

# The Party's Hand in Primary Elections: Evidence from Party Primaries in a New Democracy

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## Abstract

In response to mounting calls for internal party democracy, political parties in new democracies have increasingly allowed for mass participation in the candidate selection process. While these reforms should result in the diminishing influence of party leaders and the ascendancy of mass preferences over the selection of party candidates, few studies have examined whether this is the case. I investigate this question in Kenya, where major incumbent and opposition parties have adopted primary elections to select their candidates for legislative office. Drawing on insights from qualitative interviews with elected officials, original data on primary elections, as well as a survey and embedded experiments of primary voters, I show that contrary to expectations, parties wield significant influence over the outcome of primaries and that primary voters can be persuaded to select the party's favored candidate over other higher quality aspirants. These findings have implications for our understanding of the relationship between internal party democracy and democratic accountability in the developing world.

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# 1 Introduction

The selection of candidates for public office remains one of the most important and distinctive functions of a political party (Schattschneider, 1942). Despite its importance, candidate selection<sup>1</sup> in the developing world has traditionally been left in the hands of powerful party leaders who have captured the process to ensure that the party's candidates remain loyal to them and privilege their interests. Its undemocratic nature is especially problematic in these contexts where electoral geography all but guarantees general election victory for candidates selected by the locally dominant party (Wahman and Boone, 2018; Choi, 2018), ridding voters of the opportunity to have any say in who their elected representatives ought to be. Indeed, mounting criticism regarding the lack of intraparty democracy has intensified pressures to allow for more mass participation in the candidate selection process, and perhaps as a consequence, parties in new democracies are increasingly adopting more inclusive methods such as primary elections to nominate their candidates (Field and Siavelis, 2008; Ichino and Nathan, 2018).<sup>2</sup>

Yet despite the widespread adoption of these “democratizing” reforms, few have examined whether they have had the intended consequences. In theory, the selection of candidates through primary elections, which allow for the participation of regular registered party members (closed primaries) or the general public (open primaries), should amplify the influence of mass preferences over the slate of candidates nominated to stand in the general elections. In line with this expectation, Ichino and Nathan (2022) shows that a party reform expanding the size of the selectorate in Ghana resulted in the selection of candidates with characteristics that are potentially favored by the new pool of more diverse primary voters. However, the high stakes associated with losing influence over

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<sup>1</sup>I use the term candidate selection and party nomination interchangeably throughout the paper.

<sup>2</sup>These concerns have been raised by both domestic and international actors. Domestic pressures include calls by both candidates and voters to adopt reforms to implement primaries as a rule rather than the exception. For example, in Kenya, public opinion polls conducted by Twaweza, a civil society organization, in the run-up to the 2017 party nominations, reported that more than 75% of voters on both sides of the aisle prefer open or closed primaries. See “This is how Kenyans want their democracy to work.” Washington Post Monkey Cage Blog, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/10/15/heres-how-kenyans-want-their-democracy-to-work/>. International aid agencies and NGOs, including USAID, the NORAD, DFID, and NDI have all pushed reform initiatives that focus on internal democracy within parties, including the “democratization” of candidate selection mechanisms.

candidacy decisions create incentives for party leaders to attempt to retain their influence; who represents the party on the general election ballot not only has strong implications for the party's electoral success but can also transform the power dynamics *within* the party and affect the tenure or survival of the party leadership at the apex of the party hierarchy (Schattschneider, 1942). Given these countervailing forces, it remains an open empirical question whether primary elections do in fact curtail the power of party leaders over the selection of candidates and if not, why and how party leaders manage to retain their influence despite an institutional environment hostile to it.

In addressing this question, I show that party leaders retain the ability to shape the outcome of party nominations even when the introduction of mass participatory institutions of selection should curtail their influence. I argue that party leaders do not attempt to maintain influence by undermining or working *against* the new institutional environment that places the *de-jure* authority to select candidates in the hands of primary voters, for they are weary of the potentially pernicious ramifications of such heavy-handed intervention. Instead, leaders have devised strategies that allow them to work *through* primary voters by strategically using endorsements to signal their preferences over candidates. I further argue that primary voters in new democracies are likely to vote “with” the party because endorsements allow them to overcome informational deficits that prevent them from voting in a manner that maximizes their well-being; in environments where widely used heuristics are unavailable to voters (Ferree, 2022)—typical of primary elections—party leader endorsements can help voters assess a candidate's electoral prospects in the general elections, their ability to deliver local development, and their loyalty to the party's pursuit of executive office-seeking.

I test this argument by combining qualitative insights from interviews of elected officials and analyses of observational and experimental data from Kenya, a young democracy in sub-Saharan Africa where the major incumbent and opposition parties have adopted primary elections to select their candidates. First, using an original data set of party leader endorsements and primary election outcomes in Kenya for the 2017 parliamentary elections, I show that candidates endorsed by the party—and are therefore likely to be considered the party's preferred candidate—enjoy a decisive advantage over their competitors in securing the party candidacy. I further corroborate the findings

from the observational data through a radio news experiment embedded in a face-to-face survey of almost 2,400 partisan primary voters in two populous Kenyan counties. The findings confirm that primary voters are strongly influenced by the opinion of party leaders over aspirants; a candidate endorsed by the party leadership is between 15–24% points more likely to be chosen than an otherwise similar non-endorsed candidate.

The findings presented in this paper have direct implications for our understanding of representation and accountability in the developing world. First, the adoption of primary elections and broader reforms targeted at improving internal democracy within political parties have been fronted as a crucial step in bridging the apparent disconnect between politicians and their constituents. By establishing regular party members or voters as important veto players in deciding the fate of politicians, primary elections would realign politician incentives such that they would place the interests of ordinary citizens ahead of influential party patrons (Hazan and Rahat, 2010, 53). My findings, however, suggest that primary elections are insufficient to achieve these normatively desirable goals. Even if primary elections prevent parties and their leaders from unilaterally deciding on who becomes a party candidate, when they can persuade voters to achieve the same ends, voters are in no better position than if candidate selection remained in the hands of the party leadership.

Second, the findings also contribute to our understanding of political behavior in new democracies (Bleck and Van de Walle, 2019). A large volume of research has found strong evidence that voters in many of these countries hold politicians accountable for candidate-level traits or attributes such as their track record in providing local public goods, corruption while in office, clientelistic benefits (Ferraz and Finan, 2008; Harding, 2015; Kramon, 2016). While I also find evidence that voters value these candidate-related characteristics, I contribute to the small but growing body of work that has shown that very much like in the context of consolidated democracies (Zaller, 1992; Lenz, 2012), political elites can powerfully shape the contours of mass public opinion and political behavior in new democracies (Baldwin, 2013; Koter, 2013).

The article proceeds by reviewing the literature on candidate selection in new democracies and highlights why and how party leaders will attempt to retain their influence over this important pro-

cess with the introduction of mass-based participation. I then introduce the case of Kenya and the nature of candidate selection since the introduction of multiparty politics. The following sections provide the two pieces of empirical evidence in support of the main argument. I conclude by reflecting on the findings, and present avenues for future research that are raised by this study.

## 2 Political parties and candidate selection in new democracies

Candidate selection in new democracies has been characterized as “private affairs,” largely hidden to outside observers and the masses excluded from participation in the selection process (Field and Siavelis, 2008, 622).<sup>3</sup> While there is some variation across specific political parties, the “selectorate” in these parties typically consists of a select few, often including a combination of the party leader, members of the party’s national leadership, or a cohort of party officials delegated with the task of choosing candidates by the leader or the leadership (Hazan and Rahat, 2010, 46). Under these arrangements, the party leadership exercises significant discretion over who is eventually selected as a party’s candidate with little to no prerogative to formally justify the decisions made in the “smoke-filled back room.”<sup>4</sup>

From the perspective of party leaders, the implications of introducing primaries are clear; since it takes the *de-jure* authority to select candidates out of their hands, it potentially removes one of the most powerful tools at their disposal to maintain their position as the leader of the party and control over the party apparatus. The stakes of losing such an important tool of party control will induce party leaders to “guard this right jealously, surrendering it only when forced to do so (Kemahlioglu, Weitz-Shapiro and Hirano, 2009, 339).”

Despite these strong incentives to attempt to retain their influence, political parties in new

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<sup>3</sup>In a way, the nature of candidate selection in these transitional democracies resembles the opaque and exclusive systems of nominations found in earlier West European parties as described in Pennings and Hazan (2001) and Gallagher and Marsh (1987).

<sup>4</sup>This is not to say that the party is free from any accountability pressures on the outcome of candidate selection. To the extent that voters can reject the candidates fronted by the party at the ballot box (i.e. in the election), the decision to present candidates that are considered “uncompetitive” or “unelectable” by voters will have significant implications for the electoral performance of the party.

democracies are increasingly opening up these processes to the participation of a broader set of selectors, such as regular party members and voters. Scholars examining candidate selection procedures in political parties in East Asia, Latin America, and sub-Saharan Africa have commonly documented the strong trend toward the decentralization of party nominations (Robinson and Baum, 1993; De Luca, Jones and Tula, 2002; Ichino and Nathan, 2018).

This trend has led scholars to concentrate their efforts on identifying the conditions under which parties decide to introduce primary elections (Pennings and Hazan, 2001; Kemahlioglu, Weitz-Shapiro and Hirano, 2009; Ascencio, 2023). The first set of studies focuses on the constraints or threats parties face as a result of the changing electoral environment. They find that faced with declining popular support or increased political competition, party leaders are often compelled to adopt primaries as a means to re-engage with and energize party supporters, and select higher valence candidates that are more electable. A second set of studies offers a contrasting view that identifies elite dynamics *within* parties as the driving force to adopt primaries. For example, Kemahlioglu, Weitz-Shapiro and Hirano (2009) argue that in the presence of conflict between intraparty factions, primaries are adopted because they are considered a better means to resolve these disagreements. Examining the two major parties in Ghana, Ichino and Nathan (2012) argue that national party leaders are inclined to introduce primaries in strongholds because they are weary that denying local party elites the opportunity to extract rents from primary aspirants may have negative implications for their party's electoral performance in the general elections.

By contrast, what has been relatively understudied is whether party influence in shaping the outcome of party nominations has been reduced by the adoption of primary elections. This is an important question, the answer to which has often been implicitly assumed by scholars based on the simple logic that primary elections should limit the influence of parties, as they place the *de-jure* authority to select candidates in the hands of the masses. Yet very few studies to date have attempted to examine whether this assumption is valid. A limited number of studies drawn from the US seem to be in disagreement, with some scholars providing evidence that voters and candidates have replaced parties as the dominant actors in primary elections, but others showing that parties have managed

to retain their influence to shape the outcome of primary outcomes (Beck, 1997; Hassell, 2016, 243). And such discussion is uncommon in the literature on primary elections in new democracies; with the exception of Seeberg and Wahman (2024) that examines the consequences of primary election manipulation on the success of women candidates in Zambia, studies have traditionally focused on the impact of candidate-related factors (Platas and Raffler, 2021).

I address the void in this literature and argue the perception of diminishing party influence in the era of primaries is unlikely to be true. Given the high stakes, parties and their leaders are unlikely to be willing to cede their influence simply because their *formal* authority has been removed through the introduction of primaries. And they do not; I argue that party leaders alter or adapt their strategies in response to the new institutional environment created by primaries to continue projecting their influence over party nominations. The following section elaborates on how parties are able to do so.

## 2.1 How do parties retain their influence?

What are the means through which parties in new democracies, faced with the reality of primary elections, can retain their influence over party nominations? The answer to this question requires a clear delineation of the goals that party leaders aim to achieve by exerting influence over nominations. First, as earlier research on political parties has established, party leaders are motivated by their need to consolidate power within the party organization (Katz and Mair, 1993, 2009). Since the emergence of an alternate locus of power within the party can increase the risk of challenges against their leadership, party leaders are incentivized to use candidate selection to retain loyalists and purge candidates whose allegiances lie elsewhere (Demarest, 2021). At the same time, party leaders are also concerned about maximizing the party's electoral performance; doing so involves nominating party candidates who possess the qualities or attributes that would make them competitive or "electable" in the eyes of general election voters (Gulzar, Hai and Paudel, 2021). Party leaders cannot privilege one of these goals completely over the other, as the achievement of both of these goals will critically affect the prospects of their own political survival. The task of the party

leader, therefore, is to implement a strategy that best enables her to achieve both of these goals.

Two factors constrain the party leader's choice in deciding the best strategy through which to achieve these goals. First, party leaders must take into account the extent to which the strategy they choose interferes with the primary process. While some strategies may allow party leaders to more directly and strongly exact the desired outcome, they are more likely to be perceived as reneging on a prior commitment to intraparty democracy and consequently result in a backlash among voters and candidates alike. Second, party leaders must also factor in the material and organizational commitment that is involved in implementing a particular strategy. Given that parties in new democracies often face significant financial and organizational constraints (Arriola, 2012; Novaes, 2018), strategies that place a heavy burden on the limited capacity of parties can become prohibitively costly for parties, especially if they need to be used frequently.

Previous research has discussed some of the strategies that can be used by parties to shape the outcome of candidate selection (Ichino and Nathan, 2012; Hassell, 2016). How do these strategies fare against the considerations regarding the levels of interference and resource commitment? The first set of strategies involves party leaders using their authority to “screen out” candidates who have a chance of winning against the preferred candidate or even preempting the implementation of primaries altogether to “impose” the preferred candidate. While these strategies place little burden on the material or organizational capacity of the party, these strategies constitute a direct form of interference that will likely be deemed illegitimate in the eyes of voters and candidates. Given these challenges, parties will only very rarely engage in this form of intervention, reserving it for circumstances when the party perceives the benefits of such intervention to exceed the potentially huge negative consequences.<sup>5</sup>

Second, party leaders can attempt to “unlevel the playing field” by inducing the competitors of their preferred candidates to withdraw their candidacy (Hassell, 2016) or by channeling the party's organizational and material resources to aid favored candidates. These strategies require a high level

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<sup>5</sup>It is unsurprising that both the Jubilee Party of Kenya and the Orange Democratic Movement engaged in the preemption of primaries in only a handful of constituencies and counties during the 2017 candidate selection process. See Figure B1 in Supplementary Appendix A for the locations where the two parties preempted the implementation of primaries.



of resource commitment from the party, as they would require that the party offer significant inducements to convince candidates to step down or to ensure that favored candidates have sufficient resources to fund their campaigns, especially in party strongholds where the value of the party's nomination is high. While these strategies are less likely to be considered an overt form of intervention than the preemption or cancellation of primaries, the resource-intensive nature makes them particularly challenging to implement at scale.

