino Democratic Club and Chinese American Citizens Alliance endorsed the same candidate (Norman Yee, a Chinese American and the most progressive among the leading candidates) in this election. This enabled us to manipulate these groups' endorsements truthfully while holding the candidate receiving the endorsement constant. Thus, when asking voters to make pairwise comparisons between the four leading candidates in this election, we randomly assigned voters to either a treatment group in which Yee received the Latino Democratic Club's endorsement, a treatment group in which Yee received the Chinese American Citizens Alliance's endorsement, or a control group in which Yee did not receive an endorsement. In this way, our experiment sheds light on how whites respond when an outgroup candidate receives a coethnic versus cross-ethnic group endorsement. If views toward these racial/ethnic groups condition whites' responses, then whites who hold negative stereo-

types of these ethnic groups will react differently to our treatments than whites who hold positive stereotypes.

Data Analysis

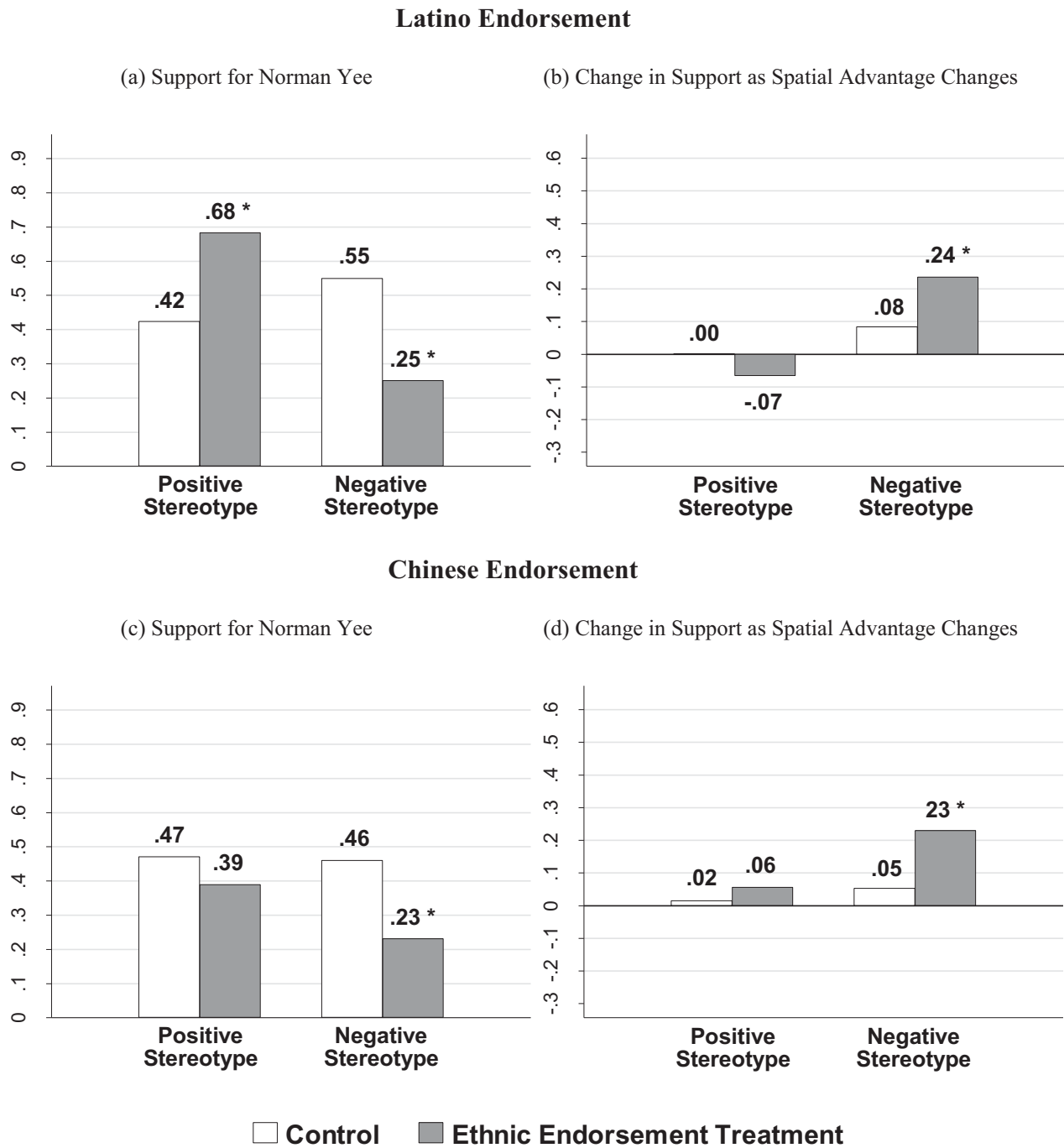
Our analysis of the effects of ethnic group endorsements on white voters in the 2012 supervisorial election is similar to the analysis of our experimental data in Study 1. The main difference is that we also include predictors that take into account whether whites hold positive or negative stereotypes of other ethnic groups. We use whites' ratings of Latinos and Chinese Americans on the three 1–7 scales that we drew from the ANES to construct additive indices that reflect how positively or negatively they view these ethnic groups.¹² This enables us to assess whether whites react favorably to endorsements from groups they view positively and/or react against endorsements from groups they view negatively (an indication that their responses are driven by racial considerations).

