

AFRO BAROMETER

Working Paper No. 49

**ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONS,
PARTISAN STATUS,
AND POLITICAL SUPPORT:
A NATURAL EXPERIMENT
FROM LESOTHO**

by Wonbin Cho and Michael Bratton

**A comparative series of national public
attitude surveys on democracy, markets
and civil society in Africa.**



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**ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONS, PARTISAN STATUS,
AND POLITICAL SUPPORT: A NATURAL EXPERIMENT FROM LESOTHO**

ABSTRACT

Does the introduction of proportionality in electoral systems help to boost popular evaluations of democracy? This article traces shifts over time in political support, using Afrobarometer data to measure mass satisfaction with democracy and public trust in political institutions in Lesotho. We find that electoral reforms have both direct and indirect effects. In the aggregate, Lesotho's transition from a majoritarian to a mixed electoral system is directly associated with increased levels of citizen support for the country's state and regime. Importantly, however, formal institutions have only indirect effects at the individual level, where a person's informal partisan status – as a member of a winning majority or losing minority – mediates the impacts of institutional change.

ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONS, PARTISAN STATUS, AND POLITICAL SUPPORT: A NATURAL EXPERIMENT FROM LESOTHO

Introduction

Does the nature of political institutions affect the willingness of citizens to support their political system? Specifically, does the introduction of electoral institutions that are inclusive, representative and proportional help to boost popular evaluations of democracy? In this article, we trace shifts over time in political support, which we measure by means of popular satisfaction with democracy and public trust in political institutions in Lesotho. We find that electoral reforms introduced in this Southern African country have both direct and indirect effects. In the aggregate, Lesotho's transition from a majoritarian to a mixed electoral system is directly associated with increased levels of citizen support for the country's state and regime. Importantly, however, institutions have only indirect effects at the individual level, where a person's partisan status – as a member of a winning majority or losing minority – has formative and consistent impact.

The current, global wave of democratization has prompted scholars to explore the institutional factors underlying citizens' orientations toward the polity. Of all the institutions that matter, the electoral system is among the most important, and its degree of proportionality is a central design issue facing institutional engineers (Taagepera and Shugart 1989; Horowitz 1991; Lijphart 1995; Sisk and Reynolds 1998; Reynolds 1999 and 2002; Taagepera 2002). So far, political scientists have generated only a few good studies that explain how electoral institutions shape citizen attitudes (Anderson and Guillory 1997; Norris 1999; Farrell and McAllister 2003). But this literature shines light on diverse objects of study and comes up with divergent empirical results. Some analysts examine satisfaction with the regime of democracy, and show a positive effect of proportional representation on political support (Anderson 1998; Farrell and McAllister 2003). Others measure popular trust in state institutions and find a negative relationship (Norris 1999). Our results help to arbitrate these debates.

The democratization wave has not exempted Africa (Huntington 1991; Bratton and van de Walle 1997; Lindberg 2004; Villalon and Von Döepp 2005). Between 1989 and 2001, 44 of the 48 sub-Saharan countries experimented with multiparty elections, and about two-thirds adopted political regimes that were more liberal and competitive than before (Diamond, 2002). Lesotho experienced a transition to electoral democracy in the early 1990s and has since held three multiparty parliamentary contests. Uniquely among African countries, however, Lesotho subsequently transformed its electoral system between 1998 and 2002 elections from a first-past-the-post (FPTP) to a mixed-member proportional (MMP) system. Lesotho's MMP electoral arrangements enabled opposition parties to win seats in parliament in 2002 for the first time since the transition.

The case of Lesotho therefore offers a rare opportunity for a natural experiment to test for impacts of institutional reform. Unlike previous studies, which use cross-sectional designs, this article introduces comparisons over time. Did a change in the electoral system lead to increases in political support? Fortunately, the Afrobarometer¹ has recently released sample survey data on

¹ The Afrobarometer is a collaborative effort of research partners in various African countries, numbering 12 in Round 1 and 16 in Round 2. The sample sizes for Lesotho were 1177 (Round 1) and 1200 (Round 2), with respondents selected randomly to represent the country's adult population. All interviews were conducted by trained fieldworkers in face-to-face settings in the language of the respondent's choice. The project is coordinated by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa, the Centre for Democratic

public opinion in Lesotho for 2000 and 2003 that was collected both “before” and “after” the electoral reform of 2002. We therefore take advantage of the happy coincidence between an institutional change and the availability of pre-reform and post-reform measurements of citizen political attitudes.

To anticipate results, we note that aggregate levels of democratic satisfaction and institutional trust trend upward for Lesotho’s citizens after 2002. Nevertheless, under both majoritarian and more proportional electoral systems, citizens who are attached to opposition parties (“losers”) repeatedly show lower levels of political support than those whose party is in power (“winners”). Moreover, electoral reform has differential effects on these “winners” and “losers”: as the latter, along with non-partisans, become more satisfied, the former become less so. Thus, change in electoral systems has no uniform effect on public attitudes; instead, it is mediated by a person’s partisan status. In Lesotho, electoral reform therefore encourages convergence in levels of satisfaction and trust among winners, losers and non-partisans. Importantly for democratization, those who were previously disadvantaged by a majoritarian FPTP system tend to express more positive attitudes toward the political system.

The article begins with an historical description of Lesotho’s parliamentary elections, including the results of the 1998 and 2002 elections. Next, we review literature on electoral systems and partisan status in order to derive testable hypotheses about their expected influences on political support. We then develop models of political support that include both institutional and individual-level variables, such as electoral system, partisan status, and standard controls. Thereafter, we use data from Afrobarometer surveys to test these models. The article concludes with implications for democratization in Africa and for democratic theory.

