

Electoral Winners and Trust in Political Institutions*

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Being affiliated with the party that won the election is thought to heighten political support. Yet, previous work disregards the proximity of elections and the role of political turnovers in balancing trust in political institutions. Using data from 124 country-years across six rounds of Afrobarometer survey data (1999-2015), I show that, relative to losing, winning leads to more trust in political institutions. Contrary to initial expectations, the proximity of elections does not seem to matter in relationships between winner status and trust in institutions. Similarly, the effect of political turnovers does not influence whether winners are likely to trust institutions more than losers.

Keywords: Political Trust, Political Institutions, Winner Status

Affiliation with the winning party is shown to be an important determinant of political trust and support (Anderson and Guillory 1997; Anderson et al. 2005). That is, when citizens identify with a political party that won the election, they are more inclined to trust in political institutions (Moehler 2009). Winning and losing has also been shown to be important in determining levels of support in newly democratized states (Anderson et al. 2005). The unfamiliarity with losing is predicted to be important in determining levels of political support among citizens affiliated with political parties that lost the elections¹. Others have questioned whether winners and losers have varying levels of political support for the regime when residing in contexts where competitive elections are rare, and elections are perceived to be imperfect, as was the case in Sub-Saharan Africa (Moehler 2009). However, the increase in the number of free and fair elections in the region over the past two decades and increased availability of comparable public opinion data requires revisiting the mechanisms that link winning and losing to levels of political support (Lindberg 2006).

Since the winners of today, in cases where turnover occurs, are the losers of tomorrow, increased experience with elections is an opportunity to test the stability of levels of public

*The paper's revision history and the materials needed to reproduce its analyses can be found [on Github here](#). Corresponding author: ahmad-qabazard@uiowa.edu. Current version: January 15, 2020.

¹See Chapter 6 in Anderson et al 2005 for the complete argument for losing predicting political support in newly democratized states.

support. Previous work suggests that increased experience with elections, decreases the legitimacy gap between winners and losers of political contests (Moehler and Lindberg 2009). Given the available public opinion data, the authors of these works can only assume that citizens observe the results of the elections and update their attitudes towards, for example, institutions accordingly. For instance, citizens affiliated with a political party that lost the election may be less inclined to trust in political institutions than if their preferred party had one that election. While this argument may seem less cognitively demanding than that which is presented in work about government performance (Van der Meer 2016), it still requires citizens to have a heightened interest in politics and knowledge about electoral outcomes.

Revisiting the question of partisanship in Sub-Saharan Africa is a fruitful opportunity to test whether the effects observed in previous studies hold (Moehler 2009; Moehler and Lindberg 2009). Having more free, fair, and competitive elections in the region allows for increased opportunities to test the effects of winner status on trust in political institutions. Additionally, the presence of several additional waves of Afrobarometer (AB) data allows for more coverage of elections and larger samples analyzed after each election.

This paper uses data from six rounds of AB surveys conducted in 32 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa between 1999 and 2015. The results suggest that being affiliated with the winning party has a consistent positive effect on trust in political institutions. Contrary to expectations, the proximity of the election does not have a consistent effect in conditioning the effect of being affiliated with the winning party. Also, the number of political turnovers does not influence winners being more likely to trust in political institutions.

Electoral Outcomes and Political Support:

While political support is undoubtably important, it is unclear what levels of trust and perceived legitimacy are required in a democratic polity (Warren 2017). The question is especially challenging to scholars studying newly democratized states (Anderson et al 2005). In democracies, citizens are expected to be critical of institutions. The literature that focuses

on advanced democracies shows levels of trust in institutions to be declining (Norris 1999). However, scholars have noted a gap in political trust and perceived legitimacy among winners and losers of electoral contests.

The effect of winner/loser status is consistent and has been confirmed in cross-national and regional studies (Anderson and Guillory 1997; Moehler 2009; Moehler and Lindberg 2009). However, most work that explains variations in political support between winners and losers relies on theories generated in studies about western democracies (Anderson et al. 2005, 91). That being said, scholars have theorized the presence of an effect resulting from challenges associated with states that experience infrequent and irregular elections. For example, Moehler (2009) argues that the effect of winner/loser status operates through evaluations of electoral integrity. Others argue that the gap in political support between winners and losers is reduced with political turnover (Moehler and Lindberg 2009).

Reducing the gap in levels of political support between winners and losers is crucial for legitimacy and systems support (Craig et al. 2006). While having elections may have democratizing effects (Lindberg 2004), elections are also viewed as threats to systems support and levels of political trust (Ginsberg and Weissberg 1978 cited in Nadeau and Blais 1993). Losers accepting the results of elections is important for political legitimation. In cases of newly democratized states, where political systems and institutions are not yet stable, mass perceptions of legitimacy are crucial (Moehler 2009, 346).

What explains the legitimacy gap between winners and losers? To explain the link between winning/losing and trust, scholars argue that winners award their governments more legitimacy than independents and supporters of the losing party (Moehler 2009; 348). Others emphasize losers' consent and claim that losing has stronger negative effects in newly democratized states (Anderson et al. 2005). Others shed light on problems that are not always considered by scholars working on this topic. Some respondents may identify with the winning party and this may lead to problems in inference².

²See Bratton et al. 2004 in the following chapter and section "Institutional Influences: Party Identification"

Beyond the direct influence of party identification, previous literature emphasizes perceptions of the fairness of the electoral process. Scholars working with cross-national samples, samples that include advanced industrialized democracies, and regional analyses that focus on newly democratized states all refer to perceptions of the fairness of the electoral process (Craig et al 2005; Moehler 2009; Moehler and Lindberg 2009). While a gap between the perceptions of winners and losers may exist, an individual affiliated with a losing political party, while also perceiving the electoral process to be fair, may be more inclined to trust in political institutions.

In the case of the legitimacy gap in Sub-Saharan Africa, the increase in the number of competitive, multiparty elections beginning in the 1990s imposes additional challenges to the mechanisms that link electoral outcomes to political support (Bratton et al. 2004, 256). Working with multiple AB survey waves³, Moehler and Lindberg show that the political legitimacy gap has decreased with at least one political turnover. However, they show that electoral fairness does not matter in decreasing the gap between winners and losers of the most recent election⁴ (Moehler and Lindberg 2009). Looking only at survey responses between 1999 and 2006, it is not clear whether political turnovers are moderating levels of political support among winners and losers.

I argue that the increase in the number of competitive elections challenges the assumption that respondents observe political changes, such as their favored parties winning the most recent elections or observing partial or full political turnover and factoring these changes into their levels of political support for institutions. To test the assumptions proposed in previous literature (Moehler 2009; Moehler and Lindberg 2009), I focus on an individual respondent's levels of trust in political institutions. This paper builds on the contributions of Moehler (2009) and Moehler and Lindberg (2009) theoretically and empirically. This analysis subjects results presented in the aforementioned articles to empirical and theoretical

³Moehler and Lindberg 2009 use rounds 1-3 of the Afrobarometer surveys.

⁴The assessment of electoral fairness used by Moehler and Lindberg (2009) is the perception measure from the AB surveys. The measure is external.

scrutiny in order to attenuate concerns that findings regarding the effects of winning/losing only hold as a result of the political circumstances in the era covered by these articles. The results is a series of theoretically motivated hypotheses that strengthen or weaken the three main theories presented by previous scholars.

Theory and Hypotheses:

This section draws attention to theories that explain the association between winner/loser status and levels of political support. First, I explain the theories and consequences of a direct link between affiliations with the winning/losing party and political support. Second, I explain how scholars have emphasized perceptions of the fairness of the electoral process as a variable mediating the effect of party affiliation. Third, I explain how political turnovers have been shown to reduce the legitimacy gap between winners and losers of the political process. Throughout my description of these mechanisms, I highlight the assumptions that have to do with respondents' levels of political interest and knowledge. I argue that previous literature overestimates voters' attention to electoral outcomes when responding to items that measure political support. I exploit variations in the number of elections that occur in each state, in whether there was political turnover after the elections, and whether respondents were surveyed in years that were unique for the presence of recent elections.

*H1: The Home Team Hypothesis*⁵



The argument for a relationship between party affiliation, electoral outcomes, and political support has a long history and extends back to key works which rely on cross-national sam-

⁵Holmberg (1999, 117)

ples of democracies (Anderson and Guillory 1997), samples from an established democracy (Nadeau and Blais 1993, Craig et al 2006), and extended to newly democratized states (Anderson et al. 2005). Some works emphasize the reaction of respondents affiliated with the party that won an election (Moehler 2009) and others emphasize the reaction of respondents affiliated with losers of the electoral process (Nadeau and Blais 1993; Anderson et al. 2005). In both cases this argument is often described as a “Home Team” hypothesis (Holmberg 1999, 117; Norris 1999; 223; cited in Banducci and Karp 2003, 447). This hypothesis implies that since their politicians are in power, respondents that feel closer to a particular political party are more likely to grant political support.

In literature on political support in Sub-Saharan Africa, the “home team” hypothesis is tested and there is evidence that winners are more trusting in government institutions (Moehler 2009). In the case of established democracies and states with less experience with elections, the “home team” hypothesis requires voters to observe electoral outcomes and know who won and lost the elections. However, researchers are not able to verify the respondents’ levels of political knowledge when using AB data⁶. Yet, other works confirm previous findings that show winner/loser status determining levels of political support (Moehler and Lindberg 2009).

While the findings show evidence of the theorized short-term effects of winning and losing elections, previous literature does not consider whether the effects are a result of the absence of political turnovers. In the absence of political turnover, elections confirm the association between the incumbent party and political institutions. In this circumstance, respondents of both the incumbent party and opposition party can attribute political responsibility to the incumbent party. For example, when a respondent is asked about a particular political institution and one party has been in power for multiple election cycles, a respondent that feels closer to the opposition party will make a decision under different conditions than that of a respondent surveyed where political turnover occurred. If respondents condition levels

⁶Some waves included measures of political knowledge, but these items were asked in specific countries. See Bratton et al. 2004-page 436 note 30.

of political support on the party in power, then we should expect a respondent in a state that didn't experience turnover to be more likely to attribute blame and withhold support than a respondent in a state that experienced multiple transitions of power. Therefore, the home team hypothesis, when tested, should account for the presence and absence of electoral turnovers.

H1A: Controlling for the number of political turnovers, being affiliated with the winner party leads to increased political trust and support.

In addition to political turnovers, for there to be a direct link between party identification and political support, this effect should be independent of political interest and engagement. Previous studies that test the “home team” hypothesis use a variable from the AB data that combines party identification and strength of partisanship⁷ (Moehler 2009; Moehler and Lindberg 2009). The variable asks if a respondent feels close to a political party. Then, each respondent is asked to report the political party that he/she feels close to. Therefore, it is not possible to capture the effects of leaning partisans or any degree of partisanship for that matter.

