The Connections of Party Brokers[*]

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Abstract

Seminal models of clientelism assert that parties value brokers for their strong downward ties to voters. Despite its dominance, scholars have not empirically scrutinized key assumptions of this theory due to the challenges of measuring brokers' network connections. We analyze unique data from three sources – Ghana's voter register, a handmade catalogue of local elites, and a large-scale survey of aspiring party brokers. We show that the observable implications of the standard model do not hold: brokers know surprisingly few voters, brokers with more downward connections are not the most active or effective, and parties do not select the brokers who know the most voters. Instead, brokers with the most upward connections to local elites appear to be the most valuable to parties. We build inductively from these results to develop an alternative theory of brokers, proposing that many parties value "problem solvers" over "monitors."

1   Introduction

Political parties in developing democracies often rely on grassroots intermediaries, or brokers, to pursue clientelist strategies (Mares and Young 2016). During campaigns, brokers mobilize votes: they distribute handouts (Stokes 2005), organize rallies (Szwarcberg 2012), and canvass (Brierley and Kramon 2018). Between elections, they build voter loyalty by providing access to vital public services (Auyero 2000, Zarazaga 2014). According to the dominant "information asymmetry" model of party brokers, parties primarily employ brokers because they have detailed information on individual voters that parties otherwise lack. Parties use this knowledge to identify clients to target (Diaz-Cayeros et al. 2016, Finan and Schechter 2012), and to tailor benefits to match voters' needs (Camp et al. 2014). Most importantly, such knowledge also can facilitate the monitoring of these exchanges to make them successful (Brusco et al. 2004, Stokes et al. 2013).

Until now, key assumptions of the information asymmetry model have not been empirically tested. Previous studies have assumed that brokers possess significant knowledge about voters, but have rarely measured these connections systematically or evaluated whether brokers with stronger ties to voters are more active and/or effective.[1] Moreover, other than Auerbach and Thachil (2018*a*, 2018*b*), prior research has not explored which brokers parties select when given a choice. Yet studying broker selection can reveal party leaders' preferences for different types of intermediaries.

We overcome these measurement challenges using an original survey of 1,140 aspiring party brokers in Ghana's ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP). While the NPP also interacts with citizens via non-party brokers (e.g. chiefs, community and religious leaders), the party primarily relies on its internal agents – the actors we survey – to implement clientelism.[2] To our knowledge, this is the largest survey of party brokers in any developing democracy to date. The survey develops

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[1]Important partial exceptions are Calvo and Murillo (2013), Ravanilla et al. (2018), Duarte et al. (2019), and Schneider (2019), discussed in more detail below.

[2]We restrict our analysis to partisan brokers because these are the most relevant type of broker in the areas of Ghana we study. Parties sometimes rely instead on non-party brokers (e.g., Baldwin 2015, Holland and Palmer-Rubin 2015).

original and objective measures of brokers' network ties. This includes leveraging an unusually fine-grained data source – Ghana's complete voter register – to estimate brokers' *downward connections* by quizzing them about the identities of real voters in their communities. We also introduce an original measure of brokers' *upward connections* by cataloguing and asking brokers the names and phone numbers of the local elites who they must contact to deliver patronage to voters. Moreover, because Ghana's political parties hold internal elections to select brokers, we can identify which broker attributes party elites (and clients) value the most in real selection decisions.

We find little empirical support for central observable implications of the information asymmetry model. Brokers in Ghana know surprisingly few voters and have little more knowledge of local voters than a reference group of non-brokers. In addition, brokers with more downward connections are neither more active during or after campaigns nor more electorally effective than those with fewer downward ties. Broker selection procedures also completely fail to screen for intermediaries with more ties to voters. Instead, our analyses show that brokers in Ghana's ruling party have significantly more upward ties to local elites than non-brokers; that brokers' ties to local elites are strong correlates of activism and electoral effectiveness; and that broker selection processes screen, at least partially, for intermediaries with the best upward ties.

Building inductively from this evidence, we propose an alternative explanation of brokers' main value to parties. Our theory extends studies that revisit canonical models of clientelism (e.g., Stokes 2005) to emphasize that many clientelist exchanges in the developing world are not monitored at the individual level (Kramon 2017, Nichter 2018), and are often initiated by voters themselves (Nichter and Peress 2017). In these exchanges, parties primarily rely on brokers to be "problem solvers" rather than "monitors" who keep close tabs on voters (Auyero 2000, Zarazaga 2014, Calvo and Murillo 2019). The best brokers are those who can meet voters' demands for personalized patronage. This requires *connections up* to local elites – local party leaders, bureaucrats, and politicians – who brokers must lobby for benefits to deliver to voters (Auyero 2000, Auerbach and Thachil 2018*a*). Additionally, local party elites often have a private incentive to select brokers

with whom they are connected, because these brokers can help them rise within the party ranks.

We focus on Ghana because of the unique measurement opportunities it affords. But, as outlined in more detail below, we expect our alternative theory of brokers' value to parties to extend broadly under several scope conditions. In particular, we expect that most exchanges between parties and voters are not monitored at the individual level. There is mounting evidence that unmonitored clientelism is extremely prevalent – or indeed the most prevalent form of clientelism – across the developing world (Hicken and Nathan 2020). In addition, we expect that many clientelist exchanges are "client-initiated" (Nichter and Peress 2017) and that recipients' likely partisanship is at least somewhat publicly inferable from voters' public actions (Nichter 2018) or their ethnicity. We expect these conditions to apply in many developing democracies.

We make two main contributions to the study of clientelism. First, our results suggest a need to rethink untested assumptions about the sources of brokers' value to parties. We do not argue that brokers' connections to voters are irrelevant, but provide evidence that such ties may be far less central to their role than is typically claimed. We thus contribute to a broader, on-going theoretical re-assessment of central claims in the study of clientelism. Our observation that brokers' ability to monitor individual voters is not their most salient feature closely complements other recent studies challenging the theoretical importance of monitoring and enforcement to the persistence of clientelist appeals (e.g., Kramon 2017, Nichter 2018, Muñoz 2019).

Our second contribution is that we look inside what has hitherto been an empirical "black box": who parties select as brokers. We present the first systematic study of real-life broker selection, and do so from the perspective of clients and party leaders simultaneously. This complements Auerbach and Thachil (2018*a*, 2018*b*), who also investigate client- and party-led broker selection, respectively. Importantly, we extend this work by focusing on actual, as opposed to hypothetical, selection decisions and employing more direct measures of brokers' attributes. We also show that brokers' connections to local elites are central to their selection in a much larger variety of settings than informal slums, including rural towns and villages and rich and poor urban neighborhoods.

2 The information asymmetry theory of party brokers

2.1 Brokers' value to parties

Clientelism entails the targeted distribution of excludable benefits in return for political support (Hicken 2011). Clientelist exchanges take place during election campaigns (*electoral clientelism*), as well as during the electoral off-cycle when parties distribute goods and services through their ongoing interactions with clients (*relational clientelism*) (Nichter 2018). Parties in many developing democracies employ brokers as agents to facilitate these exchanges. Seminal models of clientelism suggest that brokers are valuable to parties because of their social relationships with citizens. According to the dominant theory, party leaders leverage these ties to address information asymmetries between the party and voters. Information asymmetry models highlight three main ways in which brokers' intimate knowledge of voters helps parties.

First, brokers can use their social ties to identify clients for the party to target. Brokers, for example, may leverage their knowledge to identify conditionally loyal partisans (Diaz-Cayeros et al. 2016) and deduce the minimum benefits needed to maintain their support (Zarazaga 2016). In other contexts, parties may task brokers with identifying those most likely to voluntarily comply with offers of goods for votes (Finan and Schechter 2012, Lawson and Greene 2014).

