Increasing Intergroup Trust: Endorsements and Voting in Divided Societies

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Can endorsements persuade voters to transcend politicized identity cleavages to support candidates from other groups? We argue that the persuasive power of cleavage-bridging endorsements depends on the ability of politicians to elicit in-group trust on behalf of out-group candidates. The activation of in-group trust increases the likelihood of voting for out-group candidates by changing both instrumental and affective assessments about the nature of the voter-candidate relationship. To assess these claims, we provide evidence from Kenya, where simulated radio news segments experimentally manipulated the ethnic relationship among voters, endorsers, and candidates. We find that voters who hear endorsements from in-group politicians are significantly more likely to vote for out-group candidates and view them as trustworthy. We further find that the trust premium transferred from in-group endorsers to out-group candidates leads voters to regard them as nondiscriminatory representatives who care about their well-being.

In many societies with politicized identity cleavages, ascriptive loyalties are thought to so strongly determine individual vote choice that democratic elections can be reduced to "an ethnic head count" (Horowitz 1985, 196). A large body of scholarship suggests that the politicization of identity leads voters—whether driven by innate communal attachment, divergent group preferences, or the imperatives of zero-sum competition—to support in-group candidates without regard to party ideology or incumbent performance, especially when control of state resources is at stake (Lijphart 1977; Rabushka and Shepsle 1972; Rothschild 1981). Such identity-based voting has been documented across a range of contexts, including Latin America (Madrid 2012), South Asia (Chandra 2007), and sub-Saharan Africa (Nathan 2019).

But scholars have also long shown that identity alone is insufficient to account for some forms of political mobilization. Factors such as class (Scott 1985), ideology (DeNardo 2014), information (Popkin 1991), and demographics (Acosta 2014) can shape the individual choices that add up to collective outcomes. Studies of electoral behavior indicate that voters are not solely guided by group membership even where identity cleavages are salient (Long and Gibson 2015; Weghorst and Lindberg 2013). In Ghana, Long and Hoffman (2013) find that voter evaluations of party performance are more important determinants of vote choice than ethnicity, and Ichino and Nathan (2013) show that voters residing in areas dominated by another ethnic group are less likely to vote for the party associated with their own group. In Uganda, both Conroy-Krutz (2013) and Carlson (2015) show that voters condition their preferences over candidates based on their performance in delivering public goods.

While partisan or performance-based information may enter voters' calculations, demographic reality ultimately imposes itself as long as identity-based voting remains a

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The research protocol for the experiment was approved by the University of California Berkeley's Office for the Protection of Human Subjects, under protocol number 2015-09-7517. The pre-analysis plan for this project is registered at the Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP) design registry under protocol ID 20151116AA. Replication files are available in the *JOP* Dataverse (https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/jop). The empirical analysis has been successfully replicated by the *JOP* replication analyst. An appendix with supplementary material is available at https://doi.org/10.1086/719632.

Published online July 26, 2022.

The Journal of Politics, volume 84, number 4, October 2022. Published by The University of Chicago Press for the Southern Political Science Association. https://doi.org/10.1086/719632

defining feature of elections. Candidates for office must often seek out votes from other groups because their own are not large enough to ensure a winning coalition (Ferree 2010b). And many voters simply will not have the option of voting for an in-group candidate. Under such conditions, candidates can attempt to become competitive across cleavages by securing the endorsement of leaders who represent voters from other groups (Arriola 2012; Koter 2013). In racially polarized Guyana, an Afro-Guyanese presidential candidate might rely on the endorsement of an Indo-Guyanese political leader to expand his base of support (*EFE Newswire* 2015). In Nigeria, where ethno-regional rivalries infuse electoral politics, a northern Fulani incumbent president can turn to the endorsement of an Igbo traditional leader to shore up his reelection bid in the country's southeast (*Sun* 2019). In Sri Lanka, where a civil war was fought along ethnic lines for over two decades, a Sinhalese presidential candidate can hope that the endorsement of ethnic Tamil party leaders will increase his competitiveness nationally (*Daily Mirror* 2019).

Yet, if candidates appear to regularly use cleavage-bridging endorsements to expand their voter base, it remains unknown to what extent such endorsements actually influence individual voter behaviors and attitudes. Endorsements may have little to no effect on voters' perceptions of out-group candidates. Voters may refuse to believe that out-group candidates can be faithful representatives, regardless of who endorses them. Or, voters may be willing to cross cleavages in casting their votes without regard to who supports out-group candidates. In this respect, the causal effects of cleavage-bridging endorsements have yet to be fully understood: Are such endorsements effective in persuading voters to support out-group candidates? Can endorsements influence how voters perceive out-group candidates?

We contribute to the literature on voter behavior in divided societies by examining the impact of political endorsements issued across identity cleavages. We argue that cleavage-bridging endorsements can persuade voters to support out-group candidates—but only when those endorsements come from in-group members. Endorsements from in-group members derive their influence from the trust that a shared group identity creates. That is, in-group trust mediates the impact of cleavage-bridging endorsements. By claiming that an out-group candidate will treat them as if they were an in-group representative, the in-group endorser is effectively asking voters to transfer the trust placed in her to the out-group candidate. Moreover, we contend that the activation of trust through cleavage-bridging endorsements affects how voters perceive out-group candidates. Because trust operates through cognitive (Ferree 2006) as well as affective (Choi, Harris, and Shen-Bayh, forthcoming) processes, endorsements can induce voters to view out-group candidates as more than politically instrumental partners; they become seen as individuals genuinely concerned about the voter's well-being.

We assess our theoretical claims through an experimental design that estimates the effects of endorsements on voter evaluations of candidates. We conducted the randomized experiment in Nakuru County, Kenya, where electoral mobilization has historically followed identity lines among members of the Kalenjin and Kikuyu ethnic groups. The experiment employed simulated radio news segments modeled after actual Kenyan media coverage of election campaigns to manipulate the ethnic relationship among voters, candidates, and endorsers. The experimental manipulation of ethnicity was subtle: only the last names of the candidate and the endorser were randomized to be either Kalenjin or Kikuyu.

We find evidence that cleavage-bridging endorsements can positively affect intergroup behavior and attitudes. Voters who hear an endorsement from an in-group politician are significantly more likely to report being willing to vote for the out-group candidate. The magnitude of this effect is large enough to offset the expected preference for an in-group candidate under certain conditions. We also find evidence for the role of trust as a mechanism through which endorsements operate. Voters who hear an in-group endorsement for an out-group candidate are more likely to perceive the candidate as trustworthy. These voters believe that the endorsed out-group candidate is more likely to be nondiscriminatory, representing the broader interests of their constituency rather than the candidate's own group. Additionally, we find that endorsements can influence affective evaluations. Cleavage-bridging endorsements lead voters to perceive out-group candidates as more likable, a measure of in-group bias (Misch, Paulus, and Dunham 2021), as well as caring about them, a measure of affective trust (McAllister 1995).

The findings presented here have implications for the study of democratic stability in divided societies. Although the fragility of democracy is often linked to intergroup conflict (Snyder 2000), little experimental research has been conducted to examine how "real world" interventions might help mitigate the negative aspects of identity-based political competition (Paluck and Green 2009). Our results suggest that the salience of identity may not need to be diminished to engineer normatively desirable outcomes like intergroup cooperation. Relatedly, our findings have implications for understanding individual voter behavior in divided societies. While the logic we employ is largely derived from instrumentalist theories of voting, we suggest that this framework may not be able to fully account for important shifts in voter attitudes and behaviors. Adapting insights from psychology could be useful in expanding our understanding of why and how voters' affective perceptions of

intergroup relations can change, particularly in contexts where voters rely on limited or manipulated sources of information.

