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## It Takes a Female Chief: Gender and Effective Policy Advocacy in Malawi

Ragnhild Muriaas, Vibeke Wang, Lindsay J. Benstead,  
Boniface Dulani and Lise Rakner

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Ragnhild L. Muriaas

Professor in Comparative Politics,

University of Bergen, Norway.

*ragnhild.muriaas@uib.no*

Associated Senior Researcher,

Chr. Michelsen Institute, Norway.

Vibeke Wang,

Researcher,

Chr. Michelsen Institute, Norway

*vibeke.wang@uib.no*

Lindsay Benstead,

Associate Professor of Political Science,

Mark O. Hatfield School of Government,

College of Urban and Public Affairs,

Portland State University

*benstead@pdx.edu*

Contributing Scholar,

Women's Rights in the Middle East Program,

James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy,

Rice University

Boniface Dulani,

Senior Lecturer,

Department of Political and Administrative Studies,

University of Malawi.

*ntwee2002@gmail.com*

Lise Rakner,

Professor in Comparative Politics,

University of Bergen, Norway

Senior Researcher, Chr. Michelsen Institute, Norway

*lise.rakner@uib.no*

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## Abstract

Traditional leadership often coexists with modern political institutions, yet we know little about how traditional and state authority cues—or those from male or female sources—affect public support for human rights issues. Using an original survey experiment of 1,381 Malawians embedded in the 2016 Local Governance Performance Index (LGPI), we randomly assign respondents to a control group or one of four treatment groups to receive a message about child marriage reform from a female or male traditional authority or parliamentarian. Overall, we find that the female traditional authority is most effective, while other endorsers elicit backfire effects. Endorsements produce complex heterogeneous effects across respondent sex, patrilineal/matrilineal customs, gender attitudes, and institutional trust. We extend traditional governance literature by elaborating an intersectional approach to policy advocacy and building a theoretical framework explaining the impact of state and traditional endorsements across countries and policy domains.

Keywords: Traditional authorities \* Gender \* Policy advocacy \* Malawi \* Africa \* Experiments

# 1. Introduction

Scholarly and policy literatures on dual polities—that is, nations governed by a fusion of modern state institutions and traditional rules—is evolving rapidly. Drawing on survey results that find that traditional leaders are highly respected and trusted (Logan, 2009), some international development agents increasingly see traditional institutions as complements to, rather than as competing with, state institutions.<sup>1</sup> Having traditional—not only elected leaders—on board with reforms may be necessary when promoting gender equality in countries with long-standing cultural traditions that sustain discrimination against women. Yet, despite the range of policy advocacy areas, extant literature is silent when it comes to the role that male versus female authorities play in promoting public acceptance of reforms. This is surprising, given that progressive gender law reform are commonly pursued throughout Africa and beyond and fall within the stereotyped policy competencies of female authorities, who therefore may serve as effective policy advocates (Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993).

Instead, scholars and practitioners often assume traditional leaders are men and expect them to promote patriarchal practices, and this colors their approach to research and development projects. While several studies examine women in *elected* offices, highlighting the role women play in shaping a feminist agenda in parliament, genuine focus on gendered aspects of *traditional* leadership is rare. This is an oversight, given that female traditional leaders are, at least up until recently, as common as female parliamentarians in countries such as Malawi and rural Zambia. Some female traditional leaders have also forwarded feminist goals. For instance, female senior chief Theresa Kachindamoto of Dedza District in Malawi figured prominently in the world media in April 2016, when she annulled 850 child marriages and suspended all village heads that refused to ban the practice of child marriage.<sup>2</sup> Among the Chewa people of Malawi,

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that not all agree with this interpretation. While Acemoglu et al. (2014) find that people respect TAs, for instance, they are very critical of interpreting this as a sign that they are appropriate channels for public service.

<sup>2</sup> See for instance Huffington Post ‘How This Female Chief Broke Up 850 Child Marriages In Malawi’ by Sarah Ruiz-Grossman, 1 April 2016. Retrieved from:

Mozambique, and Zambia, women played a key role in the selection of their paramount Chief, the Kalonga, who rules on behalf of his mother, called Nyangu. In countries like Botswana, while no woman has served as president, a woman has been paramount chief. In the Akan chieftaincy in Ghana, queen mothers are recognized as co-rulers but have gained minimal attention in the literature for their role in governance and policy advocacy (Mensah et al., 2014, p. 207). In the Kingdom of Swaziland, the *Ndlovukati*, or She-elephant, the title given to the Queen Mother, is considered the co-Head of State alongside the King.<sup>3</sup> Despite the importance of female traditional leadership in Africa, few studies examine the role of leaders' gender in their governance effectiveness.

To address this gap, we employ an original framing experiment embedded in a survey conducted in Malawi in 2016, which allows us to examine the impact of authority type (whether traditional or elected) and authority gender (male versus female) on citizens' support for human rights reforms linked to women's rights. Specifically we randomly assign 1,381 respondents to either a control group or to one of four treatment groups to receive a statement from a male or female parliamentarian or male or female traditional authority (TA). This allows us to test competing hypotheses drawn from institutional trust and role congruity theories to explain the impact of different messengers on citizens' support for child marriage reforms.

Two strands of research inform our choice of research design. First, the emerging literature on governance and traditional leadership has shown that traditional leaders may play a critical role in brokering local development projects, although we still need more research to unpack how and why this is the case. Within this strand of research, scholars find that traditional leaders may have a greater capacity to organize responses to rural problems than elected politicians (Cammack et al., 2009; Díaz-Cayeros et al., 2014; Baldwin, 2016). We contribute to these ongoing discussions by testing whether traditional leaders have a more positive effect on policy advocacy for human rights reform than elected officials. Second, the gender and politics literature places substantial

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[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/woman-chief-breaks-up-850-child-marriages-in-malawi\\_us\\_56fd51c2e4b0a06d580510da](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/woman-chief-breaks-up-850-child-marriages-in-malawi_us_56fd51c2e4b0a06d580510da)

<sup>3</sup> See Article 7 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland. As in Akan society, very few studies have explored the role of the Queen mother in Swazi society.

emphasis on how female leaders shape agendas and influence political outcomes, but it focuses almost entirely on state actors, such as parliamentarians and cabinet ministers, and so far has little to say about how female leaders influence public attitudes toward policies. To our knowledge, the existing experimental literature does not test the impact the gender of an authority has in terms of support for policy reform, when it comes to either elected parliamentarians or traditional leaders.

Our results are theoretically and empirically novel. We find that the female TA is the most effective endorser of child marriage laws among the groups of leaders included in the experiment and that an intersectional approach that extends existing theory is needed to explain her effectiveness vis-à-vis other authorities. All other endorsements elicited a backfire effect—a decline in support for the law relative to when no endorsement was presented. Drawing on institutional performance and gender role congruity theories, we argue that the female TA's overall effectiveness is linked to the public's high level of trust in traditional authorities, coupled with women's stereotyped competence in the area of women's rights (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Lawless, 2004; Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993; Rosenwasser and Seale, 1988). Our results emphasize the need for an intersectional theory of policy advocacy that takes into account both the authority type and his or her gender. Overall, our results also suggest that the effect of messengers could vary not only across cases, according to citizens' trust in state and traditional institutions, but also across policy domains, given their link to stereotypically male or female competencies.

At the same time, we observe complex heterogeneous effects across respondents' gender, lineage practices, attitudes about gender equality, and trust in state and traditional authorities. All four messengers increased and decreased support for child marriage reform among at least one population subgroup. For instance, among matrilineal citizens, endorsements by a male member of parliament (MP) significantly lowered support for the reform relative to the control (that is, a backfire effect). But, among those who do not support gender equality, endorsements from the male MP produced significantly higher support for the reform compared to the control (that is, consistently with biased assimilation—the tendency to attend to information consistent with one's a priori views; Lord et al., 1979). That we find complex effects of each authority across respondent subgroups underscores the need for evidence-based approaches targeting messages



to different groups and coupling them with poverty reduction programs that reduce the perceived need for child marriage.

This article proceeds in five sections. We begin by establishing the reasons why a traditional leader's gender is likely to impact policy advocacy effectiveness across policy areas. We go on to explain why Malawi is a salient case for studying advocacy endorsements: its (1) comprehensive chieftaincy structure with female chiefs and (2) current gender equality reforms, for which the national government is partnering with traditional leaders to help insure effective implementation. To develop our hypotheses of why authority and gender matter intersectionally, we draw on insights from both institutional trust, as well as gender-role congruity theories. In our Results and Discussion section we show that the female traditional leader is, overall, the most effective endorser, but that various subgroups are affected differently. We conclude the paper by stating how our findings extend traditional governance and gender and politics literatures by showing the need for an intersectional theory that takes into account authority type and gender, as well as the characteristics of receivers.

## **2. Dual Governance**

Dual governance—or, the practical and formal coexistence of state and traditional authorities—is a global phenomenon, but is widespread in regions riddled with internal conflict, delayed democratization, and stalled development (Holzinger et al., 2016, p. 469). In states with dual governance, the existence of ethnic groups is constitutionally recognized and customary law and other forms of law coincide.

In most of Africa, dual governance arose as a consequence of European colonialization and the development of indirect rule, which established local intermediaries chosen by the colonial power to rule in capitals, while leaving traditional authorities in the hinterlands intact. This effectively created bifurcated states, where civil elites exercised authority in urban areas, while tribal authority governed in rural areas (Mamdani, 1996, p. 18). Urban, direct, civil rule spoke the language of civil society and civil rights, while rural tribal authorities enforced tradition.

Since independence, governments across Africa have adopted different and evolving strategies toward traditional authorities. Some governments formally incorporated traditional governance institutions into their political systems, while others denied them recognition (Mijiga, 1998; Bank and Southall, 1996). Some evidence suggests that these strategies also had development implications. For instance, states that incorporated preexisting sources of political authority into their systems experienced better economic outcomes than countries that repress them (Englebert, 2000, p.190).

While postcolonial integration of traditional rule in African states has followed different trajectories, the lowest layer of government in many states is occupied by traditional leaders who commonly have the capacity to collect informal taxes, solicit funds for local development, and control the judicial system, particularly within matters of family law (Acemoglu et al., 2014, p. 320). However, Sklar asserts, traditional authorities do not necessarily exist as a consequence of their recognition by governments, but rather because they are “legitimated by the beliefs of the people, who expect them to exist in practice” (1999, p. 169). Consequently, some kind of traditional rule might coexist with the formal state structure independent of its judicial status.

### **3. Traditional Leadership and Gender**

Traditional leadership has generally been seen as negatively impacting women’s rights. Charrad’s (2001, p. 233) study of state formation and family law in North Africa shows women’s rights depends on tribes’ strength vis-à-vis the state. Where patriarchally-organized clan groups are strong, states passed conservative family laws that allowed tribes to preside over kinship and reproduction, negatively affecting women’s rights. Similarly, Htun and Weldon (2010; forthcoming) identify historical state accommodation of cultural, traditional, and religious groups as a cause of resistance against gender equality reforms. These studies show that many religious, traditional, and tribal authorities perceive that their continued power depends on control over kinship and reproduction. Following this, Hudson et al. argue that the particular kinds of female subordination—child marriage, cousin marriage, prevalence of polygyny, or sanction for honor-based violence against women—“serve as indicators of the degree to which clans are salient to

governance in a given society” (2015, p. 540). This literature thus points to traditional leaders as a group that would possibly resist gender equality reform rather than promote it.

In recent years, however, traditional leaders have been included in strategies to challenge discriminatory cultural practices that are considered detrimental to women and children. In a comparative study of resistance to child marriage reform in Sudan and Zambia, Muriaas et al. (2016) found that the decision to include traditional leaders in a comprehensive campaign was efficient for avoiding counter-mobilization. Traditional leaders gained a sense of ownership over the policy and were trained to increase their understanding of how child marriage contributed to school dropout. Importantly, the strategy neither threatened their powers—as law reform only challenged current practices—nor their position as administrators of the law.

