

Why Vote with the Chief? Political Connections and Public Goods Provision in Zambia

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Why are voters influenced by the views of local patrons when casting their ballots? The existing literature suggests that coercion and personal obligations underpin this form of clientelism, causing voters to support candidates for reasons tangential to political performance. However, voters who support candidates preferred by local patrons may be making sophisticated political inferences. In many developing countries, elected politicians need to work with local patrons to deliver resources to voters, giving voters good reason to consider their patron's opinions of candidates. This argument is tested using data from an original survey of traditional chiefs and an experiment involving voters in Zambia. Chiefs and politicians with stronger relationships collaborate more effectively to provide local public goods. Furthermore, voters are particularly likely to vote with their chief if they perceive the importance of chiefs and politicians working jointly for local development.

The existing literature on the electoral influence of local elites in developing countries claims their influence operates through practices that are troubling for democracy. Studies from Argentina (Stokes 2005) to Senegal (Schatzberg 2001) to Taiwan (Wang and Kurzman 2007) suggest that clientelism is underpinned by vote buying and deference. Some scholars focus on deficiencies in the secret ballot that allow local leaders to monitor voting and punish individuals depending on how they vote (Brusco, Nazareno, and Stokes 2004; Medina and Stokes 2007). Others emphasize the importance of voters' personal loyalties and obligations to local elites (Auyero 2000; Lemarchand and Legg 1972; Scott 1972). But in both of these arguments, elites give voters non-political reasons for supporting candidates and thus undermine the integrity of the voting process.

This article provides an alternative explanation for the continued electoral influence of local elites, or as I refer to them here, "patrons."¹ I argue that voters may prefer the candidate backed by a local leader because they expect this candidate to perform better in office. This argument emphasizes the relevance of patrons' relationships with elected politicians for the provision of public goods and access to government resources in their communities. Voters have compelling reasons for electing candidates with good relationships with local patrons in contexts where patrons play a key role in facilitating the government's delivery of goods and services locally. In these contexts, the performance of politicians in providing for their constituents once in office is dependent on them having good working relationships with patrons. The implication is that individuals who decide to vote

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¹I define this term at length at the beginning of the next section.

with their patron may be making sophisticated calculations about their political interests; they are not necessarily coerced or cowed into supporting candidates they believe will perform poorly.

This article makes both a theoretical and an empirical contribution to the literature on clientelism. First, it provides a revised explanation for patrons' political influence. This argument recasts the way we think about the voting decisions of clients. These individuals may be primarily concerned with the performance of their representatives, using the political opinions of patrons to assess this. This perspective bridges gaps in how scholars theorize about voter behavior in developing and developed countries, suggesting that poor voters can be strategic in evaluating candidates.

Second, the article empirically tests this argument against the strongest alternative explanations for the political influence of local elites, which emphasize the role of coercion and norms of reciprocity. There have been few quantitative studies of political patrons, in part because of the difficulties associated with measuring their influence. This article uses original data sources, including a survey of traditional chiefs and an experiment involving voters, to test the explanatory power of different arguments in Zambia. I study not just the amount of influence chiefs have, but also the characteristics of voters who are influenced by them, and I use this information to make inferences about why individuals vote with their chiefs.

The article proceeds by outlining its explanation for the political influence of local patrons in greater detail. Then I introduce the case of Zambia, a country that has experienced a series of relatively fair national elections, but where unelected chiefs are still thought to have significant political influence in rural areas. The following section provides preliminary empirical support for the article's argument, showing that chiefs' personal relationships to elected politicians have significant effects on both public goods provision and electoral support for political candidates in Zambia. The main empirical analysis is an experiment designed to analyze how chiefs' political opinions affect Zambian voters. I conclude by discussing the implications of the evidence for the broader study of clientelism.

A Performance-Based Explanation for Patrons' Electoral Influence

Existing explanations for the electoral influence of local elites emphasize the ability of these leaders to coerce or pressure voters into supporting candidates the voter believes will perform poorly in office. However, voters may

also have performance-related reasons for supporting the candidate preferred by local leaders. In particular, I argue that voters should care about relationships between politicians and local leaders when voters view the main role of their representatives as bringing home pork, and community leaders facilitate the government's delivery of goods and services locally.

In many developing countries, voters are predominantly concerned with the ability of politicians to provide local public goods and services rather than their stances on national policy issues (Kitschelt 2000; Wantchekon 2003). But in places where governments have weak bureaucratic capacity, politicians have limited capacity to deliver resources directly to communities. In "weak states," bureaucratic agencies and political parties lack the capacity to monitor problems, mobilize resources, or encourage participation at the local level (Herbst 2000; Migdal 1988). In these contexts, the ability of politicians to successfully respond to the needs of community members hinges on their ability to work with local patrons.

I use the term "patron" to denote unelected local elites in leadership positions by virtue of their centrality to the social and economic structure in their communities (Scott 1972). The title and exact basis of power of these leaders vary across countries, including landlords in Chile and India (Baland and Robinson 2009; Wilkinson 2007), Islamic leaders in Senegal and Indonesia (Schatzberg 2001; Slamet-Velsink 1994), "gamonales" and "caciques" in Columbia and Mexico (Cornelius 1977; Schmidt 1984), and traditional leaders in Sierra Leone and Zambia (Clapham 1982). They are similar, however, in that they are all unelected leaders at the zenith of the socioeconomic hierarchy in their communities. This puts them in a unique position to lobby on behalf of their communities, to obtain information on problems, to organize local resources, and to ensure community participation in programs. The embeddedness of patrons within their communities gives them the capacity to broker relationships between voters and politicians, and the incentive to do so.² Patrons can serve as the technology by which local goods and services are demanded and delivered.

²I argue patrons have an incentive to broker relationships between voters and politicians not because they are benevolent but because they gain materially from doing so. Patrons who live full-time among their subjects or rely in great part on contributions from community members for material support are akin to Olson's "stationary bandits," who have an encompassing interest in the local economy (2000); they stand to benefit from the provision of public goods and services within their communities. In addition, patrons may "capture" a share of the resources targeted at their communities. As long as this amount is less than the benefits that would be lost if politicians tried to deliver resources directly to communities, the argument outlined in this section still holds.

However, the effectiveness with which politicians can work with patrons to provide local public goods and services depends on the quality of their relationship. If they have a poor relationship, they will experience high transaction costs when working together, and their efforts and resources will translate less efficiently into goods and services that benefit community members. In contrast, if the two leaders have a strong relationship, they will be able to work together more efficiently. Thus, the relationship between a voter's patron and candidates for office is a matter of great political relevance. In contexts where individuals have little choice over their patron but are free to vote for their political representatives, they have an incentive to use their vote to select a politician who will work well with their patron. Individuals who vote with patrons may be making sophisticated inferences about a politician's likely performance in office.

This argument contrasts starkly with the leading explanations for the political influence of local elites. One existing explanation emphasizes that the secret ballot is violable, making it possible for elites to punish (or reward) voters for voting a particular way (Medina and Stokes 2007; Stokes 2005). A number of scholars have suggested that local leaders can figure out how particular individuals vote; leaders can either develop sophisticated technologies that allow them to observe how individuals vote (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Schaffer 2007), or, in small tight-knit communities, they can make people believe they can find out their votes (Brusco, Nazareno, and Stokes 2004; Chandra 2004).

