Accountability or Representation? How Electoral Systems Promote Public Trust in African Legislatures

WONBIN CHO*

Elections serve as instruments of democracy, but they do so differently in various parts of the world. This article focuses on the democratizing role of elections in 16 sub-Saharan African countries represented in Afrobarometer survey data. It traces confidence in legislative institutions to whether a citizen perceives competitive elections to produce accountability and/or representation. The analysis shows that elections function differently depending on the nature of legislative institutions. Majoritarian electoral systems promote a sense of citizen control over policymakers (i.e., accountability) whereas proportional representation (PR) systems increase the perception of inclusion across a society's factions (i.e., representation). Because sub-Saharan African citizens typically prioritize representation rather than accountability when evaluating their legislative institutions, controlling for other influences, PR systems are much better at boosting public trust in the region. These findings have important implications for democratic development in Africa.

Introduction

Citizens' political support for important government institutions such as legislatures is critical for achieving stability in emerging democracies (Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi 2005; Easton 1965; Norris 1999). Citizens put their trust in political institutions based on their evaluations of the performance of those institutions (March 1988; Mishler and Rose 2001; Norris 1999). More specifically, citizens judge a legislature according to whether it provides what people want and whether it provides a reasonably fair chance for them to influence decision-making processes through periodic multiparty elections. Different electoral systems have different mechanics for allowing citizens to express their interests. Without knowing how ordinary citizens understand the mechanics of a given electoral system, we are hardly able to understand how they build their trust in the legislature.

Elections establish the connection between citizens and policymakers in a democracy. They are the means through which citizens encourage

*Sungkyunkwan University

policymakers to pay attention to their interests. However, institutional designs differ in the vision of representation that they promote. Some emphasize accountability (Barkan 1998; Horowitz 1991, 2003; Reilly 1997; Sartori 1997) whereas others emphasize representativeness (Lijphart 1999, 2004; Powell 2000; Reynolds 1999; Shugart and Wattenberg 2000). While the former uses elections as an instrument for citizens' direct control over policymakers, the latter argues that elections should increase broad participation in government and broad agreement on policies.

Electoral system can be broadly classified into two types: majoritarian electoral systems and proportional representation (PR) systems. Majoritarian systems most often use single-member districts. In this system, voters cast a vote for an individual candidate, and the candidate receiving the most votes is the winner (winner take all). On the other hand, a PR system is an electoral system in which voters cast their votes for political parties, and the percentage of the vote that each party receives translates into the percentage of seats that the party receives in the legislature.

Majoritarian electoral systems help promote accountability with the winner-take-all system. They usually offer voters a clear-cut choice between two major parties at the national level, and the national vote clearly translates into winning and losing parties. Majoritarian electoral systems in turn produce legislative bodies that are especially reflective of the wishes of the majority but may neglect the goal of representativeness by excluding smaller groups from meaningful participation. Systems that distribute legislative seats proportionally, meanwhile, ensure broader representativeness in the legislature but may fracture power to such an extent that leaders fail to achieve compromise policy solutions, and the majority cannot hold the leadership sufficiently accountable (Cox 1997; Katz 1997; Lijphart 1994; Norris 2004; Reynolds 1999).

These differences in institutional priorities pose an interesting dilemma when theorizing about how legislative institutions might promote public trust. The electoral system may shape people's evaluation of institutions themselves (Anderson and Guillory 1997; Cho and Bratton 2006; Criado and Herreros 2007). Specifically, individual citizens may not expect the same degree of either accountability or responsiveness from all legislatures, but they may instead judge the democratic system according to its success promoting the values underlying it. A majoritarian system likely will generate trust when it succeeds at providing accountability. Under such a system, citizens who perceive an ability to control their members of parliament (MPs) directly through voting would in turn show higher levels of trust in the legislature. A PR system, on the other hand, might generate trust according to its success at being representative. It brings into the policymaking arena representative agents from all factions of society who then bargain with each other in a flexible and accommodative fashion. In other words, electoral institutions would mediate how citizens translate their judgments of legislative performance into overall trust in the legislative branch itself.

This article will test that proposition by applying it to elections and democracy in Africa. It examines the impact of citizens' perceptions of accountability and representation on their confidence in the legislature, using Afrobarometer survey data collected from 16 sub-Saharan African countries with country context indicators—but then allows the relationship between those perceptions and overall confidence to depend upon the type of electoral system present in each country. After controlling for a variety of individual- and country-level characteristics, I found that African citizens typically value the representation function of elections more than their accountability roles when they judge the legislature. Moreover, PR systems are much better at boosting the public trust in the legislature than are majoritarian electoral systems when citizens believe that elections actually improve their political representation. These findings have important implications for democratic development in Africa. They help us to understand how ordinary citizens build their trust in the institutions that are intended to represent them, as high levels of trust enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of democratic government in emerging democracies.

Public Trust in the Legislature

How do ordinary citizens build their confidence in the legislature, particularly in Africa's emerging democracies? High levels of trust in political institutions contribute to legitimating, and thus consolidating, democracy. Low levels of institutional trust tend to force political elites to face a difficult environment to carry out their agenda. Several studies show the evidence of a direct relationship between institutional trust and democratic legitimacy for emerging democracies (Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi 2005; Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998).

Three theoretical traditions (cultural theories, theories of government performance, and institutional theories) attempt to explain the origins of institutional trust, and they provide very different perspectives on how ordinary citizens develop high levels of trust in political institutions (Mishler and Rose 2001; Norris 1999). Cultural theories emphasize the role of deep-rooted cultural norms and individual's socialization experiences (Almond and Verba 1963; Inglehart 1997; Putnam 1993). Individuals learn to trust or distrust other people by interacting with family members, friends, and formal social networks from their early youth. This socialization process results in a collective sense of interpersonal trust in a given society, and high levels of interpersonal trust are strongly associated with high levels of institutional trust. However, Mishler and Rose (2001) find few empirical results supporting the cultural explanations with the survey data from 10 post communist countries.

