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Promoting Ethnic Equality In Campaign Messages: Survey Experimental Evidence From Nairobi, Kenya

By: **Hye-Sung Kim**

Abstract

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Promoting ethnic equality in campaign messages: Survey experimental evidence from Nairobi, Kenya

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

In urban sub-Saharan Africa, leaders should appeal to voters of diverse ethnic backgrounds for electoral success. Yet, the political salience of ethnic inequality demands their attention to ethnicity issues in campaign messaging. This study examines the impacts on voter preference of appeals to ethnic equality by using a conjoint experiment conducted in Nairobi, Kenya. Appeals to ethnic equality were varied randomly as follows: (1) no appeal to ethnic equality, (2) appeals to equal opportunities for all ethnic groups (pan-ethnic appeal), and (3) appeals to opportunities for ethnic minorities (pro-minority appeal). The study found a substantial increase in support for politicians making appeals to ethnic equality, while pan-ethnic appeals increased voter support for candidates more than pro-minority appeals. Pan-ethnic appeals were more effective than pro-minority appeals because they bolster support from co-ethnic voters who are also from the candidate's party, while not alienating non-co-ethnic voters or voters affiliated with other parties.

1. Introduction

In societies with salient ethnic cleavage, ethnically based party competition often mirrors existing ethnic divisions as these parties draw their support predominantly from their ethnic groups (Horowitz, 1985). Whether ethnic mobilization by appealing to the interests of one's own ethnic group is an effective electoral strategy in increasing voter support, however, depends on multiple factors such as the electoral system, the ethnic group's population size, assimilation of the ethnic group to the majority population, and the group's geographic concentration (Moser, 2008). In particular, electoral rules can interact with existing ethnic divisions to affect how parties compete in elections (Ferree et al., 2019; 2014; Lijphart, 2004; Milazzo et al., 2018; Moser and Scheiner, 2012). For example, in a single member district (SMD) system, we expect ethnic diversity and the absence of a dominant ethnic group to limit politicians' dependence on ethnic mobilization because support from a single ethnic group alone will not provide sufficient votes to win a seat (Moser 2008).

In many sub-Saharan African countries (SSAs), ethnic division and its political salience have persisted and ethnicity has been an important determinant of both voter and candidate behavior (Adida, 2015; Bates, 1974; Carlson, 2015; Conroy-Krutz, 2013; Gutiérrez-Romero, 2013; Posner, 2005; Wantchekon, 2003). Yet, two thirds of SSAs have no ethnic majority and are highly ethnically diverse (Fearon, 2003).

Politicians in SMD systems with existing ethnic divisions that also lack an ethnic majority are likely to face a dilemma: (a) appeal to widespread sentiment of ethnic inequality driven by intense ethnic competition while (b) avoiding overt ethnic appeals to their own ethnic group, which alienates voters from other ethnic groups. Politicians in urban settings in SSA face this dilemma more frequently because urban areas are generally ethnically diverse with no dominant ethnic group due to rural-urban migration, while the sense of ethnic inequality prevails among urban voters due to nation-wide ethnic competition. Given this dilemma, what campaign messages do leaders in ethnically diverse democracies in urban SSA use to appeal to voters of diverse ethnic backgrounds?

A number of studies have examined the impact of different types of campaign messaging on voter support in sub-Saharan Africa, including appeals to clientelism (Wantchekon, 2003), vote-buying (Vicente and Wantchekon, 2009), appeals to ethnic grievances (Horowitz and Klaus, 2018), and religious messages (McClendon and Riedl, 2015). However, the appeal of campaign messages directly addressing ethnic inequality to voters from various ethnic groups has rarely been tested empirically in this literature, despite it being a highly politically salient issue. In SSAs, politicians cannot focus entirely on non-ethnic messages because there is a widespread belief that resources and opportunities are not distributed equally across different ethnic groups (Lindberg, 2013). Instead, addressing the need for equal distribution of resources and opportunities across different ethnic groups to diverse ethnic

communities is an effective strategy for increasing voter support and is in fact a common practice in elections in SSAs.

This study focuses on Kenya, a country composed of more than 40 ethnic groups, where repeated interethnic electoral violence has made ethnicity politically salient. Kenya has a SMD electoral system with plurality winners for parliamentary elections.[1] A survey experiment was conducted in Kenya's highly urbanized, ethnically diverse capital city Nairobi to test whether addressing the issue of ethnic inequality in campaign messages increases voter support more than focusing entirely on non-ethnic messages in an ethnically diverse, SMD constituency. Various campaign messages in Kenya show that two types of messages are commonly used in addressing the issue of ethnic inequality. The first, which I call "pan-ethnic appeals," refers to making promises that the benefits of public policies will be inclusive of all ethnic groups and provide equal opportunities to everyone. The second type, which I call "pro-minority appeals," refers to promises of equal opportunities to minority groups that have been marginalized and lack political and economic power. Therefore, this study examines which type of ethnic equality message, pan-ethnic or pro-minority appeals, is more effective in increasing voter support in urban, diverse settings in SSAs. To address this question, I use a conjoint experiment where hypothetical office-seeking candidates use campaign messages where various elements in the messages vary randomly including the type of ethnic equality appeal.