In addition to this limitation, previous research conflates the effects of winning and losing by coding the closeness to party variable with lower values indicating a respondent that feels close to a party that lost, respondents not affiliated with any political party are coded to the middle category, and higher categories indicating respondents that feel close to parties that won the election (Moehler 2009; Moehler and Lindberg 2009). This way of operationalization is problematic for the hypothesized relationship because it conflates the effects of winning and losing. The effects are not necessarily symmetric, winners cannot always be expected to grant their government more political support⁸. Consider a case were winners are not

⁷Only the first round of the AB surveys asks respondent the close to party item and whether the respondent voted for the ruling or opposing. However, the latter was not used, in either Moehler (2009) and Moehler and Lindberg (2009), to test for the effect of winner/loser status on partisanship. Reasons for this might be that it is not clear what elections the item is referring to.

⁸This is a reference to coding of the independent variable in Moehler (2009). However, the author does not claim that winners are always expected to grant their government political support. This claim is made to as part of the example in the following sentence.

satisfied with their government, but this is masked by variation in the levels of support of independents and losers. In this case, the coding decisions do not capture what is intended of them.

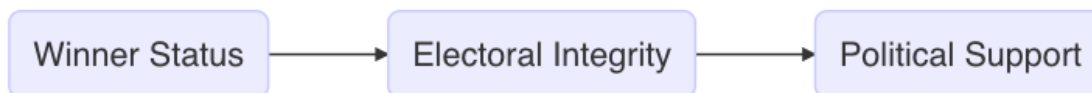
H1B: Relative to the effect of losing the elections, winner status should, controlling for the effect of being an independent, lead to increased trust and support.

In order to determine whether attitudes are stable or fluctuate as a result of electoral results and to address the aforementioned concerns, I test whether winning status predicts levels of political support. In my coding decisions, I separate the effects of winning and losing for clarity. Evidence of an effect of party affiliation supports the “home team” hypothesis and confirms the findings of previous scholars (Moehler 2009; Moehler and Lindberg 2009). An absence of the consistent effect of party affiliation is evidence that scholars may be overestimating the effects of electoral outcomes and attitudes instability. While we may not conclude that the absence of an effect is evidence of a particular factor at play, we can look to factors such as the distance from the most recent elections, whether there was political turnover, or whether the effect is driven by winners or losers as evidence that respondents are not behaving in ways theories of the “home team” hypothesis expect of them.

As a result of the time the AB data is collected, some respondents are surveyed soon after elections and others at times distant from elections. Since the effects of electoral outcomes are discussed as short-term forces, accounting for time passed since the elections is necessary to test whether the effect is, in fact, short-termed (Banducci and Karp 2003). If the effect of winning holds regardless of how distant the election was from the time respondents were surveyed, this is evidence that electoral outcomes have persistent effects. If the effects of winning the elections decline with that passes after the elections, this is evidence that the effect is short-termed (Banducci and Karp 2003). If the effect of winning holds regardless of how distant the election was from the time respondents were surveyed, this is evidence that electoral outcomes have persistent effects. If the effects of winning the elections decline with that passes after the elections, this is evidence that the effect is short-termed.

H1C: Conditional on the years that passed since the most recent election, winner status leads to higher levels of political trust and support.

H2: Electoral Integrity as Mediating Factor:



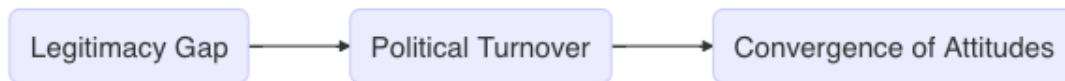
In addition to the presence of a direct effect, it has been argued that perceptions of the freeness and fairness of an election mediate the effects of winning/losing an election when predicting levels of political support (Moehler 2009). This argument is grounded in the idea that losers would be more tolerant of an electoral outcome that results from free and fair elections. Previous literature tests this argument, which is adopted from the social psychology literature (Lind and Tyler 1988 cited in Moehler and Lindberg 2009), on electoral outcomes. However, the challenge with this argument and with its extension to electoral outcomes is whether the undesirability of the outcome, namely losing an election, shapes an individual's perception of the integrity of the electoral process. Moehler and Lindberg note that any electoral flaws will be viewed as harmless mistakes by winners and as intentional by losers (Moehler and Lindberg 2009, 1452).

The results for the effect of electoral qualities is mixed. As noted above, Moehler (2009) finds that perceptions of electoral integrity mediate the effects of winning the election. In another work, Moehler and Lindberg (2009) fail to find an effect for election qualities predicting levels of political support. I argue that perceptions of electoral integrity cannot be expected to mediate the effect of electoral outcome for two reasons. First, it is not clear that the separation between perceptions of rules and procedures from perceptions of the party that controls the executive branch is achieved. The measure of electoral fairness could be

a place where respondents are expressing their distrust in the ruling power as opposed to objectively assessing the fairness of the process. Second, the literature that measures trust in political institutions usually includes the electoral commission as a key political institution in an institutional trust index (Moehler and Lindberg 2009)⁹ . If respondents are separating elections from their attitudes about other governing institutions, it is not clear how they would assess the electoral commission.

I argue that perceptions of electoral integrity do not mediate the effects of winning/losing the most recent elections. I argue that items which measure perceptions of electoral integrity are difficult instruments to use as mediating variables. This is the case because the hypothesized bias in political support would possibly absorb perceptions of electoral integrity. When testing this hypothesis, I expect my results to be consistent with that which was found by previous scholars (Moehler 2009). That is, I expect having more confidence in the electoral process to lead to having higher levels of political support. However, I expect that responses to the items that measure electoral integrity to be highly correlated with questions about political institutions among partisans. If the items are not correlated and the data shows that we have a meaningful distinction between these survey items, then Moehler (2009)'s theory will be test across all available AB survey waves.

H3: Electoral Turnover and Narrowing the Gap in Political Support



In addition to the presence of an effect of winning/losing the most recent elections, scholars argue that political turnover narrows the legitimacy gap between winners and losers of the elections (Moehler and Lindberg 2009). However, looking at alignment with the party of the

⁹Moehler (2009) excludes the electoral commission from her measure of institutional support and the results are not very different.

president and attitudes towards the judiciary, other research finds that partisanship matters and finds convergence in attitudes¹⁰ (Bartels and Kramon 2020). This hypothesis presents an additional challenge to the claim that attitudes are stable (Banducci and Karp 2003). Not only are attitudes determined by short term pressures exerted by the most recent election, attitudes of partisan respondents are expected to converge with political turnover.

Why does this convergence occur? The following argument has been presented as an explanation for the convergence of attitudes. First, new winners get a boost in confidence while their attitudes are still shaped by skepticism they held before winning the election. Second, new losers are expected to have a decline in support after losing but are expected to maintain some of their previous levels of confidence and institutional legitimacy (Moehler and Lindberg 2009, 1451). However, this argument does not tell us about how long we should expect the effect of turnover to last¹¹. Therefore, extending this argument and testing it with more recent survey waves requires testing whether the effect of political turnover continues to narrow the legitimacy gap between winners and losers.

Another challenge, one that may cast doubt on whether the convergence that is observed in previous works actually represents moderation in the attitudes of partisans (Moehler and Lindberg 2009; Bartels and Kramon 2020), has to do with the role of respondents that identify with the winning parties on surveys. The fact that some respondents identify with the winning party on measures of party affiliation and vote preference has led scholars to study this phenomenon extensively (Lindberg and Morrison 2005; Lindberg and Morrison 2008; cited in Moehler and Lindberg 2009). While previous literature shows, at least in the case of Ghana, that approximately 80 percent of voters have stable voting preferences, it is worth exploring the challenges that swings partisans can impose on a theory that relies on political turnover as a mechanism that moderates the views of partisans.

The evidence observed for political turnovers narrowing the legitimacy gap is that winners

¹⁰See Figure 1 in Bartels and Kramon (2020).

¹¹Moehler and Lindberg (2009) make note of this on page 1463. They explain that they were not able to test the effect of more than one turnover because none of the countries sampled experienced more than one turnover in the time of analysis (1999-2006).

and losers' predicted levels of political support converge on measures such as institutional trust, perceived accountability, and consent to authority (Lindberg and Moehler 2009, 1459). Other work shows convergence in the proportion of winners and losers that support various forms of judicial power (Bartels and Kramon 2020). Having a group of respondents that are likely to identify with the winning party threatens the validity of conclusions. If the levels of political support among swing respondents is moderate, then, whenever these respondents are surveyed, it is likely that they are causing the moderation in the view of winners and losers.

To clarify this point, I return to the argument presented by Moehler and Lindberg (2009). It can be the case that new winners increase levels of support while maintaining skepticism from previous experiences. Similarly, losers are likely to decrease political support after losing, but the decline may not be drastic because of previous experiences. Since we cannot test whether new winners and new losers maintain previous levels of political support, it is important to consider the following possibility. Suppose the presence of a proportion of respondents that are likely to claim to be winners whenever they are surveyed. If this group has moderate and stable levels of support, political turnover means that repeatedly sampling these types of respondents leads to moderation between winners and losers. The absence of panel surveys makes distinguishing between both possibilities difficult. However, to identify when political turnovers have an effect, according to the argument presented by Moehler and Lindberg (2009) or otherwise, or whether the effect of turnovers operates through allowing swing respondents to narrow the legitimacy gap, it is necessary to extend the analysis to countries and times that experience more political turnovers.

If after multiple turnovers levels of political support among winners and losers polarize after converging, this would be evidence that turnovers do not have a lasting effect and we can eliminate the effect of swing voters. We only eliminate the effects of swing voters if they have moderate levels of support and because polarization among traditional partisans would eliminate a long-lasting effect of turnovers. However, this does not allow us to account for

swing voters especially considering that their levels of political support may not be stable and moderate.

Data and Methods:

To analyze the hypotheses described above, I use six waves of AB data. The AB surveys are nationally representative surveys conducted in 34 African countries across seven waves¹². The surveys are conducted using a random, clustered, stratified, multi-stage probability sample (Afrobarometer 2019). In addition to being a valuable data source for studying attitudes in Africa, the AB surveys are used by scholars working on the same research question (Bratton et al 2004; Moehler 2009; Moehler and Lindberg 2009; Bartels and Kramon 2020). The presence of comparable public opinion data allows scholars to test and extend previous findings. With the exception of Bartels and Kramon (2020), which focuses on trust in the judiciary, previous research on the effects of identifying with the winning party uses data as recent as the third AB survey wave (Moehler and Lindberg 2009). Since the third waves of AB surveys, four additional survey waves have been available for use (Afrobarometer 2019). I test my hypothesis using six waves of AB data. Among other advantages, the inclusion of additional and more recent data allows this analysis to overcome the following concern. Respondents surveyed in the early waves of the AB surveys reside in countries that are more democratic than the African average (Moehler and Lindberg 2009, 1453). With the inclusion of additional states within each survey round, these concerns about generalizability are slightly alleviated.

