Meet the Candidates: Information and Accountability in Primary and General Elections

Pre-Analysis Plan

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Abstract

Under what conditions does information affect political behavior? This study builds on existing work examining the relationship between information and political behavior, with the goal of identifying some of the conditions under which information affects turnout and vote choice. We contrast the effect of information provided in the form of candidate debates across primary and general elections, and in a public and private setting. Additionally, we contrast the effect of providing information about the incumbent candidate only with the effect of providing information about both the incumbent and challenger. The study takes place in Uganda.

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1 Introduction

What is the effect of information on political behavior? A number of studies have evaluated the effect of information about incumbent politicians and government performance on political behavior, particularly vote choice. These studies have yielded mixed results, with some finding that political information affects political behavior and knowledge, while others find no effect of information on these outcomes. The Metaketa project on information and political accountability, organized by Experiments in Governance and Politics (EGAP), aims to identify the conditions under which information matters for political behavior.

This field experiment, one of seven studies in the Metaketa initiative, will be conducted in Uganda during the 2015 primary and 2016 general elections, and will systematically assess the conditions under which information about candidates affects voter behavior. We examine two conditions in particular: the political environment (intra vs. inter-party competition) and the public vs. private nature of information provision. We also examine two different sets of information: one that provides information about the incumbent alone, and one that provides information about both the incumbent and challengers. The candidate debates will be publicly screened in one set of polling station catchment areas, privately to individuals in another set of polling station catchment areas, while a third set serve as controls. The debates will take place in both an intra-party and inter-party electoral environment, in the 2015 primary elections of the National Resistance Movement (NRM), Uganda’s ruling party (intra-party), and the 2016 general elections (inter-party) for Member of Parliament.

Uganda is an ideal study site for two reasons. First, this study builds on existing work conducted in Uganda on information and political accountability (Humphreys and Weinstein, 2012). Second, Uganda presents an opportunity to study the role and effect of different types of information in both intra-party and inter-party competitive electoral environments. There is little research on primary elections in the context of developing countries and nascent democracies, and even less on primaries in African countries. Uganda’s ruling party holds nation-wide primary elections for Member of Parliament, where all registered party members are eligible to vote. Thus, we are able to assess the effect of information – specifically in the form of candidate debates – on voter behavior in both primary and general elections.
One of the largest studies on information and political accountability in a developing country to date took place in Uganda between 2007 and 2011 (Humphreys and Weinstein, 2012). In this study, the researchers, together with a local NGO, developed a scorecard measuring the performance of Members of Parliament, where the scorecard was disseminated in a randomly selected set of constituencies. Although an estimated half million Ugandans learned about the scorecard in the period leading up to the 2011 general election, and although survey experimental evidence suggested respondents were receptive to information on the scorecard, the new information about candidates via dissemination campaigns had no effect on voter behavior at the level of the constituency.

While these results appear to paint a disappointing picture, from a normative perspective, of the effect of information on voter behavior and political accountability in Uganda, we view these results as an important starting point for understanding the conditions under which information about candidates will affect voter behavior, particularly in the context of a nascent democracy with a ruling party that is strong relative to opposition parties.

2 Theory

2.1 A Decision-Theoretic Model of Vote Choice

We employ and build upon a theory of change developed as part of the Metaketa initiative. The theory of change is based on a decision-theoretic voting model. The key outcome of interest is vote choice. In the model, a voter begins with prior beliefs about a candidate’s quality, or valence, along a number of dimensions. Then, the voter receives information about candidates’ quality along these dimensions and makes a voting decision based on their updated beliefs about the candidate.

The effect of information about a particular dimension of candidate valence on vote choice depends on the following: a) the persuasiveness of the signal, and b) how much weight a voter places on the dimension as compared to other dimensions of candidate quality, and c) whether or not the information provided is “good news” or “bad news.” Good news is defined as information about a candidate that is as good or better than a voter’s prior beliefs about that piece of information for that candidate, while bad news is defined as information about a candidate that is worse than
the voter’s priors about that piece of information for that candidate.

We analyze the effect of information at two levels, and thus have two units of analysis: 1) the individual voter, and 2) the polling station.

2.2 Two Dimensions of Valence: Policy and Image

In this study, information about candidate valence is provided in the form of a video recording in which candidates for the office of Member of Parliament answer a set of questions about their policy preferences, qualifications for office, personal characteristics, and relevant experience. We have selected questions that we expect will provide voters with information along two primary dimensions: policy and image. Policy includes candidates’ policy positions on several important policy issues. Providing information about candidates’ positions allows voters to determine the extent to which policy alignment exists between the voter and the candidate on a set of three issues: 1) constituency policy priorities, 2) the creation of new administrative units (districts), and 3) the legal consequences for those convicted of vote buying.

Additional questions allow candidates to share information about their qualifications and performance. Questions on qualifications and performance, together with the overall image a candidate displays in the course of the video, contribute to a voter’s knowledge about the second dimension, candidate image. We employ the definition of candidate as suggested by Hacker (2004), a cognitive representation made in the process of voter perceptions of candidate messages. In accordance with the literature, we further distinguish between sub-dimensions of candidate image, specifically, competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill (McCroskey and Teven, 1999). A discussion of the measurement of the extent of policy alignment and candidate image is provided in Section 7.1. The precise wording of the questions asked of candidates can be found in Appendix A.

While there are several potential explanations for the divergence in findings about the role of information on political behavior and accountability to date, we focus on two in particular: the political environment and the role of publicly versus privately provided information. By political environment, we specifically refer to whether an election is taking place in an intra or inter-party environment. By public versus private we refer to whether or not information is provided in a public setting, where multiple individuals are receiving the same information at the same time,
and are subsequently aware that this information is held by a group of people, rather than by themselves alone. Public information is contrasted with private information, which is information that is provided to a single individual at a time, and there is no expectation that others hold the same information.\footnote{This is an important assumption that we will return to. It is possible that even with information provided on an individual basis, there is an expectation that others are also receiving this same information on an individual basis. However, the certainty that others have received this information, and knowledge of who specifically has received this information, will necessarily be lower with private rather than public provision. We will use several questions in the survey to assess individuals assessments of how widely information they receive is held.}

### 2.3 Intra vs. Inter-Party Environments

For information about a candidate’s valence to sway a voter’s decision, this information must trump other considerations voters take into account when making a choice over a set of candidates, including ethnic, religious, partisan, or other identities. Thus, political information is less likely to matter in extremely polarized environments along any of these dimensions. In the case of Uganda, politics at both the local and national level is characterized by the existence of a dominant ruling party, the National Resistance Movement, which has held power since 1986.

The NRM comprises a majority of seats in parliament (68%), a majority of district chairpersons (77%), and a majority of sub-county chairpersons (71%).\footnote{Calculations based on official data from the Electoral Commission as of 2011.} A large percentage of the remaining seats at all levels are held by independents, many of whom are NRM leaning. Combined, the six opposition parties only hold 19% of seats in Parliament. At the same time, a recent opinion poll found that 75% of respondents stated they would likely vote for the same party as they voted for in the previous election if the election was held that day.\footnote{Opinion poll commissioned by the daily newspaper, the \textit{Daily Monitor} and implemented by Research World International, Ltd., in April 2014.} Thus, partisan considerations are very important for vote choice, likely more so than other identities, such as ethnicity, particularly at the local level where constituencies are relatively ethnically homogenous.

Given the strong position of the ruling party and consistency in voting, many observers argue that the real electoral competition occurs during NRM primaries rather than in the general election. More generally, candidates’ party identification can affect a voter’s assessment of the quality of the candidate, and the voter’s prior belief about the candidate. In different contexts, party identification can signal different kinds of candidate attributes of candidate quality, ranging from their
likely policy positions to their likelihood of being able to access state resources. Parties with a longer track record or who have comprised a relatively larger proportion of successful candidates previously are likely to produce stronger prior beliefs about the current candidate in question. If party identification strongly signals candidate quality and predicts prior beliefs about candidates, the effect of additional information is likely to be relatively small. Thus, we expect the effect of information to be greater when party identification cannot be used in this way. That is, we expect that the effect of information about candidate valence on vote choice will be greater during the primary elections (an intra-party environment), where party affiliation is held constant, than in the inter-party environment of the general election.

Our research design is specifically set up to test this hypothesis, by randomly assigning individuals to receive information about candidate valence in either the primary or general elections.\(^4\) While it is the particular nature of party politics and partisanship in Uganda that has led us to focus on the role of political environment in mediating the relationship between information and voter behavior in our research design, we suggest that similar dynamics may be at play in other countries with dominant ruling parties, or where partisanship is known to be a strong predictor of vote choice, such as in the U.S. context.