I argue that the challenges to pursuing the aforementioned strategies make one strategy the most appealing and perhaps the most effective; parties can use their connection and influence with partisans to induce them to vote for their preferred candidate in the party primaries. In order to do so, party leaders can employ a method whose extensive use by political elites has been documented in both consolidated and new democracies: political endorsements ([Cohen et al., 2009](#); [Baldwin, 2013](#); [Arriola, Choi and Gichohi, 2022](#)). Endorsements are preferable to other strategies because they do not require a significant personal commitment of resources by the party or the party leader; issuing an endorsement does not force the party to mobilize its organizational resources on behalf of a candidate. It does not necessarily impose any financial burdens on the party to fund a preferred nominee's campaign activities. And it is also a form of interference that is relatively free from the risk of backlash, as it does not directly overturn the results of the primaries, nor exclude any candidates from participating.

In addition, endorsements present an additional informational advantage for the party that the use of other strategies would not necessarily provide. They enable party leaders to effectively balance a candidate's loyalty with her electability. Even if party leaders prefer to nominate loyalists in general, they will be unwilling to do so if the loyalist candidates are so undesirable in the eyes of voters that the party is likely to lose the seat in the general election. Unlike the other strategies that require party leaders to have somewhat accurate information about the electability of candidates, endorsements lessen this informational burden to a significant degree; primaries will function to automatically "weed out" candidates who are deficient in terms of mass appeal to the extent that even an endorsement from the party is unable to push them through the primaries. With these advan-

tages, endorsements have the potential to be the most effective means through which the party can retain their influence over party nominations, so long as primary voters are receptive to persuasion by their party leaders.<sup>6</sup>

## 2.2 Why would voters follow the party leaders?

But what are the incentives that motivate primary voters to “fall in line” with their party leaders and vote for endorsed primary contestants? After all, the party leader’s ability to influence primary elections through endorsements is predicated on the assumption that primary voters will follow the leader’s evaluation of candidates. I argue that primary voters will be inclined to vote with the party because the endorsement allows them to overcome constraints they often face in low-information environments. When there is little differentiation in terms of ideological or policy positions across both parties and candidates, voters must rely on heuristics that allow them to approximate the behavior of the fully-informed voter who would vote to maximize their material self-interest (Popkin, 1994; Lupia, 1994). However, since heuristics such as ethnicity<sup>7</sup> or partisanship become largely irrelevant in the context of primary elections (Ferree, 2022), voters must search for alternatives that allow them to maximize their expected utility.

The party’s support for a candidate is informative to primary voters because it allows them to both pool their support on the candidate that is likely to win in the party primaries and the general elections and make inferences about the anticipated ability of candidates in terms of distributing resources to his or her constituents. Voting for the likely victor is especially important if voters believe that their future receipt of material benefits and resources are contingent on voting for the winning candidate (Stokes et al., 2013). Yet in the absence of systematic polling data that would provide information regarding the electoral prospects of primary candidates—as would be the case for

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<sup>6</sup>This is not to say that political parties will engage exclusively prefer an endorsement-based strategy over the other alternatives discussed in this subsection. In fact, as will be discussed in later sections, data collected by the author on endorsements suggest that only 10% of all primary contestants are endorsed by the party.

<sup>7</sup>While ethnicity might be a highly informative heuristic for contests for national executive office (i.e. the presidency) they are uninformative in many local contexts in which voters are unlikely to have a non-coethnic candidate on the ballot (Carlson, 2015; Ferree, 2022).

lower-level elections in the developing world—bandwagoning around the likely victor can become especially challenging. An endorsement from the party can provide primary voters to overcome such a coordination problem, as they now have a clear signal regarding how others participating in the primaries are likely to vote.

The party leader's endorsement might also provide primary voters with information on the capacity of candidates to provide access to goods and services. First, primary voters may expect the party leaders to have better information on the party candidates contesting the primaries and take endorsements as a cue that their party believes the endorsed candidate to be of superior quality or more suitable for public office than his or her competitors (Conroy-Krutz, 2013).

Second, primary voters may believe that the endorsements signal the candidate's ability to "work together" with the party. A close relationship between the candidate and the party will be important if a candidate's ability to channel resources to her constituents depends on her connection with the party and the party leader. In executive-dominant systems that characterize much of the developing world, a large majority of state resources are controlled by the national executive rather than lower-level political units. Given that party leaders often tend to be the presidential candidate seeking national executive office (Lupu, 2016), voters may rationally infer that a local candidate with a better cooperative relationship with the party leader will, later on, enjoy more access to resources at the national level.

The party's endorsement is likely to be of special value to partisan primary voters. Voters who participate in their party's primary elections are distinct in that they are partisans who hold a stronger sense of attachment and affinity towards their political party and its leaders. Furthermore, this bond between party leaders and partisans is likely to be stronger in patronage-based democracies, a category to which many new democracies in the developing world belong (Chandra, 2007; Van de Walle, 2003). Political parties in these countries are seldom organized based on programmatic or ideological differences—rather, parties are often formed based on existing social cleavages across ascriptive identities such as race, ethnicity, or religion (Madrid, 2012; Elischer, 2013). When ascriptive loyalties become the basis of electoral mobilization in patronage democracies, elections

become a contest between these groups to secure future access to state resources. In this regard, the party and its leader become synonymous with the political representative of the identity groups, whose electoral success is the most important factor that structures the extent to which these groups will benefit from the spoils of holding the national seat of power (Van de Walle, 2003, 2007). The perception that the political fate of their party leader is intertwined with their own well-being will induce partisan primary voters to generate affective ties to the party leader and place their trust in their opinion (Gichohi, 2016).

My theory shares its focus on the role of endorsements with the canonical work of Cohen et al. (2009), which identified endorsements as one of the components of the “invisible primary” that determines the victor of presidential nomination contests in the United States. My argument differs in that I focus on primaries at a different tier of elections (legislative), and a different class of parties in new democracies that are unlikely to have the organizational and financial capacity that parties in western democracies possess. I also privilege the direct impact of over primary voters as the key mechanism through which endorsements enable parties to retain control over candidate selection.

### **3 Political parties and legislative primaries in Kenya**

I empirically test these expectations in the context of Kenya, an African democracy that has held six simultaneous presidential and parliamentary elections since the reintroduction of multiparty elections in 1992. Under the new constitution that was implemented in 2013, there are a total of 349 members of the lower house of parliament, 290 of which are elected from single-member district constituencies. The upper house is comprised of 67 members, 47 of which are elected directly by the voters at the county level.

Owing to the lucrative salaries and benefits, as well the significant amount of discretionary budget controlled by each legislator’s office, parliamentary seats are highly sought after (Harris and Posner, 2019). Yet competition for parliamentary seats has traditionally been most viciously fought during the party nomination stage rather than the actual election itself; due to the ethnicized nature

of politics in Kenya, Kenyan voters usually hold strong ethnopartisan identities, which results in the emergence of clusters of local one-partyism, where a single dominant party successfully repeatedly retains an overwhelming majority of the parliamentary seats (Choi, 2018). In these local party strongholds, often comprising up to 75% of all parliamentary constituencies in Kenya, aspirants running as the candidate of the locally dominant party are the only ones that can realistically expect to stand a chance in the general elections. The relatively high value of the party ticket is one of the most important reasons why party nominations of the larger parties are so hotly contested; for example, in the primaries for the 2017 parliamentary elections, the incumbent Jubilee Party and the largest opposition Orange Democratic Movement each attracted an average of 6.3 and 3.9 aspirants per constituency in their strongholds.

Party nominations for legislative office, not unlike the general elections, have been a source of much controversy since the introduction of multipartyism. Academic and journalistic accounts of party nominations unequivocally demonstrate that processes laid out in party constitutions or rules that govern party nominations were seldom adhered to in practice (Cheeseman, 2008). Party leaders were central in these subversions of procedure: nominations were often conducted at the whim of the party leaders and a small number of cronies in the inner circle of the party leadership, with nomination certificates allegedly being issued to party “loyalists,” to the detriment of candidates who were more popular at the grassroots (Khadiagala, 2010).

However, the state of affairs seems to have improved since the nominations for the 2013 elections. In the run-up to the 2017 general elections, in particular, parties proclaimed their strong resolve to establish primary elections as their main method of candidate selection and publicly announced that primaries would be held without exception in constituencies where the party attracted more than one aspiring candidate for the primaries.<sup>8</sup> And true to their stated commitments, the incumbent Jubilee Party and the opposition Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) seem to have implemented primaries as the rule rather than the exception. As presented in Figure B1 in the Supple-

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<sup>8</sup>See “There will be no direct nomination in ODM – Joho” in *Citizen Digital News*, March 6, 2017; See also “Jubilee rules out direct nominations for any contestant”, in *Citizen Digital News*, April 5, 2017; See also, The Constitution of the Jubilee Party of Kenya, September 10, 2016; See also “Nomination Rules, Orange Democratic Movement”, December 5, 2014

mentary Appendix, both parties implemented primaries in more than 90% of these constituencies for which there was more than one candidate vying for the nomination.

The seemingly regular implementation of primaries, however, does not mean that parties chose to forfeit their control over the outcome of the party primaries. Having experienced firsthand the backlash from voters when they chose to overrule the outcome of primaries—which was considered by many voters as a violation of their democratic right to choose the party candidate—parties seem to have devised strategies that operate within the framework of primary elections but still enable them to retain control over the outcome of nominations.

The strategy that was most frequently used and considered by many as the most highly effective was the persuasion of primary voters through endorsements. Media coverage on both the 2013 and 2017 party primaries are replete with accounts that attest to the strategic use of endorsements, and less frequently, the use of denouncements, to tip the party primaries in favor of the party's preferred nominee.<sup>9</sup> While party leaders officially denied that they had preferred candidates in the party primaries and committed to working with whoever was selected by the mass selectorate,<sup>10</sup> their actions during throughout primary season betrayed their real intentions, as they explicitly or implicitly made their preferences over candidates clear to potential primary voters.

These endorsements took on various forms, ranging widely from subtle to highly explicit. In many cases, endorsements happened in the context of a local campaign rally over which the party leader was presiding; in the process of addressing the crowd, the party leader or senior party officials would typically urge voters in attendance to support a candidate's bid for the parliamentary post.<sup>11</sup> In some cases, party leaders would engage in more explicit forms of endorsement by personally gracing the "homecoming ceremonies" of their closest allies.<sup>12</sup> The party leader's presence at these events was considered a firm commitment by the party towards the candidate and was cited as

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<sup>9</sup>See "Oduol is a project and an Enemy, Says PM", *The Star*, February 8, 2013; "URP Aspirants in 'Panic Campaigns' Ahead of Nominations", *The Star*, January 10, 2013

<sup>10</sup>See "Uhuru, Ruto insist no aspirant will be favored in Jubilee nominations", *Capital News*, April 7, 2017; See also "I won't endorse anyone in ODM", *Daily Post*, February 15, 2017.

<sup>11</sup>See "Raila's endorsements cause disquiet among hopefuls", *The Daily Nation*, August 7, 2016; See also "Mike Sonko Adopts President Uhuru's Endorsement as Campaign Slogan", *Nairobi Wire*, September 6, 2016

<sup>12</sup>See "MP Mtengo 'sidelined' in Raila homecoming rally for rival Aisha Jumwa", *The Star*, June 24, 2016

signaling to candidates and voters alike that the party leader had “anointed” the particular candidate over her competitors.<sup>13</sup>

Accounts of both senior party officials and candidates who competed in the parliamentary primaries for the major political parties strongly suggest that these endorsements were considered to be common, and played a decisive influence in determining the fate of candidates in primaries. A senior party official in a major opposition party stated on the record that “(the party leader) often has preferred aspirants, and is not shy about making this known to the people at the grassroots.”<sup>14</sup> A parliamentary aspirant who unsuccessfully contested in the nomination for one of the major opposition parties, recognizes this tendency for party leaders to employ endorsements in the primaries, and recounts what happened in the run-up to the primaries, saying, that “it was almost impossible to campaign because everybody knew (his opponent) had the support of the party.”<sup>15</sup> Even winners were willing to concede that the endorsement of the party was one of the most important factors that provided them with leverage over primary voters. One incumbent party candidate went on the record in an interview to say that voters “saw that my party leader was with me, and they wanted me to get the party ticket.”<sup>16</sup>

## **4 Testing party influence in primaries with observational data**

In this section, I provide the initial piece of evidence in support of my argument that party leaders can powerfully shape the outcome of primary elections by signaling their preferences over candidates using endorsements. The analysis draws on an original data set I collected on party leader endorsements issued by both the incumbent party (Jubilee Party) and the largest opposition party (ODM) in Kenya towards candidates competing in their 2017 parliamentary primaries. The endorsement data were then combined with candidate-level biographical data, electoral data from previous elections, and data on the outcome of the party nominations that I compiled from multi-

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<sup>13</sup>Interview with a senior opposition party official, Subject 2015-PI13, March 5, 2015.

<sup>14</sup>Interview with a senior opposition party official, Subject 2015-PI13, March 5, 2015.

<sup>15</sup>Interview with opposition party candidate, Subject 2015-PO32, May 15, 2015.

<sup>16</sup>Interview with incumbent party candidate, Subject 2015-PI4, Feb 8, 2015.

ple sources.