The second prominent existing explanation argues that local leaders draw on voters' personal loyalties to them in order to mobilize votes for a particular candidate (Auyero 2000; Lemarchand and Legg 1972; Schatzberg 2001; Scott 1972). Norms of reciprocity may induce voters to repay past assistance from their patron by supporting the patron's preferred candidate (Finan and Schechter 2012; Lawson 2009). According to this line of argument, voters are not *coerced* into voting against their wishes, but they are still influenced to select candidates for reasons that are tangential to the candidate's expected political performance.

Both of the leading explanations suggest that patrons can get voters to support candidates who the voters believe will perform poorly in office by threatening to punish them or by drawing on extrapolitical obligations. More generally, the literature on developing democracies often describes voters as unsophisticated decision makers who are easily manipulated by their leaders. In contrast, my argument suggests that voters are making sophisticated assessments of candidates when they take their patron's opinions into account. They are formulating expectations

about how well different candidates will perform in office based on a relevant factor—the ability of candidates to collaborate with the local patron.

By viewing patrons as a technology by which resources are delivered to communities, we can understand the incentives of community members to vote with their patron using the models of pork-barrel politics developed by Cox and McCubbins (1986) and Dixit and Londregan (1996). Voters are concerned primarily with the amount of resources that politicians will provide to their community. They understand that less “leakage” of benefits will occur in places where chiefs and politicians have stronger relationships with one another. In addition, if voters do not have strong ideological affinities, politicians will target more resources at communities where they have stronger relationships with the local patron (Dixit and Londregan 1996). Thus, voters have good reasons for wanting to elect political candidates who have stronger relationships with their patron, as they can expect to receive more goods and services if this candidate is elected. Keefer and Vlaicu (2007) provide a similar interpretation of the role of patrons, arguing that patrons serve as a technology that allows politicians to credibly commit to providing targeted resources after elections.³

The explanation presented in this article also shares similarities with the American politics literature on heuristic cues, which argues that voters use the political endorsements of leaders as an efficient way of deciding which political option is in their best interest (Lau and Redlawsk 2001; Lupia 1994; Popkin 1991). However, in the American politics literature on heuristic cues, the endorsements of leaders provide information shortcuts for “lazy” voters who are not willing or able to obtain detailed information on their political options from other sources. In contrast, according to my explanation, the opinions of local leaders are more than an information shortcut for “lazy” voters. Patrons' opinions of politicians don't simply *reflect* how well a political candidate will perform; they *affect* how well politicians will serve their constituents.

How does my explanation differ in its empirical predictions from existing theories that emphasize the importance of coercion or reciprocity in underpinning the influence of patrons? Two unique predictions follow from this explanation for patrons' political influence. First, the relationship between politicians and patrons should affect the delivery of public goods and services in patrons' communities. In places where politicians have better relationships with patrons, communities should receive more

³Our research differs in that Keefer and Vlaicu (2007) seek to explain politicians' choices, and this project seeks to explain voters' choices.

public goods and services. The fourth section of this article tests this prediction and also shows that voters are more likely to vote for candidates with stronger relationships to their local patrons.

In addition, although all three explanations predict that some voters should be influenced by their patron's opinions, they differ in the characteristics that they predict will condition an individual's likelihood of voting with their patron. According to the explanation put forward above, individuals who believe that politicians and patrons must work together to deliver goods and services should be most likely to vote with their patron. In contrast, explanations that emphasize the importance of coercion or norms of reciprocity in underpinning the influence of patrons predict that other characteristics of individuals are crucial in conditioning their susceptibility to their patron's influence. The fifth section of the article adjudicates between different explanations by analyzing the characteristics of individuals that condition their likelihood of being influenced by their patron's opinion in an experiment.

Background on Chiefs and Politicians in Zambia

The explanatory power of this argument is tested using data from Zambia. Zambia was among the first countries in Africa to amend its constitution to allow multi-party elections in the early 1990s, and it has since held five national elections. However, during this sequence of relatively free and fair elections, nonelected traditional leaders have continued to influence governance in rural areas, and political candidates have gone to great efforts to demonstrate they have the support of local chiefs. As a senior leader of one political party expressed it, "The first port of call in any election is the chief."⁴ This article focuses specifically on the relationships between rural Members of Parliament (MPs) and traditional chiefs, and the effects chiefs have on parliamentary elections.⁵

Although the empirical data used in this article are drawn exclusively from Zambia, the findings have broad implications. Zambia is a classic example of a new democracy with a weak state bureaucracy in which elected representatives are expected to provide targeted goods. Zambia has 150 MPs elected from single-member constituencies

(approximately two-thirds of whom represent rural areas), and most Zambians believe the main function of their MP is to deliver goods and services to their communities. This is a common expectation across developing countries, particularly where MPs are elected from single-member constituencies (Ashworth and Bueno de Mesquita 2006).⁶ Zambian MPs are expected to deliver local projects by lobbying for resources from ministries and by allocating resources from the constituency development funds they control.⁷

In addition, like many other new democracies, Zambia has weak political parties, which further heightens MPs' incentives to campaign on promises of targeted redistribution rather than programmatic policies (Keefer 2007). The field research for this project was conducted in 2007 and 2008, at which time the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) formed the government. Two regional opposition parties, the Patriotic Front (based in northern and urban Zambia) and the United Party for National Development (UPND, based in southern Zambia), also had significant numbers of parliamentary seats. There are few ideological differences between these parties, which differ mainly in their ethnic bases of support (Posner 2004). None of the parties existed prior to 1990, and none has a significant organizational presence in rural areas between elections.

The combination of voter expectations and weak parties means that Zambian MPs are under great pressure to deliver pork to their constituents, but they cannot rely on the bureaucracy to implement the projects for which they secure funding. Like in "weak states" and "brown zones" elsewhere in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Migdal 1988; O'Donnell 1993), the state bureaucracy is largely absent from rural Zambia (Bratton 1980; Herbst 2000). Instead, in order to ensure that the projects for which funds are secured are actually implemented, Zambian MPs need to work closely with community leaders.

Community leaders work with politicians to organize local involvement in the delivery of public goods and services in many developing countries (Olken and Singhal 2011). For example, in Senegal, the state works

⁴Interview POL-1.

⁵Zambia also has a directly elected and powerful president who has a narrower network of regional leaders and paramount chiefs on whom he depends for support; unfortunately, there are not enough independent observations to study these relationships systematically.

⁶In the Afrobarometer survey (2009), 91% of Zambians said the main function of their MP was to represent their constituents' needs or deliver jobs and development; only 9% said their main function was to make laws for the good of the country or to monitor the government. A majority of respondents indicated their MP's main function was bringing home pork in all 20 surveyed countries, with particularly high percentages in countries using single-member systems.

⁷In 2008, government and opposition MPs each had a fund worth about US\$125,000.

with marabouts (Islamic leaders) to implement agricultural policies (Coulon 1981). In rural Colombia, “*gamonales*” (local notables) lobby for medical equipment for clinics (Schmidt 1974). In Zambia, politicians work closely with traditional chiefs to implement community projects.