2. Political salience of ethnicity and appeals to ethnic equality in Kenya

As in many other African democracies, ethnicity remains a politically salient factor in Kenya (Horowitz and Klaus, 2018). Kenya has experienced long-lasting interethnic competition and antagonism between groups such as the Kikuyu and Kalenjin communities in the Rift Valley, which has erupted into repeated interethnic electoral violence. Vote-seeking politicians may even foster such violence by appealing to the interests of their own ethnic group and inciting antagonism against the competing ethnic group (Lynch, 2014). Kenya's multi-party transition might have reinforced competition between ethnic groups, as indicated by ethnic violence in the run-up to the 1992 and 1997 elections leading ethnicity to be "the primary cleavage" in Kenya's electoral results (Ndegwa, 1997; Miguel and Gugerty, 2005).

When ethnicity is politically salient, appealing to co-ethnic voters is an effective means for candidates to boost support from within their ethnic group (Adida, 2015; Posner, 2005). However, it is not an effective electoral strategy for increasing overall voter support in ethnically diverse environments because it excludes voters outside their own ethnic group where the majority of voters are not their co-ethnic peers. In ethnically diverse settings, people inevitably interact more with other ethnic groups than in ethnically segregated environments and this interaction can foster inter-ethnic trust (Kasara, 2013), or a sense of shared national identity, which could become more salient than ethnic identity (Robinson, 2016). Moreover, voters who live in urban environments may come to dislike ethnic favoritism as it is against inclusive social norms (Horowitz and Kim, 2019). Therefore, politicians should appeal to voters beyond their ethnic groups in ethnically diverse settings - particularly in urban areas - to increase their probability of being elected.

2.1. Appeal to ethnic equality

When the ideas of ethnic inequality and favoritism are so deeply embedded in the political culture that certain policy positions have associations with certain ethnic groups, as they do in Kenya, voters are not likely to separate politics as usual from ethnic issues. In such circumstances, focusing only on politics as usual without addressing the politically salient issue of ethnic inequality, and without specifying which ethnic groups will benefit from new policies, may come across as avoidance of important and relevant valence issues. Rather, it is more effective for politicians trying to reach multiple ethnic groups to address the salient issue of ethnic inequality directly, and to make references to which ethnic groups are the targeted beneficiaries of their proposals.

In Kenya, politicians introducing policies without referring to ethnic inequality during election campaigns is rare. They often frame their proposed policies as their effort to create equality across ethnic groups. For example, during the Jubilee Coalition's 2013 election rally in Rift Valley, after Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto[2] proposed their implementation plan of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) project – allocating "one hundred million [Kenyan shillings] in every constituency every year" – a local politician Jubilee member summarized their effort as bringing equality in Kenya:

> Uhuru wants to bring equality in Kenya. He wants Turkana, Garisa, Mandera, Uasin Gishu and Kiambu to be equal.[3]

Another example also illustrates how politicians frame policy issues as a tool to address ethnic inequality. One of the central issues in the run-up to Kenya's 2013 election was devolution, which was institutionalized in Kenya's 2010 constitution to decentralize government power by creating 47 County governments. The 2013 election was to elect the first County governments under the new constitution. A Jubilee Coalition's campaign rally in Eldoret illustrates how politicians frame devolution in addressing ethnic inequality. Eldoret is not only ethnically diverse as the Kalenjin, Kikuyu, Luhya, Luo and Kisii people reside together but the past ethnic clashes between the Kalenjin and Kikuyu over unequal distribution of land have made ethnic inequality politically salient in Eldoret. In his campaign speech, William Ruto first primed voters to think of the salience of ethnic politics in Eldoret by telling them that Jubilee promotes multi-ethnic peace and national unity and then proposed plans for the devolved government to create equality:

> We are the only political party, the only coalition which has made a conscious decision and allocated 40% of all our resources for devolution […] In Jubilee government, we will create equality. We are allocating 40% for devolution.[4]

2.2. Pan-ethnic appeal vs. pro-minority appeal

Two common types of campaign messages frequently used by Kenyan politicians to address the ethnic inequality prevalent in their country are: (1) *"pan-ethnic appeals,"* that are intended to be inclusive of all ethnic groups and frame policy issues so that they concern all ethnic groups, not just selected groups, and indicate that the proposed policies will benefit all ethnic communities, and (2) *"pro-minority appeals,"* that utilize rhetorical tactics to appeal to underprivileged minorities by emphasizing that certain ethnic groups have been marginalized and

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[1] For presidential elections, a winner should receive over 50% of all votes and over 25% of votes in more than half of all counties.

[2] Uhuru Kenyatta was elected president and William Ruto became the deputy president in this election.

[3] This excerpt was from the news recording of a campaign speech during the Jubilee rally in Rift Valley in 2013. See https://youtu.be/LSkZ7nNo9dI. Some of these counties such as Turkana, Garisa and Mandera are known as the most politically and economically marginalized and are predominantly made of a single ethnic group, namely the Turkana people in Turkana County, the Somalis people in Garisa and Mandera Counties.

[4] This excerpt was from the recording of a campaign speech during the 2013 election rally by the Jubilee Coalition in Eldoret in February. See https://youtu.be/iETHNOgnh3I. The original speeches used in this manuscript were given primarily in Swahili and translated by a research assistant.

that, in the interests of fairness, a particular policy correction that promote equal opportunity to minority groups would be prudent.