Second, brokers' knowledge is thought to help parties tailor benefits to the needs of individual voters (Brusco et al. 2004, Stokes et al. 2013). Party brokers in developing democracies are sometimes said to "deploy their detailed knowledge of constituents... to match distributive benefits to people's needs and leverage individual circumstances for votes" (Camp et al. 2014, 567). Identifying relevant individuals and tailoring benefits helps to make clientelism efficient; parties do not waste (unwanted) benefits on non-voters or unpersuadable clients (Zarazaga 2016).

Third, and most important for canonical theories of clientelism, brokers' intimate knowledge of voters is claimed to allow parties to enforce clientelist exchanges via the monitoring of vote choices. Indeed, Stokes et al. (2013, 76) argue that brokers are a "*sine qua non*" of clientelism

because their monitoring ability is what makes conditioning possible. Monitoring by brokers is sometimes said to be explicit, through direct violations of the secret ballot. But more common are more subtle forms of surveillance argued to occur through brokers' sustained social interactions and personal relationships with individual voters (e.g., Brusco et al. 2004). Theories building on each of these three approaches suggest that parties that engage in clientelism are strongly incentivized to recruit brokers with the best ties to voters.

2.2 Challenges to the information asymmetry model

Despite the dominance of information asymmetry models, there are reasons to question whether brokers' value to parties truly lies in their social connections with voters. Three arise from empirical observations that appear at odds with assumptions on which many information asymmetry theories rest. Two others relate to measurement challenges common to most studies of brokers.

First, and most importantly, recent scholarship suggests that many parties do not actually monitor clientelist exchanges for votes at the individual level (Kramon 2017, Chauchard 2018, Guardado and Wantchekon 2018, Nichter 2018, Hicken et al. 2019).[3] Some studies draw attention to the absence of monitoring in contexts where parties are weak and do not employ networks of brokers who could be used to monitor (Kramon 2017, Muñoz 2019). However, there is little evidence from *any* modern democracies with the "Australian" ballot that exchanges for votes are systematically monitored at the individual-level – even where party machines are much stronger and brokers are very active (Hicken and Nathan 2020).[4]

Second, in practice, clientelism might not be as party-driven as information asymmetry theories assume. Recent research demonstrates that many clientelist transfers are "client initiated": voters contact brokers to demand assistance (Nichter and Peress 2017, Nichter 2018). Voters demand

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[3]There is evidence of monitored *turnout* buying (e.g., Larreguy et al. 2016). But this does not require social knowledge of voters; turnout is usually publicly observable, even a matter of public record.

[4]Zarazaga (2014) even disputes whether there is widespread monitoring of votes in Argentina, the context without the Australian ballot in which it is most famously said to happen (e.g., Stokes 2005).

benefits both during campaigns (Lindberg 2003, Chauchard 2018, Hicken et al. 2019) and after elections (Auyero 2000, Zarazaga 2014). When voters initiate exchanges, parties do not necessarily need brokers' pre-existing social ties to identify potential clients – brokers can wait for clients to come to them. Moreover, brokers do not need deep pre-existing knowledge of clients' individual needs or reservation prices if clients communicate their specific demands.

Third, even when parties do task brokers with identifying conditionally loyal clients (e.g., Diaz-Cayeros et al. 2016), this knowledge may be fairly easy to obtain. In clientelist environments, voters often send costly public signals of their partisanship – such as by registering as party members, attending meetings, or displaying party paraphernalia. These actions tie their future access to resources to the party's electoral success (Nichter 2018). Where ethnic voting is salient, brokers can also rely on visible ethnic cues. Public indicators of partisanship reduce the difficulty of identifying loyal clients and, by extension, the need for brokers with deep social knowledge.

The fourth objection is methodological. Due to measurement challenges, the key assertion that parties value brokers because of their ties to voters has not been rigorously tested. Few prior studies have systematically measured brokers' knowledge about voters. Community social networks capturing brokers' social ties are usually too complex to observe at scale, though Ravanilla et al. (2018) and Duarte et al. (2019) have made important advances in this direction.[5] Most studies attempting to demonstrate brokers' knowledge of clients have simply asked brokers whether they believe they are capable of monitoring voters or identifying their partisanship.[6] Alternatively, studies ask voters if they believe parties can monitor them. But these approaches have clear drawbacks. Brokers have incentives to inflate their importance by exaggerating the extent of their knowledge,[7] and voters who are fearful of electoral intimidation may overestimate the extent of monitoring.[8]

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[5]Calvo and Murillo (2013) and Cruz (2018) instead measure the social network ties of *voters* who receive benefits.

[6]For example, Stokes et al. (2013, 100) rely on self-reports of monitoring ability.

[7]Brokers may also believe they are good at inferring preferences, but lack any means to validate these beliefs if the ballot is secret.

[8]For example, while Afrobarometer surveys suggest that some voters in Ghana believe party agents can observe their

In one of the only studies to test brokers' knowledge objectively, Schneider (2019) finds that intermediaries in rural India are surprisingly bad at identifying voters' intended behavior, especially among non-co-partisans.

The fifth challenge is that scholars have thus far been unable to observe parties' broker selection decisions in practice. In theory, investigating such decisions can reveal parties' preferences over broker attributes. These observations represent another way to validate assumptions about brokers' value to parties. Indeed, if parties prefer brokers who have in-depth knowledge about voters, they should be expected to design institutions that screen for this knowledge when hiring their brokers. However, prior studies have not systematically observed a real-life broker selection process to examine why parties select certain brokers. The closest exception is Auerbach and Thachil (2018*a*), who study broker selection in India indirectly via a survey experiment. In contrast to the information asymmetry model, they find that brokers' education and ties to municipal governments are key criteria in their selection, rather than co-ethnicity or other proxies for their ties to voters.

We seek to overcome both of these measurement challenges, while building on recent scholarship that suggests many exchanges between parties and voters are unmonitored and client initiated. We begin by assessing three central observable implications of the information asymmetry model of clientelism (Section 5). *First*, if the information asymmetry model of brokers is correct, brokers should have high overall levels of knowledge about voters in their communities. *Second*, brokers with greater knowledge of voters should be relatively more active in – and effective at – facilitating clientelist exchanges. *Third*, parties should structure their institutions for selecting brokers to choose agents who have the best ties to voters. After assessing these claims, we suggest an alternative theory of brokers' value to parties (Section 6).

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vote choices (Ferree and Long 2016), party agents widely admit they have no ability to monitor voters' choices (Nathan 2019, 181-185). Also see Nichter (2018, 38) for Brazil.

3 Party brokers and party organization in Ghana

We study partisan brokers in Ghana, where the major parties share two features critical to our analysis. First, they rely on party brokers to engage in clientelism. Second, they use observable procedures to fill broker positions, which allows us to better examine their preferences regarding broker attributes.

3.1 Branch leaders as brokers

Ghana's two major parties, the NPP – the incumbent following the 2016 election – and the National Democratic Congress (NDC), have hierarchical machine organizations with standing committees of internally elected executives at the national, regional, parliamentary constituency, and polling station levels. Polling station *branches* are our main focus. Branches are led by committees of branch leaders (or "executives") who serve – at least on paper – at all of the country's 29,000 polling stations. The NPP has five leaders per branch, while the NDC selects nine leaders per branch.[9] Polling station branches oversee localized communities of roughly 500 to 1,000 registered voters, which is equivalent to an entire village or small urban neighborhood. Branch executives are themselves overseen by a committee of constituency-level leaders (or "executives").[10]

Branch executives act as brokers engaged in both electoral and relational clientelism. During campaigns, branch leaders distribute handouts from the party (e.g. food, money) (Lindberg 2003, Nugent 2007). These exchanges take place at public events like rallies or community meetings or in private during house-to-house canvassing. Often such exchanges are not a *quid pro quo*, but used to signal the party's generosity and reputation, as in Nugent (2007) and Kramon (2017), or to draw voters' attention to the party's platform and candidates, as in Muñoz (2019).[11] Indeed,

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[9]We focus on the incumbent NPP. The five positions at each branch are: chairman, secretary, organizer, youth organizer, and women's organizer.