Theories of government performance focus on the effects of either public evaluation of government performance or objective indicators of economic performance on institutional trust (Anderson and Guillory

1997; Hetherington 1998; Weatherford 1992). The high quality of policy outcomes and improvement in economic evaluations lead ordinary citizens to perceive government to be working effectively. These positive perceptions result in increased institutional trust. In addition to economic outcomes, political outcomes—such as removing restrictions on individual liberty, providing increased freedoms, and reducing corruption—contribute to high levels of institutional trust, particularly in emerging democracies. While I found a significant amount of research about the influence of government performance, these studies do not agree about the most appropriate way to compare government performance, and existing empirical studies show inconsistent results. For example, Mishler and Rose (2001) find strong evidence supporting the perspective of institutional performance, but McAllister (1999) and Miller and Listhaug (1999) show that the impact of government performance on institutional confidence is not significant.

One group of scholars emphasizes the influence of political institutions on levels of public trust in institutions (Anderson et al. 2005; Cho and Bratton 2006; Criado and Herreros 2007; Norris 1999). The variation in public trust in institutions across countries seems due to characteristics of political institutions such as electoral systems, executive types, and party systems. The direct effects on popular attitudes toward political institutions vary in different studies. Norris (1999), for example, finds that countries with majoritarian electoral systems have higher levels of institutional confidence than ones with proportional electoral systems in her cross-national analysis. However, Anderson et al. (2005) and Cho and Bratton (2006) show that more proportional electoral systems increase citizens' confidence in the political system. Focusing on country-level political institutions helps scholars understand the various levels of citizens' institutional confidence across countries. However, those discrepancies in empirical results suggest that the issues of the effects of institutions on institutional confidence remain understudied.

Instead of direct effects, political institutions have indirect (or mediate) effects between popular evaluation of institutional performance and institutional trust. To understand how ordinary citizens develop their trust, this article combines two existing bodies of knowledge: theories of government performance and institutional theories. The effects of citizens' perception of institutional performance on their levels of institutional trust can be mediated by the impact of political institutions. At a basic level, public trust in a given institution is an evaluative orientation focused on how well the institution is operating according to some normative expectation (Mishler and Rose 2001; Stokes 1962). In addition, the same democratic institutions can have different effects on citizens' attitudes toward political systems (Cho 2010). Combining the individual- and country-level effects on public trust in institutions further advances my understanding of the relationship among citizens and the government.

In contrast to previous studies focusing on citizens' trust in institutions generally (Mishler and Rose 2001; Norris 1999), my research emphasizes a specific institution—exploring how citizens' perceptions of the performance of multiparty elections affect their levels of trust in the legislature. Individual evaluations of the performance of a given institution are based on their experiences and thoughts, for example, whether they perceive that individuals are able to vote for the candidate that represents them best when casting votes in a general election. Emphasizing the mechanism of a specific institution can help us to increase my understanding of how key political institutions shape citizens' attitudes toward those institutions and its political consequences.

Weakness of legislatures is a common phenomenon in Africa (Barkan 2009; van de Walle 2003). The legislature, however, is the embodiment of the sovereignty of the people. In addition to its legislative role, the legislature is expected to serve both as an agency of restraint on the executive branch of government and as a public arena for the mobilization of popular participation in the broad governmental decision-making process. The legislature itself represents an institution that captures the diversity of society. When legislatures were introduced as a political institution, in turn, they were supposed to have a significant role in the establishing and consolidation of democracy in the region. Thus, the legislature still effectively shapes political debates in a handful of country (Kenya, South Africa, and Uganda), and democratic politics still revolves to a varying extent around their most representative bodies (Barkan 2009). For that reason, my article attempts to understand the legitimacy of African legislatures from the ordinary citizens' perspective. The legitimacy of the legislature depends heavily on whether citizens approve the work their lawmakers are doing and, therefore, how the legislature influences the development of democracy. This public trust in institutions is generally beneficial—and sometimes necessary—for the success of democratic governments (Gibson and Caldeira 1995; Hetherington 1998).

Elections for MPs: Accountability and Representation

What determines the levels of popular trust in legislature? First, my article focuses on how popular perception of multiparty elections affects confidence in the legislature. Between 1990 and 2006, 44 of the 48 sub-Saharan African countries introduced multiparty electoral competition (Bratton and van de Walle 1997; Lindberg 2006). As observed after the 2007–2008 Kenyan postelection violence, a significant number of African elites and some scholars still argue that multiparty elections exacerbate ethnic conflicts and polarize societies in the region (LeBas 2006; Sisk and Reynolds 1998). However, multiparty elections are the means for connecting ordinary voters with political elites. In emerging democracies, voting might be the only peaceful way for citizens to express their preferences and to influence decision making at the national level. Therefore, it is critical for

voters to perceive how those elections enable them to influence government decision-making processes and be fairly represented by the rules of their country's electoral system.

I then examine whether the effects of popular evaluations of electoral performance are dependent on various types of electoral systems. There is no consensus on what kind of electoral system is better for political accommodation and stability in emerging democracies. A group of scholars strongly recommends majoritarian electoral systems, which should motivate parties to approach moderate positions (Barkan 1998; Horowitz 1991, 2003; Reilly 1997; Sartori 1997). Others recommend a system of PR to allow minority parties to gain representation in the legislature (Lijphart 1999, 2004; Powell 2000; Reynolds 1999; Shugart and Wattenberg 2000).