An excerpt from the Jubilee Alliance's campaign rally speech in Kisii County in 2013, given by presidential candidate Uhuru Kenyatta, neatly illustrates an example of a pan-ethnic appeal:

> We cannot divide Kenyans along tribal lines because the problems faced by Kenyans are the same everywhere whether one is Kikuyu, Kisii, Kalenjin, Masai or Luo. We want to ensure that the youth have investments. We want good roads, good medical care for women. This is what Kenyans need, and I am here today to kindly ask you to support me on this agenda.[5]

A quote presented earlier from the Jubilee's 2013 election rally in Rift Valley is a good example of a pro-minority appeal that promotes equal opportunities to underprivileged minorities. An additional excerpt from the National Super Alliance (NASA)'s flag bearer Raila Odinga's speech during its campaign rally in Nairobi in the run up to the 2017 election also illustrates a pro-minority appeal. The speech first focused on increased inequality and poverty across Kenya, which Odinga attributed to the corruption and tribal politics of the Jubilee government:

> Then the issue of water … Take a tour to Kajiado, to Narok, to Garissa, to Wajir, to Marsabit, to Turkana and to some sides of Lamu. Then you can tell Uhuru that he is lying who says that poverty is over. Hasn't poverty increased?

There are at least two reasons why we may think pan-ethnic appeals can increase voters' support more than pro-minority appeals. First, pan-ethnic appeals can reach a broader swath of Kenyans as they may believe they are the beneficiaries, while pro-minority appeals can reach only those who think they are part of a minority group. Second, although pro-minority appeals do not necessarily target co-ethnics exclusively, it can have divisive and polarizing effects as the appeal can make a clear division between those who have been privileged and those who have not. Where ethnicity has been so deeply embedded in the politics of "who gets what" (Lindberg, 2013) as in Kenya, proposed policies that appear to target certain ethnic groups will be inseparable from the groups to which they appeal, making ethnic division more salient. Due to such divisive effects, appealing to ethnic groups' resentments or grievances have been a tactic political elites have used to mobilize individuals to participate in ethnic-based violence (Horowitz, 1985; Cederman et al., 2013; Bormann et al., 2017). However, recent studies on Kenya suggest that Kenya's urban voters show distaste toward co-ethnic politicians showing favoritism toward their own groups due to social norms against ethnic politics (Horowitz and Kim, 2019) and find no evidence of citizens having ethnic favoritism or "co-ethnic bias" in behavioral games (Berge et al., 2020). Therefore, pro-minority appeals that appear to be more divisive as targeting only a few may be conflicting with growing, inclusive social norms in urban Kenya and would not be as attractive to them as pan-ethnic appeals that are more universal and inclusive.

I generate two hypotheses for urban voters in Kenya, one regarding the overall equality appeal and another comparing the effectiveness of pan-ethnic and pro-minority appeals.

Hypothesis 1. A candidate directly addressing the issue of ethnic inequality in one's campaign message will increase voter support for the candidate, compared to candidates focusing only on non-ethnic issues.

Hypothesis 2. Pan-ethnic appeals will be more effective in increasing

voter support than pro-minority appeals**.**

3. Research design

To test the effectiveness of pan-ethnic and pro-minority appeals on the preferences of voters from diverse ethnic groups, I conducted a survey experiment embedded in a larger public opinion survey in Nairobi in July 2014.[6] Specifically, I used conjoint analysis in an experimental design as it allows researchers to draw causal inferences from among seemingly interconnected factors (Hainmueller et al., 2014), such as a politician's ethnic affiliation, use of ethnic favoritism, and policy positions. Hence, a conjoint experimental design allows me to isolate and compare the effectiveness of pan-ethnic and pro-minority appeals in increasing voter support separately from the effectiveness of other candidate attributes impacting voter preference.

3.1. Sampling

The survey was carried out through person-to-person interviews. To produce a reasonably representative sample of the Nairobi population, I used a multi-stage, stratified random sampling method with all 17 parliamentary constituencies in Nairobi as the strata. In the first stage, I selected 4 to 5 sampling points per stratum, using the 2013 election's polling station list as a master frame for the sampling point. In the second stage, the enumerators randomly selected households to interview by following a random walk and skip pattern. In the last stage, enumerators created a household roster of the selected household that included any currently present household members who were at least 18 years old. One respondent from the household roster was randomly selected, and the interview began upon the informed consent of the respondent. A total of 902 respondents completed the survey.

3.2. Experimental design

In the experiments, each respondent was presented with a short prompt about a pair of hypothetical parliamentary candidates running for office in the next parliamentary election and the prompt was read by the survey enumerator. A conjoint experimental design was used in which the description of each candidate was composed of eleven attributes, randomly varying among multiple elements (i.e., levels). Each description began with the attributes of the candidate's ethnic affiliation[7] followed by profession, years of experience, party affiliation, education vs. health policy positions, programmatic vs. non-programmatic policy appeals, ethnic equality appeals, education level, wealth level, religion, and secondary school attended. Table A1 in Supplementary Materials (SI) provides the lists of the possible elements (i.e., levels) each candidate attribute could have, and Table A2 in SI presents an example of a full script. Each respondent repeated the experiment five times, with different candidate pairs.

Among these attributes, the primary interest of this study were the types of campaign messages on ethnic equality, which varied among three conditions, namely, the *control condition*, *pan-ethnic appeal* and *pro-minority appeal*. The exact wording of the pan-ethnic and pro-minority appeals depended on what value was assigned to the candidate's

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policy position attribute, which varied between *health* and *education*. The prompts for the different *ethnic equality appeals* each started with a common lead-in, followed by the type of *policy appeal* varying between *programmatic public policy* and *non-programmatic local public goods provision*. In the following examples illustrating each of the three types of campaign appeal, *education* was preselected as the *policy position attribute* and a *programmatic policy appeal* was selected for type of *policy appeal attribute*. First, the control condition does not include any message on ethnic equality in the candidate's message. On the other hand, the pan-ethnic appeal condition indicates "every social, ethnic group" will have an equal opportunity in the proposed policy. The prompt is worded as follows:

> [He] added that it is very important for all adolescents to have equal opportunities of having access to universal secondary education, and said that he will make sure the children from *every social, ethnic group* in the constituency will have an equal opportunity to get secondary education.