[10]Constituency-level leaders are who we refer to as "local party elites" below. As of 2016, there were 275 parliamentary constituencies nested within 216 districts. Each district is administered by a single local government.

[11]Ghana's two major parties are not ideologically differentiated, which is typical among African parties (van de Walle

canvassing – a very common activity – provides branch executives an opportunity to both discuss the party's policy promises and exchange benefits with voters (Brierley and Kramon 2018).[12]

During the electoral off-cycle, branch leaders from the ruling party connect clients with patronage controlled by state and party officials, as in Auyero (2000). For example, party supporters regularly approach branch leaders in pursuit of preferential access to state-sponsored jobs, scholarships, loans, and other benefits available through the party's control of local governments (Nathan 2019, Brierley Forthcoming).

Branch executives are not the only actors who serve as brokers in Ghana. Both parties also sometimes work through traditional chiefs, especially in rural villages.[13] However, branch executives conduct the largest share of brokerage activities nationwide. Separate parallel networks of informal brokers are rare. Parliamentary and presidential candidates both draw on branch- and constituency-level executives rather than build private campaign teams.

3.2 Selection institutions

Unlike in some other settings, branch leaders in Ghana do not emerge solely through informal, community-organized procedures (e.g., Auerbach and Thachil 2018*a*). Instead, party positions at all levels are filled – at least on paper – via first-past-the-post internal elections. These elections are held every four years (following the national election), with party members serving as the electorate. Branch elections are not always held in practice, however. Constituency-level party executives also sometimes interfere to hand pick branch leaders. In these cases, only one candidate stands for a position and wins by default. Variation in whether elections occur allows us to observe broker selection both when it is determined formally by ordinary party members and informally

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and Butler 1999), and largely do not mix ideological and patronage-based appeals (Nathan 2019). Accordingly, the brokers that we study are what Calvo and Murillo (2019) term "territorial" activists, rather than "ideological" activists, which are also common in some Latin American parties.

[12]Other non-clientelistic activities of branch leaders include assisting with voter registration and working as polling agents on election day to guard against (or help commit) electoral irregularities.

[13]The Online Appendix shows that substitution between chiefs and party brokers cannot explain our results.

by constituency-level party elites.

4   Data and measurement

4.1   Survey design

We surveyed aspirants to branch leadership positions in the NPP during the party's most recent branch elections, held in January 2018.[14] We restrict our analysis to the ruling party as it is the only party with access to significant state resources that allow its branch leaders to serve as brokers at a large scale in the current period.

We construct a stratified, representative, random sample of NPP branches in five regions of southern Ghana.[15] The final sample consists of 200 polling stations, now representing 232 separate branches,[16] spread across 10 parliamentary constituencies (five urban and five rural). The survey was conducted over a four-week period immediately after the branch elections. All candidates as of election day for each of the five positions in each branch were interviewed. We also interviewed the incumbent branch chair, organizer, and women's organizer regardless of whether they re-contested. Our final sample of 1,140 respondents consists of four types of aspiring brokers: incumbent leaders who were re-elected, incumbent leaders who lost or did not re-contest, new contestants who won, and new contestants who lost. The Online Appendix provides further details on sampling.

4.2   Measuring broker connections

We conceptualize brokers as having two types of network ties: *connections down* to clients – ordinary voters and party supporters – and *connections up* to politicians, bureaucrats, and higher-level party leaders (see Figure 1). Our *connections down* measure assesses respondents' knowledge of real voters from their polling station. We used the official voter register (from 2015) to randomly

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[14]These branch leaders will be in office until after the 2020 presidential and parliamentary elections.

[15]These are Ashanti, Greater Accra, Volta, Central and Eastern.

[16]The Electoral Commission recently divided 32 of the selected 200 polling stations into two separate stations, necessitating the creation of parallel NPP branches at the split stations starting from the 2018 branch elections.

Figure 1: *Political party structure and broker connections.*
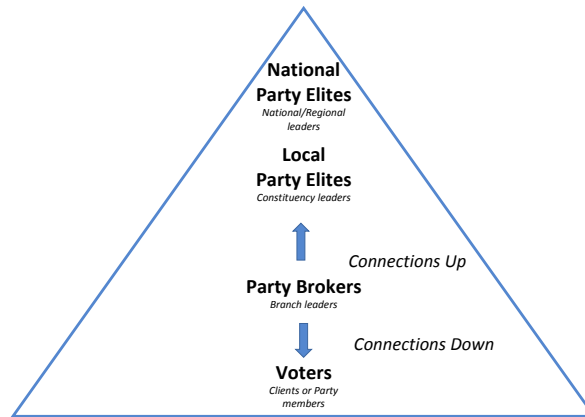
select 24 voters from each polling station, creating sheets of de-identified voters using their photographs (see Figure 2). The variable records the percentage of voters that each respondent named correctly.[17]

To measure *connections up*, we tested branch leaders' knowledge of 13 local elites. We focus on the main actors that a broker in Ghana would need to contact in order to deliver patronage to individual voters. The list includes the main local politicians who control local governance decisions and can serve as patrons to voters.[18] It also includes the district government bureaucrats who control the major sources of patronage.[19] Finally, the list includes the full set of constituency-level party executives who take on informal positions of influence in district governments.[20]

Each respondent was asked to name the current occupant of each position and to provide the

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[17]We employ a flexible coding scheme that allows for the possibility that respondents only know voters by a nickname (see Online Appendix).

[18]These are the Member of Parliament (MP), mayor (district chief executive), city/town councilor (District Assembly member), and city/town council chair (presiding member of the District Assembly).

[19]These are the district head bureaucrat (district coordinating director), district engineer, the district coordinator for the National Disaster Management Organization, and the district's Youth Employment Agency coordinator. The latter two supervise common avenues for grassroots patronage employment, while the district engineer oversees public works contracting.

[20]These are the constituency party chairperson, secretary, treasurer, organizer, youth organizer, and women's organizer.

Figure 2: *Example of polling station quiz sheet used to measure connections down.*
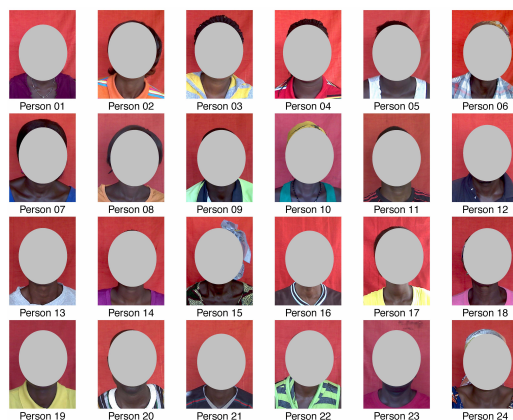
last four digits of his/her phone number, creating a 25-item test of upward connections; names and numbers were scored separately.[21] To ensure that we measure aspiring branch leaders' connections from *before* the 2018 branch elections, we also ask if respondents first learned each name or number in the days or weeks between the election and the survey interview. If a respondent answered *yes* to this question, we removed their responses for this item. Our *connections up* variable records the percentage of items correctly identified by each respondent.[22]

Figure 3 shows that there is wide variation across aspiring branch leaders in both types of connections. *Connections up* ranges from 0% to 84% correct, with a median of 20% and standard deviation of 15%. *Connections down* ranges from 0% to 100%, with a median of 17% and standard deviation of 22%. Connections *up* and *down* are also not correlated within individuals (r=-0.003): knowing a broker's value on one dimension does not help predict their value on the other.[23]

While it may not always be the case that upward and downward connections are as uncorrelated as in Figure 3, it is reasonable to expect that they will often not be very tightly linked, such that

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[21]We only tested for the MP's phone number, as MP names are widely known. Research assistants obtained correct phone numbers for each official before the survey was administered.

[22]We again employ a flexible coding scheme that allows for the possibility that each official has additional phone numbers or nicknames (see Online Appendix).

[23]This is true in the full sample and within either rural or urban constituencies.

