

IAT in African Political Behavior: New Frontiers in Partisanship and Party Branding

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Project Overview

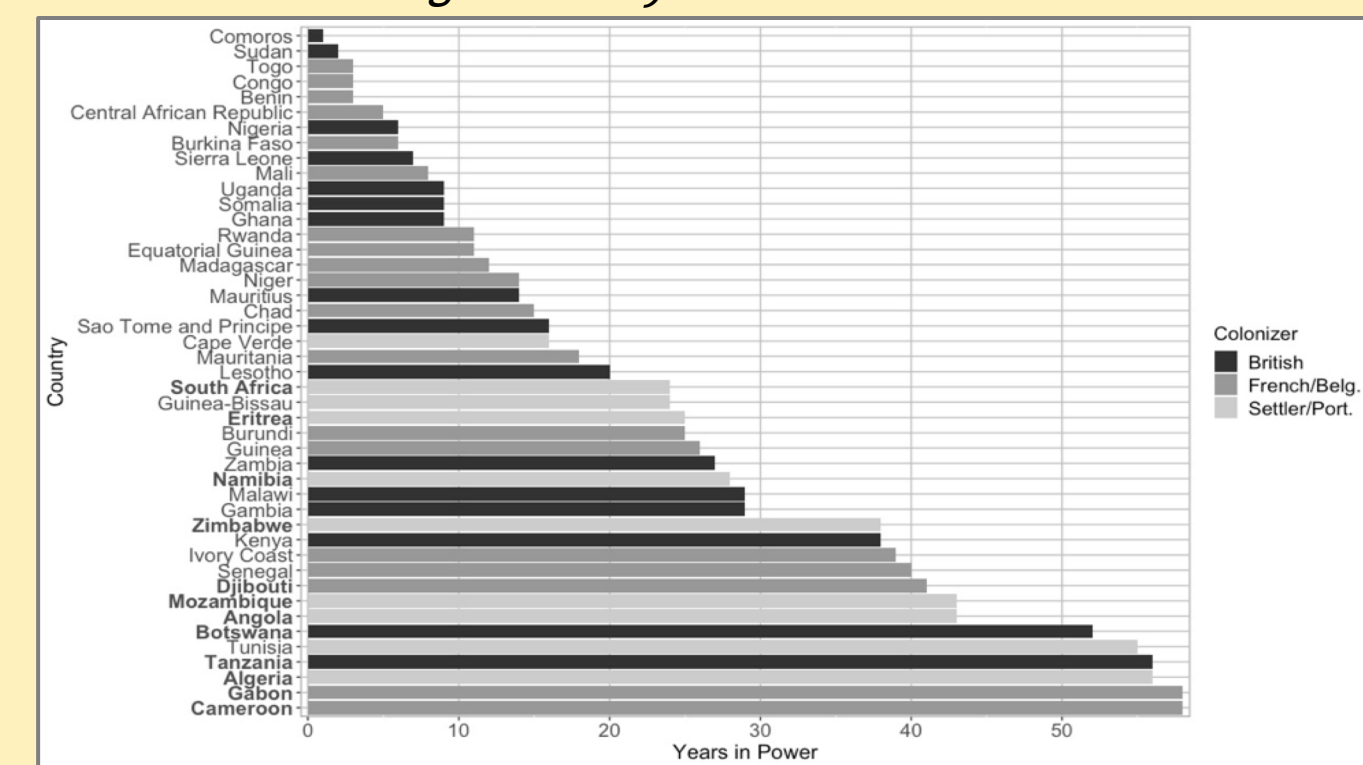
This poster presents a central empirical test of my doctoral dissertation, the application of Implicit Association Tests (IAT) in two case study countries – Botswana and Zimbabwe. This will work alongside other investigations into political party support focusing on the determinants of ruling party dominance in Africa. Fieldwork will include elite interviews with political leaders, but the primary research activity will be an in-person survey of approximately 500 citizens from each country.