The pro-minority appeal condition is designed to appeal to politically and economically marginalized ethnic groups who feel that they have been unfairly treated by the government, though the targeted ethnic group does not have to be the candidate's own. This condition indicates that "under-privileged social, ethnic groups" will have equal opportunities in the proposed policy. The prompt is worded as follows:

> [He] added that it is very important for all adolescents to have equal opportunities of having access to the universal secondary education, and said that he will make sure the children from *under-privileged social, ethnic groups* in the constituency will have an equal opportunity to get secondary education.

Immediately after being read a description of a pair of candidates, respondents were asked a question that measured support for each candidate, which was later used as an outcome measure when identifying the causal effect of each attribute on support for a given politician. The question was "Which candidate would you choose if an election were held tomorrow?" The candidate chosen by the respondent was coded as 1, while the unselected candidate was coded as 0.

3.3. Estimation

Following Hainmueller et al. (2014), I used respondent-round-candidate as the unit of analysis in the estimation stage. As there were 902 respondents who completed the experiment, each respondent was presented with five different candidate pairs; with two candidates each time, the completed dataset had 9,020 (902 × 5 × 2) observations.

The random assignment of all eleven attributes, which were orthogonal in the conjoint experiment, allowed us to estimate the relative causal effect of each attribute's value (i.e., average marginal component effects [AMCE]) on voter preference (Hainmueller et al., 2014). Each value's relative causal effect represented the expected change in the probability that a respondent would support the candidate, when a given value for the candidate attribute was selected in comparison with its reference value (Hainmueller et al., 2014).

In presenting the AMCEs of each value of all eleven attributes, I created new variables called "co-ethnic" and "party affiliation" whose AMCEs I report here, rather than those of each of the five candidate ethnicities (Kikuyu, Luo, Luhya, Kalenjin, Kamba), and those of three party labels (The National Alliance (TNA), The Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), Independent). The reason is that, theoretically, what affects a respondent's preference and ultimate decision is whether a candidate belongs to the respondent's own group (the same ethnicity or party) rather than with which, among multiple ethnic groups or parties, a candidate affiliates. The variable "co-ethnic" takes the value of 1 if the randomly assigned candidate's ethnicity is the same as the respondent's

ethnicity, and it takes 0 otherwise. Similarly, the variable "party affiliation" takes the value of 1 if the candidate's randomly assigned party is the same as the party with which the respondent feels most closely affiliated, and it is 0 otherwise. After presenting the AMCEs using the entire sample, I also provide sub-group analyses to examine whether the effectiveness of different types of ethnic messages on respondents' preferences is robust to different types of voters.

4. Main results

Fig. 1 presents the AMCE of each attribute's individual values on voter preference (Hainmueller et al., 2014).[8] When all attributes are held at the baseline category, the probability that a respondent would support the candidate is approximately 36%. As for the AMCEs of "pan-ethnic" and "pro-minority" appeals on respondent support for a hypothetical parliamentary candidate, both appeals increased support from the respondent compared with making no appeal to ethnic equality, while pan-ethnic appeals were more effective in increasing support than pro-minority appeals. Pan-ethnic appeals increased support for a candidate by 12.1 percentage points in comparison to the control condition, when no ethnic equality appeal is made. Pro-minority appeals increased support by 7.8 percentage points when compared to the absence of any ethnic equality message, a still sizable boost in support for the politician but less than that associated with the pan-ethnic message. The difference in the effectiveness between the two types of appeal, 4.3 percentage points, was statistically significant ($p = 0.002$). The results are shown by pooling across all five rounds of the experiment, while accounting for within-subject correlations by using cluster standard errors by respondent.

Furthermore, comparing the relative causal effects of all attributes in the study confirms the effectiveness of ethnic equality appeals, particularly pan-ethnic appeal. The AMCE of pan-ethnic messaging (12.1%) was larger than that of any other candidate attribute, including party affiliation (7.7%) and co-ethnicity (6.3%). Having many years of experience (25 years as opposed to fifteen years) increased the relative causal effect on support for the candidate by 4 percentage points. The AMCEs of all other categories were not significantly different from 0.

The findings showed that directly addressing ethnic inequality increased support from the respondents to a large extent. Pan-ethnic appeals were not only more effective in increasing support than pro-minority appeals, but also more effective than all other candidate attributes considered in this experiment.

5. Alternative explanations

The main results can potentially be driven by reasons other than voters' preferences for ethnic inclusiveness. These include "dog-whistle" effects, social desirability bias and learning effects.

5.1. "Dog-whistle" effects

A challenge to internal validity arises if a respondent interprets these ethnic equality messages as a coded message behind a candidate's seemingly neutral statements. Some respondents might believe that a candidate cannot make a targeted ethnic appeal, but will maintain that once elected, the public policy will actually benefit the respondent's ethnic group regardless of the message. This is similar to a "dog-whistle" effect in US politics, which is somewhat consistent with the view of the instrumentalist ethnic voting theory: voters expect that benefits will come from an elected, co-ethnic candidate, and politicians expect that votes and support will come from co-ethnic voters (Carlson, 2015; Conroy-Krutz, 2013; Dunning and Harrison, 2010; Posner, 2005).