We proceed by elaborating on the role of trust in cleavage-bridging endorsements in divided societies. We then describe the empirical context and the research design. We present the experimental results along with discussions of mechanisms and heterogeneous treatment effects. We conclude by discussing the implications of our findings for understanding political behavior.

THE ROLE OF TRUST IN CLEAVAGE-BRIDGING ENDORSEMENTS

Identity is a politically powerful heuristic wherever voters expect their membership in ethnic, racial, or religious groups to condition their access to state resources. According to instrumentalist theories of voting, a candidate's group membership is an important consideration for voters who believe that elected officials will use identity-based criteria in allocating scarce public goods and services (Chandra 2007; Ferree 2010a; Nathan 2019; Posner 2005). Under such circumstances, voters expect candidates who share their identity to follow through on distributive campaign promises because, after the election, their common group membership provides for norms of reciprocity to induce compliance as well as sanctioning mechanisms to punish reneging (Habyarimana et al. 2009). Voters rationally expect candidates from other groups, if they are installed in office, to leave them empty handed (Bratton 2008).

The challenge for candidates seeking broad-based electoral support is that their campaign promises will be seen merely as cheap talk by voters from other groups. To make their promises more credible to out-group voters, candidates often turn to endorsements from the leaders, officials, and politicians who represent them. Such cleavage-bridging endorsements allow candidates to publicly signal their intent to equitably distribute state resources across groups and serve all constituents, regardless of their identities.

Prior research suggests that voters will respond to endorsements that bridge politicized identity cleavages when they perceive their individual fate as linked to group identity (Dawson 1995). In the United States, Latino voters may prefer to vote for candidates from their own group (Barreto 2007), but Barreto et al. (2008) show that endorsements by Latino officials serve to coordinate Latino votes for non-Latino presidential candidates in Democratic Party primaries. Benjamin (2017) finds that endorsements by Black leaders can move Black voters to support non-Black candidates in local elections in which partisan cues are absent. Similarly, voters appear to follow cleavage-bridging endorsements in countries where party systems are too new or fragmented for partisan affiliation to meaningfully convey programmatic information. In Indonesia, legislative candidates seek out endorsements from local ethnic associations to cultivate a personal reputation for attending to the needs of targeted out-group voters (Fox 2018). In Democratic Republic of Congo, presidential candidates use endorsements from regional party leaders to form electoral alliances that can attract support from out-group voters nationwide (Makutu and Tshimanga 2014). In Benin, the noncoethnic spouses of presidential candidates serve as surrogates who can secure electoral support from voters in their respective groups (Adida et al. 2016).

In this context, we seek to refine and supplement the logic of instrumental voting in cleavage-bridging endorsements. First, we explain the central role of in-group trust in mediating the impact of endorsements aimed at persuading voters to support out-group candidates. While the standard instrumentalist framework would lead us to expect endorsements to work when endorsers and voters are members of the same group, the existing scholarship largely leaves unstated exactly why and how in-group trust facilitates cross-cleavage political behavior. Second, in stressing the role of trust, we suggest that cleavage-bridging endorsements may induce voter beliefs about intergroup relations that go beyond standard instrumentalist expectations. The voter who has been convinced to cross a politicized cleavage does not only expect the out-group candidate to treat her fairly (or not discriminate against her) in the allocation of state resources; she might also perceive her relationship with that candidate in qualitatively different terms.

Leveraging in-group trust in endorsements

Voters who lack knowledge about candidates have an incentive to rely on information provided by endorsers they trust (Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Popkin 1991). Endorsements derive their force from the fact that voters place stock in information sources that share their interests and values (Iyengar and Hahn 2009; Taber and Lodge 2006). The voter uncertain about which candidates will deliver on their promises can increase the likelihood of choosing the superior candidate by relying on information from sources known to share her perspective. In countries where the electorate is divided by social cleavages, an endorsement helps to alleviate informational constraints that voters otherwise face when assessing out-group candidates for whom they will have less reliable information. Endorsements thus provide voters with the information necessary to approximate voting with complete information (Lupia 1994).

When voters perceive endorsers as sharing their interests, as occurs when they have a common group identity, they are more likely to believe that they themselves would have reached the same voting decision if they had complete information. Such a belief frees voters from the burden of having to acquire

costly information on multiple candidates and instead allows them to rely on cues conveyed through endorsements (Brady and Sniderman 1985; Huckfeldt et al. 1995). Voters can infer the benefits to be gained from different candidates by simply looking at who is endorsing them. Focusing on these relational properties of endorsements helps to explain why certain types of endorsements are unlikely to influence how voters perceive a candidate. In an ethnically polarized society, for example, voters are unlikely to be swayed by an endorsement from an out-group politician because they will not believe that the endorser's interests are aligned with their own. Likewise, voters are unlikely to be swayed by an endorsement for an in-group candidate if no new information is revealed about the candidate's distributive behavior in office.

For an endorsement to persuade a voter to overcome her identity-based priors about out-group candidates, the endorsement must be issued by a trusted source that shares the voter's biases. An endorsement from a trusted source that challenges a voter's intuition will be interpreted as a particularly strong signal that she should reconsider her choices (Calvert 1985). Updating occurs because individuals pay closer attention, and are more likely to invest in learning, when confronted with incongruent information that interrupts normal cognitive associations (Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000). The voter who hears an in-group politician endorse an out-group candidate should be more likely to update her priors precisely because she has received a piece of information from a trusted source that is unexpected, given their shared group interests.

The persuasive power of cleavage-bridging endorsements stems from in-group trust. Voters are willing to consider supporting an out-group candidate because they are making the calculated decision to believe in the in-group endorser's intentions. Voters will make themselves vulnerable in this way if they can reasonably infer that the in-group endorser, due to their common group membership, will make choices in a benevolent, predictable way that advances their shared interests (Platow et al. 2012). This expectation is bolstered when their shared identity provides complementary social ties that help identify as well as sanction any dishonesty (Habyarimana et al. 2009). The lack of social ties should lead voters not to trust an out-group endorser, especially if they have no means to detect or punish any potential betrayal of that trust (Robinson 2020).

In-group trust mediates the impact of a cleavage-bridging endorsement because the in-group endorser—by publicly vouching for an out-group candidate is ultimately encouraging voters to transfer the trust placed in her to the out-group candidate.[1] In this way, the endorser leverages an in-group trust premium to close the trust gap that would normally prevent voters from even considering the out-group candidate as a viable option. The in-group endorser is effectively promising that the out-group candidate will treat them as if they were also members of her group. The endorsement thus allows voters to envision their potential relationship with the out-group candidate to be comparable to what they have with the in-group endorser. Voters should follow the endorser's advice as long as they reasonably expect that supporting the candidate will ensure their access to state resources.

The relational impact of endorsements

We argue that the activation of trust through cleavage-bridging endorsements can generate new beliefs about the nature of a voter's relationship with an out-group candidate. In the standard instrumentalist framework, voters rationally expect an endorsed out-group candidate to address their needs because that is what their political relationship entails: constituency service is exchanged for electoral support. But what is overlooked in this framework is the fact that trust itself is multidimensional, operating through cognitive as well as affective processes (McAllister 1995; Schaubroeck, Lam, and Peng 2011; Wang, Indridason, and Saunders 2010). A cleavage-bridging endorsement—by convincing voters to transfer their trust from an in-group endorser to an out-group candidate—may also induce voters to perceive the out-group candidate in affective terms, namely, as someone who is personally concerned about their well-being. In this respect, the candidate is believed to address voter needs not solely because she is embedded in an instrumental political relationship. Rather, the endorsement persuades voters to believe that the candidate genuinely cares about them.