Measuring Trust in Political Institutions:

A key component of measuring political legitimacy and political support are levels of trust in political institutions (Moehler 2009; Moehler and Lindberg 2009). While the AB surveys ask about various political institutions, such as the presidency, the legislature, and the

¹²Although an early version has been released, the seventh wave is not included in this analysis. The reason for this is that the codebook has not been published yet.

electoral commission, it is argued that respondents do not always distinguish between institutions in their evaluation. More specifically, measures of trust in political institutions “can be considered as a general assessment of the political culture in a country that guides the behavior of politicians and civil servants alike” (Zmerli and Hooghe 2013, 4). Yet, scholars that measure the effect of electoral outcomes discard measures of trust that can be associated with a politician (Moehler 2009; Moehler and Lindberg 2009). The justification for excluding certain institutions, such as the presidency and the legislature, is that the measure is intended to be an index on trust in institutions and not persons (Moehler 2009, 305 footnote 21). Therefore, this argument reflects a concern that responses to questions about institutions easily attributable to persons would merely capture evaluations of the persons in power. Thus, in previous work, measures of trust in the presidency, the legislature, or any particular representative are excluded (Moehler 2009; Moehler and Lindberg 2009). I adopt this approach when generating the *Institutional Trust Index*. Similar to previous works, this index sums measures of trust in: the electoral commission, the courts of law, the army, and the police (Moehler 2009, 350).

Measures of the Independent Variables:

The primary independent variable is *Winner* and it captures whether a respondent is affiliated with the political party that won the most recent elections. As discussed in the description of the first hypothesis, previous studies have measured this variable differently. Some measure winner status through voting intention (Norris 1999), the party a respondent voted for in the last elections, or most preferred party (Holmberg 1999; Moehler 2009). In Moehler (2009), this variable is measured with lower values indicating that a respondent identifies with the political party that lost the elections, middle values indicating respondents that do not feel close to any political party, and respondents that identify with the winning party are coded in the higher categories. Another approach is to separate this variable into a series of binary indicators and including all but the reference category in the model (Moehler

and Lindberg 2009; Bartels and Kramon 2020). Since I argue that the effects of winning and losing should not be conflated, I generate *Winner* and *Independent* variables and I leave losers as the reference category. This way of operationalizing the party affiliation variable into a winner status variable is beneficial because it allows for controlling for the effect of independents.

The second hypothesis highlights the role of perceptions of electoral integrity. I include the variable *Free and Fair Election*¹³ to test whether the mechanism proposed by Moehler (2009) continues to have an effect after the first round of the AB surveys. In addition to testing the effect of electoral integrity as a mediating variable, I test whether the hypothesized partisan bias extends to electoral integrity. Since the variable *Free and Fair Election* is included in all but the second wave of the AB surveys, I exclude the second wave from the analysis when I test the second hypothesis.

Finally, the first and third hypotheses require testing the effect of political turnovers. Since Moehler (2009) does not test the effect of political turnovers, I explore how other scholars have dealt with political turnovers. Previous works have measured turnovers differently¹⁴ (Moehler and Lindberg 2009; Bartels and Kramon 2020). In this article, political turnovers are measured as transitions in power particularly in the chief executive. I focus on political turnovers in the chief executive because this is the most salient political change and would probably produce the largest effect on respondents. Since my argument casts doubt on whether political changes factor into evaluations of political institutions, using the most salient political change is a conservative approach.

¹³I maintain the coding decisions employed in Moehler (2009). See the in-article appendix for more detail about the coding decisions.

¹⁴Moehler and Lindberg (2009) measure both full and partial turnovers based on whether turnovers occurs in both branches or one. Bartels and Kramon (2020) focus on the presidency. Political turnovers are assumed to be when the party of the president changes.

Controls

To best capture the effect of the independent variables, I include a series of control variables. To maintain comparability with previous research, I include control variables that were included in previous research¹⁵ (Moehler 2009). That being said, I challenge previous model specifications and conduct theoretically motivated robustness checks in the online appendices. I include the demographic variables: *Education*, *Female*, and *Age*. In addition to demographic variables, I include the following political engagement variables: *Electoral Participation*¹⁶, *Political Interest*, and *Exposure to Mass Media*.

Previous work also controls for the effects of performance evaluations (Moehler 2009). Other work implies that partisan bias may lead self-proclaimed winners to be less willing to criticize the performance of their government (Bratton et al. 2004, 259; cited in Moehler and Lindberg 2009, 1454). This suggests that presence of multicollinearity in models that include both party affiliation and measures of government performance. While that may be the case, I include *Government Performance* and *Economic Performance* and report results of models that exclude these variables. Government performance is a combined scale that asks respondents about their evaluations of how the government is handling multiple issues¹⁷. Economic performance is a combined scale that includes perceptions of both national and personal economic conditions¹⁸.

In addition to the controls included by Moehler (2009) I control for: *Years Since Election*. If elections have the hypothesized short-term effects, then the proximity of the election should matter. To account for the effect of being in an election year or being surveyed at times distant from elections, I include a variable that indicates how many years have passed since the last election.

¹⁵I include the all controls employed by Moehler (2009).

¹⁶This variable is not included in the second round of the AB surveys.

¹⁷See appendix for list of issue that are included.

¹⁸See appendix for the list of items that were combined in this index.

Modeling Technique

To model the relationship between winning and trust in political institutions, I explore several modelling techniques. Previous literature includes –J-1– country level indicators to account for the multilevel structure of the data and to control for variation caused by country level factors (Moehler 2009; Moehler and Lindberg 2009). Modeling decisions in this paper are guided by the following factors. First, the third hypothesis requires testing the effect of the number of turnovers, a country-level covariate, so, depending only on models with individual-level indicators is not possible. Second, since the interest is in individuals and not countries, I use a random effects model as opposed to using a fixed effects model¹⁹ (Searle et al. 1992; cited by Gelman et al 2006). Third, since I am interested in testing the effects of time-varying, group-level covariates, years since last election and political turnovers, I fix the coefficients for these variables. Therefore, I deal with time by including year fixed effects. Additionally, to test for the presence of longitudinal effects, I deal with time by including year dummies and I interact the year variable with time varying covariates²⁰ (Fairbrother 2014). Lastly, inconsistencies in the presence/absence of variables from waves²¹ and in the number of item response categories²² makes pooling all waves difficult. Since not all rounds are comparable for the aforementioned reasons, I run separate models for the cross-sections that cannot be pooled (Rounds 1, 2, and 4) and I pooled models that include respondents from the third, fifth, and sixth round²³.

¹⁹Gelman et al. also propose that fixed effects should be used when all possible groups are included in the data. However, given this proposition, they recommend using random effects (Gelman et al. 2006, 246). I deal with the fact that respondents are nested in countries by allowing for varying intercepts.

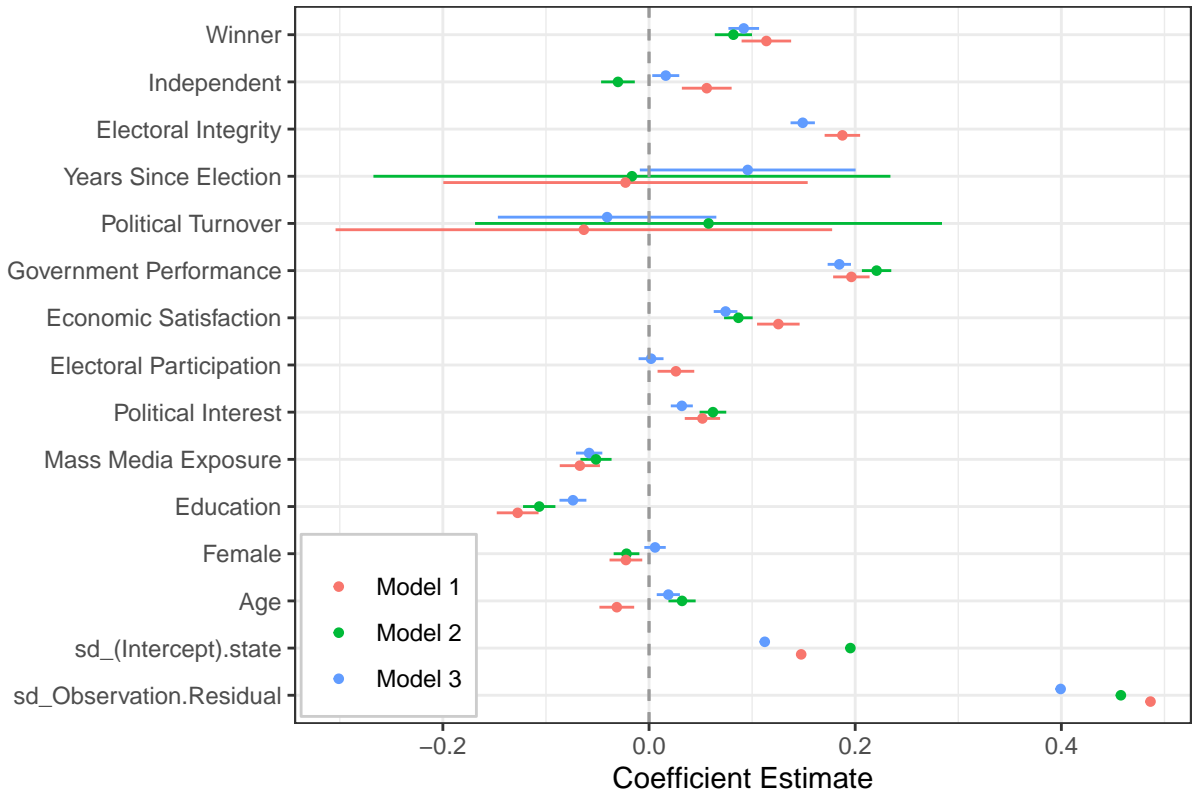
²⁰This approach requires including the mean of the time varying covariates and the difference from mean.

²¹With the exception of an item asking about voting in the last election, which itself is excluded in the second-round survey, the three variables required to build the electoral participation index are not repeated in any of the following surveys. Also, Trust in the Army, one of the four variables that make up the index used as the dependent variable (Institutional Trust), is excluded from the fourth-round survey.

²²In subsequent surveys, the possible response categories for the political interest and education items changes from the first surveys.

