

Working Paper No. 183

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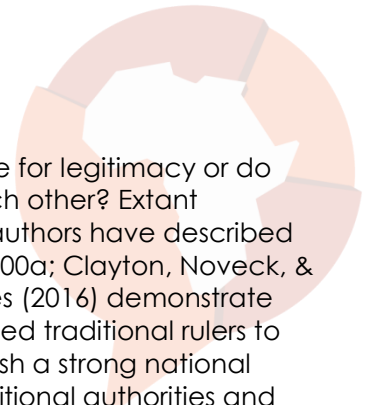
Vladimir Chlouba is a PhD candidate in the Department of Political Science at Ohio State University.
Email: chlouba.1@osu.edu

Abstract

Do African traditional leaders weaken state legitimacy at the local level? Past scholarship raises the possibility that unelected chiefs might undermine trust in national-level institutions. Relying on an original map of areas governed by chiefs and survey data from Namibia, this study examines whether respondents governed by traditional leaders are less likely to trust state institutions. I find that compared to individuals not living under traditional authority, chiefdom residents are more likely to trust government institutions. To partially alleviate the concern that chiefdom residence is endogenous to trust in national-level institutions, I use a genetic matching strategy to compare relatively similar individuals. I further find that the association between chiefdom residence and trust in state institutions is considerably weaker and less statistically significant for individuals who do not share ethnicity with their chief. This evidence suggests that traditional leaders' ability to complement state institutions at the local level is compromised by ethnic diversity.

Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction

Do modern states compete with traditional institutions of governance for legitimacy or do these two distinct yet interacting forms of authority complement each other? Extant literature offers evidence in favor of both claims. On the one hand, authors have described traditional leaders as competitors with the modern state (Oomen, 2000a; Clayton, Noveck, & Levi, 2015), implying a logic of substitution. Acemoglu and colleagues (2016) demonstrate that in the case of Sierra Leone, indirect rule under colonialism enabled traditional rulers to resist the bureaucratization of the state and led to a failure to establish a strong national identity. On the other hand, researchers have found that trust in traditional authorities and state officials can show a positive correlation (Logan, 2009), that positive changes in respondents' valuation of traditional leaders lead to positive changes in support for the state (Van der Windt, Humphreys, Medina, Timmons, & Voors, 2018), or that traditional leaders can, where the state is weak, facilitate democratic responsiveness (Baldwin, 2016). Supplying evidence from New Guinea, Cooper (2018) finds that the expansion of state capacity may lead to greater interaction with traditional institutions of governance, especially if increasing state capacity upends local power dynamics. Studying the role of chiefs in everyday governance in Malawi, Eggen (2011) concludes that the parallel structures of modern and traditional governance allow individuals more avenues for communicating with the state and that traditional institutions offer the national government an additional option for the execution of its power. Famously, the case of Botswana has been studied as an instance where the post-colonial state's incorporation of traditional leadership was crucial for securing the state's legitimacy and ensuring the support of rural populations for government programs (Gulbrandsen, 2012).

To examine whether traditional leaders undermine or enhance state legitimacy in the areas they govern, we need data capable of distinguishing between respondents who reside in areas currently governed by traditional leaders and individuals whose experience with traditional leaders takes less direct forms. Existing quantitative studies that have explored the relationship between allegiance to the state and support for traditional leaders have typically examined the correlation between these two variables. Although this is a natural first step, this approach is insufficient to establish plausible causal relationships. It is possible, for example, that a person has a positive view of traditional authorities in general, even if this individual lives in the capital city, far away from areas governed by traditional leaders. Indeed, it is not uncommon for individuals to consider themselves part of a traditional community even if they reside in areas where "their" traditional leader exercises little to no power. This hypothetical individual's view of traditional institutions of governance may thus be driven by lack of experience with everyday traditional governance. Furthermore, limited information about the kind of traditional leader a respondent lives under circumscribes our ability to ask more nuanced questions. For instance, does the complementary/substitutive relationship between traditional and modern authority hold across the board or does it depend on other factors such as shared ethnicity between the respondent and her traditional leader? Could it be the case that the relationship is complementary for some and substitutive for other respondents and traditional leaders?

Lack of satisfactory answers to these questions is undoubtedly due to the paucity of available data. Many African governments, let alone researchers, do not possess detailed data sets of the traditional authorities that are active within their territories. I begin to remedy this shortcoming by constructing a unique data set of Namibian traditional authorities (TAs) and their appurtenant areas of jurisdiction. Rather than assuming that chiefs are only active in rural communities (Gluckman, 1960) or relying on government maps as other researchers have done elsewhere, I studied the past and present of every single Namibian chiefdom to ascertain their actual jurisdiction as experienced by people on the ground. I utilized a number of sources, including government data, historical maps, and information from TAs themselves to digitize a map of Namibian chiefdoms, which I then spatially joined with an Afrobarometer (2014) survey. This empirical strategy enables me to distinguish among individuals residing outside of traditionally governed areas, individuals residing in areas

governed by coethnic chiefs, and individuals residing in localities ruled by non-coethnic traditional leaders. In this paper, I first examine whether chiefdom residents, when compared to individuals residing outside of traditional chiefdoms, are less likely to trust state institutions. I find that chiefdom residents are no less likely to trust crucial state institutions than non-residents. In fact, people who reside within areas administered by traditional chiefs express greater trust in the tax authority, courts of law, the police, and the army. The results are robust to the inclusion of numerous individual and geographical controls, ethnic-group fixed effects, and fine-grained localized data such as average night-light intensity, which proxies for economic development.

An obvious challenge to this finding's internal validity is that there are potentially omitted variables that drive both respondents' trust in state institutions and the choice to live in areas governed by traditional rulers. Although the goal of the present study is above all to establish robust empirical regularities that can generate more specific questions for future research, I attempt to arrive at a more precise estimate of the treatment effect of chiefdom residence by matching on respondents' employment status, education, and urban residence, all of which are theoretically linked to respondents' residence choices. Although matching can only be performed on the observed covariates, it is reassuring that the positive effect of chiefdom residence on trust in state institutions remains robust.

The greater proclivity of chiefdom residents to trust state institutions provides evidence for a complementary relationship between traditional and modern authority, but it alone does not clarify the possible mechanisms at play. I reason that if traditional leaders are to complement the state at the local level, they have to leverage the one crucial aspect at which they outperform modern governments – the trust of their people. To explain the observed outcome, I argue that traditional chiefs act as an informal link between local populations and state institutions and that those respondents who trust traditional leaders are more likely to perceive state institutions as legitimate because it is chiefs who connect their communities to national-level policymakers. Whether they communicate the needs of local communities to the government and receive appropriate responses on their behalf, assist with the delivery of public goods (Walsh et al., 2018), oversee implementation of development projects, or even funnel patronage to their villages, traditional leaders can only serve as a crucial link between their people and the state if they earn their people's trust.

In accordance with the expectation that traditional leaders can only complement the state if they earn the trust of their communities, I find that chiefdom residence loses its explanatory power once it is interacted with trust in chiefs. This means that individuals who simultaneously live in a chiefdom and trust their chief tend to regard state institutions as legitimate. This finding also explains why chiefs' non-coethnics, who are less likely to trust their traditional leaders to begin with, do not necessarily have more trust in national-level institutions, even if they reside in a chiefdom.