Figure 3: *Individual-level correlations between connections up and connections down*
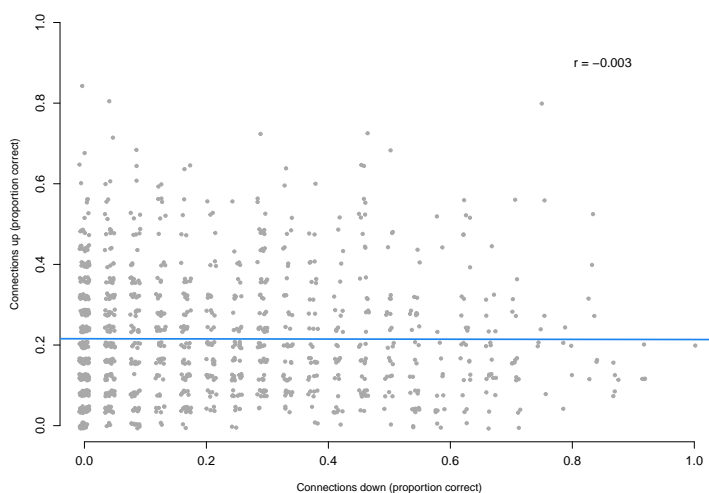
parties still face a real choice about which type of tie to prioritize. Brokers from different socio-economic backgrounds have different life experiences, which will influence their opportunities to interact with different types of people, especially local elites. Figure 4 shows the demographic characteristics associated with each type of connections within each community. Downward connections (left-panel) are not predicted by most individual-level traits – such as, gender, education and wealth.[24] In contrast, the right-panel suggests that *connections up* are concentrated among higher social status individuals – men, civil servants, civic association members, the better educated. These individuals have greater opportunities to interact with local elites at professional and social events, but are not necessarily the same people spending the most time meeting ordinary community members. Thus, the limited correlation between the two dimensions is likely to be

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[24]Two significant predictors of *connections down* are being a relative of the chief (positive association) or a trader (negative association). Chiefs' relatives are often from locally active and socially important families, which facilitates meeting community members. In contrast, traders often spend much of their time away from the immediate area around their home, which can inhibit meeting community members.

Figure 4: *Predictors of connections down (left) and connections up (right).*
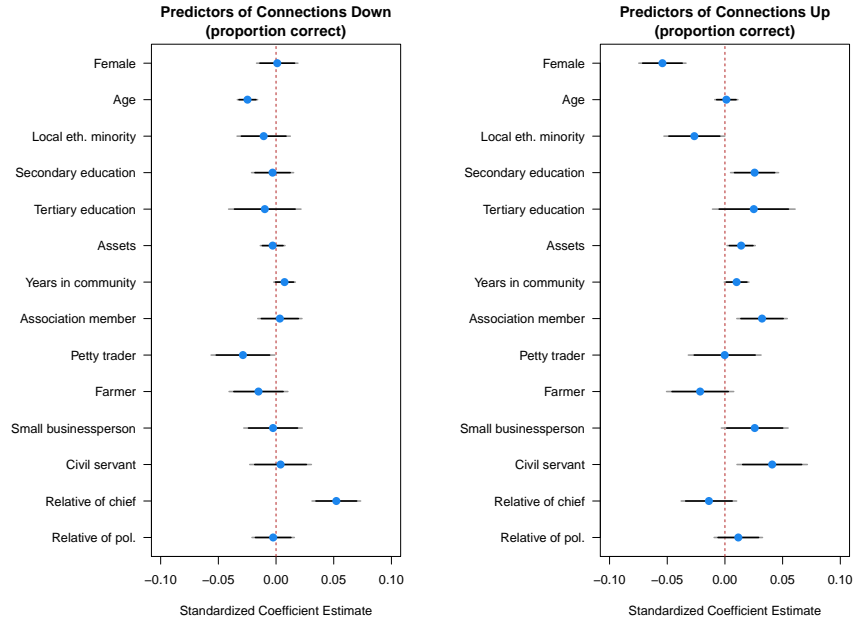
Notes: Figure 4 displays the predictors of connections down (left) and connections up (right), respectively. The plots show regression coefficients taken from multivariate OLS regressions that include polling-station level fixed effects. Continuous variables (i.e. age, years in community and asset index) are standardized to ease comparison. The dependent variables are measured on a 0-1 scale. The corresponding regression table is included in the Online Appendix.

explained by differential barriers faced by some aspiring brokers, but not others, in developing upward ties.

4.3 Validating the measure of *connections down*

We address several potential concerns regarding our measure of *connections down*. First, what may matter most is the *depth* of brokers' ties to voters, not simply the number of people they know. Indeed, prior studies conclude that it is brokers' intimate knowledge of voters' lives that is important (Stokes 2005, 317). Our measure of downward ties represents a minimalist operationalization of this deeper knowledge, because identifying voters' names is a necessary prerequisite to a stronger relationship. Thus, while the depth of each tie remains unobservable, our measure provides an

Figure 5: *Correlates of* connections down.
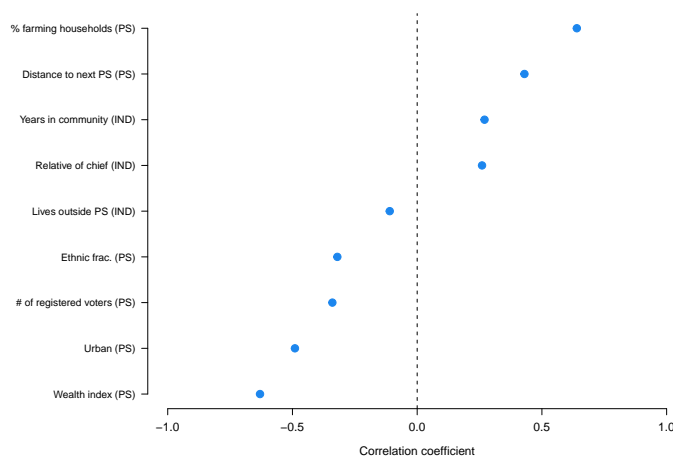
Notes: Correlations between *connections down* and individual- and community-level variables. Variables at the individual level are identified with "(IND)" and those measured at the polling station level are identified with "(PS)". Wealth, ethnic fractionalization, and percent farming households each use geo-coded 2010 census data to measure these attributes within a 2km radius of each polling station.

upper bound on each broker's possible social connections to voters.

Second, it may be argued that our measure is too noisy because of the small number of voters in our quiz. To validate that this is a reliable proxy for real ties to voters, we show that it strongly correlates with various attributes of brokers and communities that one should expect to differentially affect social ties. Figure 5 displays correlations between respondents' *connections down* and a number of individual- and polling-station-level attributes. In communities that are more tight-knit – for instance, those that are rural, more remote, and where citizens engage in a single line of work (e.g., farming) – citizens should be more likely to know each other, especially compared to richer, larger, or more urban communities where residents are more anonymous. As expected, brokers who operate in communities that are more remote (r=0.43)[25] and have more farming house-

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[25] As measured by distance (km) to the next closest polling station.

holds (r=0.64) know more voters. Brokers who work in urban communities or communities that are wealthy or ethnically fractionally know fewer voters (r=-0.49, r=-0.63, r=-0.32, respectively.) Considering individual attributes, respondents who have lived in a community longer (r=0.27) or who are related to the local chief (r=0.26) – and are likely more central to local family networks – know more voters. These correlations strongly suggest that our measure captures real social ties.[26]

Third, it can be argued that what matters most are ties to *specific types* of voters, not a random sample. We account for this in Section 5 and the Online Appendix through robustness tests in which we redefine *connections down* in several ways to examine ties to different subsets of voters.

4.4   Measuring broker activism

Finally, we use the survey to measure brokers' participation in both electoral and relational clientelism. We create two indices listed in Table 1. *Campaign index* sums activities conducted during the 2016 presidential and parliamentary campaigns. Branch leaders on average performed about four of the nine activities listed (mean = 4.56); a majority reported that they canvassed, organized voters to attend rallies, and distributed handouts. *Post-election index* sums the post-election brokerage activities. Most branch leaders performed at least one of these activities (mean = 1.14).

