

Explaining Vote Choice in Africa's Emerging Democracies

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Abstract

In this paper, we study the voting behavior of Africans in seven countries currently ranked as “free” by Freedom House International. Thus, we are examining a select set of African countries, each of which hold regular elections at the national and local levels, support a free press and free speech and allow citizens to gather publicly to express their political views. Using the 2005 Round 3 Afrobarometer survey, we study why Africans in these seven free countries turnout to vote and choose to vote for a particular political party. Studying the political choices of Africans who actually have the opportunity to make such choices tells us a great deal about the characteristics of democracy in these seven countries. What we find is surprising, interesting and encouraging. While ethnic ties affect vote choice in Africa, retrospective evaluations of governmental corruption are equally important. Likewise, partisanship exerts separable and strong effects on vote choice, even controlling for ethnicity. In addition, we find some evidence that clientelism, defined as vote-buying, is targeted by the ruling elite at supporters of the opposition; however, these effects are significant only in our pooled sample. In separate country sample analyses, clientelism has no effect on vote choice.

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Introduction

Although research on democratization in Africa has grown in recent years, democratization itself has been slow to take hold in most African countries. Countries that appeared to be making a transition to democracy in the mid-1990s have stalled or reversed their transition in recent years (Bratton and van de Walle 1997). Understanding why successful transitions to democracy are rare in Africa is an important question but one that remains unanswered. According to the logic of modernization theory (Deutsch 1961, Lipset 1959), economic growth and the changes growth brings to society are essential to sustain democratization. Recent empirical work that puts modernization theory to the test supports this conclusion. Using modern statistical techniques on a sample of many countries over many years, Przeworski and Limongi (1997) investigate the relationship between economic growth and democracy. Although they find no evidence of a causal relationship, they do find, however, that economic growth and a relatively strong economy (such as exists in countries with per capita GDP over \$6,000) make it more likely that democratization will result in a consolidated democracy. Likewise, they find that democracy is almost never sustained in poor, underdeveloped countries. Given that most African countries can be characterized as poor and underdeveloped (e.g. see Easterly and Levine 1997), the weight of empirical evidence suggests that Africans are too poor and their economies too underdeveloped to support democracy.

Nonetheless, while Africans are generally poor, and successful democratic transitions in Africa are rare, evidence from recent mass surveys of citizens shows that in some African countries, citizens vote in regularly scheduled national and local elections, attend community meetings and participate in local organizations, and even join public demonstrations or protests on occasion (Bratton, Mattes, & Gyimah-Boadi 2005). In such countries, poverty is often extreme,

literacy low and opportunities for self-betterment are limited, yet citizens show high levels of interest in the public affairs of their country, and they participate in high numbers. Whether or not recent democratic transitions will be sustained remains to be seen; however, in Africa as elsewhere the conditions and stakes of political engagement change dramatically after citizens have been given the right to vote. The extent and intent to which Africans use their right to vote is of paramount importance to the success of democratization.

In this paper, we study the voting behavior of Africans in seven countries currently ranked as “free” by Freedom House International. Thus, we are examining a select set of African countries, each of which holds regular elections at the national and local levels, supports a free press and free speech and allows citizens to gather publicly to express their political views. Studying the political choices of Africans who actually have the opportunity to make such choices tells us a great deal about the characteristics of African democracy. If, as many experts argue, political participation in Africa is a continuation of cultural and historical patronage linkages between politicians and citizens, democracy, especially voting, is mere window dressing. If politicians pay voters to turn out and vote for them, or if they persuade co-ethnics to vote for them with promises of enrichment and prosperity once elected, citizens may be free, but their country may not look like a competitive democracy as we understand that term in the context of advanced industrialized democracies.

What Explains Vote Choice in Developed vs. Developing Countries?

Prior to democratization, experts on Africa universally described the relationships that structured African politics in terms of ethnic ties, clientelism, or both. Classic studies (Lemarchand and Legg 1972, Hyden and Leys 1972, Lemarchand 1972) describe an Africa in which powerful patrons control the political system, reap the spoils of office and maintain their

position through the support of clients. These relationships were sustained either through the dispensation of economic incentives (classic clientelism) or through the promise that economic benefits would favor members of the patron's ethnic group (van de Walle 2003). The extent to which democratization has eroded ethnic ties and changed the system of patronage established during the post-independence authoritarian period is an important and as yet unanswered question.

Most scholars argue that clientelism persists today in much the same form as in the past (Chabal & Daloz 1999, Wantchekon 2003, van de Walle 2003) and that ethnic cleavages continue to be the most important factor shaping partisanship in Africa (Horowitz 1985, Posner 2004, Berman et al. 2004, Mozaffar and Scarritt 2005, Morrison and Hong 2006, Fridy 2007, Erdmann 2007). Recently, however, disagreement has arisen as to the extent to which ethnic ties determine party allegiance and hence vote choice among citizens in Africa's emerging democracies today. Lingberg and Morrison (2007) claim that ethnicity is not a major factor explaining partisanship in Africa, while others, such as Norris and Mattes (2003) and Bratton et al (2005) argue that ethnicity is only one among several factors explaining partisan alignment.

Although difficult in the African setting, it is possible to separate the concepts of clientelism and ethnicity. In his study of clientelism and its effects on voters in Benin, Wantchekon defined clientelism explicitly as "transactions between politicians and citizens whereby material favors are offered in return for political support at the polls" (2003, 400). In his experimental design, Wantchekon manipulated the political messages of candidates such that they offered either a strictly policy-oriented platform or a strictly clientelist platform. To deal with potentially complicating linkages between clientelism and ethnicity, eight of those districts selected to be in the experiment were ethnically homogenous, which allowed Wantchekon to

isolate the treatment effect. Following Wantchekon and others, we define clientelism narrowly as a relationship in which one is offered a payment in exchange for one's vote. Although this definition is more restrictive than that used by Wantchekon, it does allow us to isolate the effect of clientelism from ethnicity. Further, vote buying is a commonly used definition of clientelism (Brusco, Nazareno, and Stokes 2004), and many argue that its role in the political outcomes of emerging democracies is widespread, even dominant (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007).