Background

Lesotho gained independence from Great Britain in 1966. The electoral system promulgated in the 1966 and 1993 constitutions was a first-past-the-post, single member district (SMD) system inherited from the departing colonial power. As a result of this system, the share of votes obtained by opposition parties was never reflected in a proportional share of seats in the parliament. In the 1993 and 1998 elections, for example, while securing up to one-quarter of all votes, opposition parties failed to win more than one parliamentary seat. As a consequence, losing parties rejected the outcome of every general election held in the country, including in 1998 (Southall and Fox 1999; Makoia 2002; Fox and Southall 2002; Rule 2000; Southall 2003). For example, the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) turned to the courts in an attempt to overturn the results of the pre-independence election of 1965. And the then ruling Basotho National Party (BNP) suspended the constitution and declined to surrender power when it lost the 1970 election.

Led by Chief Leabua Jonathan, the BNP maintained control of the state by exploiting divisions within the opposition BCP and, where necessary, with force. Having fled the country, opposition leaders established the Lesotho Liberation Army (LLA) to contest the BNP’s control. But the BNP government was ousted in a military coup in 1986 that was engineered by the apartheid government in neighboring South Africa. The armed forces then ruled throughout a moderately stable interlude until 1993. Unable to resist internal and external pressures for democratization unleashed by the political transition in South Africa, however, the military government allowed BCP leaders, notably Ntsu Mokhehle, to return from exile and to participate in open elections in 1993. These led to a dramatic win for the BCP, which took all 65 seats in the National Assembly;

Development (Ghana), and the Department of Political Science at Michigan State University. For access to data and information on sampling, see www.afrobarometer.org.



after many long years in the political wilderness, the party was therefore well placed to settle scores.

Despite the democratic transition in 1993 via elections that international and NGO monitors endorsed as free and fair, opposition parties still found themselves unable to trust the electoral system. Because Lesotho enjoys relative ethnic homogeneity (apart from small Xhosa- and Ndebele-speaking minorities, all inhabitants speak Sesotho as a first language) and because support for the major political party is spread evenly across most constituencies, the FPTP system continued to produce extremely unbalanced election results. In the 1993 election, the BCP took all the seats in parliament with just 74.7 percent of the total votes. Opposition parties dismissed the BCP's victory in the election as rigged, and backed King Letsie III when, in 1994, he led a short-lived palace coup that lacked broad popular support (Weisfelder 1999; Rule 2000).

Even more dramatic consequences followed the 1998 elections. The Lesotho Congress of Democrats (LCD) took 79 out of an increased number of 80 seats with just 60.5 percent of the total vote (Southall and Fox 1999). Despite now winning a combined total of almost 40 percent of valid votes, the opposition parties were again left essentially without representation in the parliament. The results seemed unbelievable to opposition leaders. Because ailing Prime Minister Mokhehle had lost control of the BCP machinery, manifest in an LCD breakaway right before the election, the opposition had anticipated a close outcome in which no party would gain a parliamentary majority. Instead, the LCD became the ruling party with virtually unchallenged control of Parliament. While international and local observers estimated that the election reflected the will of the electorate (Southall and Fox 1999; Leon Commission 2001), the losers repudiated the results, provoking a major crisis that undermined the LCD's capacity to rule. Opposition supporters burned down the central business district of the capital city, Maseru. With rumors of another military coup in the air, and in the name of defending democracy, South Africa and Botswana sent in an armed expedition to restore order in the name of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

On the advice of SADC, an Interim Political Authority (IPA) was established, composed of two members of each of the political parties that had participated in the 1998 election. Protracted negotiations between the IPA and the government resulted in agreement on a mixed-member proportional electoral system (MMP) (Southall 2003).² In addition to the 80 existing constituency seats to be elected by FPTP, 40 proportional representation (PR) seats would be allocated among all parties that win votes. Proportional representation is achieved by dividing total national list election votes by 120 to determine a quota per seat. The overall PR formula is Hare quota, with no formal threshold, which maximizes proportionality (Lijphart 1995).

On 25 May 2002, Lesotho became the first African country to test the MMP electoral model in a parliamentary election (Elklit 2000). Some 1,085 candidates from 18 parties, as well as 32 independent candidates, were registered to contest the 80 FPTP constituencies. Sixteen parties presented full lists for a total of 770 candidates for election via proportional representation (Southall 2003). Once again, the LCD made a virtually clean sweep of the constituencies, taking

² A distinction is usually drawn between two broad subtypes of mixed-member electoral systems: mixed-member majoritarian (MMM) and mixed-member proportional (MMP) (Shugart and Wattenberg 2003). In MMM systems, there is no connection in the allocation of seats to parties between single-seat district tiers and the PR list tier. In the MMP systems, however, the number of seats a party takes from its lists is determined partially by the number of seats it has won from the single-seat district tier.

77 out of the 78 seats contested on election day,³ this time with 57.7 percent of the vote. It also took a very similar proportion of the PR vote (54.9 percent).

Table 1 summarizes the distributions of votes and seats in the 1998 and 2002 elections. The proportions show a marked improvement in the correspondence between vote shares and seat shares from 1998 (under the old FPTP system) to 2002 (the first MMP election). An election's Index of Disproportionality (ID) measures the degree to which the distribution of parliamentary seats among parties diverges from the distribution of votes, with zero representing a perfectly proportional outcome (Gallagher 1999). While ID scores typically range from near zero to 20, the ID score for Lesotho in 1998 was 31.5. Yet the 2002 election produced an ID of 8.2, a fourfold decrease. This change clearly documents an increase in proportionality from the previous FPTP electoral system to the current MMP system.