²³In the appendix, I include models that pool all waves and exclude the variable that are missing

Figure 1: Predicting Institutional Trust



Results

Hypothesis 1:

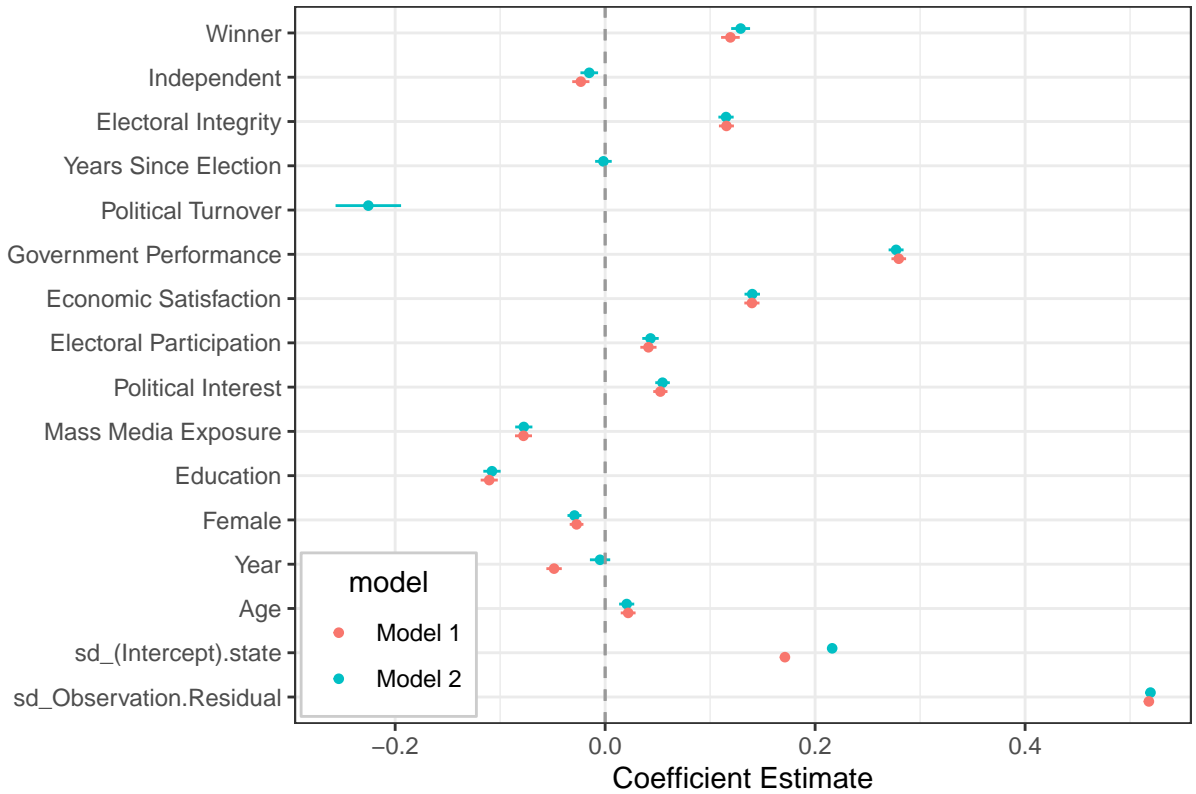
To test the hypotheses, I run several models, the results of which are displayed in the following figures. To test the home team hypothesis (H1), I regress the binary indicator of winner status, including the controls used by Moehler (2009), on the institutional trust index. In addition to the controls included by Moehler, I test for the effects of the number of political turnovers and years since the last election. The inclusion of these variables constitutes a test of Hypothesis 1 (Including 1A, 1B, 1C). The results in **Figure 1** are from the first, second, and fourth wave of AB surveys. Model 1 includes data from the first round (1999-2001) and this model, with the exception of the aforementioned addition, replicates the finding in Moehler (2009). Model 2 uses data from the second round (2002-2003) and, as results, exclude electoral participation and electoral integrity for their absence from the dataset.

Model 3 uses data from the fourth round of AB surveys (2008-2009). While this model includes the variables omitted from the third model, several variables are scale differently as a result of how items are worded and item omissions. First, the dependent variable, institutional trust, is missing the trust in the army item, one of the components of the index. As a result of this, the dependent variable ranges from -0.5 to 0.5 instead of ranging from -1 to 1. Also, unlike Model 1, the electoral participation variable is not an index. In Model 1, the electoral participation index included a measure of whether a respondent voted, attended a rally, or worked for a political candidate. Since subsequent survey waves exclude two of these items. In models that use data from subsequent survey waves, the electoral participation variable is a binary indicator of whether a respondent voted. As a result of the aforementioned inconsistencies, the hypotheses are tested on each of the three survey waves separately.

The results in **Figure 1** show that, relative to losers, winners have, on average, higher levels of trust in political institution. The effect of winning status is consistent across all models. Relative losers, independent are expected to have higher level of trust in political institutions in Models 1 and 3. In Model 2, however, independents are expected to have lower levels of political trust. To test H1A, I include the number of political turnovers experience in a country to test whether it influence trust in political institutions. I fail to find a consistent effect for the number of political turnovers. Also, winner status does not appear to be influence by the presence of this variable. When testing H1B, I find, as shown in Moehler (2009), that winners are more likely to trust in political institutions and the results hold regardless of how winner status is operationalized. To test H1C, I include years since election and this variable measures how distant an election was to the time respondents were surveyed. The data shows that, on average, elections were only slightly more proximate to respondents surveyed in the first round²⁴ However, the effect of years since the election is inconsistent and does not meet thresholds for statistical significance in all models.

²⁴The average number of years since an election for respondents in the first round is 3.022. The average is 3.205 for the second wave and 3.213 in the fourth wave.

Figure 2: Predicting Institutional Trust



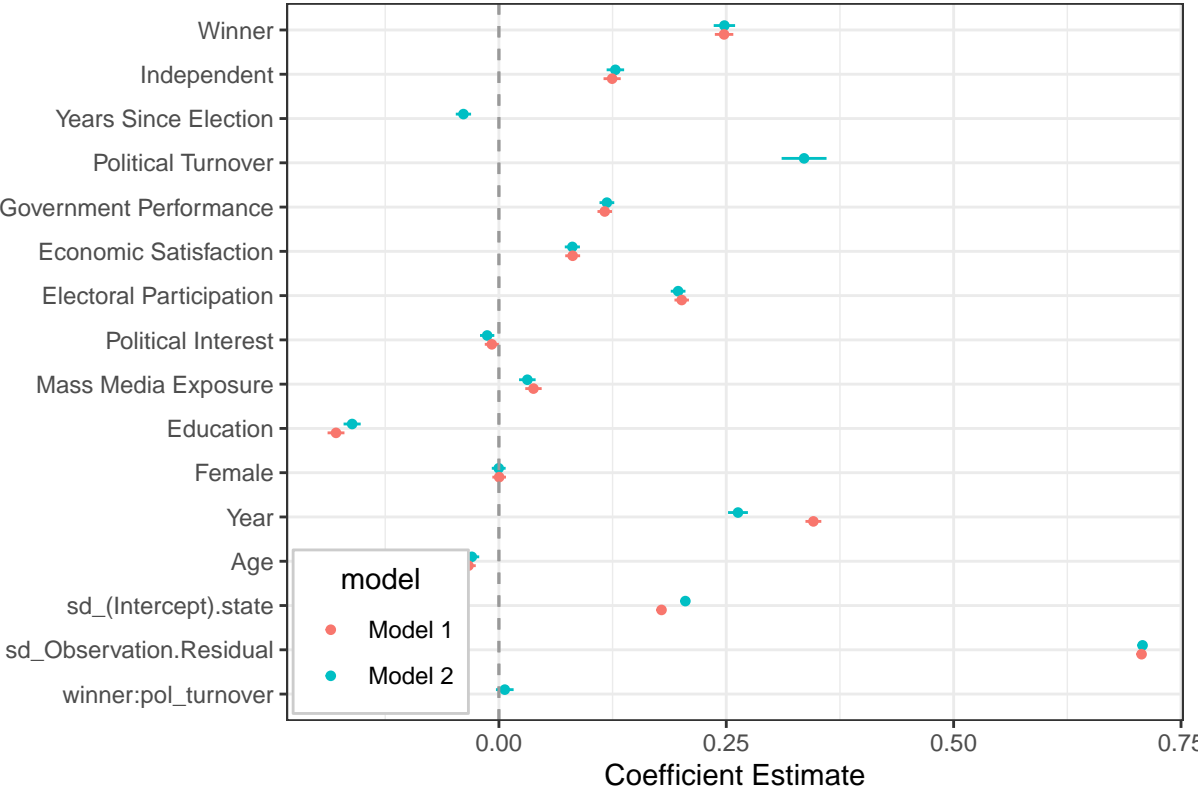
Using the remaining AB surveys, I continue to test the home team hypothesis. **Figure 2** shows results for the models that pool the remaining surveys (Round 3, Round 5, and Round 6). Model 1 presents results for the model before adding country level predictors. Even after including the number of political turnovers and years since the previous elections, winner status, relative to loser status, leads to higher levels of trust in political institutions. Relative to losers, independents are predicted to have lower levels of trust in political institutions. Similar to models in the first figure, proximity to elections does not predict levels of political trust. Unlike the previous regression, with each additional political turnover experienced, the levels of political trust among respondents are expected to decrease. However, political turnover fails to show a longitudinal effect²⁵.

Therefore, the results indicate that the evidence for the home team hypothesis is consistent and robust to challenges that may prevent this partisan bias from professing itself among surveyed respondents. I hypothesize that the ability of partisans to be influenced

²⁵See Figure A5 in Appendix D

by election results to be challenged when election are distant. That is, I expected that the results shown in Moehler (2009) to be a product of having respondents surveyed soon after elections. Contrary to my expectations, distance from the election does not seem to matter in predicting levels of political trust. The same is true for the effect of political turnovers. While I had predicted turnovers to make the partisan bias difficult to identify in Moehler’s regression model, the effect of winner status continues to predict trust in political institutions. Even when pooling all six AB survey rounds together, being a winner, relative to a loser, is predicted to lead to higher levels of political trust²⁶.

Figure 3: Predicting Perceived Electoral Integrity



Hypothesis 2:

While the effect of being a winner is consistent, the role of perceptions of electoral integrity as a mediating factor is challenged. **Figure 3** shows the results for the pooled model. Model 1 includes only individual-level predictors. Model 2 includes country-level predictors.

²⁶See Figure A4 in Appendix C for these results

The results show that winners are more likely to have favorable views about the freeness and fairness of the elections. Independents are, relative to losers, expected to have more favorable perceptions of electoral integrity. This is evidence that the partisan bias also explains perceptions of electoral integrity.