Modernization theory strongly supports the classic view of participation in Africa, arguing that undereducated citizens of pre-modern societies lack the cognitive resources to assess the qualifications of competing parties or candidates (Lipset 1959). Such studies predict that in this context vote choice will be guided not by individual evaluations of the performance of elected officials but by group associations and group leaders (Norris 2004), which in the African context include ethnic ties and the powerful patrons of local communities. However, van de Walle (2007) questions the ability of patrons to police the political behavior of clients once democracy ushers in the secret ballot, implying that citizens will rely more and more on their own individualistic evaluations of political leaders rather than the cues of traditional group leaders.

At issue are questions about the validity of Africa's new democracies. Clearly, if powerful patrons control how their clients vote, democracy exists in name only. But, if, as van de Walle (2007) suggests, the secret ballot means that patrons can no longer buy their way into elected office, is democracy undermined if ethnic leaders can count on the unanimous support of co-ethnics? Inherent in our belief that democracy is better at governing than autocracy is a reliance on voters to hold their leaders accountable. Can votes be highly influenced by ethnic ties but also hold their leaders accountable? Is democracy undermined in such circumstances?

The literature on vote choice in emerging democracies, both in Africa and elsewhere, emphasizes the role of clientelism on vote choice (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). However, most of the literature on vote choice has focused on the behavior of citizens in established democracies, the so-called advanced, industrialized democracies. Such countries are relatively wealthy with extremely high rates of literacy. They are “modern” (Lipset 1959, Deutsch 1961). Studies of vote choice in these contexts emphasize the deductive process whereby voters gather information about the available choices, assess the relevance of this information to their own lives, and make an informed decision. In the original Downsian framework, political parties serve as the most important source of information for voters about the prospective implications of their choice (1957). Voters use the party’s published ideology to understand how that party’s policies will affect him or her. In this rational choice framework, voters are assumed to have the resources and skills necessary to make such assessments. In this model, voters are highly individualistic – group associations exist but only as the result of shared preferences.

Yet, empirical work, especially on voters in the American context, finds that even in advanced industrialized democracies, most citizens lack the necessary information and cognitive skills to assess the relative qualifications of competing parties or candidates (e.g. Converse 1964, Abramson 1983, Kinder 1983. See Sniderman 1993 for an excellent review.). A revised model of rational voting holds that although most voters do not employ a complex cost-benefit evaluation of competing candidates, they do use one vital piece of information in a rational way; that is, they compare how they are doing at the time of the election with how they were doing at the time of the prior election. They assess the future potential of a party or candidate based on how that alternative performed for them in the past; Fiorina called this retrospective voting (1981). Retrospective voting salvages the model of the rational voter: it requires minimal

information, but it assumes that voters have the cognitive resources to evaluate their economic well-being today in comparison to yesterday. In the retrospective voting framework, voters choose which party or candidate to vote for based on two main factors: party identification and a retrospective evaluation of the state of their country.¹ Voters have only to decide whether the party in power performed well or poorly since the past election.

Using the 2005 Round 3 Afrobarometer survey data, we study why Africans in seven “free” countries choose to vote for a particular political party. We are interested in the extent to which group ties versus retrospective evaluations of performance determine vote choice in these seven countries, and we are interested in the extent to which levels of modernization (e.g. education and economic growth) affect the relative importance of group ties versus retrospective evaluations. What we find is surprising, interesting and encouraging. While ethnic ties affect vote choice in Africa, retrospective evaluations of governmental corruption are equally important. Likewise, partisanship exerts separable and strong effects on vote choice, even controlling for ethnicity. In addition, we find some evidence that clientelism, defined as vote-buying, is targeted by the ruling elite at supporters of the opposition; however, these effects are significant only in our pooled sample. In separate country sample analyses, clientelism has no effect on vote choice.

Seven African Democracies

In their now classic work, Bratton and van de Walle (1997) describe a wave of democratization that swept Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1990s. Although not all of these transitions were successful, a number of these countries joined a small group of African nations currently ranked “free” by Freedom House International. Leaving aside for the moment the

¹ In candidate-centered elections, valence characteristics also influence voters’ choices (Stokes 1963).

small island nations of Cape Verde, Mauritius, Sao Tome & Principe, as well as Lesotho, a country totally enclosed within South Africa and governed by a constitutional monarchy, this small set of African democracies includes Benin, Botswana, Ghana, Mali, Namibia, Senegal and South Africa. Of these seven, four became fully democratic (again, according to the Freedom House classification scheme) in the 1990s (Benin, Mali, Namibia and South Africa), two have become democratic since the turn of the century (Ghana and Senegal). Unique among these cases, and indeed in Africa, Botswana has been free since the 1970s. Note that our use of the Freedom House measure tells us nothing about the balance of power in these seven countries, or about the margin of victory of governments, presidents or parties. Because we are interested in vote choice alone, we are most interested in a measure that allows us to select countries in which that choice can be made freely and in secret, and the Freedom House measure “Freedom in the World” captures this very well.²

Conceptualizing the Dependent Variable: Vote Choice

Executive Selection. The characteristics discussed above, socioeconomic factors, retrospective evaluations, and ethnicity, impact vote choice through the institutional parameters of the political system and the number, array and strength of parties, because these things determine the set of choices available in each election. In each of the seven countries included in our analysis, the most prominent elected official is the president, and the president’s party

² There are several commonly used measures of level of democracy, including the Freedom House ranking we use in the paper as well as the much used alternative “Polity Score” as reported in the Polity IV data set. Both are highly respected and have been shown to produce consistent results when used over multiple years and countries. Although the two measures are correlated, they capture different characteristics of the countries included. Because we are interested in vote choice alone, we are most interested in a measure that allows us to select countries in which that choice can be made freely and in secret, and the Freedom House measure captures this very well. The Polity Score is made of many more components than is the Freedom House score, including characteristics of the regime itself as well as the climate surrounding elections. As others have argued, by including regime characteristics, such as constraints on the executive, the Polity Score includes not only the criteria of democracy but also the effects of a particular democracy on decision-making (Glaser et al). For our purposes, this contaminates the choice set of countries we seek to study.

invariably dominates the national legislature. In five of the seven countries, the president is directly and popularly elected; in two (Botswana and South Africa), the president is elected by the parliament and serves as both head of state and head of government. Regardless of the mode of election, presidents in each of these seven countries dominate their respective political system. As we show in Table 1, in all seven countries, at the time of the Afrobarometer survey, the president's party held a majority of the seats in the national legislature; in five of the seven, the president's party held at least a 2/3 majority. As a result, in each of these countries, the president and his party act as a single veto player controlling policy making; therefore, the president dominates the political system both in stature and in fact (Tsebelis 1995, Andrews and Montinola 2004).