This paper contributes to extant literature in a number of ways. First, it subjects hypotheses centering on the complementarity and substitutability of traditional and modern forms of authority to a test on a new data set that carefully distinguishes between individuals who experience traditional rulers' jurisdiction on a daily basis and individuals whose experience with traditional governance is less direct. Second, I demonstrate that accounts portraying traditional chiefs as either desirable or undesirable actors from the perspective of modern state builders are bound to underappreciate the complexity that the coexistence of traditional leadership and modern state institutions presents. It might well be the case that at the local level, in order for the typical, weak African state to thrive, chiefs might need to survive. In other words, traditional and modern state institutions might in particular conditions act as complements rather than substitutes. Third, the data I exploit uncover an important empirical regularity that researchers interested in the complementarity/substitutability hypotheses should address in future research: the differential effects of chiefdom residence for traditional leaders' coethnics and non-coethnics. Ethnicity may be an important dimension conditioning the relationship between different forms of authority. While traditional leaders may be able to act as a connecting link between their communities and state

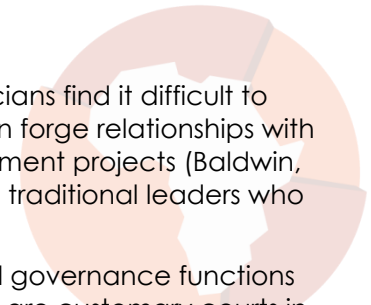
institutions, they may not be able to fulfill this function for non-coethnics. The remainder of this article proceeds as follows: I first examine the existing literature that conceptualizes the role of traditional leaders in sub-Saharan Africa and derive testable hypotheses that the said literature's theoretical foundations offer. I then discuss the empirical strategy of this article and the data I employ to test my hypotheses. Next, I review the results and elaborate on their robustness and limitations. The last section concludes.

2. Traditional leaders and modern states: Allies or competitors?

Lord Frederick Lugard, who is usually credited with laying out the principles of indirect rule, envisioned that African chiefs and modern bureaucrats would "be complementary to each other, and the chief himself must understand that he has no right to place and power unless he renders his proper services to the State" (Lugard, 1922, p. 203). But in fact traditional and modern rule were often in tension. In his treatise *Citizen and Subject*, Mamdani (1996) claims that the emergence of the so-called bifurcated state, which on the one hand sought to construct national allegiance and on the other continued to rely on ethnically based traditional institutions, created a fundamental incompatibility between customary and modern forms of governance. In Mamdani's view, the deleterious impact of traditional chiefs comes in at least two forms. First, since most traditional leaders are not elected, they stand in the way of democratic, accountable institutions at the local level. That chiefs play an important role in electoral politics in some countries is a well-established fact (Williams, 2004; Oomen, 2005; Baldwin, 2013, 2014, 2016; Koter, 2013, 2016; de Kadt & Larreguy, 2018), as is the notion that some traditional leaders are prepared to use their influence on behalf of the highest bidder (Ribot, 2002; Ntsebeza, 2005). Second, by deriving its meaning and legitimacy from association with real or imagined notions of distinct subnational groups, the institution of chiefship potentially perpetuates the centrality of ethnic identity and tribalism. Although he does not portray traditional chiefs in as negative a light as Mamdani, Williams (2010) agrees that chiefs in post-apartheid South Africa are instrumental in reinforcing their communities' cultural identities.

The nature of political institutions is an important aspect of identity formation (Lijphart, 1977; Laitin, 1985; Bates, 2006; Brancati, 2006; Penn, 2008). In a highly relevant work, Jesse and Williams (2012) argue that the division of the Spanish state into autonomous communities in the late 1970s has over time promoted the building of exclusive identities in each community. Furthermore, the authors show that although this phenomenon is particularly pronounced in historically distinct communities such as the Basque Country and Catalonia, it is also evident in newly created communities. The authors argue that promoting "cross-border" institutions at the expense of divisive, subnational institutions is necessary for nurturing overlapping identities. In the context of contemporary Africa, Logan (2013) finds that preference of ethnic over national identity is positively correlated with Afrobarometer respondents' support for increasing traditional leaders' influence. This leads her to wonder whether "strong traditional leaders could be bad for national unity" (p. 371). In the Namibian context, Lechler and McNamee (2018) exploit a natural experiment to argue that individuals residing in formerly indirectly-ruled areas express lower support for democracy and greater inclinations to respect authority. To the extent that traditional chiefdoms can be conceptualized as subnational institutions, it is reasonable to hypothesize that they can perpetuate the salience of subnational allegiance where it would otherwise weaken. In other words, it is reasonable to expect that individuals who live in areas governed by traditional chiefs find central government institutions less legitimate, particularly if traditional and modern political institutions act as substitutes. (*Hypothesis 1a: Individuals who reside within chiefdoms will report lower levels of trust in state institutions.*)

A competing view holds that the transition from traditional to modern forms of governance is a rather fragile process and giving chiefs a role may facilitate it (Malinowski, 1929). Relatedly, if traditional leaders are the backbone of their communities' social capital (Low & Pratt, 1960; Putnam, 2001), an expedited departure from customary authority might be destructive to rural communities' social fabric. Therefore, rather than abolishing traditional leaders, modern



state builders might want to work with them. Because elected politicians find it difficult to ensure the production of public goods in rural communities, they can forge relationships with local unelected leaders who mobilize their communities for development projects (Baldwin, 2013, 2016). The result is a symbiosis between elected politicians and traditional leaders who work together to bring about development.

There is growing evidence that traditional chiefs can perform crucial governance functions on the cheap (Chiweza, 2006). Prime examples of this phenomenon are customary courts in many African countries' rural areas. Consider the case of Botswana, where traditional chiefs reportedly adjudicate around 70% of all court cases.¹ One reason for the popularity of customary courts is that rural dwellers are usually familiar with the rules and procedures that traditional chiefs uphold, which is an important characteristic in rural environments (Owusu, 1996; Oomen, 2000b). Traditional leaders are thus more disposed to perceiving their communities' needs, and community members are more likely to reach out to them with feedback. Empowering traditional chiefs might be an optimal strategy even for governments that are relatively strong but perhaps suffer from a legitimacy deficit at the local level.

In his seminal article on social requisites of democracy, Lipset (1959) argued that prolonged effectiveness may give legitimacy to a political system, and so it is reasonable to expect that to the extent to which chiefs enhance the national government's effectiveness, they will also further its legitimacy. As Sklar (1993, p. 90) put it, "many thrones lend their support to the power of the modern state, which they also help to legitimate." (*Hypothesis 1b: Individuals who reside within chiefdoms will report higher levels of trust in state institutions.*)

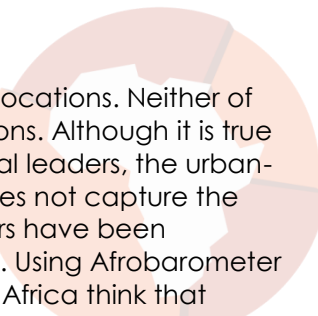
Yet if traditional chiefs serve as a link between their communities and the central government, the synergy between traditional and modern institutions should be most strongly perceived by individuals who see traditional chiefs as legitimate actors to begin with. If an individual does not think chiefs have a role to play in local governance, the link from local constituents to the central government is broken. (*Hypothesis 2: Individuals who reside within chiefdoms and trust their chief will report higher levels of trust in state institutions.*)

This could be particularly relevant for individuals who do not share ethnicity with their traditional leader. Extant literature has shown that shared ethnicity is an important determinant of trust (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2002; Bahry, Kosolapov, Kozyreva, & Wilson, 2005) and that ethnic diversity undermines public-goods provision (Habyarimana, Humphreys, Posner, & Weinstein, 2007; Kasara, 2007; Kramon & Posner, 2013), while several recent studies have pointed out the proclivity of traditional leaders to engage in nepotism while distributing public goods (Basurto, Dupas, & Robinson, 2017; Carlson & Seim, 2018). If traditional leaders' ability to earn the trust of their people is necessary for their capacity to act as complements to national-level institutions, it is reasonable to expect that those who do not share ethnicity with their chief are less likely to trust him and state institutions as a result. (*Hypothesis 3: Chiefs' non-coethnics will report lower trust in state institutions than chiefs' coethnics.*)