These indices have the limitation that they measure the *range* of brokerage activities in which respondents engage, rather than the *depth* of that engagement. Measuring informal labor inputs is difficult (including for party leaders; e.g., Larreguy et al. 2016); survey questions asking brokers to recall the specific number of times they engaged in an activity are unlikely to be reliable. But because all of these are common tasks assigned to polling station branch leaders throughout Ghana, we expect the diversity of activities in which a respondent engages to proxy well for overall effort.

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[26]Each of these variables is also a significant predictor of *connections down* in regression analyses (Online Appendix).

Table 1: Summary of activities that branch leaders perform

	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Campaign index	1,117	4.562	2.064	0	9
House-to-house canvassing	1,140	0.919	0.272	0	1
Organize people to attend rallies	1,138	0.772	0.419	0	1
Organize community events	1,137	0.663	0.473	0	1
Distribute handouts (food, cloth, cash, t-shirts, phone credit)	1,138	0.573	0.495	0	1
Organize transport for voters on election day	1,138	0.546	0.498	0	1
Provide financial assistance to people	1,134	0.448	0.498	0	1
Coordinate with the chief on behalf of the party	1,131	0.301	0.459	0	1
Personally drive voters to polling stations on election day	1,134	0.183	0.387	0	1
Help people find jobs	1,136	0.136	0.343	0	1
Post-election index	1,140	1.135	1.318	0	3
Help citizens contact party to discuss their problems	1,140	0.474	0.500	0	1
Help citizens contact local govt. to discuss their problems	1,140	0.354	0.479	0	1
Help party identify local citizens to provide with benefits	1,140	0.307	0.461	0	1

5 Assessing the information asymmetry theory

In this section we evaluate the three observable implications identified above from the information asymmetry model of brokers.

5.1 Implication 1: brokers have strong connections to voters

First, contrary to standard expectations, we find that most brokers have relatively few ties to voters, knowing only a small proportion of the registered voters at their polling stations. On average, respondents were only able to identify five (21%; see Table 2) of the 24 randomly selected voters. This knowledge is predicted primarily by attributes of the constituency and community as opposed to brokers' characteristics. For example, brokers who represent polling stations in urban constituencies know significantly fewer voters (9%) than those who serve in rural areas (31%). Within constituencies, much of the variation in knowledge is explained by variables that proxy for the remoteness of the polling station: the number of registered voters, the distance to the next

Table 2: Mean connections down of aspiring branch leaders

	Mean connections down	Absolute no. of voters (out of 24)
Full sample	0.21	5.15
Urban	0.09	2.25
Rural	0.31	7.47
Difference	0.22	5.22
P-value	0.000	
Non-Akan voters	0.19	4.49
Akan voters	0.22	5.28
Difference	0.03	0.79
P-value	0.002	
Non-incumbent branch leader	0.19	4.65
Incumbent branch leader	0.22	5.37
Difference	0.03	0.72
P-value	0.031	

station, and the share of farming households.[27] For example, the polling station where the average broker knows the most voters (76%) is a small cocoa-farming community on the western edge of the Ashanti Region. This community has 98 registered voters, the next-nearest polling station is over 2 km away, and two-thirds of households engage in farming. By comparison, in 11 stations the average broker could not name a single voter. These polling stations have an average of 710 registered voters, the nearest polling station is less than half a kilometer away, and roughly 6% of households engage in farming.

The data also imply that branch leaders may not know significantly more voters than other residents of their communities. While we did not collect data on ordinary residents' connections, we leverage variation in the types of respondents in the survey to compare the connections of incumbent branch leaders, who have already been serving as NPP brokers, with those of non-incumbents – aspiring activists who have not yet worked for the party in a formal capacity. We find no substantively significant difference in the connections down of aspiring vs. incumbent

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[27]A regression that contains these three variables has an R-squared of 0.43. Regression models that include only individual-level variables have less predictive power (see Online Appendix).

brokers. On average, incumbents know fewer than one person more than new aspirants (22% versus 19%). These results suggest that branch leaders do not develop ties to a large number of voters while they are in office. Moreover, even if the only types of residents who seek positions as brokers are those with the greatest ties to community members, Table 2 demonstrates that these especially well-connected residents often at most only know a small minority of voters, let alone have more substantive relationships with them that would facilitate monitoring at scale.

One can argue that brokers' downward connections are limited to party supporters, as opposed to ordinary residents. Given the Akan ethnic group's close alignment with the NPP, we also use ethnicity as a rough measure of partisanship. We employ a dictionary-based method to code ethnicity using voters' names (see Online Appendix). The results show that while branch leaders know relatively more Akans than non-Akans (22% compared to 19%), this difference is not substantively significant. Even when restricting the data to likely party supporters, most brokers continue to know only a small minority of the voting population, even within small communities. Overall, the data do not support the claim that brokers have deep ties to large segments of voters. This is especially true in urban communities, where clientelism is still quite prevalent in Ghana (Nathan 2019, Paller 2019).

5.2 Implication 2: brokers with more connections down are more active

We next assess whether brokers who know more voters are the most active and effective. We differentiate between activities undertaken during Ghana's 2016 campaign (*Campaign Index*) and activities since the party took power (*Post-campaign Index*). There is significant variation in branch leaders' level of activity during the campaign.[28] Over a third of branch leaders (40%) engaged in six or more of the nine campaign activities, while 23% performed three or less. In OLS regression models, brokers' *connections down* do not predict overall campaign activism, as visualized

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[28]We restrict this analysis to incumbent branch leaders who held positions as of 2016.

in Figure 6 (left panel).[29] But brokers' *connections up* are a strong predictor of campaign activity. A one-unit increase in connections up (i.e. 0% to 100%) predicts that a branch leader conducted 2.79 additional campaign activities on the nine-point scale (Figure 6, left panel). There is also significant variation across incumbent branch leaders in their post-campaign brokerage. While forty five percent of respondents engaged in none of the three post-election activities, about one-third engaged in all three (32 percent). As before, respondents' *connections down* do not predict these activities, while *connections up* is significantly associated with more post-campaign brokerage.

The right plot of Figure 6 disaggregates the two activism indices into their components. Figure 6 plots the change in the predicted probability of a broker engaging in each item as the number of connections increases from one standard deviation below to one standard deviation above the mean. *Connections up* positively predicts each of the nine items in the campaign index, and two of the three post-campaign items. But brokers' downward ties are only associated with three of the nine campaign activities: canvassing, working with the chief, and finding jobs for residents. *Connections down* is not associated with any of the three post-campaign items. Overall, these results suggest that knowing more voters is at best only very weakly associated with brokers' campaign and post-election activism.

One concern is that we can only measure brokers' connections *after* they have performed these activities. This makes it difficult to know if the connections are driving activism, or if they have changed because brokers are active. In particular, a broker who is active on the campaign trail is likely to meet more local residents. But this should bias our results *in favor* of a strong positive correlation between *connections down* and activism, as opposed to the largely null relationships we document. This implies that brokers are engaging in campaign activism without necessarily developing deep social ties to voters.

In addition, we develop an approximate measure of the electoral effectiveness of the NPP's bro-

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[29]These models include constituency and position fixed effects, and both community- and individual-level controls (See Online Appendix).