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[8] Table A3 in SI provides balance test results across the three conditions of inclusive messages, the control, pan-ethnic, and pro-minority appeals.
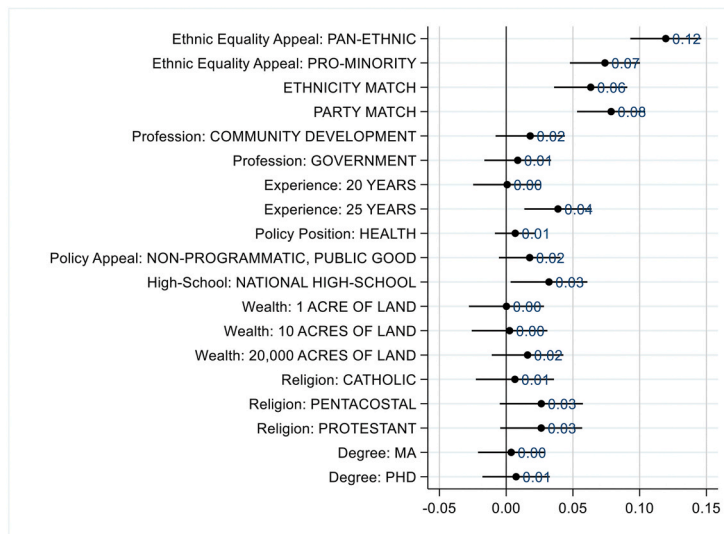
Notes. N = 9,020. Constant=0.36. Point estimates and their 95% confidence intervals are presented. Cluster standard errors are used at the respondent level. The baseline category for ethnic equality appeal is the control condition (no content); the baseline category for profession is a businessperson; the baseline category for experience is the lowest level, 15 years; the baseline category for policy position is education policy; the baseline category for the policy appeal between programmatic public policy and local public good is programmatic public policy; the baseline category for high school is a non-national high school; the baseline category for wealth is no information on the candidate's wealth; the baseline category for religion is no information on the candidate's religion; the baseline category for degree is a BA degree.

Fig. 1. Average marginal component effects for all attributes.

Once ethnicity is highlighted by the surname of the candidate that signals the candidate's ethnicity, voters from a politician's ethnic group may be primed to think about coded language. If voters assume that benefits will come from an elected, co-ethnic candidate, we expect either pan-ethnic or pro-minority appeals will increase support among those from the politician's ethnic group. From the non-co-ethnic voter's perspective, however, if the campaign message was nothing but signaling a coded-language, any promise to benefit every ethnic group or minority group would be understood as disingenuous. If non-co-ethnic voters do not trust the benefits promised by non-co-ethnic candidates, the effect of either pan-ethnic or pro-minority appeal on voter support will not be positive.

To test if ethnic equality appeals signal ethnically coded-language, I estimated a model that includes pan-ethnic and pro-minority appeal and their interactions with ethnicity match (See Fig. 2). Among candidates' non-co-ethnic respondents (the baseline estimates), the pan-ethnic message and pro-minority message increased support for politicians by 12 and 7 percentage points respectively, and the estimates were statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. The interaction terms between ethnicity-match and each equality appeal were not significant, suggesting that making appeals to ethnic equality increased support for politicians not only from co-ethnics but also from non-co-ethnic respondents and that each equality appeal is no more effective among co-ethnic voters than among non-co-ethnic voters. Therefore, "dog-whistle" effects are not supported by this result.

5.2. Surveyor-respondent interaction

Survey research conducted in sub-Saharan Africa on the topics of ethnic preferences and favoritism has produced suggestive evidence showing that respondents' answers can be affected by what appears to be desirable according to existing social norms (Adida et al., 2016; Carlson, 2015, 2016). In Kenya, using explicitly ethnically targeted rhetoric is also often seen as inappropriate and, therefore, the substantial effect of the pan-ethnic appeal, a more inclusive type of message, can

possibly be explained by social desirability bias. Carlson (2016) suggested that social desirability bias regarding ethnic voting increases with priming for ethnic voting, in public, and when being observed by non-co-ethnics.

To mitigate the potential social desirability bias due to priming, this study first avoided directly telling the respondents the candidates' ethnicities but varied the surname of each candidate among typical ethnic surnames to subtly signal the ethnicity of the candidate, the method that has been used in other studies on Kenya (Gutie'rrez-Romero and Lebas, 2020; Horowitz and Klaus, 2018) to mitigate social desirability bias due to priming. Second, I controlled for the "respondent-surveyor pair" fixed effects to account for the possibility that the interaction between a surveyor and respondent may affect the way respondents reveal their preferences, as an alternative approach to controlling for the surveyor-respondent ethnicity match (Carlson, 2016; Adida et al., 2016). The AMCE estimates of pan-ethnic and pro-minority appeals after controlling for the respondent-surveyor pair fixed effects are 0.14 and 0.93, respectively, and each estimate and the difference in the estimates based on the Wald test are all significant at p < 0.01, showing a robust result (See Fig. 3).