Party System. Although the president's party dominates the party system in each of these cases, in every case important opposition parties also exist. While most have been historically seen as dominant single party systems (most notably Botswana), in recent elections, two-party and multi-party systems have begun to emerge. In Ghana, for example, there now appears to be two effective parties, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC). Recent Ghanaian elections witnessed the peaceful transition of power from the NPP (under former President Kufuor) to the NDC (under current President Mills). Party competition has also been heating up in Senegal and South Africa in recent months. In Senegal's recent local elections, for example, the incumbent PDS party lost severely at the polls. The sacking of President Mbeki in South Africa caused a splinter in the ruling ANC in South Africa, which has resulted in a new party (COPE). While there is much speculation about whether or not COPE will pose a serious threat to the ANC in the upcoming elections, its mere existence shows that the days of the dominant single party in South Africa may be numbered. Even Mali, which

rarely makes it into the headlines, has had an interesting history in terms of its party structure. While technically Mali is classified as a multi-party system where coalitions must be formed in order to establish a majority in the legislature, President Touré was elected in 2002 as an independent.

Opposition. While the president's party dominates the government in all of our seven cases, there is important variation in the size and strength of the opposition. In most of the cases, the name and number of parties competing changes from election to election. Likewise, the ideological position of many of the parties is not constant; it too may change from election to election (Mozaffar, Scarritt, and Galaich 20003, Mozaffar and Scarritt 2005). In spite of the instability in number and ideology of parties, it is reasonable in each country case to characterize party competition in terms of the president's party and the opposition, even if that opposition is made up of more than one party.

Based on the characteristics of political competition in the seven countries included in our study, we conceptualize vote choice, our dependent variable, as a choice for the president's party, an opposition party, or the choice to support no party.

Key Independent Variables

In this paper, we explicitly test the relative impact of retrospective evaluations of politicians' performance versus traditional group affiliations on vote choice. In addition, we implicitly test the effect of level of economic development and modernization on vote choice. We expect that in countries with higher levels of modernization (e.g. economic development, literacy and urbanization), retrospective evaluations will have more impact on vote choice, and ethnicity and clientelist ties will have less impact on vote choice, than in countries with lower levels of modernization. The seven countries included in our study provide variation on each of

the key independent variables required to test these relationships. In Table 1, we present statistics on modernization (economic development, literacy and urbanization), ethnic composition, and corruption, in addition to characteristics of the political system, for each of the seven countries included in our study.

Modernization. As can be seen from Table 1, four of the countries included in our study are extremely poor, with low literacy and urbanization. These four countries, Benin, Mali, Ghana and Senegal are considerably less “modern” than are Botswana, Namibia and South Africa. In both Botswana and South African, per capita GDP places them in the World Bank’s category of “middle income” countries, a group that according to Przeworski and Limongi is at risk of successful democratization (1997). Benin, Mali, Ghana and Senegal are among the world’s poorest countries. Based on the logic of modernization, we would expect that retrospective evaluations would have a greater impact on vote choice in Botswana and South African than in the four poorest countries in our sample. Further, we expect the effect of ethnic ties and clientelism to be stronger in the four poorest countries than in the other three.

Retrospective Evaluations. In addition to retrospective evaluations of economic performance, we are also interested in citizens’ retrospective evaluations of the corruption of national-level elected officials. A number of recent studies have found that not only do citizens of both advanced and emerging democracies disapprove of corrupt leaders, but the perception that leaders are corrupt affects assessments of competence and so decreases overall confidence in government (Anderson and Tverdova 2003, Bowler and Karp 2004, Redlawsk and McCann 2005). According to Bratton and van de Walle, Africans are very interested in the level of corruption of elected officials. In the 1990s, Bratton and van de Walle found, “Protesters began linking their economic grievances to official corruption and mismanagement, which they blamed

for depressed economic conditions” (1992, 424). Cross-national survey data provides convincing evidence that in many African countries, citizens want clean and accountable governments. Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi report that corruption prompts citizens to vote against corrupt leaders (2005, 308). Especially in countries where most people live in poverty and economic conditions are consistently bad, citizens may use their assessments of the level of corruption of their elected officials as a way to evaluate their competence (Inman and Andrews 2009). As shown in Table 1, our sample includes variation in overall level of corruption, as measured by the Transparency International Index (2006). While level of corruption in Botswana is on a par with corruption in the cleanest of the new democracies of Eastern Europe, level of corruption in South Africa is about that of Italy. Corruption in the other countries in our sample is considerably worse, with Benin’s score of 2.5 placing it among the most corrupt countries in the world. Given this variation in levels of corruption, we expect that evaluations of the corruption of national level elected officials to have a stronger and more significant effect in the poorest (and most corrupt) countries in our sample. We also expect that in the poorest countries in our sample, where there is little variation in economic performance from election to election, retrospective evaluations of the corruption of elected officials ought possibly to be more important than evaluations of economic performance.

Ethnic Composition. In addition to variation across indicators of modernization and levels of corruption, our sample exhibits variation on ethnic composition as well. Botswana is the most ethnically homogeneous, with one ethnic group, the Setswana, making up over 80% of the population, and a PREG (politically relevant ethnic group) index of 0. Several of the countries have decidedly more ethnic diversity than Botswana. In Benin, Ghana, Namibia and Senegal, no ethnic group makes up more than 50% of the population. According to Posner’s

PREG index, Namibia and South Africa are the most ethnically diverse countries in our sample. For our purposes, we feel confident that our sample set of countries contains sufficient variation on ethnic diversity to allow us to compare the effects of ethnicity on vote choice across these cases. We expect ethnicity to have less impact on vote choice the more homogeneous the country; therefore, controlling for economic development and modernization, we expect ethnicity to affect vote choice far less in Botswana than in Namibia or South Africa.