Results

To determine whether whites' reactions to ethnic group endorsements are driven by racial considerations, we estimated a probit model of these voters' pairwise choices in the 2012 experiment (see Table A6 in the SI) and converted the coefficients into predicted probabilities and first differences. Figure 4a plots predicted probabilities of support for Norman Yee when voters in our treatment group are told that he received the Latino Democratic Club's endorsement. As expected, whites with positive and negative stereotypes of Latinos react quite differently. Among whites who hold positive stereotypes, the probability of supporting Norman Yee increases from 0.42 in the control group to 0.68 in the treatment group ($p < .05$). Among whites who hold negative stereotypes, the probability of supporting Norman Yee decreases from 0.55 in the control group to 0.25 in the treatment group ($p < .05$). That the Latino Democratic Club's endorsement affects support for a Chinese American candidate among whites is remarkable. It shows that ethnic group endorsements can change how whites respond to a candidate's actual race/ethnicity, increasing support among whites who hold positive stereotypes of the ethnic group making the endorsement and producing a backlash among whites who hold negative stereotypes. This affirms that whites' reactions to ethnic group endorsements are driven, in part, by racial/ethnic stereotypes.

¹²Voters who score below (above) the median are considered to hold positive (negative) stereotypes. In the SI, we discuss and offer evidence for the validity of this measure.

FIGURE 4 Effects of Ethnic Group Endorsements on Whites' Support for Supervisorial Candidates



Note: Numbers are predicted probabilities and first differences from Table A6 in the SI.

*Difference with control is statistically significant ($p < .05$, one-tailed).

Figure 4c plots support for Norman Yee when voters in our treatment group are told that he received the Chinese American Citizens Alliance's endorsement. Again, whites with positive and negative stereotypes of Chinese Americans react differently. Among whites who

hold positive stereotypes, the probability of supporting Yee does not significantly change (from 0.47 in the control group to 0.39 in the treatment group). This is not entirely surprising because this endorsement is redundant with the candidate's race/ethnicity (i.e., a Chinese American

group endorsed a Chinese American candidate). Nonetheless, the stronger effect of the Latino Democratic Club's (cross-ethnic) endorsement vis-à-vis the Chinese American Citizens Alliance's (coethnic) endorsement among voters with positive stereotypes supports Hypothesis 3. Among whites who hold negative stereotypes of Chinese Americans, the probability of supporting Yee decreases significantly from 0.46 in the control group to 0.23 in the treatment group ($p < .05$). For these voters, the Chinese ethnic group endorsement prompts a backlash against Yee. This may occur because the endorsement makes Yee's ethnicity salient and/or conveys that he will represent Chinese Americans at the expense of whites (see Hajnal 2010). These results offer evidence that whites' reactions to these endorsements are race-based.

Figures 4b and 4d show the effects of these ethnic group endorsements on spatial voting. Specifically, they plot the effects of changing *Spatial Advantage* from the 25th to 75th percentile (i.e., the endorsed candidate, Norman Yee, becomes relatively closer to a voter's ideological position) within the treatment and control groups. While the Latino Democratic Club's and Chinese American Citizens Alliance's endorsements exert no change in the effect of *Spatial Advantage* among whites with positive stereotypes, they produce a significant increase in the effect of *Spatial Advantage* among whites with negative stereotypes. These results likely reflect the correlation between ideology and racial/ethnic stereotypes among this subgroup. That is, whites with negative stereotypes tend to be more moderate (right-leaning). Thus, in this context, reacting against a candidate for purely racial reasons leads more moderate voters to select candidates whose ideological positions are closer to their own (because the endorsed candidate, Yee, is progressive). For several reasons, we do not believe that these results represent enhanced spatial voting. First, the endorsements do not have similar effects on whites who hold positive stereotypes. It is unlikely that ethnic group endorsements signal different spatial information to voters with positive versus negative stereotypes. Second, the Chinese American Citizens Alliance's endorsement should convey that Yee holds moderate views, whereas the Latino Democratic Club's endorsement should convey that Yee holds progressive views. Yet these two endorsements cause the same reaction among whites with negative racial/ethnic stereotypes.