Table 1: Vote and Seat Shares, 1998 and 2002 Elections

Parties	1998			2002		
	Votes (%)	Seats (%)	Seats (no.)	Votes (%)	Seats (%)	Seats (no.)
LCD	60.7	98.8	79	54.9	65.3	77
BNP	24.5	1.3	1	22.4	17.8	21
BCP	10.5	0	0	2.7	2.5	3
MFP	1.3	0	0	1.2	0.8	1
LPC	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	5.8	4.2	5
NIP	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	5.5	4.2	5
BAC	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2.9	2.5	3
LWP	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1.4	0.8	1
PFD	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1.1	0.8	1
NNP	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0.7	0.8	1
Other/Independents	3	0	0	1.4	0	0
ID	31.5			8.2		
Total	100	100	80	100	100	118

Importantly, for the first time in Lesotho's electoral history, the losing opposition parties accepted the results. The new MMP system allowed the combined opposition to capture all 40 PR seats in the parliament. Because the opposition won a presence in the legislature in 2002 with roughly the same combined share of the votes that it had attained in 1998, we are comfortable in attributing the seat gain mainly to reform of electoral institutions. Party leaders signaled their appreciation of the new electoral rules by actually taking up their seats in parliament without threatening a protest, boycott, or walkout. But did public opinion also undergo a similar thaw? This study investigates whether – and, if so, how – a more proportional electoral system increases citizen support for the political system.

³ Owing to the deaths of candidates, elections were postponed in Mt. Moorosi and Hlotse constituencies.

Electoral Systems and Citizen Attitudes

The electoral system is a key mechanism for connecting citizens and the state. Electoral systems are conventionally divided into two categories, majoritarian and proportional (Lijphart 1995). As is well known, majoritarian systems usually employ single-seat districts with a plurality rule, and tend to give greater representation to parties that receive the most votes. Proportional systems employ multi-seat districts, usually with party lists, and typically produce parliamentary representation that largely mirrors the vote shares of multiple parties.

Recently, however, there has been a marked tendency around the world to mix these two principles of electoral system design. Many newly adopted electoral systems, including those in long established democracies such as Italy, Japan, New Zealand and Venezuela, have entailed various hybrids of the majoritarian and proportional principles (Shugart and Wattenberg 2003). Mixed-member systems employ two tiers: single-seat district (SSDs) and PR list. In the prototype of a mixed-member system, half of the seats in a legislative chamber are elected in single-seat districts, while the other half are elected from party lists allocated by proportional representation.

The literature on electoral systems focuses on the degree of proportionality or disproportionality in the translation of votes into seats and on subsequent effects on the number and strategies of parties (Rae 1967; Katz 1980; Taagepera and Shugart 1989; Lijphart 1995; Cox 1997; Reynolds and Reilly 1997). Lijphart (1999) shows that, although no PR system is perfectly proportional, and despite a great deal of variation within the PR family, PR systems tend to be considerably less disproportional than plurality or majoritarian systems. Proportional systems are more inclusive, and therefore also more representative, than majoritarian systems because they facilitate the expression of interests by all relevant societal and ethnic groups.

Few studies have yet examined the influence of different electoral systems on citizens' attitudes toward political systems. Based on aggregate data collected in 19 European democracies, Anderson (1998) finds that there is a strong correlation between electoral systems and aggregate popular satisfaction with democracy, indicating that the more proportional the electoral system, the higher the level of satisfaction (see also Farrell and McAllister, 2003). With a survey data set collected in 25 democracies, however, Norris (1999) finds that majoritarian electoral systems produce higher levels of confidence (or trust) in political institutions. Thus, the questions of whether and how electoral systems affect political support remain unresolved. Perhaps this discrepancy is due to the different ways in which these authors measure political support, with Anderson and others using satisfaction with democracy, and Norris and colleagues using trust in institutions. This article explicitly tests this possibility.

Lesotho's MMP reform adds evidence about the effects on the party system of adding a list tier of 40 PR seats to 80 existing constituency seats. There was a great increase in the number of parties physically present in the National Assembly, from an average of one in the 1993-1998 period to ten after the 2002 election. Because of the introduction of a list tier, minor parties were encouraged to campaign on a nationwide basis and managed to gain representation in parliament for the first time. From this unaccustomed position, opposition parties were better placed to express the preferences of previously excluded minorities. This leads to our first hypothesis, namely, that an increase in the proportionality of the electoral system induces a higher level of popular satisfaction with the way democratic institutions work (*H1*).

Partisan Status: Winners, Losers, and Non-Partisans

Democracy is about winning and losing within a context of fixed rules: "Since the struggle for political office is bound to create winners and losers, this necessarily generates ambivalent

attitudes towards authorities on the part of the losers” (Kaase and Newton 1995: 60). At the simplest level, if people consider that the rules of the game allow their preferred party to win a share of power, they are more likely to trust political institutions and to be satisfied with governmental and regime performance (Lambert, *et al.* 1986; Kornberg and Clarke 1994; Nadeau and Blais 1993). On the other hand, those whose preferred party loses the election are more likely to feel excluded from decision-making, which in turn probably produces dissatisfaction with democratic institutions.

Yet losers play a crucial role in political development. Their support has greater impact on the stability of the regime than the loyalty of winners, because losers are more likely to reject the prevailing rules and to seek non-democratic alternatives. The disposition of the losers toward founding and subsequent elections therefore is critical to democratization. To achieve popular consensus over democratic rules, losers must feel that, far from being permanently excluded, they have a chance to win a share of power, either now or in the future.

In a study of 11 European democracies, Anderson and Guillory (1997) found that winners were more likely to be satisfied with democracy than those who voted for losing parties. Others demonstrate that differences in levels of political support between winners and losers are wider in emerging democracies than in developed democracies (Fuchs, Guidorossi and Svensson 1995). While citizens who live in Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg and Denmark show relatively narrow differences (less than 20 percentage points) in satisfaction with democracy, those in young democracies like Portugal, Spain and Greece express significantly larger differences (more than 30 percentage points). Citizens in the latter countries have much less experience with democracy, having observed few regular multiparty elections, and even fewer electoral alternations of ruling party.