2.1 From hypotheses to empirics

None of the above hypotheses can be properly evaluated unless we possess a detailed understanding of spatial extent of traditional chiefdoms. Because the fault lines I wish to investigate run between those individuals who reside within traditional chiefdoms and those who do not, and, furthermore, between those who are coethnic with their traditional leader and those who are not, it is necessary to delineate where exactly traditional leaders rule. To the extent that previous studies have been able to surmount this challenge, they had to rely on one of two solutions. First, they postulated that traditional chiefship is a predominantly rural phenomenon (Gluckman, 1960). Second, authors have adopted, in the very few

¹ Author's interview with an official at Botswana's Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 5 June 2017



countries where they exist,² government maps that specify chiefdoms' locations. Neither of these solutions is perfect, as they both rely on relatively strong assumptions. Although it is true that rural Africans are more likely to live under the influence of traditional leaders, the urban-rural distinction, which is usually facilitated by standard survey items, does not capture the variation of interest that exists on the ground because traditional leaders have been reported to exist even in cities (Cammack, Kanyongolo, & O'Neil, 2009). Using Afrobarometer surveys, Baldwin (2016, p. 41) finds that 22% of urbanites in sub-Saharan Africa think that chiefs have primary responsibility for allocating land, 33% believe chiefs have responsibility for resolving disputes, and 25% conclude that traditional leaders have a great deal of influence. In Namibia, towns with significant populations, such as Ondangwa, Oshakati, and Oshikango, all lie deep within traditional-authority territory. In fact, regions with some of the highest population densities, such as Ohangwena, Oshana, and Oshikoto, are governed by powerful traditional leaders. Conversely, genuinely rural areas with few settlements may not fall under the direct jurisdiction of any particular chiefdom. As Figure 1 below illustrates, vast areas in southern Namibia, although not without population, are not governed by any particular TA.

Relying on government documents and maps alone likewise presents distinct challenges. First, such maps usually capture a particular point in time and thus offer a snapshot of the situation rather than conveying the dynamic process of evolution that traditionally-ruled areas undergo. Second, government documents likely offer a mixture of reality and administrative intent. Both phenomena can be illustrated with the case of Zambia. The country's 286 chiefdoms were already delineated by the colonial administration prior to Zambia's independence in 1964. Because the colonial administration aimed to control all of Northern Rhodesia (as Zambia was then known), it divided the entire territory into traditional chiefdoms, regardless of whether or not every administrative unit was effectively controlled by the chief to whom it was assigned. In addition, Zambia's population has grown significantly since independence. While in 1960, the country's population was about 3 million, its population density about 4 persons per square kilometer, and its rate of urbanization 18%, by 2016 these figures have grown to almost 17 million, 22 persons per square kilometer, and 41%, respectively (World Bank Group, 2017). Particularly if one assumes that traditional chiefs are mainly a rural phenomenon, the relative importance and power of chiefs in newly urbanized areas compared to traditional chiefs in rural regions has decreased. Conversely, in the rural regions where previously sparsely populated areas have been inhabited, the spatial extent of chiefs' authority may have increased. Without adjudicating any of these conjectures, it is clear that relying on historical maps alone, although in many cases a practical necessity, presents distinct challenges to researchers. In the Namibian case, I attempt to assuage these concerns by utilizing a palette of sources that enable me to delineate the actual and current areas under chiefly jurisdiction.

2.2 Traditional authorities in Namibia

Namibia offers an ideal case for the evaluation of hypotheses H1-H3 cited above because there is variation, both in rural and urban areas, in the presence of chiefdoms. The Namibian government classifies chiefdoms based on their ethnic affiliation, and chiefs themselves tend to refer to the history of their people rather than land when explaining their own role and origin (Hinz & Namwoonde, 2010; Hinz, 2014, 2016). Thus, the worry that continued relevance of traditional institutions of governance might weaken the modern state's legitimacy is not unreasonable – traditional chiefs could plausibly offer an alternative narrative of belonging based on ethnic kinship.

In the course of this paper, I consider chiefdoms that are recognized by the Namibian government. Although it is plausible that other traditional structures exist that are not recognized, their identification remains the task of future research. Given that government

² Two examples of countries where researchers have been able to exploit government maps are Sierra Leone (Acemoglu, Reed, & Robinson., 2014) and Zambia (Baldwin, 2013, 2016).

recognition results in the provision of modest salaries to traditional leaders, I assume that the vast majority of traditional leaders in Namibia seek out government recognition. Traditional chiefs are paid 2,640 Namibian dollars (about U.S. \$200) per month, whereas so-called traditional councillors, who assist chiefs with their duties, receive 1,800 Namibian dollars (U.S. \$136) from the government. Each chief is also provided with a driver (Immanuel, 2017). Historically, chiefdoms in Namibia come in three forms: the kingdoms of northern Namibia, which are mainly inhabited by Oshiwambo speakers (Ondonga, Oukwanyama, Ongandjera, Uukwambi, Ombalantu, and Uukwaluudhi); the chieftainships of central and southern Namibia and the Kavango and Zambezi regions; and headmanships. The individual traditional authorities differ, among other aspects, in their leadership structures and customary law. For the purposes of this paper, I do not explicitly consider these differences, which also remain the focus of future work.

Traditional chiefs continue to play an important role in modern-day Namibia. They provide cultural leadership to their communities, adjudicate disputes, perform traditional rites, cooperate with local police forces to ensure security, and, perhaps most importantly, allocate land (Hinz & Namwoonde, 2010; Hinz, 2014, 2016). Particularly in northern Namibia, communal land is administered by the TAs, which traditional chiefs head. Whenever an external investor or a native inhabitant wishes to obtain land, he or she has to consult the responsible traditional leader, who may then allocate a plot of land.³

Aware of the important role that traditional chiefs played in their communities, the Namibian government convened in its early days a commission tasked with determining a proper role for chiefs in newly independent Namibia. The Commission of Inquiry Into Matters Relating to Chiefs, Headmen, and Other Traditional or Tribal Leaders (the so-called Kozonguizi Commission) concluded that “the concept of a Nation must prevail over that of a tribe or ethnic group” (Republic of Namibia, 1991, pp. 8-9). In the course of its work, the Kozonguizi Commission became deeply aware of the fact that defining a role for traditional chiefs in independent Namibia might clash with the vision of a united country governed by one central government. Noting that the Namibian Constitution bars the delineation of administrative boundaries with reference to race or ethnic group, the commission pointed out that “as a matter of fact, the areas of jurisdiction of most traditional leaders are ethnically determined” (p. 10). Ultimately, however, the inquiry concluded that “the traditional system is not only necessary but also viable” and that as such, it should “be retained within the context of the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia” (p. 73).

Upon independence in 1990, the Namibian government recognized 36 traditional authorities and 176 traditional leaders (Keulder, 1997). Additional applications for recognition were evaluated over the subsequent years, and as of November 2017, there were 51 recognized TAs. Although the appurtenant legislation eschews the language of ethnicity, ethnically defined groupings certainly come to mind when one reads the conditions that the Traditional Authorities Act of 2000 lists as requirements for government recognition. The act defines a traditional community as “an indigenous homogeneous, endogamous social grouping of persons comprising of families deriving from exogamous clans which share a common ancestry, language, cultural heritage, customs and traditions, who recognises a common traditional authority and inhabits a common communal area” (Republic of Namibia, 2000).