The endorsement data is a candidate-level data set (nested in constituencies) that codes a primary candidate as having received an endorsement by the party if the top three print-based national newspapers, as well as several web-based outlets, carry a story of the endorsement during the one year period before the start of the party nominations.<sup>17</sup> The scope of the search was restricted to endorsements that were specifically issued by the national party leader for each of the parties, as well as the national deputy party leaders. I include endorsements by the deputy party leaders because they were largely understood to have been also operating under the auspices of the party leader in issuing endorsements for primary candidates.<sup>18</sup>

While there are instances in which a single primary candidate was seemingly endorsed on multiple occasions, it is difficult to accurately and consistently code the *number* of times a candidate was endorsed. Therefore, the measure employed is a coarsened dichotomous variable (*Endorsed*), where the value “1” indicates a candidate that has been endorsed by the party at least once during the period covered. Out of the 1,498 candidates who applied to become a parliamentary candidate of the Jubilee party and ODM, I observe endorsements being issued to slightly less than 10% of them.<sup>19</sup> It is important to emphasize that the measure constructed here is likely to be an “underestimate” of the total number of endorsements issued to candidates; although the search conducted to construct this data set was quite comprehensive, there is undoubtedly a large number of cases in which an endorsement was not carried by the print media but rather by national and local radio or television stations or not covered at all. To the extent that endorsements are unlikely to *hurt* a candidate’s prospects, the incompleteness of the data, however, is likely to understate the correlation between endorsements and primary election outcomes.

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<sup>17</sup>The following are the media outlets from which the articles are extracted. *The Daily Nation, The Standard, The Star, tuko.co.ke, capitalfm.co.ke, Citizen TV, and KTN News.*

<sup>18</sup>Interview with incumbent party official, Subject 2017-PI46, February 20, 2017; Interview with opposition party official, Subject 2017-PO47, February 25, 2017.

<sup>19</sup>A systematic analysis of who receives endorsements from parties is beyond the scope of this paper. However, a brief descriptive analysis of the endorsed candidates reveals that only 54% of the endorsed candidates were incumbent MPs. 86% of the endorsed candidates are male, which is slightly lower than the proportion of male candidates in the whole candidate pool (92%). 57% of the endorsed candidates had experience holding an elected position at the national level or serving as a cabinet-level or sub-cabinet-level official in government.



The analyses are conducted by running the following linear regression:

$$y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Endorsed}_{ic} + \beta_2 X_{ic} + \beta_3 C_c + \epsilon \quad (1)$$

where  $\text{Endorsed}_{ic}$  is the indicator variable for whether a particular aspirant was endorsed by the party leadership,  $X_{ic}$  is a vector of candidate-level attributes, and  $C_c$  is a vector of constituency-level covariates. Standard errors in the models clustered by party×constituency in the full models and constituency in models disaggregated by party.<sup>20</sup> Since the focus of the analysis is the influence that parties have over primary elections, I subset the data to constituencies in which either the Jubilee or ODM party held primaries to select their candidates.<sup>21</sup> The outcome I use as a measure of candidate success is a dichotomous variable that takes a value of “1” if the candidate is declared the winner of the primaries.

Model (1), the baseline specification, presents the bivariate correlation between endorsements and candidate victory in primary elections. On average, primary candidates who are endorsed by the party are around 64 percentage points more likely to win in the primaries than candidates who are not. This coefficient is substantively large and is statistically significant at the  $p < 0.001$  level.

Model (2) shows that the bivariate relationship found in Model (1) is robust to the inclusion of other candidate and constituency-level political variables; to address the possibility that incumbent members of parliament (MP) are might be more likely to both be endorsed and win in the primaries, I introduce a binary variable which takes on a value of “1” if the primary candidate was the sitting MP for the constituency (Lee, 2008; Hirano et al., 2010). I also include a dummy for the gender of the candidate, based on the finding that the under-representation of women in legislatures can be traced back to the disadvantages they face during the party primaries (Lawless and Pearson, 2008). I follow convention and control for a variable that captures the political experience of the candidate; this variable takes on a value of “1” if the candidate has ever held an elected position at the national

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<sup>20</sup>Full models reporting coefficients for the control variables included in the models are presented in Tables C1–C3 in the supplementary appendix A.

<sup>21</sup>The same analysis with the full set of constituencies (regardless of method of candidate selection used) is included in supplementary appendix A, Table C4. While the coefficients from the specifications without constituency fixed effects are around 10% less, they are large, positive, and retain statistical significance at the  $p < 0.001$  level.

Table 1: Endorsements and primary election outcomes

Panel A	<i>Outcome: Won in Primaries</i>			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Endorsed	0.645*** (0.043)	0.518*** (0.052)	0.709*** (0.054)	0.626*** (0.063)
Sample	Pooled	Pooled	Pooled	Pooled
Candidate controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Electoral controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Party×Constituency FE	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,255	1,255	1,255	1,255
R <sup>2</sup>	0.199	0.249	0.207	0.229
Panel B	<i>Outcome: Won in Primaries</i>			
	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Endorsed	0.425*** (0.075)	0.533*** (0.090)	0.634*** (0.070)	0.747*** (0.084)
Sample	Jubilee	Jubilee	ODM	ODM
Candidate controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Electoral controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constituency FE	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	905	905	350	350
R <sup>2</sup>	0.232	0.277	0.312	0.369

*Notes:* Models are estimated using linear regression, with robust standard errors clustered at the constituency level in parentheses. The dependent variable is whether a candidate won in the primary elections. Candidate controls include whether the primary candidate is an incumbent MP, gender, and prior political experience. Electoral controls include the party vote share and turnout (Jubilee and ODM) for the previous (2013) parliamentary and presidential elections at the constituency level, as well as the number of candidates in the primary contest. Since the Jubilee party is a merger of multiple parties (The National Alliance and United Republican Party are the main partner parties) that contested in the 2013 elections, the prior vote share of the Jubilee party is calculated by summing the vote share of the parties that merged into the Jubilee party. \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05.

level or held a cabinet-level or sub-cabinet level appointment within the government, and “0” otherwise (Carson and Roberts, 2005; Carson, Engstrom and Roberts, 2007). Also added as controls were the number of candidates contesting in the primary, which is mechanically related to the probability that a candidate is selected as the party’s nominee, a set of constituency-level political variables such

as the vote share of the political party's parliamentary and presidential candidate in the previous general election, as well as the turnout measured for both the presidential and parliamentary races at the constituency level. Even controlling for these additional covariates, the correlation between whether a candidate is endorsed by the party and the candidate's success in primary elections remains large, positive, and precisely estimated. Furthermore, none of the candidate-level attributes obtain statistical significance at conventional levels.

Models (3) and (4) subject the findings to more robustness checks. Given that candidate-level data points are nested within constituencies, I now include constituency fixed effects, which should control for the influence of both observed and unobserved constituency-level characteristics that do not vary across candidates. The coefficients on the key variable of interest increase slightly from the specifications without constituency fixed effects, showing that on average, an endorsed candidate is between 63–71 percentage points more likely to win in the primaries than a candidate without an endorsement.

Models (5) through (8) in Panel B disaggregate the relationship between party leader endorsements and a candidate's success by political party. The results suggest that there is a fair amount of heterogeneity in the association between endorsements and primary election outcomes; although large and statistically significant, the coefficient on the party endorsement variable for the ODM sample is around 20% points higher than that of the Jubilee party. These differences are in line with qualitative accounts of both local political analysts<sup>22</sup> and politicians<sup>23</sup> themselves, who predicted that the ODM traditionally intervenes more heavy-handedly in its primaries than Jubilee.

It is important to end the discussion with a key caveat: while the analyses employ a battery of control variables and fixed effects for robustness, they do not deal with confounds *by design*, and as such, the results should be interpreted with caution. However, it is reassuring that the results survive the robustness exercises conducted and as such, should be considered the first piece of descriptive evidence in a triangulation strategy designed to show that parties can influence the outcome of primary elections.

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<sup>22</sup>Interview with political journalist, Subject 2016-EJ8, June 10, 2016

<sup>23</sup>Interview with a member of parliament, Subject 2015-PI24, April 24, 2015; Subject 2015-PO27, May 2, 2015

## 5 An experiment on party influence among primary voters

This section examines the influence that the party has in shaping the opinion of primary voters. Isolating the direct effects of party leader endorsements with observational data poses inferential challenges. I attempt to address these challenges by embedding an experimental study within the context of a large-scale survey conducted across two populous counties in Kenya (Nakuru and Kisumu), wherein I randomly assigned information provided to likely primary voters on whether a primary candidate has been endorsed by the party leader.<sup>24</sup> Results from the experimental data provide evidence that party leaders have a powerful effect on the vote intention of primary voters and shape how they evaluate primary candidates. The experimental protocol was reviewed by University X's Institutional Review Board under protocol number XXXX-XX-XXXX.<sup>25</sup> The analysis plan for the experiment was registered at the Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP) design registry under protocol number XXXXXXXXAA.

### 5.1 Experimental design

In testing whether the opinions of the party leader affects primary election outcomes, I focus on examining whether they influence voter evaluations of a single primary candidate or candidate.<sup>26</sup> To do so, I conducted an experiment in which I varied the information delivered to likely primary voters through a simulated radio news segment regarding a candidate seeking the party nomination for the parliamentary seat.

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<sup>24</sup>Likely primary voters are defined as i) registered party members or ii) voters that report holding a close attachment towards either of the two parties, and iii) reported that they were likely to participate in the upcoming 2017 party primaries. This sampling strategy reflects the participation requirements for party primaries in Kenya; a closed primary election with only party members participating, but where party registration drives in the run-up to primaries are frequent and dramatically lower the costs of registration as a party member. Analyses that restrict the sample to registered party members (around 62%) confirm the results reported for this larger sample.

<sup>25</sup>A brief discussion on research ethics and transparency is available in Supplementary Appendix A.

<sup>26</sup>The experiment presented in this section was paired with a conjoint analysis in the survey that explicitly allows respondents to choose between two randomly generated candidate profiles that include whether the candidates were endorsed by the party leader. I omit the details regarding the conjoint analysis from the main text but a description of the design and a brief write-up of the findings are included in Supplementary Appendix E. The main results of the main experiment are replicated in the conjoint analysis; the results are reported in Appendix Figures [E1](#), [E2](#), and [E3](#). The results largely confirm the findings of the experiment presented in the main text; that party leader endorsements significantly affect primary vote choice.

The content of the news segment played to primary voters varied in terms of whether i) the candidate was reported to be preferred (endorsed) or not preferred (denounced) by the party (as conveyed by the opinion of the candidate by the party leader) or other elected local political elites,<sup>27</sup> and ii) the candidate’s performance in providing services to the constituency. The addition of the second dimension manipulated in the treatment was in response to the emerging narrative in the recent literature on African voting behavior: that voters in African democracies are “performance voters” that privilege the candidate’s credentials on her ability to deliver local public goods and particularistic benefits (Conroy-Krutz, 2013).

Table 2: Treatment assignment matrix for radio news experiment

		Candidate performance	
		High	Low
Endorsement	Party leader endorses	(1) N=227	(6) N=219
	Local elites endorse	(2) N=220	(7) N=247
	Party leader denounces	(3) N=257	(8) N=255
	Local elites denounce	(4) N=262	(9) N=215
	No opinion	(5) N=239	(10) N=252

The experiment follows a  $5 \times 2$  factorial design, which is presented in Table 2. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of the 10 treatment conditions until the target total sample size of 2,400 was reached across the two locations.<sup>28</sup> Respondents were exposed to the experimental treatment by streaming an audio file on an electronic tablet device in the language of their choice. The subjects were then asked a battery of post-treatment questions measured on a 7-point scale, including our main outcome of interest “How likely are you to vote for the candidate in the party primaries?”

The experimental design adopted for this study falls short of the full realism that is considered to be the defining characteristic of field experiments: the subjects were given information about a fictitious candidate, albeit with an endorsement from powerful real-world party leaders, and their

<sup>27</sup>I include this local elite endorsement treatment to juxtapose the effect of party endorsement and an endorsement by other local political elites. Comparing the effect of party leader endorsements to those issued by other political actors prevents us from conflating the effect of a *party leader* endorsement with the effect of *any* endorsement.

<sup>28</sup>Descriptive statistics on the sample recruited for the experiment is presented in Appendix B Table D1.

responses were self-reported vote intentions.<sup>29</sup> However, a number of precautions were taken to enhance the reality of the experimental intervention. Specifically, to mirror the way in which information about an aspirant’s candidature is conveyed and presented to voters in everyday life, the news segment was modeled after typical news coverage of political candidates and campaigns by national and local radio news stations: this included a locally-hired actor narrating the news script, adopting the tone and accent of a local news anchor in-so-doing, as well as professional editing that added audio-acoustic effects to enhance the reality of the news segment.<sup>30</sup> In addition, respondents were only debriefed at the end of the survey as to the fictitious nature of the candidate portrayed in the news segment. The precautions taken seem to have had the desired effect: enumerators report that respondents perceived the candidate to be a real contender in the party primaries.<sup>31</sup>

## 5.2 Party influence among primary voters

Are parties able to influence the voting intentions of primary voters? In accordance with the registered pre-analysis plan, I take an intention-to-treat analysis approach, where I simply compare the average responses among respondents assigned to each treatment condition.

Table 3 presents the main findings for the experiment. In columns (1)-(3), I present the estimated average treatment effects of the party endorsement treatments on the main outcome (primary vote intention) vis-à-vis the pure control conditions. Columns (4)-(6) present the estimated ATEs of the party denouncement treatments. The first row in Table 3 presents the ATEs while the

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<sup>29</sup>The decision to use a fictitious candidate was made in response to two concerns: first, given the perceived influence of party leaders, providing partisans with information about the nature of the relationship between party leaders and an *existing* candidate raised concerns about provoking reactions from other candidates, and ultimately influencing the party primaries. Second, given that the relationship between incumbent politicians and the party leader is often discussed in the local media, partisans often hold priors about this relationship. Short of using outright deception, it would have been challenging to claim that the party leader has both endorsed and denounced the same candidate. The use of fictitious candidates (coupled with real party leaders) addresses both concerns over interfering in elections and enables the clean manipulation of endorsement or denouncement status of the candidate without the use of deception.

<sup>30</sup>Audio-visual treatments have recently been used with some success for experimental research in Africa (McCauley, 2014; McClendon and Riedl, 2015). Post-survey reports from enumerators indicate that a significant proportion of respondents perceived the candidates portrayed in the news segment to be real contestants in the upcoming party primaries.

<sup>31</sup>Prior to being debriefed, respondents frequently exhibited behavior during the interview that suggested that they were rendering judgments about a candidate they perceived to be real. In more than 50 occasions, respondents extended an invitation to the candidate to attend the local ward/village meetings to address constituents.