Traditional chiefs are customary leaders who head communities (sometimes very) loosely based on precolonial governance structures. Rural Zambia is divided into 286 chiefdoms, each of which is headed by a hereditary chief who rules for life; there are approximately three chiefs per electoral constituency.⁸ The fact that Zambian chiefs and their “subjects” live in geographically defined areas is a methodological advantage, as it provides a means of measuring the administrative and political impact of chiefs.⁹ Chiefs are constitutionally barred from running for office, but they continue to play an important role in allocating land, administering justice, and organizing community projects.¹⁰ They are highly respected within their communities, with two-thirds of rural Zambians saying that they trust traditional leaders a lot.¹¹

Chiefs are uniquely positioned to facilitate the implementation of local projects. First, chiefs typically have up-to-date information on local problems. As an opposition MP told me, “All the things [constituents] need, they cry to [the chief]. . . . So the chief knows what the problems are.”¹² Chiefs must also give permission before customary land can be used for development projects.¹³ Finally, chiefs organize voluntary labor, and they monitor the progress of local projects.¹⁴ A government minister explained the importance of involving chiefs in community organization, emphasizing that “once the chief says something, there is no debate.”¹⁵

As a result, in rural Zambia, chiefs and MPs must work jointly to provide local public goods and services, with the MPs providing financing, and the chief providing

⁸Chiefdoms are rarely divided between constituencies. In the few cases where chiefdoms are divided, I assigned the chiefdom to the constituency in which the majority of its population lives.

⁹Patrons whose clients are not geographically clustered may have equal influence, but it will typically be harder to detect.

¹⁰The fact that chiefs cannot run for office also helps the study. In cases where patrons can run for office, voters can ensure the smooth delivery of goods and services not just by electing someone with a close relationship with their patron but also by electing the patron himself.

¹¹This statistic is from the Afrobarometer survey (2009).

¹²Interview POL-9.

¹³Interviews POL-3, POL-4, POL-7, POL-10, POL-13, POL-25.

¹⁴Interviews POL-2, POL-7, POL-10, POL-25, CHF-32.

¹⁵Interview POL-25.

information and local organizational capacity. As a particularly blunt MP told me, “Once you have the resistance of the chief, I don’t see how you can operate as Member of Parliament.”¹⁶ Another MP noted that it would be difficult to get elected without the support of the chief, “because whichever political leader aspires to be the MP, they must work with the chief.”¹⁷ The importance of MPs having good working relationships with chiefs was also noted by a number of voters I interviewed. For example, interviewees noted that political candidates without the support of the chief “will not deliver if elected,” or “if they are voted in, they will fail in their duties.”¹⁸

The Political Effects of Connections between Chiefs and MPs

In this section, I provide two pieces of evidence in support of the theory outlined above. I show both that politicians with stronger relationships to chiefs actually do provide more local public goods and that candidates’ relationships to chiefs affect their electoral support. Both parts of the analysis draw on a new chiefdom-level data set based in part on an original survey of chiefs conducted in three provinces of Zambia in 2007. The survey data were then combined with census data, electoral data, and geocoded information on the provision of classrooms by georeferencing historical maps indicating the boundaries of each chiefdom.

I measure the strength of relationships between chiefs and MPs using a question that asked the chief the number of years since he or she first met the MP. The logic of this measure is that individuals face high barriers to cooperating when they first meet, but they typically overcome these challenges the more times they interact. Furthermore, an additional year of interaction probably makes a larger difference when people first meet and less so once they have an established pattern of interaction, so the measure employed is the log of the number of years the chief and the MP have known each other (*Connections to MP (ln)*).¹⁹ The number of years chiefs have known MPs varies from 0 to 50, so the logged variable ranges from 0 to

¹⁶Interview POL-10.

¹⁷Interview POL-3.

¹⁸Interviews CIT-56, CIT-57.

¹⁹I have added 1 to the number of years of the relationship prior to taking logs to avoid undefined values in cases where the chief and the MP had not met. The survey also included a question that asked chiefs about their preferred candidate in the 2006 parliamentary election. There are concerns that chiefs may have felt pressure to say they liked the winning candidate best, and almost half of the respondents refused to state which candidate they liked best. Even

TABLE 1 Chiefs' Connections to MPs and Local Classrooms

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Connections to MP (ln)	0.352** (0.036)	0.378** (0.039)	0.331* (0.057)
Temporary Classrooms 06–07	0.385*** (0.000)	0.380*** (0.000)	0.440*** (0.000)
Population	0.042*** (0.000)	0.053*** (0.001)	0.033** (0.028)
Years since MP First Elected	−0.057* (0.094)	−0.054 (0.134)	−0.045 (0.254)
Years Chief Installed	0.027** (0.047)	0.023* (0.061)	0.009 (0.694)
Proportion Vote for MP (Chiefdom)		0.932 (0.343)	
MMD MP		−0.481 (0.342)	
Difference in Vote (Constituency)		−1.932 (0.191)	
University MP			−0.129 (0.802)
Cabinet MP			0.399 (0.336)
Local MP			0.482 (0.331)
Chief with Secondary Education			−0.012 (0.980)
Chief with Political Experience			0.616 (0.238)
Chief Age			0.030 (0.112)
Pseudo R-squared	0.199	0.198	0.222
N	99	96	94

Note: ***, **, and * indicate 99, 95, and 90% confidence levels, respectively. Table displays p-values in parentheses. Models are ordered logit regressions, with standard errors clustered at the constituency level. The dependent variable is the number of temporary classrooms in the chiefdom during the 2007–08 academic year.

about 4. About three-quarters of the chiefs in the analysis met their current MP before the MP was elected to office, indicating the measure captures something distinct from the political experience of the MP.

The models in Table 1 analyze the impact of relationships between chiefs and politicians on the provision of “temporary” classrooms (defined as classrooms built in part from local materials) in government schools. I

so, there is a strong correlation between preferring the winning candidate and knowing that candidate longer ($r = .44$), suggesting the *length* of MP-chief relationships is an important determinant of the *strength* of these relationships.

focus on this outcome because there is significant variation in the construction of classrooms across rural Zambia and because collaboration between chiefs and MPs is particularly important for constructing these classrooms.²⁰ The dependent variable in Table 1, *Temporary Classrooms*, measures the number of classrooms in the chiefdom during the 2007–08 school year. It takes on 21 unique values ranging from 0 to 29 but with the data concentrated at the bottom end of the range. Because the data are not continuous, I use ordered logit models to analyze the data. The standard errors in the models are clustered by constituency.

Model 1, the baseline specification, includes four control variables. The first is the number of temporary classrooms in the chiefdom during the previous academic year (*Temporary Classrooms 06–07*).²¹ The second is the size of the chiefdom (*Population*, measured in thousands of people). Finally, in order to isolate the effect of chiefs' connections to MPs from the experience of each leader, the model includes measures of the MP's years of experience (*Years since MP First Elected*) and the chief's years in office (*Years Chief Installed*).

Model 1 shows the effect of connections between the chief and the MP on the number of temporary classrooms in the chiefdom is large, positive, and statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. This suggests that electing a MP with a stronger relationship to the local chief makes a material difference to voters. Substantively, the impact of a one-unit increase in the connections between the chief and the MP (equivalent to an increase from 0 to 2, 2 to 6, 6 to 19, or 19 to 54 years in their relationship) is almost as large as the effect of having one additional temporary classroom in the chiefdom during the previous academic year. The coefficients on the other control variables are positive and statistically significant, as expected, with the exception of the negative coefficient on *Years since MP First Elected*.

Model 2 shows the results in Model 1 are robust to controlling for political variables thought to influence the allocation of local public goods. Cox and McCubbins (2004) suggest that core supporters are favored in the allocation of goods; politicians favor their supporters within constituencies, measured here by *Proportion Vote for MP (Chiefdom)*, and the government favors MPs from its own

²⁰MPs mobilize funds for the construction of these classrooms, while chiefs organize voluntary labor and community contributions and allocate land for classrooms. Interviews POL-5, POL-7.