Although traditional leaders claim to enhance governance at the local level, TAs and local governments do not always co-exist in a symbiotic relationship. Disagreements arise in situations when a local government council is elected to govern a newly incorporated village, thus limiting the power of chiefs. An example is provided by a small settlement of Bukalo in northeastern Namibia, where traditional leaders opposed curtailment of their power, remarking that “the royal family discussed this issue at length and unanimously

³ Although traditional chiefs allocate land in cooperation with so-called communal land boards, chiefs are widely perceived to have decisive influence over the decisions that these boards reach.

agreed that handing over administration from traditional authority to village council is not in the best interest of the community and the entire region" (Tjihenuna, 2015).

3. Empirical strategy and data

In order to shed light on the hypotheses specified above, I constructed and digitized a map of traditional chiefdoms in Namibia, which I then joined with the sixth round of Afrobarometer surveys (Afrobarometer, 2014).⁴ Afrobarometer's samples are nationally representative and stratify at the region, constituency, and urban-rural level. The fact that the locations of individual survey respondents have been geocoded enables me to ascertain the region, constituency, and above all chiefdom in which a given respondent resides (BenYishay et al., 2017). The resulting data set thus empowers me to construct two new independent variables: chiefdom residence and non-coethnic chiefdom residence. A chiefdom resident is anybody who resides within an area of jurisdiction of a traditional chiefdom. A non-coethnic chiefdom resident is anyone who resides within a traditional chiefdom but does not share ethnicity with the particular TA's chief. This paper's sample consists of 1,200 respondents, 728 of whom reside in traditional chiefdoms. Out of the 728 chiefdom residents in the sample, 186 are non-coethnic with their chief. No ethnic group dominates among non-coethnic chiefdom residents; they come from 17 different groups.

To the best of my knowledge, this study is the first to construct a map and to test the effects of residence within areas controlled by TAs in Namibia. Figure 1 below depicts 50 of the 51 government-recognized TAs in the country.⁵ In order to construct and digitize this map, I relied on a number of sources. First, I reviewed all of the *Government Gazettes of the Republic of Namibia* published between 1991 and 2016. These gazettes are issued several hundred times each year and include newly passed or modified legislation as well as various regulatory notices and amendments. Importantly, whenever new TAs, chiefs, or traditional councillors are recognized, this information is likewise published in the gazettes. Aside from the ethnic group to which a TA belongs, a notice announcing recognition will not necessarily mention the new TA's area of jurisdiction. Fortunately, the recognition of community courts, which are institutions run by the TAs, is also gazetted, and the courts' areas of jurisdiction are delineated with differing levels of precision. In some cases, a gazette will mention the towns, villages, and settlements that fall under the jurisdiction of a particular TA. In others, the individual farms that a TA covers will be listed. Utilizing a digitized map of all government and commercial farms in Namibia, I digitized the chiefdoms whose areas correspond to particular farms with considerable precision.

Second, I made use of Customary Law Ascertained (CLA), a recent project run by a research team affiliated with the University of Namibia that seeks to codify the various TAs' customary law (Hinz & Namwoonde, 2010; Hinz, 2014, 2016). The CLA research team visited the individual TAs and collected their rendition of their chiefdom's customary law, history, and area of jurisdiction. Some chiefdoms, such as the ≠Aodaman, provided very detailed information regarding their chiefdom's boundaries or even (as was the case with the Vaalgras) drew their own map and listed the phone number of the map's author. Still others, such as the Dâure Daman, the Ju |'Hoan, or the Witbooi, list primarily geographic points of reference such as rivers, international borders, or other TAs to clarify their position.

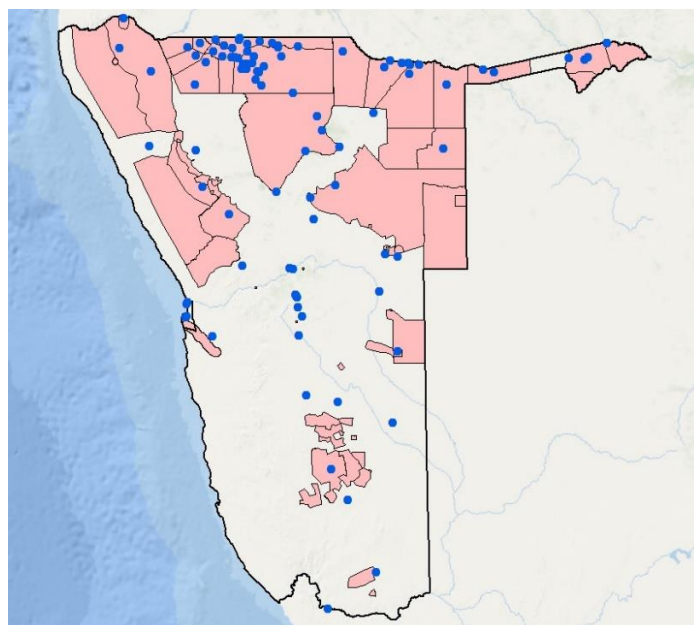
⁴ The main reason why I use Afrobarometer's sixth round (2014/2015) is that earlier rounds do not code interviewer ethnicity in ways comparable to subsequent rounds and it is thus impossible to create the important dummy variable for coethnic interviewer, which can account for some of the social-desirability bias inherent in the questions analyzed in this paper. In earlier rounds, interviewers were asked to indicate their home language and not ethnicity per se. Since ethnicity and home language may differ, one cannot infer whether interviewer and interviewee were coethnic. However, expanding the analyses presented in this paper to earlier rounds yields largely similar results.

⁵ The jurisdiction of the 51st TA, the Ovaherero chiefdom, had not been officially determined at the time of writing.

Third, I examined historical materials held by the National Archives of Namibia to cross-validate information obtained from other sources. Of particular importance were historical maps drawn by the German and South African colonial administrations as well as maps produced by the likes of South West Africa's Department of Water Affairs. The historical materials examined span the period from 1852 to 1974.

Fourth, I interviewed a number of Namibian government officials at institutions that work with traditional authorities on a daily basis (Ministry of Urban and Rural Development, Council of Traditional Leaders, Ministry of Justice) to obtain their take on information gathered elsewhere. Lastly, I interviewed Namibian academics and legal experts in the field of customary law. A detailed account of all the sources as well as the description of every traditional chiefdom's area is included in the [Appendix](#). To account for the possibility that chiefdom boundaries as I identified them are inaccurate, I ran all of the results presented below with a data set that drops respondents living within 10km of the identified boundaries. The results remain substantively identical.

Figure 1: Traditional authorities in Namibia and respondent locations

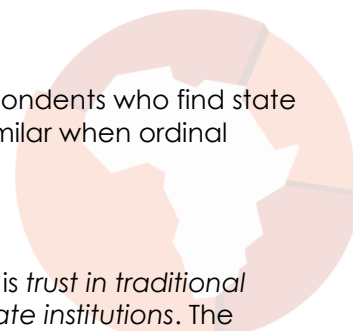


Shaded areas delineate areas governed by traditional chiefs. Points indicate locations where respondents were interviewed.