Clientelism (vote-buying). We know of no national level statistics on the prevalence of vote-buying across our country cases; thus, we rely solely on survey respondents' self-reporting to characterize clientelism for each country.

In the following section we discuss our data, the Afrobarometer Round 3 survey, and the measures we use to capture the dependent and independent variables discussed above. Our primary question concerns the relative effect of group ties versus performance evaluations on vote choice. Secondly, we are interested in the differential effects, if any, of these effects in the more developed versus less developed cases in our sample.

Data and Measurement

Our analyses are based on data from the Round 3 Afrobarometer survey, which was conducted in each of our seven country cases between 2005 and 2006. We are working with this data for several reasons. First, Round 3 of the Afrobarometer is the first round to include surveys of all free and fair African countries identified by the Freedom House index. Second, the data has been merged so that direct comparisons of results across all surveyed countries are possible, and pooled analysis of the entire set of cases is also possible. Third, the Afrobarometer is an extraordinary and as yet underutilized source of information on political participation in

Africa. In Table 2, we present descriptive statistics of all variables included in our analyses, broken down by country.

Vote Choice. As discussed, our primary interest is vote choice, the dependent variable in all analyses presented in the paper. Although we would like to know which party or candidate each respondent actually voted for in the most recent election, we do not have this information. Instead, we have information on which party the respondent plans to vote for in the upcoming election. Thus, we have information on respondents' future intentions only. As discussed above, in each of the seven countries there exists one dominant party (almost always the party of the president) and one or more opposition parties. To facilitate cross-country comparison, we are interested in three choices that are comparable across our country cases: a vote for the president's party, a vote for an opposition party, or a vote for no party. Therefore, our dependent variable equals 1 if the respondent indicates he/she will vote for the president's party, -1 if the respondent indicates he/she will vote for an opposition party, or 0 if the respondent indicates he/she vote for neither the president's party nor an opposition party. Note that this variable is trichotomous, that is, it is fully expressed by three discrete, unordered categories. Among the 9,639 total respondents, 47% indicated that they would vote for their president's party, 26% that they would vote for an opposition party, and 27% that they would vote for no party.

Modernization variables.

Age. Age is a continuous variable that reports the respondent's age in years.

Gender. Gender is coded 1 if the respondent is a male; 0 if the respondent is female.

The sample is composed of 50% males and 50% females.

Urban. Urban resident is coded 1 if the respondent lives in an urban area, 0 if in a rural area. In our sample, 45% live in urban areas, 55% in rural areas.

Education. Education is coded 0-9, where 0 indicates that the respondent has no formal schooling and 9 indicates that the respondent has a post-graduate degree. The plurality of respondents (30%) report that they have no formal education, while only 0.55% report having a post-graduate degree. 78% of respondents have not completed a secondary education.

Employed. Employed measures whether the respondents' employment status. It is coded 0 if the respondent reports that she is unemployed, 1 if she has a part time job, and 2 if she has a full time job. 63% of the respondents report not being employed.

Gone without food. Gone without food is coded 0-4, where 0 indicates the respondent has never gone without sufficient food, and 4 indicates that the respondent always goes without sufficient food. 57% of respondents report never having gone without food, while only 3% report always going without food.

Retrospective evaluations. To assess whether or not voters' choices take into account government performance, we include respondents' assessment of whether economic conditions in the country have improved or worsened over the past year. We also consider respondents' evaluations of governmental corruption. Bratton especially has argued convincingly that because economic performance is often so abysmal in Africa, Africans use corruption as a measure of governmental performance. Further, scholars have found that citizens interpret the corruption of their national elected officials as a reflection of the competence and performance of those officials (Anderson and Tverdova 2003, Manzetti and Wilson 2006). Therefore, we include a measure of the respondent's perception of the level of corruption of the elected officials that comprise the country's government, namely the president and the parliament.

Economic performance. This question asks respondents to evaluate changes in the country's economic condition from 12 months ago to the present. The variable is coded 1-5 with

1 corresponding to a situation that is much worse than one year ago and 5 corresponding to a situation that is much better than one year ago.

Perception that president or parliament is corrupt (two variables). The corruption questions ask respondents to evaluate the level of corruption across different governmental offices, such as the executive and legislature. It is coded 1-4 with higher values signaling that the respondent believes that all officials in the office are corrupt. These variables have high levels of “don’t know” responses. Instead of dropping them, we recode ‘don’t know’ responses to the mean value of the overall responses in each country.

Group Associations. To assess how much group associations affect voters’ choices, we include measures of three key mechanisms hypothesized to support group associations: ethnicity, clientelism and party loyalty (or party ID). Although we could easily have included a series of dummy variables capturing all possible ethnicities represented in our sample, the meaning of such measures would be unclear. We are interested not in ethnicity per se, but in how ethnic identity might affect vote choice. Thus, we measure each respondent’s ethnicity in relation to the ethnicity of his or her sitting president. If accepted wisdom is correct, respondents from the same ethnic group as their sitting president ought to be more likely to vote for the president’s party in the next election. We measure party ID also in relation to the president’s party and opposition parties. Respondents either feel close to the president’s party, one of several opposition parties, or no party. Although our measures of clientelism are incomplete, we take advantage of a question that asks respondents’ if they were offered a payment for their vote.

Ethnicity. This variable is coded 1 if the respondent reports identifying with the same ethnic group as the president; 0 otherwise.

Clientelism (or vote buying). This variable is coded 1 if the respondent reports having ever been offered a payment to vote; 0 otherwise.

Party ID president's party. This variable was coded based on the branch question in the Afrobarometer that first asks if the respondent feels close to a party, and if so, which party. It is coded 1 if the respondent said that they feel close to a party in the first question and they report that the party they feel close to is the president's party (this is the branch question); it is coded 0 otherwise. 31% of respondents report feeling close to the president's party.

Party ID opposition party. This variable is formed in the same way as the President's PID variable. That is, it is coded 1 if the respondent reports feeling close to a party, and the party she feels close to is any party other than the president's party; it is coded 0 otherwise. 19% of respondents report feeling close to an opposition party.

24% of respondents report feeling close to no party.