Powell (2000) distinguishes between two visions of elections as "instruments of democracy": accountability and representation. Accountability models try to use elections directly to influence policymakers. Under this model, citizens appear to be more suspicious of the autonomy of elected representatives and are more likely to trust elected officials who are accountable to voters. Furthermore, they seem more likely to see elections as a periodic opportunity to change unsatisfactory policymakers. Additionally, the accountability model argues that anticipation of possible rejection shapes the policies of the incumbents. Competitive elections create pressure on all incumbents to worry about the next elections and to make policy with voter review in mind. During the election campaign, MPs clamor for personal votes, and they are more inclined to seek out regular contact with individual voters. Citizens, meanwhile, like to pinpoint responsibility for policymaking and exercise direct control over determining the policymakers. When voters feel that they have the ability to reward or punish elected officials in elections, their resulting confidence seems to shape their positive attitudes toward the legislature as a group of individual MPs who are expected to represent their constituents' interests (Hypothesis 1).

On the other hand, the representation model emphasizes that citizens should be treated equally at the decisive stage of public policymaking. This model argues that democracy should require PR of the full range of citizen opinion, not just an electoral majority opinion. In the representation model, citizens seem to be more suspicious of majorities (especially those created by elections), less worried about the autonomy of policymakers (so long as citizens have had a role in selecting them), and less worried about negotiated inaction. Elections are instruments of citizen influence, not direct control. Elections should create equitable reflection of all points of view in the legislature. They work as an instrument to choose representatives who can bargain for their voters' interests in postelection policymaking. While the accountability model uses elections as a one-stage device to locate the true majority position, the representation model emphasizes the bargain process of representatives to find the most preferred policy after the elections. This model, therefore, suggests that

citizens who feel that elections enhance representation in the legislature are more likely to express high levels of trust in parliament (Hypothesis 2).

The Mediating Effects of Electoral Systems

Electoral system choice has important implications for citizen expectations of representation and accountability, but different systems tend to perform better in achieving one or the other. Electoral systems are conventionally divided into two categories, majoritarian and PR (Lijphart 1999). Majoritarian systems usually employ exclusively single-seat districts with plurality rule and tend to give greater representation to the two largest parties. PR systems must employ multiseat districts, usually with party lists, and typically produce a high degree of proportionality between a party's vote share and its seat share in parliamentary. PR systems are more representative than majoritarian because they make it easier for smaller parties to win seats in parliament. Majoritarian electoral systems are more common in sub-Saharan Africa than PR systems.[1]

Electoral institutions not only affect the nature of the democratic process but also seem to shape public attitudes toward political systems (Cho and Bratton 2006; Norris 1999). Under PR systems, all political parties have a right to equal expression, regardless of their relative size (Lijphart 1999; Powell 2000). The Namibian National Assembly, a PR system, ensures that small parties such as the National Unity Democratic Organization, the United Democratic Front, the Republican Party, and the Monitor Action Group, each of which has less than 5% of the vote, have a voice in government. By allowing small ethnic parties into the parliament, in addition, the PR systems encourage such parties to work within the system rather than seek to overthrow it. Therefore, PR systems obviously have a greater impact on popular perceptions of MP's political representation.

PR systems, furthermore, have as their hallmark the faithful translation of votes cast into seats won; this allows parties with a small number of votes to gain legislative representation and minimizes "unfair" representation of the larger parties. If electoral thresholds are low and district magnitudes are reasonably large, almost all votes cast in PR systems can be translated into seats in the legislature. In PR systems, on the other hand, voters choose between parties, not candidates, and have little ability to mandate the elected officials. Elected officials' reelection chances depend mainly on where the candidate selectors, not voters, place them within the party list. Because PR systems are more complex than majoritarian systems, they are more likely to confuse voters. The voters may not be entirely certain of how their votes are counted into seats in the parliament, and they may end up with a government very different from the one imagined. I expect that the effect on trust of popular evaluations of the representation mechanism should be higher in PR systems than in majoritarian electoral systems (Hypothesis 3a).

When people evaluate the government decision-making process, they stress its ability to perform in the interests of all citizens. A first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system, as a typical example of majoritarian electoral systems, can provide a clear-cut choice for voters between two main parties, and it is likely to give rise to single-party government and a coherent parliamentary opposition in the legislature. Under FPTP, voters know better who their own representative is and have the ability to reelect, or throw him/her out. An elected official's belief that chances of reelection depend significantly on voter evaluations of individual performance builds individual accountability of the MPs. Under FPTP, on the other hand, legislative representation will capture voter preferences less accurately. A significant number of votes cast for losing candidates are "wasted," and voters can merely say "yes" to one candidate and "no" to the rest. Because majoritarian electoral systems are designed to promote citizens' direct control over policymakers, I expect that citizens in countries with majoritarian electoral systems are much more likely than those in PR systems to base their confidence in the legislature on perceptions of their ability to replace electoral officials (Hypothesis 3b).

Data and Methods

This article mainly draws upon individual-level survey data collected by the Afrobarometer in 16 sub-Saharan Africa countries[2] between March 2005 and March 2006. The data are derived from national probability samples that range in size from 1,161 in Lesotho to 2,400 in South Africa, Nigeria, and Uganda. Those 16 countries have had a founding election (or a redemocratizing election) and some degrees of political liberalization. The results thus cannot be seen as representative of sub-Saharan Africa as a whole: They are among the continent's most liberalized regimes.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in this article is the level of confidence that people place in the legislature. Respondents were asked: "How much do you trust the parliament?" The response options were not at all (= 0), just a little (= 1), somewhat (= 2), and a lot (= 3).