²¹The outcome is not specified as the change in the number of classrooms because classrooms constructed from local materials will decay substantially from year to year, implying that the coefficient on the number of classrooms in existence in the previous year should be less than one.

party, measured by a dummy variable for *MMD MP*. In contrast, Dixit and Londregan (1996) suggest that politicians often target resources at swing constituencies, measured here using the difference in the vote share between the top two candidates at the constituency level (*Difference in Vote (Constituency)*). Even controlling for these additional covariates, the effect of connections between the chief and the MP remains large and precisely estimated. Furthermore, none of the new variables obtain statistical significance.

Model 3 shows that chiefs' connections to MPs continue to affect classroom construction even once controlling for a host of other personal characteristics of the MP and the chief that could conceivably influence their willingness and capacity to provide local public goods. The model includes a series of dummy variables indicating whether the MP has a university degree (*University MP*), whether the MP has at any time been in the cabinet (*Cabinet MP*), and whether the MP is local to the chiefdom (*Local MP*). In addition, the model includes variables indicating whether the chief completed secondary school (*Chief with Secondary Education*), whether the chief was ever involved in politics (*Chief with Political Experience*), and the age of the chief in years (*Chief Age*). None of the new variables has a statistically significant effect on classroom construction, and although the statistical significance of the coefficient on *Connections to MP* drops slightly below the 95% confidence level, the size of the effect remains large.

In sum, the length of relationships between chiefs and MPs has a strong effect on classroom construction at the local level.²² Insofar as relationships between chiefs and politicians impact the amount of development in their communities, voters have good reasons for considering the strength of this relationship when deciding whether to support political candidates. But are voters actually influenced by the relationship between their chief and their MP? I turn to this in Table 2.

The models in Table 2 analyze the effect of candidates' connections to chiefs on electoral support for the incumbent party at the chiefdom level in the 2006 parliamentary elections. The independent variable of interest in these models is *Difference in Connections*, a variable that compares candidates' relationships with the chief. It is equal to the length of the chief's relationship with the incumbent party candidate (logged) minus the length of the chief's relationship with the opposition party candidate

²²In the supplementary information, I show that these relationships also affect road repairs and the ability of the chief to lobby the MP more generally.

TABLE 2 Chiefs' Connections to Candidates and Electoral Support of Incumbent

	(1)	(2)
Difference in Connections	0.023** (0.048)	0.024* (0.092)
Incumbent Vote 2001	0.116 (0.621)	0.036 (0.859)
Incumbent Candidate	-0.025 (0.719)	-0.041 (0.551)
MMD Incumbent	-0.061 (0.223)	-0.055 (0.248)
UPND Incumbent	0.132 (0.137)	0.130* (0.094)
Number of Candidates	-0.028*** (0.001)	-0.027*** (0.001)
Years since Incumbent First Elected	-0.013 (0.170)	-0.008 (0.366)
Incumbent from Chiefdom		0.044 (0.264)
Opposition from Chiefdom		0.041 (0.318)
Constant	0.535 (0.000)	0.528 (0.000)
R-squared	0.498	0.499
N	87	86

Note: ***, **, and * indicate 99, 95, and 90% confidence levels, respectively. Table displays p-values in parentheses. Models are OLS regressions with standard errors clustered at the constituency level. The dependent variable is the proportion of votes for the local incumbent.

(logged).²³ The dependent variable, *Incumbent Vote*, indicates the proportion of votes for the local incumbent party in the chiefdom. *Incumbent Vote* ranges from .07 to .9, with 80% of the data falling between .2 and .8, suggesting little truncation. As a result, the models in Table 2 are ordinary least squares regressions, with the standard errors clustered at the constituency level. All of the models include controls for the incumbent party's vote share in 2001 (*Incumbent Vote 2001*), whether the incumbent candidate was running (*Incumbent Candidate*), which party was the local incumbent party (*MMD Incumbent*, *UPND Incumbent*), the number of candidates for the parliamentary seat (*Number of Candidates*), and the incumbent candidate's years of experience (*Years Since Incumbent First Elected*).

Model 1 indicates that the incumbent party received significantly higher levels of electoral support when their

²³This is equivalent to the log of the incumbent party candidate's connections over the opposition party candidate's connections, which provides another way of interpreting the measure.

candidate had stronger connections to the chief than their opponent. A one standard deviation increase in the logged ratio of the connections of the two candidates (which could reflect either an increase in the incumbent party candidate's connections or a decrease in the opposition party candidate's connections) is associated with 3 percentage points more votes for the incumbent. This is a small but important margin of difference, given that one quarter of the parliamentary races in these provinces were decided by margins of 6 percentage points or fewer, and it is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Model 2 shows the effect of having stronger connections to the local chief remains similar, though slightly less statistically significant, once including indicators for whether the incumbent party candidate and the opposition party candidate were from the chiefdom (*Incumbent from Chiefdom*, *Opposition from Chiefdom*). When these controls are introduced, the statistical significance of the coefficient on *Difference in Connections* drops to the 90% confidence level, but the size of the coefficient remains unchanged, and the coefficients on the variables measuring whether the candidates are from the chiefdom are not statistically significant.²⁴

To summarize, the results presented in Table 2 suggest that Zambian voters consider political candidates' relationships to their chiefs when deciding whom to support. The results in Table 1 demonstrate that it would be rational for voters to support politicians with stronger connections to their chiefs because they expect these politicians to provide more local public goods. However, the article has not yet presented any evidence that this is why voters decide to vote with their chiefs. The next section provides this crucial piece of evidence.

How Do Chiefs' Opinions Influence Voters?

This section tests the power of different explanations for chiefs' influence by examining whether the characteristics of individuals most affected by their chiefs are those predicted by each explanation. Specifically, this section aims to assess whether individuals vote with their chief because they are concerned about the ability of their elected rep-

resentative to work jointly with the chief, because they are worried about being sanctioned by the chief if they do not, or because they feel obliged to reciprocate favors from the chief. I use an experimental design to identify the effect of chiefs' opinions on voters, and then examine whether the attributes predicted to be important by each explanation condition respondents' likelihood of being influenced by their chiefs' opinions. In spite of the ubiquity of arguments about coercion and reciprocity in the literature, my data provide compelling evidence that these factors do not drive Zambians to vote with their chiefs; instead, voters support candidates with strong relationships to their chiefs because of concerns about their joint performance in providing local development.

Experimental Design

This research employs an experimental design because of the challenges of measuring the influence of chiefs on voters using observational studies. The difficulty is that observed similarities between the political views of elites and other voters could be driven by common environmental factors or even by the effect of voters' interests on the views articulated by their leaders. In addition, given that elite influence is a sensitive topic, voters may systematically over- or understate the extent to which they are influenced by local elites if asked directly. However, by randomly exposing respondents to information about their chiefs' political opinions, I can measure the extent to which different subsets of voters are influenced by their chiefs' views.