Modeling Strategy and Results

An Appropriate Model for a Trichotomous Categorical Dependent Variable

To estimate the effects of our independent variables on vote choice, we must take into account the categorical nature of our dependent variable. As discussed above, among the data from all seven countries, a substantial proportion of the respondents, 27%, indicated that they would not vote for either the party of the president or an opposition party. Since we are most interested in the difference between those who would vote for their president's party versus those who would vote for an opposition party, we considered dropping those who would vote for neither from our analysis. However, in so doing, we would be throwing away a great deal of valuable information. In understanding why some voters would choose to vote for the opposition rather than the party of the president, we need also control for (and so understand the

characteristics of) those voters who would vote for neither. Thus, a modeling strategy that accounts for the full set of categorical responses captured in this variable is ideal; therefore, we estimate our model using multinomial logit. Because we are most interested in the difference between those who support the president's party versus those who support an opposition party, we use support for an opposition party as our base outcome, and we present results only for the category that corresponds to a vote for the president's party. Thus, one interprets the results presented in Tables 3, 4 and 5 in comparison to voting for the opposition, keeping in mind that these results were obtained by regressing on the trichotomous dependent variable.

Separate Sample vs. Pooled Sample Estimation

We have survey data for seven African democracies. For the sake of understanding the determinants of vote choice in Africa's emerging democracies, we would like to be able to discuss these seven countries as a group. Hence, we would like to pool the survey responses from each of the seven cases. The fact that the same Afrobarometer survey was administered in each of these seven countries at about the same point in time makes this feasible. However, as discussed by Steenbergen and Jones (2002), we must be careful in how we analyze this pooled data. Because our data is clustered by country, it is very likely that data from one country will have characteristics unique to that country that must be accounted for in our pooled analysis. While it is perfectly correct to analyze the same model separately for each country and draw analytical comparisons across this set of results, for certain question and for certain types of comparisons it is more efficient to pool the data.

We begin with a standard fixed effects model, utilizing the large sample size resulting from the pooled data. With this model, we estimate the mean effects of our key explanatory variables and four conditional relationships for the entire sample (see Table 3). Although this

model is useful to studying general relationships within our pooled sample, and the large N (over 9000 observations) allows us to estimate four interesting interaction effects that are much less precisely estimated in the individual country samples. However, this model cannot tell us whether or not the estimated relationships hold in all of our country cases or in a subset only.

To arrive at the country specific effects of our independent variables, we specify an interactive model in which each of our independent variables is interacted with each of our seven country variables (often called country dummies). The coefficients and standard errors estimated by the fully interactive model (in which every country dummy, except the referent country, is interacted with every independent variable included in the model) are equivalent to the coefficients and standard errors estimated with the same model for each separate country sample; therefore, for ease of presentation and comparison of direct effects, we present results for each country in Table 4.

Utilizing the advantages of the interactive model, we estimate our basic model on the pooled sample, including country interactions for only our key explanatory variables – retrospective economic evaluations, perceptions of corruption, clientelism, ethnicity and party identification. This strategy enables us to estimate the mean full sample effects for certain variables while exploring the country specific effects of other variables. In addition, this modeling framework makes it simple to test for the significance of differences in the effects (coefficients) of key explanatory variables across our country cases. Although unwieldy, we present results of this model in Table 5.

Pooled sample, fixed effect model. In Table 3, we present the results of a multinomial logit regression of our key explanatory variables along with control variables on vote choice. The base category for the regression is the intention to vote for the opposition. Thus, two sets of

coefficients were estimated, one estimating the effect of the explanatory variables on choosing not to vote for any party versus voting for the opposition, and one estimating the effect on choosing to vote for the president's party versus for the opposition. We report results only for the effect of our variables on choosing to vote for the president's party versus the opposition.

We include in the model control variables for level of modernization (age, gender, education, urban resident, no food, and employed), retrospective economic evaluations, perceptions of corruption of both president and parliament, vote buying, ethnicity and partisanship. These are the components of our basic model of vote choice. In addition, we include four interaction terms. The first two interactions (education and clientelism, education and ethnicity) were included to test whether or not a key modernization indicator – education – conditions the effect of clientelism and/or ethnicity on vote choice. According to hypotheses stated earlier in the paper, we expect that in the more modern countries in our sample, clientelism and ethnicity ought to have weaker effects than in the less developed countries in the sample. These interactions test this relationship at the individual level. The second two interactions (clientelism and PID president's party, clientelism and PID opposition) were included to test whether the effect of clientelism on vote choice is conditional on party identification. We expected to find that supporters of the president's party would be more likely to vote for the president's party if they were offered a payment to vote simply because the president's party, as the governing party, has a much greater ability than any opposition party to offer large numbers of citizens payments in exchange for votes. We simply assumed that opposition parties would not be able to offer payments for votes. As it turns out, the relationship is more subtle than we anticipated.

Interpretation of Effects: Modernization Indicators. As can be seen in Table 3, three of these variables, education, going without food and being employed have significant effects on vote choice. Age, gender and living in an urban versus rural area have no effect on vote choice. Most interestingly, the more educated the respondent, the less likely he or she was to vote for the president's party in the next election and the more likely to vote for the opposition. On average in these seven democracies, support for the opposition comes from the more educated. Going without food, a proxy for the very poor, are more likely to vote for the president, whereas those who are employed, a proxy for the better off, are less likely to vote for the president. At the individual level, these measures of socioeconomic status predict that the better off the citizen the more likely he or she is to support the opposition over the president and his ruling party.

Interpretation of Effects: Retrospective Evaluations: Again in Table 3, we see that the retrospective evaluations of economic performance and of corruption of the president have significant effects on vote choice. The better a respondent's evaluation of how the country is doing today as opposed to one year ago, the more likely that respondent is to vote for the president's party, and this effect is highly significant. Evaluations of the corruption of the president also have a highly significant, although negative, effect on vote choice. The more corrupt the respondent views the president and his officials as being, the less likely that respondent is to vote for the president's party in the next election. Respondents punish their president and his party for corruption, just as they punish him for poor economic performance. Interestingly, respondents do not seem to care about the corruption of the parliament – this effect of this variable is small and insignificant. In the pooled sample, the mean effect of retrospective evaluations of both economic performance and corruption is strong.