Figure 6: *Left: Predicting broker activism (OLS regressions) Right: Change in predicted probabilities of activism (logit regressions)*
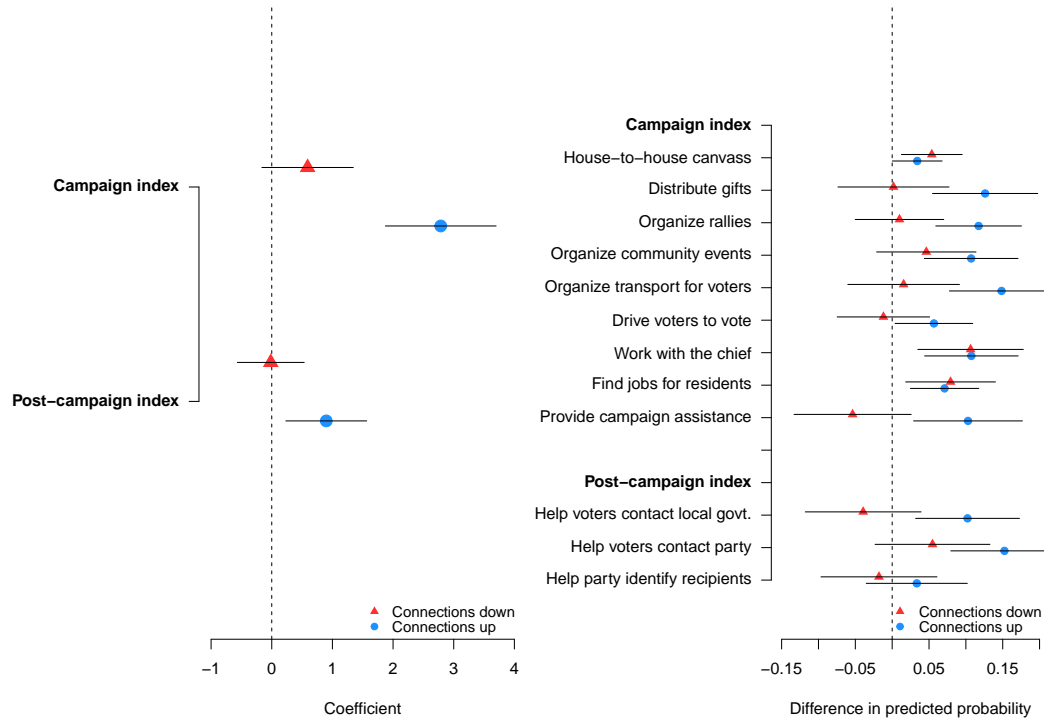
Notes: The right panels simulates changes in the predicted probability of each activity as connections *down* and *up* increase from one standard deviation below to one standard deviation above the mean.

kers by examining changes in NPP (presidential) vote share between the 2012 and 2016 elections at the polling station level.[30] In the Online Appendix, we regress the NPP vote swing from 2012 to 2016 at each polling station on the average characteristics of the slate of five incumbent branch leaders – those serving during the 2016 campaign. We control for constituency-wide trends in NPP support to identify which branches performed unusually well relative to neighboring branches. We find that branches at which the NPP's branch leaders have greater average *connections down* ac-

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[30]Party leaders in Ghana, and elsewhere, can evaluate brokers' performance based on polling station results (the lowest level at which results are aggregated) (e.g., Larreguy et al. 2016).

tually perform *worse* relative to the trend in the surrounding constituency, not better, as would be expected if these ties to voters were central to brokers' performance (see Online Appendix).[31]

5.3   Implication 3: parties select brokers with more connections down

Finally, we assess whether parties select brokers who have the strongest downward connections. We find no evidence that the NPP favors branch leaders with the best knowledge of voters.

In Ghana, as elsewhere, national party leaders lack the localized knowledge to identify potential brokers in each community. This means they must delegate broker selection to local actors: local party elites (candidates and intermediate-level party officials) or clients (ordinary party members). Broker selection decisions can be analyzed to reveal the preferences of these local actors. More importantly, the fact that senior party leaders allow a set of selection procedures to persist over time – rather than finding a new process – can indicate their preferences for broker characteristics.

Broker selection in Ghana is formally delegated to party members via branch-level elections. Despite this *de jure* process, elections are rare. Constituency-level party leaders – one tier up from the branch leaders – often intervene to prevent elections from taking place, ensuring that they can select preferred branch leaders. Table 3 displays the selection process for each leadership position in all branches in our survey in 2018.[32] Contested elections occurred for 10% of positions. The large majority of positions (74%) were uncontested ("acclamation"). For the remaining 16%, two or more aspirants stepped forward, but no election was held because a deal was struck for all but one to withdraw at the last minute ("backroom deal").

Table 3: Mode of branch leader selection

	Uncontested	*Contested*	
No. aspirants:	1	2+	
Outcome	Acclamation	Election held	Backroom deal
	74% (721)	10% (97)	16% (153)

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[31]We also show these results are unlikely to be due to shifts in underlying voter populations (see Online Appendix).
[32]Due to missing and/or inconsistent responses, we cannot determine the selection process in 189 of 1,160 contests.

5.3.1 Selection by clients

First, we examine selection via elections. In these instances, local clients (NPP party members) are the selectorate. We estimate a logistic regression predicting electoral victory on the connections of each aspirant, as well as an indicator of whether the aspirant is the incumbent, and branch-position fixed effects, to compare contestants for the same branch-level position. Whether an aspiring broker has more *connections down* than her opponent is not associated with winning the branch leadership election (p=0.66; see Online Appendix). Instead, *connections up* strongly predicts victory.[33] In short, when clients select brokers, they do not select those who know the most voters.

5.3.2 Selection by local party leaders

Second, we study selection via either acclamation or backroom deals to determine the preferences of local party elites. Constituency leaders can influence the likelihood of acclamation by preventing the entry of aspirants through their control of the election schedule and the distribution of nomination forms that all prospective aspirants must submit (see Online Appendix). If multiple aspirants enter, constituency leaders can also use their powers to strike "backroom deals": they sometimes apply pressure on candidates to step aside to allow a favored branch leader to win.

During our fieldwork (which coincided with the NPP's 2018 branch elections), we witnessed illustrative examples of both of these actions. In one case, we arrived at the polling station's "election" to find that it was only attended by a single, handpicked aspirant for each position and had not been publicized to other party members, none of whom were gathered to vote. Nomination forms had not been distributed in advance by constituency leaders, restricting the pool of candidates. Every position was won via acclamation. By contrast, at another polling station there were

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[33] Additional analyses demonstrate that this result is most likely due to aspirants' connections, rather than correlates of those connections (see Online Appendix).

three candidates for the position of branch youth organizer, but a constituency executive pressured two to withdraw, allowing his favored candidate to win without an election taking place.

Systematically assessing the impact of party elites' interference is complicated by the need to separate constituency leaders' actions from more mundane reasons positions may go uncontested. For instance, some acclamations occur because there is no interest in a position. Elsewhere, strong incumbents deter the entry of challengers without help from constituency leaders. To isolate *strategic* interference by local party elites, our analysis therefore includes controls for both sets of factors. To account for the potential lack of interest in positions, we control for the baseline number of likely NPP supporters, operationalized as 2016 NPP presidential vote share at the branch (polling station) level, and whether the branch is dormant, measured by the percentage of respondents who report the branch has not held meetings over the past year.[34] To account for the role of the incumbent's decision to re-contest a position on selection outcomes, we use incumbent characteristics as the main reference point for explaining the decisions of other actors.

In Table 4 (columns 1 and 2) we examine the predictors of full branch-level acclamations – instances in which all five positions go uncontested, which may indicate that constituency-level party leaders are placing restrictions on access.[35] The predictors are the average connections of the incumbent branch leaders, alongside the controls listed above.[36] Column 1 suggests that branches with the *least* local party elite interference are those where branch leaders have the best knowledge of voters. This is in contrast to what we would expect if constituency leaders wanted to protect brokers with the best ties to voters. Simulating from column 1, branches with incumbent branch leaders that have average *connections down* at the 90th percentile (49%) are 25.6 percentage points

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[34]We also control for local ethnic fractionalization, which may indicate greater competition between groups for control over broker positions, and the level of wealth, as there may be more interest in broker positions in poorer communities. The latter two variables are measured using 2010 enumeration area level census data.

[35]This occurred at 38% of the sampled branches.