3.1 Dependent variables

The dependent variables used in this study are based on Afrobarometer questions that probe respondents' trust in key government institutions. The assumption is that unlike trust in particular figureheads and politicians, trust in central state institutions such as the tax authority expresses the degree of legitimacy that these institutions enjoy among the citizenry. The particular question I consider is worded as follows: *How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?* The four institutions I consider are the tax department, courts of law, the police, and the army. These crucial state institutions cover a wide area of modern government activity: revenue collection, rule of law, and provision of security. The answers available to the respondents were *Not at all*, *Just a little*, *Somewhat*, and *A lot*. Although potentially simplifying the obtained information, I create dichotomized versions of the dependent variables by coding *Not at all* and *Just a little* as 0 and *Somewhat* and *A lot* as 1.⁶ I opt for a dichotomized measure because the difference between *Somewhat* and *A lot* can be interpreted differently by each respondent and

⁶ Respondents who answered "don't know" were coded as missing data.



because the basic comparison I seek to make is between those respondents who find state institutions legitimate and those who do not. The results are largely similar when ordinal measures are used.

3.2 Independent variables, specification

Aside from *chiefdom residence*, an important independent variable is *trust in traditional leader*. This variable is constructed in a manner identical to *trust in state institutions*. The remaining control variables can be grouped into individual and geographical controls. Individual controls include age, gender, educational attainment, and formal employment; the chief geographical variable is a binary indicator of urban residence. I also control for whether or not a given respondent was interviewed by a coethnic interviewer. This variable is of importance in the African context because interviewees might be susceptible to different degrees of social-desirability bias depending on who poses questions (Adida, Ferree, Posner, & Robinson, 2016).

Given that African states are generally weak, the observed variation in the dependent variables could potentially be driven not by interaction with traditional chiefs but by exposure to local economic development. More developed areas will, after all, be more likely to attract the attention of state institutions, if only because they generate greater tax revenue. To account for local economic development, I include a measure of average night-light intensity (provided by Tollefsen, Strand, & Buhaug, 2012). This variable is measured at the level of the PRIO-GRID data structure, which divides the Earth's entire surface into 50x50km grid cells. Summary statistics of all relevant variables are available in the [Appendix](#).

After cross-tabulating the main variables of interest, I begin by estimating an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression in which trust in a given institution is the dependent variable and *chiefdom residence* is the main independent variable of interest. In Equation (1) below, which illustrates this specification, α_j is an ethnic group fixed effect for group j , X_{ij} is a set of individual and geographical covariates for individual i , and ϵ_{ij} indicates the disturbance term. I utilize robust standard errors clustered at the geographical grid-cell level to account for unobserved idiosyncrasies associated with different grid cells. I choose to cluster at the grid-cell level because grid cells are generally smaller than individual traditional polities and allow for a more detailed account of local heterogeneities.

$$y_{ij} = \alpha_j + \beta \text{chiefres} + \gamma X_{ij} + \epsilon_{ij} \quad (1)$$

Subsequently, I repeat the analysis with a matched data set in which educational attainment, formal employment, and urban residence are used to estimate the relevant propensity scores. I use matching to arrive at more plausible estimates of the treatment effect, since chiefdom residence is not likely to be assigned randomly and one might worry about confounding. The matching procedure is described in detail in Section 4.1. Next I estimate a specification identical to Equation (1) above but adding individual respondents' trust in their traditional leader as well as its interaction with chiefdom residence (Equation (2)). I do this because I expect that the effect of chiefdom residence, explored in a crude form in specification (1), flows mainly through the respondents' willingness to trust their chief. Respondents who trust their traditional leaders should also be those for whom chiefs can function as a link between local communities and state institutions. Therefore, the interaction between the two variables should "explain away" much of the main effect of chiefdom residence.

$$y_{ij} = \alpha_j + \beta_1 \text{chiefres} + \beta_2 \text{trust} + \beta_3 \text{chiefres} * \text{trust} + \gamma X_{ij} + \epsilon_{ij} \quad (2)$$

Next I investigate the importance of shared ethnicity by re-estimating Equation (1) while distinguishing between individuals who reside in a chiefdom headed by a coethnic traditional leader, a chiefdom headed by a non-coethnic leader, and an area not governed by traditional chiefs at all. To add the necessary caveat, all analyses where shared ethnicity between respondent and traditional leader enters as an independent variable are exploratory and correlational in nature and thus cannot be imbued with causal interpretation.

4. Results

It is illustrative to begin the exploration of the data by cross-tabulating the outcomes of interest by chiefdom residence as well as a handful of individual-level characteristics. As Table 1 illustrates, chiefdom residence is one of the strongest predictors of the legitimacy of key state institutions, offering initial support for Hypothesis 1b, which asserted this positive relationship. While on average, 63% of respondents who live outside of traditional chiefdoms trust Namibia's tax authority, 77% of chiefdom residents do. Continuing the visual inspection of the cross-tabulation, one notices that the gap between chiefdom residents and chiefdom non-residents remains wide with the consideration of other state institutions. The difference is 11 percentage points for legitimacy of the courts, 17 points for trust in the police, and 12 points for the army's legitimacy. It bears repeating that these differences are substantively large and statistically significant as they are expressed by a total of 1,200 respondents, 728 of whom reside within traditional chiefdoms. Considering whether or not a given respondent shares ethnicity with the traditional leader of his area, one notices that non-coethnics are consistently less likely to trust state institutions than chiefs' coethnics. This difference is greatest for trust in the police forces but remains substantial across the board.

Table 1: Trust in state institutions by category

	Trusts tax authority	Trusts courts	Trusts the police	Trusts the army
Lives in a chiefdom	0.77	0.78	0.77	0.80
Does not live in a chiefdom	0.63	0.67	0.60	0.68
Lives in a coethnic chiefdom	0.79	0.80	0.80	0.82
Lives in a non-coethnic chiefdom	0.73	0.74	0.66	0.73
Formally employed	0.69	0.75	0.69	0.75
No formal employment	0.73	0.72	0.71	0.75
No education	0.77	0.73	0.74	0.79
Primary education	0.76	0.72	0.73	0.74
Secondary education	0.68	0.74	0.68	0.74
Post-secondary education	0.74	0.74	0.71	0.78
Age 18-30	0.68	0.71	0.67	0.74
Age 31-45	0.71	0.75	0.69	0.75
Age >45	0.80	0.76	0.78	0.78
Male	0.70	0.71	0.69	0.74
Female	0.73	0.77	0.72	0.76

Notes: The figures indicate the fraction of respondents within a given category that trust a given institution.

I now move on to exploring the intuition built with the help of the cross-tabulation in an OLS regression framework. In Table 2, I regress trust in tax authority, courts, the police, and the army on chiefdom residence as well as a rich set of individual and geographical controls. For

each of the dependent variables, I estimate two separate specifications, one with and one without ethnic group fixed effects. Specifications with ethnic group fixed effects account for the possibility that there are ethnic-group-specific unobserved variables that condition the relationship between the independent and dependent variables of interest. The results confirm the intuition that chiefdom residence is systematically related to trust in state institutions, further supporting Hypothesis 1b. Throughout the estimated models, education yields positive but for the most part statistically insignificant coefficients, at most suggesting that the state succeeds at engendering some measure of legitimacy through the provision of education. I find no consistent and statistically significant association between formal employment and trust in state institutions. Aside from trust in the armed forces, there does not seem to be a clear correlation between the outcome variables and economic development at the local level as measured by night-light intensity. The positive effect of chiefdom residence remains statistically significant with the inclusion of ethnic group fixed effects, indicating that the positive effect of chiefdom residence is not driven by a particular ethnic group.