Table 3: Party leader influence on primary vote intentions

	Primary vote intentions					
	Party endorsements			Party denouncements		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
ATE	0.953*** (0.106)	1.115*** (0.132)	0.817*** (0.164)	-0.647*** (0.114)	-0.808*** (0.144)	-0.486** (0.178)
Control mean	4.334*** (0.073)	4.312*** (0.088)	4.357*** (0.116)	4.334*** (0.082)	4.312*** (0.102)	4.357*** (0.128)
Sample	Pooled	Jubilee	ODM	Pooled	Jubilee	ODM
Observations	937	449	488	1,003	506	497
R <sup>2</sup>	0.079	0.138	0.049	0.031	0.059	0.015

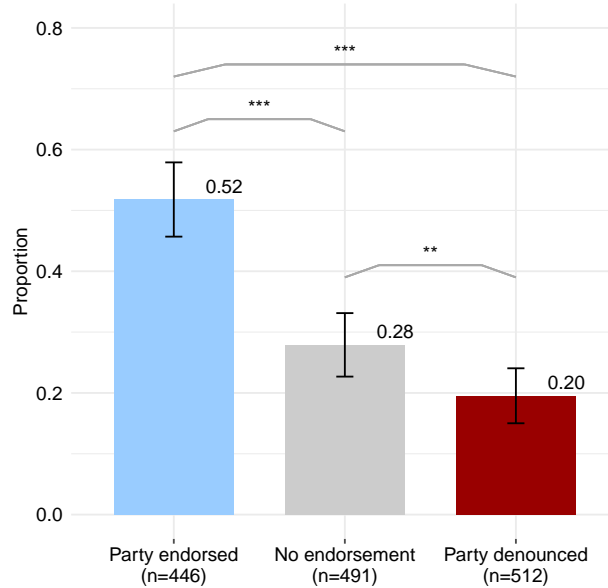
*Notes:* Estimated average treatment effects (ATEs) of the party endorsements and denouncements on primary vote intentions. ATEs are estimated against pure controls in which no endorsement information was provided. Standard errors from linear regression.

second presents robust standard errors from linear regression.

I find robust evidence that parties are able to sway voter evaluations of primary contestants. As seen in Column (1), the average primary vote intention for the candidate who is endorsed by the party is almost a full point (0.953) larger than that of a candidate who has neither been endorsed nor denounced (or pure control). The reported vote intention of a candidate who has been denounced is 0.647 points smaller than that of the pure control condition. These results are replicated even when the sample is disaggregated by party: as seen in columns (2), (3), (5), and (6) in Table 3, both incumbent and opposition primary voters adjusted their vote intentions for the candidate when their party endorsed or denounced the candidate.

The magnitude of these effects is substantively large and important. To illustrate the substantive changes, Figure 1 plots the proportion of primary voters who say that they are either “very likely” or “certain” to vote for the candidate. Whereas around 28% of respondents assigned to the no endorsement condition said they were very likely or certain to vote for the candidate portrayed in the news segment played to them, more than 50% of respondents reported the same high propensity to vote for the candidate in the party endorsement condition. This represents an 85% increase in vote intentions, statistically significant at the  $p < 0.001$ . Similarly, only 20% of respondents assigned to

Figure 1: Proportion of respondents very likely or certain to vote for the candidate in primaries



*Notes:* The bar graph plots the proportion of individuals who report being “very likely” or “certain” that they will vote for the candidate across each experimental condition. The error bars are 99% confidence intervals for the means. The difference in means is derived from a standard two-tailed t-test. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ .

hear a news segment about a denounced candidate reported that they are “very likely” or “certain” to vote for the candidate, which represents an 8% point decrease from the no endorsement condition. This decrease, while smaller than the effect of a party endorsement, still remains substantively large and statistically significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level.

Analysis probing effect heterogeneity across subgroups of the experimental sample also reveals interesting patterns. Figure D4 and Tables D2 and D3 in the Supplementary Appendix show that the party’s influence is likely to be heightened amongst primary voters who i) share a strong sense of linked fate with the party leader and ii) are coethnics of the party leader. If we make the reasonable assumption that these individuals also happen to be the group of strong partisans that are more inclined to turn out during primary elections, we can expect the aggregate impact of the party’s support to be larger.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup>We do not find any evidence that the treatment effects are heterogeneous in approval of the party leader or the level of the respondent’s political knowledge.



### 5.3 Can the influence of party leaders offset countervailing information?

The evidence presented above provides strong support for the prediction that parties can control the outcome of primaries by influencing candidate evaluations among primary voters. What is less clear is how the magnitude of the party endorsement effects compares to other candidate characteristics that are believed to be important factors that determine how primary voters exercise their vote. The factorial design of the experiment allows me to answer this question, as information on candidate performance (in terms of contribution to local development initiatives) was manipulated in conjunction with the endorsement dimensions. Not only does this allow me to estimate the average treatment effect of the candidate's prior performance it also allows me to assess how candidate performance effects directly compare against party endorsement effects.

Table 4: Candidate performance and primary vote intentions

	Primary vote intentions		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
ATE	0.893*** (0.071)	0.787*** (0.089)	1.003*** (0.109)
Control mean	3.984*** (0.050)	3.986*** (0.064)	3.982*** (0.077)
Sample	Pooled	Jubilee	ODM
Observations	2,393	1,188	1,205
R <sup>2</sup>	0.062	0.061	0.065

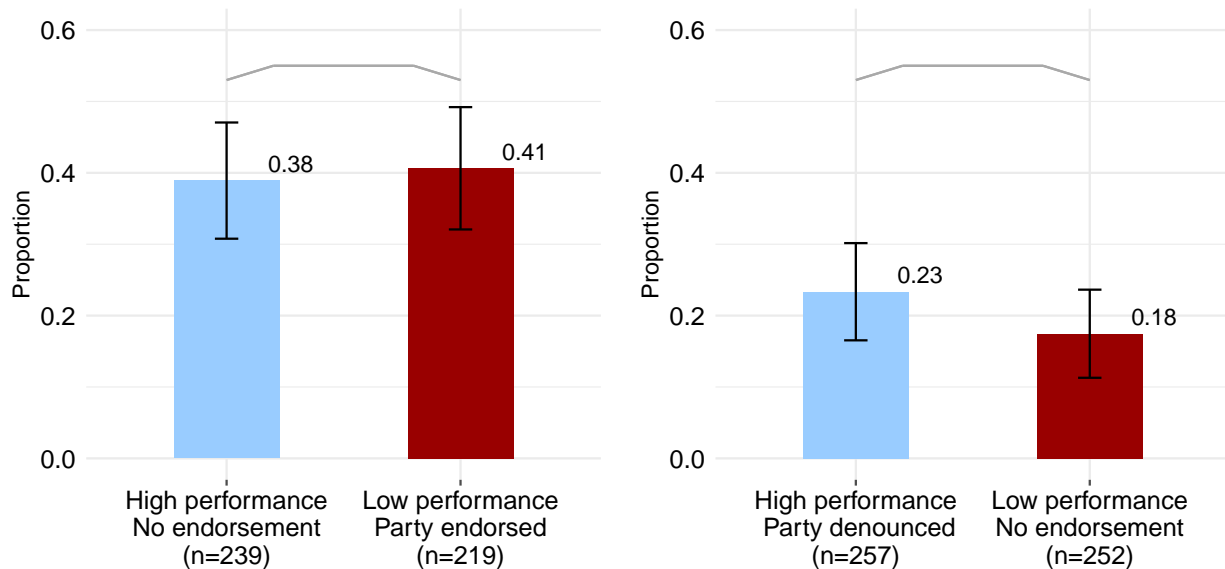
*Notes:* Estimated average treatment effects (ATEs) of candidate performance treatments on vote intention in primary elections. Standard errors from linear regression. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ .

As a first step, Table 4 first presents the effect of candidate performance. The findings largely echo what existing literature has found: primary voters reward good performance. The mean primary vote intention for a high-performance candidate is 0.89 points larger than that of a low-performance candidate. This difference is statistically significant at the  $p < 0.001$  level.

But how does the size of the performance effect compare with the effect of endorsements? The basic intuition behind the approach I take is that if the magnitude of party leader endorsement

and denouncement is indeed large and significant, it should be able to “offset” the evaluation gap induced by the difference in candidate quality or performance. For example, if the impact of party leader endorsements is large enough, there should be little to no observed difference between a low-performance candidate who has been endorsed by the party leader and a high-performance candidate without an endorsement. Conversely, if the impact of party leader denouncements is sufficiently large, there should be little to no observable difference between the evaluation of a high-performance candidate without an endorsement who has been denounced by the party leader and a low-performance candidate.

Figure 2: Party leader endorsement effects versus candidate performance effects



Notes: The bar graphs plots represent the mean of each treatment condition. The error bars are 99% confidence intervals for the means. The difference in means is derived from a standard two-tailed t-test. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ .

The results presented in Figure 2, which plots the proportion of primary voters who say that they are either “very likely” or “certain” to vote for the candidate for each treatment condition, suggest that the effects of party influence over primary voters are large enough to offset the effect of candidate performance. For example, the figure on the left shows that there is no observable difference between a high-performance candidate without an endorsement and a low-performance candidate who has

the endorsement of the party; across the two conditions, the proportion of voters who are either very likely or certain to vote for the candidate differs by only one percentage point. Similarly, the figure on the right shows that there are no real differences between a low-performance candidate without an endorsement and a high-performance candidate who has been denounced by the party leader; while the difference between the two candidates is around 5% points, these differences are statistically indistinguishable from zero at  $p < 0.1$ . It is important to note that the evidence I presented here does not indicate that the influence of parties is so large that it “trumps” the effect of candidate performance. Rather, it suggests that the magnitude of endorsement effects is sufficient to offset the effect of candidate performance, which is considered one of the most important factors determining vote choice in the developing world.

#### **5.4 Mechanisms for party leader influence**

The results discussed so far demonstrate the strong influence that parties have on the voting intentions of primary voters. In this section, I test whether party leader endorsements change voter perceptions of the candidate’s electoral prospects (the perceived likelihood that she will win) and anticipated performance (ability to channel resources to the constituency)—factors that I posited as the mechanisms driving party influence. I do so by examining the effect of party leader endorsements on three outcomes that were included in the post-treatment survey; a measure probing voter perceptions of the likelihood that a candidate will become the MP, a question on the perceived ability of the candidate to channel local development to the constituency, and an item asking voters of their perceptions on how actively the candidate will be involved in the party’s campaign activities for the presidential elections.

Table 5 shows that party leader endorsements and denouncements indeed shape voter perceptions of a candidate’s electoral prospects, and their capacity to deliver goods and services to constituents. In columns (1) and (4), I present the estimated average treatment effect of party leader endorsements and denouncements on the perceived likelihood that the candidate will be elected as a member of parliament; the party’s endorsement increased the perceived likelihood of a candidate

Table 5: Party leader influence on candidate evaluations

	Party endorsement effects			Party denouncement effects		
	Likelihood of winning (1)	Bring more development (2)	Actively campaign (3)	Likelihood of winning (4)	Bring more development (5)	Actively campaign (6)
ATE	0.849*** (0.101)	0.644*** (0.100)	0.867*** (0.093)	-0.869*** (0.113)	-0.562*** (0.111)	-1.067*** (0.110)
Control mean	4.421*** (0.070)	4.619*** (0.069)	4.857*** (0.064)	4.421*** (0.081)	4.619*** (0.080)	4.857*** (0.079)
Sample	Pooled	Pooled	Pooled	Pooled	Pooled	Pooled
Observations	914	924	921	980	987	989
R <sup>2</sup>	0.072	0.043	0.087	0.057	0.025	0.087

Notes: Estimated average treatment effects (ATEs) of the party endorsements and denouncements on beliefs about candidate's likelihood of becoming MP, ability to bring development to constituency, and actively campaign for the party's presidential campaigns. ATEs are estimated against pure controls. Standard errors from linear regression. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ .

winning the MP seat by 0.85 points, while a denouncement decreased the candidate's perceived likelihood of victory by around the same amount. The difference between a denounced candidate to an endorsed candidate (more than 1.7 points on a 7-point scale) has the substantive effect of moving voters from believing that a candidate is *unlikely* to win to believing that a candidate is *likely* to win. These differences are statistically significant at the  $p < 0.001$  level and survive adjustment for multiple testing

Columns (2) and (5) show that the party leader's position on a primary candidate shapes voter perceptions of the candidate's ability to deliver resources to the constituency. Primary voters view endorsed candidates to be more capable of service delivery in comparison to candidates who have not been endorsed. The difference is around a 0.64-point increase on a 7-point scale. Contrastingly, voters believe that candidates who have been denounced by the party will be significantly less able to deliver than a candidate without an endorsement, which results in a 0.56-point difference on a 7-point scale. These differences are statistically significant at the  $p < 0.001$  level and also survive multiple testing adjustments

Finally, results reported in columns (3) and (6) show that party leader endorsements and denouncements shape perceptions about how active a candidate will be in contributing to the party's efforts to capture the presidency, a characteristic that I argue will be important to voters if they believe that service delivery requires a system of cooperation between a candidate, the party, and the party leader. Primary voters are significantly more likely to believe that an endorsed candidate will actively participate in the presidential campaigns (an increase of 0.87 points on a 7-point scale), and a denounced candidate will be less active in such campaign activities (a decrease of more than a single point).<sup>33</sup>

## 6 Conclusion

This article challenges the perspective that parties and its leaders have little influence over the outcome of party nominations when candidates are selected through methods that allow for mass participation, such as primary elections. Leading accounts of primary elections have traditionally emphasized the importance of mass preferences or the ability of candidates themselves in shaping outcomes, thereby relegating parties as passive actors that have no choice but to accept the candidates chosen by primary voters. However, this paper shows that political parties and their leaders are able to retain influence over the candidate selection process within their parties even when they have been stripped of their *de-jure* authority to decide on party candidates.

