WHY SO FEW WOMEN AND MINORITIES IN LOCAL POLITICS?

INCUMBENCY AND AFFINITY VOTING IN TORONTO MUNICIPAL WARD RACES

Incumbency is a significant predictor of candidate success in municipal elections. Nonetheless, other voting shortcuts may be relevant in low information settings such as ward-level City Council races, and especially in situations where there is no incumbent. In this paper we test the effects of incumbency and gender and racial affinity in ward elections using data from the Toronto Election Study, a large-N survey of voters conducted around the time of the 2014 Toronto Municipal Election. Results reveal the absence of gender affinity effects at the ward level, regardless of the presence of an incumbent, but that racial affinity is a factor in wards without incumbents.

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Women and visible minorities are two groups that tend to suffer significant numerical underrepresentation in local politics in Canada (Andrew et al. 2008). Despite the common contention that women are more connected to local political affairs than to national politics, there is clear evidence that they are no better represented numerically at this level than in other orders of government (Gidengil and Vengroff 1997; Tolley 2011). According to the most recent available data, women comprise 26% of municipal councillors across Canada (FCM 2013), while they hold 25% of seats in the House of Commons (Equal Voice 2015). Visible minorities are even less well represented in municipal councils than women, relative to their population share. They also appear less likely to be elected municipally than at the provincial or federal levels, despite the overall success of multiculturalism in urban governance in some of Canada’s largest cities (Good 2009; Siemiatycki 2011). For example, the City of Toronto is Canada’s largest and one of its most ethnically diverse municipalities, where 49.1% of residents identify as belonging to a visible minority (Statistics Canada, 2013) Yet in the case of the 2014 Toronto municipal election, only 31.8% of winning candidates were women, while visible minorities make upon a mere 13.6% of council.

Why do women and visible minorities find it so difficult to get elected to council in some of Canada’s most diverse and cosmopolitan cities, including Toronto? We have few, if any, conclusive answers to this question, owing largely to the scarcity of research on municipal elections in Canada (Cutler and Matthews 2005; Kushner et al. 1997; Tremblay and Mévellec 2013). There has been some analysis of the geography of voting in Canadian cities, for example correlating the concentrations of immigrants and visible minorities with turnout across wards (Hicks 2006; Siemiatycki and Marshall 2014), and with the ethnic background of winning councillors (Smith and Walks 2013). However, no research has yet examined the role of
individual voter and candidate sociodemographics in local elections. This is in sharp contrast to the US, where there have been far-reaching examinations of how political institutions combine with gender stereotypes (Crowder-Meyer et al. 2015), and with racial and ethnic divisions in local contexts to shape municipal voting patterns and policy outcomes (e.g., Hajnal 2001; Karnig 1976; Kaufman 2004; Trounstine 2011; Vedlitz and Johnson 1982).

In this study, we focus on understanding two aspects of support for women and visible minority candidates in a non-partisan, low information context: incumbency and affinity voting. Previous research suggests that the lack of partisan labels may lead voters to rely heavily on incumbency (Krebs 1998; Schaffner et al. 2001) and, possibly, on candidate sex and racial status (Matson and Fine, 2006; McDermott 1997, 1998; Pomper 1966) as heuristic cues to guide their choices. However, these studies have tended to examine the effect of incumbency or candidate sociodemographics in isolation, thus ignoring the possibility that one heuristic may be overwhelmed by other heuristics. No study has considered the interaction of the two types of information shortcuts. We thus consider how the presence and sociodemographic characteristics (sex, race) of an incumbent candidate affect voter evaluations, and whether these impacts differ among male and female voters, and among white and visible minority voters.

This study is relevant for understanding the low representation of women and visible minorities in municipal office in Canada, as there are conflicting hypotheses as to whether, for example, support for female candidates is bolstered by affinity voting, and whether women are advantaged, relative to men, by being an incumbent (e.g., Kushner et al. 1997). Further, while there is considerable evidence of gender and ethnic affinity voting in vote choice experiments presenting fictionalized candidates (Besco forthcoming; McConnaughy et al. 2010; McDermott 1998; Moskowitz and Stroh, 1994; Philpot and Walton 2007; Sigelman et al. 1995; Terkildson
1993; Tolley and Goodyear-Grant 2014), few researchers have yet to find such effects in actual elections, presumably because the salience of partisanship and party leaders overwhelms the sociodemographic characteristics of local candidates (Goodyear-Grant and Croskill 2011; McElroy and Marsh 2009).