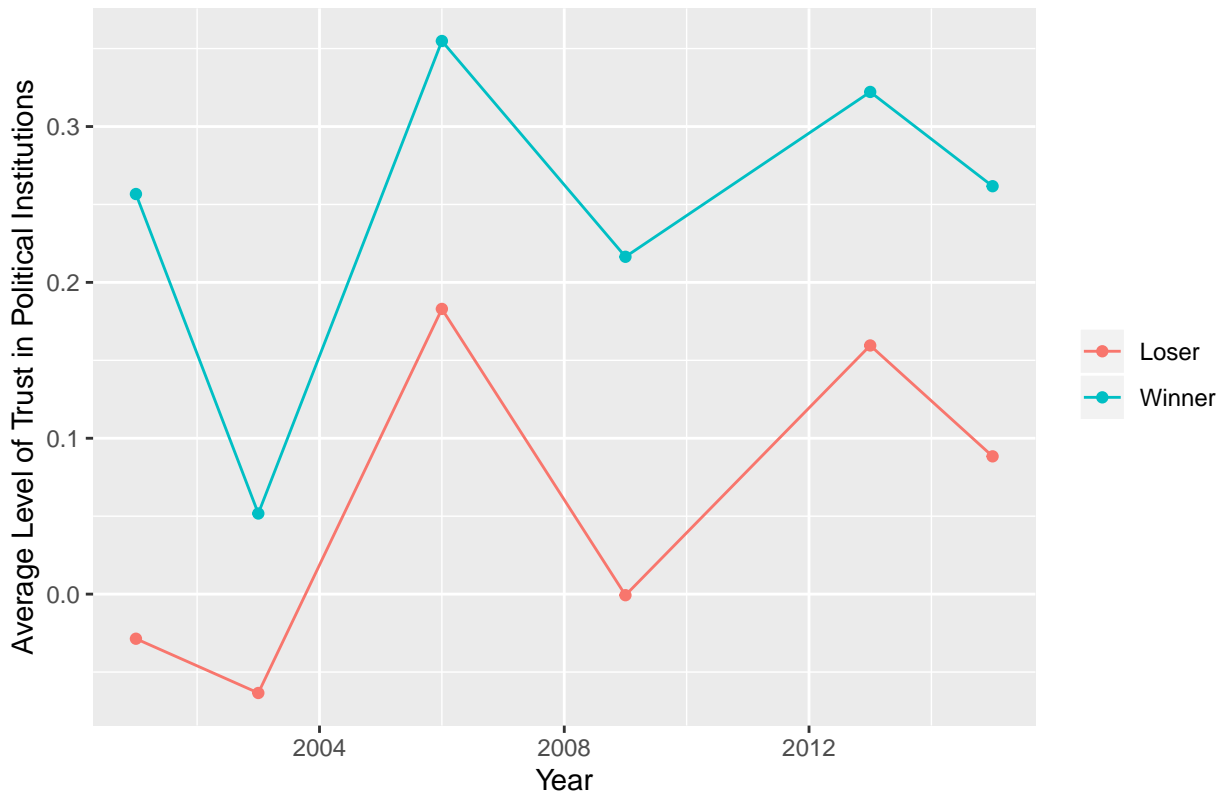
However, when checking for the correlation between levels of trust in political institutions and perceptions of electoral integrity the evidence is not as clear. The Pearson correlation between responses to the institutional trust index (consists of four items) is not as high as expected and does not change between partisan and independents. Among partisans, the correlation is 0.17704 and among non-partisans the correlation is 0.1716.

While there is no evidence of correlation between the dependent variable and perceptions of electoral integrity, evidence in Figure 3 suggests that the partisan bias extends to evaluations of the freeness and fairness of the election. However, additional evidence suggests that having more favorable views about the election reduces the effect of winner status when predicting levels of political trust²⁷.

Therefore, the results for analysis of the second hypothesis are mixed. While we see winner status predicting perceptions of electoral integrity, the correlation between the dependent variable and perceptions of fairness is not as high as expected. Moreover, the negative coefficient for the interaction between winner status and perceptions of fairness of elections supports the argument presented by Moehler (2009). Moehler notes, in addition to the presence of direct link between electoral outcomes and trust in political institutions, that electoral integrity mediates the effect of electoral outcomes. While effect of this interaction may not hold in the data used by Moehler, it holds in subsequent rounds of AB data.

²⁷See Figure A6 in Appendix E for model with an interaction between winner status and perception of electoral integrity. The interaction holds for all models presented in this article with the exception of the model that only uses the first wave of AB survey data.

Figure 4: Trust Gap Between Winners and Losers

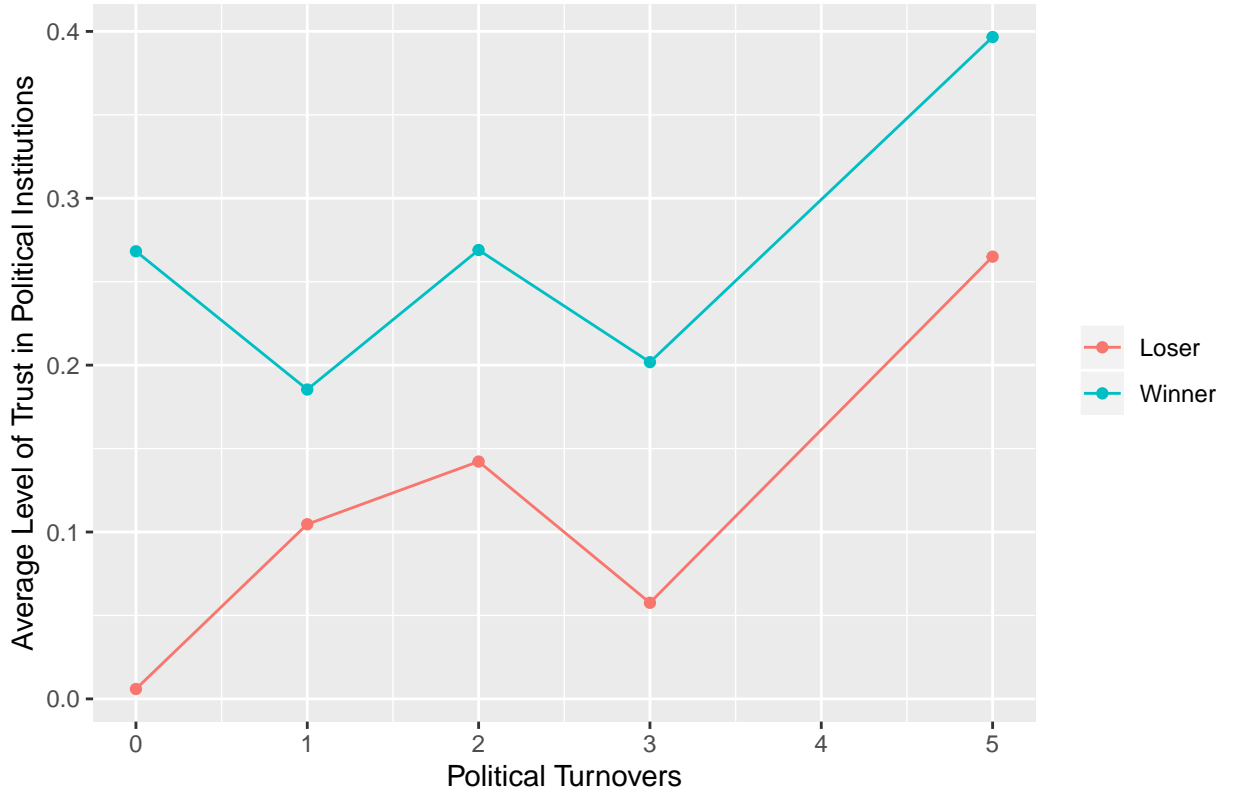


Hypothesis 3:

This hypothesis explores the role of turnovers in reducing the legitimacy gap between winners and losers. At the individual level, the previous section shows mixed results for the effect of political turnovers when predicting an individual's level of trust in political institutions. Additionally, when testing the effect of political turnovers conditioned on the number of political turnovers experienced in a state, the results are mixed. A model interacting the effect of winning and political turnovers shows that political turnovers reduce the effect of winning the election²⁸. However, these results hold in all models except that which uses Round 4 of the AB survey.

²⁸See Figure A7 in Appendix F

Figure 5: Trust Gap Between Winners and Losers



Looking at the aggregate level, previous scholars argue that the legitimacy gap is reduced with experiencing political turnovers (Moehler and Lindberg 2009). Moehler and Lindberg ask whether Huntington’s “two-turnover test” is meaningful in this context (Huntington 1991, Moehler and Lindberg 2009, 1449). Looking at trust in political institutions and benefiting from additional rounds of AB data, I plot the political trust gap between winners and losers. **Figure 4** shows the gap to be present across all included rounds of AB data. **Figure 5** plots average levels of political trust among winners and losers by the number of political turnovers experienced in a country. Consistent with that which is found by Moehler and Lindberg, experiencing a turnover does seem to reduce the gap in political trust. The difference in the gaps between states that have yet to experience a political turnover and states that experience only one turnover is large. In this dataset, 56 country-years have yet to experience a political turnover and 35 county-years have experienced only one political turnover. Since less country-years have experienced more political turnovers²⁹, we are less

²⁹25 country-years experienced two political turnovers. 6 country-years experienced three turnovers and

confident as the plot moves towards high numbers of political turnovers. That being said, the gap does not seem to decrease when comparing country-years that experienced 1 and 2 political turnovers.

Faced by the same limitations that challenged Lindberg and Moehler (2009) and are discussed in the theory section of this article, it is difficult to infer anything about the effect of turnovers on aggregate level data. Since this data set lacks a sufficient number of countries that experience two or more political turnovers³⁰, we cannot be sure about whether the gap is reduced or increased as the plot presented here shows. Taken with the mixed results on the effects of political turnovers at the individual level, the results suggest the absence of evidence of political turnovers influencing levels of political trust at the individual and aggregate levels.

Conclusion:

Across 126 country-years, the results in this article show levels of trust in political institutions to be polarized between winners and losers of the electoral process. Across multiple model specifications and methods of operationalization, winners are expected, relative to losers, to have higher trust in political institutions. This is evidence of what previous scholars have called the “home team” hypothesis (Holmberg 1999). These findings confirm what previous scholars, also looking at public opinion in Sub-Saharan Africa, have shown (Moehler 2009; Moehler and Linberg 2009; Bartels and Kramon 2020). Using six rounds of AB data, I show the presence of a partisan bias in evaluations of political institution. These results have normative implications and implications on our understanding of political trust. Normatively, the findings confirm that citizens are not engaging in the cognitively demanding evaluation of political institutions (Zmerli and Hooghe 2013). Rather, partisans seem to be looking at who is in power as opposed to the performance of institutions.

2 experienced five turnovers.