Even when new democracies perform satisfactorily, there is always potential for instability inherent in the clashing popular preferences between winning majorities and losing minorities. We expect that, relative to the political majority (the winners), citizens in the political minority (the losers) will have a diminished stake in the system. As a consequence, they are likely to express more negative views of political system performance (*H2-A*). In addition, especially in emerging democracies where overt partisanship can be risky, a significant bloc of citizens will shun affiliation with both ruling and opposition parties. For these non-partisans, we expect that levels of political support will fall somewhere between those for winners and losers (*H2-B*).

Partisan Status in Different Electoral Systems

Winning and losing may have singular implications under different electoral systems. Lijphart (1999) has identified the advantages of proportional electoral systems in encouraging broad social group representation and producing equitable policy outcomes. These features of PR systems obviously have a greater positive impact on losers than winners. And we have argued that minority groups that feel part of the governing process are likely to express increased levels of political support. With reference to Western Europe, Anderson and Guillory (1997) confirm a general pattern in which differences in satisfaction with democracy between winners and losers are significantly smaller in consensual, as compared to majoritarian, democracies.

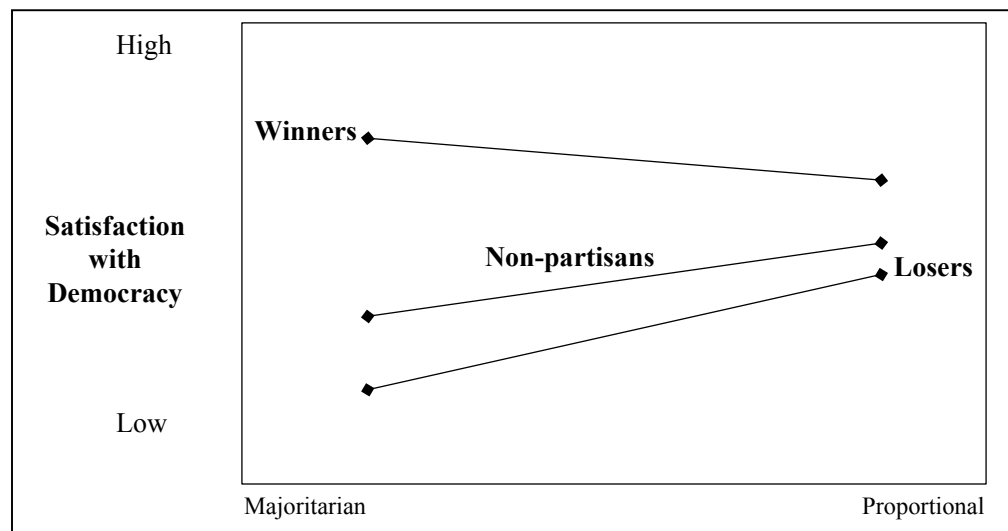
But does this result apply to a country like Lesotho? In sub-Saharan Africa, the parties that won founding elections are usually still in power (van de Walle 2003; Bratton 2004) and, even after democratic transitions, African politics remain largely neopatrimonial (Bratton and van de Walle 1997). In neopatrimonial systems, a presidential “big man” concentrates political and economic power in his own hands and distributes patronage awards almost exclusively to his own group of

loyal voters. In Lesotho, as in many other African countries, the identification card of the ruling party serves as a ticket for ordinary people to gain access to government services. In short, under neopatrimonial rule, “winners take all.” Not only do “losers” have low expectations about ever winning elections; they also harbor realistic fears that losing will shut them out permanently from official patronage networks.

The high stakes of neopatrimonialism are reinforced by majoritarian electoral arrangements, which are more common in sub-Saharan Africa than PR systems.⁴ The fact that winners can literally take all legislative seats with just half of all valid votes makes it easy for dictators to ride roughshod over the preferences of minorities. Under these exclusionary circumstances, one would expect losers to be alienated from official institutions and to constitute a restless threat to the stability of emerging democracies.

Formally, we argue that an individual’s partisan status (“winner” or “loser”) systematically mediates the relationship between electoral systems and political support. In Lesotho, we expect to see a shift toward favorable attitudes particularly among political minorities. Losers (and, to a lesser extent, non-partisans) should express higher levels of political support under a relatively proportional electoral system than under a majoritarian one (*H3*). The opposite effect should prevail for winners. As a consequence, electoral reforms are expected to decrease differences in political support between winners on the one hand and losers and non-partisans on the other. Figure 1 describes this hypothesized interactive effect.

Figure 1: Hypothesized Political Support in Different Electoral Systems



⁴ 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.

Measurements

We now turn to empirical analysis. To capture political support, we draw two conventional dependent variables from the Afrobarometer Round 1 (2000) and Round 2 (2003) data. Consistent with Anderson and Guillory's (1997) approach, *satisfaction with democracy* is a single survey item that measures public opinion on how well or badly "democracy works in (your country)." ⁵ Following Norris (1999), *institutional trust* is an index that averages the amount of confidence that respondents place in the chief executive, the national assembly, the army, the police, and the courts. ⁶ Exact question wordings and response categories for all items are given in Appendix A.

As for independent variables, we represent electoral systems with the *index of disproportionality (ID)* developed by Michael Gallagher (1991):

$$ID = \sqrt{\left(\frac{1}{2} \sum (v_i - s_i)^2\right)}$$

in which v_i is vote percentage and s_i is seat percentage. The higher the ID, the greater the disproportionality produced by an electoral system. Because of the inverted valence of the index, we expect disproportionality to have a negative effect on satisfaction with democracy and institutional trust.

Turning to partisanship, the Afrobarometer survey asks respondents which political party, if any, they feel close to. Combining this variable with information about the outcome of the most recent election prior to each survey, we can distinguish winners from losers. We treated as non-partisans all respondents who did not feel close to any political party, said "don't know," or otherwise refused to answer the question on party affiliation. Excluding winners as the base category, we then created two dummy variables for *losers* and *non-partisans*. As hypothesized, there should be negative signs on the democratic satisfaction and institutional trust of these non-winners.