Conclusion

Our studies provide the first direct evidence of the effects of candidate race/ethnicity and ethnic group endorsements on racial and spatial voting in real-world

elections. Using original candidate surveys and exit polls, our observational analysis in Study 1 demonstrates a strong relationship between voters' policy views and those of the candidates they choose, even after accounting for the impact of race/ethnicity. However, our experimental results show that ethnic group endorsements induce Chinese Americans and Latinos to support candidates endorsed by groups that represent them, irrespective of whether such candidates share their policy views. Ethnic group endorsements also weaken spatial voting among whites, and Study 2 shows that whites' responses are rooted in their stereotypes of Chinese Americans and Latinos. That the Latino endorsement produced a backlash against a Chinese American candidate among whites who hold negative stereotypes of Latinos is especially telling. Such a backlash in a city where racial/ethnic tensions are comparatively mild indicates that the extent of racial voting could be greater in more racially polarized settings.

Our results have important methodological, practical, and normative implications. For scholars interested in understanding how race/ethnicity and ideology shape voter decision making, we show the benefits of studying elections in which these factors are less strongly correlated than at the national level (see also Abrajano, Nagler, and Alvarez 2005). In San Francisco and, we expect, many other local settings, candidates' and voters' racial/ethnic identities are less predictive of their ideological positions. Given this weak correlation, we are confident that the spatial voting we observe is driven by ideological, not racial, considerations. We also show how experiments that manipulate ethnic group endorsements in these settings can improve our understanding of the effects of racial/ethnic cues, including their ability to enhance or weaken spatial voting—an outcome that previous research on this topic rarely examines.

For practitioners interested in how race/ethnicity can influence local election outcomes, our experiments—the first to manipulate ethnic group endorsements in real-world elections—are especially relevant. Such endorsements are interesting because, unlike physical attributes, they are things candidates can control. Our results indicate that ethnic group endorsements present candidates with a catch-22. On the one hand, Chinese Americans and Latinos respond positively to candidates who are endorsed by groups that represent them. Similarly, the positive reactions of some whites indicate that ethnic group endorsements, especially from groups who do not share a candidate's racial/ethnic identity, can provide a signal of racial harmony. These positive reactions explain why candidates in local elections might seek and advertise these endorsements. On the other hand, whites with negative stereotypes react against these ethnic groups'

endorsements. If alienating such voters is a concern, it could lead candidates to forego seeking the support of racial/ethnic groups or, worse, exploit the divisions such ethnic group endorsements might cause. Our results also suggest the challenges that racial/ethnic groups may face when mobilizing support for coethnic candidates via endorsements. For example, the Chinese American Citizens Alliance's endorsement of the Chinese American candidate, Yee, reduced his support among whites with negative stereotypes of this group without offsetting gains among whites who view the group positively.

What implications do our results have for normative concerns about representation? On the one hand, racial voting tends to privilege descriptive over substantive representation. While electing candidates who have a common racial/ethnic identity might lead to policy changes favored by a racial/ethnic community, no consensus exists on the value of descriptive representation or the factors that affect its likelihood (Gay 2007; Juenke and Shah 2016; Marschall, Ruhil, and Shah 2010). It is also plausible that substantive interests will suffer if candidates' policy views are consistently out of step with those of voters. On the other hand, descriptive representation has other benefits. These include improvements in the quality of deliberation, political mobilization, and larger shares of government appointments, contracts, and jobs (Swers and Rouse 2011).

That ethnic group endorsements elicit mostly race-based responses can inform future studies of candidate strategy in local elections. Under what circumstances will candidates seek ethnic group endorsements, and when will the electoral benefits of these endorsements outweigh their costs? Future research might also assess the effects of ethnic group endorsements on local officials' behavior, including whether they serve as "substantive" representatives. Their ability to do so can shed light on whether and how growing populations of Latinos and Asian Americans will influence the activities of local governments and, with it, the future of American cities.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of the article.

- Demographic Characteristics
- Sample Exit Poll Surveys
- Model for Observational Results
- Models for Experimental Results
- Expert Ratings of Ethnic Interest Groups
- Experimental Results for Three Restricted Samples
- Ideological Differences among Elites in San Francisco
- Effects of Party Cues versus Ethnic Group Endorsements
- Validity of Stereotypes Measure
- Effects of Ethnic Group Endorsements on Chinese Americans