In the American politics literature, party primaries have been found to result in the election of candidates at extreme ends of the ideological spectrum, which some have argued has contributed to increasing polarization in the American political environment. In the context of a two-party system in American politics where preferences are ideologically oriented on a left-right spectrum, candidates for political office are posed with a strategic dilemma: how to appeal to their party constituency on either the right or left side of the ideological spectrum while remaining competitive in the general election where the preferences of the median voter are closer to the center (Brady, Han and Pope, 2007). In other words, politicians must determine where to place themselves along the ideological spectrum bearing in mind that the preferences of the electorate in the primary election are distinct from those in the general election. Voters, meanwhile, in deciding which candidate to vote for, must balance candidate “purity” in terms of ideology with candidate “electability” in a

\(^4\)As described in greater detail in Section 4, our variation is inter- not intra-subject. We assign voters to receive either information about primary or general election candidates or none, since we are concerned that receiving information about primary candidates would affect respondents’ response to information on general election candidates, thus limiting comparability across the two study arms.
general election (Hall, 2015).

While our understanding of how party primaries affect representation, polarization, and voter behavior is far from complete in the American context, the effect of party primaries on political behavior and candidate selection is even more limited in the context of developing countries and nascent democracies. The role of political ideology is downplayed altogether, particularly in the study of African politics, where ethnic voting remains the dominant narrative, with good reason in many countries, for explaining vote choice. Political parties are often weak, or considered so, and the practice and implementation of party primaries rarely studied. We argue, however, that just as in American politics, party primaries are an important part of the electoral process.

There are important differences, however, between primaries in the American context and that of nascent democracies. While in American politics, the study of legislators focuses largely on their positioning on an ideological spectrum, in the context of emerging democracies, there is rarely a unidimensional policy space (if one indeed can be said to exist anywhere) on which political parties place themselves. The manifestos of political parties often look quite similar. There may be some issues on which political parties distinguish themselves, but it is difficult to place this issues on a unidimensional spectrum, and the issues may vary considerably over time and across countries. Thus, in emerging democracies, we care about primaries not primarily because of how they might affect ideological polarization, but rather because of how they might affect the pool of candidates running in the general election. If higher quality candidates are elected in primary elections, the average candidate quality in the general election will be higher as well.

As noted previously, we are investigating the role of political information in the context of intra-party vs. inter-party electoral environments because we believe that in a dominant party system, voting in the general election is largely determined by party affiliation. Of course, party affiliation is itself a proxy for other things, such as likelihood of getting transfers from the state. What are the relevant dimensions along which voters are evaluating candidates in the context of a primary election? Candidate quality in terms of effort, integrity, alignment with policy positions, are investigated as well as co-ethnicity and clientelism, in line with the mediators and substitution

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5There are some important exceptions worth noting, including Ichino and Noah, 2012 and 2013.
6It is important to note that losing in a primary election does not necessarily preclude one from participating in the general election, although political parties try to prevent this from occurring. In Uganda, for example, candidates who lose in the NRM primaries frequently run as independents in the general elections.
variables as specified in the meta pre-analysis plan. We also suggest that in the primaries, voters will prefer candidates whom they believe are more likely to be able to access resources from the state.

Outside of the Ugandan context, when might we expect the political environment to matter in terms of its effect on the role of political information in voter behavior? While this is a question that is not addressed through our research design, we expect that political environment matters in the context of a dominant ruling party. Dominant ruling parties occur frequently in Africa, in both democratic and autocratic settings, including Uganda, South Africa, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Botswana, and Namibia. In the context of a dominant ruling party, information about candidates will do little to shift voting behavior if party affiliation is strong. While political parties in Africa are frequently considered weak relative to their counterparts in developed democracies, strong party allegiance may mean that information in an inter-party electoral environment does little to shift voting behavior.

2.4 Public vs. Private Information

Next, we discuss the second dimension we vary across treatments: public vs. private provision of information. In the private provision condition, individuals view the pre-recorded debates in the privacy of their own homes and will be told a small number of other people in their village will also view the debate. In the public condition, community members from the area surrounding the polling station (the unit of randomization) are invited to attend a group screening of the debate. They then view the debate in a central and public location together with other members of their community.

We expect that the information provided will be more salient, and thus have a larger effect, in the public than in the private condition. This is a common expectation with other studies in the Metaketa initiative. We expect that the signal will be more salient in the public condition because the information is reinforced to a greater extent than in the private condition. In a similar study, Bidwell, Casey and Glennerster (2014) also find that the magnitude of the treatment effect in the group screening is larger than that of the private screening for knowledge of candidate characteristics, knowledge of candidate policy positions, and moving into policy alignment. They
find that there is no difference between group and private screenings in terms of general political
knowledge, suggesting that the difference between public and private screenings is not simply
explained by differences in comprehension.

Reinforcement may occur through deliberation among viewers, who, through discussion raise
the salience of the information provided and help one another process the information. Under
conditions of deliberation it is also possible that opinion leaders are able to sway beliefs about
candidates, such that viewers in the group setting will hold more similar assessments of candidates
after discussion than viewers who did not have the chance to discuss and hear others’ interpretation
of information.

In the private condition, the effect of the information operates only in relation to the viewer’s
prior beliefs about candidates, and is not affected by the beliefs of others, at least in the short term.
It is possible that subsequent to the viewing, the individual discusses the debate with others in their
community, but we expect that even if discussion takes place, the ability to interpret and overcome
cognitive barriers to incorporating new information will be less when only one party has received
the information first hand.

Another possible mechanism through which public provision of information might affect vote
choice in theory is through improved voter coordination. In particular, public viewing of informa-
tion creates the possibility for the production of common knowledge. This means that an individual
knows that not only themselves, but others have the same information they have received, and oth-
ers know that they have this information. A voter’s preference over a set of candidates may change
as a result of the information he or she receives, but that voter may be unwilling to change his or
her vote unless they know that other voters are making the same decision.

While coordination could in theory affect vote choice, we do not expect that this is the mecha-
nism underlying the greater effect of information on vote choice under conditions of public provi-
sion in this case. Because the candidate is selected at the level of the constituency, and the debate
viewing takes place at the level of the polling station, there is no reason to believe that a voter
will assume that those beyond the polling station in which the viewing occurred will also have
access to the same information. Indeed, such an assumption could be a costly mistake if the voter’s
area is able to be singled out as an area that did not support the winner (under conditions of a
punishment regime or selective targeting of resources by the winner to supporters). To avoid the
possibility of voters making this mistake, we plan to inform those who attend group screenings that the screenings are being held in only a subset of randomly selected polling stations in the constituency.

2.5 Full vs. Partial Information

Finally, in the general election setting, among those who receive information privately, we compare the effect of information about candidate valence on vote choice and turnout when we provide information about all candidates running (full information) versus providing information about the incumbent only (partial information).\(^7\) Most of the field experiments to date that have provided voters with information about candidate quality and performance have done so for the incumbent politician or party only, and not for challengers. One obvious reason for this is that any information provided about performance in office can, by definition, only be provided about the incumbent. Nevertheless, the expectation for vote choice is not clear in the absence of knowledge about the information available to them about challengers. If a voter receives good news about an incumbent, we predict that she will be more likely to vote for that candidate. If she receives bad news, we expect that she is less likely to vote for the incumbent, but we do not know whom she will vote for instead, without knowing something about her relative ranking of other candidates and whether or not she has received any additional news, good or bad, about the set of challengers. We also expect that if she receives bad news about the incumbent only, she is less likely to turn out to vote.

Our intervention is somewhat unique in that we have purposely selected information that is possible to collect for all candidates, both incumbents and challengers, and we collect information on voters’ priors for all candidates. This allows us to examine voter behavior in a “full information” context. To examine the effect of full information versus partial information, we compare voter behavior across treatments where voters watch the full video, exposing them to information about all candidates, versus where voters watch a video that features the incumbent only.

When a voter receives good news about the incumbent, we expect those in the full information treatment are likely to vote for this candidate only if there is no other candidate about whom they receive better news. If a voter receives good news about more than one candidate, we expect that

\(^7\)The private information treatment arm is only included in the general elections since we do not have the budget and capacity to implement it in both elections.
the voter is likely to support the candidate according to the weights he or she places on the various dimensions of candidate valence about which we provide information. If a voter receives bad news about the incumbent, we expect the voters in the full information treatment will be likely to support another candidate if and only if there is another candidate about whom they receive good news. If a voter receives bad news about the incumbent in the partial information treatment, we expect the voter is less likely to support the incumbent.\(^8\)

Recently, studies in a variety of developing country contexts have found that, unlike in the U.S. context, incumbent politicians face a disadvantage relative to their challengers. Some have proposed that perceptions of incumbent engagement in corruption explains this finding (Klavsnja 2013). We suggest an additional hypothesis - developing country contexts are often low information political environments. When voters receive bad news about incumbents in a low information setting, they choose not to vote for the incumbent again, but not on the basis of having information that challengers will be better, or less corrupt. Given more information about all candidates, voters may come to the conclusion that although the incumbent performed poorly, he is still likely to outperform challengers. Thus, incumbent disadvantage may be mitigated in a full information environment.