Table 2: Chiefdom residence and trust in state authorities

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>							
	Trust in tax authority		Trust in courts		Trust in police		Trust in army	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Chiefdom	0.124*	0.115*	0.135**	0.133**	0.159***	0.141**	0.126***	0.096**
	(0.067)	(0.062)	(0.054)	(0.054)	(0.058)	(0.059)	(0.048)	(0.045)
Employment	-0.026	-0.014	0.032	0.034	-0.004	-0.004	0.009	0.011
	(0.029)	(0.030)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.035)	(0.034)	(0.031)	(0.032)
Education	0.008	0.009	0.011	0.011	0.006	0.007	0.011*	0.014**
	(0.009)	(0.011)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.007)
Urban	-0.024	-0.023	-0.012	-0.003	-0.027	-0.019	-0.061	-0.049
	(0.046)	(0.043)	(0.051)	(0.050)	(0.047)	(0.045)	(0.050)	(0.049)
Age	0.003**	0.003*	0.002**	0.002***	0.003***	0.003***	0.001**	0.002***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Female	0.025	0.023	0.067***	0.071***	0.035*	0.039**	0.028*	0.034**
	(0.020)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.016)	(0.016)
Night lights	0.022	0.011	0.028	0.025	0.042	0.030	0.069**	0.061**
	(0.051)	(0.041)	(0.033)	(0.032)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.028)	(0.028)
Coethnic interviewer	0.055	-0.127**	-0.024	-0.097*	0.034	-0.065	0.017	-0.103**
	(0.035)	(0.050)	(0.033)	(0.055)	(0.033)	(0.060)	(0.031)	(0.041)
Constant	0.485***		0.491***		0.437***		0.537***	
	(0.098)		(0.079)		(0.070)		(0.060)	
Ethnic group FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	1,173	1,173	1,189	1,189	1,196	1,196	1,190	1,190
Adjusted R ²	0.032	0.054	0.024	0.028	0.037	0.050	0.024	0.042

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Robust standard errors clustered at the grid cell level in parentheses.

The binary variable indicating coethnic interviewer is often negative and statistically significant in three of the eight models. This provides suggestive, if patchy, evidence for the notion that respondents who realize that they are speaking with an interviewer from the same ethnic group are more comfortable with expressing lack of trust in state institutions. As for the magnitude of the estimated effects, chiefdom residence increases the probability that a respondent trusts the tax authority by 12 percentage points. For trust in courts, the police, and the army, the figures are 13, 14, and 10 percentage points, respectively.⁷

⁷ These predicted probabilities are calculated using models 2, 4, 6, and 8 from Table 2 holding all variables besides chiefdom residence constant at their means or modes, whichever is applicable.

Considering the difficulties that developing countries often experience with engendering legitimacy of state institutions, these effects are substantively very large indeed.

As a caveat, one cannot rule out the possibility that survey respondents do not draw a clear distinction between traditional and modern government institutions. Thus, when asked about how much they trust a given government institution, respondents might in fact provide their opinion on an activity performed by their chief. This possibility is particularly relevant for trust in courts, as many respondents residing in traditional chiefdoms will have more experience dealing with customary courts than with formal, state-run courts. On the other hand, no traditional chiefdom runs an army, and few run anything akin to a police force. Given that the observed results are very similar across these different kinds of government institutions, it is not likely that a lack of clear distinction between traditional and modern government institutions biases the observed correlations.

4.1 Endogeneity

Even though the evidence presented so far is strongly suggestive, one might continue to worry that the observed correlations are driven by some underappreciated endogenous relationship. For example, individuals who are inherently distrustful of state institutions might settle in areas outside of traditional chiefdoms simply because they prefer to reside in areas free of authority, whether it be modern or traditional. In this arguably tortured example, it would be possible that individuals' pre-existing trust (and lack thereof) in governing institutions determines whether they settle in chiefdoms, and the observed relationship would thus run in a direction opposite to that hypothesized in this paper.

Furthermore, the precise locations of chiefdoms themselves may be subject to "deeper" forms of endogeneity. The sizes and shapes of territories governed by traditional chiefs are the result of complicated historical processes that might be relevant for the outcomes of this study. Consider the fact that the apartheid colonial government was instrumental in shaping many traditional chiefdoms' boundaries in myriad ways, no doubt affecting the livelihoods of chiefdom residents. It is possible that, as a result of this process, certain chiefdom residents are more dependent on government assistance, which might, in turn, shape their view of the Namibian government.

While the latter form of endogeneity is challenging to explore empirically and remains the task of future research, the potential impact of the former kind can be lessened. In order to address the possibility that certain individuals are more likely to receive the treatment of chiefdom residence, I turn to a matching strategy, which enables me to estimate the treatment effect of chiefdom residence by comparing relatively similar individuals. Matching is a method widely used to estimate causal effects. Although this method cannot alleviate confounding by unobserved covariates, it can reduce worries that the observed effects are confounded by covariates that we do observe. I employ genetic matching that utilizes a search algorithm to identify a set of weights for covariates, so that optimal balance is achieved when matching is completed (Ho, Imai, King, & Stuart, 2011). The algorithm maximizes the balance of observed baseline covariates across treated and control units that are matched (Diamond & Sekhon, 2013).

I match on three covariates: employment, education, and urban residence. The choice of the covariates was driven by the plausibility with which these variables might affect an individual's decision to reside within traditional polities. Formally employed respondents likely face greater opportunities for attractive career options, a great many of which will be located outside of predominantly rural traditional polities. Thus, formally employed individuals are less likely to live in chiefdoms. Similarly, respondents with higher educational attainment might choose to live outside of traditional polities, either because the payoff for their education is greater outside of chiefdoms or because their education may lead them to prefer governments based on rational rather than traditional authority. Finally, city dwellers are potentially less likely to choose to return to live under the authority of traditional leaders once they made the decision to migrate to urban areas.

The pre- and post-matching statistics displayed in the [Appendix](#) illustrate that after matching, the mean differences for the matched covariates decrease significantly and KS- and T-tests indicate that balance was successfully achieved. Out of the 451 control observations present in the unmatched data set, 449 are matched to 708 treated observations. This means that only two observations are discarded in the matching procedure. Table 3 displays the results obtained with matched data. For each dependent variable, I estimate a simple model without controls or fixed effects to obtain a baseline treatment effect. Subsequently, I estimate a more complex model with controls for individual and geographical covariates. I also include a dummy for coethnic interviewer and ethnic group fixed effects. Robust standard errors are clustered at the grid-cell level.

Table 3: Chieftom residence and trust in state authorities – matched sample

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>							
	Trust in tax authority		Trust in courts		Trust in police		Trust in army	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Chieftom	0.148** (0.069)	0.083 (0.052)	0.152*** (0.036)	0.181*** (0.038)	0.179*** (0.049)	0.161*** (0.048)	0.192*** (0.059)	0.182*** (0.043)
Ethnic group FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Individual controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Night lights	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Coethnic interviewer	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	1,157	1,157	1,157	1,157	1,157	1,157	1,157	1,157
Adjusted R ²	0.025	0.079	0.027	0.073	0.036	0.059	0.044	0.086

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Robust standard errors clustered at the grid cell level in parentheses.

As Table 3 indicates, the results obtained with matching are relatively similar to those presented in Table 2. Chieftom residence remains a positive and statistically reliable predictor of trust in government institutions in all but the second model. Note that the magnitude of the associated effects increases across the board, indicating that the largely observational design of the present study might actually underestimate the effect sizes of interest.