We draw on insights from social psychology to explain how voters exposed to cleavage-bridging endorsements might develop affective evaluations about out-group candidates. The scholarship on contact theory suggests that intergroup prejudice can be reduced when contact is defined by a set of facilitating conditions: equal status, cooperative interaction, common goals, and authority support (Paluck, Green, and Green 2019; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006).[2] These very conditions broadly define cleavage-bridging endorsements because they typically involve two politicians (equal status) publicly affirming their intent to work together (cooperative interaction) to implement a shared political platform (common goals). When

1. Voters are more likely to follow through in transferring their trust from endorser to candidate if both are perceived as sharing similar characteristics, forming part of a common category, and engaging in repeated interactions (Lickel et al. 2000).

2. Scacco and Warren (2018), however, find that contact may not necessarily reduce out-group prejudice; contact instead may attenuate discrimination produced as a result of more intense in-group bonding.

issued by a recognized in-group leader (authority support), the endorsement gives group members permission to participate in similar political cooperation.

While voters themselves rarely directly participate in or observe the endorsement act, they may still indirectly absorb its effects. Research suggests that intergroup contact need not occur in person for its positive effects to take hold; prejudice can be reduced even when it is not feasible for individuals to communicate directly (Lemmer and Wagner 2015; Wright et al. 1997). Whether transmitted through social networks or mass media, the knowledge that an in-group member has a positive relationship with an out-group counterpart may be sufficient to shift perceptions about the desirability of contact. Representations of successful intergroup contact make future interactions more likely by increasing information about the out-group, reinforcing norms of contact, and reducing anxieties about their interactions (Ensari and Miller 2002; Ramiah et al. 2014). For example, in the aftermath of Rwanda's genocidal violence, Paluck (2009) and Bilali and Vollhardt (2013) show that even exposure to fictional examples of positive intergroup contact can reshape beliefs about out-group members.

Cleavage-bridging endorsements, as a form of indirect or vicarious contact, enable voters to perceive their relationship with out-group candidates in affective terms. Experimental studies in social psychology repeatedly show that indirect contact can do more than lead individuals to reduce their prejudices or stereotypes of others; it can elicit positive feelings and intentions toward out-group members (Pagotto et al. 2013; Vezzali et al. 2012). Similarly, by creating the anticipation of cooperative interactions (Misch et al. 2021; Zhou et al. 2018), endorsements can lead voters to begin developing positive sentiments about out-group candidates. Voters who learn to view endorsed out-group candidates as allies in a cooperative partnership will then apply to them the attitudes and behaviors normally reserved for in-group members (Aron et al. 1991; Pietraszewski, Cosmides, and Tooby 2014).

Testable hypotheses

The discussion presented above suggests a set of straightforward testable hypotheses consistent with the expectations of instrumental voting. In this regard, voters should be more likely to express support for an out-group candidate endorsed by an in-group politician. Endorsements from out-group politicians should not be expected to affect support for an out-group candidate. Here we add three refinements regarding the role of trust in endorsements.

First, if our claim about the role of trust is correct, we should expect to find that endorsements operate through a trust mechanism: out-group candidates should be viewed as more trustworthy when endorsed by an in-group politician. Since voters follow endorsers they consider to be honest and dependable (Botero et al. 2015; Druckman 2001), the endorsement likely induces voters to view the out-group candidate as being trustworthy precisely because an in-group politician has vouched for her. By extension, we expect the voter's trust in the in-group politician to mediate the other outcomes associated with the endorsement.

Second, the trust transferred by an in-group endorser should influence voter expectations about an out-group candidate's distributive behavior in office. This is also consistent with theories of instrumental voting. If voters follow an endorsement when they believe the endorser shares their interests (Arceneaux and Kolodny 2009; Boudreau 2009), an in-group endorsement should convince them that the out-group candidate will not discriminate against them in the distribution of state resources once elected.

Third, our affect-related claims about trust should lead us to find that voters attach positive affect toward endorsed out-group candidates whom they come to view as quasi-in-group members who care about their personal well-being.

RESEARCH DESIGN

We assess the effects of cleavage-bridging endorsements on voting through a survey-based experiment conducted in Nakuru County, Kenya. Politics have been highly ethnicized in Kenya since independence, when the country's major ethnic groups initially allied with different parties to compete for power. Political competition then largely played out along ethnic lines in both single-party and multiparty eras (Ajulu 2002; Opalo 2019), partly because officeholders became accustomed to channeling valuable development resources toward their own coethnics (Jablonski 2014; Kramon and Posner 2016).

Kenyan politicians continue to cultivate electoral support on the basis of ethnicity (Bratton 2008), but increasingly competitive elections have also compelled them to become pragmatic in seeking to win over out-group voters to form viable winning coalitions (Horowitz 2016). Multiethnic electoral alliances have become a regular feature of national elections (Arriola 2012), exposing a larger number of Kenyan voters to cleavage-bridging endorsements in the process. At our study site, Nakuru, members of the two largest ethnic groups—Kikuyu and Kalenjin—would have heard or witnessed endorsements that were relevant to their identities. In 2013, for example, presidential candidate Uhuru Kenyatta, a Kikuyu, selected William Ruto, a Kalenjin, to be his vice-presidential running mate. In the same election, Kinuthia Mbugua, a Kikuyu candidate for Nakuru County's governorship, selected Joseph Kibore Rutto, a Kalenjin, to be his running mate for deputy governor.

But along with voting for various multiethnic electoral alliances—with Kikuyu and Kalenjin politicians being allies in some elections and rivals in others—Nakuru's residents have experienced the interethnic antagonisms associated with living in "a contested space" (Hassan and O'Mealia 2018, 166). Historical tensions stemming from group competition over land have persisted over time. Kikuyu migrants began moving to the area following resettlement programs initiated by the postindependence government in the 1960s, provoking resentment and resistance among the locally rooted Kalenjin community (Lynch 2011). Consequently, identity and land remain salient issues that politicians periodically inflame through campaign rhetoric at election time (Kanyinga 2009; Kasara 2013). A Nakuru resident interviewed by Klaus (2020, 14) succinctly captures how some politicians have exploited these issues to mobilize voters: "Issues of land are connected with politics because the politician sees the presence of other communities in a region as a threat to his [victory] in the area since most people vote along tribal lines. So he will try his best to eliminate them. He does this by inciting his community, telling them that the other community is not supposed to be living there."

Intergroup tensions exacerbated by electoral competition have periodically escalated to outright violence in Nakuru. Both Kikuyu and Kalenjin politicians have been implicated in fomenting ethnically targeted attacks that have killed scores and displaced hundreds of thousands from the area. In the run-up to the 1992 presidential election, Kalenjin politicians incited violent attacks aimed at driving out Kikuyu residents as well as preventing them from voting for the Kikuyu opposition candidate competing against the Kalenjin incumbent (Hassan and O'Mealia 2018). After the contentious 2007 presidential election in which a Kikuyu presidential incumbent faced a Kalenjin-endorsed ethnic Luo candidate, violence broke out once again as ethnically targeted attacks erupted across Nakuru (Kenya National Commission on Human Rights 2008). Nakuru was one of the areas most affected by the 2007–8 postelection violence, accounting for an estimated 263–431 lives (18%–29%) of the approximately 1,500 killed nationally (Klaus 2020). A household survey conducted by Klaus (2020, 214–16) in Nakuru reveals that 51% of respondents recall violence during the 2007 election and 55% heard politicians encourage their followers to "kick out the other tribe" as part of that campaign.