This study takes advantage of the non-partisan and low information context of ward-level elections in the City of Toronto, Canada’s largest municipality, to address a series of questions: First, is there evidence of gender and visible minority affinity voting in the 2014 Toronto Municipal Election? Second, is affinity voting stronger in the absence of an incumbent candidate? Finally, when incumbency and sociodemographic candidate cues overlap, was there a general boost in support for female or visible minority candidates across all voters? There is significant ethnic diversity within the voter population and amongst the candidates running for Toronto City Council, and the large number of wards ensures sufficient variation in the presence of incumbents to answer these questions. While the Canadian municipal context is in some respects unique, we believe this is an important first step in providing a richer analysis of how incumbency and candidate sociodemographics interact in the minds of voters.

**Voting in Canadian Municipal Elections**

In an ideal world, every time a voter cast a ballot he or she would be fully informed about the candidates and issues. We know, however, that the ideal is rarely the reality. In municipal elections especially, voters are faced with a daunting task if they wish to gather such information, as the context is much less information-rich than a federal election, for example. How do voters make decisions in such a context? Cues such as partisanship, candidate sociodemographic characteristics and incumbency provide voters with a means of
“economiz[ing] by making political judgments according to knowledge they already have about politics and the world” (McDermott 1998, 897). This process often involves political and social stereotypes that help voters to make decisions about candidates in low-information settings (Matson and Fine 2006; Anderson et al. 2011).

Partisanship has been shown to be a crucial heuristic cue that can override other policy relevant information about candidates (Rahn 1993). Even without knowing a great deal about the specifics of a particular election, party cues can allow voters to make “informed yet efficient” issue appraisals and vote choices (Mondak 1993, 167). In Canada (as in the US), no model of vote choice of national or provincial (state) elections is complete unless partisanship is considered (Blais et al. 2002, Gidengil et al. 2012).

Party cues, however, are not always available to voters. Most municipal elections in Canada are, in fact, non-partisan in nature. Absent parties as informational shortcuts, what other cues do voters use to assess candidates’ electoral suitability? We focus on two options here. First, incumbency has been shown to be one cue that voters rely on where partisan information is absent. Research suggests that voters understand incumbency to indicate candidate experience, reliability and competence, and thus use incumbency to guide their voting decision (Kushner et al. 1997; Krebs 1998; Schaffner, Streb, and Wright 2001; Trounstine 2011). Second, there is strong evidence that voters in low-information contexts employ gender and racial heuristics when making their vote choice (McDermott 1998; Matson and Fine 2006). There is little understanding, however, of which of these cues matter most, or how voters react when multiple shortcuts are available. In order to properly understand support for women and visible minority candidates in municipal elections, it is necessary to explore the literatures on incumbency voting and sociodemographic cues, and then consider how they might interact to affect vote choice.
**Incumbency as a Voter Cue**

Candidate incumbency is a particularly important factor in municipal elections in the Canadian context. For example, Kushner et al. (1997, 544) found that the re-election rate of incumbents in large Ontario cities was over 88 per cent across three electoral periods from 1982 to 1994. In the election under study here, the 2014 Toronto election, 36 of 37 incumbent councillors (or 97.3 per cent) won re-election. Research points to significant structural advantages enjoyed by incumbents, including a fundraising advantage, and the fact that candidates in many municipalities in Ontario are permitted to carry forward campaign surpluses to future elections (McDermid 2009). Incumbents also perform constituency service and have greater media exposure, and thus are much more visible than challengers (Kushner et al. 1997; Marland 1999).

In addition to the structural advantages enjoyed by incumbents, there is growing consensus among researchers that the incumbency advantage at the municipal level is largely a product of voters’ using incumbency as a heuristic in a low information setting (Krebs 1998; Schaffner et al.; Trounstine 2011). Incumbency can be conceived as “an anchor that secures weakly partisan and independent voters” (Desposato and Petrocik 2003, 19), and has been shown to be a particularly important factor in municipal elections where party cues are unavailable (Hajnal et al., 2002). Probing the mechanisms behind incumbency reveals that it works in unique ways in low-information, nonpartisan elections. While incumbents often run on the established record of their political party, in nonpartisan elections, councillors’ voting record and political behaviour usually are not well known. Incumbency is thus theorized as a useful vote-garnering mechanism in municipal elections because incumbents’ visibility and community involvement between elections drives name recognition and signals a candidate’s credibility and experience at
city hall (Kushner et al. 1997; Siemiatycki 2010). In the absence of other information, such factors offer a sense of comfort and predictability that is attractive to voters (Zajonc 2001). For example, using a laboratory experiment with subliminal priming, Kam and Zechmeister (2013) found that, in low-information contexts, exposure to a candidate’s name had a significant, positive effect on voter choice and perceptions of candidate viability. The experiment also found that known incumbents were preferred over known challengers, indicating that the name recognition heuristic may be washed away against incumbency status. Finally, there is evidence that voters are “more likely to take the informational shortcut of relying on incumbency” as the information-gathering demands of a particular local election increase (Hajnal et al. 2002, 59). In their study of California municipal elections, Hajnal et al. found that the re-election rate of incumbents grew where municipal elections were held concurrently with state-level elections, or where voters had to select multiple council members at the same time.