³⁰Only Ghana, Malawi, and Mali experienced two or more political turnovers when under observation. See Bartels and Kramon (2020) for analysis that shows the trust in judiciary gap decreasing with political turnovers in Ghana.

While this article confirms findings that undermine understandings of political support as stable attitudes (Banducci and Karp 2003), it subjects the evidence of a partisan bias to scrutiny. I argue that evidence of partisan bias should be challenged because this bias is more cognitively demanding than is assumed and this varies based on political context. When a party has been in power for many years, respondents that win or lose the election can easily associate the ruling political party with the government and political institutions. When political context change, such as the case when a country experiences a turnover, respondents must balance their evaluation of the new ruling party with past experiences and evaluation of institutions. When testing the home team hypothesis, previous work does not account for the number of political turnovers experience by a country (Moehler 2009). Evidence in this analysis suggest that controlling for the number of political turnovers. The effect of winner status holds and is in the hypothesized direction.

Another important factors that was not accounted for in studies hitherto is the proximity of elections. If the partisan bias is the results of citizens observing who won the elections and using that information to evaluate political institutions, the distance from the elections should matter. Since the AB waves survey respondents from the same country, in many instances, multiple times between elections, this is an additional reason to test for the effect of the proximity of elections. Interestingly, levels of political trust are not predicted by how recent an election³¹. Nor does controlling for the effect of the proximity of elections influence the effect of being a winner.

While the proximity of elections does not seem to matter for winners, previous work shows that the effect of winning is mediated by perceptions of electoral integrity (Moehler 2009). I argue that the partisan bias, which is hypothesized to effect evaluations of institutions, should also extend to evaluations of the electoral process. I find evidence that winners are more likely to have positive evaluations of the election. However, when interacting winning status with evaluations of the election, results indicate that positive evaluations of the election lead

³¹The effect of winning is not condition by the proximity of elections. See Figure A8 in Appendix G. Coefficient is not in a consistent direction and does not always meet thresholds of statistical significance.

to a decrease in the effect of winning relative to losing. However, the results do not hold when tested on data from the first round of AB surveys.

In addition to the absence of an effect for political turnovers at the individual level, plotting the average levels of trust of winners and losers shows the presence of a trust gap across all waves of AB data. Additionally, the gap in political trust is largest in country-years that have not yet experienced political turnovers. The gap shrinks in units that experience one turnover but increases in country-years that experience their third political turnover. However, the absence of frequent turnover limits what can be done at the aggregate level.

Future research may benefit from increased political turnovers and elections. However, more work needs to account for factors such as ethnicity and its relationship to affiliation with political parties. While the importance of ethnic identities in predicting partisan affiliation is challenged (Lindberg and Morrison 2008; Basedau and Stroh 2011), others find ethnolinguistic identities to be correlated with vote choice in some countries (Bratton et al. 2004, 306). Moreover, work on winner status and the legitimacy gap shows the ethnicity of the president not to matter when predicting trust in the judiciary (Bartels and Kramon 2020). However, the absence of data on the ethnicity of political elites makes accounting for ethnic co-partisanship difficult. An additional difficulty is in the fact that ethnicity can determine partisan identification. Which suggest that the effects of partisanship may incorporate the effect of ethnicity.

Dealing with respondents that identify with the winning political party is another challenge that requires attention. While the data suggest that winners of elections are more likely to trust political institutions, we do not know which winners have decided to be winners. While previous work addresses this as a concern (Bratton et al. 2004; Moehler and Lindberg 2009). More needs to be done to test how this influences results of works that focus on the legitimacy gap and political turnovers.

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Appendix A³²

- *Institutional Trust*: How much does you trust the following institutions [to do what is right]: the police, courts of law, the army³³, the electoral commission? Not at all = -0.250; Distrust Somewhat = -0.125; Don't Know=0; Trust Somewhat= 0.125; Trust a lot= 0.250. (Index ranges from -1 to 1)
- *Free and Fair Election*³⁴: On the whole, how would you rate the freeness [honesty] of the last national election, held in[____]? Not free and fair/very dishonest= -1; Free and fair but with several major problems/somewhat dishonest=-0.5; Don't know=0; Free and fair with some minor problems/somewhat honest=0.5; Completely free and fair/very honest=1).
- *Winner*: Do you feel close to any political party? If yes, which one? (If party choice match the party that one the elections=1; otherwise=0).
- *Independent*: Do you feel close to any political party? (If response is no = 1; otherwise zero).
- *Government Performance*: How well would you say the government is handling the following matters? Would you say very well, fairly well, not very well, not at all well, or haven't you heard enough about this to have an opinion: Addressing the educational needs of all [nationality name]? Improving health services? Creating jobs? Ensuring that prices remain stable?' (Not at all well = 0; Not very well=1; Don't know=2; Fairly well=3; Very well=4. The index ranges from zero to 16.
- *Economic Performance*: How satisfied are you with the condition of the [____] economy today? How do economic conditions in [____] now compare to one year ago? What about in twelve months' time: do you expect economic conditions in [

³²From appendix in Moehler 2009

³³Missing from Round 4.

³⁴Missing from Round 2

_____] to be worse, the same, or better than they are now? Would you say that your own living conditions are worse, the same, or better than other [nationality name]? Very dissatisfied/much worse= 0; Dissatisfied/worse =1; Don't know/ neither/same=2; Satisfied/better=3; Very satisfied/much better=4. The index ranges from 0 to 16.

- *Electoral Participation*³⁵: Understanding that some [_____] choose not to vote, let me ask you: did you vote [in the most recent national election]? Did not vote/not able to vote/don't know=0; Voted = 1.) I will read out a list of things that people sometimes do as citizens. Please tell me how often you, personally, have done any of these things [during the last five years]: Attended an election rally? Work for a political candidate or party? Never/no chance to/don't know = 0; Only once/once or twice = 0.333; Sometimes/a few times = 0.667; Often = 1. (The combined 'electoral participation' scale for three items ranges from 0 to 3.).
- *Political Interest*³⁶: Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs:_____? How interested are you in politics and government? Hardly/not interested=0; Only now and then=1; Some of the time/somewhat interested = 2; Always/most of the time/very interested = 3.
- *Exposure to Mass Media*: How often do you get news from the following sources: Radio? Television? Newspapers? Never = 0; Less than once a month = 1; About once a month = 2; About once a week/few times a month = 3; Several times a week/a few times a week = 4; Every day = 5. (The combined 'exposure to mass media' scale for three items ranges from 0 to 15.).

³⁵After the first round this becomes a binary indicator of whether a person voted. Reason for this is the other items are not asked again.

³⁶One response category is excluded in the second round. So, the variable ranges from 0 to 2 in the second round survey.

- *Education*³⁷: How much education have you had? No formal schooling=0; Primary only=1; Secondary = 2; Post-secondary = 3.
- *Age*: ranges from 15 years old to 100 years old.
- *Years from Election*³⁸: ranges from 0 to 9.
- *Year*: Last year surveys were conducted in that particular round of AB surveys.
- *Number of Political Turnovers*³⁹: Political turnovers are transitions of power uninterrupted by military coups within regime classification [Restricted Democratic Practice, Emerging Democracy, Democracy]. Looks only at transition in the position of chief executive. Ranges from 0 to 5.

³⁷After the first-round, categories are added to account for partial educational progress. Variable ranges from 0 to 9 in following rounds.

³⁸Source: African Elections Database. More recent election dates taken through Wiki pages

³⁹Source: African Elections Database. More recent election results taken through Wiki pages

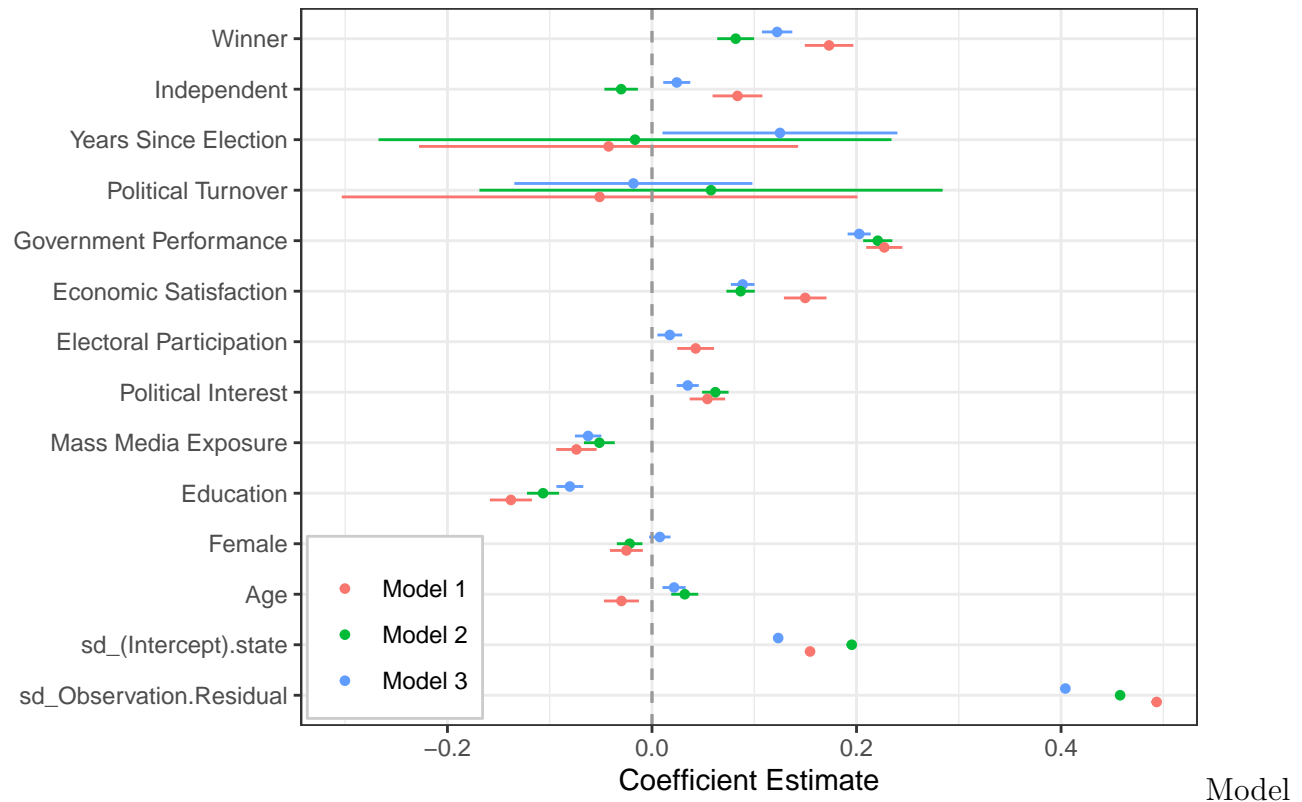
Country Inclusion in AB Survey⁴⁰

Country ¹	R7 Sample	R6 Sample	R5 Sample	R4 Sample	R3 Sample	R2 Sample	R1 Sample
Algeria	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Benin	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
Botswana	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Burkina Faso	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Burundi	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Cameroon	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Cape Verde	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Cote d'Ivoire	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Egypt	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Gabon	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Gambia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ghana	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Guinea	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Kenya	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Lesotho	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Liberia	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Madagascar	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
Malawi	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mali	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mauritius	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Mozambique	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Namibia	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Niger	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Nigeria	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sao Tome and Principe	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Senegal	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Sierra Leone	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
South Africa	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sudan	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Tanzania	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Togo	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Tunisia	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Uganda	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Zambia	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Zimbabwe	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

⁴⁰Countries not in Sub-Saharan Africa are excluded from the analysis they are included here to show the coverage of the AB surveys.