Given the competing influences to which Nakuru residents have been exposed over the past two decades—multiethnic electoral alliances versus ethnically targeted political violence—it remains unknown what impact cleavage-bridging endorsements might actually have on voters. Even if voters are willing to follow endorsements from in-group politicians, as the instrumental logic would predict, it may well be that they do so without changing their perceptions of out-group candidates. We must establish empirically whether in-group trust mediates the impact of an endorsement along with their associated instrumental and affective effects on voter attitudes.

Experimental design

To identify the causal effect of cleavage-bridging endorsements on voter evaluations of candidates, we presented a simulated radio news segment embedded in a large-scale survey of respondents randomly selected across Nakuru County. The segment presented respondents with a fictitious candidate announcing his campaign for Nakuru's governorship in the 2017 election.[3] The county governor is a consequential position under Kenya's 2010 constitution. Powers devolved to county governments provide governors with considerable authority over the distribution of local resources; they directly control at least 15% of total government revenue in Kenya (Cheeseman, Lynch, and Willis 2016). The county governor is thus an executive who has the power to channel resources to coethnics or distribute them across groups.

We opted for an audio rather than a video treatment because most Kenyans receive their news from the radio. According to Round 7 of the Afrobarometer, 70% of Kenyans receive their daily news from the radio.[4] To enhance the treatment's realism, the radio news segment was modeled after typical coverage of election campaigns in Kenyan popular media.[5] The segment consisted of an introduction by a news presenter, a brief excerpt of a campaign speech by the candidate at a rally, and an endorsement made by a local politician attending the rally.[6] The segment included real-world sound effects such as theme music to cue the respondent to the program's beginning and end, clapping and cheering during the candidate's speech at the rally, and background street noise during the endorser's statement.[7]

The endorser presented in the news segment is a Member of the County Assembly (MCA), which is an elected position in the local legislature. While politicians at all levels make endorsements, we opted for an MCA rather than a member of parliament (MP) because voters would be more likely to

3. At the time of the study, Kenya's 2017 elections were a year away, but numerous candidates had already started declaring their intention to challenge incumbent governors, including Nakuru County Governor Kinuthia Mbugua.

4. The data are available at http://afrobarometer.org/.

5. The radio news script is in app. A.

6. Each of the treatments was delivered in a consistent manner with voice actors using a similar tone and pace throughout. As a result, the edited audio recordings are all within two seconds in length of each other. The exceptions are recordings for which the nonendorsement script was much shorter by design.

7. Audio clips of the simulated news segments can be made available upon request to the authors.

know the name of their local MP and be possibly swayed by factors such as incumbency or personality. It is possible that constituents might know MCAs from their own local wards, but it is highly unlikely that they would be able to correctly identify all MCAs in the Nakuru County Assembly.

The experimental manipulation involved varying the identities of the candidate and endorser as well as the content of the endorsement. Per convention, we manipulated the respondent's ethnic relationship vis-à-vis the candidate and endorser by varying the last names of both candidate and endorser (Dunning and Harrison 2010; McCauley 2014). Last names in Kenya often convey an individual's ethnicity. For the candidate, we either used Mwangi, a Kikuyu name, or Koech, a Kalenjin name. These two names are the two most common last names found for each group in the 2013 Nakuru County voter registration list. For the endorser, we used Njoroge, a Kikuyu name, or Korir, a Kalenjin name, which were the second most common names in the same voter list for each respective ethnic group. Moreover, voice actors were selected to ensure that they did not have identifiable accents in English or Kiswahili that would cue respondents to their ethnic identities other than through our treatment.

One concern with the subtle priming of ethnic relationships through last names is whether respondents can accurately identify the ethnicity of the individuals portrayed in the segment. Successful priming is critical to our study because we are interested in how an individual's perception of her ethnic ties to the candidate and the endorser shapes her willingness to cross ethnic boundaries to cast a vote. To verify that these perceptions were sufficiently manipulated, we asked respondents to identify the candidate's ethnicity and name as well as the endorser's after answering all other posttreatment questions. Respondents identified the ethnicity and name of both individuals with nearly perfect accuracy. Despite having only been primed of candidate and endorser identities during the treatment—as well as choosing from among 15 ethnic categories—respondents correctly identified both ethnicities and names more than 90% of the time. Respondents identified candidates at a slightly better rate than endorsers, but these differences are statistically indistinguishable.

Our experimental design is a 2 × 2 factorial design with an additional four control conditions in which we omit the endorsement for the candidate entirely or include the endorsement without disclosing the last name of the endorser. This yields a total of eight treatment and control conditions, which are graphically presented in figure 1.[8]

8. We also randomly varied the type of appeal made by the endorser, emphasizing either public goods or private benefits as part of the endorsement. We find no effects based on appeal type, as reported in app. I. These results, however, are not central to our main theoretical claims regarding endorsements as such.

Survey administration

The experiment, which was embedded within a face-to-face survey, was carried out using tablet devices in respondents' homes. Upon consent, respondents were exposed to a randomly selected recording that contained one of the eight treatment and control conditions.[9] The probability of assignment into the main experimental conditions (T1 through T4) was double that of being assigned to one of the control conditions (C1 through C4). Once respondents listened to the radio news segment, they answered a battery of questions related to their opinions of the candidate, their own political participation, and other demographic information. Following the administration of the posttreatment survey, respondents were debriefed about the fictitious nature of both the candidate and endorser portrayed in the segment. Respondents received a mobile phone airtime voucher worth 100 Kenyan shillings (US$1.10) after completing the interview as compensation for their time. After each successful interview, enumerators skipped a predetermined number of households and repeated the process until the day's target was reached.

Respondents were recruited within Nakuru County to vary their urban and rural conditions: Nakuru Town, Gilgil, Njoro, and Elburgon/Molo.[10] Nakuru Town is one of Kenya's largest cities, while the others are predominately rural in nature. A total of 1,806 interviews were completed across the four study sites over a period of 21 days: 1,055 (58%) of these were completed in urban Nakuru Town, and the remaining 755 (42%) were completed in the rural areas in the outskirts of Nakuru and Gilgil, Njoro, and Elburgon/Molo. The sample was ethnically 81% Kikuyu and the remaining 19% was Kalenjin; 52% was female.[11] Table 1 presents summary statistics of the respondent sample on a set of demographic, religious, political, and economic characteristics.

Respondents were recruited through a random-walk protocol modeled after the Afrobarometer protocol for household survey sampling.[12] Within each location, estates were chosen at random after listing them in pairs and randomly choosing

9. Respondents had the option of completing the survey in either English or Kiswahili.

10. A map of the area is found in fig. A1.

11. The sample's ethnic composition is comparable to the proportion of Kalenjins and Kikuyus in the 1989 Kenyan census of Nakuru District. The sample's slight overrepresentation of women (52%) is a consequence of the prevalence of female single-individual households in Nakuru Town.

12. For highly rural locations in Molo/Elburgon, a random-walk protocol was infeasible due to large distances between households. In these locations, enumerators were instructed to interview a respondent after every 300 meters of walking in a designated direction from the preselected departure point.