The survey will gather in-depth data on partisanship and political attitudes by testing for salient political ideologies based upon a comprehensive analysis of existing public opinion data, an IAT section measuring the strength of partisan identity and gauging associations between ruling parties and valence issues such as nationalism, a conjoint experiment on party branding, and an experimental game measuring partisan in-group bias. Combined, these data should help provide an improved understanding of the differing motivations for ruling party support across the continent.

Research Puzzle

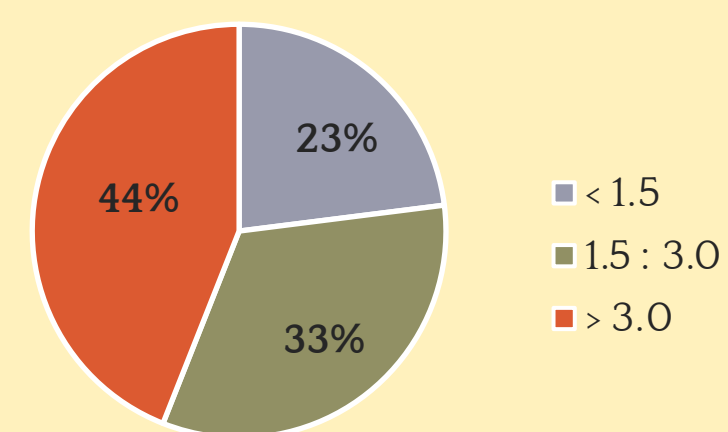
Twelve countries across Africa have experienced only a single ruling party since national independence. Curiously, among this group are both some of the most democratic countries (Botswana, Namibia, South Africa) and some of the most autocratic (Angola, Djibouti, Eritrea, Zimbabwe).

Variations in Inaugural Party Tenure



The majority of African polities experience a significant popularity gap between the ruling party and main opposition party. The aggregate rate of partisan identification – 55% – is very similar to that of Western democracies, but ranges from 12% to 84%. Overall, average support for the ruling party is 32%, but only 12% for the largest opposition party.