**Sociodemographics as Voter Cues**

Like incumbency, sociodemographic information is a readily available cue for voters. The media attention afforded to candidates in local races often emphasizes female and minority candidates’ gender and ethnic background (e.g., Lindgren 2014; Tolley 2015; Wagner 2011). Photos of candidates can also signal such information to voters, regardless of the written content. Even without any exposure to or research on candidates prior to voting, voters can still reliably assess candidates’ gender and often their ethnic minority status by name at the voting booth (McDermott 1998; Matson and Fine 2006). Such demographic information may be more readily available than substantive information on candidates’ partisan affiliation, experience, or issue positions, and voters can “extrapolate stereotypical information from candidate demographics.
and then use this information to make a voting decision” (McDermott 1998, 898).

Gender and racial cues act in two related ways. First, voters may apply a particular schema to sociodemographic information. Schemata are a type of road map in our memories, based on socialization, stereotypes and prior experiences. They allow us to impute quickly and with little cognitive effort, a broader set of traits and characteristics to a given stimuli (Fiske and Kinder 1981; Markus and Zajone 1985). Research suggests that voters readily draw on schemata associated with female and racialized minority candidates to infer that they will be more left-leaning and more competent on issues of social policy (Huddy and Terkildson 1993; Koch 2000, 2002; King and Matland 2003; Gidengil and Everitt 2003; McDermott 1998). Similarly, voters draw on schemata to assess candidate suitability for different levels of office. A social stereotype associating women with service-oriented and clerical duties may lead voters to disproportionately favour females for ward leadership, while the schema that “mayor equals male” raises little doubt about the suitability of a male candidate for that top executive position (Crowder-Meyer et al. 2015; Smith and Son 2014).

Second, more linear self-interest motivations may also be at play. Candidates’ sociodemographic characteristics can signal to in-group voters that candidates share similar life experiences, and thus have a better understanding and increased likelihood of acting on gendered or minority issues (Barreto 2007; Kymlicka 1993; Mansbridge 1999). Such identity-based voting amongst visible minority voters might be triggered by shared heritage, cultural values, language, and experiences of discrimination, as well as minority candidates’ propensity to target their campaigning to minority voters, “reinforcing the bond” (Barreto 2007, 426; see also Leighly 2001; Tate 1991). Positive group stereotypes amongst co-ethnic voters may also result from simple in-group bias or favoritism, though less is known about this effect (Besco 2015).
These mechanisms can lead to ethnic or gender “affinity voting.” This occurs, in the case of stereotyping, because candidates imputed to be more left-leaning or more competent on social issues are in turn more likely to be chosen by more liberal voters, as well as persons prioritizing social issues. Or it may occur if voters infer that same-group candidates will better understand and represent their interests. The general idea is that “when voters and candidates have a sociodemographic trait in common… this can lead to a bond or affinity with the candidate, from the perspective of the voter” (Tolley and Goodyear-Grant 2014, 3). Ample evidence of affinity voting has been found in experimental studies that require subjects to choose between fictional candidates who differ only in their gender or ethno-racial background. These analyses find strong evidence that visible minority voters prefer minority candidates, while white voters prefer white candidates, all else being equal (Besco forthcoming, 2015; Bird 2015; McConnaughy et al. 2010; McDermott 1998; Moskowitz and Stroh 1994; Philpot and Walton 2007; Sigelman et al. 1995; Terkildson 1993). There is also some evidence of gender affinity voting, both among American and Canadian research subjects, though these effects appear to be weaker than is the case for ethnic affinity (Dolan 2008; Philpot and Walton 2007; Tolley and Goodyear-Grant 2014).¹