It is possible, of course, that partisan status mediates the relationship between electoral institutions and citizen attitudes toward political systems. To test for this possibility, we add two interaction terms – *loser*ID* and *non-partisan*ID* – into the models. We expect that both interaction terms will have negative coefficients. In other words, an electoral reform that increases proportionality (as represented by a lower ID score) will increase both satisfaction and trust among both losers and non-partisans. At the same time, the replacement of FPTP with MMP will reduce differences in political support both between winners and others.

⁵ Some scholars criticize the validity of the concept of satisfaction with democracy (Norris 1999; Canache, *et al.* 2001; Linde and Ekman 2003). Across 12 African countries, Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi (2005) show that while the concept does correlate with support for a regime of democracy, it can also represent trust in state institutions and, especially, satisfaction with the performance of the incumbent government.

⁶ Responses to the five items are highly correlated. Factor analysis extracts two factors (Eigenvalues = 2.38 and 1.19), which cumulatively explain 71.4 percent of the common variance. The scale on the first factor is reliable (Cronbach's Alpha = .72; n = 2377), suggesting that the index reflects a general orientation towards political institutions.

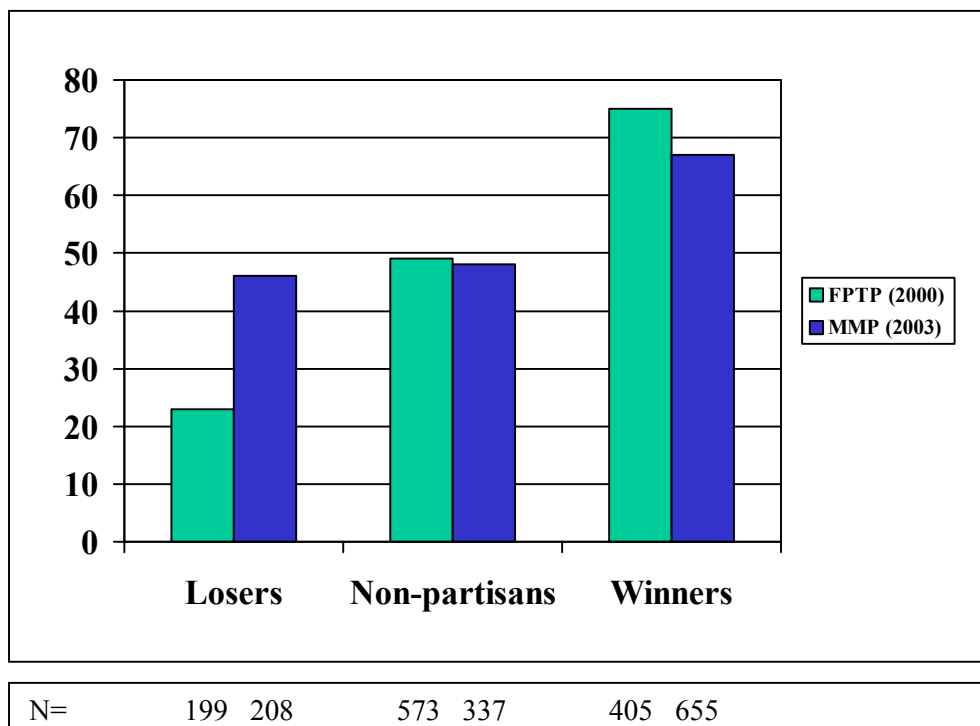
Finally, to model the extent to which observed differences in political support are due to other complementary causes, we included a standard battery of relevant control variables. Other researchers have shown that an individual’s cognitive orientation of *interest in politics* is positively related to political support (Almond and Verba 1989; Weatherford 1991; Anderson and Guillory 1997).⁷ *Economic performance evaluations* – whether based on personal (egocentric) circumstances or perceived national (sociotropic) economic conditions – are also widely thought to influence satisfactions with the polity (Weatherford 1987; Clarke, Dutt, and Kornberg 1993; Kornberg and Clarke 1992; Listhaug and Wiberg 1995). Finally, we control for the usual socio-demographic variables, such as *education, gender, and age*.

Preliminary Results

At first glance, aggregate levels of political support appear to increase over time. Between 2000 and 2003, the proportion of Lesotho’s citizens expressing satisfaction with democracy rose from 38 percent to 49 percent (Gay and Mattes 2004), a significant difference.⁸ On a scale of 0 to 15, the mean level of institutional trust went up from 6.3 in 2000 to 7 in 2003, a difference that is also statistically significant. So far, therefore, the data are consistent with the expectation of *H1*.

Moreover, winners and losers are separated by clear gaps in expressed levels of political support. Figure 2 shows that, under both majoritarian (2000) and more proportional (2003) electoral systems, winners consistently evince a higher level of satisfaction with democracy. As expected, non-partisans’ level of satisfaction settles between that of winners and losers. Most importantly, however, losers *double* their satisfaction with democracy – from 23 to 46 percent – after electoral

Figure 2: Satisfaction with Democracy among Winners, Non-Partisans, and Losers



⁷ See Appendix A. For purposes of analysis, we created a dummy variable coded as one for responses of “very interested” and “somewhat interested,” and zero for all other responses.

⁸ Chi-square = 48.280, p<.001. “Satisfaction” combines respondents who are “very” and “fairly” satisfied.

reforms. We infer that an MMP electoral system, which facilitated the attainment by opposition parties of a total of 41 seats in the National Assembly, induced opposition supporters to significantly upgrade their assessments of the performance of Lesotho's democracy.

It must be noted, however, that the satisfaction of winners declined from 75 percent in 2000 to 67 percent in 2003.⁹ Many LCD supporters complained about the 2002 election results because their party took no PR seats, even with 54.9 percent of the PR vote. Part of the problem was that the MMP system was unfamiliar and ordinary people needed more time to fully understand its relatively complex formula for allocating parliamentary seats. Non-partisans showed little change in satisfaction with democracy over time. Finally, Figure 2 provides evidence of the convergence of public opinion that we predicted in Figure 1. Between 2000 and 2003, the aggregate difference in the level of satisfaction with democracy between winners and losers decreased from 52 to 21 percentage points. This suggests that the MMP system reduced the proportion of voters who cast ineffective votes and incorporated marginalized political minorities into the political system.