This experiment randomized citizens' information about their chief's opinion of their current MP. At the two selected research sites, I first interviewed the traditional chiefs to assess their level of support for the current MP; the chiefs were supportive at both sites. Then I conducted an attitudinal survey of a representative sample of the chiefdom's voters. After completing the attitudinal survey, a randomly selected subset of the respondents were informed of their chief's views, as elicited during the interview with the chief. For example, in Ndake chiefdom, the treated respondents were told: "In a recent interview, Chief Ndake said that he would love to see Forrie Tembo re-elected in the next parliamentary election." The treatment cue was taken word-for-word from the interview with the chief to maximize the authenticity of the statement. Then all respondents were asked to participate in an opinion poll on whether they would support their MP if an election were held in the next year. The opinion poll was made distinct from the rest of the survey in order both to encourage respondents to reflect carefully on

²⁴In the supplementary information, I also demonstrate that these results are not driven by high levels of electoral support for long-serving and hard-working MPs (who may also have longer relationships with local chiefs); similar results obtain when the sample is restricted to communities without incumbent MPs and communities where the incumbent party candidate met the chief before he or she was first elected to office.

TABLE 3 Attributes of Individuals Most Likely to Vote with Chief

Explanation	Attribute
Benefits from Collaboration	Belief that MP and chief jointly important for local governance
Coercion	Belief that chief can change treatment based on how vote
Reciprocity	Belief in norm of reciprocity Belief in norm of reciprocity and received assistance from chief

their choices and to mimic the level of confidentiality that exists in the voting process; respondents were instructed that, although individual responses in the opinion poll would be kept confidential (names were never asked or recorded as part of the attitudinal survey or the opinion poll), the results of the opinion poll would be compiled at the village level and sent back to community leaders.

All explanations for patrons' political influence expect the treatment to affect certain voters, but the explanations differ in *who* they predict will be affected. The main purpose of the experiment is to examine whether the treatment effect varies depending on whether respondents have the characteristics the different explanations predict to be important in conditioning individuals' responsiveness to the treatment. The predictions of each explanation are outlined in Table 3. If people who believe that their chief and their MP jointly affect local governance are particularly influenced by their chief's opinions, this would be consistent with my argument that voters are concerned about the ability of politicians to collaborate with chiefs once in office. If people who believe their chief can change their treatment of them based on how they vote are more likely to vote with the chief, this would suggest the chief can coerce people into voting for particular candidates. If people who feel obliged to reciprocate favors from the chief are more likely to support their chief's candidate, this would suggest that norms of reciprocity underpin the influence of chiefs.

The main challenge for the study was ensuring the treatment assignment actually varied respondents' information about their chief's opinion. Most experimental studies of political communication ask individuals to respond to hypothetical statements from, or about, hypothetical individuals (Berinsky and Mendelberg 2005; Weitz-Shapiro 2012; White 2007). Because the purpose of this experiment was to find heterogeneous treatment

effects across groups defined by their relationships with their chief, this design was not appropriate for this study. Instead, this experiment varied individuals' information about their chief's true opinion.

The challenge in administering an experiment that selectively reveals the opinions of real actors is that some respondents may already know their chief's views of their current MP. I adopted two strategies to minimize the possibility of respondents being aware of their chief's political views prior to the administration of the treatment. First, the survey was implemented during the middle of a parliamentary term because background research suggested chiefs are particularly likely to broadcast their support for MPs during parliamentary campaigns. Second, I selected research sites where the MPs were in their first term, thereby avoiding locations where the relationship between the chief and the MP had a well-known history. Responses to questions in the preexperimental section of the survey suggest that these site selection rules were effective in minimizing the probability that respondents were already aware of their chief's views.²⁵

A second consideration in the site selection was testing the generalizability of the results. I chose two sites with very different chieftaincy institutions. Ndake chieftaindom in Zambia's Eastern province has decentralized traditional institutions, and the chief is highly accessible to the general population. In contrast, Kashiba/Lubunda in Zambia's Luapula province is part of the Lunda kingdom, a hierarchically organized kingdom in which chiefs are more removed from their subjects. At each research site, a representative sample of 192 adults was targeted.

The research design adopted for this study falls somewhere in between a field experiment and a survey experiment. The project manipulated individuals' access to information about a real political actor, but collected information about political behavior and opinions in the context of responding to a survey, and thus involved some departures from the full realism that is the hallmark of a field experiment. For example, in a real election campaign, voters typically learn their chief's opinion from a member of their village, rather than from an enumerator. The design also relies on self-reported intentions, rather than measures of actual voting behavior. Fortunately, field reports suggest that respondents took the information provided in the experimental prompt at face value, and

²⁵In the preexperimental part of the survey, individuals were asked whether they thought their chief would support their MP if an election were to be held in the next year; 55% of people volunteered that they did not know, and 25% of people guessed wrong, suggesting the 20% of people who gave correct responses may also have simply made good guesses.

the opinion poll was explicitly designed to give respondents similar levels of confidentiality to what they could reasonably expect to have in an election (i.e., electoral results are also compiled at the village level).

Measuring Covariates

Questions designed to measure each of the attributes listed in Table 3 were asked as part of the attitudinal survey conducted prior to the experimental cue.²⁶ The attitudinal questions were asked before the experiment in order to ensure responses would not be contaminated by the treatment. Because the questions measuring the attributes in Table 3 were asked as part of an extensive battery of questions, the priming effects should be mild.

In the analysis that follows, the main proxy for whether individuals believed their chief and their MP jointly affected local development is a measure of whether the respondent believed both the chief and the MP played important roles in the governance of their local communities. Respondents were asked to rate separately how much the decisions of their chief and the decisions of their MP influenced daily life in their community on a scale of 0 to 10. Respondents who answered above 5 to both questions are coded as perceiving the two actors to be jointly important. Approximately 43% of respondents believed that both actors were important in the governance of their communities, while 57% believed that only one of these actors (or that neither of these actors) was an important community leader.²⁷

I measured whether individuals were worried about being personally punished or rewarded by their chief for voting a particular way by asking respondents how likely they thought it was that their chief could change their treatment of them based on how they cast their ballot in an election. If respondents said there was any chance their chief could change their treatment of them, they are coded as being worried about being punished/rewarded for voting a particular way. It is noteworthy that only 20% of respondents thought it was possible to be treated differently based on how they cast their ballot.

²⁶ Respondents should have expected even higher levels of anonymity in their answers to the attitudinal part of the survey, as compared to the opinion poll, because the reports sent back to communities were based only on the opinion poll results. In the supplementary information, I show that it is impossible that missing data could change the substantive conclusions of this section.

²⁷ Within the 57% of people who did not think both the chief and the MP important, 33% believed that only the chief was important, 11% believed that only the MP was important, and 13% believed that neither was important.