Efforts to include traditional leaders as partners are based on studies showing a high degree of popular trust in traditional leadership. While these studies have not focused specifically on gender reforms, they highlight just how effective TAs can be, likely as a consequence of their proximity and the trust this engenders. Using data from the Afrobarometer, Logan (2009) finds that traditional leaders play an essential role in local governance, not just due to their cultural role but also because of their accessibility. While parliamentarians are seen as disappearing to the capital as soon as they get elected, traditional leaders stay put in their communities.

However, not all studies support this conclusion. In a study of traditional leadership in Sierra Leone, Acemoglu et al. (2014) argue that even if survey respondents express respect toward the institution, this is not linked to chiefs’ ability to deliver public goods or services, or cater to the interests of villagers. Rather, survey responses are likely to be affected by how “rural people appear to be locked into relationships of dependence with traditional elites” (p. 363). Clayton (2014) also raises caution of about the propensity for citizens to trust female chiefs in Lesotho, where their presence is mandated by a quota. Clayton finds that chiefs’ influence significantly dampened in electoral divisions reserved for women. Exactly why this was so is less apparent, but plausible explanations include an increased felt presence of the state locally and changing power-sharing dynamics when male chiefs have to work with female councilors.

Clayton's study is one of the few that shows that authorities' gender might matter when it comes to how they are perceived and how politics plays out. Her findings encourage us to analyze the intersection of gender and dual governance further, and to ask how leaders' impact on public opinion may depend on the type of policy they are advocating for as it relates to the stereotyped competencies of male and female leaders.

#### **4. Gender and Political Office**

While the literature on women and dual governance is limited, there has been a tremendous increase in the literature on women's representation the last decades. One group of studies suggests that traditional leaders' gender—like that of their state counterparts—may matter because women have different policy preferences than their male counterparts—that is, substantive representation. In a study of Indian state legislatures, Clots-Figueras (2011) finds that female legislators, particularly those from lower castes and disadvantaged tribes, invest more in health, early education, and land reforms. The growing scholarly literature on women's representation in Africa finds that gender-equal reform is increasingly put on the legislative agenda (Bauer, 2012; for Malawi see Chiweza et al., 2016), and there are several examples of female MPs being at the forefront of supporting gender equality reform, yet with varying success (Bauer and Britton, 2006; Wang, 2013). In Uganda, for instance, an attempt by female MPs to legislate a new law on land rights met with strong resistance from traditional leaders and male MPs (Matembe, 2002; Tripp, 2004).

Another strand of literature, drawn from the gender and politics literatures, expects female leaders to prioritize and excel in matters relating to women's stereotyped competence, such as health, education, or women's rights (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Lawless, 2004; Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993; Rosenwasser and Seale, 1988). But, these insights have not been applied to understanding how and why female traditional leaders can be effective policy advocates.

While there is a substantial body of literature that shows why an authority's gender matters for shaping policy preferences of elites, we lack evidence as to whether the gender of a TA or government official affects citizens' attitudes toward women's rights reforms. Moreover, the

stated claims regarding the effects of traditional governance lack empirical backing (Holzinger et al. 2016, p. 475 and 478). Regular public opinion surveys and other kinds of observational data may not be able to detect prejudice against female authorities, either because gender prejudices are subconscious or because the answers are tainted by socially desirable responses (Dolan and Sanbonmatsu, 2011, p. 289). A probability-based survey experiment allows us to implicitly test the power of gender cues relative to the power of authority cues on citizens' attitudes, while reducing the effects of social desirability and conformity bias (Benstead, 2014).

## **5. Why Malawi?**

Traditional institutions in Malawi play a key role in local communities, and are present across the country. Their role was legislated as far back as 1912, when the colonial administration passed the District Administration (Native) Ordinance, which created a new hierarchy of “traditional” authority involving principal and village headmen. These were required to assist the colonial administration by maintaining law and order, encouraging tax-paying, providing sanitation, controlling cattle movement, and overseeing general welfare (Cammack et al., 2009). Currently, the core structure of the traditional hierarchy broadly consists of three tiers of authority, listed from most to least powerful: the TA (that is, the focus of this paper), followed by the group village headman and the village headman.

For most Malawians, traditional leaders play vital roles in the community, combining traditional and cultural functions with serving as government agents to mobilize subjects for development activities in their areas and advancing the government's agenda. A 2016 national survey shows that large majorities of Malawian citizens consider traditional leaders to be relevant in the democratic political space. Equally, around two-thirds of the country's citizens approve of traditional leaders taking part in district council meetings alongside elected councilors (Figure 1). Citizens' high confidence in TAs cannot be directly linked to accountability, based on removal by elections, since TAs are not elected and are not easily removed. Subjects can petition the state president to remove a chief only on grounds of loss of confidence, disqualification under customary law, or in the interests of peace, order, and good governance. But, the president can reduce chiefs' privileges and status.

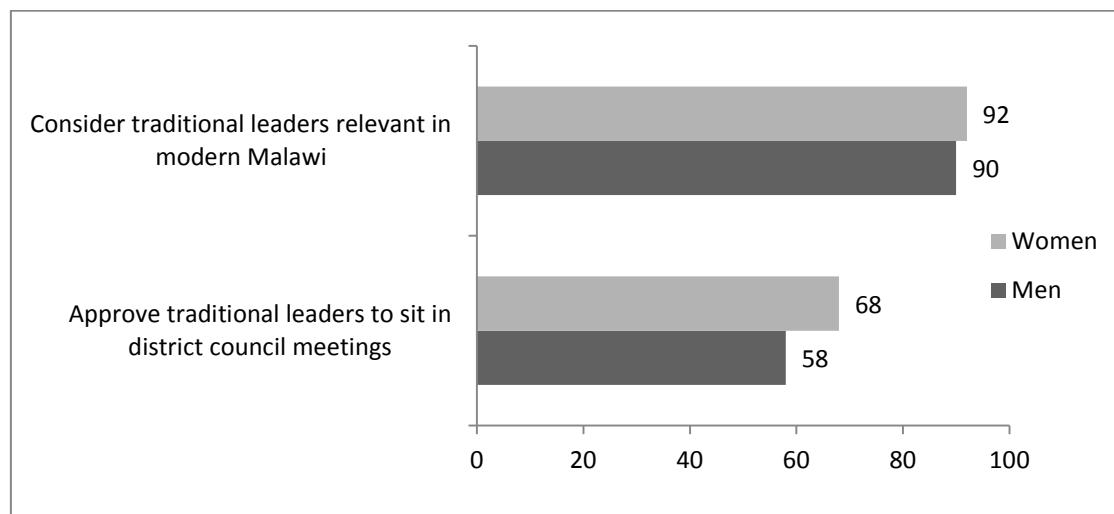


Figure 1: Perceived relevance of traditional leaders and acceptance of their participation in district council meetings. Source: Department of Political and Administrative Studies, University of Malawi, and Centre for Development and the Environment, University of Oslo, 2016. Question wording: “Do you approve or disapprove of the current system of having Traditional Authorities sit as members of the District Council?” “In your opinion, how relevant are traditional leaders in modern day Malawi. Would you say they are not relevant at all, not relevant, relevant or very relevant?”

Survey results from the Afrobarometer reinforce the high public regard that traditional leaders in Malawi enjoy as compared to elected officials. Malawians are more likely to approve of the performance of traditional leaders than that of parliamentarians (MPs). Figure 2 illustrates that traditional leaders stand out as the authority that Malawians tend to both trust and approve of the most. MPs are more trusted than the executive president, though approval ratings for MPs and the president are equally low.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>The historically low approval of and trust in the president is most likely explained by the unexpected rise of Joyce Banda to the presidency (2012–2014) after the death of President Bingu wa Mutharika, and Banda’s alleged involvement in cashgate, a large-scale corruption scandal (Dulani and Dionne, 2014, p. 218).

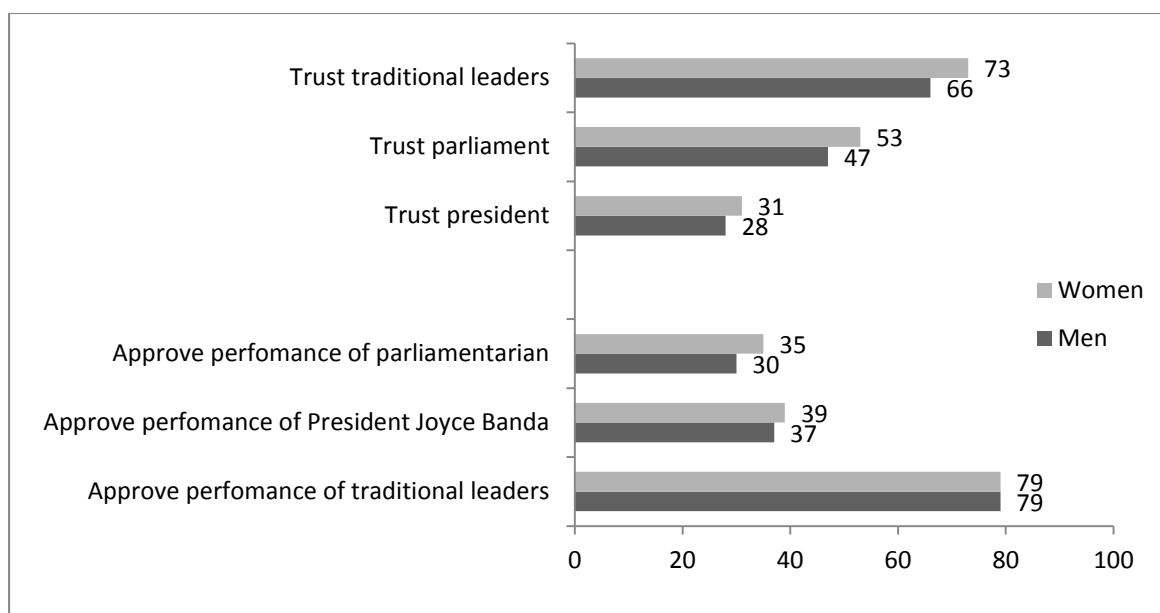


Figure 2: Trust and performance approval for traditional and elected leaders in Malawi (Afrobarometer, 2014). Source: Afrobarometer R6 2014. Question wording: "How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?" "The President," "Parliament," "Traditional leaders." "Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the following people have performed their jobs over the past twelve months, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?" "President Joyce Banda," "Your MP" and "Your traditional leader."

In addition to being a country where traditional leaders are highly regarded, trusted, and accessible, Malawi is a salient case study as a country that has undergone several attempts to implement reforms that address long-standing cultural traditions considered discriminatory and obstructive to effective development. One of the most recent legal reforms that has gained international attention is the important step taken against child marriage with the passing of the Marriage, Divorce, and Family Relations Act (The Marriage Act) of 2015.<sup>5</sup> Child marriage is commonly defined as a formal marriage or informal union entered into before the age of 18. The importance of this reform is underscored by the fact that Malawi has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world: 50% of girls marry before age 18 (UNFPA, 2012). The country is ranked 9<sup>th</sup> internationally in terms of child marriage prevalence (UNICEF, 2015), which is

<sup>5</sup>The Marriage, Divorce, and Family Relations Act was passed on February 12, 2015. Starting in 2001, the Malawi Law Commission conducted a series of workshops and stakeholder consultations that eventually led to the tabling of a 2006 Review of the Laws on Marriage and Divorce that formed the basis of the law.

common across all three regions of the country, but highest in the central region (57%). Customary norms and practices are identified as factors contributing to upholding the practice in Malawi (WLSA, 2009; Panos, 2015).

To curb the practice of child marriage, international development agents and the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability, and Social Welfare emphasized the importance of including traditional leaders in the campaign (Kachali, 2013; Chimjeka, 2016). Most child marriages are conducted under customary law and presided over by village headmen, who are widely considered in Malawian society to be custodians of culture (see PAS/UiO, 2016). Accordingly, traditional leaders across the country are urged by the government to develop action plans against child marriage and have attended workshops where they have been acquainted with different aspects of the law. While senior chief Theresa Kachindamoto is the most well-known activist of the campaign, several male traditional leaders have also endorsed it (Kachali, 2013). Involving male traditional leaders has been important, as only about 10 percent of Malawian traditional authorities are women. It is, however, likely that we will find clear differences between Malawians with different cultural background, as variation in the traditional norms of the two lineages systems, matrilineal and patrilineal, are clear markers demonstrating ethnic groups' salience (Posner, 1994, p. 533).