African Countries: Ruling/Opposition Partisan Ratio



Case Studies

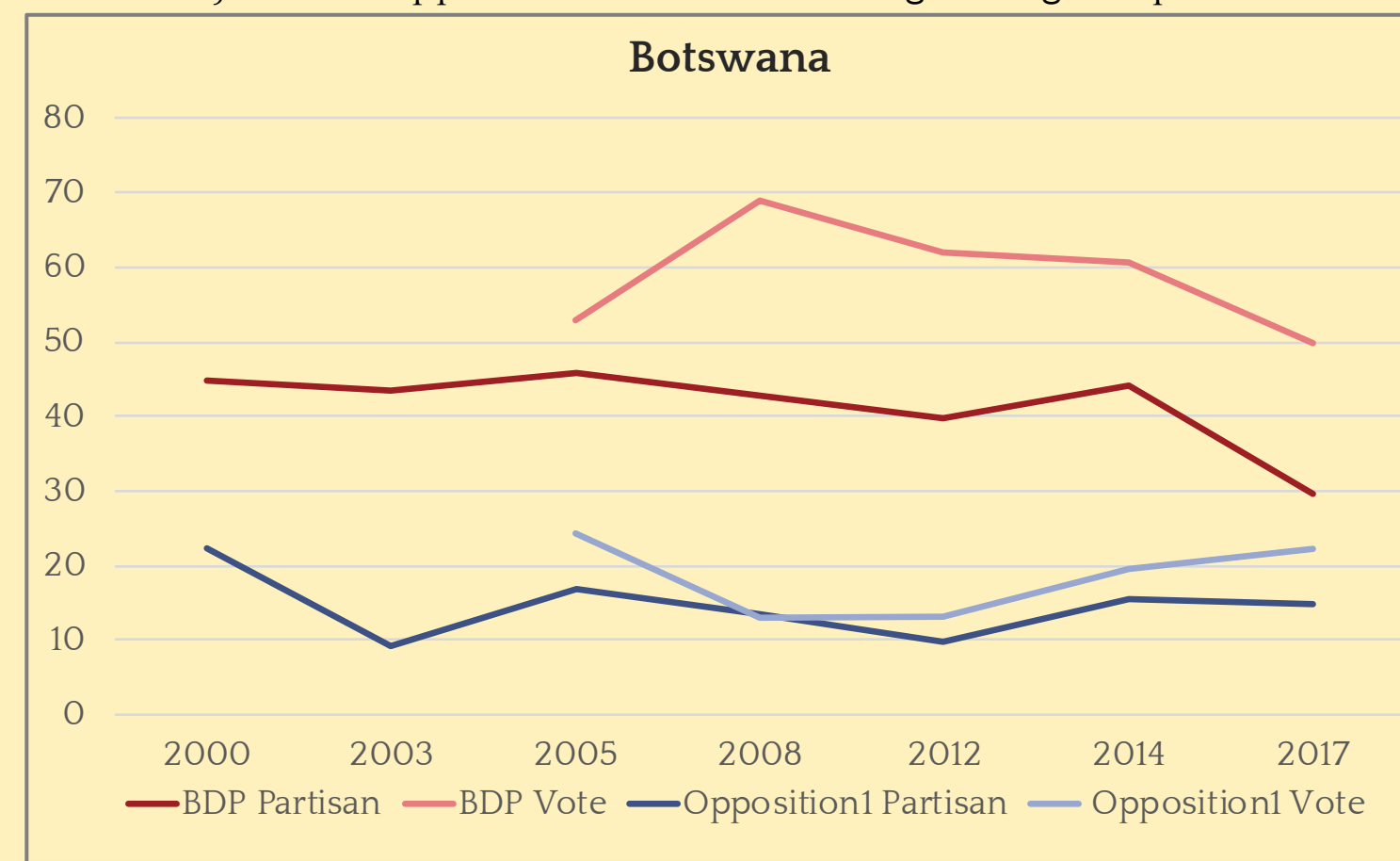
Three distinct characteristics distinguish the group of twelve countries that have only experienced a single ruling party since national independence:

- ❖ Robust Democratic/Economic Governance (some)
- ❖ National Liberation Struggle (some)
- ❖ Natural Resource Rents (all)