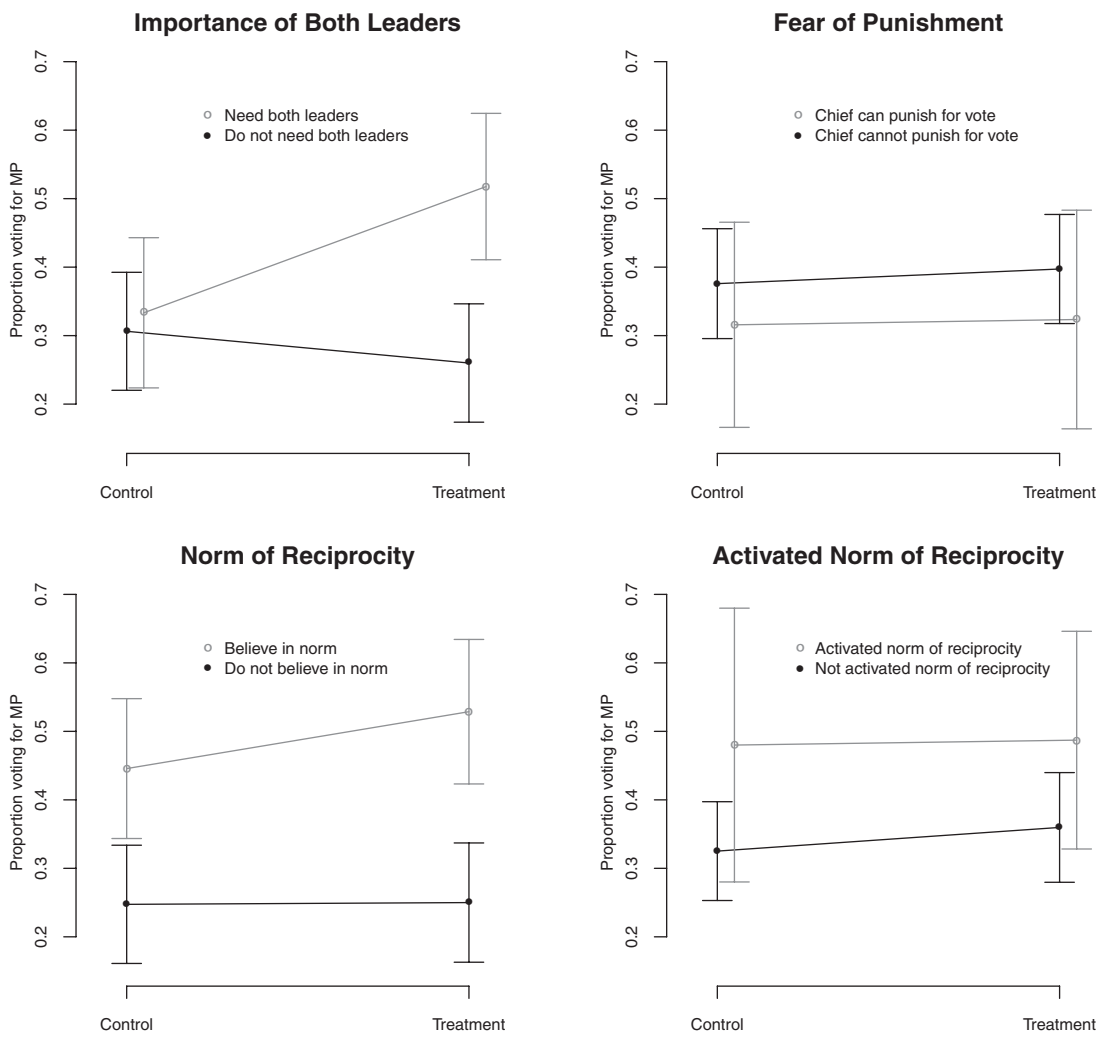
Finally, I measured whether individuals felt obliged to reciprocate favors from their chief through a two-step process. Respondents are coded as being subject to an activated norm of reciprocity only if they both believed in a norm of reciprocity and had received personal assistance from their chief in the past year. The survey included a vignette designed to elicit respondents' views about the obligation to reciprocate favors from chiefs. In the vignette, a person was provided a gift from the local chief and asked to support the chief's candidate. Individuals who reported that the person in the vignette had some or a lot of obligation to support the chief's preferred candidate — 44% of respondents — are coded as believing in a norm of reciprocity. However, even if individuals believe in the abstract in a norm of reciprocity, they may not feel obliged to follow their chief's instructions unless they also received assistance from the chief in the past year. Only 17% of respondents who believed in a norm of reciprocity had also received assistance from their chief in the past year and are therefore coded as having an "activated" norm of reciprocity.

Before presenting the tests of these three explanations for chiefs' influence, it should be noted that chiefs have only a modest impact on political behavior across their chiefdoms as a whole. Across all respondents, the effect of information about the chief's support for the MP is a four percentage point increase in support for the MP. Although this effect is not statistically significant, the size is in line with the finding in Table 2 that a one standard deviation increase in connections to the chief relative to political opponents is associated with 3 percentage points more support. In addition, to the extent that information on the chief's opinion about the MP is shared strategically with voters upon whom it has greatest impact during real elections, the average treatment effect from the experiment—which was conducted on a random sample of voters—may understate the impact of chiefs' opinions on electoral results.²⁸ The takeaway is that chiefs are not able to influence all voters, but the next section shows they have a large impact on certain types of voters.

Experimental Results

This section tests whether the effect of finding out the chief's opinion differs across groups of voters defined by the characteristics listed in Table 3. I do this by calculating the difference in the size of the treatment effects across

²⁸ Interviews with politicians suggest that information on the chief's opinion of politicians is often targeted at voters thought to be particularly influenced by it. Interviews POL-3, POL-7, POL-8.

FIGURE 1 Testing the Predictions of the Different Explanations


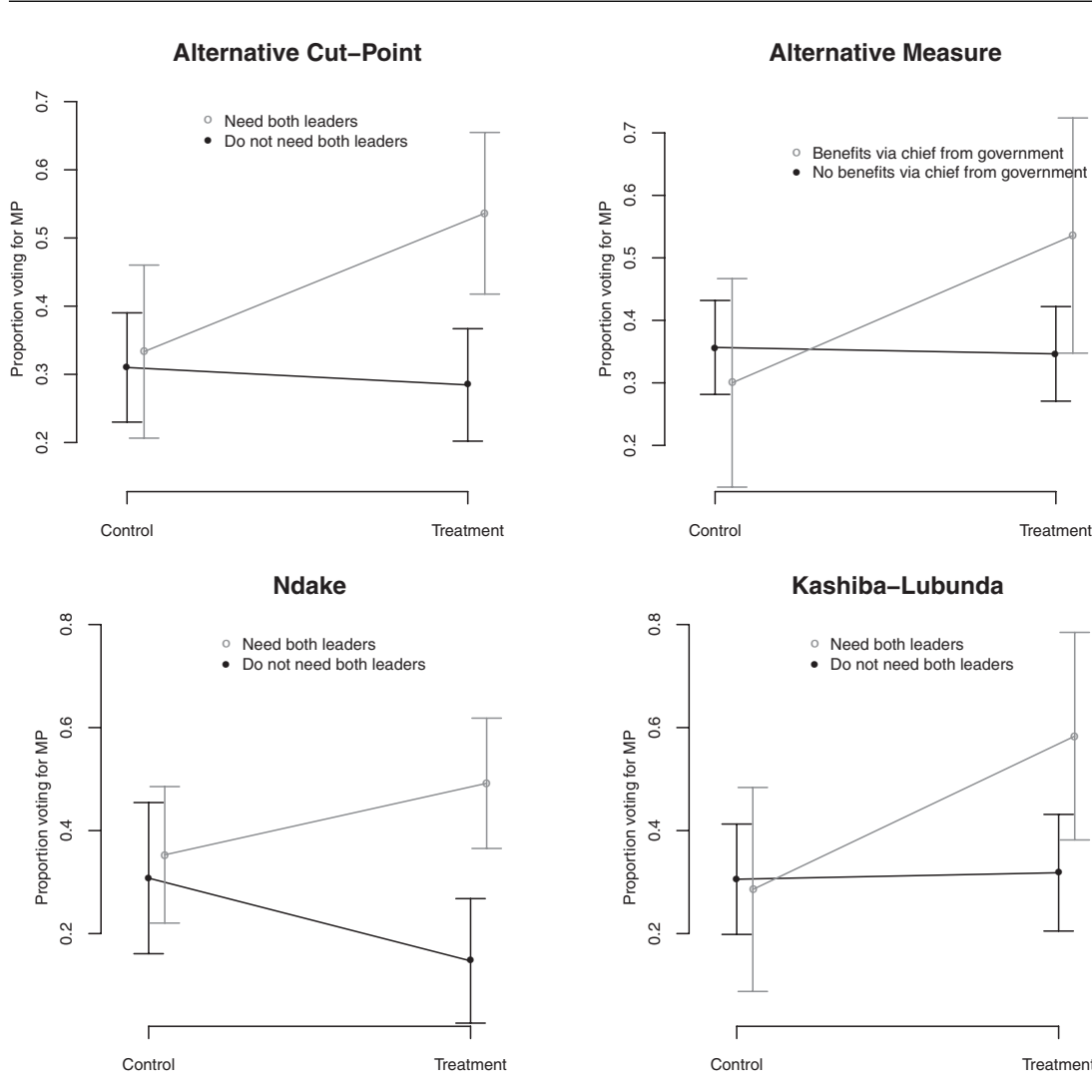
these groups. The results that follow are based on tests of differences in means. The statistical significance of the differences are assessed using t-tests, applying the conservative Neyman estimates of the standard errors of each treatment effect when calculating the standard errors of the differences.