Figure 1 shows the distribution of mean values of the dependent variables across countries included in this article. On the average, countries score 1.71 on a four-point scale for public trust in the legislature. The graph shows considerable cross-national variation in popular trust in the legislature. Specifically, the mean values of trust in the legislature range from 0.82 in Nigeria all the way to 2.39 in Mozambique.

Independent Variables

I use two types of independent variables in the model: at the country level and at the individual level. My model has two independent variables at

FIGURE 1
Public Trust in the Legislature across 16 Sub-Saharan Countries
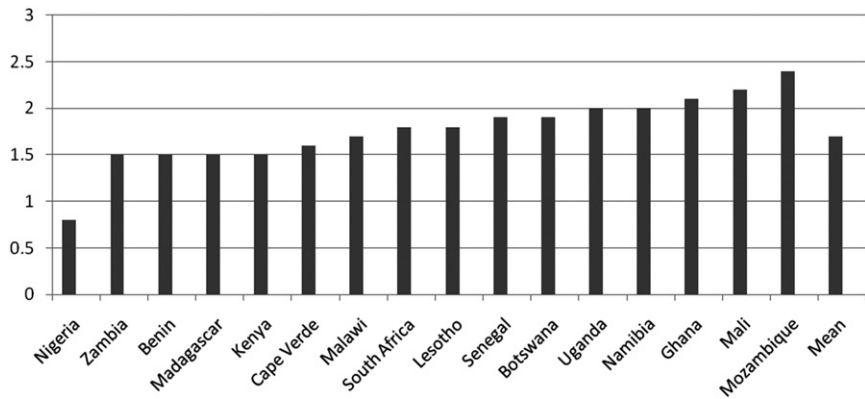
Source: Afrobarometer Round3.

the individual level: *accountability* and *representation*. The variable account-ability measures whether the respondent believes that elections "enable voters to remove from office leaders who do not do what the people want." On average, 54% of respondents think that elections "well" or "very well" offer them a periodic opportunity to change the elected offi-cials. The variable representation measures whether respondent perceives that elections "ensure that the members of Parliament reflect the views of voters." On average, 53% of respondents believe that elections "well" or "very well" bring the representations of all points of view into the gov-ernment decision-making process.[3] I expect that these two individual-level independent variables should have a positive effect on public trust in the legislature.

I also added a variable of *mean district magnitude* (MDM) for electoral systems at the country level. This variable as a measure of the proportion-ality of the electoral system allows us to introduce wide variation in district magnitude within the PR group in the sample.

I am specifically interested in the degree of relationship between public perceptions of accountability, and their confidence in the parliament is contingent upon electoral systems. To test this hypothesis, I add a cross-level interaction term—accountability × MDM—into the models. I expect that the interaction term should have a negative coefficient. In other words, the higher proportionality of electoral systems is expected to miti-gate the positive effects of popular perceptions of accountability on their confidence in the parliament. My model has an additional cross-level interaction term—representation × MDM—to test if a more proportional electoral system is likely to reinforce the positive relationship between popular perceptions of MPs' political representation and popular trust in

the legislature. I expect that the interaction term should have a positive coefficient.

Control Variables

The model also includes a series of control variables that would have an impact on popular trust in the legislature. The control variables can again be divided into country-level and individual-level variables. At the country level, I include two control variables: the effective number of political parties (ENPP) and the levels of democratization (a reversed average score of political right and civil liberties of Freedom House Index 2005).[4] Variations in party systems should shape citizens' confidence in legislature. Greater ENPP means that voters have more reliable options to choose in elections. If those parties are strongly linked with a voter's ethnic group, it will increase popular trust in the parliament.

While most African legislatures have a weak influence on the government decision-making process in relation to the executive, the extent of legislative capacity significantly varies across countries (Barkan 2009). The development of the legislature may be dependent on individual country's experience of democratization. The levels of democratization, in turn, shape public trust in the legislature. The information on political institutions of 16 countries included in this article is shown in Appendix A.

A number of individual-level variables are also used to control for attitudinal and demographic factors. In Africa, the neopatrimonial system significantly marginalizes the role of the legislature in government decision-making process (Barkan 2009; van de Walle 2003). If respondents have a positive attitude about the president's (the chief executive) dominant power in policymaking process, I expect that they should have lower levels of trust in the legislature. The quality of elections should matter for citizens to express their confidence in the legislature (Lindberg 2006). Whether MPs are elected by free and fair elections has a significant impact on the legitimacy of the legislature. People who highly rate the freeness and fairness of the national elections are more likely to express high levels of trust in the legislature.

Ethnic politics is one of the prominent factors in Africa. In many cases, moreover, multiparty elections lead to the formation of ethnic parties instead of ideological or programmatic parties (Sisk and Reynolds 1998). How to represent the interest of minority ethnic groups into the political system should have a significant effect on the legitimacy of the legislature. Because numerous studies find that perceptions of the economy influence attitudes about political institutions' performance (Anderson and Guillory 1997; Weatherford 1992), I include two measures of economic performance evaluation: one based on personal (egocentric) economic conditions and a second based on perceived national (sociotropic) economic conditions.

Finally, to control for party affiliations, this article includes an individual's identification with ruling political parties (winner). Multiparty elections produce winners and losers among voters in terms of whether they cast vote for the governing party or not. Existing studies find that winners are likely to express higher levels of trust in institutions (Anderson et al. 2005; Cho and Bratton 2006; Norris 1999). I also control for age, education, gender, and urban or rural habitation. Coding processes for the individual-level variables used in this article and the descriptive statistics are shown in Appendix B.