Despite the lower public confidence in MPs relative to traditional authorities in many countries, MPs in Malawi and some other sub-Saharan African countries have a Constituency Development Fund that can be used for constituency service. This, in turn increases their presence subnational level and may also improve citizens' trust in them. So prominent is constituents' demand for community development and personalized service provision that little pressure is placed on MPs to engage in legislative activities. Still, given their formal representative role, MPs are in a position to—and are also formally expected to—pass laws, educate and inform constituents on legislative matters, and contribute to raising awareness of various issues. As discussed earlier, a large body of research suggests that state actors, and particularly elected women parliamentarians, might be most effective in promoting human rights reforms related to gender. In 2014, 17 percent of candidates winning a seat in the national parliament (193 members) in parliament were women, which means that Malawi scores beneath the regional average of 23.5% (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2017). To date, no study has explored how Malawians evaluate



women's role as leaders in comparison to men's. And, while there are a few studies of women in elected office, there is limited work on gendered effects of traditional leaders.

## **6. Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses**

We draw on insights from several literatures to understand why state and traditional actors, and male and female messengers, affect public support for child marriage reforms—a gendered human rights reform—across population subgroups. This leads us to develop competing hypotheses drawn from institutional trust, gender role congruity, and power relations theories. Traditional and state authorities may be effective or ineffective at shaping attitudes about gender reforms, and the influence may depend on the authority's gender and the characteristics of the receiver.

### ***Institutional Trust***

Much of the existing literature on endorsement experiments argues that the impact of endorsements depends on the extent to which receivers trust the messenger. Following Arceneaux and Kolodny (2009), authority cues could compensate for respondents' lack of awareness about politics, as they are likely to be swayed by messages from those they trust without analyzing the message. This occurs because receivers tend to use simple heuristics, such as whether or not they like or trust the source (Carmines and Kuklinski, 1990; Mondak, 1993). Consistent with this theory, Masoud et al. (2016) find that respondents exposed to an argument in favor of women's political empowerment grounded in a religious rather than a nonreligious argument are more likely to express support for female political leaders.

Literature from political psychology also shows that people process information in a way that is consistent with their preexisting beliefs and often engage in motivated reasoning (Kunda, 1990; Molden and Higgins, 2005; Goren et al., 2009). Scholars identify two mechanisms: biased assimilation—effects in the direction of the information—and backfire effects—impacts in the opposite direction of the statements. Lord et al. (1979) demonstrated biased assimilation by showing how scientific studies confirming participants' attitudes were interpreted more positively than studies disconfirming their attitudes. Multiple laboratory studies later corroborated this bias

(Edwards and Smith, 1996; Miller et al., 1993; Zuwerink and Devine, 1996), as have field studies (e.g., Ahluwalia, 2000; Munro et al., 2002).

However, other evidence across different experimental contexts shows that distrust of the messenger can also lead to strong, often contradictory, responses. Instead of discounting information from a source that is mistrusted, the recipient comes to hold even stronger views after encountering the message. Referred to as a backfire effect, this occurs because recipients spend more time considering and counter-arguing the information, arriving at more strongly held views than they had before (Nyhan and Reifler, 2010). Theories of priming argue that the mere mention of these authorities can prime respondents to the underlying social and political dynamics and tensions (McConnaughy, White, Leal, and Casellas, 2010).

Ditto and Lopez (1992) first identified a backfire effect. In three experiments, participants required more information to reach a preference-inconsistent conclusion than a preference-consistent conclusion and processed information more critically. In another study of citizen misperceptions, Nyhan and Reifler (2010) conducted four experiments in which subjects read mock news articles including a misleading claim from a politician and a misleading claim with a correction. They document several instances of backfire effects when corrections increase misconceptions.

These theories lead us to develop several hypotheses about how the effect of messages on citizens' attitudes depend on their trust in the messenger, as well as whether biased assimilation or backfire effects are operating. Drawing on these insights about trust and prior views, we hypothesize that, overall, if traditional leaders enjoy greater trust than MPs, TAs may elicit greater support for gender reforms. Since TAs are more trusted in the country as a whole than MPs, we expect that they will have a greater positive impact on support for reform than MPs (H1, biased assimilation) or a less negative impact than MPs (H4, backfire effect).

Since citizens also vary in their trust in state and traditional institutions, we also expect heterogeneous effects. Among those with higher trust in their TA (H2) or MP (H3), endorsements will lead to higher support for the reform if biased assimilation is occurring, while

among those who distrust their TA (H5) or MP (H6), they will produce a negative impact if backfire effects are occurring.<sup>6</sup>

*Institutional trust hypotheses and a priori views (biased assimilation):*

Average treatment effects:

H1: Overall, traditional authorities will have a greater positive impact on support for gender reforms than state authorities.

Heterogeneous treatment effects:

H2: Those with high trust in their TA will be positively affected by endorsements more than those with low trust.

H3: Those with high trust in their parliamentarian will be positively affected by endorsements than those with low trust.

*Institutional trust hypotheses and a priori views (backfire effects):*

Average treatment effects:

H4: Overall, state authorities enjoy lower trust than traditional authorities and have a greater negative effect on public attitudes than traditional authorities.

Heterogeneous treatment effects:

H5: Those with low trust in their TA will be negatively affected by endorsements than those with high trust.

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<sup>6</sup> We also expect effects to vary by a priori views of citizens. We discuss our hypotheses and findings in the Appendix 3, since we find our research are similar to those observed with respect to the effect across citizens practicing matrilineal and patrilineal customs.

H6: Those with low trust in their parliamentarian will be negatively affected by endorsements more than those with high trust.

### ***Gender Role Congruity Theory: Authority and Policy Congruence***

Theories of institutional trust make predictions about how levels of trust shape the impact of messages, but they offer few clues about how trust varies according to messenger gender, or receivers' gender or other characteristics that are likely to correlate with their existing views. Gender role congruity theory offers important theoretical insights that can be used to anticipate these effects. While women will be seen as less authoritative political leaders than men, when it comes to women's rights—a policy domain in which women have stereotyped competencies—women may be more effective than men in shaping attitudes.

Gender role congruity theory was originally developed by Eagly and colleagues to explain women's underrepresentation in business leadership (Eagly and Karau, 2002) and has subsequently been applied to political leadership (King and Matland, 2003; Benstead et al., 2015). Role congruity theory stipulates that prejudice against female leaders arises from the perceived incongruity between traits associated with the female gender roles and leadership roles, and that this leads to two forms of prejudice. First, stemming from descriptive norms, women as potential occupants of leadership roles are evaluated less favorably than men because leadership ability is more stereotypical of men than women. Second, originating from injunctive norms, women's leadership behavior is evaluated less positively because such behavior is perceived as less desirable in women than men (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Eagly and Diekmann 2006).

Gender role congruity argues that women will be under-evaluated as actual or potential occupants of leadership roles and that males are socially stereotyped as having more power and authority. Along with related work in power relations theory (Kane and Macaulay, 1993; Tannen, 1990; Benstead, 2014), which observes behavioral differences in the tendency of males to be dominant in conversations and professional settings and thus socially stereotyped as having great authority, gender role congruity theory may suggest an alternative effect. Since men will be perceived as having greater authority due to their economic and political dominance, their endorsements may simply carry more weight, especially in patrilineal societies. To the extent that

this is the case, male messengers, whether traditional or state authorities, may have a greater positive impact on support for reform. This may be particularly true if male authorities are seen as acting against their interests and thus viewed as unbiased in their advocacy of reforms that are seen as promoting women's and girls' welfare.

Role incongruity prejudice is found to be moderated by a number of conditions, including the definition of leader roles, the weight given to the leader roles relative to the female gender role, gender (men often show stronger prejudice), and time—e.g., change of attitudes about gender roles over time and change in the definition of leader roles (Eagly and Karau, 2002). This indicates that various groups are likely to be affected differently by endorsements for different authorities, but that in general we expect the male authorities, both TAs and MPs, to be more authoritative (H7).

*Gender role congruity theory hypothesis:*

Average treatment effects:

H7: Overall, male leaders are stereotyped as having more authority and thus their statements have a greater positive impact than those of female MPs or TAs.

But, while men are often associated with having the traits needed for effective leadership, male and female leaders are stereotyped as more competent in policy domains consistent with gender roles (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Lawless, 2004). Women are seen as competent in policy areas such as children, marriage, family, and education, while men are stereotyped as competent in areas such as economy, land, and security. This has been shown to be the case in several countries, including the United States and Tunisia (Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993; Rosenwasser and Seale, 1988).

Since the policy domain examined in this study is related to perceived female competencies, a competing expectation to that of under-evaluation and authority is that female TAs and MPs will be seen as *more* competent messengers of anti-child marriage (family-related) messages and will sway public opinion more in the intended direction than will male TAs and MPs (H8). In contrast, to the extent that male messengers are perceived as lacking the skills needed to

advocate for child marriage reform and being insincere in their attempts to do so, male messengers could cause a backfire effect (H11).

Matrilineal and female citizens will see female leaders as more legitimate than will patrilineal male citizens (and to hold more supportive a priori views of gender equality), leading to more gender congruent views. Thus, we expect greater positive impacts of female messengers than male messengers among women and greater positive impacts of male messengers than female messengers among men (H9, biased assimilation). So, too, female messengers will decrease support more than male messengers among men, and male messengers will decrease support more than female messengers among women (H12, backfire effects).

We also expect that female messengers will increase support more than male messengers among those who follow matrilineal customs and male messengers more than female messengers among those who follow patrilineal customs (H10, biased assimilation). Following from here, female messengers will decrease support more than male messengers among those who follow patrilineal customs, and male messengers more than female messengers among those who follow matrilineal customs (H13, backfire effects).

### *Gendered policy domain hypotheses (biased assimilation):*

#### Average treatment effects:

H8: Overall, female TAs and MPs will be seen as more competent messengers of anti-child marriage messages and will sway public opinion positively more than male TAs and MPs.

#### Heterogeneous treatment effects:

H9: Female messengers will increase support more than male messengers among women, and male messengers more than female messengers among men.

H10: Female messengers will increase support more than male messengers among those who follow matrilineal customs, and male messengers more than female messengers among those who follow patrilineal customs.

*Gendered policy domain hypotheses (backfire effects):*

Average treatment effects:

H11: Overall, male TAs and MPs will be seen as less competent messengers of anti-child marriage messages and will sway public opinion positively more than will female TAs and MPs.

Heterogeneous treatment effects:

H12: Female messengers will decrease support more than male messengers among men and male messengers will decrease support more than female messengers among women.

H13: Female messengers will decrease support more than male messengers among those who follow patrilineal customs, and male messengers more than female messengers among those who follow matrilineal customs.

## **7. Data and Methods**

To assess the factors that shape greater support for laws setting the age of marriage to 18 years and the impact of different messengers on support for these laws, we draw on a survey experiment embedded within the Local Government Performance Index (LGPI), conducted in Malawi in 2016.

The survey used probabilistic sampling to select 17 TA areas in rural Malawi and an additional five local government wards in urban centers. Post-stratification weights were added to correct imbalances created by differential response rates across population rates, especially an under-representation of men, many of whom were working in neighboring villages, towns, or sometimes outside the country. The response rate was 94.5% (AAPOR Response Rate 1).

While 7,500 Malawians participated in the survey, 1,381 randomly selected respondents received the experimental prompts. Tests showed that the random assignment of participants into the sample and into conditions was effective and there were no differences in response rates across the frames (see tables A1 and A2).

## Survey Design

To understand the role of different authorities in increasing opposition to child marriage, we asked respondents to rate on a four-point scale the extent to which they agree that the minimum age of marriage should be raised to 18 years. A control group received no frame—respondents from this group were simply asked the extent to which they would support the law to increase the marriage age to 18—while four treatment groups received the endorsement of a female parliamentarian, female TA, male parliamentarian, or male TA before being asked whether they would support the law (Table 1).