5.3. Learning effects

It is possible that social desirability bias increases with each additional round if respondents become more aware of what is being tested (Carlson, 2016) as the earlier rounds may prime them to form their expectation that the experiment tests the difference between inclusive and more divisive appeals. To account for the possible variation in the estimated effects of pan-ethnic and pro-minority appeals across different rounds, I controlled for the round fixed effects and their interaction terms with each ethnic equality appeal. The marginal effects of both pan-ethnic and pro-minority appeals for each round are shown in Fig. 4.

The findings suggest that, first, if we focus only on the first round result, which is least likely to be affected by learning effects, we do not see a statistically significant difference in the effectiveness of pan-ethnic
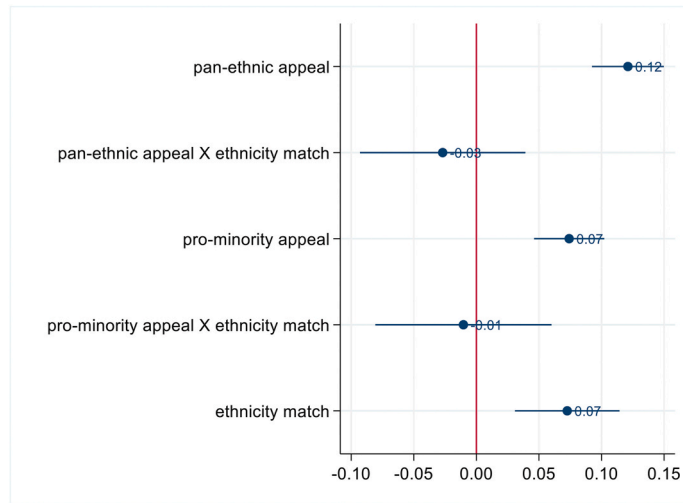
Notes. Point estimates and their 95% confidence intervals are presented. Cluster standard errors by respondents are in parentheses. Constant and other variable estimates included but not shown.

Fig. 2. Testing "dog-whistle" effects.
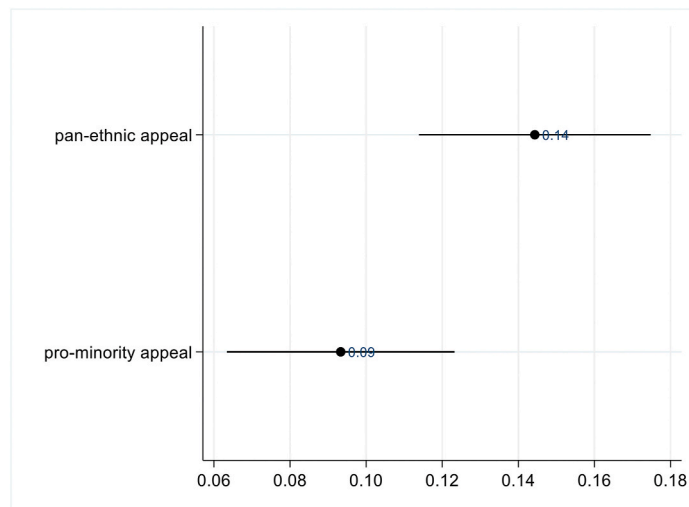
Notes. Point estimates and their 95% confidence intervals are presented. Respondent-surveyor pair fixed effects are controlled for. Constant and all other attribute estimates are not shown.

Fig. 3. Respondent-surveyor fixed effects.

and pro-minority appeals in increasing voter support. Given the sizable effect of the pan-ethnic appeal throughout all rounds including the first round, however, the positive effect of pan-ethnic appeal is not likely to be driven entirely by social desirability bias or a learning effect.

Second, the variation in the pro-minority appeal's estimate and the difference in the estimates of the two appeals are not robust to different rounds. The difference in the two appeals was significant in the second round at p = 0.078, fourth round (at p = 0.044) and fifth round (p = 0.042) round based on the Wald tests.

Third, while the AMCEs of pan-ethnic appeal were larger in the fourth and fifth round compared to the earlier rounds, none of the pairwise comparisons in the AMCE of the pan-ethnic appeal across different rounds showed statistically significant difference. Therefore, although the possibility of a learning effect cannot be disregarded completely, no significant linear increase in the ACME of the pan-ethnic appeal and no

significant linear decrease in the ACME of the pro-minority appeal suggest that a learning effect is not likely to be an important driver of the overall effectiveness of pan-ethnic appeals as opposed to pro-minority appeals.

6. Difference in effectiveness between pan-ethnic and pro-minority appeals

What, then, accounts for pan-ethnic appeals being more effective in increasing voter support than pro-minority appeals? One explanation is that the respondents, on average, prefer a message that is more inclusive than the less inclusive message. However, other plausible alternative explanations also exist. First, as expected in an earlier section, we can observe an overall pattern where the pan-ethnic appeal increases voter support more than the pro-minority appeal even when voters are
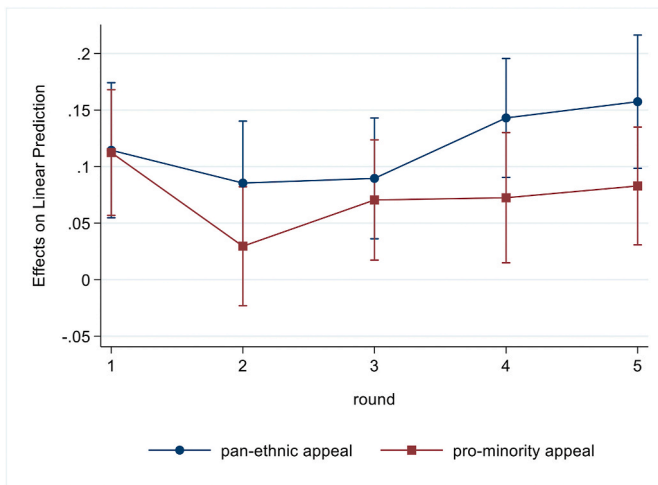
Fig. 4. Marginal effects of pan-ethnic and pro-minority appeals by round.