Multivariate Models

To make sure that these results are not attributable to other causes, we expand the analysis by means of a series of multivariate models. Table 2 reports Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) estimators.

Expected effects remain, even after statistical controls are introduced for other influences, such as interest in politics, evaluations of economic performance, and the demographic characteristics of citizens. The regression coefficients for political minorities who lost the last election (losers) are consistently significant and negative in all four models, indicating that they always feel less satisfied and trusting than winners. The same holds true for non-partisans though, as expected, this group is always less satisfied than winners and more satisfied than losers. And, again as expected, the satisfaction gap between winners and others diminishes as the electoral system changes from FPTP to MMP.

Nevertheless, in a slight anomaly, electoral reforms appear to widen the trust gap between winners and others, and particularly the gap with non-partisans. Perhaps these minority groups recognize that, even though they have gained seats in parliament, they still do not control the executive agencies of government. Instead, political institutions – including the National Assembly where the LCD still enjoyed a 79- to 41-seat majority in 2003 – remain under the sway of a dominant ruling party.

In passing, it is worth noting that an individual's interest in politics helps boost trust in political institutions. While interest in politics predicts trust in both 2000 and 2003, its influence drops over time, perhaps reflecting a declining salience of electoral reform as a pressing public issue. In 2000, political elites in the interim political authority were preoccupied with debating the kinds of electoral reforms required to extricate Lesotho from its 1998 political crisis. This discussion among party leaders was widely publicized and undoubtedly drew ordinary citizens' attention to politics. After agreement was reached to introduce the MMP system, however, there were fewer remaining political concerns to spark citizen interest.

⁹ $t = -.451, p < .001$.

Table 2. Effects of Individual Characteristics on Political Support, 2000 and 2003

Independent Variable	Satisfaction with Democracy						Trust in Political Institutions					
	2000 (FPTP)		2003 (MMP)		2000 (FPTP)		2003 (MMP)		2000 (FPTP)		2003 (MMP)	
	Coef.	Beta	Coef.	Beta	Coef.	Beta	Coef.	Beta	Coef.	Beta	Coef.	Beta
Loser	-1.199*** (0.121)	-0.363	-0.590*** (0.097)	-0.198	-1.712*** (0.338)	-0.160	-1.795*** (0.276)	-0.191				
Non-partisan	-0.796*** (0.094)	-0.317	-0.510*** (0.085)	-0.201	-1.326*** (0.260)	-0.165	-1.970*** (0.237)	-0.248				
Interest in Politics	0.043 (0.097)	0.015	0.181 (0.140)	0.041	1.140*** (0.255)	0.131	1.006*** (0.371)	0.076				
National Economic Performance	0.137*** (0.035)	0.132	0.052 (0.038)	0.045	0.342*** (0.098)	0.102	0.180 (0.109)	0.049				
Personal Economic Performance	0.053 (0.037)	0.049	0.071 (0.044)	0.053	0.349*** (0.102)	0.100	0.054 (0.125)	0.013				
Gender (female = 1)	-0.063 (0.085)	-0.025	-0.013 (0.070)	-0.006	-0.729*** (0.232)	-0.091	-0.480** (0.198)	-0.067				
Age	0.003 (0.003)	0.042	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.014	-0.027*** (0.007)	-0.116	-0.006 (0.006)	-0.032				
Education	0.023 (0.027)	0.029	0.029 (0.023)	0.042	0.043 (0.080)	0.016	-0.139** (0.065)	-0.062				
Constant	2.607*** (0.201)		2.372*** (0.215)		6.559*** (0.552)		7.406*** (0.589)					
R2	0.162		0.066		0.105		0.100					
N	779		992		1132		1189					

Note: Ordinary Least Squares estimates; standard errors are in parentheses. All significant tests are two-tailed: ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

Economic performance evaluations play more ambiguous roles in explaining political support. Although important in 2000, evaluations of the national economy and personal wellbeing are statistically insignificant by 2003. Lesotho is a typical poor African country: not only does its Gross National Income per capita of \$470 mirror the sub-Saharan African average of \$451 (World Bank, 2004: 5); but its citizens are highly dissatisfied with economic performance, including the government's efforts to attract job-creating foreign investment.¹⁰ Apparently, however, the positive effects of institutional reform were sufficient to wash out the effects of economic pessimism on public political satisfaction and institutional trust, at least during the post-reform honeymoon of 2003.

The Effects of Electoral Systems

So far, we have made the inference that increased political support derives from the fairness of Lesotho's new MMP electoral system, which introduced a greater measure of balance in the transfer of votes to seats. But can direct effects of improved representation be discerned in the data? To test our logic, we introduce Lesotho's values on Gallagher's index of disproportionality (ID) for the two elections into the multivariate model, which we then run on pooled data. This specification isolates the effects of electoral systems, net of the effects of all other influences.

Table 3 shows that reform of the electoral system has no direct, general effect on citizens' satisfaction with democracy. The coefficient on ID is minuscule and statistically insignificant in Model 1. In other words, there is no uniform change in democratic satisfaction because, at the same time that losers and non-partisans saw benefits, winners perceived drawbacks. And, in the 2002 election and the 2003 survey sample, winners greatly outnumbered losers (see Figure 2). The slight drop-off in democratic satisfaction among 655 randomly selected winners interviewed in 2003 was sufficient to offset the doubling of democratic satisfaction among 208 randomly selected losers. Winners were clearly less satisfied with electoral results under the MMP system, because they were accustomed to the winner-take-all features of FPTP. In interviews, LCD party leaders confirmed that their supporters complained that the new electoral system granted all PR list tier seats to the opposition and none to the LCD itself.¹¹

Nevertheless, the attitudes of party elites in Lesotho were more favorable to electoral reform than the mass opinion of ordinary citizens.¹² Regardless of party affiliation, all party leaders whom we interviewed said that the 2002 elections produced more acceptable results than the 1998 elections. Leaders commonly thought that, because the new MMP system was more representative of minority viewpoints, electoral reform brought peace and stability to Lesotho. Opposition party leaders went further, calling for further reforms to introduce a pure PR system for 100 percent of the parliamentary seats.