Appendix B - 1

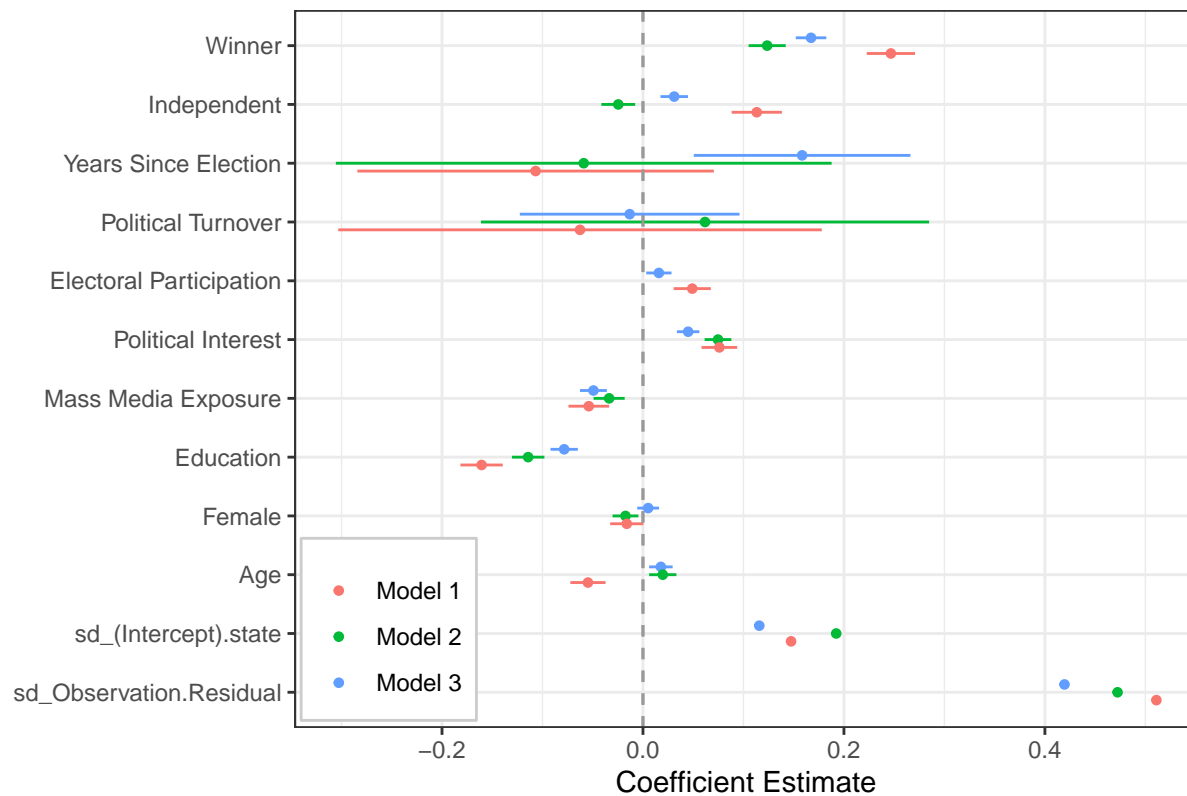
Figure A1: Excluding Electoral Integrity



1 include data from AB Round 1. Model 2 includes data from AB Round 2. Model 3 includes data from AB Round 4. This model excludes the variable that involve assessments of the role of government. Since I raise concerns about partisan bias in evaluations electoral integrity and colinearity with the dependent variable, I include this model for reference. The number of observations in models is 15669, 21899, and 24525, respectively. Results are from a OLS regression with random intercepts at the country level.

Appendix B -2

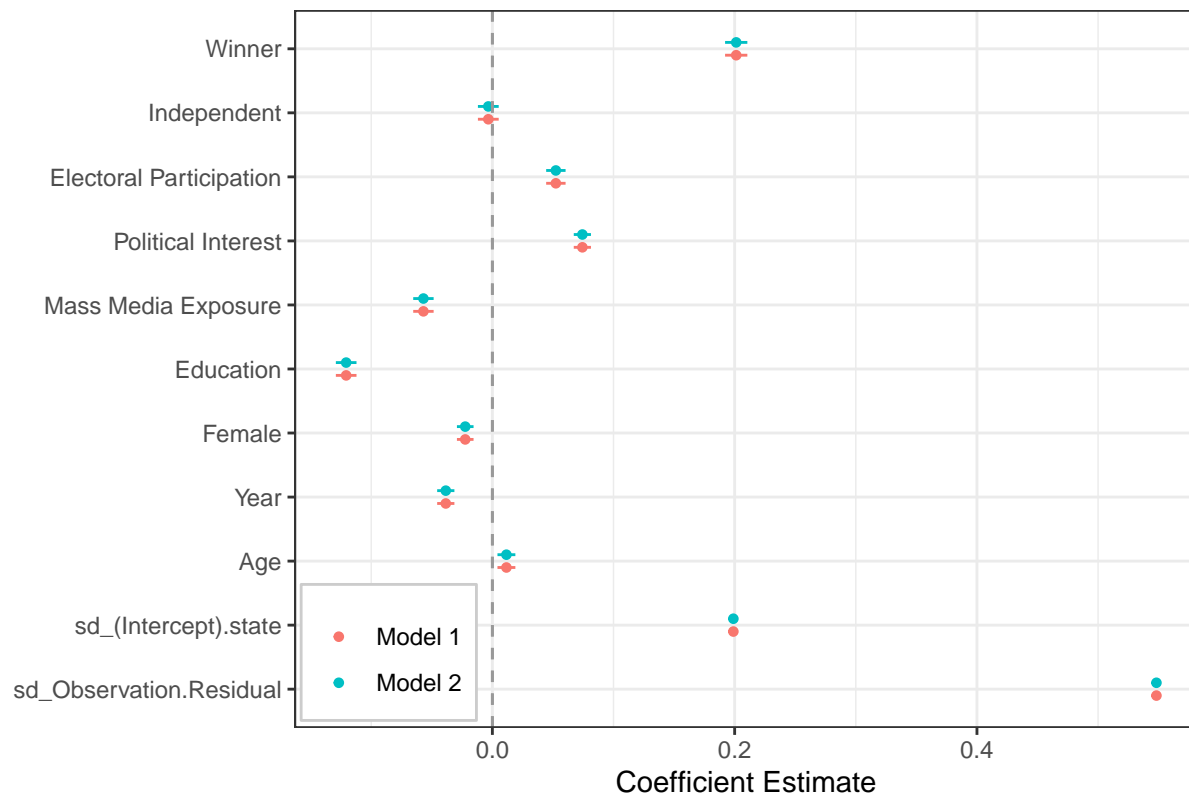
Figure A2: Excluding Evaluation Variables



Model 1 include data from AB Round 1. Model 2 includes data from AB Round 2. Model 3 includes data from AB Round 4. This model excludes the variable that involve assessments of the role of government. Since I raise concerns about partisan bias in evaluations of the government performance and colinearity with the dependent variable, I include this model for reference. The number of observations in models is 15669, 21899, and 24525, respectively. Results are from a OLS regression with random intercepts at the country level.

Appendix B -3

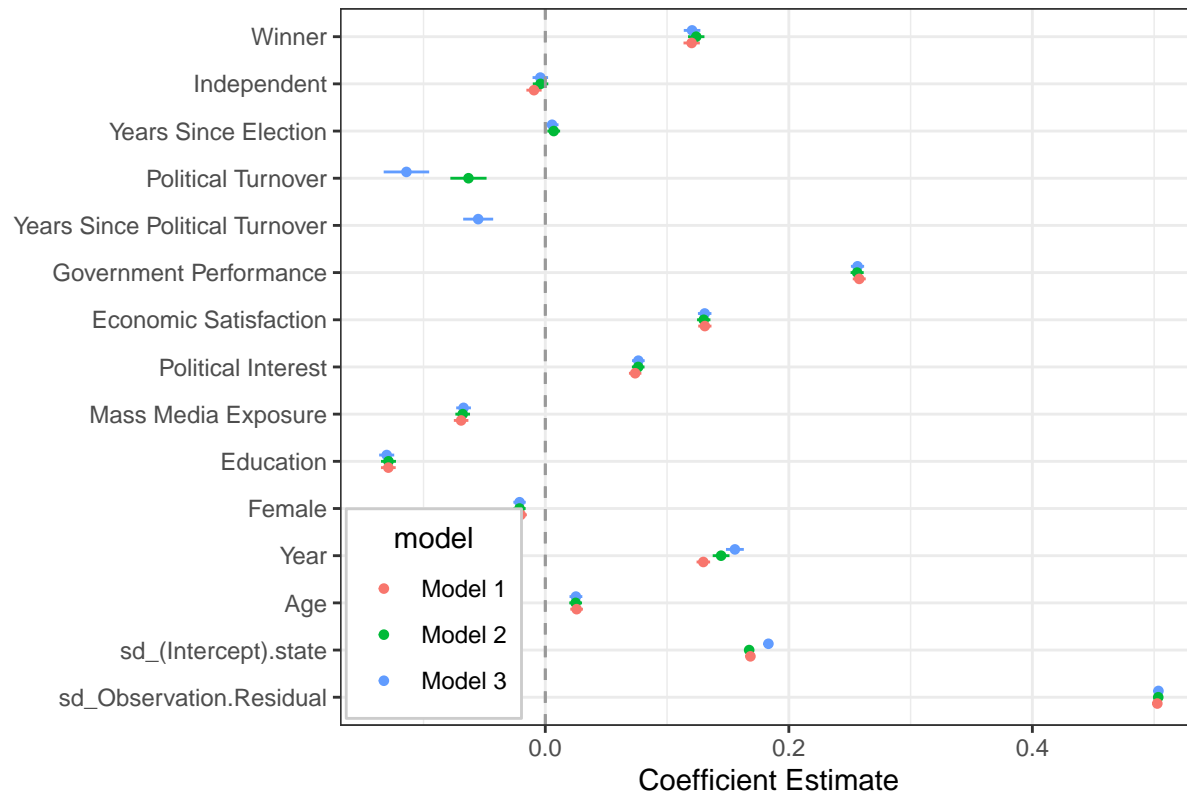
Figure A3: Pooled Model Excluding Evaluation Variables



This model excludes the variable that involve assessments of the role of government. Since I raise concerns about partisan bias in evaluations of the government performance and colinearity with the dependent variable, I include this model for reference. The number of observations in both models is 104,413. Results are from a OLS regression with random intercepts at the country level and year/round fixed effects.