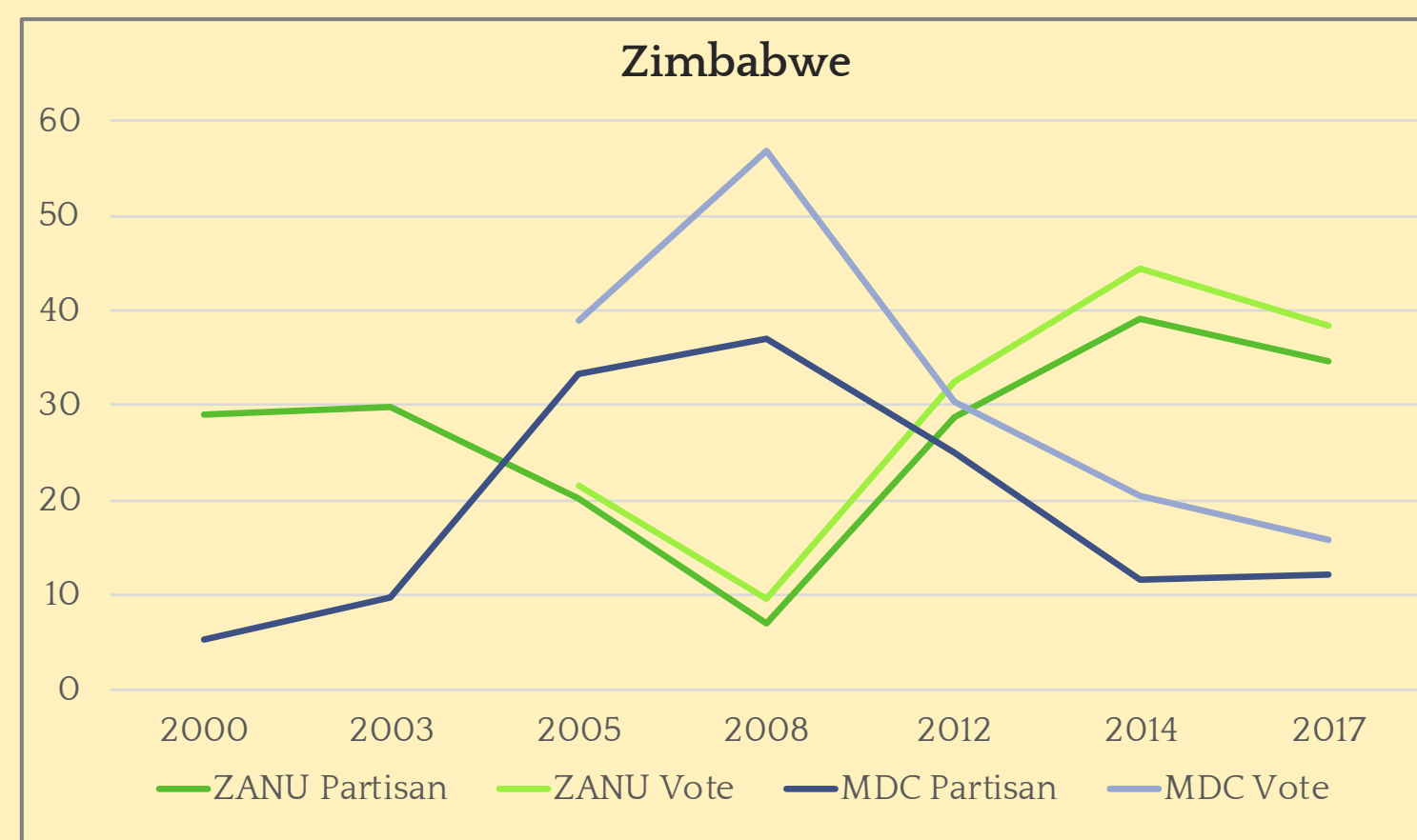
This project selects “Pathway” cases in order to uncover differing causal pathways to ruling party dominance. This includes an exemplar governing performance case with no liberation struggle (**Botswana**), and a country with an clear violent liberation struggle but weak governing performance (**Zimbabwe**). These countries have broadly similar ethnic configurations with one dominant linguistic group, plus access to mineral resource rents.



The Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) has ruled the country since 1966. The party's vote share has slowly declined over time from 80% to just under 50% in 2014. The primary explanations for the party's success are generous public service programs, presidential term limits, incumbency advantages, a continually divided opposition, and its role in negotiating independence.



The Zimbabwe African Nation Union (ZANU) emerged out of the violent war for national independence against the white settler government and has ruled since 1980. Its historical popularity evaporated during the 2008 economic crisis, though rebounded thereafter. ZANU relies on national liberation ideology and close support from the coercive state forged during the struggle.



Hypotheses

The IAT portion of the survey will work to shed light on why partisans support the parties that they do by highlighting the desirable characteristics associated with their party. The IAT is a tool commonly used to measure unconscious bias around race, gender, and self-esteem by tracking how quickly respondents are able to sort related pictures and words into their relevant categories (Greenwald et al., 1998). More recently, the IAT has received increased attention within political science (Perez, 2013) through testing the presence and strength of partisanship (Iyengar and Westwood, 2015; Theodoridis, 2017), mapping political parties onto the left-right ideological spectrum (Bluemke and Friesen, 2008), and predicting the votes of independents (Ryan, 2017).