I have argued that this is because party leaders have developed and adopted new strategies aimed at ensuring that primary voters, who hold the power to select candidates under a system of primaries, exercise their vote in line with the party's preferences; even when parties possess serious organizational and financial constraints that prevent them from channeling these valuable resources to preferred candidates and are unable to overtly impose a preferred candidate because of the real threat of backlash among voters and candidates, parties can still count on their persuasive influence

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<sup>33</sup>In addition to these tests, I provide an additional test of mechanisms by implementing mediation analysis using methods developed by Imai and coauthors (Imai and Yamamoto, 2013). The full analysis is presented in Figure D3 in Supplementary Appendix C. Results from the mediation analysis largely confirm the results presented in Table 5.

over primary voters. By strategically issuing endorsements in favor of their preferred candidates, parties can *effectively* maintain their stranglehold on primary election outcomes. Primary voters are inclined to follow the opinion of their parties and leaders because it allows them to overcome informational deficits that traditionally impose obstacles to exercising their vote in a manner that maximizes their material well-being. Specifically, I have argued that endorsements provide information that allows them to coordinate on a candidate who is most likely to win in the general election, and make inferences about the capacity of candidates to deliver resources to their constituents.

These findings have implications for our understanding of the relationship between the institutionalization of political parties and the promotion of democracy in the developing world. For democracy to fulfill its potential and result in better representation of citizen interests, due attention must be directed toward political parties and their inner workings. Whereas the international community has primarily focused on harnessing procedural justice (such as free and fair elections, the guarantee of civil and political liberties, and the introduction of primary elections) as a means to obtain the normatively desirable qualities of democracy (Kelley, 2012; Bermeo, 2016), I suggest that such efforts are unlikely to bear fruit without concomitant changes to the way power is structured within political parties. Only when key stakeholders within political parties can internalize the values promoted by democracy and honor the intent of reforms to democratize the party from within can they function as vehicles of democratic representation.

This paper also raises important questions that future research should attempt to address. For example, it is clear from the results presented in this paper that primary candidates favored by the party and its leaders will have a critical advantage in the candidate selection process. Yet we have yet to understand what factors motivate party leaders to prefer certain candidates over others; what characteristics do party leaders look for when they play favorites? If candidate selection is used as a means to prevent the emergence of potential challengers over the control of political parties, how do party leaders confront the potential costs of selecting loyalists over candidates that have more mass-based appeal? Another question that warrants investigation is the implications of party influence over primary elections on the behavior of elected representatives both as they engage in their duties

within parliament and vis-à-vis their constituents. Given the high value of party candidacy in many of these new democracies, do we observe that the persistence of party influence over nominations drives politicians to primarily direct their effort and resources while in office to serve the interest of the party leaders, to the detriment of the constituents they are responsible for serving?

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## **Appendix A: Ethics and transparency in research**

The study was conducted in compliance with APSA's Principles and Guidance for Human Subjects Research. The human subjects review for the broader project (based on the author's dissertation) was obtained from University X's, Protocol XXXX-XX-XXXX (redacted for review purposes) and was deemed exempt from review. Details on the human subject review for the experiment in section 5 follow in the following section.

### **Experiment**

The human subjects review for the experiment was filed separately from the broader project and was granted expedited review by University X's Institutional Review Board, which approved Protocol XXXX-XX-XXXX.

### **Consent**

As a part of the application for human subjects review, we submitted a full consent script for participation in the experiment that outlined the purpose of the study, the study procedures, the time it would take to participate, the (minimal) risks and discomforts, how the author would ensure confidentiality, as well as the benefits, compensations, and rights that participants had. While this script would be used for obtaining consent, I applied for a waiver of written consent and the application was granted by the University's Institutional Review Board. I opted to use verbal rather than written consent given that it would be deemed suspicious to ask for a signature in the Kenyan context and that would ultimately cause more anxiety and discomfort for the participant than if we verbally obtained consent. The author supported this application with statements from our field coordinators who supported this idea.

### **Use of deception**

The radio news experiment involved presenting information about a fictional aspirant for the party nominations through an audio clip. While we were portraying a fictitious candidate, we wanted to boost the realism of the treatment by not disclosing that the candidate was, in fact, fictitious until the completion of the survey. At the conclusion of the survey, the enumerators were instructed to read out a debriefing script (approved by IRB) that would disclose that the candidate in the audio clip was a hypothetical candidate, outlining the justifications for why we delayed the release of this information. The approval for the incomplete disclosure followed by a debriefing at the end was decided upon in consultation with the IRB. The debriefing script is available upon request.

### **Confidentiality**

In order to protect from even the minimal risk posed by breach of confidentiality, the survey did not collect any identifying information such as name, time, contact information, or the specific address or location where each survey interview was held. Due to the fact that the data collection (the playing of the audio clip and the recording of responses) both occurred electronically via tablet through the online platform Qualtrics, I disabled the collection of temporary IP addresses that comes standard

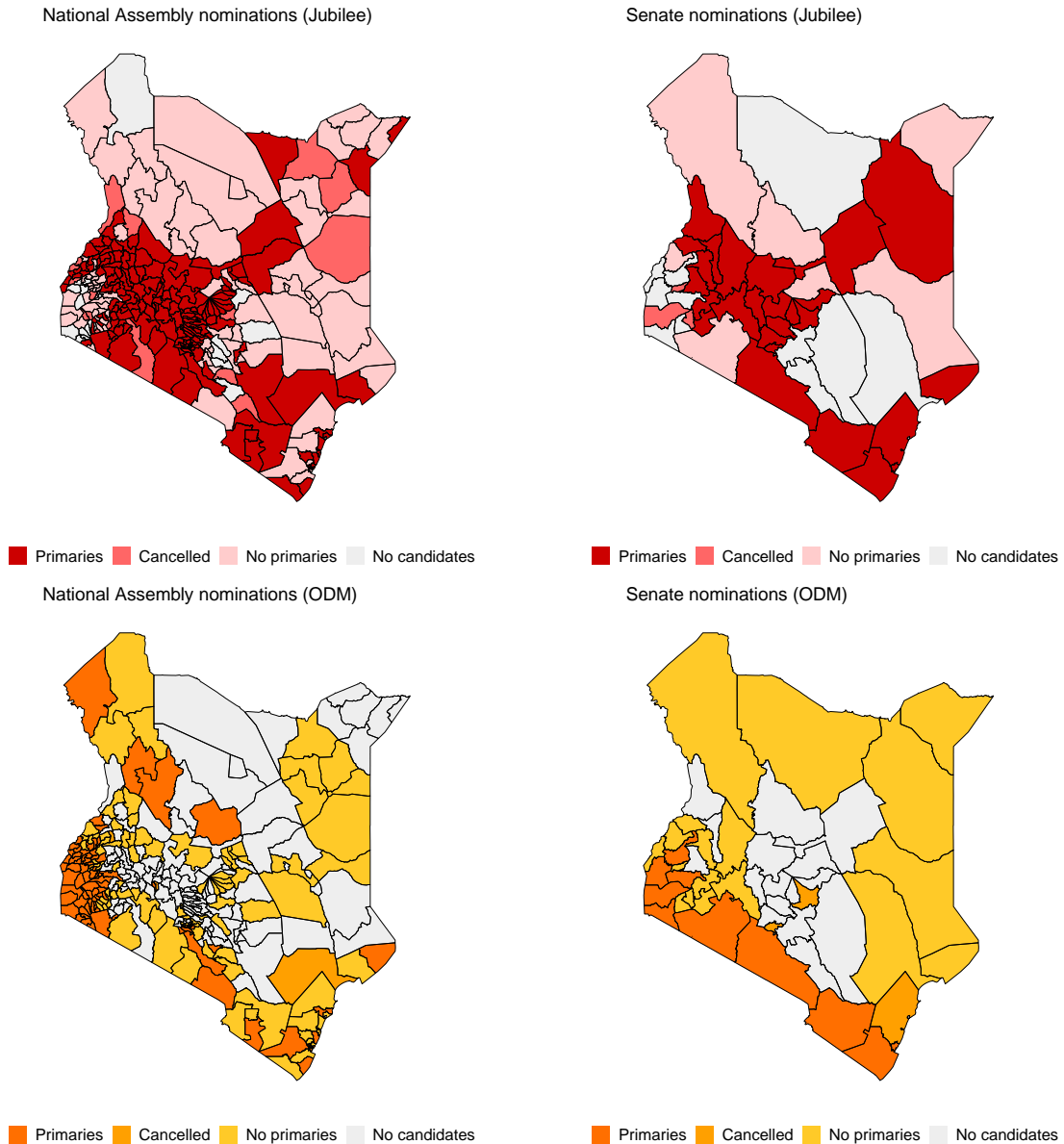
with the usage of the platform. The resulting data set does not hold any information that would allow someone to track responses back to any particular individual.

### **Compensation**

The survey interview took an average of 15 minutes. Since there were no direct benefits to participation, I provided compensation to the research subjects in the form of an airtime voucher worth 100 Kenyan Shillings (roughly 1 USD at the time the project was conducted) from a mobile phone service carrier of their choice. I determined this rate as a reasonable amount of compensation and was informed that the sum was double that of typical compensation for local surveys of similar length by our field coordinators who had extensive experience running field survey projects for local survey firms.

## Appendix B: Auxiliary figures for section II

Figure B1: Modes of candidate selection in the 2017 Kenyan general elections



*Notes:* The four subfigures plot the modes of candidate selection adopted by the two major political parties for the 2017 Kenyan National Assembly and Senatorial elections. The two subfigures at the top represent modes of candidate selection for the Jubilee Party of Kenya. The lower two subfigures represent modes of candidate selection for the Orange Democratic Movement.

## Appendix C: Auxiliary figures for observational analysis on party influence in primary election outcomes

Table C1: Endorsements and primary election outcomes (Full sample w/ covariates)

	<i>Outcome: Won in Primaries</i>			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Endorsed	0.645*** (0.043)	0.518*** (0.052)	0.709*** (0.054)	0.626*** (0.063)
Incumbent		-0.078 (0.128)		-0.194 (0.157)
Male		0.013 (0.035)		0.015 (0.044)
Prior Experience		0.253* (0.119)		0.372* (0.152)
No. of Aspirants		-0.015*** (0.002)		
Prior Party Vote Share (MP)		-0.010 (0.024)		
Prior Party Vote Share (Pres.)		-0.049 (0.028)		
Prior Turnout (MP)		-0.038 (0.049)		
Prior Turnout (Pres.)		-0.114 (0.113)		
Constant	0.150*** (0.008)	0.399*** (0.086)		
Candidate Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Electoral Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Party× Constituency FE	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,255	1,255	1,255	1,255
R <sup>2</sup>	0.199	0.250	0.285	0.305

*Notes:* Models are estimated using linear regression, with robust standard errors clustered at the party× constituency level in parentheses. The dependent variable is whether a candidate won in the primary elections. Electoral controls include the party vote share and turnout (Jubilee and ODM) for the previous (2013) parliamentary and presidential elections at the constituency level. Since the Jubilee party is a merger of multiple parties (The National Alliance and United Republican Party are the main partner parties) that contested in the 2013 elections, the prior vote share of the Jubilee party is calculated by summing the vote share of the parties that merged into the Jubilee party. \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05.

Table C2: Endorsements and primary election outcomes (Jubilee w/ covariates)

	<i>Outcome: Won in Primaries</i>			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Endorsed	0.621*** (0.059)	0.425*** (0.075)	0.682*** (0.073)	0.533*** (0.090)
Incumbent		-0.057 (0.144)		-0.170 (0.173)
Male		0.004 (0.041)		0.009 (0.051)
Prior Experience		0.307* (0.133)		0.412* (0.165)
No. of Aspirants		-0.013*** (0.002)		
Prior Party Vote Share (MP)		-0.056 (0.036)		
Prior Party Vote Share (Pres.)		-0.021 (0.035)		
Prior Turnout (MP)		0.003 (0.041)		
Prior Turnout (Pres.)		-0.224 (0.136)		
Constant	0.146*** (0.009)	0.455*** (0.112)		
Candidate Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Electoral Controls	No	Yes	No	No
Constituency FE	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	905	905	905	905
R <sup>2</sup>	0.157	0.232	0.241	0.277

*Notes:* Models are estimated using linear regression, with robust standard errors clustered at the constituency level in parentheses. The dependent variable is whether a candidate won in the primary elections. \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05.



Table C3: Endorsements and primary election outcomes (ODM w/ covariates)

	<i>Outcome: Won in Primaries</i>			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Endorsed	0.668*** (0.064)	0.634*** (0.070)	0.748*** (0.080)	0.747*** (0.084)
Incumbent		0.050 (0.168)		-0.076 (0.161)
Male		0.020 (0.057)		0.044 (0.087)
Prior Experience		-0.011 (0.156)		0.092 (0.177)
No. of Aspirants		-0.014** (0.005)		
Prior Party Vote Share (MP)		-0.254*** (0.068)		
Prior Party Vote Share (Pres.)		0.019 (0.063)		
Prior Turnout (MP)		-0.318*** (0.055)		
Prior Turnout (Pres.)		0.362* (0.163)		
Constant	0.162*** (0.017)	0.283* (0.127)		
Candidate Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Electoral Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Constituency FE	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	350	350	350	350
R <sup>2</sup>	0.276	0.312	0.368	0.369

*Notes:* Models are estimated using linear regression, with robust standard errors clustered at the constituency level in parentheses. The dependent variable is whether a candidate won in the primary elections. \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05.

Table C4: Endorsements and party nomination outcomes

Panel A (Full Sample)	<i>Outcome: Candidate Was Nominated</i>			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Endorsed	0.592*** (0.035)	0.394*** (0.042)	0.716*** (0.052)	0.622*** (0.061)
Sample	Pooled	Pooled	Pooled	Pooled
Candidate Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Electoral Controls	No	Yes	No	No
Constituency FE	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,491	1,490	1,491	1,490
R <sup>2</sup>	0.139	0.310	0.204	0.239
Panel B (By Party)	<i>Outcome: Candidate Was Nominated</i>			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Endorsed	0.305*** (0.062)	0.524*** (0.087)	0.481*** (0.058)	0.748*** (0.080)
Sample	Jubilee	Jubilee	ODM	ODM
Candidate Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Electoral Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constituency FE	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	1,037	1,037	453	453
R <sup>2</sup>	0.320	0.211	0.393	0.307

*Note:* Models are estimated using linear regression, with robust standard errors clustered at the party  $\times$  constituency level for panel A and constituency level for panel B in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ . The dependent variable is whether a candidate won the nomination, regardless of the selection method (direct vs primary elections) employed by the party. Electoral controls include the party vote share and turnout (Jubilee and ODM) for the previous (2013) parliamentary and presidential elections at the constituency level. Since the Jubilee party is a merger of multiple parties (The National Alliance and United Republican Party are the main partner parties) that contested in the 2013 elections, the prior vote share of the Jubilee party is calculated by summing the vote share of the parties that merged into the Jubilee party.