**Table 1. Experimental design**

<p><u>Control:</u> The parliament has passed a new law that sets the minimum age of marriage at 18. What do you think of the law? Do you support it strongly, support it, not support it, or not support it strongly? (N=286)</p>
<p><u>Female parliamentarian:</u> A female MP is supporting the new law that sets the minimum age of marriage at 18. What do you think of the law? Do you support it strongly, support it, not support it, or not support it strongly? (N=265)</p>
<p><u>Female TA:</u> A female TA is supporting the new law that sets the minimum age of marriage at 18. What do you think of the law? Do you support it strongly, support it, not support it, or not? (N=272)</p>
<p><u>Male parliamentarian:</u> A male MP is supporting the new law that sets the minimum age of marriage at 18. What do you think of the law? Do you support it strongly, support it, not support it, or not support it strongly? (N=266)</p>
<p><u>Male TA:</u> A male TA is supporting the new law that sets the minimum age of marriage at 18. What do you think of the law? Do you support it strongly, support it, not support it, or not support it strongly? (N=283)</p>



We carefully considered different ways of formulating the control and the treatment conditions in order to make them as similar as possible. Some might consider the control to be a stronger statement because it mentions that the new law was passed by parliament, while the treatments stated that the new law was supported by different actors. However, we see no reason that the new law being passed as opposed to being supported connotes a stronger treatment. This is because we expect respondents would have interpreted this question through the lens of the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Law of 2015. At the time of the survey in 2016 there was still continuing public debate over the provisions of the new law and also ongoing initiatives by government, legislators, and civil-society organizations to sensitize the public about the new law. The term *law*, as opposed to *bill*, in the Malawian setting denotes a rule or regulation that has been passed by parliament (and assented to by the president), and is legally enforceable.

## Descriptive Statistics

Overall—in all conditions combined (Figure 3)—there is high support for a law banning child marriage: 76% answered that they strongly support, 10% support, and 14% do not support. Support for the law is not significantly higher among women, but it is higher in matrilineal areas ( $p < .05$ ) and among those who support gender equality a priori ( $p < .01$ ).

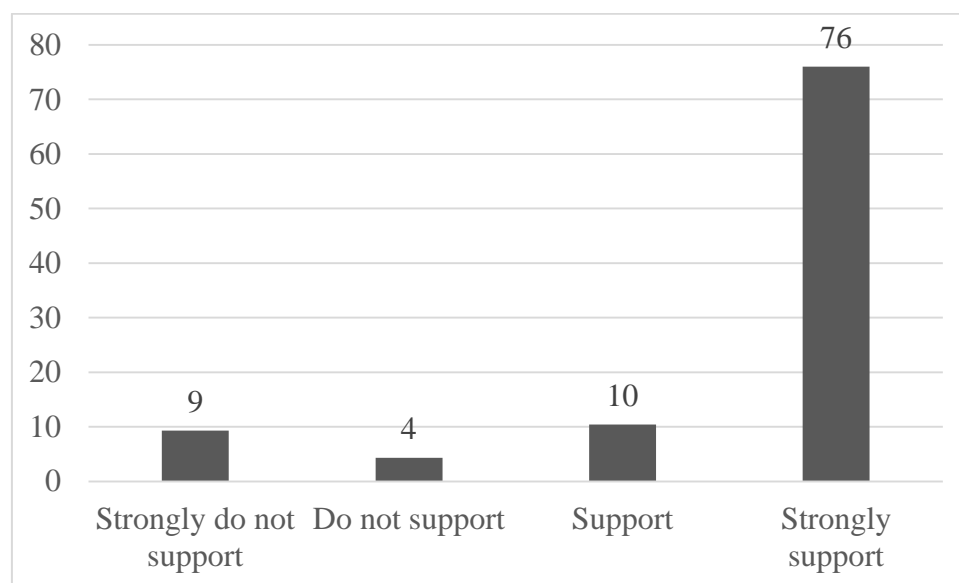


Figure 3. Support for banning child marriage (all conditions). Data weighted.

## Measurement

We also measured several independent variables pretreatment, which allows us to test our core heterogeneous hypotheses (Table 2). We include two measures of institutional trust—whether the respondent believes the TA or MP acts in the respondent’s interests. As shown in Figure 4, Malawians have higher trust in their TA than their parliamentarian: 53% of respondents trust their TA very much, compared to 28% trusting their MP very much. These findings are consistent with other studies, such as the Afrobarometer (2014) and PAS/UiO (2016) that also find higher trust levels for traditional leaders than elected officials. This suggests that overall, as hypothesized, TAs may be effective policy advocates (H1).

**Table 2. Measurement of independent variables**

<b>Theoretical mechanism</b>			<b>Survey item</b>
<u>Institutional trust</u>	High trust (=1)	Low trust (=0)	
	High trust (=1)	Low trust (=0)	For each of the following, please tell me whether you trust them very much (=1), trust them somewhat (=0), distrust them somewhat (=0), or distrust them very much (=0) to work for your interests? Your TA.
	High trust (=1)	Low trust (=0)	Your MP.
<u>Gender role congruity theory</u>	Women (=1)	Men (=0)	Respondent gender
	Supporters of gender equality (=1)	Opposers of gender equality (=0)	How likely would you be to vote for a female candidate in a parliamentary election? Would you be more likely to vote for her than a male (=1/Supports), less likely to vote for her (=0/Opposes), or would you say that there is no difference (=0/Opposes)?
	People in matrilineal areas (=1)	People in patrilineal areas (=0)	In your family, is <i>lobola</i> [bride price/dowry] paid when people get married? Yes (=0/Patrilineal). No (=1/Matrilineal).

Data in this table is not weighted.

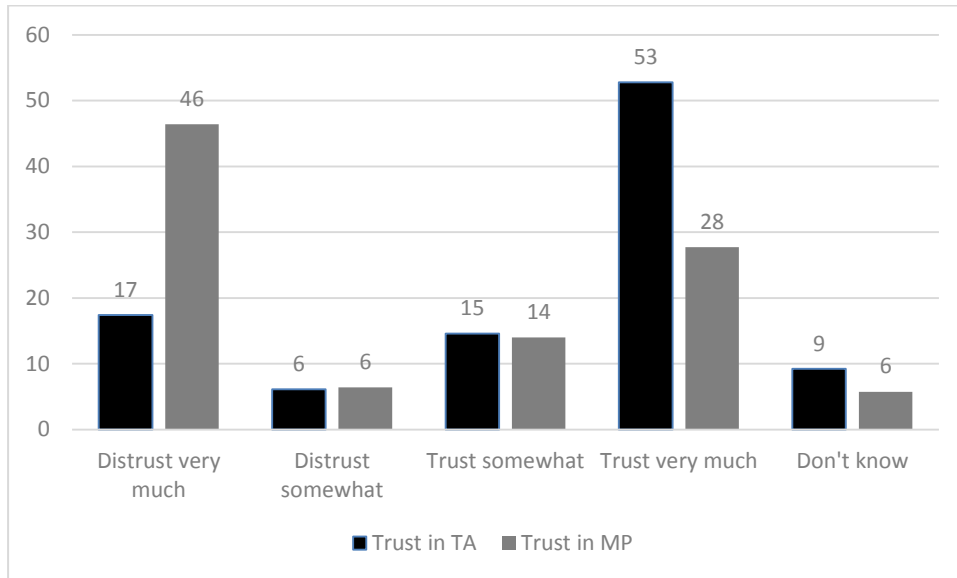


Figure 4. Trust in traditional authorities and members of parliament in Malawi (%). For question wording, see Table 2. Data weighted.

In experimental tests, we dichotomize our measures of institutional trust, such that those who trust the authority very much are coded as 1, while those who trust them somewhat, distrust them somewhat, or distrust them very much are coded as 0. Sixty-one percent trust their TA very much, while 39 percent do not. Thirty-one percent trust their MP very much, while 69 percent do not.

To measure gender role congruity theory hypotheses, we identified three variables: respondent sex, lineage, and a priori views on gender equality. Groups that we expect to hold more gender role congruent views and thus to find female messengers more convincing are those following matrilineal customs, and those who hold more positive views toward gender equality a priori. Groups that we expect to find female messengers less role congruent are men, those following patrilineal customs, and those who hold more negative views toward gender equality a priori.

We measure lineage system by whether the respondent's family pays lobola (bride price), a patrilineal custom. Those who do are coded patrilineal, and those who do not, matrilineal. The

sample is made up of 35% male and 65% female citizens. Among the respondents in the experiment, 51% follow a matrilineal system, while 49% follow patrilineal customs.<sup>7</sup>

To measure a priori views regarding gender equality, we use an item measuring whether the respondent is more, less, or equally likely to vote for a female in a parliamentary election, which we dichotomize to maximize group size. While we recognize that there could be other measures of a priori views, we selected this one because it was present in the survey form that included the experiment. Fifth-seven percent prefer to vote for a male or no difference, while 43% are more likely to vote for a female.

## 8. Results and Discussion

To test the intersectional impact of messenger institution and gender, we first estimate average treatment effects. Then we examine conditional treatment effects across the independent variables described below. Because the outcome variable is measured on a Likert scale, we use ordered logistic regression rather than means comparisons, using a methodology developed by Long and Freese (2014). Inclusion of additional demographic control variables for which heterogeneous treatment effects, unless theoretically justified, is unnecessary in a randomized treatment assignment and can bias estimation of the average treatment effects (Mutz, 2011).<sup>8</sup>

Randomization was effective across primary sampling units. However, because the treatment was related to two independent variables—views on gender equality and cultural customs—we include several control variables in the models. These include: respondent and interviewer gender

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<sup>7</sup> In the survey, respondents from the Northern region were disproportionately sampled to increase the patrilineal respondents. This means that the 51-49 split is a function of the sample clustering and does not imply that there is an almost evenly split between patrilineal and matrilineal customs in Malawi.

<sup>8</sup> We estimate the models using Stata 14 updated on May 1, 2017 using current update level March 16, 2017. Replications using update levels prior or subsequent to these dates may obtain slight differences in p values.

(Benstead, 2014), whether the respondent follows matrilineal or patrilineal customs, rural residence, age, income quartile, and education level, as well as post-stratification weights. (See Table A3 for randomization checks.)

## **Average Treatment Effects**

We find that in the country as a whole, the most effective endorsement comes from the female TA. All other messengers cause a backfire effect—lower support for the reform relative to the control (Figure 5). In the control condition, 80% are very likely to support the reform, compared to 78% for the female TA, which is not significantly different. Seventy-five percent strongly support the reform when it is endorsed by the female MP, which is lower when compared to the control ( $p < .05$ ). The probability is 74% for the male MP ( $p < .10$  relative to the control) and 72% for the male TA ( $p < .10$  relative to the control), the least effective messenger. (For pairwise comparisons, see Table A4).

Our theoretical framework regarding institutional trust leads us to expect that traditional authorities will be more effective than state authorities (H1 and H4). Yet, we find that the impact of traditional and state authorities is intersectional, depending on the authority's gender. So too, our theoretical framework leads us to expect that with male authorities (H7), following power relations theory, or female authorities (H8), following gender role congruity theory, will be more effective. Yet, the impact of male or female authorities depends on the type of authority they represent. This suggests that while these theories may have some merit, they must be extended to take an intersectional approach that considers *both* messenger institution and gender. Drawing on institutional performance and gender role congruity theories in tandem, our results suggest that a female TA's overall effectiveness is due to traditional authorities' high public trust (H1), as well as her stereotyped competence in the area of women's rights (H8).