Appendix C

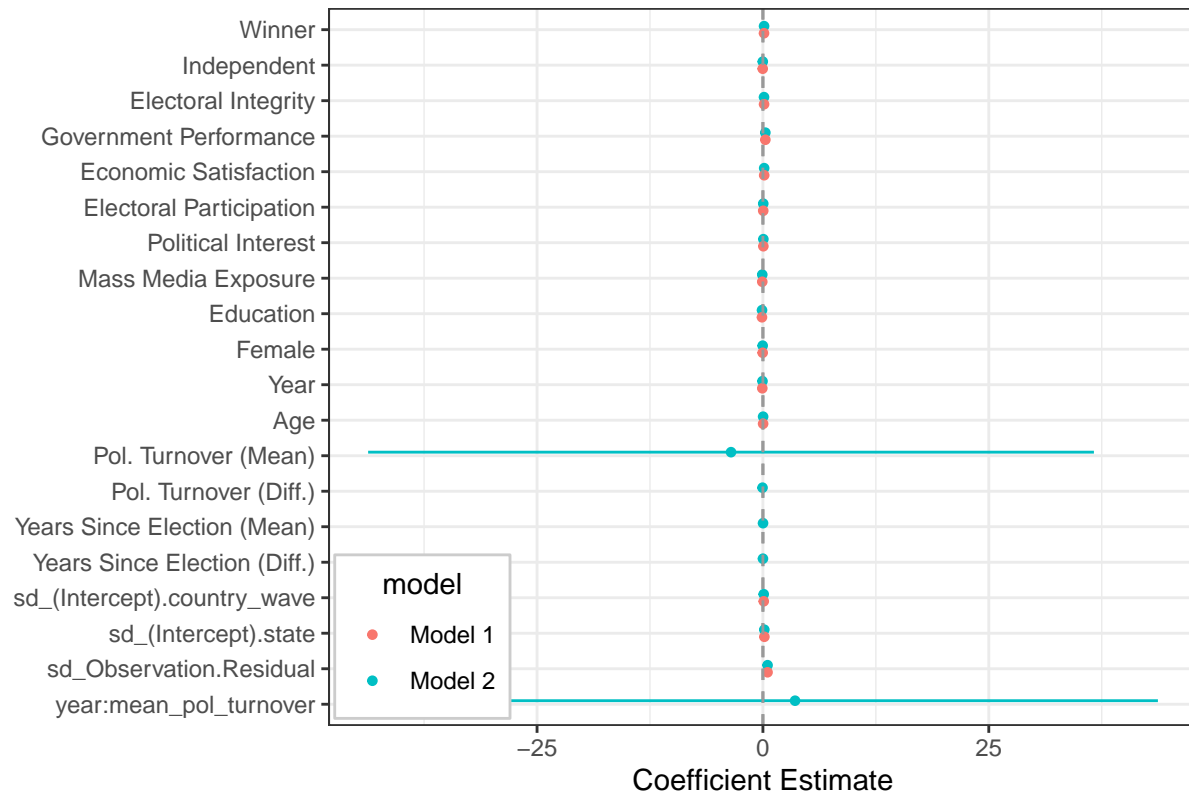
Figure A4: Pooling All Models



This model pools all survey round together and excludes variables missing from any round (Electoral Integrity and Electoral Participation). The variables in this model have coding inconsistencies discussed in the paper. However, this model is included for references. The number of observations is: 166,058 and 162,739, respectively. Results are from a OLS regression with random intercepts at the country level and year/round fixed effects. Model 3 includes a control variable that measures how many years have passed since an turnover was experienced.

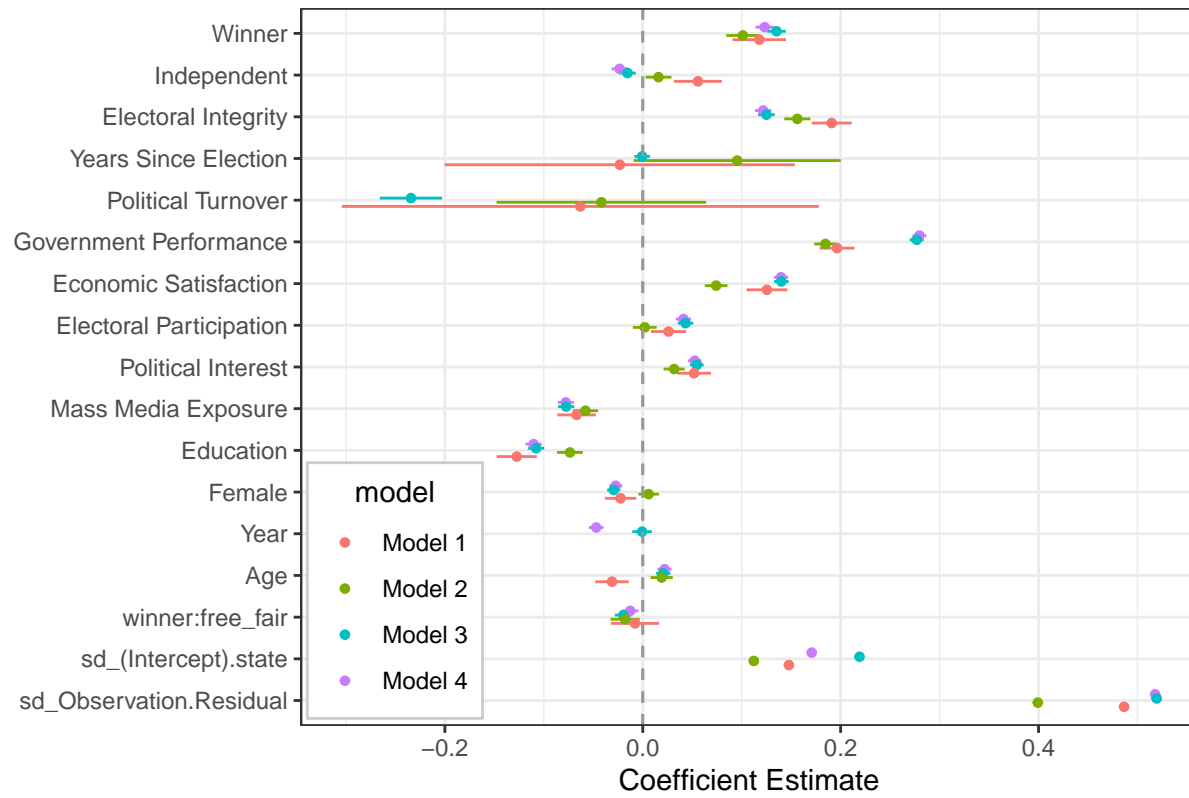
Appendix D

FigureA5: Longitudinal Effect Three-Level-Model



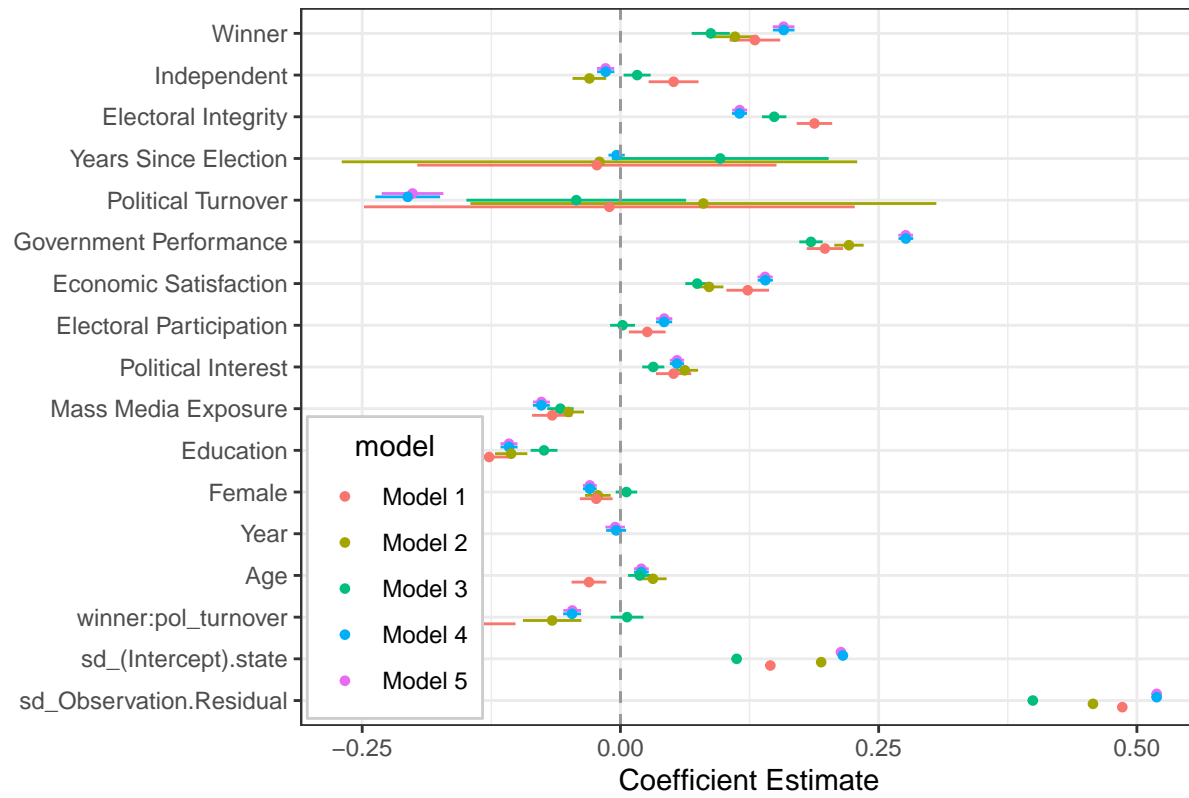
Appendix E

Figure A6: Interaction Winner X Electoral Integrity



Appendix F

Figure A7: Interaction Winner X Political Turnover



Appendix G

Figure A8: Interaction Winner X Year Since Election