motivated by ethnically targeted benefits, if more respondents in the study are from large and relatively well-off ethnic groups who do not consider themselves as minorities. To them, the pro-minority appeals may appear to only benefit minority groups. Second, it is also possible that the overall effectiveness of pan-ethnic appeals relative to pro-minority appeals may be a result of a larger backlash effect of the pro-minority appeal when voters find the message to be conflicting with their expectation based on the candidate's ethnicity and party attributes. Because pro-minority appeals may appear as a targeted message, voters can find pro-minority appeals to be beneficial to them only when co-ethnic politicians from their party make such appeals. When either non-co-ethnic candidates or candidates of opposition parties make pro-minority appeals, on the other hand, they may find them inconsistent with their beliefs and therefore disingenuous.

6.1. Affluent groups' motivation for more material gain

To examine whether the greater effectiveness of pan-ethnic appeals relative to that of pro-minority appeals was driven by the preferences of the large and affluent ethnic groups, I present the AMCEs of both pan-ethnic and pro-minority appeals by ethnic group in Fig. 5 to examine this possibility. The results show that the respondents from the two largest ethnic groups, Kikuyu and Luhya, had substantially and significantly lower support for a candidate making pro-minority appeals as opposed to those making pan-ethnic appeals. For respondents from the third largest ethnic group, the Luo, pro-minority appeals have no significant effect on increasing support and the effectiveness of pan-ethnic appeals was larger than that of pro-minority appeals (at $p < 0.1$). For the fourth largest group, Kalenjin, the pro-minority appeal had a larger ACME than the pan-ethnic appeal, although neither the estimate nor the difference was statistically significant. For smaller groups such as Kamba and Kisii, both equality appeals were effective while the difference was not statistically significant.

Note that only the Kikuyu consisting of approximately 22% of Kenya's and 35% of Nairobi's population is typically known as the most affluent group. Furthermore, according to the Afrobarometer survey,[9] Kikuyu and Kalenjin are the two ethnic groups of which the majority of respondents (59% and 61%, respectively) believe they are never treated unfairly by the government. For the Luhya and Luo, much less *35%* and *15%* thought they were never unfairly treated by the government, while

32% and 45% of their respondents thought they were either *often* of *always* unfairly treated by the government. Given that many of the Luo believe that they are a marginalized group, the results suggesting that the pro-minority appeal was not effective in increasing voter support among the Luo respondents was not consistent with this alternative explanation.

6.2. Backlash between ethnicity, party and equality appeals

To test whether there is a larger backlash effect of pro-minority appeal compared to pan-ethnic appeal due to conflicting messages caused by a candidate's ethnicity and party combinations, an additional analysis was conducted by fully interacting each equality appeal with ethnicity-match and party-match. The estimation results are shown in Fig. 6. First, there was no backlash effect of pro-minority appeal neither by the candidate's ethnicity nor by party mismatch. Second, while not having any backlash effect from either a party or ethnic mismatch, a pan-ethnic appeal significantly bolsters voter support when the appeal was made by a co-ethnic candidate from the same party.

For example, a pan-ethnic appeal made by a non-co-ethnic candidate from a different party was large and significant (13 percentage point, p-value < 0.01), so that when the appeal was made by a co-ethnic candidate from a different party, the pan-ethnic appeal still increased support from voters (5.8 percentage points, p-value = 0.086) relative to making no equality appeal despite a decrease in its effectiveness. When made by a non-co-ethnic candidate from the same-party, the pan-ethnic appeal still increased voter support by 8.7 percentage points (p-value < 0.05) compared to when no equality appeal was made. Pan-ethnic appeals made by co-ethnic, same-party candidates further increases support from voters by 24.5 percentage points compared to when the appeal was made by a non-co-ethnic candidate from a different party and by 37.8 percentage points (p-value <0.01) compared to when no equality appeal was made (p-value < 0.001). Therefore, the potential backlash between ethnicity, party and equality appeals does not explain why we found pan-ethnic appeals to be more effective in increasing voter support than pro-minority appeals overall. Rather, pan-ethnic appeals were more effective than pro-minority appeals overall because while pan-ethnic appeals do not alienate voters due to ethnic or party affiliations, they bolster support from co-ethnic voters from the same-party.

7. Conclusions

In SSA, ethnic-voting is less prevalent in urban areas compared to rural areas (Green, 2014; Robinson, 2014; Conroy-Krutz, 2009). Yet, even in the urban context, the sense of ethnic inequality is prevalent and politicians make campaign appeals to promote equal opportunities across ethnic groups. This study has conducted a conjoint experiment in Kenya's capital city, Nairobi and examined the effectiveness of making two types of equality appeals, appeals to equal opportunities for all ethnic groups (*pan-ethnic appeal*) and appeals to opportunities for ethnic minorities (*pro-minority appeal*).