In addition to vote choice, we expect the full versus partial information environment to have differential effects on turnout. We expect that conditional on receiving bad news about an incumbent, voters are more likely to turn out to vote in a full information environment, where they learn either a) that there is a challenger who will better represent them, or b) that despite poor performance, the incumbent is superior to challengers and the voter would be well served by voting for the incumbent. We further expect that conditional on receiving bad news about an incumbent, turnout will be depressed to a greater extent in an intra-party environment than an inter-party environment, when the voter holds the same party affiliation as the incumbent.

\(^8\)Whether having information about the challenger changes the prediction about vote choice or makes the precision more precise depends on the context. We elaborate on the theory and related hypotheses in an update the the pre-analysis plan prior to the collection of data for the general election, where the individual treatment arms will be administered.
3 Description of Treatments

Treatment 1: Candidate Debates - Public

The candidate debate treatment is a direct replication of the main treatment in Bidwell, Casey and Glennerster (2014), where the authors found that screening debates increased general political knowledge, knowledge of candidate characteristics, knowledge of candidate party stances, policy alignment, votes for the best performing candidate, and voter turnout in parliamentary elections in Sierra Leone. Similarly, in each constituency in the proposed study, a debate will be facilitated and recorded. This treatment arm is intended to provide information to voters about candidates’ policy positions and candidate image. The video also provides some information on the minimum qualifications, roles and responsibilities of members of parliament, and encourages them to vote on election day. The screening of the recorded debate will take place in a randomly selected set of polling stations within the constituency.

The debates will center on two dimensions, policy and image:

1. Policy
   
   (a) Policy priorities for the constituency and the nation
   
   (b) Position on a contentious issue: District splitting
   
   (c) Position on a contentious issue: Legal consequences of vote buying

2. Image
   
   (a) Qualifications (education, career history, community experience)
   
   (b) Personal characteristics that best prepares them for office
   
   (c) Performance: Achievements that show the candidate will be a good representative

The specific questions asked of the candidates are provided in Appendix A.

For both primaries and general elections, trained moderators will facilitate the candidate debates to ensure uniformity of treatment across constituencies. Moderators will ensure that for each debate, each candidate answers every question and each candidate receives equal time. Debates
will be held in local languages. Following the recording of the debate, the recording will be profession­ally edited and we will confirm that all candidates answered questions. The debates will then be screened in selected polling station catchment areas through a road show. Community members will be invited in advance to attend. The questions will be designed in collaboration with implementing partners and agreed upon with candidates prior to the recording of the debates to ensure that candidates participate.\(^9\)

Teams will be sent to villages in the catchment areas of treatment polling stations with equipment to screen the debate at a large community meeting. Community members will be mobilized several days in advance. Since we will be working in remote areas where televisions in general and large screenings in particular are still a rarity, we expect high attendance rates.

In advance of the screening, a set of individuals in the community will be randomly selected to participate in a baseline survey. This survey, discussed further in Section 7, will collect, amongst others, respondents’ prior beliefs about candidates. At the conclusion of the survey, these respondents will be provided with an incentive to attend the screening and participate in a second follow-up survey. During the baseline survey, all respondents will be told that they will receive an incentive of phone airtime if they make themselves available to answer a call on the date the election takes place. Additionally, those in the public treatment group will be told they will receive an additional airtime incentive if they turn in their respondent card at the screening. We will also collect the contact information of respondents, with their permission, to allow us to follow up with them after the election takes place.

In compliance with the Public Order Management Act, the route plan of the screenings will be sent to the national Inspector General of Police. Prior to beginning the screening in a district the team will gather letters of approval from the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) and the local internal security organization. We expect that we will be assigned police or security officers to attend and safeguard the screenings.

\(^9\)Despite best efforts, it is possible that some candidates will choose not to participate. In the case of a candidate not participating, the final version of the film will note that they are a candidate, but that they chose not to participate.
Treatment 2: Candidate Debates - Private

In the individual-level treatment polling stations, a subset of individuals will be randomly assigned to receive the private candidate debate treatment. These respondents will receive a survey, and in the course of the survey privately view the recorded debate on tablets brought by enumerators. Respondents will view the debate on tablets in the course of conducting a household survey. As in the public debate treatment, we will also collect the contact information of respondents, with their permission, to allow us to follow up with them after the election takes place. An independent auditor will backcheck at least 10% of all surveys conducted across the different treatment arms, and among other things ensure that interviews were indeed conducted privately.

Treatment 3: Incumbent Recording - Private [TBD]¹⁰

In the individual-level treatment polling stations, a subset of individuals will be randomly assigned to receive a private treatment in which they view only the responses provided by the incumbent. As in Treatment 2, these respondents will privately view the recording of the incumbent’s responses on tablets brought by enumerators. Also as in the public debate treatment, we will also collect the contact information of respondents, with their permission, to allow us to follow up with them after the election takes place.

4 Experimental Design

We examine the effect of candidate debates, screened publicly, on political knowledge and behavior in primary and general elections. Within general elections, we examine the effect of candidate debates screened publicly on political knowledge and behavior compared to two individual-level treatment arms: 1) private debate screenings, and 2) an incumbent recording [TBD], also viewed privately (see Figure 1).

¹⁰As discussed above, this treatment is a modification to the original design that we are proposing.
4.1 Randomization

Constituency Selection and Assignment

The candidate debates will take place in a total of 10 constituencies. The sample of constituencies eligible for selection into either the intra or inter-party treatment condition was determined by assessing the competitiveness, likelihood of violence, and other factors affecting the ability of project consortium to screen the film. First, a set of 58 rural constituencies were selected using the following criteria for competitiveness: (a) having different winning parties in the past two elections (2006 and 2011) (b) not having the same Member of Parliament serve for two different parties, and (c) having average vote margins across the past two elections of 20 percent or lower. Urban constituencies, i.e. constituencies located within city or municipal boundaries, were excluded from the sample.

Then, the research team conducted interviews with a set of key informants, including journalists, members of political parties, political analysts, and staff at Innovations for Poverty Action to gather information on past violence and the likelihood of violence, whether a constituency was located in a difficult to reach area, and whether the presence of multiple languages would prohibit the screening of the film in a single language (thereby preventing a subset of constituents from being able to understand the information being provided). After excluding constituencies for the aforementioned reasons, a total of twenty-seven constituencies remained eligible for inclusion. In the lead up to the general elections, a number of new constituencies were created. We expect split constituencies to decrease in competitiveness, and we therefore also excluded any constituency which was listed in a parliamentary committee report.11

Of the remaining constituencies, we randomly assign 10 constituencies for inclusion in the primary arms of the study, and the remainder serve as controls, which will be employed to assess downstream effects of the intervention, as discussed in Section 4.2. We block sampling on (a) region and (b) whether the incumbents party is an opposition party or not (defined as NRM or Independent). From the resulting strata, we stick as closely as possible to drawing 1 out of 3. This implies oversampling of the non-opposition strata in the North (2 out of 4) and of the opposition strata in the West (1 out of 2). Should we have to replace a constituency we will do so with the

constituency with the next smallest random number within the same strata.\(^\text{12}\)

**Polling Station Assignment to Treatment**

The primary unit of randomization is the polling station. In the 10 study constituencies, we will randomly assign polling stations to one of the following: a) primary elections - public screening, b) primary elections - control, c) general elections - public screening, d) general elections - control, and e) general elections - individual treatment.\(^\text{13}\) In each constituency, we will randomly assign a total of 12 polling stations to receive a public debate screening and 12 to serve as control, for a total of 120 treatment and 120 control polling stations in each election round.

To ensure that polling stations are geographically distributed in the constituency and that no adjacent villages are selected into the sample, we randomize in two stages. First, parishes are assigned to one of four treatment conditions. To ensure orthogonality across the survey rounds, and to enable us to measure spillover effects, we use a factorial design, with the treatment and control assignment in the general and the primary elections, respectively, being the two dimensions.\(^\text{14}\)

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In each study round, primaries and general elections, only one polling station per parish is included in the “public” sample – and assigned to the public treatment or control condition – in order to minimize spillover. Thus, up to 24 parishes per constituency are assigned to the four treatment cells pictured above.

Within each parish, we select the three polling stations with the highest overlap between a polling station catchment area and its ‘main’ village.\(^\text{15}\) We define the main village as the village contributing the highest number of voters to a polling station according to the updated voter register.

\(^{12}\)In fact, three constituencies were ultimately replaced. One because the constituency was likely to be split, and two others because the NRM data available at the time of final sample selection showed zero or one contestant.