Table C5: Determinants of endorsements

	<i>Outcome: Candidate was endorsed</i>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Incumbent	0.199*	0.215*	0.123
	(0.106)	(0.110)	(0.382)
Male	-0.070**	-0.042	-0.164*
	(0.028)	(0.027)	(0.084)
Prior Experience	0.139	0.124	0.221
	(0.095)	(0.096)	(0.377)
No. of Aspirants	-0.006***	-0.005***	-0.015**
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.006)
Prior Party Vote Share (MP)	0.047	0.115***	0.039
	(0.036)	(0.043)	(0.120)
Prior Party Vote Share (Pres.)	-0.076**	-0.120***	-0.008
	(0.036)	(0.038)	(0.114)
Prior Turnout (MP)	-0.194	-0.288	0.033
	(0.147)	(0.180)	(0.248)
Prior Turnout (Pres.)	0.054**	0.032	0.081
	(0.021)	(0.030)	(0.084)
Constant		0.349**	0.232
		(0.148)	(0.220)
Sample	Pooled	Jubilee	ODM
Observations	1,258	906	352
R <sup>2</sup>	0.194	0.232	0.143

*Notes:* Models are estimated using linear regression, with robust standard errors clustered at the constituency level in parentheses. \*\*\*p<0.01, \*\*p<0.05, \*p<0.1.

## Appendix D: Auxiliary figures and tables for candidate evaluation experiment

### Subject recruitment and sample characteristics

Experimental subjects were recruited through door-to-door canvassing using a random-walk method in constituencies located in Nakuru and Kisumu county, Kenya. Only those who were permanent residents of the constituency were either i) registered party members or ii) reported that they held a close attachment towards either of the two parties, and iii) reported that they were likely to participate in the upcoming 2017 party primaries were eligible to participate in the survey. This sampling strategy is based on the fact that Kenya's major parties hold closed primary elections that restrict voting to registered party members. The decision to include strong partisan leaners who report intentions to participate in the party primaries is based on the fact that registering to vote in the party primaries is prevalent in the run-up to primaries as parties engage in party registration drives.

Figure D1: Data Collection for the Experiment in Progress



*Notes:* Team of enumerators in Nakuru and Kisumu interview survey respondents at their homes.

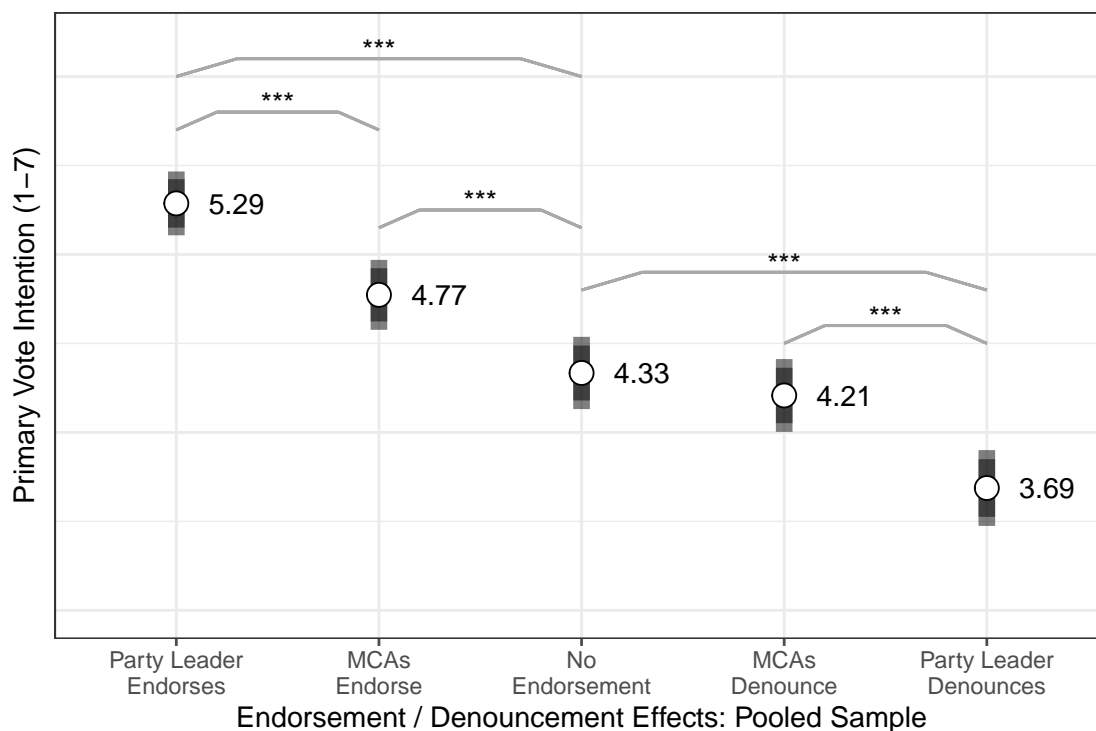
The resulting sample yielded a total of 2392 likely incumbent and opposition primary voters. Table D1 presents the descriptive statistics on the final sample. The sample is almost exactly balanced on gender. By virtue of sampling self-identified likely primary voters, respondents seemed to be active participants in politics, and have favorable evaluations of their political parties and their party leaders: 81% of the sample report having voted in the previous general election. 62% self-identified as registered party members. The average rating on the feeling thermometer for the political party was 76/100, while for the party leader, it was slightly higher at 79/100. Respondents on average strongly approved of their party leader's job performance. Additionally, the sample was almost evenly split in terms of the number of incumbent and opposition supporters: 1205 out of the 2392 reported identifying with the ODM (opposition) and 1188 were aligned with Jubilee Party

(incumbent). The two largest ethnic groups represented in the sample are the Luo (39.1%) and Kikuyu (35.9%), who constitute the main ethnic support base for the ODM and Jubilee Party respectively. These two groups are followed by the Luhya (11.1%), Kisii (4.3%), Kalenjin (2.6%), and Kamba (2.0%).

Table D1: Sample descriptive statistics (N=2392)

Variable	Min	Max	Mean (SD)
Female	0	1	0.51 (0.50)
Voted in last election	0	1	0.81 (0.39)
Registered party member	0	1	0.62 (0.49)
Number of years in constituency	0	68	14.66 (12.20)
Current living conditions	1	5	3.31 (1.03)
Party feeling thermometer	0	100	76.20 (17.92)
Party leader feeling thermometer	0	100	79.00 (18.66)
Party leader job approval	1	7	5.90 (1.17)

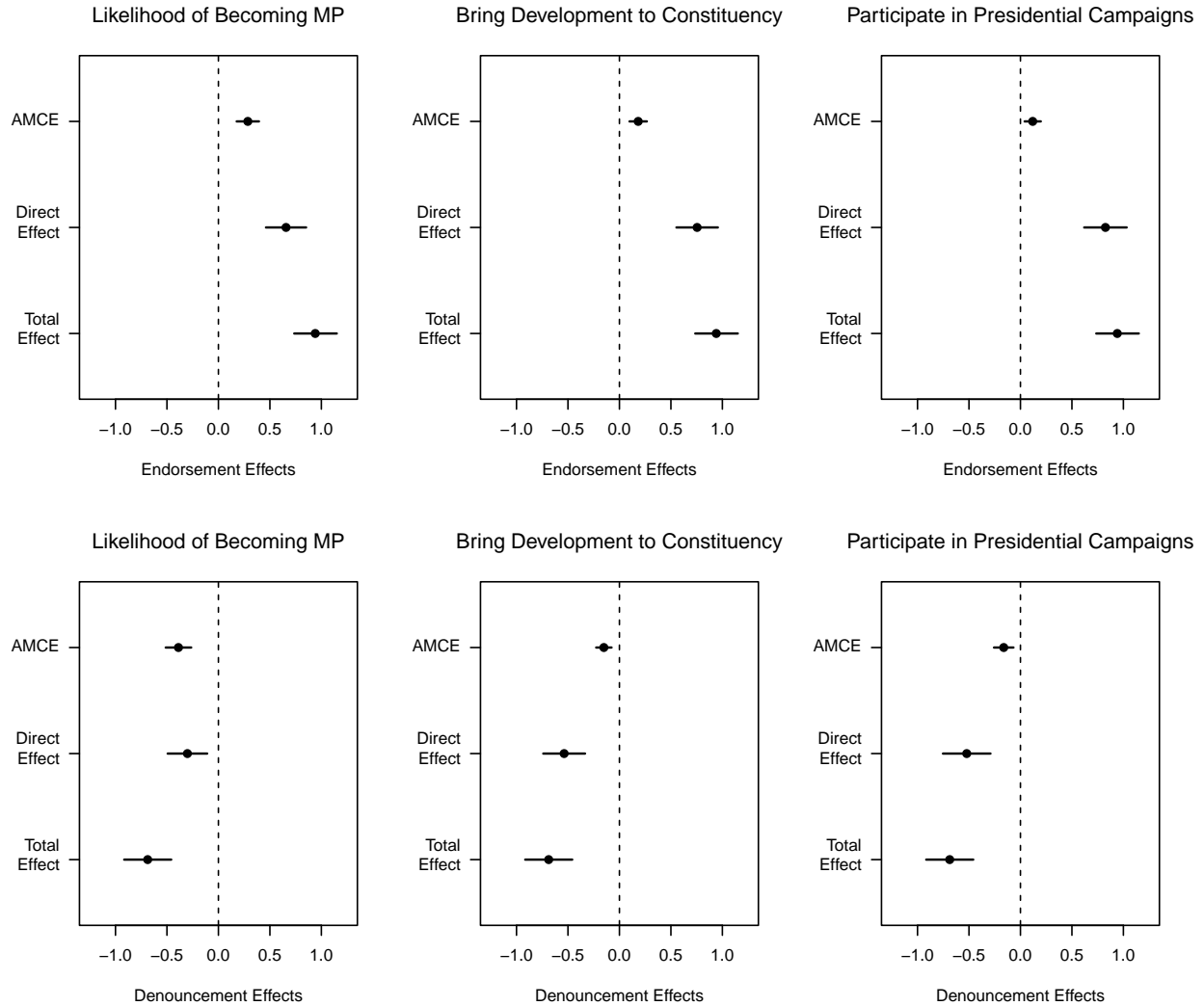
Figure D2: Effects of Endorsements/Denouncements: Pooling across Performance Dimension



Notes: Pooled sample with both Jubilee and ODM primary voters. The figure reports point estimates for the mean of each treatment condition. The thick and thin lines represent 95 and 99% confidence intervals for the means. The difference in means is derived from a standard two-tailed t-test. \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.1$ .

# Causal Mediation Analysis

Figure D3: Causal Mediation Analysis



*Notes:* Analysis conducted using the `Mediation` package in R. The figure reports point estimates and the 95% confidence intervals for the average treatment effect (Total Effect), average direct effect, and average causal mediation effect (AMCE). The direct effect is the residual causal effect that is not mediated through the mechanism. A direct effect that is statistically indistinguishable from zero means that we cannot reject the null hypothesis that the average treatment effect is completely mediated through the causal mechanism in question.

If one accepts the strong assumptions required to identify the average causal mediation effect (ACME) in [Imai and Yamamoto \(2013\)](#)'s framework, changes in the perception of the candidate's electoral prospects account for around 30% of the relationship between party leader endorsements and primary vote intentions. Changes in the perception of candidate's anticipated performance in terms of

service delivery and participation in the presidential campaigns account for between 13% and 19% of the total effect. Mediation analysis on the effects of party denouncement, however, suggests that the changes in the perception of the candidate’s electoral prospects account for a much larger proportion of the denouncement effect: 56% total effect can be attributed to this mechanism. Changes in the anticipated performance of the candidate and participation in the presidential campaigns account for around 22–23% of the total effect.

## Heterogeneous Treatment Effects

In this section, I assess whether the effect of party leader endorsements and denouncements are moderated by certain respondent attributes and characteristics: are certain types of the partisan mass selectorate likely to respond more strongly to the opinion of their party leaders? For example, are partisans with a stronger sense of linked fate with the party leader more inclined to listen to the opinion of the party leader? Are the party leader’s *coethnic* partisans primarily responsible for the endorsement and denouncement effects? Are the endorsement effects moderated by the respondent’s prior evaluation of the party leader’s job performance? Do low information voters in particular privilege the word of the party leader to cast their vote in the party primaries?