This study has found that the pan-ethnic appeal has a substantially large and statistically significant effect on increasing voter support and that the effect of the pan-ethnic appeal was never smaller than that of the pro-minority appeal in any sub-group analysis. This result is not driven by stronger preferences among the larger and well-off groups for policies that promise to reward them (pan-ethnic appeal), as opposed to policies that promise to benefit a different ethnic group (pro-minority appeal). The result is also not driven by a larger backlash effect of the pro-minority appeal when a candidate's ethnicity and party convey that the voters are not the beneficiaries of the proposed policies. Instead, the results suggest that a pan-ethnic appeal is more effective than a pro-minority appeal in increasing support as it bolsters support from co-ethnic voters from the same-party while not alienating non-co-ethnic voters or voters from different parties.

This study makes two contributions to the existing literature. First,
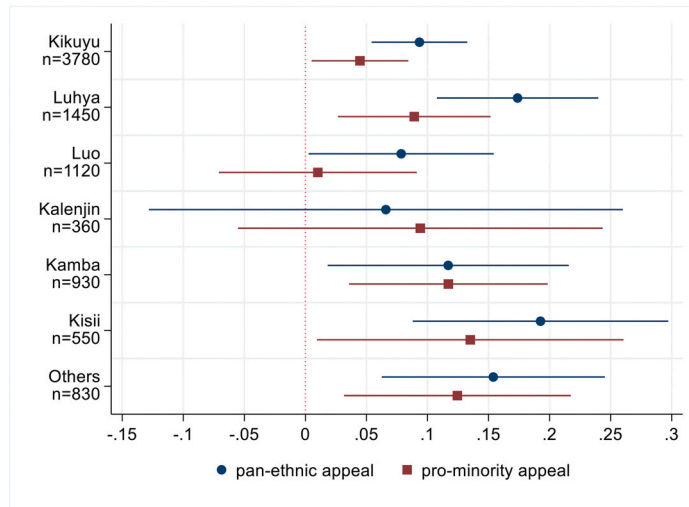
Notes. Cluster standard errors by respondents are in parentheses. Wald tests were conducted for the difference between the two estimates: the difference for Kikuyu, 0.050 and for Luhya, 0.083, are statistically significant at 95% confidence level; the difference for Luo, 0.068, is significant at 90% confidence level.

Fig. 5. AMCEs of pro-minority and pan-ethnic appeals by respondent's ethnicity.
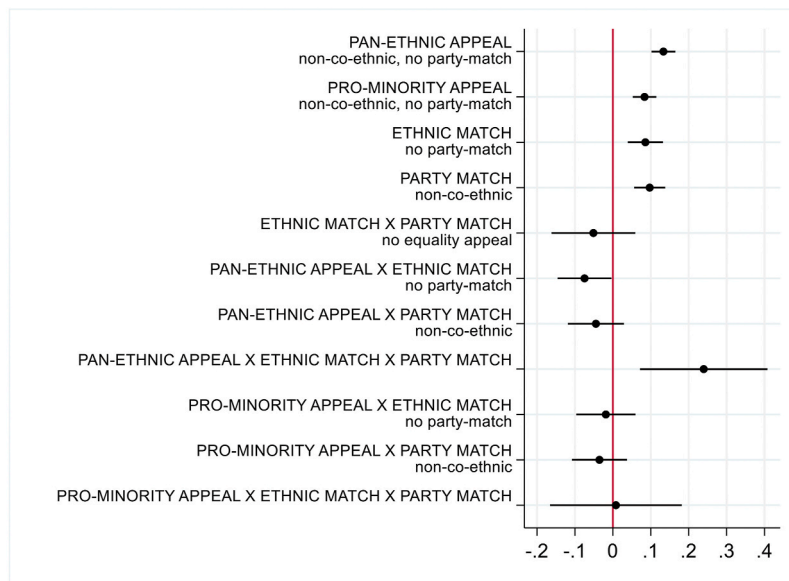
Notes. N = 9,020. Constant and other attributes not shown; Point estimates and their 95% confidence intervals are presented. Cluster standard errors are used at the respondent level.

Fig. 6. Triple interaction between equality appeals, ethnic match and party-match.

this study's findings confirm results from the emerging literature showing that making overt appeals to ethnic-favoritism is rare in elections in sub-Saharan Africa (Bleck and Van de Walle, 2013; Horowitz, 2016; Posner, 2005; Taylor, 2017) and that such appeals can be particularly ineffective in urban contexts where social norms run counter to ethnic favoritism (Horowitz and Kim, 2019) or because citizens in urban areas do not show bias toward their co-ethnics (Berge et al., 2020). Second, this study is the first to show the experimental evidence for the effectiveness of ethnic equality appeals, which are frequently being used by politicians in SSA with politically salient ethnic competition.

Although this study examines results from a single city, I expect the findings to hold in other urban contexts under an SMD system that meets

the following conditions. First, ethnicity is politicized nation-wide so that voters generally expect ethnically targeted benefits from public goods distribution in ethnically segregated areas. Second, due to ethnically targeted distributive politics, there is widespread frustration over inequality across ethnic groups. Third, ethnicity is highly diverse and less segregated in the urban area compared to the rural area. According to the World Bank, over 40 percent of the population in SSA live in urban areas as of 2019 and a number of urban areas in SSA fall under these three conditions. Considering potentially polarizing and divisive effects that pro-minority appeals may cause, similar to the consequences of real-world politicians appealing to the interests of their own ethnic groups, the results from this study can be used to encourage politicians to use more ethnically inclusive message, which is likely to be less

divisive and more effective in increasing significant urban voter support.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2020.102278.

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