I present the experimental results graphically. For example, the top-left quadrant of Figure 1 shows the effect of finding out the chief's support for the MP across people who believe that both their chief and their MP are important local leaders and those who do not. For the group of respondents who believe both their chief and their MP to be important, the open gray circles indicate the proportion who voted for the MP in the control and treatment groups. For the group of respondents who did not believe both their chief and their MP to be important, the closed black dots represent the proportion who voted for the MP in the control and treatment groups. The bars

around the point estimates indicate the 95% confidence intervals. *The difference in the slope of the lines in the graph is the quantity of greatest interest in this analysis*, as a large difference indicates finding out the chief's opinion differentially affects these two groups.

The data in the top-left graph support the hypothesis that people who perceive the joint importance of their chief and their MP are most likely to be influenced by their chief's opinion. The treatment has a positive effect on voters who believe both the chief and the MP are important local leaders, as the positive slope of the gray line indicates. Within this group, support for the MP increases by 18 percentage points if the chief's opinion is revealed. In contrast, among individuals who do not believe that both the chief and the MP are influential local leaders, support for the MP decreases by 5 percentage points if the chief's opinion is revealed. This is depicted by the downward-sloping black line. The difference in the slopes

FIGURE 2 Robustness of Main Result



of the gray and black lines indicates that, as predicted, the size of the treatment effect varies depending on respondents' beliefs about the dual importance of chiefs and MPs. The difference in the size of the effect across these two groups is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

In contrast, the analysis finds little support for the argument that coercion underpins the political power of chiefs. The top-right quadrant of Figure 1 shows that respondents who believe their chief could change their treatment of them based on how they vote are slightly less likely to support the MP, regardless of experimental treatment. Furthermore, this group of respondents is not more likely to be influenced by the chief's views. The chief's opinion makes little difference to either group of respondents' political views, as evidenced by the near horizontal lines in the graph.

The analysis also finds little support for the claim that norms of reciprocity drive the political influence of chiefs. The bottom-left panel in Figure 1 shows that respondents who believe people are obliged to reciprocate assistance from their chief are generally more likely to support their MP, but they are not particularly influenced by finding out their chief's opinion. The effect of finding out the chief's views is statistically indistinguishable across respondents who believe people should reciprocate assistance from their chief and those who do not. The bottom-right panel examines whether individuals whose norm of reciprocity has been "activated" by the receipt of assistance from the chief in the past year are particularly likely to be influenced by their chief's views. Again, the effect of finding out the chief's views is small and statistically insignificant among both respondents subject to an activated norm of reciprocity and respondents who are not.

In sum, the findings indicate that individuals who recognize the importance of both chiefs and politicians in governing their communities are particularly likely to vote with their chief. In contrast, people who are worried about being punished or who are subject to norms of reciprocity are not particularly likely to be influenced by their chief’s political views. Voters appear to use their chief’s opinions to make inferences about the future performance of their political representatives rather than being manipulated into casting their ballots for reasons unrelated to political performance.

Robustness Tests

The finding that individuals are most likely to vote with their chief if they believe their chief and their MP are jointly important in delivering development is very robust. The top-left quadrant of Figure 2 shows that the results are not dependent on the particular cut-offs used to code whether individuals believe both their chief and their MP are important; the results are virtually unchanged if only individuals who rated leaders above a 7 on a scale of 0 to 10 are coded as believing them to be important. The top-right quadrant shows that results are similar using a second measure of individuals’ beliefs about the importance of their chief in brokering benefits from the government. Individuals who have benefited from resources provided to their chief from the government are 24 percentage points more likely to support their MP if they find out their chief is supporting him, while individuals who do not view their chief as a broker are uninfluenced by their chief’s opinion, a difference in effect size that is significant at the 90% confidence level. Finally, the bottom two quadrants of Figure 2 show that in both decentralized chiefdoms (Ndake) and centralized chiefdoms (Kashiba-Lubunda), the interaction effect remains large and statistically significant (at the 95% confidence level in Ndake, and at the 90% confidence level in Kashiba-Lubunda).²⁹

But what are the characteristics of the respondents who recognize the importance of both chiefs and MPs in governing their communities? Are they really sophisticated voters? Or are they people who might be manipulated into supporting their chief’s candidate? Table 4 examines the characteristics of the respondents who believe chiefs and MPs are both important in governing their communities using logit models.

The results show that people with greater knowledge of and exposure to how politics works are more likely to recognize the importance of both their chiefs and MPs. In

TABLE 4 Who Thinks Chiefs and MPs Are Both Important?

	(1)	(2)
Female	−0.006 (0.979)	0.134 (0.587)
Age	0.008 (0.339)	0.012 (0.205)
Listen to Radio	0.569** (0.026)	0.038 (0.895)
Every Week		
Engage in	0.339 (0.374)	0.657* (0.098)
Agriculture		
No Cash Income	−0.162 (0.475)	0.138 (0.590)
Party Member	0.686*** (0.003)	0.315 (0.218)
Finished Primary		0.678*** (0.008)
Chief’s Ethnicity		1.284*** (0.000)
Constant	−1.604 (0.008)	−2.631 (0.000)
Adj. R-squared	0.037	0.101
N	345	343