\(^{13}\)To save costs and to estimate survey effects the control group in the primaries will be ‘recycled’ as half of the treatment and half of the control group during the general election phase.

\(^{14}\)Eligibility criteria for parishes are: At least two polling stations in the parish, only one randomly selected parish per urban area (town council).

\(^{15}\)To minimize spillover, we exclude polling stations from the sample which: (a) are part of the sample of the other Uganda team, and/or (b) have a main village where voters are registered in polling stations in two different parishes.
of the National Electoral Commission. Overlap is defined as the percentage of voters in a given polling station that come from its main village. For example, a polling station where 90% of voters come from the village contributing the highest number of voters is considered to have higher overlap than a polling station where only a maximum of 20% of voters come from one village. We choose this strategy to maximize overlap between a village and a polling station catchment area in the general elections.

The three sample polling stations per parish are then randomly assigned to be part of the primaries sample, the general election public sample, or – potentially – the general election individual sample. Only ‘individual’ polling stations in parishes in the control group of the general election (cells TT and TC above) will be included in the sample, to minimize the risk of spillover from the public treatment to respondents in the individual treatment or control groups.

Randomization is blocked at the constituency level. Since the elections we analyze are held at the constituency level, this strategy effectively blocks on legislative performance of the incumbent, level of electoral competition, quality of service delivery, performance of the incumbent in the debate, number of challengers, and other constituency level characteristics. Randomization of assignment of polling station to treatment arms will further be stratified on vote margin for the NRM and voter turnout in the previous general election. The randomization strategy is summarized in the graph below.

For the NRM primary elections, each gazetted village in Uganda serves as a polling station. For the general elections, each polling station serves several villages, with an average of 580 voters per polling station in the 2011 general elections. There were nearly 24,000 polling stations, with an average of 214 polling stations per constituency, in the 2011 general elections.

**Respondent Assignment to Treatment**

We will sample a random subset of 20 voters in each polling station assigned to a group treatment or control to participate in the survey. We will rely on official voter registers for the process of randomization at the level of the respondent. For the NRM primaries, only those eligible to

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16The zoning of primary polling stations is different in the primary elections, where one village typically corresponds with a village, rendering high overlap in the general elections all the more important for the sake of comparability of results across the two rounds of elections. We will invite voters from other but the main village to attend the public screening during the general elections.
participate in the primary elections, that is, registered NRM voters, will be eligible for participation in the study. For the general elections, only registered voters will be eligible for participation in the study.

In the general election we will select 30 polling stations (3 per constituency) to receive individual level treatments. Individual respondents within these polling stations will be randomly assigned to one of three treatment conditions: a ‘private screening’ of the debate (n=400), a scorecard or a ‘private screening’ of the incumbent recording only (TBD) (n=400), and control (n=400).¹⁷

**Risks and Mediation Strategies**

Randomly assigning polling stations within a constituency to be either treated in the primaries or the general elections is necessary in order to have statistical power to compare treatment effects across the two types of elections. One challenge, however, is that the winner of the NRM primaries will participate in debates twice – in the primaries and in the general elections, thus potentially modifying part of the treatment. We do not expect debates to affect which candidate wins. However, just participating in debates in the primaries may affect the behavior of the NRM candidate in the debates we organize in the general elections (or the strategies s/he uses in reaction...

¹⁷The intervention for the second private treatment arm in the general elections is still being discussed. We will update the pre-analysis plan accordingly prior to starting data collection for the general election phase of the study.
to the debates). We will collect survey and observational measures of the performance and strategies used by the different candidates in both elections.\textsuperscript{18} If debates during the general election favor lesser known candidates, i.e. the opposition, improved performance by the NRM candidate would bias us against finding a treatment effect during the general election. We could also consider recording NRM candidates positions only once prior to the primaries and using the same recording also during the general election screening.\textsuperscript{19}

We minimize spillover between treatment and control polling stations by only working in one polling station per parish in each election round.\textsuperscript{20} Spillover effects across rounds are another concern. Three to four months will pass between the primaries and the general elections debate screenings. Conducting both screenings in the same districts increases chances of spillover across rounds, i.e. people in control areas learning about the primaries debates and adjusting their expectations about the winning primary candidate in the general elections accordingly. We are not too concerned about spillover, since we consider it unlikely that respondents will learn about the specific information relayed in the debates. We will get some measures of spillover during the baseline survey for the general elections, by asking respondents whether they heard about the debate and whether according to their knowledge any candidate performed better than the others. Hence, while we cannot completely rule out spillover, we can minimize the risk, measure spillover and formulate expectations in which direction it may have affected the average treatment effect in the general election round.

### 4.2 Analysis of Downstream Effects

Although the main outcome variable of interest is vote choice, we also seek to determine whether participation in Meet the Candidates sessions also affects politician behavior. In order to assess the downstream effects of the intervention, we compare long-term behavior of the politicians ultimately elected in treatment versus control constituencies. In order to do this, we conduct a sur-

\textsuperscript{18}We separately plan to assess the extent to which candidates alter their campaign rhetoric and promises in an intra- vs. inter-electoral environment.

\textsuperscript{19}The challenge with recording only once is that candidates may have justifiable reasons to alter their responses to questions, for example if an urgent issue arises in their constituency between the primary and general elections.

\textsuperscript{20}With the exception of polling stations assigned to the individual treatment, which only be located in parishes assigned to the control group of the public intervention during the general elections, thus making spillover from public to individual very unlikely. We are not concerned about spillover from the individual treatment, since a relatively small number of people per village will be treated individually in private.
vey of all candidates in the control constituencies, that includes the same questions asked in the recorded candidate debates. We will follow candidate behavior over the course of the next parliamentary term (2016-2021) to examine whether candidates who publicly commit to campaign promises are more likely to fulfill these promises than those who do not commit publicly via the recorded and screened sessions. We will also examine whether there are differences in campaign promises across candidates from the same party running in general and primary elections.21

5 Data

Data on the primary outcomes of interest, vote choice and turnout, will be collected in two ways. First, we will obtain official voting records disaggregated at the polling station level for both the primary and general elections. Second, we will obtain individual level voting outcomes through a phone survey on the evening of the election for all treatment and control groups. In addition to the exit poll, we will conduct a baseline survey in all treatment arms and a posterior survey in the treatment group only.22 In polling stations assigned to the private treatment or the private control, data on baseline characteristics, priors and posteriors will be collected in the same session, just before and after the private viewing of the screening.

The stages of interaction with the primary respondents, i.e. all those sampled for the household survey, are outline below.

(1) Baseline survey to elicit baseline characteristics and priors. At the end of the baseline survey, respondents are given an invitation card to attend the debate screening. The invitation card contains their respondent ID. They are told that if they attend the debate and are willing to conduct a brief interview afterwards, they will receive a small compensation in the form of airtime (about USD .50) conditional on presenting the invitation card. (2) Public debate screening. The debate screening will be held at a central location in the polling station catchment area, will be open to the public and advertised in advance. We expect 150-200 viewers per debate. (3) Posterior survey. Within 24 hours of the debate screening we will conduct a posterior survey with respondents from

21The section on downstream effects will be expanded in an updated version of the pre-analysis plan prior to the collection of any related outcome data.
22Ideally we would conduct the same posterior survey for the control group, but unfortunately lack the resources to undertake this activity.
the primary sample. (4) Exit poll. All respondents in the primary sample will be called in the evening of election day to ask about their individual voting behavior.

In control areas, steps (2) and (3) are skipped. For respondents assigned to the individual treatment, the public debate screening (step 2) is replaced with an individual display of the information on a tablet and steps (1)-(3) are combined.

Below we briefly summarize the content of each survey. Measurement and survey items are discussed in greater detail in Section 7.

5.1 Baseline Survey

The baseline survey will be conducted with 20 individuals randomly selected from voter registers in each polling station. For the NRM primaries, respondents will be selected from a single village, as each village has its own polling station. For the general elections, respondents will be selected from the polling station catchment area, which includes 2-3 villages on average. The baseline survey will collect information on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Demographic information and eligibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Controls and moderators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Political knowledge and behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Policy preferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Priors on candidates’ quality and policy positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Saliency of candidate qualities, weights and partisanship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Intended vote choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Community-level variables</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2 Posterior Survey

Voter evaluation of candidates (posteriors) will be measured after the dissemination of information. Respondents will be asked questions about how they evaluate the different candidates along a number of dimensions and whom they perceived to win the debate. They will also be asked whether they intend to vote and if so, for which candidate.
In public screening polling stations, respondents from the baseline survey will be interviewed within 24 hours of the screening, individual treatment respondents will be asked questions immediately after seeing the screening. In order to incentivize respondents in public screening polling stations to attend the screening and to respond to a survey afterwards, they will receive an invitation to the debate at baseline, indicating their respondent ID. Upon registering with a staff member at the screening they will receive a small remuneration. The posterior survey will collect information on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Confirm attendance of debate screening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Assessment of candidate quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Knowledge of candidates policy positions and qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Intended vote choice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.3 Exit Poll

We will collect individual level data on turnout and voting behavior through a phone-based exit poll on the evening of the election. Since overreporting of turnout is a concern respondents will be asked a simple factual question which they are likely to only be able to answer if they actually voted, such as a question about the design of the ballot. In a robustness check, only respondents who answered this question correctly will be considered. For the individual level treatment we have to purely rely on self-reported voting behavior.