[36]We include constituency fixed effects to compare branch elections supervised by the same slate of constituency leaders.

less likely (95% CI: 4.1, 43.9) to have all positions go unopposed than branches at the 10th percentile (1%). Moreover, Column 2 suggests that not only do constituency-level party leaders not protect the most downwardly connected branch leaders; they also do not protect slates of branch leaders who may have performed best, measured as the polling station-level NPP presidential vote swing between 2012 and 2016 relative to the rest of the parliamentary constituency.

Table 4: Predictors of selection mode

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Unit of analysis	Branch	Branch	Position	Position	Position w/ 2+ aspirants	Position w/ 2+ aspirants	Incumbent contestant
Outcome (DV)	All positions acclaimed (0,1)	All positions acclaimed (0,1)	Multiple aspirants (0,1)	Multiple aspirants (0,1)	Backroom deal (0,1)	Backroom deal (0,1)	Backroom deal (0,1)
Avg. *connections down* (%) of incumbents	−3.065* (1.394)	−3.840* (1.518)					
Avg. *connections up* (%) of incumbents	−0.723 (1.848)	0.078 (1.987)					
Incumbent's *connections down* (%)			−0.089 (0.577)	−0.073 (0.577)	−0.812 (0.790)	−0.428 (1.011)	0.450 (1.115)
Incumbent's *connections up* (%)			−0.648 (0.716)				
Incumbent's cxns. up to politicians (%)				0.105 (0.639)	−2.432* (0.986)	−3.314** (1.180)	−3.323** (1.189)
Incumbent's cxns. up to bureaucrats (%)				0.923 (0.963)	0.694 (1.687)	0.925 (1.926)	2.501 (2.046)
Incumbent's cxns. up to const. execs. (%)				−0.935 (0.613)	2.192* (1.013)	2.281* (1.140)	2.027† (1.208)
NPP PS-level vote share (2016)	0.831 (1.292)		1.192 (0.757)	1.273† (0.764)		0.918 (0.907)	2.190* (0.988)
Swing in NPP PS-level vote share (2012 to 2016)		−11.371* (5.346)					
Incumbent is re-contesting (0,1)			−0.304 (0.317)	−0.300 (0.316)	−0.067 (0.376)	0.145 (0.532)	
Incumbent demographic characteristics	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N
Branch-level controls	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Position FEs	−−	−−	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Constituency FEs	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
N	199	184	679	679	158	158	145

∗ significant at $p < .10$; ∗ ∗ $p < .05$; ∗∗∗ $p < .01$. All models are logistic regressions with standard errors in parentheses.

Columns 3–7 (Table 4) examine the predictors of backroom deals. Because deals can only occur if multiple aspirants step forward, we first investigate what predicts the entry of multiple aspirants (columns 3–4) and then examine predictors of deals conditional on multiple entrants (columns 5–7). The unit of analysis is now the position, rather than the branch. We use the incumbent's characteristics and decision to re-contest as the main predictors: other aspirants decide

whether to enter the race based on the incumbent's characteristics.[37] Columns 3 and 4 provide no evidence that incumbents who have better *connections down* deter challengers. Columns 5–6 restrict the sample to positions for which multiple aspirants initially filed nomination forms. Column 7 further restricts the sample to positions in which the incumbent chose to re-contest. Because the sample size becomes much smaller, we forego the full set of controls used in the previous columns. Again, we find no evidence that constituency leaders protect incumbent branch leaders in their positions if they have better downward ties to voters.[38] Ultimately, Table 4 is inconsistent with a broker selection system in which local party leaders actively interfere in the selection process to choose brokers with better ties to voters.

The Online Appendix examines the robustness of these results using three approaches. First, it could be that what is important are the *total* connections held by the set of branch leaders. However, aspirants with more unique connections down – who can identify more voters not already known by other aspiring brokers at their branch – are not more likely to be protected by constituency leaders. Second, local party elites may value downward ties to particular types of voters. However, the results in Table 4 are robust to testing for ties to Akan voters only – those most likely to be loyal NPP supporters – as well as to other sub-types of voters, such as youth and likely family heads (see Online Appendix). Third, local party elites may only prefer brokers with strong downward connections in competitive polling stations, where a broker's ability to monitor vote buying is potentially most useful. But our results do not change when we subset to competitive areas.[39]

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[37]Moreover, almost all "backroom deals" struck by constituency leaders were used to protect incumbents.

[38]Moreover, there is no evidence that the pool of aspirants is somehow pre-screened to weed out brokers with especially low downward ties. Indeed, the median branch leader protected through a backroom deal had very low *connections down*: 12.5%. This is lower than the median among all respondents (17%).

[39]Similarly, the results remain the same if we subset only to urban polling stations, where greater anonymity makes brokers' information on voters potentially more valuable (Stokes et al. 2013), or to polling stations at which other types of brokers, such as traditional chiefs, are not active and the party is least able to substitute away from its branch leaders when engaging voters (see Online Appendix).

6 Towards a new theory of brokers' value to parties

What traits of brokers do parties value? The information asymmetry model suggests that parties value brokers who have deep knowledge of local voters. However, Section 5 is broadly inconsistent with the observable implications of this model: most brokers lack ties to the vast majority of voters in their communities, brokers' ties to voters do not predict activism or effectiveness, and agents with better downward connections are not more likely to be selected. Our findings suggest a need to reconsider common assumptions about brokers' value to parties.

Given a fixed budget, brokers' actions along three separate dimensions can influence how successful parties are at using clientelist transfers to maximize the votes they receive: first, brokers can affect the number of relevant voters reached with clientelism (*scale*); second, brokers can affect the value of the benefits provided to voters (*value*); third, brokers can affect the conditionality of exchanges (*enforceability*).[40]

Information asymmetry theories emphasize how brokers with better *connections down* help parties maximize both *scale* – by identifying relevant clients – and *enforceability* – via monitoring. However, there may be limits to how much a broker with marginally better ties to voters can truly improve a party's success along either of these dimensions. Instead, our results suggest that brokers can most significantly improve the success of clientelism along the *value* dimension, something that often requires the recruitment of brokers with better *connections up*. We discuss each of these points in turn.

Regarding *enforceability,* even if monitoring would be useful in theory, brokers – regardless of their social connections to voters – will struggle to monitor individual voters' choices where

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[40]Our argument is motivated by canonical formal models of distributive politics. For example, while brokers are not part of Dixit and Londregan (1996), it is straightforward to see how adding brokers might affect several key terms in their framework. Borrowing their notation, brokers could plausibly affect: the number of voters (N_i) in a given group i who can be reached with transfers (*scale*); the utility to voters of the transfers (T_i) provided (*value*); and the multiplier ($1 - \theta_i$), akin to the concept of contingency, which signifies the yield rate at which transfers convert into votes (*enforceability*).

the ballot is secret. This appears to be the case for both campaign-season electoral clientelism (Chauchard 2018, Kramon 2017, Guardado and Wantchekon 2018, Muñoz 2019) and post-election relational clientelism (Auyero 2000, Zarazaga 2014, Nichter 2018). In Ghana, brokers regularly complain that though they wish they could monitor voters' behavior, they cannot (Nathan 2019, 181-185), mirroring a common sentiment among brokers elsewhere (e.g., Chauchard 2018, Hicken et al. 2019).

Regarding *scale*, brokers may have other means to identify relevant clients beyond their deep social connections. As described above, ethnicity sometimes provides cues about partisanship or voters instead actively signal their partisanship (Nichter 2018). These public signals should reduce the comparative advantage of brokers with better pre-existing downward ties. Furthermore, there is evidence that voters, not parties, initiate a significant share of clientelist exchanges.[41] Where clientelism is a form of "request fulfilling" (Nichter and Peress 2017), rather than finding clients, brokers frequently serve voters who approach them – even those they may not yet personally know. The risks of helping strangers are limited if exchanges are not being monitored anyway, and a voter's likely partisanship is already inferable through other means. Indeed, in our survey, 55% of incumbent branch executives reported "request fulfilling," assisting voters who *approached them* in search of benefits. In a follow-up survey, a significant minority of these executives (30%) report that they sometimes provide this assistance to strangers who were referred to them by others. As they do so, branch leaders can refer to detailed lists of party members kept by many branches, which allow them to identify publicly declared supporters they do not know personally.[42]

For these reasons, in contexts where monitoring is difficult for any broker, partisanship is at least partly publicly inferable, and voters initiate many exchanges – each of which should be common in many developing democracies – the marginal returns to parties from employing brokers

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[41]As noted in Section 2, citizen-initiated exchanges occur during both "electoral" and "relational" clientelism.