4.2 State legitimacy, trust in traditional leaders, and shared ethnicity

I now move on to testing the second hypothesis, which asserted that the association between chieftom residence and trust in state institutions is in fact driven by respondents' trust in their chief. This is because traditional leaders who are not themselves trusted cannot link local communities to state institutions, thus failing to further these institutions' legitimacy. I first utilize an interaction between *chieftom residence* and *trust in chief*. If it is the case that the effect of chieftom residence works primarily through trust in chiefs themselves, the interaction should be positive and, furthermore, chieftom residence should lose statistical significance. Table 4 provides strong evidence that this is in fact the case, although the interaction itself is statistically significant in only two of the four estimated models. Both *trust in chief* and its interaction with *chieftom residence* yield positive coefficients, while *chieftom residence* loses its predictive significance. Chiefs' ability to act as links between local communities and the state is compromised when citizens do not trust their traditional leaders to begin with. The [Appendix](#) can be consulted for complete results with covariate coefficients as well as visualizations of the estimated interactions.⁸

⁸ It should be noted that models in Table 4 seem to be somewhat dependent on the coding of the dependent variables. When the dependent variables enter as ordinal outcomes, the interaction between chieftom residence and trust in chief is positive only in models 2 (trust in courts) and 3 (trust in police). However, the

Table 4: Trust in chief and trust in state authorities

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Trust in tax authority	Trust in courts	Trust in police	Trust in army
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Chiefdom	0.040 (0.082)	-0.006 (0.072)	-0.030 (0.067)	0.058 (0.060)
Trust in chief	0.406*** (0.038)	0.478*** (0.046)	0.352*** (0.061)	0.456*** (0.062)
Chiefdom*trust in chief	0.045 (0.054)	0.112* (0.066)	0.181** (0.070)	0.001 (0.073)
Ethnic group FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Night lights	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Coethnic interviewer	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,148	1,168	1,172	1,167
Adjusted R ²	0.208	0.278	0.218	0.226

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Robust standard errors clustered at the grid cell level in parentheses.

Next I explore the degree to which the effect of chiefdom residence is conditioned by shared ethnicity between traditional leaders and their constituents. In the [Appendix](#), I estimate a series of models that consider those respondents within the sample who live under the jurisdiction of traditional chiefs and find that non-coethnic chiefdom residence is negatively correlated with trust in the chief; this result is statistically significant even when standard controls used above are taken into account. If shared ethnicity makes a difference with respect to trust in chief and, furthermore, if trust in chief is indeed crucial for explaining the positive relationship between chiefdom residence and the dependent variables, one would also expect that coethnic chiefdom residence explains some of the effect observed in chiefdom residence. In other words, there should be a difference in the effect of coethnic and non-coethnic chiefdom residence, as Hypothesis 3 proposed. Table 5 below is identical to Table 2 with the exception that chiefdom residence is now broken into three different categories: residence outside of traditional chiefdoms, residence in a non-coethnic chiefdom, and residence in a coethnic chiefdom (residence outside is the omitted category).⁹ It is rather clear that coethnic residence is the more important explanatory component of chiefdom residence, because the coefficients on non-coethnic chiefdom residence are almost invariably statistically insignificant and generally smaller than those on coethnic chiefdom residence.

dichotomous version of the dependent variables is arguably more appropriate for assessing whether or not traditional authorities undermine state legitimacy. From the perspective of this theoretical interest, the difference between trusting the state just a little and somewhat is much more important than that between trusting the state somewhat and a lot because the former crosses the midpoint.

⁹ In the [Appendix](#), I also show models where respondents residing outside of chiefdoms are dropped. This provides a direct comparison of coethnic and non-coethnic chiefdom residents, obviating the necessity to pick respondents residing outside of chiefdoms as a baseline. In line with the results presented above, non-coethnic chiefdom residence is negatively correlated with trust in state institutions in this restricted sample.

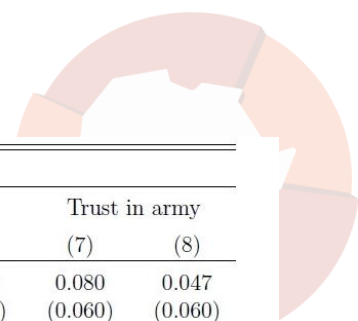


Table 5: Comparing different resident types

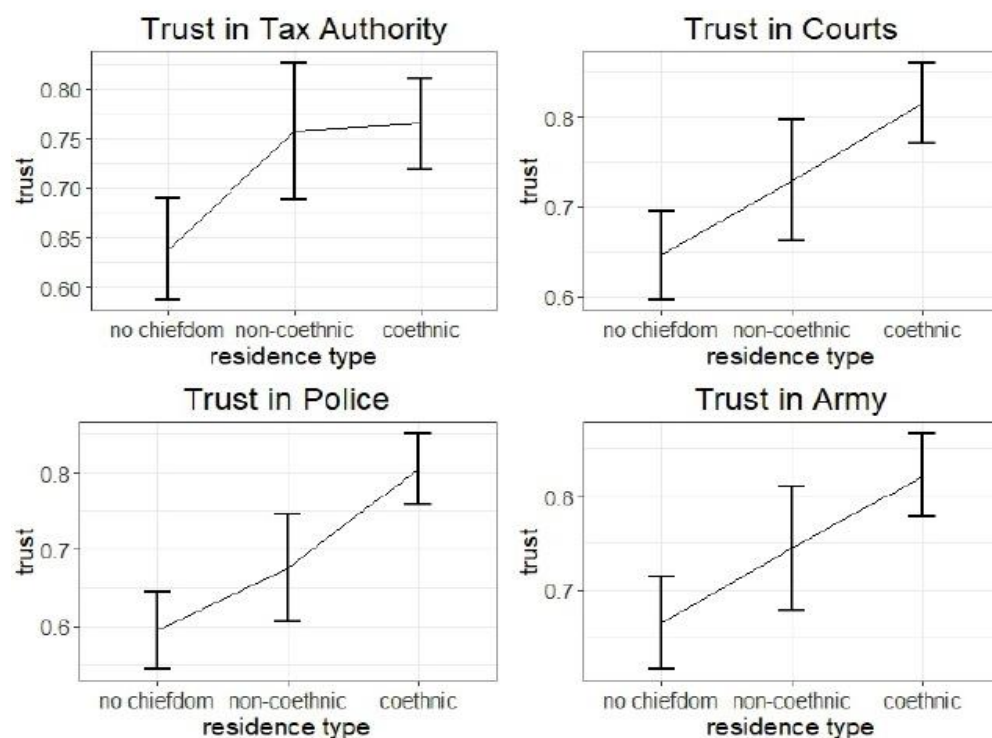
	<i>Dependent variable:</i>							
	Trust in tax authority		Trust in courts		Trust in police		Trust in army	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Non-coethnic chiefdom	0.119*	0.100	0.084	0.076	0.081	0.063	0.080	0.047
	(0.068)	(0.064)	(0.054)	(0.055)	(0.066)	(0.068)	(0.060)	(0.060)
Coethnic chiefdom	0.127*	0.125*	0.170***	0.167***	0.210***	0.188***	0.157***	0.125***
	(0.074)	(0.067)	(0.058)	(0.060)	(0.058)	(0.060)	(0.048)	(0.046)
Ethnic group FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Night lights	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Coethnic interviewer	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,173	1,173	1,189	1,189	1,196	1,196	1,190	1,190
Adjusted R ²	0.031	0.053	0.027	0.030	0.044	0.055	0.026	0.043

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
Robust standard errors clustered at the grid cell level in parentheses.

Residence outside of areas controlled by traditional chiefs is the omitted category. The sample consists of all respondents.

This insight is clearly illustrated by Figure 2, which plots models 1, 3, 5, and 7 from Table 5. In terms of effects, the difference between residence outside of chiefdoms (no chiefdom) and non-coethnic chiefdom is much smaller than that between the first two categories and residence in coethnic chiefdom. As I have argued above, this is because those individuals who are coethnic with their chief are more likely to trust him, and those who trust their chief likewise see state institutions as more legitimate because traditional leaders serve as a link that connects their communities to the state.