For a random subset of respondents we will conduct an ‘exit poll plus’ which also elicits political knowledge, perceived likability of the candidates and information on candidate behavior in the polling station catchment are. The phone survey will cover the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vote choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Verification question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Political knowledge (exit poll plus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Perceived likability of candidates (exit poll plus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Candidate behavior, including number of visits and gifts given (exit poll plus)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4 Attrition

Attrition is a concern for both the posterior survey and the exit poll, the latter in particular as it is phone-based. We have three strategies for dealing with attrition. First, we oversample respondents at baseline. Our power calculations suggested we require at least 10 respondents per polling station, and we have randomly selected 20 respondents per polling station, in anticipation of attrition. Second, as discussed above, we employ participant incentives. Those in the treatment group receive an incentive in the form of phone credit if they turn in the respondent card given to them at baseline during the screening. Those in both treatment and control receive phone credit if they answer our phone call on the evening of the election. Respondents are told of both of these incentives at the conclusion of the baseline survey. Third, we assess the randomness of attrition, or missingness in the exit poll data, by comparing those who complete the exit poll with those who do not on baseline characteristics. We believe that these three strategies together will minimize attrition and help us determine the extent to which the exit poll data we collect is representative of the baseline sample.

5.5 Electoral Data

The data for candidate vote share and turnout comes directly from official polling station electoral returns. For the general election, data on both outcome variables are collected by the Electoral Commission and available at the polling station level. We have obtained polling station level electoral data for the last election and the Electoral Commission Secretary has confirmed the cooperation of the Electoral Commission for the study. For the primaries, the same polling stations are used and data on vote share and turnout are collected by the NRM Electoral Commission, which has also agreed to share their data.

6 Hypotheses

We have several sets of hypotheses. Some are held constant across studies in the larger Metaketa project, some are specific to this project.
6.1 Primary Hypotheses

H1a Positive information increases voter support for politicians (subgroup effect). (Metaketa)

H1b Negative information decreases voter support for politicians (subgroup effect). (Metaketa)

H2 The effect of political information (exposure to debates) will have a larger effect on vote choice in an intra-party than an inter-party environment. (Project-specific)

6.2 Hypotheses on Secondary Outcomes

H3a Good news increases voter turnout. (Metaketa)

H3b Bad news decreases voter turnout. (Metaketa)

H4 Bad news reduces turnout in an inter-party environment to a greater extent than in an intra-party environment. Confronted with bad news about a candidate, voters will feel more comfortable voting for a different candidate instead in an intra-party contest, where both are from the same party. In an inter-party contest, voters confronted with bad news will instead opt to abstain if they have a strong partisan attachment. (Project-specific)

6.3 Hypotheses on Intermediate Outcomes

H5 Both types of information increase voters’ political knowledge. (Project-specific)

H6 Politicians mount campaigns to respond to negative information. (Metaketa)

H7 Politicians’ campaign effort is stronger in treatment areas. (Project-specific)

H8 Party officials’ campaign effort is stronger in treatment areas. (Project-specific)

H9 Party officials’ campaign effort is stronger in treatment areas in an inter- versus intra-party environment. (Project-specific)
6.4 Hypotheses on Voter Specific Heterogeneous Treatment Effects

H10 Information effects—both positive and negative—are stronger for voters that do not share ethnic identities. (Metaketa)

H11 Information effects—both positive and negative—are stronger for voters with weaker partisan identities. (Metaketa)

H12 Information effects—both positive and negative—are stronger for voters who value individual merit over party ID. (Project-specific)

H13 Information effects—both positive and negative—are stronger for voters who have not received clientelistic benefits from any candidate. (Metaketa)

H14 Information effects—both positive and negative—are stronger for voters who do not report expecting to receive personal favors from any candidate in the future. (Project-specific)

H15 Informational effects—both positive and negative—are stronger for voters who believe the ballot to be secret. (Metaketa)

H16 Informational effects—both positive and negative—are stronger for voters who have poor information about candidates in the absence of the intervention, defined as either lacking or wrong information. (Project-specific)

H17 Informational effects—both positive and negative—are stronger for voters who have uncertainty about candidates in the absence of the intervention, defined as how informed the respondent feels about a given candidate. (Project-specific)

6.5 Intervention Specific Heterogeneous Effects

H18 Information effects—both positive and negative—are stronger when the gap between voters’ prior beliefs about candidates and the information provided is larger. (Metaketa)

H19 Information effects—both positive and negative—are stronger when information is provided in public settings. (Metaketa)
H20a Information—both positive and negative—about the incumbent are stronger when information is provided about the incumbent only versus all the candidates. (Project-specific)

H20b Negative information about the incumbent will depress turnout to a larger extent when information is provided about the incumbent only versus all the candidates. (Project-specific)

H21 For voters holding the same party ID as the incumbent, negative information about the incumbent will depress turnout to a larger extent when information is provided in an inter-versus intra-party environment. (Project-specific)

7 Key Variables and Measurement

7.1 Defining Good and Bad News

Our debate intervention necessarily bundles different types of information treatments, and the evaluation of some of them is inherently subjective. Our definition of good and bad news therefore needs to solve the issues of aggregation and of subjective evaluations. Below we describe two different approaches, which we term the ‘agnostic’ and the ‘constructed indicator’ approach.

We think of our information treatment as providing information along two different dimensions, candidates’ policy platforms and candidates’ characteristics (commonly referred to as candidate image (Hacker, 2004)). In the debate, we have three questions related to each dimension. The policy questions ask candidates to describe their policy priority sector for the constituency, for the nation and their position on a controversial policy, district splitting. We are interested in the degree to which the positions of a given candidate align with the preferences of a given voter. Here, good and bad news can be objectively defined by comparing a respondent’s prior on whether a candidate’s policy position aligns with the actual alignment revealed in the debate.\(^{23}\) This approach is applicable to both the treatment and the control group.

The literature on debates in the US recognizes the importance of debates for voters’ perception of candidate characteristics (Schill and Kirk, 2014; Brubaker and Hanson, 2009; Benoit, Hansen

\(^{23}\)One may ask whether candidates’ statements are viewed as trustworthy by voters. For the statements relating to image, a voter’s assessment of how they answer the question, and other information gleaned from viewing the candidate, enters into their assessment of trustworthiness. For policy alignment questions, we do expect voters will deem statements as trustworthy.
and Verser, 2003). We follow McCroskey and Teven (1999) in differentiating between three different dimensions of perceived candidate characteristics: competence, trustworthiness and genuine interest in voters’ interests (goodwill). One challenge is that the evaluation of candidate characteristics is inherently subjective. To assess how the debate influenced voter perceptions, we ask respondents in the treatment group less than 24 hours after the screening whether they were positively or negatively surprised by a given candidate’s responses on each of the three categories of candidate image outlined above. For obvious reasons we cannot ask control respondents the same question. We therefore use baseline characteristics, including demographics, priors, partisanship and past voting behavior, to predict the posterior assessments of control respondents, and respondents who were in treatment villages but did not attend the screening. The questions in the posterior survey are as follows:

- Competence: Compared to how you felt before watching the film: Considering factors such as education, work and life experience, do you rate [candidate]’s qualifications as area MP as much better, slightly better, about the same, a little worse or much worse?

- Trustworthiness: Compared to how you felt before watching the film, do you think you can trust [candidate] to follow through on what he says much more, a little more, about the same, a little less or much less?

- Goodwill: Compared to how you felt before watching the film, has your perception changed of how much [candidate] genuinely cares about voters like you – cares much more, a little more, about the same, a little less or much less?