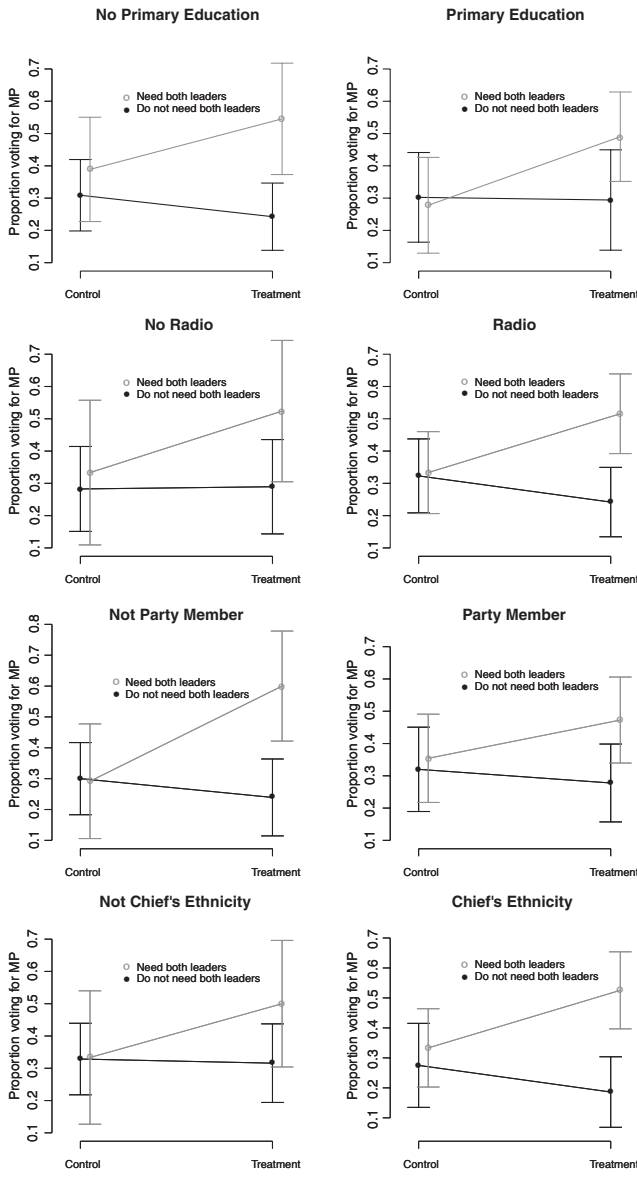
Note: ***, **, and * indicate 99, 95, and 90% confidence levels, respectively. Table displays p-values in parentheses. Models are logistic regressions with robust standard errors. The dependent variable measures whether the respondent believes *both* the chief and the MP to be important.

Model 1, which does not include controls for education level and ethnicity, a number of measures of information and political engagement are positively associated with the likelihood of believing both leaders important. Individuals who belong to political parties and respondents who listen to the radio every week are significantly more likely to believe both chiefs and MPs are influential local leaders. However, these effects disappear once controlling for whether respondents have completed primary education and whether they are co-ethnics of the chief, the two variables with the strongest effects on believing both chiefs and MPs important. Model 2 indicates that people who have finished primary education are 16 percentage points more likely to believe both leaders important. In addition, co-ethnics of the chief are 30 percentage points more likely to believe both leaders important, which may reflect greater cognitive awareness of the chief’s role in assisting MPs to deliver projects or the greater objective importance of chiefs in brokering goods for co-ethnics.³⁰

²⁹Even more robustness tests are included in the supplementary information.

³⁰These estimates were made holding other variables at their means.

FIGURE 3 Interaction Effects within Different Demographic Strata



Although many of the correlations in Table 4 are sensible, they raise concerns that the conditional effect of beliefs about the importance of both leaders may be driven by one of these demographic variables. In order to demonstrate that these demographic variables are not driving the main finding, I examine the size of the interaction effect between beliefs about the importance of both leaders and exposure to the chief's views within different demographic strata.³¹ Figure 3 shows that the size of the interaction effect remains large across groups with

³¹I examine the robustness of the effect by partitioning the data, rather than using regression models, because I am interested in

different education, information, party membership, and ethnicity. The size of the sample in each stratum is a fraction of the overall sample size, so the interaction effects do not achieve the same level of statistical significance within each stratum. However, the interaction effects remain positive and large across all of the demographic groups, as the divergence between the slopes of the lines in each graph indicates. Thus, demographic variables do not appear to be driving the article's main result.

In summary, individuals who vote with their chief appear to be making sophisticated political inferences. The previous section showed that Zambians can expect development benefits from electing politicians who get along with their chiefs and that they give more votes to candidates with stronger relationships to their chiefs. This section then demonstrated that individuals who vote with their chiefs appear to be aware of the development benefits of electing politicians with positive relationships with chiefs; voters who recognize the joint importance of chiefs and politicians to local governance are more likely to vote with their chief. These individuals, who are better informed than average, are not misled when they vote with the chief; they are making a sophisticated assessment about the future performance of politicians.

Conclusion

This article shows that the electoral influence of local patrons does not always indicate that voters are being misled into voting against their political interests. The leading explanations for patrons' political power emphasize the role of coercion and obligations in underpinning clientelistic politics. However, this article shows that voters who support candidates preferred by their local patrons may be making sophisticated political inferences.

This is because, in many contexts, politicians with stronger relationships with local patrons can be expected to perform better in office. In places where the formal bureaucracy is weak, the delivery of public goods and services to communities often depends on collaboration between these two leaders, making the relationship between them politically relevant. The political opinions of patrons do not cause voters to vote against their political interests but to alter their expectations about the performance of candidates in delivering local public goods and services.

interaction effects, and I do not have sufficient degrees of freedom in the data to control for all of the interaction effects simultaneously.

The article sets an agenda for further research on the role of elite opinion in influencing voters in the developing world. The Zambian evidence shows that we cannot assume this operates through deference or threat of punishment, but further research is necessary to assess how widely voters use the opinions of local leaders strategically. Unfortunately, a comment made 30 years ago about the dearth of comparative research on patron-client politics remains on point (Landé 1983). We still have little information about how traditional, religious, and economic elites influence voters in developing democracies, in part due to the difficulties of empirically studying this phenomenon. This article shows the utility of experiments in measuring the influence of elites and also how the existence of heterogeneous treatment effects can be used to make inferences about why individuals vote with elites.

Further research should also examine the circumstances under which patrons' political influence diminishes. This article implies that reforms to reduce violations of the secret ballot will not necessarily eliminate the influence of patrons. Situations in which new leaders emerge to compete with "traditional" patrons to mediate access to state resources may be more effective in reducing patrons' political influence (Krishna 2007). Perhaps the most promising solution would be the development of a strong and impartial bureaucracy that provides public goods and services directly to citizens rather than indirectly through patrons. Only through careful empirical research across multiple countries will we be on firmer ground in understanding and reducing the political influence of patrons.

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Supporting Information

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's website:

Table S1: Summary Statistics for Chiefdoms

Table S2: Chiefs' Connections to MPs and Classroom Construction

Table S3: Chiefs' Connections to MPs and Classroom Construction

Table S4: Chiefs' Connections to MPs and Road Quality

Table S5: Chiefs' Connections to MPs and Collaboration in Providing Local Public Goods

Figure S1: Boxplots of length of relationship between chiefs and MPs

Table S6: Chiefs' Connections to Candidates and Incumbent Electoral Results

Table S7: Interaction Effects Between Individuals' Attributes and Treatment

Table S8: Covariate Balance across Control and Treatment Groups

Table S9: Interaction Between Treatment and Believing Both Chief and MP Important

Figure S2: Heterogenous effects with introduction of noise into the treatment

Figure S3: Heterogenous effects dropping respondents who may have known views of chief prior to treatment

Figure S4: Heterogenous effects filling in missing data

Figure S5: Heterogenous effects by trust in chief

Figure S6: Heterogenous effects by trust in MP

Figure S7: Heterogenous effects by whether belong to chief's ethnic group

Table S10: Wording of Survey Questions Measuring Conditioning Variables