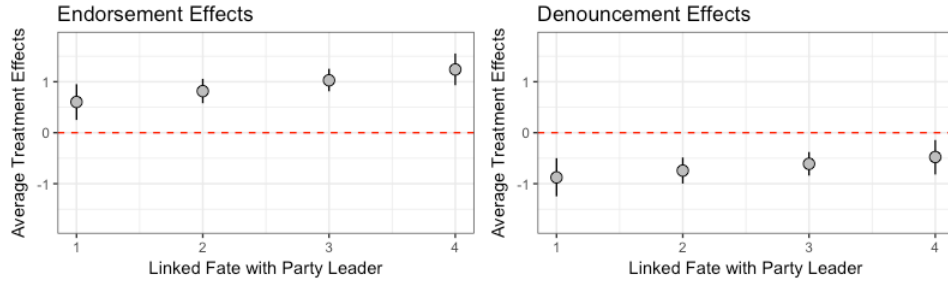
In order to test how the effect of leader endorsements and denouncements are moderated, I conduct a heterogeneous treatment effects analysis where I regress our main outcome against four moderators measured at the individual level, the treatment indicators, and the interactions of the moderators and treatment indicators. The four moderators, as specified in the pre-analysis plan are 1) level of linked fate with the party leader, 2) coethnicity with the party leader, 3) job approval of the party leader, and 4) level of respondent political knowledge. I also included a battery of respondent characteristics including gender, religion, ethnicity, and a self-assessment of their living conditions and location fixed effects as controls. The specific regression equation estimated was as follows:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Moderator}_i + \beta_2 T_i + \beta_3 \text{Moderator}_i \times T_i + \beta_4 X_i + \delta_j + \epsilon_i \quad (2)$$

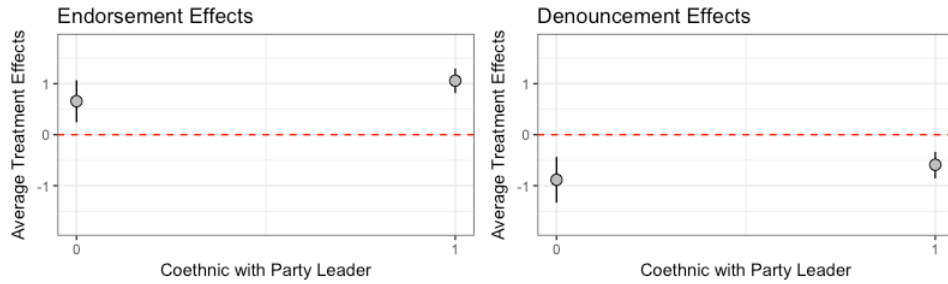
where  $T_i$  denotes the treatment status of the respondent,  $X_i$  is a vector of individual-level covariates measured pre-treatment, and  $\delta_j$  is a dummy for respondent location.

The results of the analyses are presented in graphical form in Figure D4. Panel (a) of Figure D4 shows whether the treatment effect for party leader endorsements and denouncements are moderated by the respondent’s perception of linked fate with the party leader. The evidence seems to be asymmetrical: individuals who report higher levels of linked fate with the party leader respond more strongly to the endorsement treatment, as observed in the left-side panel that shows a clear upward slope on the treatment effects across increasing levels of linked fate. The effect is statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$ . The moderating effects of linked fate, however, are not observed in relation to the denouncement treatment: the coefficient for the interaction term between the linked fate measure and the treatment indicator is not statistically significant at conventional levels. The same asymmetry is observed for the coethnicity with the party leader. Whereas individuals who are coethnics of the party leader are more likely to be supportive of a party candidate who has been endorsed by the party leader (marginally significant at  $p < 0.10$ ), no such moderating effects are observed for coethnicity regarding the denouncement treatments. Neither the prior levels of approval for the party leader nor the level of the respondent’s political knowledge seem to be moderating the effect of party leader endorsements and denouncements.

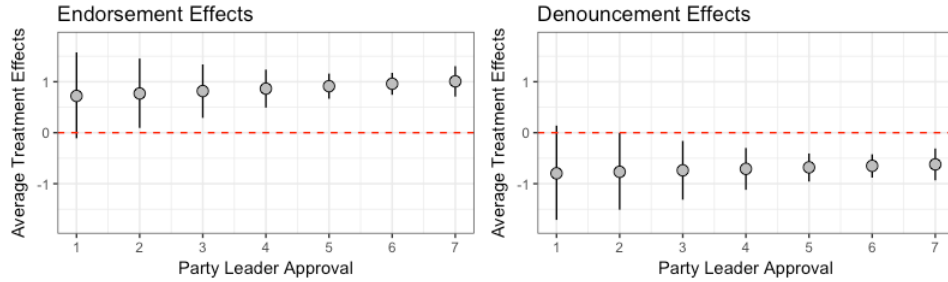
Figure D4: Heterogeneous Effects of Party Leader Endorsements and Denouncements



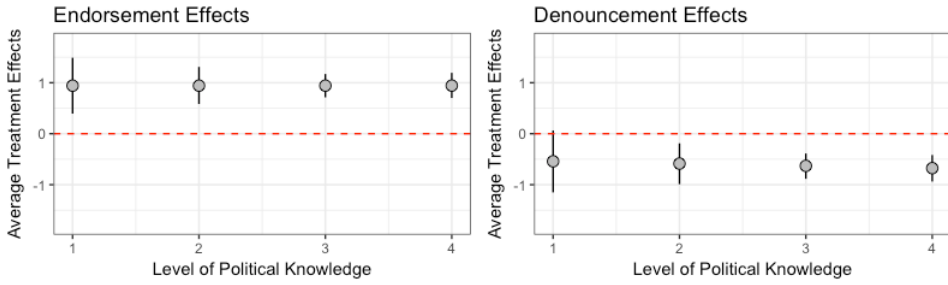
(a) Endorsement and Denouncement Effects by Linked Fate with Party Leader



(b) Endorsement and Denouncement Effects by Coethnicity with Party Leader



(c) Endorsement and Denouncement Effects by Party Leader Approval



(d) Endorsement and Denouncement Effects by Level of Political Knowledge

Note: The lines represent 95% confidence intervals for the difference in means. Estimated difference in means derived from a standard two-tailed t-test. Results of the analyses used to generate this figure are presented in Table A1, Appendix A.



Overall, the results of the exploratory analyses adds partial credence to the idea that the sense of shared interests and fate that underpins the effect of party leader endorsements. While we find very little evidence of further moderating effects with regard to respondent evaluation of leaders and their level of political knowledge, this maybe due to the limited variation on these characteristics within our sample: almost 90% of respondents have a favorable evaluation of the party leader's job performance, while only 10% of respondents incorrectly stated both the name and the party of their current MP. It is also worth highlighting again that the analyses conducted here are exploratory, and any conclusions that can be drawn are tentative.

Table D2: Heterogeneous effects: party endorsement treatment

	Primary vote intentions			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	0.396 (0.254)	0.656*** (0.207)	0.679 (0.521)	0.945** (0.382)
Linked Fate	-0.075 (0.063)			
Coethnic		-0.501** (0.203)		
Leader Approval			-0.008 (0.061)	
Political Knowledge				-0.006 (0.074)
Treatment×Linked Fate	0.210** (0.087)			
Treatment×Coethnic		0.402* (0.241)		
Treatment×Leader Approval			0.047 (0.087)	
Treatment×Knoweldge				-0.0003 (0.107)
Constant	4.061*** (0.291)	4.380*** (0.305)	3.921*** (0.432)	3.912*** (0.345)
Demographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Location FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	936	937	937	932
R <sup>2</sup>	0.093	0.093	0.087	0.086

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.1$ . All variables except for dichotomous variables are standardized for the analyses. Linked fate is measured using the question “Do you think what happens to your party leader will affect what happens in your life? If yes, how much will it affect you?” Responses were recorded on a 4 point scale ranging from 1 (None) to 4 (Yes, a lot). Coethnic is a dichotomous variable indicating whether the respondent was a coethnic of the party leader. Leader approval is measured using the question “Do you approve or disapprove of the way the party leader of [insert party name here] is handling his job? Responses were recorded on a standard 7 point likert scale. Political knowledge is coded based on an open-ended question asking the respondent to name the current MP of her constituency, as well as the MP’s party affiliation. Low knowledge is a dichotomous variable that takes on a value of 1 when the respondent failed to correctly identify *both* the name *and* the party affiliation of the MP.

Table D3: Heterogeneous effects: party denouncement treatment

	Primary vote intentions			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	-1.006*** (0.277)	-0.885*** (0.226)	-0.819 (0.574)	-0.493 (0.424)
Linked Fate	-0.122* (0.070)			
Coethnic		-0.635*** (0.232)		
Leader Approval			-0.031 (0.068)	
Political Knowledge				-0.0005 (0.083)
Treatment × Linked Fate	0.132 (0.095)			
Treatment × Coethnic		0.294 (0.263)		
Treatment × Leader Approval			0.028 (0.096)	
Treatment × Knowledge				-0.045 (0.118)
Constant	4.526*** (0.321)	4.852*** (0.342)	4.350*** (0.481)	4.168*** (0.378)
Demographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Location FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,002	1,003	1,003	1,002
R <sup>2</sup>	0.045	0.050	0.042	0.042

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.1$ . All variables except for dichotomous variables are standardized for the analyses. Linked fate is measured using the question “Do you think what happens to your party leader will affect what happens in your life? If yes, how much will it affect you?” Responses were recorded on a 4 point scale ranging from 1 (None) to 4 (Yes, a lot). Coethnic is a dichotomous variable indicating whether the respondent was a coethnic of the party leader. Leader approval is measured using the question “Do you approve or disapprove of the way the party leader of [insert party name here] is handling his job? Responses were recorded on a standard 7 point likert scale. Political knowledge is coded based on an open-ended question asking the respondent to name the current MP of her constituency, as well as the MP’s party affiliation. Low knowledge is a dichotomous variable that takes on a value of 1 when the respondent failed to correctly identify *both* the name *and* the party affiliation of the MP.

## Appendix E: Auxiliary figures for conjoint analysis

The experiment in the main text provides strong evidence that party leader endorsements and de-nouncements shape how partisan primary voters evaluate political aspirants. Yet do we observe the influence of parties in a multiple candidate framework in which voters are presented with viable alternatives? For example, would a voter's preference for an aspirant favored by the party hold when voters have an option to choose another aspirant who has a strong record of local development? Here, I move beyond the single candidate framework and test the effect of party leader endorsement on the intended *vote choice* of primary voters. I specifically employ conjoint analysis, which allows for the simultaneous estimation of multiple treatment components using a discrete choice task that mirrors the choice that voters face in the ballot box in a typical election: one in which voters cast their vote for a single candidate from a set of candidates that differ along multiple attributes and dimensions.

While only a handful of studies have examined the determinants of voter behavior specifically in the context of primary elections, I combine the insights from those studies with other candidate attributes that have been found in prior research to influence vote choice in *general election* settings across Africa. These attributes and attribute levels are presented in Table E1.

Table E1: Conjoint Analysis - Candidate Attributes and Attribute Levels

Candidate Attributes	Attribute Levels
Current occupation	Member of parliament (MP) Business owner Professor at a university School teacher
Ethnic group	Kikuyu/Kalenjin/Kamba/Luo/Luhya
Gender	Male/Female
Previous government appointments	Cabinet Minister Deputy Minister None
Contribution to local development	Largest donation to the school renovation project Did not donate to the school renovation project Largest donation for new health clinics Did not donate to new health clinics Provided bursaries for 150 children in the constituency Did not provide bursaries for children in the constituency Paid the hospital fee for 150 sick people Did not pay the hospital fee for sick people None (unknown)
Record on corruption	Convicted of corruption for handing out cash to voters Under investigation for embezzling funds for personal use No record of corruption
Party leader's position	publicly stated that he strongly supports the candidate publicly stated that he does not support the candidate has not expressed his opinion about the candidate

Profiles of fictitious aspirants for the Jubilee and ODM primaries were randomly generated using the attributes and attribute levels in Table E1. Though the total number of possible combinations of attribute values is much larger than what would be actually observed in reality, the ran-

dom assignment of attribute values<sup>34</sup> guarantees that profiles with a certain attribute-attribute level combination will have the same distribution for all other attributes on average as compared to profiles with the same attribute but a different attribute value level, allowing for a simple comparison means. Following a pre-treatment survey measuring standard demographic information, the experimental respondents were presented with two profiles and asked to make a choice between the two profiles (forced/discrete choice): “Which of these two candidates would you prefer to vote for in the Jubilee/ODM party primaries?”<sup>35</sup> Per common practice in conjoint experiments, this process was repeated 3 times per respondent, for a total of 7,176 aspirant profile pairs across the two study locations.

## Main Results

The quantity to be estimated is the average marginal component effect (AMCE). I use the fully non-parametric linear regression estimator presented in (Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto, 2013), and cluster the standard errors derived from the estimation at the respondent level.<sup>36</sup> I also estimate the *conditional* AMCEs to detect heterogeneity in treatment effects across the two different party samples.

Figures E1, E2, and E3 report the main findings of the conjoint analysis. The dots and lines in the plots represent the point estimates and 95% confidence intervals for the AMCEs of each attribute value on the probability that respondents chose the aspirant in the choice task. Rows without any estimates represent the reference categories within each attribute. The regression model that the plot was generated from is included in the online supplementary index.

In support of the main hypothesis, likely primary voters of the two parties seem to strongly prefer aspirants who have the party’s backing: as seen in Figure E1, compared to an aspirant for whom the party leader has not expressed an opinion, endorsed aspirants are 8.1 percentage points (SE=0.9) more likely to be preferred in the party primaries. In comparison to an aspirant that has been denounced, an endorsed aspirant is more than 10 percentage points more likely to be chosen as the preferred candidate. The results from the samples disaggregated by political party tell a similar story: endorsed aspirants are around 8 percentage points more likely to be preferred as the party

<sup>34</sup>For the candidate ethnic group attribute, we deviate from convention and do not assign with equal probability: instead, we use the population proportion of the ethnic groups based on the most recent census data on ethnic group distributions in Kenya. This is to mitigate concerns raised by enumerators and respondents during piloting that questioned the frequency with which candidate profiles with minority ethnic group membership were being generated. For constituencies in Nakuru county, the ethnicity of the candidate were assigned according to the following probability: Kikuyu 61%, Kalenin 15%, Kamba 6%, Luo 10%, Luhya 8%. For constituencies in Kisumu county, the probability was as follows: Kikuyu 1%, Kalenjin 2%, Kamba 1%, Luo 90%, Luhya 6%. These probabilities are accounted for in the analyses of the conjoint data.