Outside of experimental settings there is less evidence that affinity voting operates in actual elections. This is presumably because, in information-rich settings, the salience of partisanship, issues, candidate characteristics, campaign styles, and other local contextual factors can overwhelm heuristics based on sociodemographic cues (Brians 2005; Dolan 2008; Gidengil, Everitt and Banducci 2009; Kaufmann 2004; King and Matland 2003; McElroy and Marsh 2009). Research on Canadian federal elections has found that partisan and other relevant information washes out any effect of local candidates’ gender or visible-minority background (Goodyear-Grant and Croskill 2011; Murakami 2014). Once the effects of party leaders and
partisanship are controlled, there is no evidence that women vote for women in greater numbers than do male voters, or that minority voters are more likely than non-minorities to support minority candidates.

Yet these null findings may not be generalizable to nonpartisan municipal elections. It seems reasonable to hypothesize that affinity voting will be more pervasive in low-information, non-partisan municipal Council elections. When there is no incumbent running in an election race, especially, the gender and racial status of a candidate should matter more to voters, as such information could be used as cues to infer policy positions or to signal common interests. However, the high likelihood of incumbents running for office again makes it important to consider whether and how incumbency and affinity may interact. We take up this task now.

**MODERATING AND INTERSECTIONAL EFFECTS OF INCUMBENCY AND AFFINITY VOTING**

What are the consequences of incumbency for voters’ decisions, when the candidate is also a woman or a visible minority? To our knowledge, neither experimental nor survey research has thus far examined what happens when incumbency and candidate sociodemographic cues combine, nor what it means for support for women and visible minority candidates.

Women and visible minority incumbents, like all incumbents, benefit from visibility between elections. We postulate two distinctive effects for voters encountering an incumbent who is also female or a visible minority. First, there may be a ‘competency boost.’ In this case, the visibility and presumed credibility of a female incumbent, for example, should send a broad signal about women’s suitability for elected office, activating perceptions *amongst all voters* about female candidates’ suitability as ward-level political contenders (e.g., Crowder-Meyer et
Aggregate level research suggests that incumbency and gender may interact to increase the vote share of incumbent women, relative to incumbent men. Schwindt-Bayer et al. (2010) found evidence of a gendered incumbency ‘boost’ in Australia (though not in Ireland or Malta). In Australia, female incumbents received a 14 percent increase in vote share, compared to 10 percentage points for male incumbents. In the Canadian federal context, Goodyear-Grant and Croskill (2011) also find some evidence of stronger support for female, relative to male, incumbents. A second postulation is that the presence of a female (or visible minority) incumbent will have a narrower effect of amplifying gender (or ethnic) affinity voting amongst same-group voters. That is, those who were already inclined to vote for someone from their in-group will be even more so. This could be related to the competency boost, in that it may be that incumbency simply makes a similar candidate even more attractive.

**DATA AND METHODOLOGY**

We rely here on several sources of data. Our individual-level data on voters comes from the Toronto Election Study, a two-wave internet survey of Torontonians that was conducted around the time of the Oct. 27, 2014 municipal elections. The TES includes a variety of questions about attitudes and behaviour, similar to those contained in many national or provincial election studies. This is the first dataset in Canada to have individual-level data on ward-level vote choices, and thus the first that allows for a thorough consideration of voting behaviour at the ward level. Of relevance to our study, the TES includes data on the gender and visible minority status of voters, as well as information on which ward respondents live in and how respondents voted in ward elections.

Information on incumbency and candidate vote share was compiled using the Toronto
City Clerk’s official election results for the Toronto 2014 municipal election (Toronto City Clerk 2014). We also collected data on the sex and visible minority status of all 384 registered candidates for City Council, across Toronto’s 44 wards. Two research assistants were trained to establish candidates’ sex and visible minority status using publicly available photographs, names, and biographical descriptions from candidates’ websites, news articles, and news media’s candidate profiles. Codes were checked twice to ensure inter-coder reliability, and all ties were broken by a third researcher. The Ontario Human Rights Commission has lauded this method for its transparency (OHRC 2010).

We therefore have information on the gender and “race” (i.e., visible minority status) of respondents and the candidates whom they voted for, and have created gender and race dummy variables for respondents themselves (our key independent variables), as well as for the candidates they voted for (our dependent variables). Also available is information on the gender and race of each ward incumbent. Across 44 wards in the 2014 City of Toronto elections, there were seven wards that were ‘open’ races with no incumbent running; amongst incumbents, 13 were women and six were visible minorities. These variables can be combined to test for the presence of gender and racial affinity effects, and to consider whether these effects are moderated by the presence and type of incumbent.