Multilevel Analysis

To explore the different levels of citizens' confidence in the parliament, the data set for this article is constructed with both individual- and country-level variables. Due to the multilevel structure of data set—survey respondents are nested within countries—I estimate my model using multilevel analysis (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002). A multilevel model is a type of regression model that is particularly suitable for such a data set. In contrast to the ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, the equation of this multilevel model in this article has two error terms: one for individual level and one for country level. In addition, the OLS regression model creates a number of statistical problems, including underestimating the standard errors for country-level predictors, which constitute key independent variables in this article. OLS also assumes that there is constant variance and no clustering across countries. Multilevel analysis, in contrast, allows us to estimate a model with varying intercepts and slopes between countries in this article, and provides for a direct estimation of variance components at both levels of the model (Steenbergen and Jones 2002).

Results

To test for significant variation in public trust in the legislature at the individual and country levels, first, I estimate an analysis of variance (ANOVA) model decomposing the variance in the dependent variable between the two different levels of analysis. This ANOVA model is important because it provides the basic partition of the variability of the dependent variable in the data set between the two levels. If both variance components are statistically significant, I can argue that both levels of analysis are important. For example, when I estimate the ANOVA model for public confidence in the legislature, both variance components are statistically significant,[5] suggesting that there is significant variance in public confidence in the parliament at both levels. The results of the ANOVA model clearly suggest that I should take factors from both individual and country level into account to fully understand the levels of public trust in the legislature.

Therefore, I first examine the independent effects of two public percep-
tions about how elections work in practice in their country (accountability
and representation) on their trust in the legislature. I then estimate a
model with all two variables and two cross-level interaction terms
(accountability × MDM and representation × MDM) together to under-
stand their relative effects better. Table 1 presents the results of these
models.

Model 1 includes two individual-level independent variables: one mea-
suring popular perceptions of their ability to replace electoral officials
(accountability) and one measuring popular perceptions of the political
representation of MPs. The results show that the variable of accountability
does not have any significant effects on popular trust in the legislature.
Whether or not citizens believe that they can use elections to reward or
punish their elected officials is not a significant factor when they express
levels of trust in the legislature. The results suggest that periodic multi-
party elections do not offer any practical control for ordinary people to
select a better performing candidate for the seat in the legislatures. Elec-
tions do not work as one aspect of democratic instruments: the account-
ability mechanism. Even after introducing multiparty elections, we have
still observed one-party dominance and few cases of executive power
turnover in many countries. The prevalence of ethnically based parties also
limits voter's choice on a ballot in the region. Voters can merely say "yes"
to their co-ethnic candidate and "no" to the rest.

On the other hand, the variable measuring popular perceptions of the
political representation of MPs has a positive and statistically significant
effect on the levels of trust in the legislature. This result is consistent with
my hypothesis saying that citizens who feel that elections enhance MPs'
political representation are more likely to express high levels of trust in the
legislature. It suggests that multiparty elections do work as one aspect of
democratic instruments: the representation mechanism. After democratic
transition, multiparty elections significantly increased the number of
parties, small ethnic parties in particular, in the legislature. For example,
Benin currently has 12 parties in the National Assembly, Kenya has 10
parties, and South Africa has 12 parties. Having their preferred party in the
legislature due to multiparty elections, voters feel that their voice will be
heard, and their particular interests will be represented in the government
decision-making processes.

In addition, most of the other individual-level control variables are
statistically significant, and in some cases, the effects are quite substantial.
In particular, people who have positive attitudes toward dominant presi-
dential legislative power are less likely to express their confidence in
parliament. Compared to the president, ordinary people still believe that
the legislature possesses relatively weak power in the policymaking
process and in the operations of the state. Voters still perceive the presi-
dent as the most important political figure of the political system in this
region. Unsurprisingly, public perceptions of the president negatively

TABLE 1 **Individual- and National-Level Predictors of Popular Trust in the Legislature**

Independent Variable	Model 1	Model 2
Fixed effects		
Individual-level predictors		
Accountability	0.001	−0.011
	(0.010)	(0.011)
Accountability × mean district magnitude		0.001
		(0.001)
Representation	0.171**	0.152**
	(0.011)	(0.012)
Representation × mean district magnitude		0.002**
		(0.001)
Dominant executive	−0.016*	−0.015
	(0.008)	(0.009)
Quality of election	0.122**	0.122**
	(0.008)	(0.008)
Minority ethnic group	−0.088**	−0.088**
	(0.008)	(0.009)
National economic condition	0.071**	0.071**
	(0.008)	(0.008)
Personal economic condition	0.026**	0.026**
	(0.008)	(0.008)
Winner	0.230**	0.231**
	(0.017)	(0.017)
Age	0.001	0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Education	−0.044**	−0.044**
	(0.005)	(0.005)
Female	−0.007	−0.007
	(0.016)	(0.016)
Urban	−0.108**	−0.107**
	(0.017)	(0.017)
Country-level predictors		
Mean district magnitude (electoral system)	0.001	−0.004
	(0.003)	(0.004)
Democratization	0.012	0.006
	(0.071)	(0.071)
Effective number of political parties	0.157	0.154
	(0.088)	(0.089)
Constant	0.642	0.711
	(0.328)	(0.333)
Variance components		
Country-level	0.260**	0.263**
	(0.054)	(0.055)
Individual-level	0.946**	0.945**
	(0.005)	(0.005)
−2 × log-likelihood	41,725.892	41,722.954
N	15,243	15,243

Note: Estimates are maximum likelihood estimates (generalized least squares); standard errors in parentheses.
*$P < 0.05$, **$P < 0.01$.

associated with their levels of trust in the legislature. I also note that the quality of elections has a positive and significant effect on public trust in the legislature. This suggests that the quality of the election should have a significant role for ordinary citizens to evaluate the performance of the legislature. Free and fair elections contribute to boost the legitimacy of the legislature.