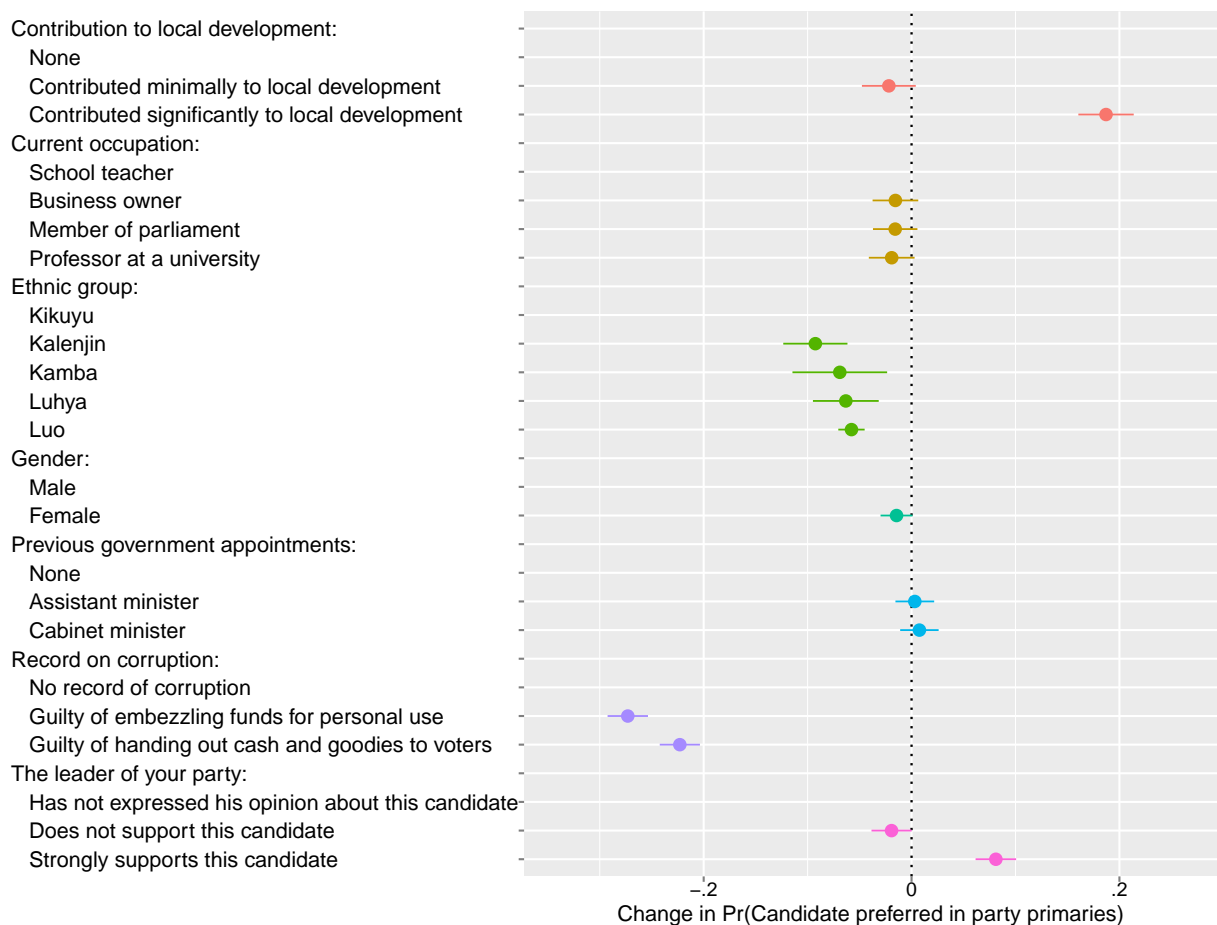
<sup>35</sup>To minimize the possibility that respondents privilege the first attribute they encounter in the party profiles (primacy effects) to guide their choice, I randomize the order of the attribute presented *across* respondents, but hold the order constant *within* the respondent.

<sup>36</sup>For example, the estimation of the AMCEs for party leader endorsement attribute is conducted by running the following regression:

$$\text{choice}_{ijk} = \theta_1 + \theta_2[\text{support}_{ijk} = \text{yes}] + \theta_3[\text{support}_{ijk} = \text{no}] + \epsilon_{ijk} \quad (3)$$

where  $\text{choice}_{ijk}$  is the choice outcome, and  $[\text{support}_{ijk} = \text{yes}]$ ,  $[\text{support}_{ijk} = \text{no}]$  are dummy variables coded 1 if the respondents are assigned these attribute levels. The reference category is the candidate where the party leader has not expressed an opinion about the candidate.

Figure E1: Effects of aspirant attributes on probability of being preferred in primary elections: Pooled sample - Jubilee and ODM



Notes: Pooled sample with both Jubilee and ODM primary voters. Estimates are based on the benchmark OLS model with standard errors clustered at the respondent level. The dots and lines represent point estimates for the AMCEs while the bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Rows without any estimates represent the reference categories within each attribute.

candidate in comparison to the baseline category of aspirants for whom the party has not expressed his opinion. The size of these effects across the two parties are remarkably similar (Jubilee–8.4 percentage points, ODM–7.8 percentage points), providing assurance that the effect of party leader endorsements in the pooled sample are not being driven by any one of the two parties included).

Although I observe that party influence remains robust in a two-candidate framework, a few caveats are in order: first of all, the coefficient for the party endorsement attributes, while substantively large, is smaller than some of the other attributes included in the experimental design. For example, the AMCEs for the positive performance attribute levels in the “contribution to local development” attribute as well as the “record on corruption” attribute are much larger than the coefficient for party leader endorsements (the coefficient for these attribute levels range from 17–27 percentage points). There are two potential interpretation of this large size differential: first, it maybe that the large effects for these candidate quality attributes reflect the importance African voters place on the

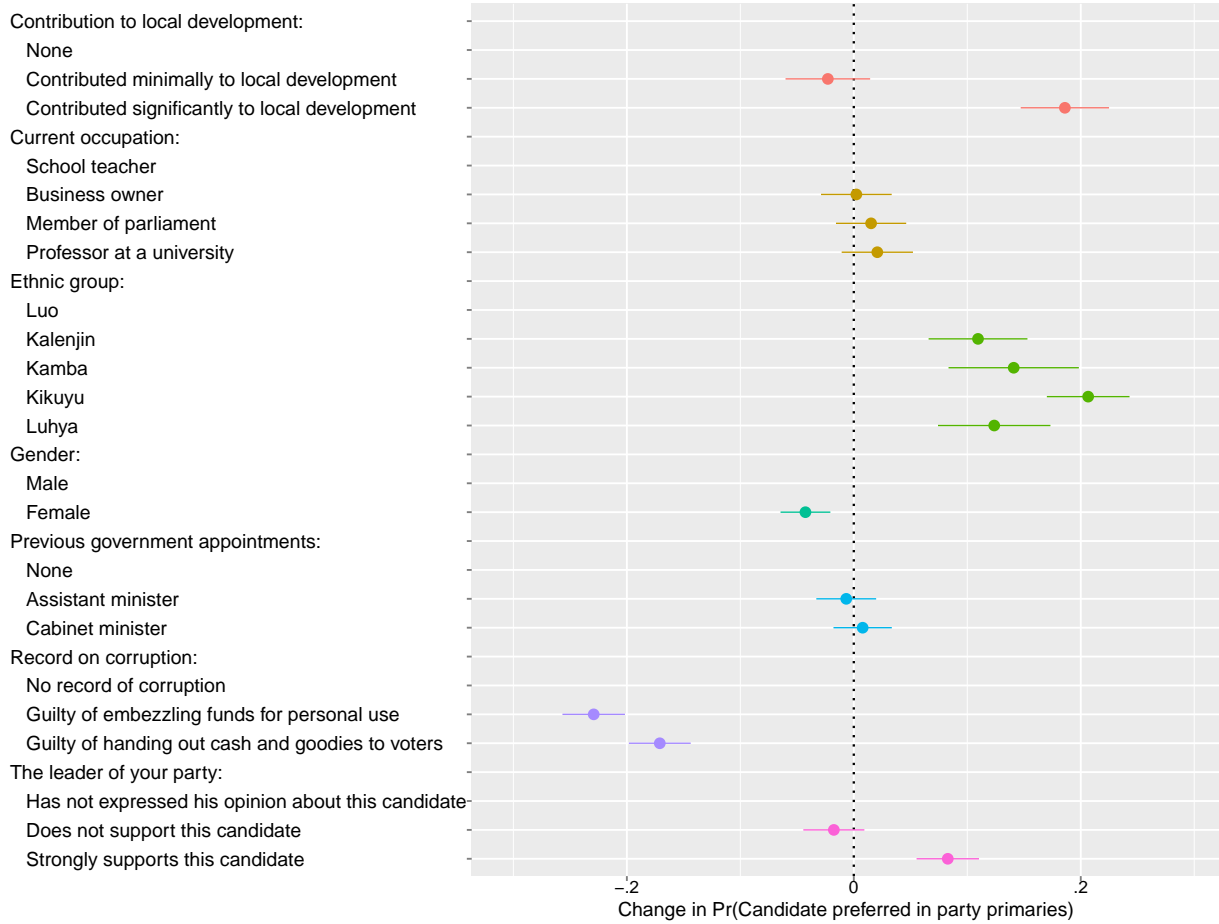
performance of their politicians (Conroy-Krutz, 2013; Carlson, 2015; Adida et al., 2016). A second explanation might be that the relatively smaller effects for the endorsement attributes are the result of the non-specificity of the wording included in the conjoint design. Whereas the wording for the candidate quality attribute was generally more specific (invoking specific initiative and projects that the aspirant contributed to), the attribute for party leader endorsements were less specific in that it did not invoke the name of the party leader, and did not describe in any detail the context of the endorsement. Anecdotal accounts by survey enumerators suggest that many respondents asked follow-up questions about the endorsement attribute, including inquiries about when and where the endorsement was given, and the overall nature of the relationship between the candidate and the party leader.

Second, it is also worth noting that the effects of party leader endorsement and denouncements might be asymmetrical: consistently across the pooled sample and the disaggregated individual party samples, the size of the denouncement attribute level is significantly smaller than the endorsement attribute level and is only marginally statistically significant at  $p < 0.1$ . While the theoretical framework laid out in the previous section does not provide an a priori reason to expect this asymmetry, it might be reflective of the difference in how to respond to positive versus negative information, and how that interacts with baseline expectations of politician behavior.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>It is interesting that the asymmetry is observed for the aspirant performance attributes. In comparison to the baseline category where no information was given regarding the performance of the aspirant, the AMCEs for the attribute levels with negative information on the aspirant's performance were not statistically distinguishable from zero. This also lends suggestive evidence in support of the idea that respondents are reacting to and processing positive versus negative information in different ways.

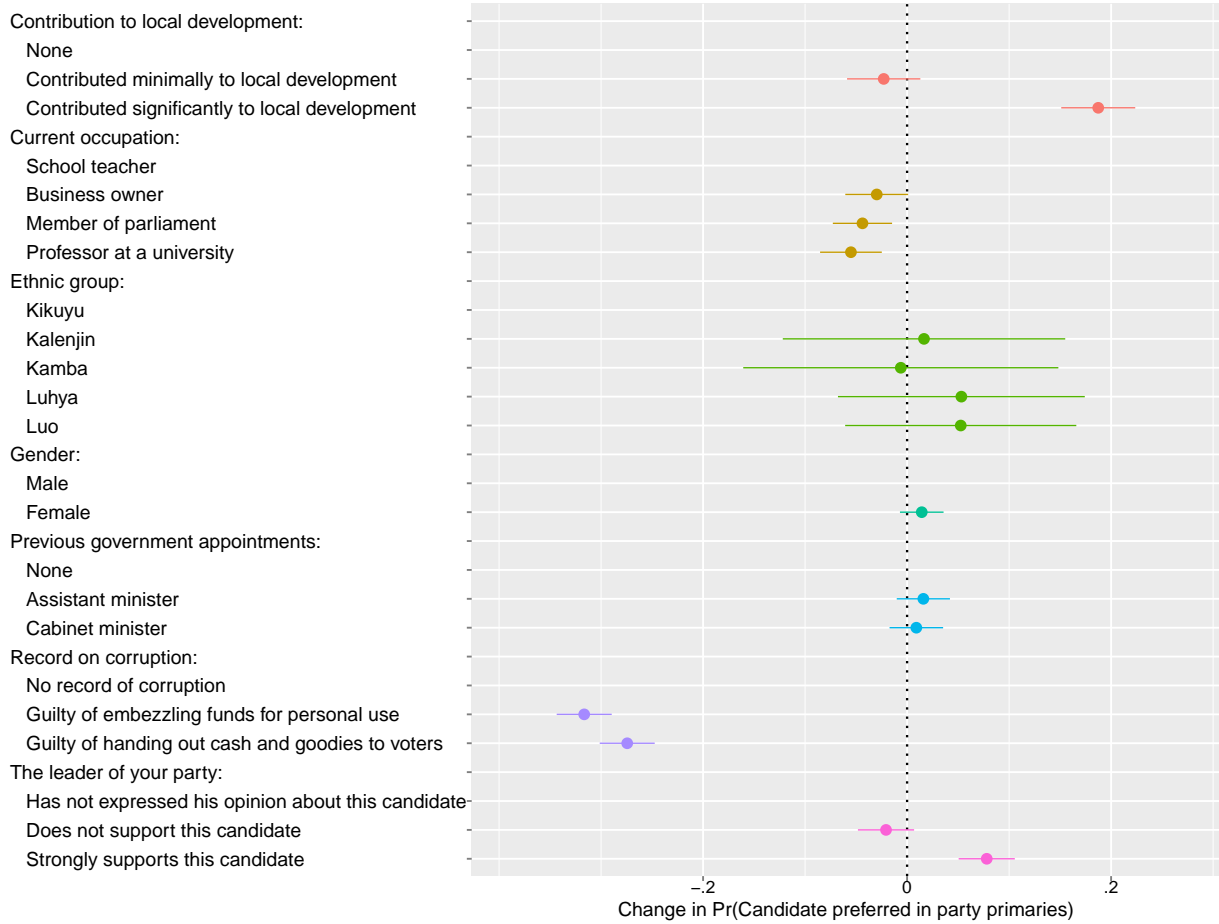
Figure E2: Effects of aspirant attributes on being preferred in primary elections



Notes: Results from Jubilee (incumbent) primary voters. Estimates are based on the benchmark OLS model with standard errors clustered at the respondent level. The dots represent point estimates for the AMCEs while the bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Rows without any estimates represent the reference categories within each attribute.



Figure E3: Effects of aspirant attributes on being preferred in primary elections



Notes: Results from ODM (opposition) primary voters. Estimates are based on the benchmark OLS model with standard errors clustered at the respondent level. The dots represent point estimates for the AMCEs while the bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Rows without any estimates represent the reference categories within each attribute.