Our analysis includes two sets of logistic regression models - one for gender and another for race. For each of these factors we run models with voter gender (visible minority) status only, another with incumbency variables added, and still another where we interact the candidate sociodemographic and incumbency variables. We use this latter model to test for differences in effects across different types of incumbents; thus we include a variable for both female (visible minority) and male (non-visible minority) incumbent candidates. In all models we include a
control for the share of candidates in each ward who were female (visible minorities), under the 
assumption that, *ceteris paribus*, the more women (visible minority) candidates contesting a race, 
the more votes these types of candidates will receive.⁶ We omit from our analysis those wards 
where there was no candidate variation with respect to gender or visible minority status (i.e., if 
all candidates are men, voters do not have the option to vote for a woman; likewise, if they are 
all white, there is no possibility to vote for a visible minority candidate).⁷

**RESULTS**

Prior to testing for the presence of gender and racial affinity effects, it is worth describing 
the performance of women and visible minority council candidates in the 2014 Toronto 
municipal election. As noted above, both groups are significantly underrepresented on council, 
but also in terms of candidate shares; the share of female and minority candidates is lower than 
each group’s share of the population. A mere 22.5% of council candidates were female, while 
29.8% were visible minorities. Interestingly, female candidates received 30.6% of vote share – a 
jump of about 36% from candidate share. The opposite is true for visible minority candidates, 
however, who received a combined vote share of only 20.0% (a drop of 33%). Though relatively 
few members of either group ran in the election, women significantly outperformed visible 
minorities. Such a finding is consistent with existing work on Ontario municipalities, which 
shows that women’s share of council seats outstrips their candidate share, while the opposite is 
true for visible minorities (Bird 2015).

We turn now to consider whether gender and ethnic affinity voting, or the presence of an 
incumbent, helps to explain these patterns. We begin this analysis by presenting Figures 1 and 2, 
which show the effects of gender and visible minority status upon vote choice, depending upon
the presence and type of incumbent. The bars in Figure 1 represent the shares of men and women, respectively, who voted for female candidates. Wards have been broken down into three types: those without an incumbent, those with a male incumbent, and those with a female incumbent. By comparing the vote shares received by candidates of different genders across these three types of wards, we can begin to evaluate the presence of a gender affinity effect.8

*Figure 1 about here*

Put plainly, Figure 1 reveals no evidence of a gender affinity effect, regardless of the presence or type of incumbent. Female candidates perform very well in wards with a female incumbent candidate, but men and women are equally likely to support female candidates in these settings. Even in wards without incumbents, where the cue of gender should be particularly effective as an information shortcut, there is no evidence of a gender affinity effect.

In contrast to the gender results, Figure 2 reveals that the racial identity of voters does tend to predict whether or not voters support a minority candidate, but only in wards without an incumbent. Indeed, this is the only statistically significant difference in either Figure 1 or 2. Visible minority voters are nearly three times more likely to support a visible minority candidate than are white voters (30.9% vs. 10.8%) when there is no incumbent councillor. Such a finding is suggests racial affinity effects are stronger in the absence of an incumbent.

*Figure 2 about here*

The results in Figures 1 and 2 are drawn from simple descriptive data on voters from each type of ward, but to properly test for the presence and strength of affinity effects, multivariate analysis is necessary. On this front, we once again begin with gender. Table 1 shows the results of three logistic regression models, with each subsequent model introducing additional variables. A vote for a female candidate versus a male candidate is the outcome variable. If a gender
affinity effect exists, the ‘female voter’ variable should be positive and statistically significant, and if this effect is enhanced by the presence of a female incumbent, the interaction term ‘female X female incumbent’ will be significant. The variable for male incumbent (compared to the baseline of no incumbent) will reveal whether, as expected, the presence of a male incumbent is associated with less support for female candidates. Likewise, the variable for female incumbent tells us whether female candidate support among the entire electorate increases in the presence of a female incumbent. Note that results are clustered by ward.