[42]Branch leaders showed us that they use copies of the voter register to record NPP membership, ticking off voters who had membership cards or attended party meetings. In a follow-up survey, branch executives made clear that they had many ways to identify NPP supporters without relying only on personal knowledge (see Online Appendix).

with relatively better downward ties may be quite small. In comparison, brokers' upward connections to local party elites, bureaucrats, and government officials may still significantly improve the success of clientelism via enhancing the *value* of benefits.

Brokers' *connections up* help enhance the value of benefits parties offer clients because these ties enable brokers to locate and deliver the specific resources voters demand. While information asymmetry models sometimes also propose that brokers' knowledge helps parties figure out what voters want (e.g., Camp et al. 2014, Zarazaga 2016), these theories often take it as given that the party then has the ability to deliver the desired good or service. But this emphasis may be backwards: where clients regularly approach parties and brokers to make specific personal demands, deducing what voters want can be trivial (i.e., they tell you); by contrast, if the distribution of party and state resources primarily flows through opaque, informal channels (e.g., Auyero 2000), not all brokers will have the ability to address voters' requests.[43]

Becoming an effective "problem solver" requires possessing *connections up* to local party elites, politicians, and local bureaucrats, on whom brokers must rely to extract the benefits that they provide to voters (Auerbach and Thachil 2018*a*). This is especially true of "relational clientelism:" as an Argentinian broker describes, "90 percent of my problem is to keep connections in the municipality. If you have friends there, then doors will open when you knock" (Zarazaga 2014, 26). Similarly, a broker quoted in Auyero (2000) explains: "You have to know how to pull the right strings, knock at the right door [in the local government]. The most important thing is to know the right person" from whom to obtain goods for voters (56). But it also can be true of electoral clientelism, as brokers often must convince higher-level party leaders to provide them the handouts and other benefits they distribute during the campaign. To summarize, rather than being able to deduce that a voter who asks for a job wants a job, a broker's real advantage may come

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[43]Formal models of clientelism typically explicitly assume away the problem of how to get the specific benefits voters want by simplifying all transfers to be (fully liquid) monetary payments; but in reality, many benefits demanded by clients are not cash, and are not similarly accessible to all brokers.

from whether she can quickly navigate the bureaucracy needed to find that voter a job.

During our fieldwork, we observed directly how upward ties help brokers make clientelism more effective in this way. While visiting an NPP constituency party office in Greater Accra, we saw voters submitting applications for jobs through the country's Youth Employment Agency scheme, sidestepping the official process by having their applications informally fast-tracked by party officials. This opportunity was not publicly announced. Instead, voters were directed to the office by branch leaders who knew the constituency party secretary would be collecting applications on that day. Before filing each application, the secretary personally called the branch leaders to confirm they had sent the applicants. Without pre-existing ties to this constituency leader, these branch leaders would likely have been unable to deliver these job opportunities to their voters.

Finally, in addition to improving the effectiveness of clientelism, brokers with better upward ties to local party elites bring other, unrelated benefits to a party. Parties also have an incentive to select brokers who are less likely to defect with their followers to another party in the future (e.g., Camp 2017). Brokers with stronger social bonds to existing party elites may be more loyal. Moreover, while local party elites have the goal of securing victory for their party, they also often desire to rise within the party organization or position themselves to pursue elected office. Local elites' pursuit of a political career can require support from the grassroots brokers who operate below them in the party hierarchy. In some parties, as in Ghana, this tie is formalized: brokers vote in internal party elections on elites' promotions to internal party positions or nominations for elected offices.[44] Elsewhere, the tie of dependency is informal: the size of a local party elite's following among brokers influences her power within the party by affecting her ability to bargain for promotions and nominations.[45] Either form of dependency provides local party leaders with an additional, more personal reason to also seek out brokers to whom they are tied.

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[44]Intra-party elections are most common in organizationally thick parties, such as the Botswana Democratic Party, South Africa's African National Congress (Darracq 2008), and the Worker's Party in Brazil (Hunter 2010; 40).

[45]For example, Levitsky (2003; 67–79) describes how leaders of Peronist party factions in Argentina must jockey for the loyalty and support of grassroots branch leaders as they seek to control municipal governments.

7 Supporting evidence: the value of *connections up*?

This alternative view of brokers as "problem solvers" rather than "monitors" fits more closely with the empirical patterns in Section 5. Table 2 suggests that brokers in the NPP do not have more downward ties to ordinary voters than non-brokers. But incumbent brokers score a full 9% more on the *connections up* measure than non-incumbents. Similarly, *connections up* is consistently correlated with greater broker activity in Figure 6, while *connections down* is not. We also find that the average *connections up* of the sitting NPP branch leaders at each polling station strongly predicts better NPP performance relative to surrounding communities (see Online Appendix). These findings must be interpreted with caution due to endogeneity concerns: *connections up* is measured after the 2016 election and could have changed as a result of brokers' activity during the campaign. But when viewed together, these patterns are more consistent overall with a theory in which brokers' *connections up* are the central source of their value than with standard expectations that *connections down* are the most important.

Also consistent with our hypothesis that brokers with better upward ties are the most effective is evidence that clients themselves (when given the opportunity to select brokers) screen based on brokers' upward connections. An aspiring broker whose *connections up* are in the 90th percentile (36%) has a 27-percentage-point (95% CI: 1.2, 46.5) greater chance of winning a branch election compared to a broker with connections up at the 10th percentile (4%) (see Online Appendix).

Similarly, our results provide suggestive evidence that constituency party elites work to protect and promote brokers with whom they already have personal connections, rather than select broker with better ties to voters. In columns 5–7 of Table 4, a clear predictor of whether constituency leaders protect an incumbent branch leader through a "backroom deal" is the branch leader's ties up to constituency leaders. Simulating from column 6, a "backroom deal" is 25.8 percentage points (95% CI: 1.3, 46.4) more likely for positions in which the incumbent branch leader has upward ties to constituency leaders at the 90th percentile (60%) than the 10th percentile (0%).

8 Conclusion

Classic theories of clientelism assume that brokers are valuable to parties because of their social connections with voters. This claim often builds from an antecedent assumption that clientelist transactions take the form of a monitored and enforced *quid pro quo*, mediated by brokers through their intimate knowledge of voters' behavior (Stokes 2005). Others instead assume that brokers draw on their ties to voters to provide other forms of information to parties, such as deducing voters' personal needs and identifying the best targets for clientelist appeals (e.g., Zarazaga 2016). But recent empirical findings increasingly challenge common assumptions about the prevalence of monitoring and enforcement (Zarazaga 2014, Kramon 2017, Muñoz 2019) and suggest that parties often have other means to obtain useful information about voters without relying on brokers' pre-existing knowledge (Nichter 2018).

We suggest that revising our assumptions about how clientelism unfolds also requires adjusting our expectations about the value brokers provide to parties. This is particularly because key assumptions about brokers have rarely been evaluated systematically due to measurement limitations. Studying Ghana, we develop original and objective measures of brokers' network connections and observe real-life broker selection directly for the first time. Our empirical results are broadly inconsistent with standard expectations about brokers; they instead imply that brokers' upward ties to local elites may be more important to the party than their downward connections to voters. Future research can test the extent to which these dynamics extend to contexts beyond Ghana. Future studies should also re-examine other aspects of existing theories of brokered politics, including assumptions about how brokers bargain with parties for payment, and expectations about the ways in which brokers develop their relationships with higher-ranking party elites.

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