**Figure 5. Average treatment effects**

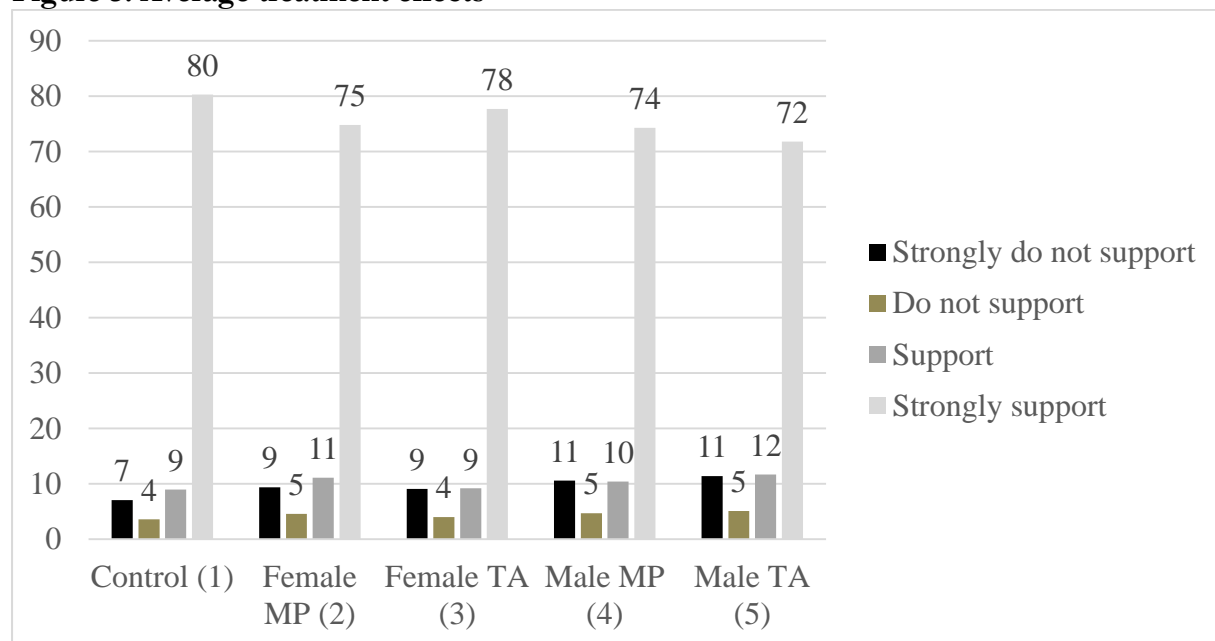


Figure 5 shows predicted probabilities for supporting or opposing the law. Model includes controls for respondent gender, interviewer gender, cultural customs, attitudes about gender equality, rural residence, education, income (asset index), and age. Post-stratification weights included.

## Heterogeneous Effects

Next, we examine effects across respondents by level of trust, gender, and matrilineal or patrilineal customs and find that the impact of messages depends not only on the intersection of the endorser's institution and gender, but also on respondents' backgrounds. We find that all four endorsers positively or negatively impact support for the reform among at least one group, and that their impacts are at times consistent with biased assimilation and at others, backfire effects. As with the average treatment effects, no one institution (state versus traditional) or gender (female versus male) is, on the whole, more or less effective as a policy messenger. Rather, the effects depend on the complex interaction of messenger institution and gender, as well as respondent traits, linked to institutional trust and gender role congruity theory.

### *Institutional Trust*

We find small, statistically significant differences in the statements' impact across respondents with varying levels of trust in their TA and parliamentarian. Among those with high trust in their

TA, there are no significant differences in the treatments' effects. This fails to support H2, which anticipates the TA to be more effective among those with higher institutional trust.

Yet, among those with lower trust in their TA, the impact of endorsements depends on the intersection of messenger institution and gender—just as we found in our analysis of the average treatment effect—and thus only partially supports H5 (Figure 6 and Table A5). When the endorsement comes from the female TA, 80% say they strongly support the law, compared to only 64% when it comes from the male TA ( $p < .05$ ).

However, when it comes to state authorities, endorsements from a male parliamentarian are more convincing for those with lower trust in TAs than from a female parliamentarian. When the endorsement comes from the female MP, 69% say they strongly support the law, compared to 79% when it comes from the male MP ( $p < .10$ ). These findings confirm that institutional trust is a factor shaping policy advocates' effectiveness, but this impact is more complex and intersectional in ways that are not captured by existing theory.

**Figure 6. Predicted probability, Low trust in TA**

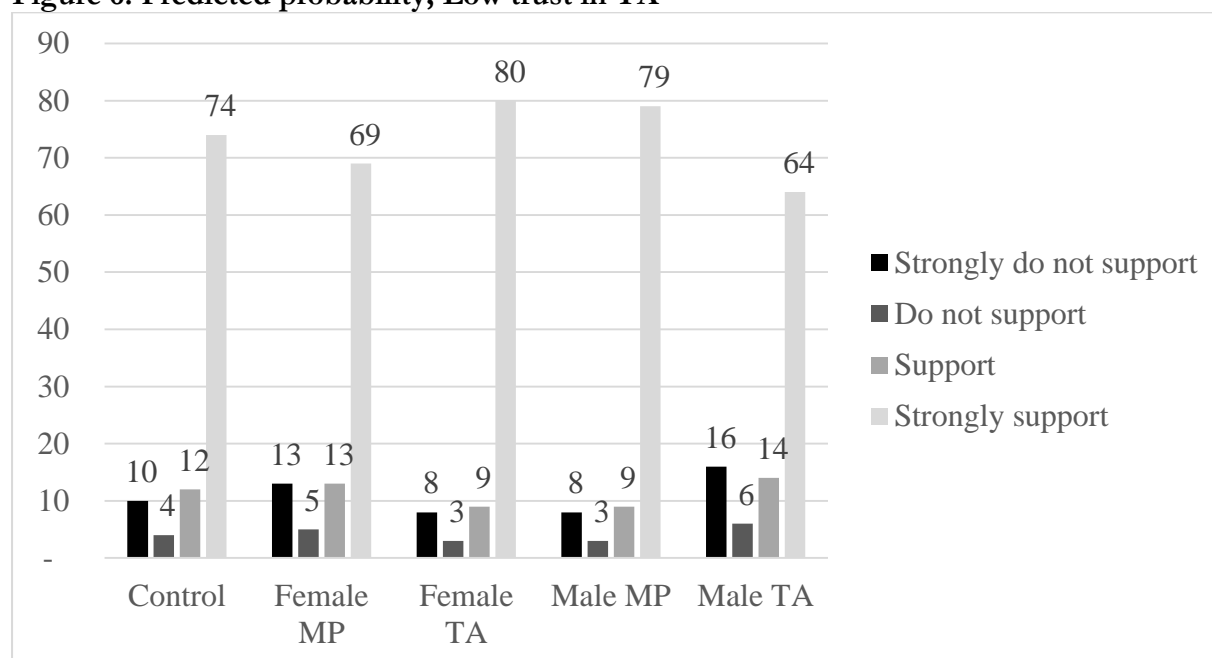


Figure 6 shows predicted probability of supporting the law among those with low trust in their TA. Effects are not significant at  $p < .05$  level for those with high trust in their TA.

We reach similar conclusions with regard to trust in the MP. The impact of the treatments does not vary across those with low trust in their MP (contrary to H6), but effects are significant among those with high trust. Yet, as shown in Figure 7 and Table A6, among those with high trust, the effects do not fit the expectations of H3, which expected those with higher trust in their MP to be positively affected by MPs' endorsements. Instead, MP endorsements do not differ from the control and are no more effective than TA endorsements.

Moreover, neither the MP nor the TA is more or less effective at garnering support for the reform among those with high trust in their MP, nor are female or male messengers more effective. The female MP is more effective than the male MP; 79% strongly support the reform when endorsed by a female MP, compared to 71% when endorsed by a male MP ( $p < .10$ ). This partially supports gender role congruity theory, but also demonstrates that existing theory is inadequate in accurately capturing how endorsers' institutions and gender intersect and how they impact attitudes in complex ways among different subgroups.

**Figure 7. Predicted probability, High trust in MPs**

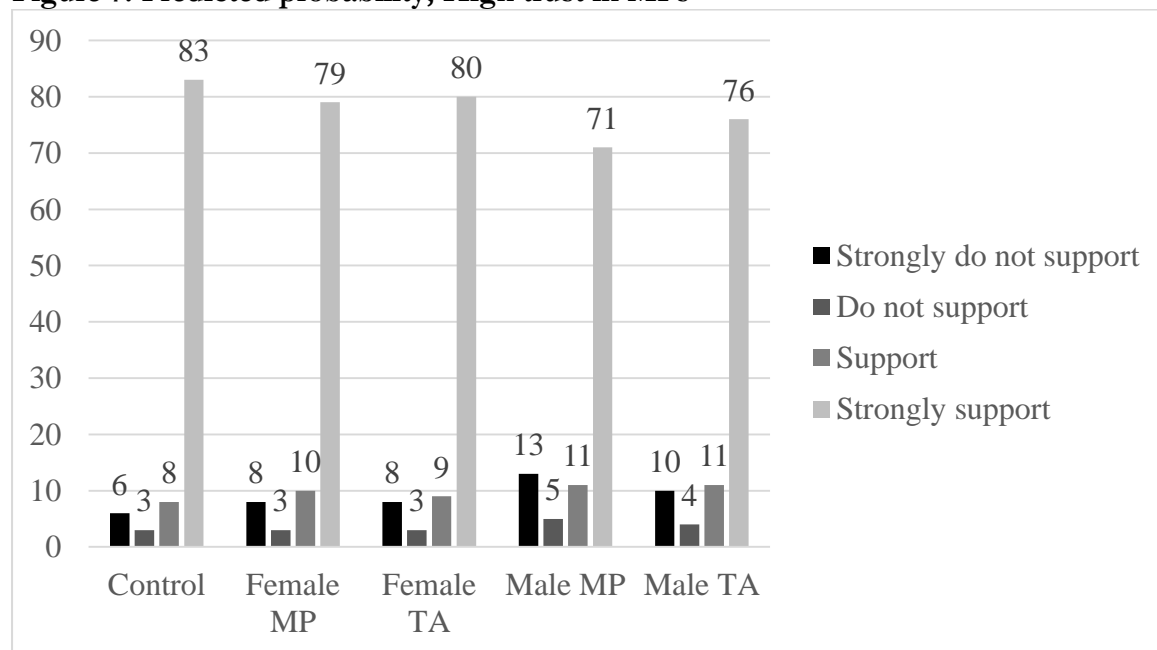


Figure 7 shows predicted probability of supporting the law among those with high trust in their parliamentarian. Effects are not significant at  $p < .05$  level for those with low trust in their parliamentarian.



### *Gender Role Congruity Theory*

As shown in Figure 8 and Table A7, the effectiveness of the messengers varies significantly for female but not male respondents. Among female respondents, and as with previous analyses, the female TA (83%) is more effective than the female MP (76 %), while there is no difference in the effectiveness of male and female MPs. The greatest difference is between the female and male TA, as the predicted probability of strongly supporting the law is 68% when the male TA endorses it ( $p < .05$ ). These findings partially support H9, which posits that, among women, female messengers will increase support more than among men. But, this theory needs to be extended to take into consideration the intersectionality of authority type and gender when it comes to policy advocacy effectiveness.