To aggregate good news and bad news across these six categories, we use self-reported weights.

\[24\text{In lab settings in the US, respondents are commonly asked their candidate assessments immediately before and after watching the debate. Since a before-after test is both cost-prohibitive and logistically unfeasible in our setting we rely on asking about change in assessments after the debate screening. We may be able to measure assessments for a subset of respondents immediately before the screening in order to verify our measure.}\]

\[25\text{This measurement approach is adapted from the American literature on political communication, see Brubaker and Hanson (2009); McCroskey and Teven (1999); Teven (2008).}\]
measured at baseline.\textsuperscript{26} We refer to this measure as the *constructed indicator*.\textsuperscript{27}

We also assess respondents’ overall subjective assessment of good news versus bad news for each candidate within 24 hours of the debate screening. Similarly to the subjective candidate image assessments, we use baseline characteristics to predict voters’ overall subjective assessment of a candidate for the control group. We refer to this measure as *agnostic*, since it treats the debate as a black box. The question in the posterior survey is as follows:

- Overall subjective assessment: *Compared to how you felt before watching the film, is your current overall opinion of [candidate] much better, slightly better, about the same, slightly worse, or much worse?*

We use the agnostic measure to verify and improve the quality of our constructed indicator of good versus bad news in the treatment group. If we construct the indicator well, it should correlate highly with respondent’s subjective assessment on whether the debate provided them good or bad news on a given candidate. To tie our hands on the construction of the good news/bad news indicator before analyzing outcome data but still take advantage of the fact that we have a ‘true’ measure\textsuperscript{28}, we will update the pre-analysis plan with the final indicator construction after having analyzed the posterior data but prior to having access to the data from the exit poll. If the constructed indicator does not correlate well with the agnostic measure – which could be the case if (a) respondents misreported the weight they attach to different considerations in assessing a candidate, or (b) we are not measuring important information content conveyed in the debates – we will rely on the agnostic measure with predicted values for the control group for the main analysis instead, and report results with the constructed indicator in the Appendix.\textsuperscript{29} We discuss each of these approaches in greater detail below.

\textsuperscript{26}The survey question reads: “There are many factors people take into consideration when deciding how to assess a candidate. I’m going to read you a few such factors. For each of them, please tell me how important you consider them in your personal evaluation of candidates for area MP – very important, somewhat important, neither important nor unimportant, somewhat unimportant, or very unimportant. *List of criteria:* (a) Whether a candidate thinks that the same issues are a priority for your constituency as you do. (b) Whether a candidate has the same policy priority for Uganda as a whole as you. (c) Whether a candidate holds the same position as you on whether or not more districts should be created in Uganda. (d) How well qualified, considering education, job, and life experience a candidate is to represent your constituency. (e) Whether a candidate genuinely cares about the interests of voters like you. (f) Whether you can rely on a candidate to follow through on what they say.”

\textsuperscript{27}We also measure weights at the posterior survey to assess the possibility that the treatment changes the weights. If so, we will employ a specification in which we do not use weights.

\textsuperscript{28}We have a ‘true’ measure of the degree to which each respondent was positively or negatively surprised by a given candidate, assuming they respond truthfully to the question above.

\textsuperscript{29}To be decided and registered prior to having access to outcome data.
### Dimension | Category \((k)\) | Weight \((w_k)\)
---|---|---
Policy | Alignment on constituency policy priority | a
| Alignment on national policy priority | b
| Alignment on position on district splitting | c
Candidate image | Competence | d
| Trustworthiness | e
| Goodwill | f

**Agnostic approach**

The agnostic approach treats the debate as a black box. Let \(L_{ij}^+\) be good news and \(L_{ij}^-\) be bad news for individual \(i\) and politician \(j\). After the screening, we ask respondents in the treatment group to tell us on a five point scale the degree to which they were positively or negatively surprised by a given candidate. This gives us a subjective measure of good or bad news for each candidate-respondent dyad in the treatment group, where a positive surprise is considered good news and a negative surprise is considered bad news. Since we cannot gather this data from respondents in the control group, as we do not have an endline survey in control areas, we predict it based on baseline characteristics. To account for uncertainty of prediction, we run the final estimation over different predicted datasets and then average the estimate across.

**Constructed indicator**

For the constructed indicator, we consider different aspects of the information contained in the debate screening separately.

**Policy dimension** We measure the priors \((P_{ijk})\) and the information content \((Q_{jk})\) for each of these categories \(k\) for each politician \(j\) and individual \(i\). For policy positions, we consider it as good news if a candidate’s policy preferences are more aligned with those of the voter than anticipated, or are as aligned as anticipated (thus offering greater certainty), and as bad news otherwise. The distance \((N)\) between the prior and the information provided determine the degree to which news are good or bad. We consider it “very good news” if a voter had a prior that a candidate’s policy position was not aligned, but the position is indeed aligned (++++), as “good news” if a voter didn’t
have a prior on whether the policy positions were aligned and finds out that they are aligned (++) and as “weakly good news” if a voter’s prior that policy positions are aligned is confirmed, thus reducing uncertainty (+). Conversely, we consider it “very bad news” if a voter had a prior that policy positions were aligned but the information reveals that they are not (—), as “bad news” if a voter did not have a prior and the information reveals that they are not aligned (—) and as “weakly bad news” if a voter’s prior that policy positions are not aligned is confirmed (-). This is summarized in the table below.\textsuperscript{30}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Align</th>
<th>Non-align</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Align</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-align</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Candidate image** Defining good and bad news with regard to candidate image issues is more difficult, since the perception of information conveyed about candidate quality in a debate clip is to a degree subjective. Since we cannot have respondents in the control group give us a rating of the candidates performance, we have to rely on prediction.

To do so, we will ask respondents in the treatment group whether watching the debate screening changed their mind on the three categories – competence, trustworthiness and goodwill of a given candidate – and if so in which direction and to which degree. We then use this data to construct ratings of each candidate’s performance with regard to each of the three categories. As an alternative approach, we construct an average ‘news’ measure for each candidate, which is the average response among treatment group respondents to the question “Compared to how you felt before watching the film, is your current overall opinion of [candidate] much better, slightly better, about the same, slightly worse, or much worse? This means we lose individual level variation, but can avoid prediction since we can objectively code expected and actual policy alignment (see the description above). We will show results for both measures.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{30}We also assess the possibility that candidates convince voters to change their policy preferences. To do so, we ask respondents after watching the debate what their policy preference is. If it is different from the one reported at baseline, we ask them what made them change their mind.

\textsuperscript{31}We have also considered gathering respondents’ priors at baseline (T & C, prior1), priors immediately before the
**Aggregation** Since our treatment is a bundle of information along candidate image and policy dimensions, we construct a weighted average of good/bad news across the different categories. To do so, we ask each respondent at baseline how they weight the different categories of information when deciding how to vote. We then use these weights to construct a respondent specific average of the type of information they receive.

For the policy dimension, we define news as

$$ L_{ijk} = P_{ijk} - Q_{ijk} $$

where we consider news as good if $L_{ijk} \geq 0$ for individual $i$, politician $j$, and category $k$, and as bad news otherwise. For the candidate image dimension, we directly measure $L_{ijk}$ for the treatment group and estimate it for the control group, as discussed above. We then rescale $L_{ijk}$ to $[-1, 1]$ and aggregate the news for the six categories, using the weights $w_{ik}$ collected during the baseline survey.

$$ L_{ij} = \sum_{k} (weight_{ik} \times L_{ijk}) $$

Since we have a measure of the ‘true’ news content as perceived by the individual for the treatment group (agnostic measure), we also consider tweaking this algorithm to better match the agnostic measure.\(^{32}\)

To test whether priors change over time in the run-up to the election, and whether respondents become more informed about candidates, we test for time effects over the course of baseline data collection.

\(^{32}\)See discussion above.
7.2 Dependent Variables

The main dependent variables of interest are vote choice and turnout, which we will collect at the polling station and individual level.

Polling Station-Level Outcomes

We will collect polling station level official election results for both the NRM primaries and general elections:

1. VoteShare: The vote share of each candidate, calculated at the level of the polling station.

2. TurnoutShare: The percentage of registered voters who voted on election day. The denominator for the primaries comes from the NRM voter registration list, and for the general elections comes from the national voter register. The numerator is the number of valid votes.

Individual-Level Outcomes

1. Vote: Vote choice is a binary variable for each voter-candidate dyad, which takes the value 1 if voter $i$ reported voting for candidate $j$ in the exit poll and 0 otherwise. “Which candidate did you vote for for member of parliament of your constituency?”

2. Turnout: A measure that takes a value of 1 if the respondent reports that they voted on election day, 0 otherwise.

Polling Station-Level Outcomes - Secondary Dependent Variables

In addition to these primary dependent variables, we examine another set of secondary dependent variables, collected from a random subset of respondents during the exit poll survey, and aggregated at the level of the polling station:

1. CandResponse: Composite index indicating candidates’ response to the intervention, consisting of the two variables below:

$^{33}$Due to budget constraints these questions will only be collected from a subset of respondents. The exact number is yet to be determined, pending additional funding.
• **CandVisits**: Number of visits to a polling station catchment area each candidate made in the previous month.

• **CandSpend**: Amount reported spent per candidate on individual respondents in the form of sugar, salt, fuel and money in the course of the campaign.