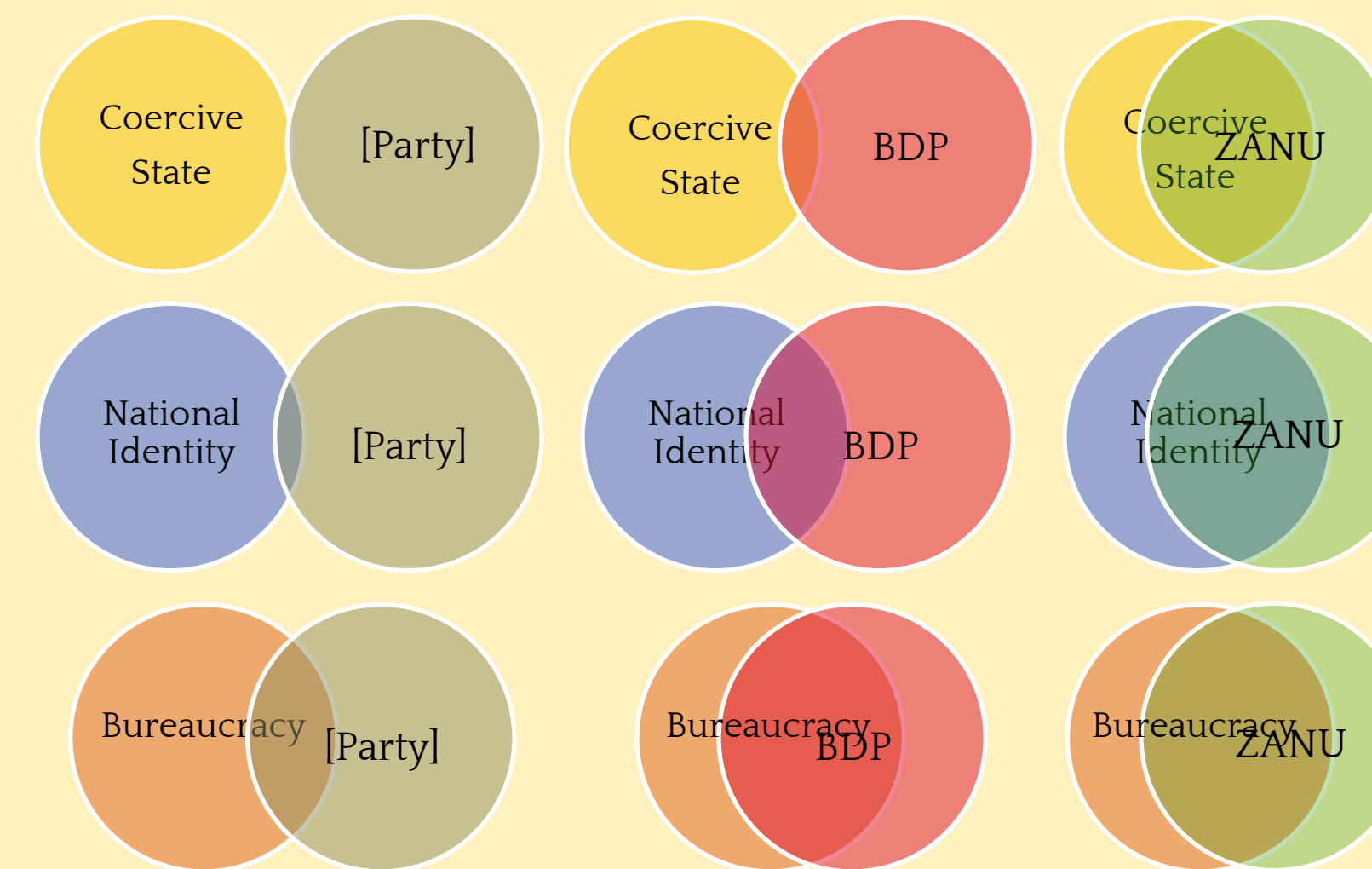
The IAT section has two goals:

- ❖ Measure partisanship as an implicit and meaningful identity
- ❖ Measure associations between parties and valence issues

This project will implement a two-step IAT sequence based upon these goals. The first step will capture implicit partisan identification by measuring the associational strength (represented as >) between the concept of “Self” and the relevant political parties following the format of Theodoridis (2017). The second step will measure brands or valence issues associated with the ruling party. This sort of associational connection is commonly implemented in IATs that assess marketing brands or social stereotypes. A well-known example of this sequential exercise is Nosek et al. (2002) who first measured gender identification (Self > Gender) and then gender stereotypes (Men > Math, and Women > Liberal Arts).