Table 1 about here

Consistent with the findings in Figure 1, multivariate analysis reveals no evidence of a gender affinity effect, regardless of whether there is an incumbent (either male or female) present. In none of the three models in the table is the female voter variable statistically significant. Not surprisingly, the female candidate share is significant — female candidates receive more support when they make up a larger share of the candidate slate. Interestingly, the female incumbent variable is significant in Models 1B and 1C, suggesting that, after controlling for candidate share, votes for women are boosted when the incumbent is a woman (but among voters, not just women); however, the male incumbent variable is not significant, meaning that male vote share is not affected when the incumbent is a man.9 Finally, there is no evidence that gender affinity voting is affected by incumbency. Neither of the interaction terms in Model 1C is significant, suggesting that the effect of gender upon vote choice is no different in wards with incumbents (either male or female) than without.10

We next conduct the same analysis as above, but for visible minority status. The setup of Table 2 mirrors that of Table 1, but here voting for a visible minority candidate (or not) is the dependent variable. If a racial affinity effect exists, the ‘visible minority voter’ variable should
be significant, and if this effect is moderated by the presence of an incumbent, the interaction terms should be significant. The results for the ‘minority incumbent’ variable evaluate the competency boost expectation.

*Table 2 about here*

In contrast to the gender results, Table 2 provides evidence of racial affinity voting, but importantly, only when there is no incumbent present. The ‘visible minority voter’ variable is insignificant in Models 2A and 2B, which do not take into account the possibility that the difference in the voting behaviour of minority and non-minority voters might depend upon the presence of an incumbent. The variable only becomes significant in Model 2C, which includes the interactions between voter minority status and incumbency. Due to the presence of the interactions, the visible minority constituent term is to be interpreted as the effect of being a visible minority, as compared to a non-minority, in wards without an incumbent candidate. The statistically significant result for this term suggests that racial affinity effects are indeed present in the absence of an incumbent. Failing to distinguish between wards with and without incumbents therefore masks the racial affinity voting which occurs in wards without incumbents.

The interaction terms in Model 2C are significant, or very nearly significant ($p = 0.052$ for the minority voter X minority incumbent term),\(^{11}\) and in the opposite direction to that of the visible minority constituent term. This suggests that the effect of race upon vote choice is less in wards with either a white or minority incumbent than in those with none. In fact, the magnitude of these terms is not statistically different from that of the visible minority term, which, in effect, suggests that the presence of an incumbent cancels out the effect of racial affinity voting.

The result for the ‘minority X white incumbent’ variable make sense, as we have no theoretical reason to expect that the presence of a white incumbent would lead to heightened
ethnic affinity voting. However, the negative sign on the ‘minority X minority incumbent’ variable is perhaps curious, as it suggests there is no boost to affinity voting when a minority candidate is an incumbent. The reason for this finding is not immediately clear, though it could suggest that visible minority voters may tend to be more critical of visible minority incumbents than of white incumbents, however more research is required to fully understand this finding. Whatever the reason for this finding, however, incumbency is apparently a more powerful shortcut than is ethnicity.\textsuperscript{12}

Nevertheless, the significance of the ‘minority incumbent’ variable in Model 2A does suggest that there is a general competency boost for visible minority candidates, similar to what we found for female incumbents. In this instance, results suggest that, after controlling for minority candidate share, minority vote share receives a bigger boost from the presence of a minority incumbent than white candidate share receives from the presence of a white incumbent. Future research should seek to uncover the causes of these asymmetries.

Overall, the results in Tables 1 and 2 are therefore congruent with those from Figures 1 and 2. Though gender affinity voting appears to have been absent at the ward level in the 2014 Toronto municipal election, the finding that racial affinity voting occurs in the absence of an incumbent is consistent with expectations. In the absence of an incumbency cue, many voters relied upon race as a shortcut. When an incumbent is present, however, voters had no need to fall back upon race when making their decision. There is no comparable gender affinity effect, however, as gender does not appear to affect whether voters support a male or female candidate, regardless of the presence of an incumbent.

\textbf{DISCUSSION}
There is no denying that women and visible minorities are vastly underrepresented at the municipal level of government in Canada, including on Toronto City Council. Relatively few members of either group contest elections, and neither comes close to achieving a level of representation that their populations within the electorate might warrant. One factor hindering proper representation is the power of incumbency. Though TES data suggest that the presence of female or minority incumbents does lead to a general competency boost for candidates of these types among all voters, few incumbents are either female or visible minorities. Absent greater turnover among sitting politicians, increasing representation of these groups will be difficult.