I find that people who feel that their own ethnic group is treated unfairly by the government are more likely to show lower levels of trust in the legislature. One of the main roles of the legislature is to represent the various and conflicting interests of the society as a whole; those ethnic groups marginalized from the government decision-making process are very likely to express their distrust in the legislature. Public perceptions of economic performance also matters: Higher ratings of national and personal economic conditions are associated with more optimistic assessments about the parliament's performance. Consistent with existing studies (Anderson and Guillory 1997; Hetherington 1998; Mishler and Rose 2001; Weatherford 1992), ordinary Africans tend to build their own levels of trust in political institutions based on their evaluation of economic performance. The results also show that citizens who identify with parties in power ("winners") reveal higher trust in the legislature than those who support opposition parties. Multiparty elections result in both winners and losers, defined by whether voters support a party in the government or not. People in the political majority should be more positive about how the political system works.

Meanwhile, the more urbanized and educated respondents exhibit lower levels of trust in the legislature. Both urban dwellers and highly educated citizens are likely to have more information on the government decision-making process, and they are more critical of how the political system works in this region. Age and gender have no significant effect on public trust in the legislature.

None of three country-level predictors is statistically significant at the 0.05 level in model 1. The 16 countries included in this article are among the most liberalized ones on this continent. The statistical insignificance of the country-level variable of democratization may be due to the small variance across the 16 countries. Interestingly, the results show that electoral systems do not have any direct impact on public trust in the legislature, a conclusion not consistent with existing studies (Cho and Bratton 2006; Norris 1999).

Model 2 includes two cross-level interaction terms to understand more clearly in what way electoral systems matter for increasing public trust in the legislature. I hypothesized that the impact of popular perceptions of either accountability or MPs' political representation on public trust in the legislature may be contingent upon electoral systems. The first argument tested in model 2 is whether the effect of the evaluation of the accountability mechanism of elections on public trust in the legislature is lager in those countries with a more majoritarian electoral system. Under

majoritarian electoral systems, voters assume to have a direct control on choosing a better candidate for the seat in the legislature, and MPs are more likely to directly meet their constituents and to provide public goods to the residents of their district. The results of model 2 show the cross-level interaction term between public perceptions of accountability, and MDM is not statistically significant at a conventional level. I found no evidence suggesting that citizens in countries with majoritarian electoral systems are much more likely than those in PR systems to base their confidence in the legislature on perceptions of their ability to replace policymakers. Electoral systems designed to directly connect voters and political elites do not successfully boost ordinary citizens' perceptions of the accountability mechanism and their trust in the legislature in the region.

The second argument tested in model 2 is whether the impact of popular evaluation of MPs' political representation on public trust in the legislature is higher in countries with PR systems than in countries with majoritarian electoral systems. The coefficient of the cross-level interaction term between popular perceptions of MPs' representation and MDM is positive and statistically significant at conventional level. The results indicate that PR electoral systems are better than majoritarian systems when it comes to boosting public confidence in the legislature when citizens feel that elections enhance MPs' political representation. This suggests that the type of electoral system should matter for citizens to evaluate the performance of political institutions. Under PR systems, as we expect, citizens perceive that their views and opinions are equally treated within the system, and even smaller parties can easily win seats in the legislature. This inclusive feature of PR systems encourages minority groups and small parties to work within the political system and in turn contributes to increase public trust in the legislature.

Conclusion

Elections—especially free and fair, competitive, and multiparty elections—are a critical component of democratization in emerging democracies. While an election can intensify the polarization of a society along ethnic lines, competitive elections can force political elites to legitimate their rule through the ballot box. However, it has not been clearly answered whether and how multiparty elections work as instruments of democracy in emerging African democracies. Moreover, we are still debating about how elections serve to link voters and elected officials. While one group of scholars emphasizes the directness and clarity of the connection between voters and policymakers, others point to representation of all factions in society. My article explores how ordinary Africans perceive those two different mechanisms (accountability and representation) of elections in practice and whether the public evaluation of electoral performance shapes their levels of trust in the legislature.

When ordinary Africans build their confidence in the legislature, I found, they focus more on whether elections facilitate the scope of representation of all the factions of society than on whether they can directly reward or punish their representative through regular elections. Citizens who positively perceive that elections ensure that MPs reflect the views of voters are likely to express higher levels of trust in the legislature. The results also show that the effect of popular perceptions about the degree of representation of MPs on their confidence in the legislature depends on the type of electoral system. PR systems work better for boosting the positive effects of MPs' political representation on public trust in the legislature than majoritarian systems do. On the other hand, I found no evidence indicating that the effect of popular perceptions about their ability to replace electoral officials on their confidence in the legislature is greater in countries with majoritarian electoral systems than in countries with PR systems.

The results show that elections are not fully developed as instruments of democracy in Africa. Elections are instruments of citizen influence, not direct control, over their representatives. Elections help voters to send MPs representing their interests to the parliament to some extent. However, voters do not believe that they have a controlling ability to reward or punish elected officials in periodic elections based on their performance in the office. While the continent has undergone a series of multiparty elections and a significant number of countries have experienced power alternations as a result of their founding election, legislator turnover has in fact been a relatively infrequent occurrence after the founding election. This pattern of one-party dominance in the region is consistent with my finding.

Public support is one of the necessary conditions for the development of political institutions in democracies. While the legislature usually has a weak power in relation to the executive in young democracies, its legislative capacity and influence on government decision-making process varies greatly from country to country. This article clearly shows a significant variance in the levels of public trust in the legislature across 16 sub-Saharan countries. Focusing on public trust in the legislature can help us to understand why the legislatures in some countries are able to increase their legislative power while those in others are not.