**Figure 8. Predicted probability, women**

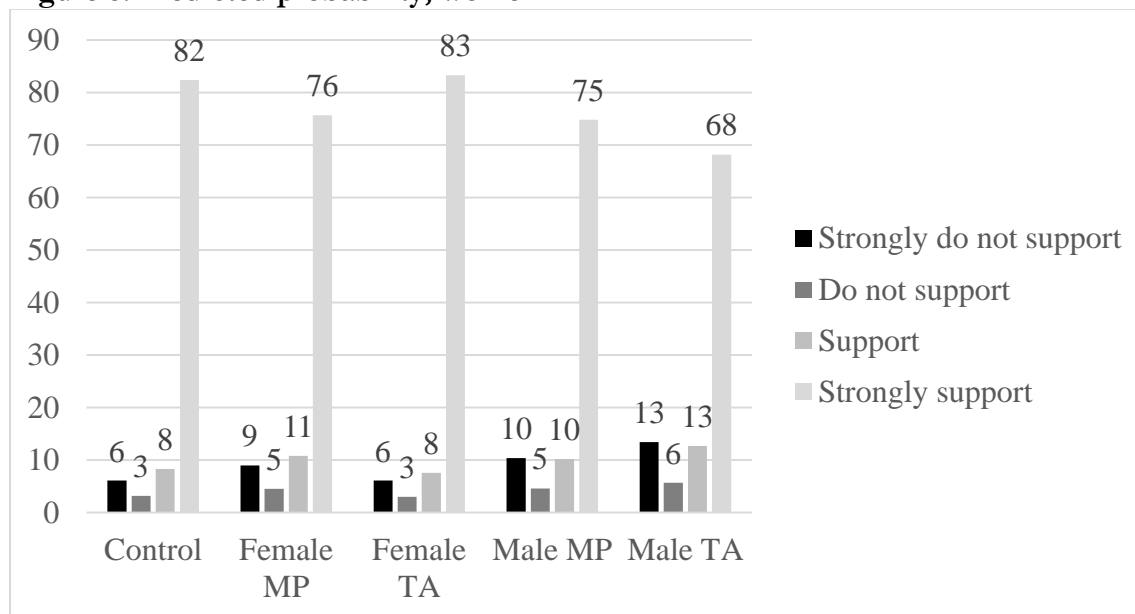


Figure 8 shows predicted probability of supporting the law among women. Effects are not significant at  $p < .05$  level among male respondents.

Next, we consider effects across respondents' cultural customs and find that effects vary according to the lineage customs of the receivers (Figure 9a-b and Table A8a-b). Among those who practice patrilineal customs, H13 expects that female messengers will decrease support more among those who follow patrilineal customs than matrilineal customs. Yet, we find that for those who practice patrilineal customs the impact of endorsements does not differ from the

control and that the impact of the female and male endorsements depends on institution type. The probability of strongly supporting the law is 76% when endorsed by the male MP, compared to 67% for the female MP ( $p < .10$ ). However, the male MP is more effective than the male TA. The probability of strongly supporting the law is 76% when endorsed by the male MP, compared to 72% for the male TA ( $p < .01$ ). While we expect male messengers to carry more weight among patrilineal groups, our theory does not account for the greater success of the male MP over the male TA.

The effects among matrilineal citizens are, as expected, opposite to those among patrilineal citizens. Among matrilineal citizens, the male MP is not only the least effective, but he is significantly less so than the control. This has important implications because it suggests that male MPs are likely to be effective messengers in patrilineal areas but cause backfire effects in matrilineal areas. In the control condition, 86% strongly support the law, while in the male MP condition, that number falls to 73% ( $p < .001$ ). H10 posits that female messengers will increase support more among those who follow matrilineal customs than patrilineal customs, while H13 posits that female messengers will decrease support more among those who follow patrilineal customs than matrilineal customs. Among matrilineal citizens, the female endorsement is more effective, but only for MPs, not TAs. While our results were partially consistent with these hypotheses, we found that it is only the case when comparing male and female state actors, confirming the need for an intersectional theory of policy advocacy that takes into account messenger institutions and gender, as well as respondent traits.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>We examined effects across respondents' a priori views (Figure A10a-b and Table A8a-b) and find similar patterns in comparisons by patrilineal and matrilineal cultural customs. Thus, we include these analyses in the Appendix.

**Figure 9a. Predicted probability, Patrilineal customs**

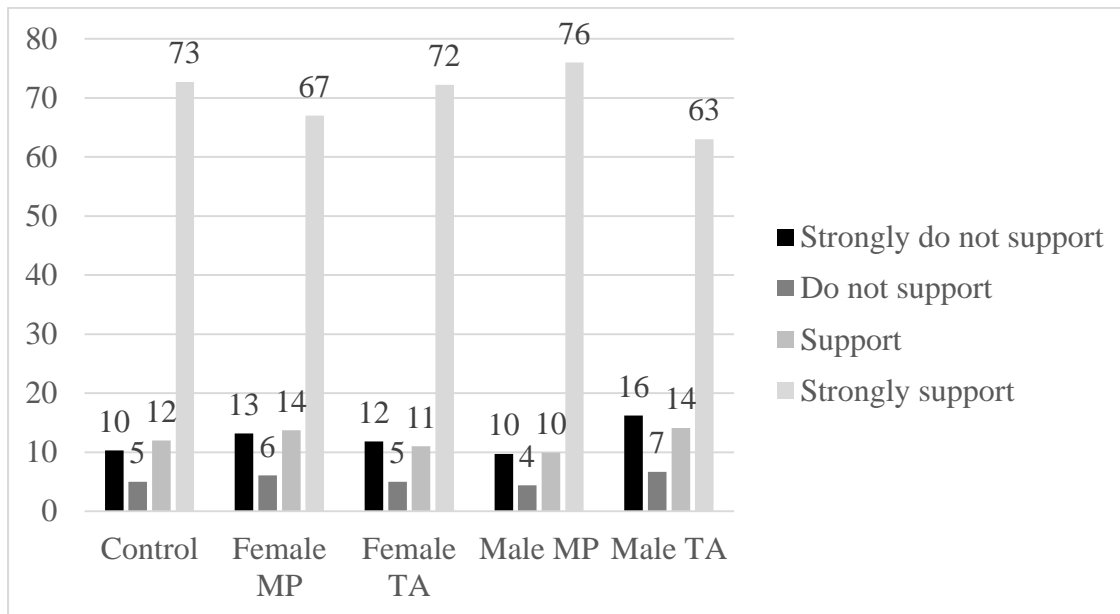


Figure 9a shows predicted probability of supporting the law among citizens with patrilineal and matrilineal customs.

**Figure 9b. Predicted probability, Matrilineal customs**

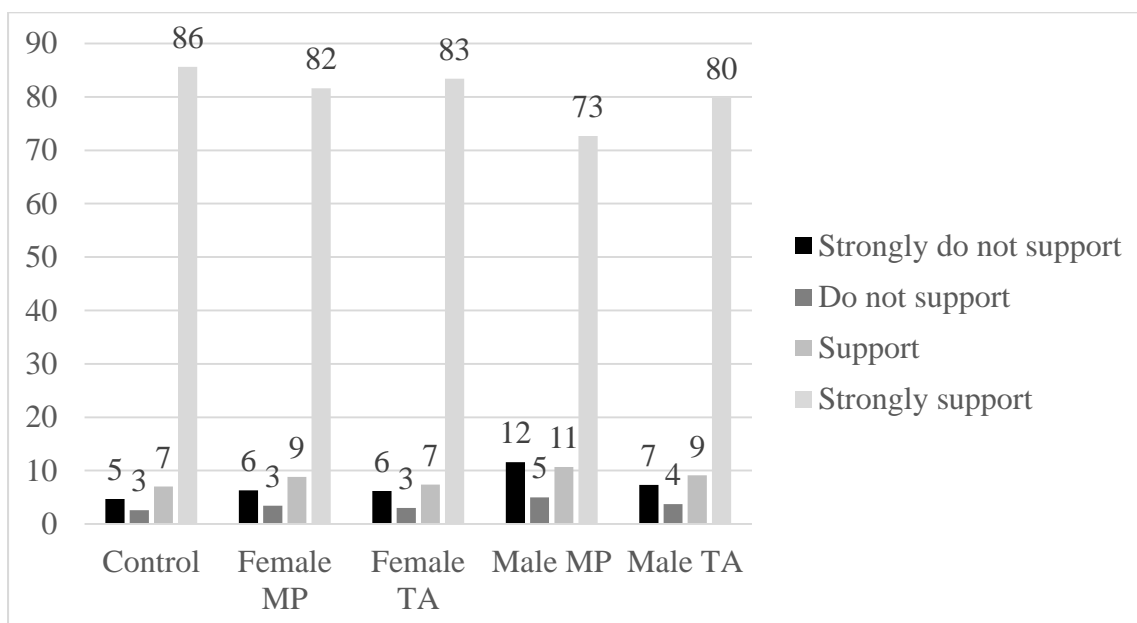


Figure 9b shows predicted probability of supporting the law among citizens with patrilineal and matrilineal customs.

Drawing on institutional performance and gender role congruity theories, we argue that the female TA's overall effectiveness is due to high public trust in traditional authorities, coupled with women's stereotyped competence in the area of women's rights. But, none of the theories can fully account for every observed average treatment or heterogeneous effect in the study. Instead, messengers' impacts depend on the intersection of authority type and gender, as well as on the characteristics of the receiver. All four messengers were effective—and counter-productive—among at least one population subgroup. Moreover, it was never the case that, on the whole, either state or traditional authorities were more effective. Nor was it the case that male or female messengers were, on the whole, more effective.

## 9. Conclusion

Both scholars and policymakers grapple with the questions of when and why traditional authorities provide effective governance in support of development and human rights goals. The results of our survey experiment show that the answers depend on the authority's gender and citizens' characteristics'. We find that under particular circumstances, traditional authorities can be effective endorsers of policy messages. This was the case for female traditional authorities in the sample as a whole, as well as among women, those who follow matrilineal customs, and those who hold supportive attitudes about gender equality.

At the same time, our analysis also suggests that the gender of the TA is important. For a gender-sensitive child marriage reform law, female TAs and female MPs are effective in the sample as a whole, as well as among women, those who follow matrilineal customs, and those who hold supportive attitudes about gender equality. But future research is needed to compare the impact of these types of authorities across policies that are associated with the stereotyped competencies of male and female leaders.

Our findings have important implications for the growing body of research on traditional governance, which we extend by demonstrating the need for an intersectional theory of policy advocacy. The findings from the Malawi case provide insights that are likely to be replicable in a broader set of cases within the region. If authority endorsements have an effect in Malawi as we have shown in this experimental study, they are also likely to make a difference in other African

societies where child marriage is less common and citizens are relatively more well off. More research is, however, necessary, in order to fully understand the dynamics of gender-law reform in countries with strong traditional institutions, and to further establish how traditional and political institutions complement one another for more effective policy implementation.

Our findings also have implications for international agencies, national governments, and civil-society organizations across the developing world that champion human rights initiatives and provide traditional leaders with a significant role in the implementation of such reform initiatives. Traditional leaders can play a constructive role in brokering infrastructure development projects, as well as projects aimed at enhancing gender equality. Yet, their impact is complex in a society such as Malawi's, whose diverse ethnic and societal practices mirror most of Africa. Among some groups, male leaders can be effective, while in others, women are better placed to play this role.

Some cautions are in order. The presence of traditional institutions might not always be positive; they may sometimes undermine the role of elected representatives and the consolidation of democracy. In the long run, this could become detrimental to women's rights and empowerment. Several actors can be effective endorsers among different groups, but they also have the potential to do harm when the wrong authority pushes a policy that one or more groups see as running counter to their interests and not falling within the authority's supposed competencies. To explore these potential tensions, we need more studies of the role of traditional leaders in promoting gendered development issues vis-à-vis other institutions, as well as more in-depth case studies of the tools traditional leaders possess to curb harmful practices such as child marriages. Rights concerning gender equality, sexuality, and reproduction are policy areas that are sensitive to prior beliefs and backfire effects, and reform promotion applying the "wrong" messenger could impact the support of the reform significantly. Collaboration with authorities viewed as inappropriate for delivering a certain message or interfering in policy areas that are outside their competence could stir counter-mobilization and cause unwanted friction. This underscores the need to gather context-specific information and to develop an effective strategy for engaging citizens positively with different leaders to promote human rights reform.

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1: Randomization Checks

A randomized block design was used. All test showed that randomization was effective. In order to reduce questionnaire length, a random subset of the 7,750 respondents in the LGPI took part in the experiment. Table A1 shows that the 1,381 respondents who received the child marriage endorsement study embedded in the LGPI were randomly distributed across the 15 electoral districts ( $p < .422$ ).