2. **PartyResponse**: Measure of party’s response to the intervention. A count variable of the number of times a party representative has visited the village, as reported by a subset of respondents in the exit poll.

**Individual-Level Outcomes - Secondary Dependent Variables**

The following are another set of secondary dependent variables, collected from a random subset of respondents during the exit poll survey, and measured at the individual level:

1. **PolKnow**: An index consisting of the variables listed below. We report results both for the index and for individual survey items.

   • **MinRequirements**: Count variable (0-3) of correctly identified minimum qualifications for individuals contesting as member of Parliament.

   • **MPResp**: Count variable (0-5) of correctly answered true-false questions on MP responsibilities.

   • **CandKnow**: Count variable (0-5) of correctly answered questions about individual, randomly selected MP candidates, including: total number of MPs running, party (for general election), policy position on district splitting, priority area for constituency, position on banning candidate engaged in vote buying.\(^35\)

---

\(^34\)Due to budget constraints these questions will only be collected from a subset of respondents. The exact number is yet to be determined, pending additional funding.

\(^35\)One concern is that candidates may take different positions in the debates than they do elsewhere in the campaigns, and thus voters receive conflicting information on candidate positions. This is indeed possible, but very difficult to measure since candidate statements are infrequently recorded in the media, as they are in the US context. If candidates do provide conflicting information, this would bias us against finding a treatment effect.
7.3 Independent Variables

7.3.1 Treatment Variables

1. $T$: A measure that takes a value of 1 if respondent is assigned to receive any treatment, 0 otherwise.

2. $Public$: A measure that takes a value of 1 if respondent is assigned to receive the public (group screening) treatment, and 0 otherwise.

3. $Primary$: A measure that takes a value of 1 if respondent is part of the sample of the primaries, and 0 otherwise.

4. $Private$: A measure that takes a value of 1 if respondent is assigned to receive the individual (private screening) treatment, and 0 otherwise.

5. $Private2$: A measure that takes a value of 1 if a respondent is assigned to receive the score-card/incumbent treatment privately, and 0 otherwise.

6. $Watch$: A measure that takes a value of 1 if respondent attended the public or watched the private screening, and 0 otherwise.

7. $Change (N)$: Distance between priors and information received, $L_{ij} = P_{ij} - Q_{ij}$. The construction of this variable is described in detail in Section 7.1.

8. $GoodNews (L^+)$: An indicator variable taking the value 1 if a respondent received – or would have received, in the case of the control group – good news during the screening, relative to the respondent’s priors, i.e. $L_{ij} \geq 0$. The construction of this variable is described in detail in Section 7.1.

9. $t$: Number of days passed between the screening and the election.

7.3.2 Individual Characteristics and Moderators

1. $CandInfo$: Count variable (0-8) consisting of: Does respondent feel informed about a candidate, whether correctly identifies candidate’s highest level of education, religion, ethnicity,
main occupation and policy positions.\textsuperscript{36}

2. \textit{PolKnow}: Count variable (0-9) of the political knowledge of a respondent at baseline, including: The number of public offices for which a respondent can correctly tell the name of the office holder, including district councilor, district chairperson, current MP and speaker of Parliament. A count variable of correctly answered true-false questions on MP responsibilities.

3. \textit{Client}: A variable indicating whether a respondent has received any gifts from a candidate during this election campaign.

4. \textit{ExpectFavor}: A variable indicating whether a respondent expects to receive any personal favors from a candidate if elected.

5. \textit{SecretBallot}: Takes a value of 1 if the respondent is confident in the secret ballot, 0 otherwise.

6. \textit{PartyID}: Extent to which respondents are attached to one party relative to others (self-reported).\textsuperscript{37}
   
   - \textit{PartyMember}: Takes a value of 1 if the respondent is a member of the political party and 0 otherwise
   
   - \textit{PartyOpenness}: Count variable 1-7 of how open the respondent is to voting for the party they are a member of/feel close to.
   
   - \textit{PresMPCongruence}: Count variable for past voting behavior. 0 if the respondent did not vote for the MP or presidential party candidate in the previous election, 1 if they voted for either the MP or the presidential party candidate in the previous election, and 2 if they voted for both the MP and presidential party candidate in the previous election.

7. \textit{CoEthnic}: 1 if respondent and candidate are co-ethnics, 0 otherwise.

8. \textit{IntTurnout}: Takes a value of 1 if the respondent plans to vote in the upcoming elections, and 0 otherwise.

\textsuperscript{36}This is a more comprehensive version of the outcome variable CandKnow. Since we collect CandKnow during a short phone based interview on election night we can only include a subset of the baseline questions in the outcome measure.

\textsuperscript{37}construction tbd. Use the sum of openness (1-7) to other parties that they do not consider their preferred party
9. *PastTurnout*: Takes a value of 1 if the respondent reported voting in the previous parliamentary elections, and 0 otherwise.

10. *PastVote*: Which party did you vote for in the last Parliamentary elections?

11. *AccessInfo*: We assess respondents’ self-reported interest in consuming political information as well as more objective measures of media consumption for different outlets (radio, newspapers, and TV) (composite index).


13. *Certainty*: A respondent’s self-reported certainty, measured on a 5 point scale, where they are asked how well informed they feel about a given candidate.\(^{38}\)

### 7.3.3 Manipulation Check

Only respondents who report attending the screening will be included in the posterior survey. Even so, we employ the following variables as additional manipulation checks that the respondent received the treatment. First, we ask questions related to non-political content of the video. Second, for half the respondents in the posterior survey, we will ask a short set of questions relating to candidate knowledge.\(^{39}\)

1. *Manipulation check 1*: Variable that = 1 if the candidate answers correctly a question about non-political content of the video, such as the color of the background, and 0 otherwise.

2. *Manipulation check 2*: Count variable (0-5) of correctly answered questions about information included in the debate about individual, randomly selected MP candidates, including: total number of MPs running, party (for general election), policy position on district splitting, priority area for constituency, position on banning candidate engaged in vote buying.

\(^{38}\)In piloting we asked certainty about each prior on a given candidate, but found that respondents became frustrated with these questions. Unlike other projects in the Metaketa, we provide not only multiple pieces of information but also information about many candidates, such that asking about the certainty for each candidate-prior pair is not feasible.

\(^{39}\)We ask these questions in only half to test whether asking respondents immediately after viewing the screening contributes to a treatment effect.
8 Analysis

This section describes the empirical strategy we will be used to test the hypotheses generated above.

8.1 Main Analysis

For the main analysis and the estimation of heterogeneous treatment effects use the same estimation strategy as laid out in the metaPAP.\footnote{From which we are heavily borrowing below.} The primary outcome variable is vote choice, a dichotomous variable that takes a value of 0 or 1, measured at the level of the voter-candidate dyad.

There are two core estimating equations. The first, Equation 1 is estimated for the set of voter-candidate dyads where the voter receives good news about a candidate. This set of voters, our treatment subjects, is denoted as $L^+$, defined as the set for whom $Q_j > P_{ij}$ or $Q_j = P_{ij}$ and $Q_j \geq \hat{Q}_j$, where $P_{ij}$ denote the prior beliefs of voter $i$ over political information on a particular attribute (policy or image) of candidate $j$, and where $Q_j$ denotes the information provided about candidate $j$ on that attribute. $\hat{Q}_j$ denotes the median value of $Q_j$. The second, Equation 2, is estimated for the set of voter-candidate dyads where the voter receives bad news about a candidate. This set of voters, $L^-$, are the remaining subjects.

$N_{ij}^+$ denotes the difference between information and individual $i$’s prior ($Q_j - P_{ij}$), defined for all subjects in $L^+$ and standardized by the mean and standard deviation of $Q_j - P_{ij}$ in the $L^+$ group in each constituency. $N_{ij}^+$ is therefore a standardized measure of “good news” with mean 0 and standard deviation of 1. Let $N_{ij}^-$ denote the same quantity but for all subjects receiving bad news.

Thus, the two core estimating equations are the following:\footnote{Note that these equations are as specified in the meta-preanalysis plan for the Metaketa initiative.}

\begin{align*}
E(Y_{ij}|i \in L^+) &= \beta_0 + \beta_1 N_{ij}^+ + \beta_2 T_i + \beta_3 T_i N_{ij}^+ + \sum_{j=1}^{k} (\nu_k Z_i^k + \psi_k Z_i^k T_i) \\
E(Y_{ij}|i \in L^-) &= \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 N_{ij}^- + \gamma_2 T_i + \gamma_3 T_i N_{ij}^- + \sum_{j=1}^{k} (\nu_k Z_i^k + \psi_k Z_i^k T_i)
\end{align*}

where $Z_1, Z_2, ..., Z_k$ are covariates as specified below, standardized to have a 0 mean.
The average treatment effect of information for \( L^+ \), voters receiving good news, is represented by \( \beta_2 \). Meanwhile, \( \gamma_2 \) is the average treatment effect of information for \( L^- \), voters receiving bad news.