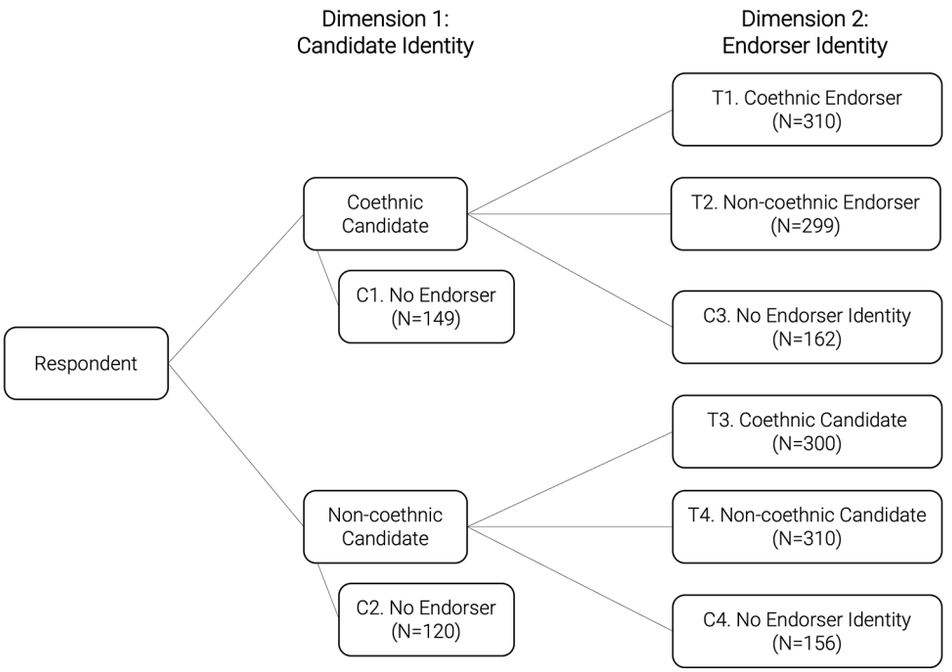

Figure 1. Experimental design: subjects assigned to main treatment and control conditions

which would be sampled.[13] After the estates were identified, enumerators started from previously selected landmarks and executed a random-walk protocol to identify households where interviewing would begin. In each household, enumerators followed the Kish grid method to determine which individual over the age of 18 would be interviewed. After being selected, respondents were administered a short screening questionnaire that determined eligibility. Only those who were of voting age, residents of Nakuru County, and either from the Kalenjin or Kikuyu ethnic group were eligible to participate in the experiment.

Outcomes of interest

The main dependent variable is vote preference. The survey asked respondents about the likelihood that they would vote for the gubernatorial candidate presented in the radio news segment on a scale from 1 to 7, ranging from completely unlikely to completely likely. The average likelihood of voting for the candidate is 4.58, pooled across all treatment and control conditions, with a standard deviation of 1.51.

The survey posed a series of follow-up questions regarding attributes of the endorser and the candidate to determine whether trust is a key aspect of an endorsement. Respondents were asked about the endorser's trustworthiness on a 1–7 scale, ranging from completely untrustworthy to completely trustworthy. For the gubernatorial candidate, respondents were also asked to assess his trustworthiness on a scale from 1 to 7.

For the instrumental evaluations we expect to be associated with endorsements, respondents were asked to state the extent to which they agreed that the candidate's loyalty would "primarily lie with all people in the county, regardless of tribe or group." This question was also posed on a 1– 7 scale from completely disagree to completely agree. Respondents were also asked whether they agreed that the candidate would "take care of my group" on the same 1–7 scale. Both questions are meant to gauge voter expectations about the candidate's behavior in office.

For the affective evaluations, respondents were asked to what extent they considered the candidate to be likable, a measure of in-group bias in studies of social psychology (Misch et al. 2021). Respondents were also asked if they thought the candidate "cares about me," a measure of affective trust (McAllister 1995). Both questions were measured on a 1–7 scale. Descriptive statistics on these and auxiliary outcomes are presented in table A1.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

We take an intention-to-treat analysis approach that compares the average responses among respondents assigned to

13. For Nakuru Town, an official list of estates was secured from the Nakuru County Office of Planning. For Gilgil, Njoro, and Elburgon/Molo, the list of estates was collected by surveying a number of local residents prior to sampling.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Statistic	*N*	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Demographics:					
Female	1,806	.524	.500	0	1
Ethnicity (Kikuyu)	1,806	.811	.392	0	1
Ethnicity (Kalenjin)	1,806	.189	.392	0	1
Religion:					
Protestant	1,806	.758	.428	0	1
Catholic	1,806	.199	.399	0	1
Muslim	1,806	.011	.105	0	1
Traditional	1,806	.005	.070	0	1
Other	1,806	.027	.163	0	1
Political characteristics:					
Voted in prior election	1,799	.834	.372	0	1
Party member	1,805	.332	.471	0	1
TNA party member	598	.776	.417	0	1
URP party member	598	.144	.351	0	1
Feel close to party	1,805	.520	.500	0	1
Close to TNA	938	.769	.422	0	1
Close to URP	938	.151	.359	0	1
Asset ownership:					
Owns radio	1,805	.890	.313	0	1
Owns TV	1,805	.794	.404	0	1
Owns vehicle	1,805	.324	.468	0	1
Owns mobile	1,805	.914	.280	0	1

treatment and control conditions. By doing so, we intentionally disregard that some respondents did not comply with the treatment, that is, they did not receive the treatment manipulation as intended. While this creates the possibility that the results presented here underestimate the treatment effect, we take the high compliance rates reported in the previous section as reason to expect that substantive findings will remain unchanged even if we account for noncompliance and calculate the complier average causal effect (CACE).

Endorsement effects on voter support

The first part of our analysis examines the effects of endorser ethnicity on voter evaluations of candidates. Table 2 presents the average evaluations by the ethnic relationship between the endorser and respondent. References hereafter to coethnic or noncoethnic relationships will always be made with respect to the respondent. We find that assignment to an endorsement issued by the respondent's coethnic has no discernible effect on the evaluation of a coethnic candidate. The difference in evaluations between a coethnic candidate endorsed by a coethnic versus a noncoethnic are statistically indistinguishable from zero. This null result suggests that, when evaluating a candidate from her own group, the respondent derives no additional information by knowing the ethnicity of the endorser.

We find, however, that respondent evaluations of noncoethnic candidates are positively influenced after hearing an endorsement that comes from one of their own coethnics. An endorsement issued by a coethnic has a statistically significant and positive effect on the respondent's evaluation of a noncoethnic candidate. The mean evaluation of the noncoethnic candidate with a coethnic endorsement (4.56) is almost 0.5 larger than the mean evaluation of the noncoethnic candidate with a noncoethnic endorsement (4.07) at $p < .0001$. This result suggests that an otherwise indifferent voter might be more likely to support the noncoethnic candidate after hearing an endorsement by a coethnic. Since the experimental estimates for candidate coethnicity effects range from 0.37 to 0.82 on a 7-point scale, the effect of a coethnic endorsement on a noncoethnic candidate is substantively large (see table A4). This outcome is measured on a Likert-type scale, so we subject these findings to a series of robustness checks with nonparametric tests, as shown in table 2. Both the two-sample Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney rank sum test and the two-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which is known to be highly conservative when used for discrete distributions (Conover 1972), support the findings from our parametric tests.