Multiparty elections constitute a principal avenue for citizens to become involved in the policymaking process. Understanding their effects on public trust in the legislature and the role of the individual therein has important implications for theories of democratic governance in emerging democracies.

Notes

1. No more than one quarter of the countries of the region—including Angola, Benin, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mozambique, Namibia, Sierra Leone, and South Africa—have adopted various forms of PR system.

2. Benin, Botswana, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda, and Zambia. For more information, see the Afrobarometer website at http://www.afrobarometer.org.

3. The correlation coefficient between accountability and representation is 0.55. Among respondents who believe that elections "well" provide them a chance to change the elected officials, only 62% of them think that elections "well" facilitate MPs' political representation in the legislature.

4. I tried to include two other country-level control variables (the rate of growth in GDP per capita 2005 and ethnic fractionalization index) into the model. I found no significant difference in the empirical results. Neither of them has any significant impact on public trust in the legislature. Three country-level predictors are enough for a multilevel analysis with only 16 countries.

5. The maximum likelihood estimate of individual-level variance was 1.028, its standard error was 0.009, the maximum likelihood estimate of country-level variance was 0.136, and its standard error was 0.050

References

Almond, Gabriel, and Sidney Verba. 1963. *The Civic Culture*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Anderson, Christopher, and Christine A. Guillory. 1997. "Political Institutions and Satisfaction with Democracy: A Cross-National Analysis of Consensus and Majoritarian Systems." *American Political Science Review* 91 (March): 66–81.

Anderson, Christopher J., Andre Blais, Shaun Bowler, Todd Donovan, and Ola Listhaug. 2005. *Losers' Consent*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Barkan, Joel D. 1998. "Rethinking the Applicability of Proportional Representation for Africa." In *Elections and Conflict Management in Africa*, ed. Timothy D. Sisk and Andrew Reynolds. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.

———, ed. 2009. *Legislative Power in Emerging African Democracies*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Bratton, Michael, Robert Mattes, and E. Gyimah-Boadi. 2005. *Public Opinion, Democracy, and Market Reform in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bratton, Michael, and Nicolas van de Walle. 1997. *Democratic Experiments in Africa*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Cho, Wonbin, and Michael Bratton. 2006. "Electoral Institutions, Partisan Status, and Political Support in Lesotho." *Electoral Studies* 25: 731–750.

Cho, Wonbin. 2010. "Citizens' Perceptions of Government Responsiveness in Africa: Do Electoral Systems and Ethnic Diversity Matter?" *Comparative Political Studies* 43: 1650–1674.

Cox, Gary W. 1997. *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Criado, Henar, and Francisco Herreros. 2007. "Political Support: Taking into Account the Institutional Context." *Comparative Political Studies* 40: 1511–1532.

Easton, David. 1965. *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*. New York: John Wiley.

Gibson, James L., and Gregory A. Caldeira. 1995. "The Legitimacy of Transnational Legal Institutions: Compliance, Support, and the European Court of Justice." *American Journal of Political Science* 39: 459–489.

Hetherington, Marc J. 1998. "The Political Relevance of Political Trust." *American Political Science Review* 92: 791–808.

Horowitz, Donald L. 1991. *A Democratic South Africa?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2003. "Electoral Systems: A Primer for Decision Maker." *Journal of Democracy* 14: 115–127.

Inglehart, Ronald. 1997. *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 41 Societies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Katz, Richard. S. 1997. *Democracy and Elections*. New York: Oxford University Press.

LeBas, Adrienne. 2006. "Polarization as Craft: Explaining Party Formation and State Violence in Zimbabwe." *Comparative Politics* 38: 419–438.

Lijphart, Arend. 1994. *Electoral Systems and Party Systems: A Study of Twenty-Seven Democracies, 1945–1990*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

———. 1999. *Patterns of Democracy*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

———. 2004. "Constitutional Design for Divided Societies." *Journal of Democracy* 15: 96–109.

Lindberg, Staffan. 2006. *Democracy and Elections in Africa*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

March, James G. 1988. *Decisions and Organizations*. Oxford: Blackwell.

McAllister, Ian. 1999. "The Economic Performance of Government." In *Critical Citizens*, ed. Pippa Norris. New York: Oxford University Press.

Miller, Arthur, and Ola Listhaug. 1999. "Political Performance and Institutional Trust." In *Critical Citizens*, ed. Pippa Norris. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mishler, William, and Richard Rose. 2001. "What Are the Origins of Political Trust?" *Comparative Political Studies* 34: 30–62.

Norris, Pippa, ed. 1999. *Critical Citizen: Global Support for Democratic Governance*. New York: Oxford University Press.

———. 2004. *Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behaviour*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Powell, Bingham G. 2000. *Election as Instruments of Democracy*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Putnam, Robert. 1993. *Making Democracy Work*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Raudenbush, Stephen W., and Anthony S. Bryk. 2002. *Hierarchical Linear Models*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Reilly, Benjamin. 1997. "The Alternative Vote and Ethnical Accommodation: New Evidence from Papua New Guinea." *Electoral Studies* 16: 1–12.

Reynolds, Andrew. 1999. *Electoral Systems and Democratization in Southern Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rose, Richard, William Mishler, and Christian Haerpfer. 1998. *Democracy and Its Alternatives*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Sartori, Giovanni. 1997. *Comparative Constitutional Engineering: An Inquiry into Structures, Incentives, and Outcomes*. London: Macmillan.