### 8.2 Heterogeneous Treatment Effects

Heterogeneous treatment effects will be estimated using interaction analysis using the following equations, where \( X \) denotes the variable of interest, which – for this purpose – is not included in the set of other covariates \( Z \).

\[
E(Y_{ij}|i \in L^+) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 N_{ij}^+ + \beta_2 T_i + \beta_3 T_i N_{ij}^+ + \beta_4 X_i + \beta_5 T_i X_i + \sum_{j=1}^{k} (\nu_k Z_i^k + \psi_k Z_i^k T_i) \tag{3}
\]

\[
E(Y_{ij}|i \in L^-) = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 N_{ij}^- + \gamma_2 T_i + \gamma_3 T_i N_{ij}^- + \gamma_4 X_i + \gamma_5 T_i X_i + \sum_{j=1}^{k} (\nu_k Z_i^k + \psi_k Z_i^k T_i) \tag{4}
\]

The heterogeneous effects of the impact of positive information, for average news levels, are given by \( \beta_5 \) and the heterogeneous effects of negative information are given by \( \gamma_5 \).

For H5, we are interested in the effect of providing any information on political knowledge, and therefore estimate the following simplified equation, where \( \delta_1 \) is the parameter of interest:

\[
E(Y_i) = \delta_0 + \delta_1 T_i + \sum_{j=1}^{k} (\nu_k Z_i^k + \psi_k Z_i^k T_i) \tag{5}
\]

To test H7 and H8 we estimate the same equation, but since the outcome variable is measured at the polling station level we use the polling station as our unit of analysis. Similarly, to test H9 we estimate:

\[
E(Y_{psj}) = \delta_0 + \delta_1 T_{ps} + \delta_2 T_{ps} GE_{ps} + \delta_3 GE_{ps} \sum_{j=1}^{k} (\nu_k Z_{ps}^k + \psi_k Z_{ps}^k T_{ps}) \tag{6}
\]

where \( ps \) stands for polling station and \( GE \) for general election.
### 8.3 Hypothesis and Variable Mapping

The mapping between hypotheses (Section 6) and measures (Section 7) is outlined in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Abbreviated Hypothesis</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Interact’n</th>
<th>Controls</th>
<th>Subset</th>
<th>Spec</th>
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<td>Vote</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>§</td>
<td>$L^+$</td>
<td>Eq1</td>
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<td>(1)</td>
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<td>Vote</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>§</td>
<td>$L^-$</td>
<td>Eq2</td>
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<td>Vote</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>§</td>
<td>$L^+$</td>
<td>Eq3</td>
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<tr>
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<td>H2</td>
<td>Stronger in Primary</td>
<td>Vote</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>§</td>
<td>$L^-$</td>
<td>Eq4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>H3a</td>
<td>Turnout (Good news)</td>
<td>Turnout</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>§</td>
<td>$L^+$</td>
<td>Eq1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Turnout</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>§</td>
<td>$L^-$</td>
<td>Eq2</td>
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<td>Primary</td>
<td>§</td>
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<td>Vote</td>
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<td>Eq3</td>
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<td>Vote</td>
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<td>Clientelism</td>
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<td>$L^-$</td>
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<td>Vote</td>
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<td>Vote</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>ClientExpect</td>
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<td>$L^-$</td>
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<td>$L^+$</td>
<td>Eq3</td>
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<td>Vote</td>
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<td>IndMerit</td>
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<td>$L^-$</td>
<td>Eq4</td>
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<td>Vote</td>
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<td>$L^-$</td>
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<td>Eq3</td>
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<td>$L^+$</td>
<td>Eq3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, $\circledast$ indicates that we will present results with and without controls.
Where **CONTROLS** are:

- for individual level specifications: Age, Coethnic, Cogender, Education, Assets, PartyID, PastVote, PastSupport, Clientelism, TrustInst, AccessInfo, t, Primary
- for cluster level specifications: averages of Age, Coethnic, Cogender, Education, Assets, PartyID, PastVote, PastSupport, Clientelism, TrustInst, AccessInfo, t, Primary

### 8.4 Correction for Multiple Hypotheses Testing

To correct for multiple hypotheses testing, we will use the Benjamini-Hochberg (1995) False Discovery Rate correction, defining families of hypotheses as outlined in table 1. This simple sequential Bonferroni-type procedure is slightly less punitive than a Bonferroni correction since it focuses exclusively on correcting for the false discovery rate.

### 9 Power Analysis

We conducted three different sets of power calculations for this study. First, for vote choice measured through institutional voting records: With an average of 500 voters per polling station and 120 polling stations assigned to each treatment and control, and a conservative rho of 0.1, the minimum detectable effect size is 0.12 standard deviations (sd) at 0.8 power and 0.14 sd at 0.9 power. With a less conservative rho of 0.05 the minimum detectable effect size is 0.08 sd at 0.8 power and 0.1 sd at 0.9 power, thus allowing us to detect also relatively small effects.

Second, for the outcome variables measured through survey data, i.e. vote choice, candidate evaluation (posterior) and political knowledge, the minimum detectable effect size with 10 respondents per polling station and rho of 0.1 is 0.16 sd at 0.8 power and 0.18 sd at 0.9 power. With a rho of 0.05, our minimum detectable effect size is 0.14 sd with 0.8 power and 0.16 sd with 0.9 power.

Finally, for the individual level randomization we need 400 respondents per treatment arm in order to be able to detect an effect size of 0.2 standard deviations at 0.8 power, implying a total individual sample of 1,200 respondents, who will be evenly distributed across 30 polling stations.

---

45Making a very conservative estimate on attrition, considering that we have a very short time window to reach voters in rural areas by phone.
10 Timeline

Polling stations assigned to receive the public debate screening will receive screenings 1-3 weeks prior to the primaries and 1-3 weeks prior to the general election. Polling stations assigned to the private information treatment, debate screening and the scorecard/incumbent only screening, will also receive treatments 1-3 weeks before the election.

Primaries
August 2015: Recording of primary debates
August 2015: Baseline survey
September 2015: Public debate screenings and posterior survey
September 2015: Party primaries
September: Phone based exit poll of respondents

General elections
November/December 2015: Recording of general election debates
January 2016: Baseline survey
Late January 2016: Public debate screenings, private debate screenings and information scorecard/incumbent only screening
February 2016: General elections
February 2016: Phone based exit poll of respondents

11 Partnership and Ethics

This project is a collaboration between the principal investigators and a consortium of partners, including:

- Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA)
- The Department of Political Science at Makerere University
- The Agency for Transformation, a civil society group conducting projects that promote economic development in Uganda
• Leo Africa Forum, a civil society group organizing regional and national policy debates.

The project was designed in consultation with the Uganda Electoral Commission and the NRM Electoral Commission. We have obtained letters of support from both of these organizations. IRB protocols have been approved at Stanford University (Protocol ID: 33547) and Yale University (Protocol ID: 1504015711). The project has received local human subjects approval from Mildmay Uganda Research Ethics Committee and approval from the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (Protocol ID SS 3781) and Office of the President, Uganda.

References


A Draft Script for Debates

BACKGROUND [30 seconds]

Thank you for participating in this “Meet the Candidates” session. Please begin by telling us a little bit about your background and qualifications for running as Member of Parliament for this constituency.

CONSTITUENCY PRIORITIES [2 minutes]

Members of Parliament have the opportunity to influence which policy issues are prioritized. It is important to prioritize because there are limited resources available to tackle problems, and so some issues will receive more attention than others from government. Here is a list of key sectors.

- Education
- Infrastructure, like roads and bridges
- Security, like the police and military
- Healthcare
- Agricultural development
- Energy supply
- Creation of jobs
- Water and sanitation

In your opinion, what is the single most important issue for the people in your constituency? If elected as Member of Parliament, what concrete actions will you take to address this issue?

DISTRICT CREATION [2 minutes]

In the last ten years, many new districts have been created in Uganda. The debate about district creation is ongoing. Some people support and others oppose the creation of more districts in the coming years. What about you? Do you support or oppose the creation of more districts in Uganda, and why?
MONEY AND POLITICS

Some people argue that money plays too large a role in politics in Uganda. For example, money is sometimes used to buy votes, which is illegal but common. Do you think that candidates convicted of vote buying should be banned from contesting any elections for five years? Why or why not?

PERFORMANCE [2 minutes]

Please tell us about any achievements that show that you will be a good representative for the people of this constituency.

CHARACTERISTICS [1 minute 30 seconds]

Individuals may have many characteristics that make them good candidates for elected office. What is the most important characteristic of yours that makes you the best person to represent this constituency?