To recapture the effect of partisan status, we reintroduce the dummy variables for losers and non-partisans in Table 3, Model 2. As before, confirming *H2-A*, being an electoral loser is a strong determinant of dissatisfaction with democracy. Other things being equal, opposition supporters express lower levels of satisfaction with democracy than ruling party supporters. Confirming *H2-B*, non-partisans nestle in between.

¹⁰ In Afrobarometer Round 2, 82 percent of Basotho said that national economic conditions were either "bad" or "very bad," and 86 percent said the same about their own living standards (Gay and Mattes 2004).

¹¹ Interviews in December 2004 with Sephiri E. Motanyane, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly; M.S.Lehata, MP; and R.F.Shea, whip of the LCD.

¹² Interviews with 10 leaders from various parties represented in the National Assembly, December 2004.

Table 3. Effects of Electoral Systems on Satisfaction with Democracy: Pooled Model Estimates

Independent Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coef.	Beta	Coef.	Beta	Coef.	Beta
Index of Disproportionality (ID)	0.002 (0.003)	0.018	0.007*** (0.002)	0.066	0.016*** (0.004)	0.159
Loser			-0.840*** (0.076)	-0.269	-0.370*** (0.140)	-0.119
Non-partisan			-0.620*** (0.063)	-0.250	-0.388*** (0.119)	-0.157
Loser * I.D.					-0.027*** (0.007)	-0.191
Non-partisan * I.D.					-0.013** (0.005)	-0.139
Interest in Politics	0.188** (0.081)	0.057	0.100 (0.078)	0.031	0.089 (0.078)	0.027
National Economic Performance	0.116*** (0.027)	0.106	0.103*** (0.026)	0.094	0.101*** (0.002)	0.092
Personal Economic Performance	0.044 (0.029)	0.037	0.051 (0.028)	0.043	0.057** (0.028)	0.048
Gender (female = 1)	-0.043 (0.057)	-0.018	-0.032 (0.054)	-0.013	-0.030 (0.054)	-0.013
Age	0.001 (0.002)	0.018	0.001 (0.002)	0.015	0.001 (0.002)	0.012
Education	-0.010 (0.018)	-0.013	0.028 (0.018)	0.039	0.025 (0.017)	0.034
Constant	2.084*** (0.157)		2.100*** (0.139)		2.203*** (0.156)	
Adj. R ²	0.014		0.097		0.105	
N	1771		1771		1771	

Note: Ordinary Least Squares estimates; standard errors are in parentheses.

All significant tests are two-tailed: ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

To further tease out the effects of electoral system reform on mass attitudes, we propose that citizens' partisan status mediates the relationship between the electoral system and their attitudes toward democratic institutions. To test for this possibility, we estimate the pooled OLS model with interaction terms between ID on the one hand and losers and non-partisans on the other.

The results, reported in Table 3, Model 3, are consistent with *H3*. The coefficient on the interaction term between loser and ID is statistically significant and negative. In other words, proportionality in an electoral system does indeed attenuate losers' dissatisfaction with democracy. For substantive interpretation, we calculate the simulated expected values of

democratic satisfaction.¹³ As Figure 3 shows for Lesotho, the expected value for losers increases from 1.96 to 2.20 after electoral reform, while the value for winners decreases from 3.17 to 2.79. On the basis of this test, we now feel confident in asserting the indirect salience of electoral reform for citizen attitudes. We have demonstrated that a change from a disproportional FPTP electoral system to a more proportional MMP system induced electoral losers (and to a lesser extent, non-partisans) to express increased satisfaction with the way democracy works in their country. In this respect, the results from Lesotho are consistent with the argument about the advantages of consensual institutions made by Anderson and Guillory (1997).