Figure 2: Effects of different types of residence on trust in state institutions



The plots display how the predicted probability of trusting a given state institution changes with respondents' residence type.

4.3 Potential mechanisms

Given that the above analyses rely on pre-existing survey data collected to serve a variety of scholars and research questions, it is difficult to test specific mechanisms that could explain the association between chiefdom residence and trust in state institutions. To do so, one would need more detailed information on respondents' interaction with traditional institutions and their leaders. In this paper, I use *trust in traditional leader* to indicate that the positive effect of chiefdom residence flows through the relationships that respondents have with their chiefs. What remains unclear is just what type of relationship this is. As has been indicated above, however, the goal of the present study is to point to empirical regularities that might generate more specific hypotheses for future work. Having said that, I discuss several potential mechanisms below.

First, there is much evidence that Namibian traditional chiefs communicate with government officials on their communities' behalf. As an example, consider the following remarks by Chief Boniface Lutibezi Shufu of the Mayeyi TA during an annual cultural festival attended by regional stakeholders: "I am appealing to the health ministry to look at this issue [assuring access to health care] with great concern for our elderly, pregnant women, children and the disabled who on several occasions have had to walk long distances and sleep over to access health services" (Koooper, 2017). Government officials are receptive to these messages because, as the minister responsible for overseeing TAs put it, "traditional leaders are the eyes and ears of Government at the grassroots level" (Weidlich, 2006). Chiefs attend meetings that discuss crime prevention schemes, deployment of community-based development projects, and construction of schools. In the case of livestock theft, the police often cooperate with traditional leaders who prosecute suspects apprehended by police officers. As one chief remarked, "[The] Traditional Authority is a recognised authority, it is part of Government, we are represented in all the constituencies across the country, and we are custodians of the law of the country" (Shejavali, 2006).

Furthermore, traditional leaders assist the government with rapid responses to natural disasters. Consider the example of Chief Alfons Kaundu of the Mbunza TA, who is reported to have provided invaluable information during a severe drought in early 2015. The chief first provided an early warning of impending drought by observing that a wild fruit known as *nonsimba* grew in abundance – a clear sign that "there will be severe drought and subsequent hunger this year" (Cloete, 2015). Subsequently, the chief called on the government to prepare relief, noting that the government's seed-distribution program would not succeed in his community in a dry climate.

Second, extant literature points to the fact that traditional leaders remain crucial for local governance (Chiweza, 2006; Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2015; Baldwin, 2016). If areas governed by traditional leaders enjoy higher public-goods provision and if local residents do not draw a clear distinction between traditional and national governments, respondents might give the national government credit for services it did not actually deliver. Alternatively, even if respondents clearly identify that certain development projects are spearheaded by the national government, such projects are more likely to succeed in areas where politicians can cooperate with local traditional leaders and ensure successful service delivery (Baldwin, 2016).

Third, it is possible that in addition to communicating the needs of their communities to the state and contributing to service delivery, traditional leaders also facilitate funneling of patronage to their localities (Baldwin, 2016, Gottlieb & Larreguy, 2016, Koter, 2016). In comparison to individuals who cannot be easily reached via traditional intermediaries, chiefdom residents would be more likely to see the state as legitimate due to their position on the receiving side of mediated clientelist exchange.

The finding that the positive relationship between chiefdom residence and trust in state institutions is much stronger among traditional leaders' coethnics is compatible with all of these mechanisms. Since chiefs' non-coethnics are less likely to trust their traditional leader (see the [Appendix](#) for empirical evidence), they will also be less likely to use traditional

leaders as a conduit for conveying their concerns to the national government. Similarly, unequal access to development projects and patronage based on ethnic discrimination would explain why the positive effect of chiefdom residence is concentrated among traditional leaders' coethnics.



5. Conclusion

This study has utilized a unique map of traditional chiefdoms in Namibia to show that there are important associations between residence within chiefdoms and trust in crucial state institutions. By employing this newly digitized map, this study has avoided the necessity to assume that chiefs are mainly active in rural areas or that their influence is spatially invariant. The primary finding is a positive relationship between chiefdom residence and trust in formal state institutions, suggesting a complementary relationship between Namibian traditional leaders and the state. I further find that the positive effect of chiefdom residence is conditioned by trust in chiefs themselves. I interpret this finding as suggestive evidence for the claim that chiefs serve as a link between their communities and the national government and that only individuals who trust their chiefs benefit from this link. This conclusion is bolstered by ample anecdotal evidence from the Namibian case. Chiefs often call on the state to address their communities' needs, and the government regards chiefs as its eyes and ears at the local level.

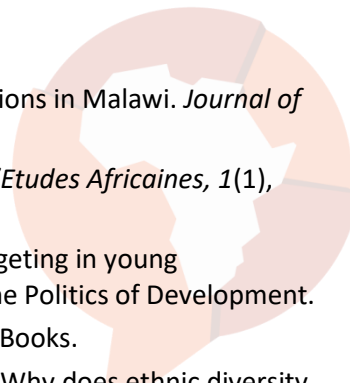
Finally, I find that residence in a chiefdom run by a coethnic is a much stronger predictor of trust in state institutions than residence in a chiefdom where respondents do not share ethnicity with their chief. One possible interpretation of this finding is that although traditional leaders can serve to enhance the legitimacy of state institutions, they can fulfill this function mainly with respect to their coethnics. This could mean that the long-term effect of traditional leaders' continued relevance in nascent African democracies is uncertain. As states grow stronger, traditional chiefs' role as local links to the central government will likely weaken, and yet their position among coethnics might enable them, should they choose to do so, to undermine national unity.

Future research could proceed in a number of important directions. First, subsequent studies should attempt to acknowledge and explore the effects of different kinds of chiefs on local governance and subnational identities. Are certain chiefs more effective than others at, for instance, adjudicating customary cases? Are chiefs who allocate a great deal of land more influential in their communities and thus more likely to mobilize unique identities? Do elected chiefs (of which there are relatively few) lack the legitimacy that hereditary chiefs enjoy? Lastly, the implications of lower trust in traditional leaders expressed by non-coethnics could be further investigated. It is important to examine whether chiefdoms with larger proportions of non-coethnic residents suffer relatively lower degrees of public-goods provision and whether traditional chiefs' ability to perform some of their functions deteriorates in ethnically diverse environments.

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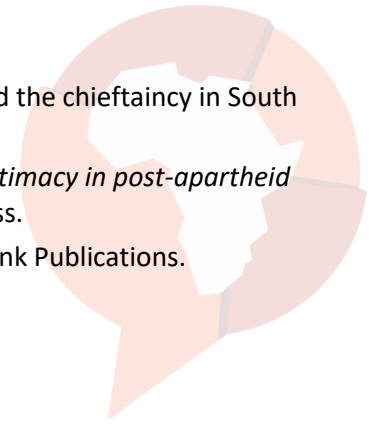
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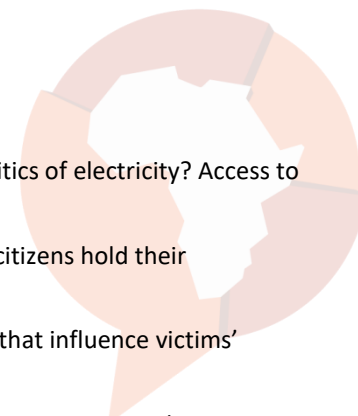
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Institute for Democracy, Citizenship and Public Policy in Africa

4.89 Leslie Social Science Building
12 University Avenue, Rondebosch, 7701
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