Interpretation of Effects: Group Associations: In the pooled sample, the effect of group associations is weaker than that of retrospective evaluations. Interpretation of the results presented in Table 3 is more complicated, due to the inclusion of the interaction terms. The effect of ethnicity on vote choice is calculated using the coefficient and standard errors on two variables, ethnicity and education. The effect of ethnicity on vote choice is positive and highly significant (at the $p < .005$ level). Thus, being of the same ethnic group as the sitting president increases the likelihood that the respondent will vote for the president's party in the next election. Clientelism, on the other hand, has no significant direct effect on vote choice.³

The first two interaction terms in the model are intended to capture whether or not the effects of ethnicity and clientelism are conditional on education. What we find is that education does condition the effect of ethnicity, but not in the way we hypothesized. In fact, the more educated the respondent the more likely he is to vote for the president's party if he is of the same ethnicity as the president. On the other hand, education does not condition the effect of clientelism.

Interpretation of Effects: Party Identification: Partisanship exerts a strong and significant effect on vote choice in the sample of African democracies. Much has been written on partisanship in African and elsewhere. In the context of advanced industrialized democracies, the overwhelming conclusion of the literature is that partisanship is the most important factor predicting vote choice. Recent work suggests that this relationship is complex and conditional on the individual characteristics of the voters (Basinger and Lavine 2005). Scholars have long been aware of the potential endogeneity of partisanship and vote choice; however, techniques to solve this problem (such as the use of instrumental variables) often create further and more

³ Determining the direct effect of clientelism in a model with three interactions involving clientelism is problematic. Therefore, we ran the model without the interactions to determine the direct effect of clientelism. This is not ideal, since as we will show, the effect of clientelism is conditional.

serious statistical problems. Nonetheless, most analysts include partisanship in their models of vote choice, since to leave it out would be highly problematic. Following the literature, we include partisanship in our models as a control. The correlation between partisanship and vote choice is .74. However, when partisanship is dropped from the model, the sign and significance of our key explanatory variables does not change. *Most importantly, when partisanship is added to the model, the sign and significance of ethnicity does not change.* This is most important, since the key concern about the effect of ethnicity on politics in democratic Africa is that partisanship is only a proxy for ethnicity. Our results suggest that this is not the case.

Clearly and not surprisingly, those who are close to the president's party are highly likely to vote for the president's party, and the same goes for those close to the opposition. What is perhaps more interesting is the conditional effect of partisanship on clientelism. The effect of vote buying on supporters of the president's party is not significant. However, the effect of vote buying on supporters of the opposition is positive and significant (calculated from the coefficient on clientelism and the interaction of clientelism with party ID). Thus, supporters of the opposition who were offered a payment for their vote were more likely to vote for the president's party in the next election! Clearly, for supporters of the opposition to be more likely to vote for the president's party after being offered a payment for their vote, the payment must have come from the president's party. The pooled sample, therefore, offers evidence that dominant parties can and do target supporters of the opposition in their use of monetary incentives at election time.

Results from the pooled model are interesting, but without further analysis, we cannot know if the relationships we have estimated exist in each country in our sample or in some subset of countries only. To explore differences in effects within each country in our sample, we

ran a fully interactive model on our pooled sample (as described above). To do this, we first dropped the four interactions discussed above and so included only the variables from our basic model. We then interacted each of these variables with each of the country dummies. For ease of presentation, we present the results of this estimation separated out by country, with direct effects and standard errors appropriate calculated (see Table 4). The results of this estimation are equivalent to those obtained by analyzing the same model on each country sample separately. (A modified version this fully interactive model is presented in Table 5.)

Separate Sample Analysis

In Table 4 we present the results of multinomial logit estimation of the effects of our explanatory variables within each country in the sample. As can be seen, for none of the variables except that of partisanship is the effect significant in every country in our sample. The modernization variables affect vote choice in a variety of countries in a variety of ways – no pattern is discernable.

Retrospective evaluations of economic performance affect vote choice positively in all country except Namibia, but they have a significant effect on vote choice in only Ghana and South Africa. Retrospective evaluations of the corruption of the president, however, decrease the likelihood that the respondent will vote for the president's party in every country in the sample, and the effect is significant in six of the seven cases. Based on the separate sample results, we would argue that in Africa, where economic performance is almost uniformly low, evaluations of the corruption of elected officials, especially the president, serve as a more salient indicator of government competence and performance, and this indicator is relevant regardless of the performance of the economy.

Group associations affect vote choice significantly in only some of the countries. The effect of clientelism is not strong; it significantly decreases the likelihood of voting for the president only in South Africa. (Although we ran separate sample analyses including the interactions of clientelism with partisanship, results were not significant.) The effect of ethnicity is important. Being of the same ethnicity as the president significantly increases the likelihood of voting for the president in Ghana, Namibia, Senegal and South Africa. As experts have long argued, ethnicity is an important factor in the politics of Ghana, Namibia and South Africa. The significance of ethnicity in Senegal is surprising.

In each country, the effect of partisanship is strong and significant. And, as already discussed, adding partisanship to the model does not affect the significance or direction of the effect of ethnicity. We conclude, therefore, that ethnicity and partisanship have separable and significant effects on vote choice.

What is most notable from these separate sample analyses is difference in results for South Africa and other countries in the sample. In South Africa, we see results comparable to what would be expected in developed democracies. That is, we see effects for both urbanization and education. And, retrospective evaluations based on economic performance are strong as are evaluations of corruption. Being of the president's ethnic group has a positive effect on voting for the president's party, but partisanship has a separable and stronger effect. Thus, in South Africa, both retrospective evaluations and group associations including partisanship influence vote choice. The lack of a discernable pattern across the least and developed countries is notable. It is also notable that the patterns in Botswana, the country with the highest GDP per capita in our sample, look like those in the least developed countries rather like those in South African. In Botswana as in four of the five least developed countries, retrospective evaluations

of economic performance do not affect vote choice. With the exception of the effect of education in Benin, neither urbanization nor education affect vote choice in any of the six countries other than South Africa. These results suggest that despite per capita GDP, Botswana is much more similar to very poor countries like Benin and Ghana, than to South Africa. South Africa is clearly exceptional.