Table 2. Endorser Ethnicity Effects: Support for Coethnic and Noncoethnic Candidates

	Coethnic Candidate	Noncoethnic Candidate
1. Coethnic endorser	4.92	4.56
	(.08)	(.09)
2. Non-coethnic endorser	4.89	4.07
	(.08)	(.09)
Difference in means: (1) − (2)	.03	.49***
	(.11)	(.12)
Wilcoxon test (*p*-value)	$p = .437$	$p < .001$
Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (*p*-value)	$p = .525$	$p < .001$

Note. Cells report average answers to the question, "On a scale from 1 to 7 . . . how likely are you to vote for the candidate?" Differences in means are assessed using a standard two-tailed *t*-test with estimated standard errors reported in parentheses.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

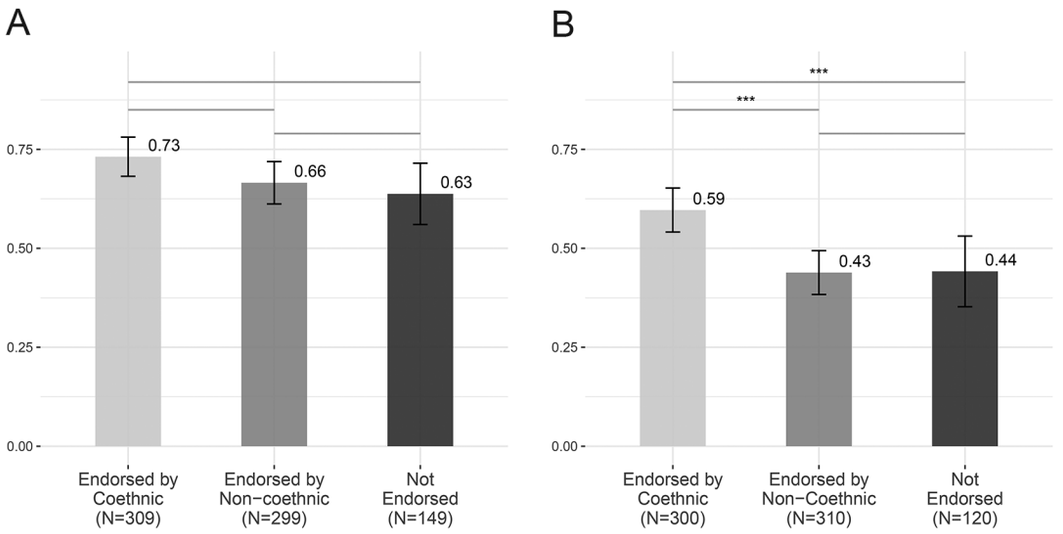

Figure 2. Evaluations of coethnic and noncoethnic candidates by endorser coethnicity. *A*, Voting intention for coethnic candidate. *B*, Voting intention for noncoethnic candidate. The bar graphs represent the proportion of respondents who replied that they were "somewhat," "very," or "completely" likely to vote for a candidate for each treatment condition. The error bars are 95% confidence intervals for the means. The difference in means is derived from a standard two-tailed *t*-test. $^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$.

To facilitate a more intuitive interpretation of the magnitude of coethnic endorsement effects, figure 2 plots the proportion of respondents who reported being "somewhat," "very," or "completely" likely to vote for the candidate portrayed in the radio news segment for each treatment condition. Figure 2*A* shows that endorsements have a limited effect on respondent evaluations of a coethnic candidate, regardless of endorser identity (coethnic or noncoethnic). A coethnic candidate endorsed by a coethnic endorser (73%) is around 7 percentage points more likely to be supported than a candidate endorsed by a noncoethnic (66%), but the difference is statistically indistinguishable at conventional levels.

By contrast, a cleavage-bridging endorsement by a coethnic substantially increases respondent support for the noncoethnic candidate, as shown in figure 2*B*. In comparison to a candidate endorsed by a noncoethnic (43%), a candidate endorsed by a respondent's coethnic (59%) enjoys a 16 percentage point boost in voter support, an effect that is statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level. The coethnic endorsement effectively brings voting intentions for a noncoethnic candidate up to the level of an unendorsed coethnic candidate (63%). The electoral advantage enjoyed by the endorsed noncoethnic candidate appears to be derived almost entirely from the coethnic relationship between the endorser and the voter. Underscoring the importance that voters appear to attach to the identity of the endorser, we find no observable effect for a noncoethnic endorsement when compared to an unendorsed noncoethnic candidate. The level of support enjoyed by both noncoethnic candidates is virtually identical (43% vs. 44%), as shown in the second and third bars of figure 2*B*.

The persistence of coethnic bias shown in figure 2 suggests that the endorsement findings presented here are not merely the product of social desirability. Satisficing, choosing the middle option on a Likert scale, can result from social desirability when respondents attempt not to displease the enumerator (Garland 1991). But the apparent preference that respondents exhibit for their own coethnic candidates—as illustrated when comparing across figures 2*A* and 2*B*—suggests that there is no such effect in our sample.[14] Given the content of the experimental manipulation, the effects reported here are more likely driven by coethnic endorsements rather than any information in the treatment script. The priming of ethnic relationships was made only by mentioning the personal names of candidates and endorsers. The radio news segment never mentioned ethnic groups, the nature of interethnic relations, or the names of any parties that might serve as proxies for ethnic groups. Furthermore, the candidate and the endorser were fictitious, so the outcomes cannot be attributed to their respective personalities, parties, or platforms.

Endorsement effects on candidate evaluations

We have argued that cleavage-bridging endorsements, beyond affecting voter support, should also positively influence how voters perceive noncoethnic or out-group candidates. Our research design does not give us full inferential leverage in this respect, but it does provide suggestive evidence toward that end. If our theoretical argument is to hold, we should be able to

14. See table A4 for a more comprehensive dealing of coethnicity effects.

observe corresponding differences in respondents' perceptions of noncoethnic candidates. In figure 3, we present analyses that test our claims for coethnic (fig. 3*A*) and noncoethnic (fig. 3*B*) candidates in terms of trustworthiness and associated outcomes for instrumental and affective evaluations. For the instrumental evaluations, we focus on whether a cleavage-bridging endorsement will move respondents to perceive the noncoethnic candidate as being more likely to distribute resources fairly across ethnic groups. For the affective evaluations, we examine whether the endorsed noncoethnic candidate is perceived as being more likable (a measure of in-group bias) and more likely to care about the respondent (a measure of affect-based trust).

We find robust evidence that a cleavage-bridging endorsement increases the level of trust afforded to noncoethnic candidates (ATE $= 0.311$, $p < .05$). A coethnic endorsement yields no comparable advantage in perceived trustworthiness for coethnic candidates. The coethnic endorsement's differential effects suggest that voters are using the endorsement to update their perceptions of candidate attributes, but only when that endorsement is issued by a coethnic in support of a noncoethnic.

Consistent with the expectations of instrumental voting, our findings show that cleavage-bridging endorsements can positively influence voter expectations about how noncoethnic candidates will behave in office. Figure 3*B* shows that respondents are more likely to update their beliefs regarding whether the noncoethnic candidate will ensure their access to equitably distributed resources. A noncoethnic candidate endorsed by a coethnic is significantly more likely to be perceived as being loyal to the entire county or constituency (ATE $= 0.483$, $p < .05$). The endorsed noncoethnic candidate is also perceived as being more likely to take care of the respondent's ethnic group (ATE $= 0.259$, $p < .05$).[15] Figure 3*A* shows no evidence that a coethnic endorsement affects evaluations of a coethnic candidate's qualities.