Shugart, Matthew S., and Martin P. Wattenberg, ed. 2000. *Mixed-Member Electoral Systems: The Best of Both Worlds?* New York: Oxford University Press.

Sisk, Timothy D., and Andrew Reynolds, ed. 1998. *Elections and Conflict Management in Africa*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press.

Steenbergen, Marco R., and Bradford S. Jones. 2002. "Modeling Multilevel Data Structures." *American Journal of Political Science* 46: 218–237.

Stokes, Donald E. 1962. "Popular Evaluations of Government: An Empirical Assessment." In *Ethics and Bigness: Scientific, Academic, Religious, Political, and Military*, ed. Harland Cleveland and Harold Dwight Lassell. New York: Harper & Brothers.

van de Walle, Nicolas. 2003. "Presidentialism and Clientelism in Africa's Emerging Party Systems." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 41: 297–321.

Weatherford, Stephen M. 1992. "Measuring Political Legitimacy." *American Political Science Review* 86: 149–166.

Appendix A

Information on Political Institutions in 16 Sub-Saharan Africa Countries

Country	2005 Freedom House Index (PR, CL)	Mean District Magnitude (House)	Electoral System	Effective Number of Political Party
Benin	2, 2	6.9	List-PR	6.16
Botswana	2, 2	0.9	FPTP	1.42
Cape Verde	1, 1	4.5	List-PR	2.07
Ghana	1, 2	1	FPTP	2.16
Kenya	3, 3	0.9	FPTP	3.22
Lesotho	2, 3	1.48	MMP	1.02
Madagascar	3, 3	1.29	FPTP and List PR	4.89
Malawi	4, 4	1	FPTP	2.68
Mali	2, 2	1	TRS	1.31
Mozambique	3, 4	22.7	List-PR	1.99
Namibia	2, 2	72	List-PR	1.66
Nigeria	4, 4	1	FPTP	2.22
Senegal	1, 2	36.2	Parallel-PB	2.40
South Africa	2, 3	44.4	List-PR	2.15
Uganda	5, 4	1	FPTP	1.15[a]
Zambia	4, 4	1	FPTP	2.88
Mean		11.7		2.46

Sources: Database for Political Institutions 2006 (World Bank 2007) and International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) http://www.idea.int
[a]It is based on 2006 parliamentary elections. In Uganda, political parties have not been allowed to participate in general elections until 2005.
FPTP, First Past the Post; MMP, Mixed Member Proportional; TRS, Two-Round System; PB, Party Block; List PR, List Proportional Representation.

Appendix B

1. Coding

Trust in the legislature:
How much do you trust the parliament?
0 = "Not at all"; 1 = "Just a little"; 2 = "Somewhat"; 3 = "A lot"

Perceptions of accountability:
Think about how elections work in practice in this country. How well do elections:
Enable voters to remove from office leaders who do not do what the people want.
0 = "Not at all"; 1 = "Not very well"; 2 = "Well"; 3 = "Very well"

Perceptions of representation:
Think about how elections work in practice in this country. How well do elections:
Ensure that the members of Parliament reflect the view of voters.
0 = "Not at all"; 1 = "Not very well"; 2 = "Well"; 3 = "Very well"

Quality of elections:
On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election? Was it:
1 = "Not free and fair"; 2 = "Free and fair, with major problems"; 3 = "Free and fair, with minor problems"; 4 = "Completely free and fair"

Dominant executive:
Which of the following statement is closest to your view? Choose Statement A or Statement B.
A: The member of the Parliament represent the people; therefore, they should make laws for this country, even if the President does not agree.
B: Since the President represents all of us, he should pass laws without worrying about what the Parliament thinks.
1 = "Agree very strongly with A"; 2 = "Agree with A"; 2.5 = "Agree with Neither"; 3 = "Agree with B"; 4 = "Agree very strongly with B"

Minority ethnic group:
How often is [your ethnic group] treated unfairly by the government?
0 = "Never"; 1 = "Sometimes"; 2 = "Often"; "3 = "Always"

National economic condition:
In general, how would you describe the present economic condition of this country?
1 = Very bad, 2 = Fairly bad, 3 = Neither good nor bad, 4 = Fairly good, 5 = Very good

Personal economic condition:
In general, how would you describe your own present living condition?
1 = Very bad, 2 = Fairly bad, 3 = Neither good nor bad, 4 = Fairly good, 5 = Very good

Winner:
Do you feel close to any particular party? If so, which party is that?
1 = if respondent chooses the party that won the most recent election; 0 = otherwise.

Gender: 0 = Male, 1 = Female

Urban: 0 = Rural, 1 = Urban

Age: Actual age

Education:
0 = No formal schooling, 1 = Informal schooling only, 2 = Some primary schooling, 3 = Primary schooling completed, 4 = Some secondary school/high school, 5 = Secondary school/high school completed, 6 = Post-secondary qualifications, 7 = Some university, 8 = University completed, 9 = Post-graduate

2. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Trust in the legislature	21,231	1.71	1.09	0	3
Perceptions of accountability	20,131	1.57	0.97	0	3
Perceptions of representation	20,157	1.55	0.90	0	3
Quality of elections	20,953	3.02	1.07	1	4
Dominant executive	21,641	2.00	0.91	1	4
Minority ethnic group	20,092	0.81	0.99	0	3
Personal economic condition	22,963	2.65	1.19	1	5
National economic condition	22,541	2.62	1.26	1	5
Winner	23,045	0.39	0.49	0	1
Age	22,789	36.58	14.93	18	130
Education	22,954	3.11	2.03	0	9
Gender (female = 1)	23,045	0.50	0.50	0	1
Urban (= 1)	23,045	0.39	0.49	0	1