Interactive Model and Comparisons of Significance Across Countries

In Table 5, we present the results of the interactive model, where we estimate mean effects for all but our key explanatory variables. The purpose of this exercise is to evaluate the statistical significance of differences in effects across the country cases. We estimated this model using South Africa as our referent country; therefore, we are interested in differences in the effects of our key explanatory variables as compared to South Africa. We discuss a few findings of note.

Comparing the coefficients on interactions with ethnicity, we see that ethnicity has a significantly greater effect in South Africa than in Benin, Mali or Senegal. Based on results presented in Table 4, we would have predicted this result for Benin and Mali. But, this analysis tells us that the effect of ethnicity in Ghana and Namibia is not significantly different than that in South Africa, but the effect in Senegal is significantly less than in South Africa.

Comparing coefficients on interactions with support for the president's party (PID pres), we see that the strength of support for the president's party is less in each of the other countries than in South Africa. This is essentially true for support for the opposition as well. Partisanship is a stronger predictor of vote choice in South Africa than in the other cases in the analysis.

Discussion

As a group, Africans in these seven emerging democracies exhibit complex and overlapping incentives for choosing to vote for a particular party. In each country, both retrospective evaluations of government performance as well as group associations, whether ethnic or party based, drive voter decisions. Retrospective evaluations are more or less significant, depending on the country, but in all but one case, evaluations of corruption affect vote choice.

Group associations clearly are important. Most important, the effects of ethnicity and party ID are separable in each country. Clearly, as experts have long said, ethnicity is a key component of African politics. But, it is only one component. In most of the countries included in our analysis, complex groups associations and identities as well as retrospective evaluations of government performance contribute to vote choice. Thus, even in the poorest countries in our sample, Africans look like voters in other democracies around the world, using multiple cues as well as their own complex social and ideological identities in deciding who among several alternatives to support.

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Table 1 – Macro-Level Variation

<u>Macro-Level Variation</u>	Benin	Botswana	Ghana	Mali	Namibia	Senegal	South Africa
Population (2006) in millions ⁴	8.8	1.9	23.0	12.0	2.0	12.1	47.7
Freedom House (2006) ⁵	2	2	1	2	2	2	2
Length of democracy in years (until 2006)	15	33	6	11	16	4	12
GDP per capita PPP (\$) 2006 ⁶	1,213	12,088	1,160	1,004	4,599	1,547	8,478
Transparency International Corruption Index	2.5	5.6	3.3	2.8	4.1	3.3	4.6
Percentage in Dominant Ethnic Group	40% Fon	90% Setswana	45% Akan	50% Mande	50% Ovambo	43% Wolof	
Politically Relevant Ethnic Groups – 0=homogenous; 1= heterogeneous ⁷	0.3	0	0.44	0.13	0.55	0.14	0.49
% Population Urbanized ⁸	41	59	49	32	36	42	60
% Adult Literacy ⁹	41	83	65	23	88	43	88
% Vote for President (or President's Party) ¹⁰	36%/75%	52%	52.45%	29%/64%	76%	31%/59%	70%
% Seats for President's party ¹¹	63%	77%	56%	71%	71%	74%	70%
Turnout (Round 1)	82%	76%	85%	38%	85%	61%	77%
Effective number of parties in parliament	1.88	1.56	2.09	2.7	1.7	1.8	1.97

⁴ Data taken from CIA World Fact Book (country reports)

⁵ Data available at www.freedomhouse.org

⁶ Data taken from World Bank Development Indicators

⁷ See Posner (2004)

⁸ Data taken from UNICEF at <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/index.html>

⁹ Data taken from UNICEF at <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/index.html>

¹⁰ Most recent elections occurred: Benin 2006, Botswana 2004, Ghana 2004, Mali 2002, Namibia 2004, Senegal 2000, South Africa 2004. If two figures reported, first is for Round 1 and second is for Round 2 of presidential election.

¹¹ Parliamentary elections occurred: Benin 2003, Botswana 2004, Ghana 2004, Mali 2007, Namibia 2004, Senegal 2001, South Africa 2004. In Mali, we used the 2007 parliamentary election because the president's party did not run in the prior parliamentary election.

Table 2: Micro-Level Variation (Afrobarometer Round 3 – 2005/2006)

<u>Micro-Level Variables</u> ¹²	Benin	Botswana	Ghana	Mali	Namibia	Senegal	South Africa
Age (mean)	38	38	40	42	35	38	39
Gender (percent women)	50	50	52	50	50	48	50
Urban resident (percent)	42	43	46	27	40	41	61
Education mean (0=none – 10=doctorate)	1.59	3.42	2.82	1.64	3.92	2.10	4.16
Gone w/o food (0=never to 4=always)	1.0	.95	.67	.99	1.1	1.4	1.1
Employed (percent)	54	21	44	7	31	14	26
Retrospective evaluations of economy (1=much worse to 5=much better)	2.5	2.9	2.6	2.7	3.5	3.2	3.2
Corruption of President (0=none are corrupt to 3=all are corrupt)	1.7	1.0	1.0	1.1	.94	1.1	1.1
Offered payment to vote (percent)	34	13	42	41	40	34	38
Ethnicity same as president (percent)	12	91	53	26	49	48	17
Voted in Last Election	89	67	87	78	79	65	76
Percent of respondents close to a party	33	79	66	61	84	54	69
Percent close to president's party	9	46	43	13	63	38	51
Percent who would vote for president's party in next election	16	53	52	25	69	52	57
Percent who would vote for an opposition party in next election	33	35	26	49	18	19	13

¹² All data reported here is from the Afrobarometer Round 3 Survey, available at www.afrobarometer.org.