The results presented in figure 3 further indicate that cleavage-bridging endorsements can generate positive affect among voters. We find that an endorsement issued by a coethnic in support of a noncoethnic candidate significantly increases the perceived likability of that candidate (ATE $= 0.418$, $p < .05$). Given that prior research in social psychology uses likability as a measure of in-group bias, this result suggests that an in-group endorsement may help voters to see their relationship with out-group candidates in qualitatively different terms. In support of this interpretation, we also find that a cleavage-bridging endorsement significantly increases a respondent's belief that the noncoethnic candidate will "care about me" (ATE $= 0.355$, $p < .05$). Again, we find no comparable movement on the evaluations for the coethnic candidate.

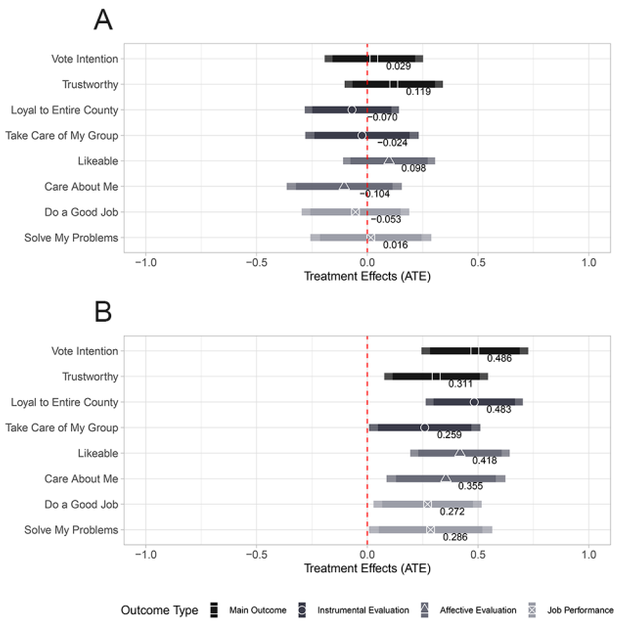

Figure 3. Treatment effects on candidate evaluations. *A*, Endorsement effects: coethnic candidate; treated: coethnic endorser; control: noncoethnic endorser. *B*, Endorsement effects: noncoethnic candidate; treated: coethnic endorser; control: noncoethnic endorser. Each of the outcomes are recorded on a 7-point Likert scale. The error bars are 95% confidence intervals for the differences in means. The difference in means is derived from a standard two-tailed *t*-test.

The mediating role of in-group trust

While the analysis thus far demonstrates that cleavage-bridging endorsements can affect voter perceptions of out-group candidates, it does not allow us to formally assess the degree to which in-group trust mediates the relationship between the treatment and the outcomes. We therefore implement a mediation analysis using the methodology proposed by Imai and Yamamoto (2013). Causal mediation analysis requires the specification of an intermediate variable that mediates the causal relationship between the treatment and outcome variables (Imai et al. 2010). If one accepts strong assumptions regarding sequential ignorability, the method allows for the identification of the average causal mediation effect (ACME). The results of these analyses are presented graphically in figure 4. Each of the panels in figure 4 presents the causal effect of the hypothesized mechanism on an outcome along with the average direct effect (ADE), the causal effect of the treatment on the outcome not transmitted through the hypothesized

15. We also conduct tests that examine the inverse of these outcomes, namely, whether the candidate "will be loyal to his own group" and "take care of his own group." As expected, the ATE are negative and statistically significant.

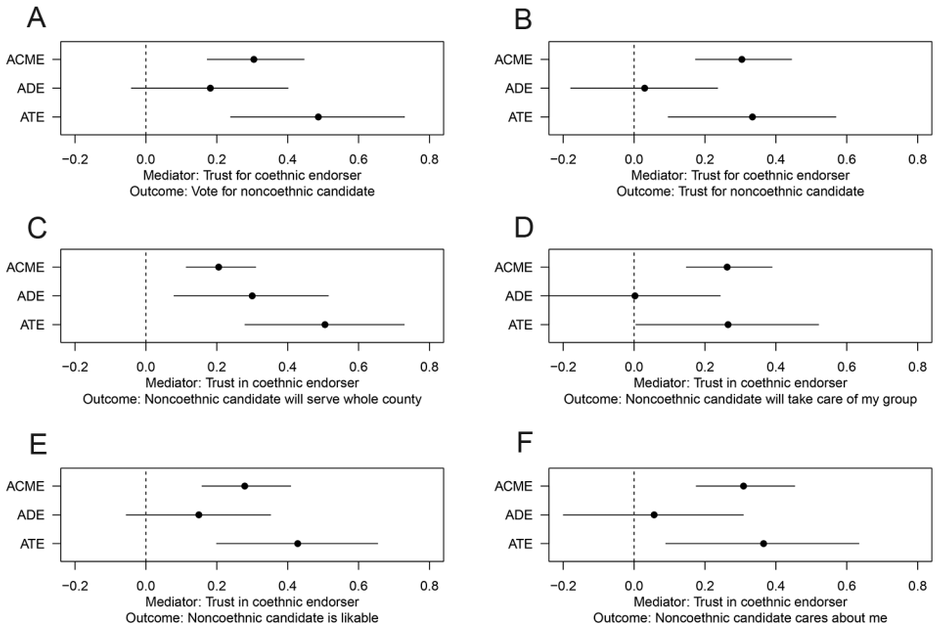

Figure 4. Mediation analysis on trust. *A*, Trust in coethnic enodorser mediates vote for noncoethnic candidate. *B*, Trust in coethnic endorser mediates trust in noncoethnic candidate. *C*, Trust in coethnic endorser mediates expectation that candidate will serve whole county. *D*, Trust in coethnic endorser mediates expectation that candidate will take care of my group. *E*, Trust in coethnic endorser mediates likability of candidate. *F*, Trust in coethnic endorser mediates expectation that candidate cares about me. Each of the panels plots the estimated average treatment effect (ATE), average causal mediation effect (ACME), and average direct effect (ADE) of a hypothesized mediator. The dot represents the estimated effect of interest, and the lines 95% confidence intervals for the effect.

mediator, and the average total effect (ATE), which is the sum of ACME and ADE.[16]

Figure 4 provides a test of the mediating role of in-group trust. If a cleavage-bridging endorsement can induce voters to transfer a degree of in-group trust to a noncoethnic candidate, then we should be able to find that trust in the coethnic endorser consistently mediates the instrumental and affective perceptions described in the previous section. In figures 4*A* and 4*B*, we examine the mediating role of in-group trust on our main outcomes, namely, voting for a noncoethnic candidate and trust in a noncoethnic candidate. Figure 4*A* shows that trust in the coethnic endorser mediates more than 60% of the endorsement effect on reported willingness to vote for the noncoethnic. Figure 4*B* shows that trust in the coethnic endorser accounts for more than 90% of the endorsement effect on reported trust in the noncoethnic candidate. After accounting for the mediating effect, the ADE of the endorsement on both the voting intention and trust toward the noncoethnic candidate is no longer distinguishable from zero. These results are consistent with the idea that in-group trust is a critical mediator of cleavage-bridging endorsements.

Figures 4*C* and 4*D* corroborate our expectations for the instrumental perceptions associated with cleavage-bridging endorsements. Trust in the coethnic endorser mediates the two distribution-related outcomes: the expectation that the noncoethnic candidate will serve the whole county and the expectation that she will take care of the respondent's ethnic group. More than 40% of the endorsement effect on perceptions of candidate loyalty toward the county, irrespective of group membership, is mediated by trust in the coethnic endorser. The mediating effect of coethnic endorser trust is even larger for the notion that the noncoethnic candidate will take care of the respondent's group, accounting for almost the entirety (96%) of the total treatment effect.