**Table A1. Randomized block design: Selection of respondents to take part in child marriage endorsement experiment**

	Respondents not selected	Respondents selected	Total
Balaka	307(85.3%)	53(14.7%)	360(100.0%)
Blantyre	571(81.6%)	129(18.4%)	700(100.0%)
Chikwawa	572(80.5%)	139(19.6%)	711 (100.1%)
Chitipa	289(82.1%)	63(17.95)	352(100.0%)
Dedza	573(80.4%)	140(19.6%)	713(100.0%)
Kasungu	280(85.6%)	47(14.4%)	327(100.0%)
Lilongwe	595(83.6%)	117(16.4%)	712 (100.0%)
Mangochi	281(81.7%)	63(18.3%)	344(100.0%)
Mulanje	294(82.6%)	62(17.4%)	356(100.0%)
Mzimba	1,144(81.4%)	262(18.6%)	1,406(100.0%)
Nkhatabay	293(84.0%)	56(16.1%)	349(100.1%)
Nsanje	281(79.4%)	73(20.6%)	354(100.0%)
Ntcheu	293(84.2%)	55(15.8%)	348(100.0%)
Rumphi	300(84.0%)	57(16.0%)	357(100.0%)
Zomba	295(81.9%)	65(18.1%)	360(100.0%)
Total	6,368(82.2%)	1,381(17.8%)	7,749(100.0%)

Two-tailed  $\chi^2$ -test shows treatments are randomly distributed across electoral districts ( $p < .422$ ).

Table A2 shows that the 1,381 respondents who were selected to take part in the experiment were randomly assigned to either the control or the four treatment groups ( $p < .891$ ).

**Table A2. Randomized block design: Assignment of respondents to control and experimental conditions**

	Control	Female MP	Female TA	Male MP	Male TA	Total
Balaka	15(28.3%)	6(11.3%)	8(15.1%)	11(20.8%)	13(24.5%)	53(100.0%)
Blantyre	24(18.6%)	22(17.1%)	26(20.2%)	28(21.7%)	29(22.5%)	129(100.1%)
Chikwawa	31(22.3%)	25(18.0%)	23(16.6%)	33(23.7%)	27(19.4%)	139(100.0%)
Chitipa	15(23.8%)	13(20.6%)	16(25.4%)	12(19.1%)	7(11.1%)	63(100.0%)
Dedza	29(20.7%)	22(15.7%)	28(20.0%)	31(22.1%)	30(21.4%)	140(99.9%)
Kasungu	5(10.6%)	10(21.3%)	6(12.8%)	12(25.5%)	14(29.8%)	47(100.0%)
Lilongwe	21(18.0%)	24(20.5%)	24(20.5%)	21(18.0%)	27(23.1%)	117(100.1%)
Mangochi	10(15.9%)	13(20.6%)	12(19.1%)	18(28.6%)	10(15.9%)	63(100.1%)
Mulanje	9(14.5%)	15(24.2%)	15(24.2%)	10(16.1%)	13(21.0%)	62(100.0%)
Mzimba	59(22.5%)	60(22.9%)	54(20.6%)	41(15.7%)	48(18.3%)	262(100.0%)
Nkhatabay	12(21.4%)	9(16.1%)	15(26.8%)	8(14.3%)	12(21.4%)	56(100.0%)
Nsanje	20(27.4%)	16(21.9%)	15(20.6%)	10(13.7%)	12(16.4%)	73(100.0%)
Ntcheu	11(20.0%)	9(16.4%)	12(21.8%)	10(18.2%)	13(23.6%)	55(100.0%)
Rumphi	13(22.8%)	10(17.5%)	10(17.5%)	9(15.8%)	15(26.3%)	57(99.9%)
Zomba	10(15.4%)	15(23.1%)	11(16.9%)	15(23.1%)	14(21.5%)	65(100.0%)
Total	284(20.6%)	269(19.5%)	275(19.9%)	269(19.5%)	284(20.6%)	1,381(100.1%)

Two-tailed  $\chi^2$  test show treatments are randomly distributed across electoral districts ( $p < .891$ ).

There were no differences in response rates (that is, attrition rates) across the five frames. Only 12 respondents did not provide an answer on the dependent variable, which is too few missing cases to compute a significance value.

Table A3 shows that the conditions were randomly distributed across demographic variables, as shown by insignificant chi-square tests. Question wording and descriptive statistics for all independent variables are also given.

**Table A3. Randomization of treatment and descriptive statistics for independent variables**

	Control	Female MP	Female TA	Male MP	Male TA
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	22.3%	18.2%	18.8%	19.2%	21.5%
Female	19.7%	20.2%	20.5%	19.6%	20.0%
(N=1,378/Mean=.65/Sd=.48)	$\chi^2(4)=2.4283(p<.658)$				
<b>Interviewer gender</b>					
Male	19.4%	18.9%	20.8%	20.3%	20.6%
Female	22.2%	20.3%	18.7%	18.4%	20.4%
(N=1,377/Mean=.42/Sd=.49)	$\chi^2(4)=2.8524(p<.583)$				
<b>Vote for female</b>					
Prefer male or no difference	19.5%	17.7%	20.1%	20.5%	22.2%
Prefer female	23.0%	22.3%	19.5%	17.7%	17.6%
(N=1,350/Mean=.43/Sd=.49)	$\chi^2(4)=10.3154(p<.035)^*$				
<b>Patrilineal/Matrilineal</b>					
Does not pay lobola (Matrilineal)	19.5%	17.6%	18.2%	22.1%	22.7%
Pay lobola (Patrilineal)	21.9%	21.2%	21.5%	17.0%	18.4%
(N=1,368/Mean=.49/Sd=.50)	$\chi^2(4)=12.6223(p<.013)^*$				
<b>Economic status</b>					
First quartile	20.8%	18.9%	19.5%	19.3%	21.5%
Second quartile	19.3%	21.8%	17.5%	19.1%	22.1%
Third quartile	24.5%	15.9%	20.5%	21.5%	17.6%
Fourth quartile	18.3%	21.1%	22.2%	18.3%	20.1%
(N=1,368/Mean=2.30/Sd=1.14)	$\chi^2(12)=11.1280(p<.518)$				
<b>Education</b>					
No formal schooling	27.4%	17.4%	16.4%	19.9%	18.9%
Some primary school	18.6%	19.1%	19.8%	20.7%	21.8%
Some primary school completed	23.9%	20.0%	20.9%	17.0%	18.5%
Some intermediate school or more	16.6%	22.5%	22.5%	18.7%	19.8%
(N=1,366/Mean=2.32/Sd=.89)	$\chi^2(12)=14.8515(p<.250)$				
<b>Trusts parliamentarian</b>					
Low trust	19.2%	21.6%	20.1%	19.0%	20.1%
High trust	21.6%	16.9%	20.6%	19.8%	21.1%
(N=1,304/Mean=.45/Sd=.50)	$\chi^2(4)=4.944(p<.293)$				
<b>Trusts TA</b>					
Low trust	18.9%	20.6%	20.6%	20.3%	19.6%
High trust	20.8%	18.9%	18.9%	19.6%	20.6%
(N=1,268/Mean=.77/Sd=.42)	$\chi^2(4)=.907(p<.924)$				
<b>Rural residence</b>					
Urban or small town	17.5%	19.8%	21.4%	19.8%	21.4%
Rural	21.3%	19.4%	19.5%	19.4%	20.4%
(N=1,376/Mean=.81/Sd=.39)	$\chi^2(4)=2.0386(p<.729)$				
<b>Age groups</b>					
1	18.2%	17.0%	20.4%	22.5%	21.9%
2	19.3%	21.1%	18.2%	19.5%	21.9%
3	23.0%	19.3%	18.9%	20.3%	18.6%
4	22.2%	20.1%	21.6%	16.4%	19.8%
(N=1,378/Mean=2.53/Sd=1.13)	$\chi^2(12)=10.2369(p<.595)$				

Two-tailed  $\chi$  test show treatments are randomly distributed across groups for all independent and control variables, with the exception of a priori gender attitudes ( $p<.05$ ) and lineal customs ( $p<.05$ ).



## Appendix 2: Pairwise Comparisons

**Table A4. Significance levels for pairwise comparisons (average treatment effects)**

	Strongly do not support	Do not support	Support	Strongly support
Comparisons of treatments with control				
Female MP vs. control (2 vs. 1)	.049*	0.063†	0.052†	0.037*
Female TA vs. control (3 vs.1)	0.301	0.506	0.881	0.452
Male MP vs. control (4 vs. 1)	.062†	.106	0.227	.073†
Male TA vs. control (5 vs.1)	.088†	.076†	.083†	.071†
Comparisons of institutions (State vs. traditional)				
Female TA vs. MP (3 vs. 2)	0.862	0.365	0.124	0.449
Male TA vs. MP (5 vs. 4)	0.769	0.574	0.335	0.566
Comparisons of gender (Female vs. male)				
Male vs. female MP (4 vs. 2)	0.473	0.872	0.457	0.845
Male vs. female TA (5 vs. 3)	0.370	0.151	.078†	0.181
Other comparisons				
Male TA vs. female MP (5 vs. 2)	0.396	0.501	0.684	0.482
Male MP vs. female TA (4 vs. 3)	0.536	0.349	0.333	0.405

Updated May 1, 2017.

**Table A5. Significance levels for pairwise comparisons (low trust in TA)**

	Strongly do not support	Do not support	Support	Strongly support
Comparisons of treatments with control				
Female MP vs. control (2 vs. 1)	0.224	0.386	0.582	0.336
Female TA vs. control (3 vs. 1)	0.582	0.364	0.220	0.384
Male MP vs. control (4 vs. 1)	0.487	0.326	0.268	0.353
Male TA vs. control (5 vs. 1)	.116	.115	0.171	. 110
Comparisons of institutions (State vs. traditional)				
Female TA vs. MP (3 vs. 2)	0.176	0.122	.040*	.095†
Male TA vs. MP (5 vs. 4)	.058†	.007**	.035*	.023*
Comparisons of gender (Female vs. male)				
Male vs. female MP (4 vs. 2)	0.117	.030*	.059†	.056†
Male vs. female TA (5 vs. 3)	.073†	.061†	.033*	.041*
Other comparisons				
Male TA vs. female MP (5 vs. 2)	0.337	0.282	0.366	0.286
Male MP vs. female TA (4 vs. 3)	0.991	0.912	0.876	0.949

Updated May 1, 2017.

**Table A6. Significance levels for pairwise comparisons (high trust in MP)**

	Strongly do not support	Do not support	Support	Strongly support
Comparisons of treatments with control				
Female MP vs. control (2 vs. 1)	0.490	0.572	0.627	0.555
Female TA vs. control (3 vs. 1)	0.492	0.704	0.877	0.667
Male MP vs. control (4 vs. 1)	.010†	0.239	0.357	0.178
Male TA vs. control (5 vs. 1)	0.313	0.308	0.316	0.304
Comparisons of institutions (State vs. traditional)				
Female TA vs. MP (3 vs. 2)	0.897	0.882	0.694	0.924
Male TA vs. MP (5 vs. 4)	0.436	0.580	0.813	0.543
Comparisons of gender (Female vs. male)				
Male vs. female MP (4 vs. 2)	.051†	.108	0.241	.061†
Male vs. female TA (5 vs. 3)	0.718	0.510	0.414	0.564
Other comparisons				
Male TA vs. female MP (5 vs. 2)	0.599	0.546	0.528	0.559
Male MP vs. female TA (4 vs. 3)	0.331	0.253	0.276	0.287

Updated May 1, 2017.

**Table A7. Significance levels for pairwise comparisons (women)**

	Strongly do not support	Do not support	Support	Strongly support
Comparisons of treatments with control				
Female MP vs. control (2 vs. 1)	0.333	0.321	0.353	0.332
Female TA vs. control (3 vs. 1)	0.998	0.935	0.862	0.937
Male MP vs. control (4 vs. 1)	0.134	0.239	0.427	0.215
Male TA vs. control (5 vs. 1)	.094†	.105	0.169	.105
Comparisons of institutions (State vs. traditional)				
Female TA vs. MP (3 vs. 2)	0.325	0.249	0.154	0.234
Male TA vs. MP (5 vs. 4)	0.443	0.298	0.224	0.319
Comparisons of gender (Female vs. male)				
Male vs. female MP (4 vs. 2)	0.546	0.839	0.593	0.816
Male vs. female TA (5 vs. 3)	.045*	.032*	.012*	.021*
Other comparisons				
Male TA vs. female MP (5 vs. 2)	0.200	0.230	0.300	0.215
Male MP vs. female TA (4 vs. 3)	0.257	0.291	0.283	0.258

Updated May 1, 2017.