Table 3. Multinomial logit model of VOTE CHOICE. Base category is vote for the opposition. Reported category is vote for the president's party. *p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Explanatory Variables	Estimated coefficients	Standard errors
Age	-.003	(.003)
Gender	-.043	(.079)
Education	-.067**	(.031)
Urban Resident	-.064	(.084)
No food	.105***	(.034)
Employed	-.167*	(.094)
Retrospective Evaluations of Economic Performance	.157***	(.038)
Corruption of President	-.428***	(.069)
Corruption of Parliament	-.003	(.071)
Offered payment to vote (clientelism)	.129	(.175)
Ethnicity	.267*	(.166)
Party ID president's party	2.92***	(.152)
Party ID opposition	-2.78***	(.127)
Education x clientelism	-.095***	(.037)
Education x Ethnicity	.121***	(.039)
Clientelism x PID president's party	.087	(.252)
Clientelism x PID opposition	.512***	(.196)
Botswana	.009	(.185)
Ghana	.584***	(.164)
Mali	.272*	(.157)
Namibia	1.02***	(.185)
Senegal	.746***	(.167)
South Africa	1.53***	(.166)
Constant	.035	(.276)
Pseudo R2	.4014	
N	9224	

Table 4. Multinomial logit model of vote choice, separate sample analysis. Base category is vote for opposition. Reported category is vote for president's party. * p<.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

	Benin	Botswana	Ghana	Mali	Namibia	Senegal	South Africa
Age	-.005 (.007)	.019** (.009)	-.0004 (.008)	-.002 (.006)	.011 (.014)	-.018** (.008)	-.009 (.006)
Gender	-.214 (.218)	-.184 (.232)	-.105 (.24)	-.114 (.186)	.861*** (.325)	-.162 (.23)	-.115 (.182)
Urban Resident	-.069 (.221)	.018 (.242)	-.085 (.243)	.282 (.203)	.324 (.348)	-.109 (.250)	-.579*** (.216)
Education	-.201*** (.067)	.013 (.073)	-.02 (.061)	-.071 (.064)	.043 (.099)	-.025 (.059)	-.21*** (.059)
No food	.179** (.088)	-.10 (.109)	.075 (.11)	.013 (.068)	.38** (.164)	.258*** (.085)	.017 (.097)
Employed	-1.02*** (.220)	-.468* (.293)	.395* (.235)	-.099 (.363)	.395 (.386)	.005 (.302)	.066 (.213)
Retrospective Evals of Econ Performance	.054 (.090)	.111 (.122)	.457*** (.11)	.028 (.081)	-.059 (.186)	.095 (.122)	.215** (.104)
Corruption of President	-.372*** (.117)	-.288* (.159)	-.412*** (.157)	-.329*** (.099)	-.211 (.186)	-.889*** (.151)	-.456*** (.123)
Offered payment to vote	-.168 (.229)	-.164 (.338)	-.114 (.23)	.109 (.175)	-.36 (.331)	.375* (.227)	-.396** (.185)
Ethnicity same as president	.081 (.37)	.307 (.42)	.912*** (.233)	.17 (.195)	1.21*** (.383)	.45** (.219)	1.13*** (.336)
Party ID president's party	2.00*** (.327)	2.25*** (.283)	2.46*** (.303)	2.45*** (.321)	4.26*** (.639)	2.74*** (.347)	4.09*** (.343)
Party ID opposition	-2.28*** (.342)	-4.12*** (.333)	-2.91*** (.282)	-1.73*** (.187)	-4.1*** (.441)	-2.65*** (.285)	-2.14*** (.237)
Constant	1.281 (.654)	.307 (.904)	-.308 (.733)	.349 (.576)	-1.13 (1.19)	1.99** (.796)	2.47*** (.657)
Pseudo R2	.1740	.4894	.4384	.2350	.5661	.3096	.4151
N	1154	1180	1166	1231	1172	1134	2353

Table 5. Multinomial Logit. Dep. Var. Vote Choice. Effects of vote for president's party versus opposition party reported. Standard errors in parentheses. Country dummy effects not reported. ¹+ p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Country	Estimated Effect	St. Error
Age	-0.00306	(0.00271)
Gender	-0.0522	(0.0799)
Urban	-0.0530	(0.0860)
Gone w/o food	0.0920**	(0.0343)
Employed	-0.145	(0.0967)
Education	-0.0681**	(0.0232)
Economic eval	0.175+	(0.0965)
Benin x econ eval	-0.103	(0.129)
Botswana x econ eval	-0.0506	(0.150)
Ghana x econ eval	0.317*	(0.144)
Mali x econ eval	-0.122	(0.125)
Namibia x econ eval	-0.335+	(0.199)
Senegal x econ eval	-0.0888	(0.154)
CorruptPres	-0.488***	(0.119)
Benin x CorruptPres	0.122	(0.163)
Botswana x CorruptPres	0.199	(0.198)
Ghana x CorruptPres	0.102	(0.196)
Mali x CorruptPres	0.167	(0.154)
Namibia x CorruptPres	0.184	(0.214)
Senegal x CorruptPres	-0.395*	(0.191)
Clientelism	-0.427*	(0.182)
Benin x clientelism	0.259	(0.288)
Botswana x clientelism	0.260	(0.381)
Ghana x clientelism	0.251	(0.290)
Mali x clientelism	0.508*	(0.252)
Namibia x clientelism	0.149	(0.369)
Senegal x clientelism	0.807**	(0.288)
Ethnicity	1.346***	(0.328)
Benin x ethnicity	-1.544**	(0.490)
Botswana x ethnicity	-0.863	(0.527)
Ghana x ethnicity	-0.394	(0.400)
Mali x ethnicity	-1.157**	(0.381)
Namibia x ethnicity	-0.221	(0.494)
Senegal x ethnicity	-1.001*	(0.390)
PID pres	4.139***	(0.341)
Benin x PID pres	-2.382***	(0.462)
Botswana x PID pres	-1.901***	(0.443)
Ghana x PID pres	-1.586***	(0.456)
Mali x PID pres	-1.691***	(0.469)
Namibia x PID pres	0.0924	(0.714)
Senegal x PID pres	-1.478**	(0.482)
PID opp	-2.124***	(0.234)
Benin x PID opp	-0.256	(0.409)
Botswana x PID opp	-1.967***	(0.402)
Ghana x PID opp	-0.748*	(0.363)
Mali x PID opp	0.404	(0.298)
Namibia x PID opp	-1.844***	(0.478)
Senegal x PID opp	-0.473	(0.359)
Constant	1.087*	(0.438)
Observations	9390	
Pseudo R-squared	0.415	