Figures 4*E* and 4*F* provide further confirmation of the affective evaluations generated by endorsements. Trust in the coethnic endorser mediates the two candidate evaluations we categorize as affective in nature: candidate likability and candidate cares about me. The ACMEs for coethnic endorser trust account for 65% and 84% of the endorsement treatment effect on the two outcomes, respectively. After accounting for the ACME, the direct effect of the endorsement is statistically indistinguishable from zero at $p < .05$, indicating that in-group

16. The analyses from which these plots are generated are presented in table A5. The table presents the ACME, ADE, and ATE, as well as the proportion of the ATE mediated by the specified mediator. The results do not include any covariates in the analysis, but results remain substantively similar when covariates are included.

trust plays a central role in mediating the impact of cleavage-bridging endorsements on voters.

Subgroup analysis: Urban versus rural samples

One concern that may arise from the preceding analysis is the possibility that heterogeneous treatment effects across subgroups may be driving our main findings. Endorser effects could, for example, only emerge among respondents in the urban sample from Nakuru Town, since urban environments create contexts where individuals of various ethnicities mix and interact with each other on a day-to-day basis. Prolonged contact to other groups may mitigate any tendencies for in-group favoritism and out-group hostility. Ethnic groups in rural areas are often geographically clustered with little opportunity for sustained intergroup contact.

Despite the potential for heterogeneous treatment effects, we find that the main endorsement effects largely hold when we disaggregate the full sample to urban and rural samples. These results are reported in table 3 and figures A5 and A6. While we do find differences in effect sizes, the main findings are replicated in the disaggregated samples: coethnic endorsements alter evaluations of noncoethnic candidates but not coethnic candidates. In line with expectations, the difference in mean evaluations for a noncoethnic candidate across the two endorsement conditions (coethnic vs. noncoethnic endorser) is much larger in the urban sample (0.56, $p < .001$) than in the rural sample (0.39, $p < .05$). In the urban sample, the effect of a coethnic endorsement is large enough to make respondents indifferent between a noncoethnic candidate and a coethnic candidate. It may be the case that greater intergroup contact within urban settings allows cleavage-bridging endorsements to serve as a stronger persuasive tool in mobilizing voters on behalf of noncoethnic candidates. However, the same does not hold in the rural sample. The effect of a coethnic endorsement for a noncoethnic candidate is still statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level within the rural sample, but the endorsement does not come close to making respondents indifferent between a coethnic candidate and a noncoethnic candidate.

Prior exposure to political violence may have weakened the treatment effects among rural respondents in our sample. Residents of Nakuru Town witnessed sporadic episodes of street fighting between Kalenjin and Kikuyu ethnic groups during the 2007–8 postelection crisis, but those living in rural areas were exposed to more intense and severe forms of violence (Klaus 2020). Rural areas in our sample, including Molo/Elburgon, Njoro, and the outskirts of Gilgil, were reported to have been hot spots of ethnic clashes during the postelection violence (Anderson and Lochery 2008). Prior exposure to violence may thus be dampening the willingness of voters to trust noncoethnic candidates even when they have been endorsed by coethnic politicians.[17]

Table 3. Endorser Ethnicity Effects: Support for a Noncoethnic Candidate, Disaggregated by Urban-Rural Respondents

	Urban Sample ($N = 710$)	Rural Sample ($N = 508$)
1. Coethnic endorser	4.66	4.40
	(.12)	(.12)
2. Non-coethnic endorser	4.11	4.00
	(.12)	(.13)
Difference in means: (1) − (2)	.56**	.40*
	(.16)	(.18)
Wilcoxon test (p-value)	$p < .001$	$p = .028$
Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (p-value)	$p = .006$	$p = .275$

Note. Cells report average answers to the question, "On a scale from 1 to 7 . . . how likely are you to vote for the candidate?" Differences in means are assessed using a standard two-tailed t-test with estimated standard errors reported in parentheses.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a baseline for understanding the role of cleavage-bridging endorsements in facilitating political cooperation in divided societies. Endorsements are a regular feature of competitive elections around the world, but our knowledge of their effects remains limited in contexts where social identities appear to condition how citizens engage with government and partisan cues are too weak to convey programmatic information. Such dynamics characterize many of the countries that transitioned to electoral democracy since the late 1980s. Yet, without a larger body of scholarship that explicitly examines whether and how endorsements persuade voters to cross politicized social cleavages—possibly an essential requirement for the long-term survival of democracy—we cannot draw reliable conclusions about their effects on voter behavior. Even if aggregate voting patterns appear to be correlated with the endorsements issued by politicians, we cannot confidently

17. We also manipulated the type of appeal included in the endorsement. The analyses of appeal effects are reported in table A6 and fig. A4. We find no discernible effect of the appeal type in shaping voting intentions for the candidate.

claim that it is the voter who follows the politician or the other way around.

In building on well-established insights from instrumentalist theories of voting, we have sought to extend our understanding of how in-group trust is leveraged to influence voters' cognitive and affective perceptions of out-group candidates. Our findings confirm expectations associated with the instrumentalist framework: cleavage-bridging endorsements seem to persuade voters that out-group candidates can be fair in the distribution of state resources. Importantly, we also corroborate our claims about the potential psychological effects associated with the activation of in-group trust through endorsements. We not only show that voters who hear cleavage-bridging endorsements are more likely to perceive out-group candidates in affective terms, but we also provide suggestive evidence that it is specifically in-group trust that mediates the cognitive and affective effects of endorsements. These are new contributions that go beyond the existing instrumentalist framework conventionally used to model voter behavior in divided societies.

But, again, the results presented here should be considered baseline findings. It is important to note that our findings need to be corroborated using other research designs and methodological approaches. More experimental work is required to precisely assess the trust mechanism as well to identify its impact on the voter-candidate relationship. Similarly, more qualitative research is needed to deepen our knowledge of how voters themselves learn from endorsements, gauge their credibility, and use them to calibrate instrumental and affective perceptions of out-group politicians. Researchers also need to consider how voters process contradictory claims often made through endorsements. In our study, voters were not presented with the kind of negative information typically heard during election campaigns. It remains unknown to what extent a positive endorsement can offset negative critiques about a candidate, particularly when those critiques relate to social cleavages.

Additional research should address the real world conditions associated with a range of politicized social identities. Future work needs to consider, for instance, whether the impact of endorsements varies across different types of cleavages such as race, religion, language, or gender. We cannot assume that an endorsement works equally well in bridging the linguistic divides of Belgium as the racial divides of Mauritius. Beyond cleavage type, demographic factors such as the relative size of groups may influence whether endorsements matter more for members of smaller groups rather than those who belong to larger groups. An endorsement's efficacy may also depend on the past success or failure of intergroup cooperation. Historical animosity or rivalry between groups could certainly dampen an endorsement's credibility.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For helpful feedback, we thank seminar participants at the Bavarian School of Public Policy, Berkeley's Center for the Politics of Development (CPD), the Berkeley/Stanford Political Economy Working Group, the Comparative Politics Seminar at the University of Washington, the Winter Experimental Social Science Institute (WESSI) Workshop at New York University Abu Dhabi, and the Center for Comparative and International Studies at ETH Zurich and University of Zurich. We are especially grateful to our excellent research team in Kenya: project manager Joseph Mwaura, supervisors Anastacia Akinyi and Osbourne Nyambare, and enumerators Josephine Abongo, Everlyn Chiteri, Linda Esegeri, Grace Indosio, Gideon Kabutho, Gregory Kalami, Irene Kanyutu, Joram Kiragu, Duncan Kironji, Caroline Okumu, and Gabriel Oyugi.

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