While women and visible minorities have this much in common, there are important differences between the nature and mechanisms behind their underrepresentation. Though few female candidates contest elections, those who do run tend to be more successful than are visible minorities. Female council representation and vote share outpaced candidate share, while the opposite is true for visible minorities. Such a finding suggests that one way to achieve higher levels of female representation on council may be simply to have more candidates contest elections. We find no evidence of gender affinity voting, regardless of the presence or gender of an incumbent, so this factor is not undermining the representation of women on council.

The story for visible minorities, however, is not so straightforward. The vast majority of Toronto councillors are non-minorities, and in a system where incumbency is so powerful, this makes it difficult to increase minority representation. Moreover, in wards without an incumbent, a racial affinity effect appears to have worked to the disadvantage of minority candidates. In those wards without incumbents, 24.0% of candidates were minorities. Only 10.8% of white voters supported such candidates, while 30.9% of visible minority voters did the same. The data therefore suggest that a racial affinity effect appears evident for both groups – white voters are
drawn disproportionately to white candidates, and minority voters to minority candidates. However, as voter turnout rates are higher among whites than visible minorities (Hicks 2006; Siemiatycki 2014), such a pattern works to systematically disadvantage minority candidates.

Assuming that racial affinity effects are not about to disappear, the results of this study point to two possible methods of improving minority representation at the municipal level. First, turnout rates among visible minorities need to increase. Evidence in the US shows that low and uneven turnout across ethnic and racial subgroups leads to less than optimal outcomes for racial and ethnic minorities, especially in cities (Hajnal 2009). The presence of racial affinity voting means that minorities must be properly represented at the ballot box in order to be properly represented on council. Such a suggestion is not necessarily far-fetched; voter mobilization efforts have been shown to improve turnout among visible minorities more than among white voters (McGregor and Anderson 2014). Second, an increase in minority turnout should also be accompanied by the implementation of term limits. Incumbency is an almost insurmountable advantage at the municipal level in Canada, and given the low level of current visible minority representation, it represents a significant barrier to entry for aspiring municipal politicians, and to visible minorities in particular. If these conditions are met, even if racial affinity voting effects persist, minority representation may be improved, allowing the composition of governments to more accurately reflect the population that they represent.
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1 Racial affinity’s strength relative to that of gender affinity is notable. While an in-depth unpacking of mechanisms mediating these effects is not within the scope of this paper, the role of ‘group consciousness’ must be noted. Shared experiences, from culture to discrimination (Barreto, 2007), that delineate in versus out-group members may reinforce consciousness of group identity and foster mobilization to counter inequality. This consciousness may also supersede the effects of other, less salient identities such as gender (Tolley and Goodyear-Grant, 2014; Philpot and Walton, 2007). Women’s hesitancy to identify ‘as a women’ or align oneself with feminist motives or leaders (Modleski, 2014) may not condition women to vote exclusively for men, but may account in part for looser group ties and the absence of gender affinity and purposive same-gender voting.

2 As a quality control measure, the TES included a question to ensure that respondents were answering questions seriously (respondents were reimbursed for their participation in the TES). The 3.1% of respondents who ‘failed’ this question are excluded from our analysis.

3 The ‘visible minority’ label applied here, for both candidates and voters, is a construction of the Canadian state, first introduced in the context of the federal Employment Equity Act of 1986 and subsequently adopted as a departmental standard by Statistics Canada for the purposes of consolidating relevant data on socio-demographic diversity. Officially, the term refers to non-white, non-Aboriginal persons and consists mainly of individuals of Chinese, South Asian, Black, Arab, West Asian, Filipino, Southeast Asian, Latin American, Japanese and Korean identity. Note that we drop the very small number of Aboriginal respondents from our analysis, as this group differs qualitatively from visible minority and white voters.
While we operationalize race here as dichotomous, as is consistent with the existing literature, we recognize that great variation may exist within the two racial categories.

We considered controlling for voter sophistication, as it has been shown to shape the strength and direction of voter affinities (Anderson et al. 2011; Bird 2009). However, aside from gender and ethnicity, our theoretical interest here is the effect of ward-level factors (including the presence and type of an incumbent) upon affinity effect. We thus exclude sophistication from our analysis.