Implicit Associational Analysis: Self > Political Parties > Valence Issues

The IAT hypotheses for Botswana, Zimbabwe, and a “Reference” democratic country are presented below as overlapping associations. Hypotheses corresponding to each of the three valence issues are determined by the decolonization process and the party's duration in power.



In the **Reference** country, citizens do not associate the coercive state with the ruling party, weakly associate the party with nationalism, and moderately associate the party with the governmental bureaucracy.

In **Botswana**, the ruling BDP party should be slightly associated with the coercive state, moderately associated with nationalism, and strongly associated with bureaucracy due to its long-term rule.

In **Zimbabwe**, the ruling ZANU party should be strongly associated with the coercive state, nationalism, and bureaucracy due to its long-term rule and pivotal role in the violent liberation struggle.

Methodology

Participants will first complete the Partisan Identity IAT, and then complete one of three randomly assigned IATs where the two parties are matched with one of three valence issues: nationalism, the military, or government bureaucracy.

The valence issues are presented as single “targets” or “categories,” a variant of the IAT where one of the concepts does not have a clear opposite (Karpinski and Steinman, 2006). The objective of these tests is to reveal the causes behind the ruling party legitimacy gaps. If the ruling party is implicitly connected to one or more of these valence issues, then the formation of the Self to an opposition party should be more difficult.

I - Partisan Identity BAIT (Randomly select one):

- Test 1: [Self] /Others > Ruling/Opposition Party.
- Test 2: [We] /Others > Ruling/Opposition Party.

| | Left | Right | Screens |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|---------|
| Block 1 - Practice | Opposition Party | Ruling Party/ [Self or We] | 20 |
| Block 2 | Opposition Party | Ruling Party/ [Self or We] | 40 |
| Block 3 - Practice | Opposition Party/ [Self or We] | Ruling Party | 20 |
| Block 4 | Opposition Party/ [Self or We] | Ruling Party | 40 |

II - Valence Issue SC-IAT (Randomly select one):

- Test 3: Ruling/Opposition Party > Brand1 (Patriotism/Nationalism)
- Test 4: Ruling/Opposition Party > Brand2 (Government - Military)
- Test 5: Ruling/Opposition Party > Brand3 (Government - Education)

Prior to the typical IAT blocks, participants will take part in a conceptual sorting exercise, where they will be asked to sort the stimuli into the different valence issue categories (Military, National Pride, Bureaucracy)

| | Left | Right | Screens |
|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|---------|
| Block 1 - Sorting | Reference | Brand | 25 |
| Block 2 - Practice | Opposition Party | Ruling Party/ Brand | 20 |
| Block 3 | Opposition Party | Ruling Party/ Brand | 40 |
| Block 4 - Practice | Opposition Party/ Brand | Ruling Party | 20 |
| Block 5 | Opposition Party/ Brand | Ruling Party | 40 |

Implementation

The IATs will be embedded within in-person surveys. The surveys will take place October–December 2019 in Botswana and March–May 2020 in Zimbabwe. Sampling will not be nationally representative but seek to gather data on 500 citizens from each countries and include quota targets on rural/urban, age, and gender dimensions.

Individual selection will include university students and deployment of the survey in several public locations where individuals will be randomly asked to participate and pre-screened. Participants will then complete the survey sitting within a public/community building with assistance from RAs.

The survey will be implemented through Qualtrics on Amazon Fire tablets with keyboards. Formatting and analysis will leverage the R package IATGEN. Surveys are estimated to take between 30–45 minutes and respondents will be fairly compensated for their time in a cash payment.