**Table A8a. Significance levels for pairwise comparisons (patrilineal)**

	Strongly do not support	Do not support	Support	Strongly support
Comparisons of treatments with control				
Female MP vs. control (2 vs. 1)	0.493	0.498	0.487	0.481
Female TA vs. control (3 vs. 1)	0.787	0.975	0.785	0.968
Male MP vs. control (4 vs. 1)	0.868	0.633	0.399	0.648
Male TA vs. control (5 vs. 1)	0.182	0.300	0.347	0.227
Comparisons of institutions (State vs. traditional)				
Female TA vs. MP (3 vs. 2)	0.792	0.432	0.298	0.559
Male TA vs. MP (5 vs. 4)	.036*	.020*	.003**	.005**
Comparisons of gender (Female vs. male)				
Male vs. female MP (4 vs. 2)	0.272	.087†	.012*	.083†
Male vs. female TA (5 vs. 3)	0.412	0.230	0.273	0.316
Other comparisons				
Male TA vs. female MP (5 vs. 2)	0.426	0.563	0.769	0.497
Male MP vs. female TA (4 vs. 3)	0.679	0.729	0.680	0.679

Updated May 1, 2017.

**Table A8b. Significance levels for pairwise comparisons (matrilineal)**

	Strongly do not support	Do not support	Support	Strongly support
Comparisons of treatments with control				
Female MP vs. control (2 vs. 1)	0.392	0.335	0.330	0.349
Female TA vs. control (3 vs. 1)	0.363	0.523	0.769	0.506
Male MP vs. control (4 vs. 1)	.004**	.004**	.002**	.001***
Male TA vs. control (5 vs. 1)	0.305	0.288	0.296	0.291
Comparisons of institutions (State vs. traditional)				
Female TA vs. MP (3 vs. 2)	0.946	0.649	0.404	0.676
Male TA vs. MP (5 vs. 4)	0.165	0.214	0.396	0.197
Comparisons of gender (Female vs. male)				
Male vs. female MP (4 vs. 2)	.025*	.085†	0.183	.037*
Male vs. female TA (5 vs. 3)	0.703	0.555	0.443	0.573
Other comparisons				
Male TA vs. female MP (5 vs. 2)	0.739	0.799	0.870	0.795
Male MP vs. female TA (4 vs. 3)	.048*	.012*	.013*	.016*

Updated May 1, 2017.

## **Appendix 3: Heterogeneous Effects for A Priori Views on Gender Equality**

### **Hypotheses**

Effects may vary by the a priori views of citizens, but we discuss this in the Appendix, due to the fact that the results are similar to the main findings discussed in the paper. We expect endorsements from female messengers to increase support more than those from male messengers among those who hold positive a priori views of gender equality, and vice versa for those who do not (H14). And, we expect that opposition from female messengers will decrease support more than that from male messengers among those who hold positive a priori views of gender equality and vice versa for those who do not (H15).

H14: Female messengers will increase support more than male messengers among those who hold positive a priori views of gender equality, and vice versa for those who do not.

H15: Female messengers will decrease support more than male messengers among those who hold positive a priori views of gender equality, and vice versa among those who do not.

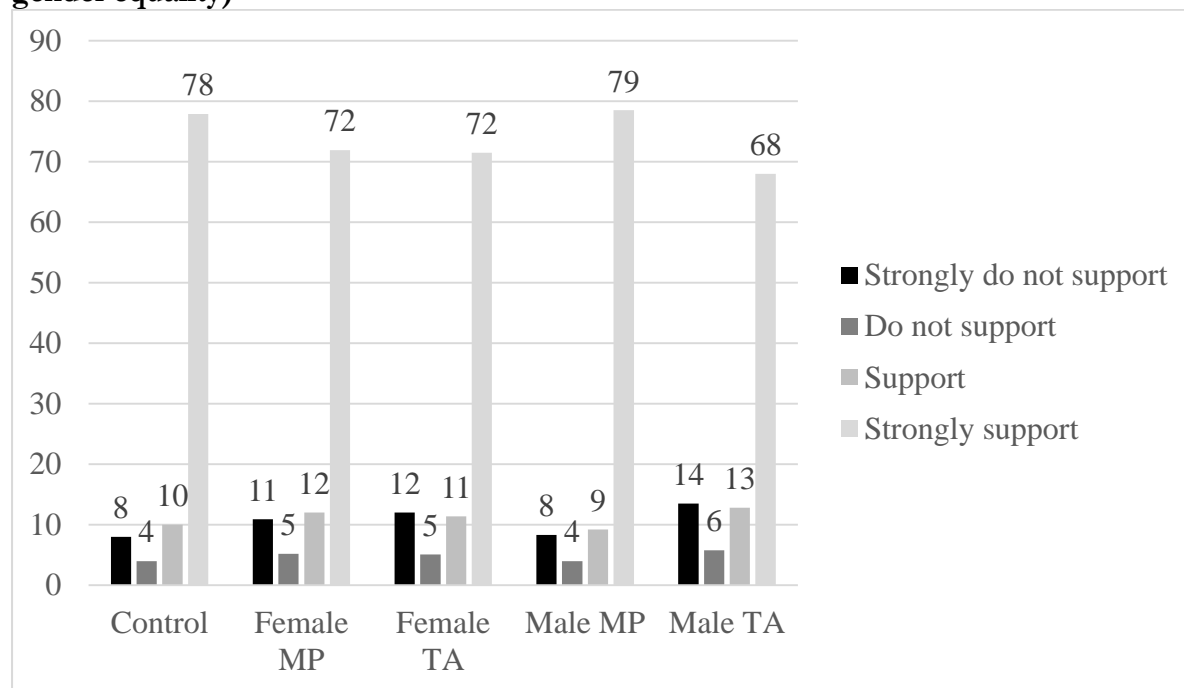
### **Results**

We examine effects across respondents' a priori views (Figure A1a-b and Table A9a-b) and find similar patterns in comparisons by patrilineal and matrilineal cultural customs. Among those who support gender equality—similarly to the matrilineal respondents—the male MP is associated with a large backfire effect, relative to the control. The probability of strongly supporting the law is 82% in the control, compared to 68% for the male MP endorsement ( $p < .05$ ). Because this is significantly lower than the female MP ( $p < .05$  for the strongly agree response category), this demonstrates that the effects of the authority on attitudes depends on the authority's gender. Yet, among those who do not support gender equality, the male MP is significantly more effective than the female MP for the strongly agree response category ( $p < .05$ ). In neither group did the effect of the male versus female TA differ significantly.

Thus, we find partial support for H14 and H15, that female messengers will increase support more than male messengers among those who hold positive a priori views and support more

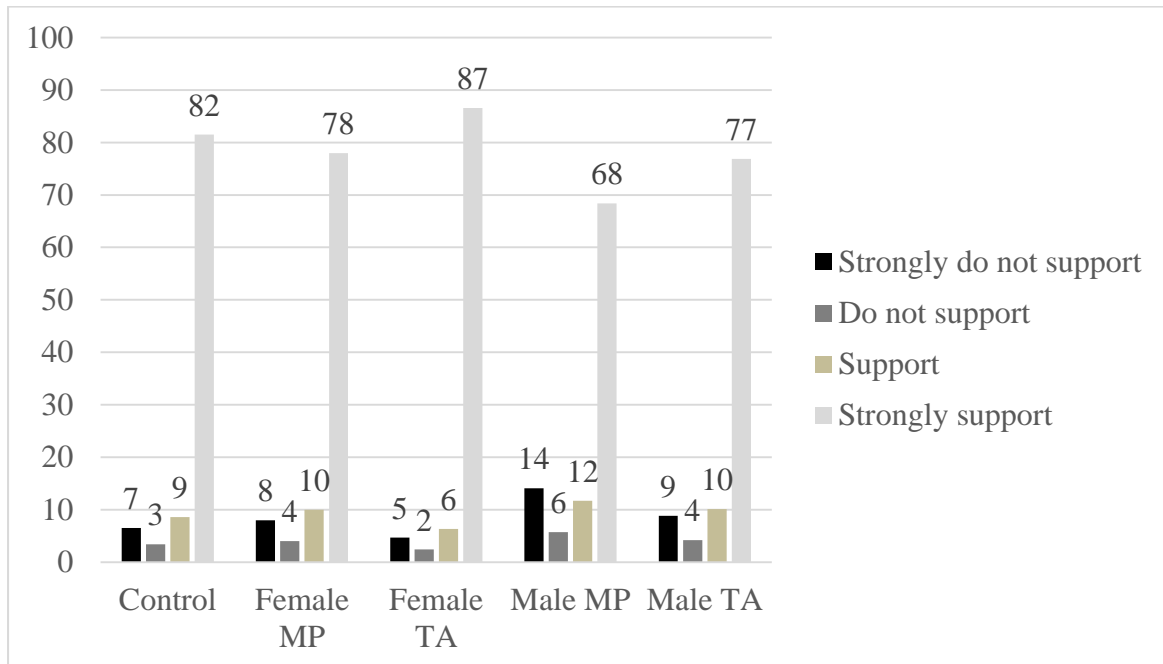
than male messengers among those who hold negative a priori views of gender equality. However, as with the other analyses, we find that the impact of messenger gender depends on the institution in ways that confound existing theoretical frameworks. Among those who do not support gender equality, male messengers are more effective than females, but only when it comes to state authorities. Among those who support gender equality, male messengers are less effective than females, but only when it comes to state authorities.

**Figure A1a. Predicted probability, by a priori views on gender equality (Does not support gender equality)**





**Figure A1b. Predicted probability, by a priori views on gender equality (Supports gender equality)**



**Table A9a. Significance levels for pairwise comparisons (does not support gender equality)**

	Strongly do not support	Do not support	Support	Strongly support
Comparisons of treatments with control				
Female MP vs. control (2 vs. 1)	0.532	0.529	0.564	0.541
Female TA vs. control (3 vs. 1)	0.689	0.644	0.556	0.627
Male MP vs. control (4 vs. 1)	.013*	.067†	0.228	.046*
Male TA vs. control (5 vs. 1)	0.482	0.524	0.614	0.534
Comparisons of institutions (State vs. traditional)				
Female TA vs. MP (3 vs. 2)	0.219	0.245	0.122	0.176
Male TA vs. MP (5 vs. 4)	.085†	0.242	0.416	0.158
Comparisons of gender (Female vs. male)				
Male vs. female MP (4 vs. 2)	.006**	.065†	0.216	.019*
Male vs. female TA (5 vs. 3)	0.231	0.233	0.165	0.197
Other comparisons				
Male TA vs. female MP (5 vs. 2)	0.745	0.853	0.962	0.839
Male MP vs. female TA (4 vs. 3)	.020*	0.105	.060†	.036*

**Table A9b. Significance levels for pairwise comparisons (support gender equality)**

	Strongly do not support	Do not support	Support	Strongly support
Comparisons of treatments with control				
Female MP vs. control (2 vs. 1)	.098†	0.145	0.163	0.114
Female TA vs. control (3 vs. 1)	0.206	0.217	0.394	0.227
Male MP vs. control (4 vs. 1)	0.898	0.920	0.643	0.898
Male TA vs. control (5 vs. 1)	.090†	.092†	0.161	.095†
Comparisons of institutions (State vs. traditional)				
Female TA vs. MP (3 vs. 2)	0.752	0.966	0.661	0.948
Male TA vs. MP (5 vs. 4)	.057†	.011*	.012*	.015*
Comparisons of gender (Female vs. male)				
Male vs. female MP (4 vs. 2)	0.113	.084†	.028*	.048*
Male vs. female TA (5 vs. 3)	0.649	0.465	0.383	0.513
Other comparisons				
Male TA vs. female MP (5 vs. 2)	0.358	0.446	0.635	0.429
Male MP vs. female TA (4 vs. 3)	0.265	0.218	0.211	0.216