We recognize the role that candidate spending plays in shaping municipal election outcomes, but due to a lack of available data, we exclude this variable from our analysis. If reliable data were available, we could include a control similar to the ones we include for share of female/minority candidates; the variable would have values for each ward for the overall share of spending by men/women or by visible minority/non-minorities. To create such a variable, spending information from all candidates is required. According to the City of Toronto, however, dozens of candidates failed to file their spending disclosure statements for the 2014 campaign. As many of these candidates may never file statements, an appropriate spending control cannot be included. Nevertheless, we argue that the omission of this variable is acceptable. The data on those candidates who did submit spending disclosure statements suggest that there are spending differences on the basis of both gender and visible minority status. Data from the 284 ward candidates who submitted financial statements suggest that the average female candidate spent more than the average male ($21,427.58 vs. $15,188.18) and that visible minorities were outspent by white candidates ($13,580.96 to $17,804.50). But while these differences might affect a candidate’s rate of electoral success or overall vote share, we are not convinced that these spending differences would influence gender and racial affinity effects, or that these two types of effects might be influenced differently. That is, there is no theoretical reason to suspect that women and visible minorities would react differently to candidate spending than men or white voters. We can also think of no reason why differences in candidate spending might influence affinity effects differently in wards with and without incumbents. Accordingly, we suggest that the omission of a spending control is acceptable.

The following wards had no variation in terms of visible minorities: 6, 11, 19, 21, 30, 40, 41, while wards 7, 10, 12, 37, 40, 43 had no variation in gender. Wards 2, 3, 4, 5, 16, 20 and 39 had no incumbent. To ensure that our gender and race results are comparable to one another, we limit our analysis to those wards that can be included in both analyses.

To maximize generalizability of our findings, all results are weighted for age, gender, and education.
Male vote share is simply the inverse of the dependent variable, female vote share.

Indeed, the R-squared value increases by a mere 0.0001 from model 2B to 2C, when the interaction terms are added, suggesting that these terms add nothing to our ability to explain why voters select either a male or female candidate.

The visible minority \(X\) minority incumbent term is very close to meeting traditional significance levels, and likely only fails to do so due to the relatively small number of visible minority voters and incumbents.

In a study based on focus group interviews with visible minority citizens in the GTA, Bird (forthcoming) presents some corroborating evidence of minority voters’ disillusionment and ambivalence regarding elected representative from their own group. Empirical findings from the U.S. also indicate that black voter’ may not be especially positive in their evaluations of black candidates and representatives (Gay, 2002; Lerman et al., 2015).
Figure 1: Gender, Incumbency and Vote Choice

Figure 2: Visible minority status, Incumbency and Vote Choice
Table 1: Vote for Female Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1A</th>
<th>Model 1B</th>
<th>Model 1C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female voter</td>
<td>-0.165 (0.190)</td>
<td>0.034 (0.208)</td>
<td>0.128 (0.384)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female incumbent</td>
<td>2.524 (0.400)**</td>
<td>2.588 (0.471)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male incumbent</td>
<td>-0.053 (0.501)</td>
<td>0.010 (0.517)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female X female incumbent</td>
<td>-0.120 (0.512)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female X male incumbent</td>
<td>-0.114 (0.513)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Candidate share</td>
<td>6.323 (2.136)**</td>
<td>4.975 (1.565)**</td>
<td>4.975 (1.557)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-2.277 (0.718)**</td>
<td>-2.966 (0.480)**</td>
<td>-3.019 (0.474)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pseudo R-squared        | 0.1005          | 0.2980          | 0.2981          |
N                       | 1047            |                 |                 |
Number of clusters      | 32              |                 |                 |

Entries report coefficients and standard errors (in parentheses).
*: p < 0.05, **: p < 0.01

Table 2: Vote for Visible Minority Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 2A</th>
<th>Model 2B</th>
<th>Model 2C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visible minority voter</td>
<td>0.243 (0.233)</td>
<td>0.272 (0.316)</td>
<td>1.144 (0.437)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority incumbent</td>
<td>2.811 (0.292)**</td>
<td>3.318 (0.435)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White incumbent</td>
<td>-0.764 (0.346)*</td>
<td>-0.344 (0.400)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority X white incumbent</td>
<td>-1.217 (0.592)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority X minority incumbent</td>
<td>-1.533 (0.791)†</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority Candidate Share</td>
<td>3.898 (1.569)**</td>
<td>3.129 (0.919)**</td>
<td>3.039 (0.905)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-2.814 (0.731)**</td>
<td>-2.645 (0.345)**</td>
<td>-2.946 (0.375)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pseudo R-squared        | 0.1020          | 0.3176          | 0.3254          |
N                       | 1047            |                 |                 |
Number of clusters      | 32              |                 |                 |

Entries report coefficients and standard errors (in parentheses).
*: p < 0.05, **: p < 0.01, †: p = 0.052