Figure 3: Predicted Values of Popular Satisfaction with Democracy

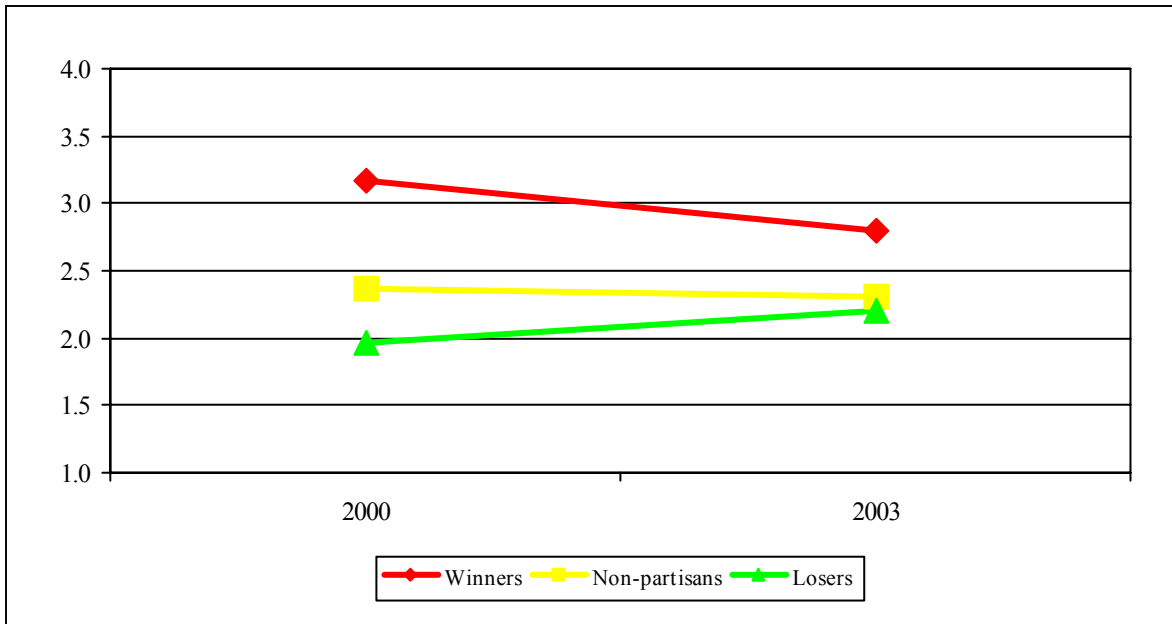


Table 4 reports results for the same model with trust in political institutions as the dependent variable. In this case, the ID coefficient is statistically significant and negative in Model 1. This implies that the introduction of a representative electoral system has direct positive consequences for citizen trust in political institutions. Note, however that these effects disappear when partisan status and interaction terms are entered into the equation. For this reason, we offer interpretations of only the fullest set of results, that is, Model 3.

Judging by the array of significant predictors, popular trust in political institutions arises from multiple sources. In Lesotho, it depends importantly on an individual's interest in politics and his or her evaluations of both egocentric and sociotropic economic conditions. Trust in political institutions is also an attribute of young males, with women and older people being more hesitant to extend such trust. The reasons for these results are unclear, since trust is unrelated to education.

Our main concern, however, is with electoral systems and their interactions with partisanship. The effects of both loser and non-partisan – which are statistically significant and in the expected (negative) direction – again survive controls for extraneous factors. And, once more consistent

¹³ Expected values are the mean of the 1000 simulated expected values generated by Clarify 2.1 (Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 2003).

Table 4. Effects of Electoral Systems on Trust in Political Institutions: Pooled Model Estimates

Independent Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coef.	Beta	Coef.	Beta	Coef.	Beta
Index of Disproportionality	-0.018** (0.007)	-0.054	-0.005 (0.007)	-0.015	-0.019 (0.010)	-0.059
Loser (minority)			-1.781*** (0.216)	-0.177	-1.802*** (0.409)	-0.179
Non-partisan			-1.643*** (0.175)	-0.210	-2.408*** (0.343)	-0.307
Loser * ID					0.003 (0.018)	0.007
Non-partisan * ID					0.037** (0.015)	0.128
Interest in Politics	1.360*** (0.207)	0.140	1.116*** (0.205)	0.115	1.135*** (0.205)	0.117
National Economic Performance	0.290*** (0.074)	0.083	0.268*** (0.072)	0.077	0.264*** (0.072)	0.075
Personal Economic Performance	0.223*** (0.080)	0.059	0.242*** (0.078)	0.064	0.247*** (0.072)	0.065
Gender (female = 1)	-0.630*** (0.156)	-0.083	-0.591*** (0.152)	-0.078	-0.603*** (0.151)	-0.079
Age	-0.015*** (0.005)	-0.070	-0.016*** (0.005)	-0.074	-0.016*** (0.005)	-0.074
Education	-0.138*** (0.052)	-0.057	-0.056 (0.051)	-0.023	-0.052 (0.051)	-0.022
Constant	6.270*** (0.428)		6.951*** (0.425)		7.179*** (0.439)	
Adj. R ²	0.052		0.096		0.098	
N	2321		2321		2321	

Note: Ordinary Least Squares estimates; standard errors are in parentheses.

All significant tests are two-tailed: ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

with *H2-A* and *H2-B*, the difference in trust in political institutions between losers and winners is greater than the difference between non-partisans and winners.

Importantly, we also find that partisanship intercedes in the relationship between electoral systems and institutional trust. In Model 3, the interaction term is a statistically significant and positive predictor of trust in political institutions. But, in this instance, the positive sign runs in the opposite direction to the prediction. For non-partisans, simulated expected values for trust decrease after the electoral system change from 5.80 to 5.39.¹⁴ In other words, this group considers that political institutions are more trustworthy under an FPTP electoral system, which is

¹⁴ The expected values for winners increase from 7.04 to 7.48 and the values for losers change from 5.33 to 5.71.

consistent with the argument about the advantages of majoritarian institutions made by Norris (1999).

Conclusions

The results of our analysis have implications for the democratization of African countries like Lesotho and, with a couple of key qualifications, for democratic theory generally.

From a cross-national perspective, some signs of democratization in Lesotho are positive. More Basotho expressed trust in the institution of parliament in 2003 than did the citizens of any other Southern African country, including promising new democracies like Namibia and Botswana. And, in Round 2 of the Afrobarometer, Basotho surpassed Cape Verdians, Malawians, Nigerians, Zimbabweans and even South Africans in terms of satisfaction with democracy. Other signs, however, are less encouraging. Lesotho still only ranks eleventh out of sixteen African countries surveyed in terms of mass democratic satisfaction. And, as in 2000, more Basotho in 2003 still said “don’t know” about their satisfaction with democracy than in any other African country. As such, Lesotho’s democracy remains a work in progress, whose consolidation at the level of mass culture remains substantially incomplete.

Our research has revealed, however, that electoral institutions play a significant role in the survival and consolidation of this new democracy. We have also found that winning and losing have distinctive meanings under different electoral systems. The introduction of proportional representation is especially effective at boosting supportive attitudes toward state and regime among political minorities who were previously disadvantaged by winner-take-all electoral systems. After reforms that increase the fairness of electoral outcomes, the losers in the previous election (and to a lesser extent non-partisans) show higher levels of both satisfaction with democracy and trust in state institutions. Because these supporters of opposition parties might be otherwise tempted to threaten political disorder, such positive public sentiments are critical to the stabilization of untested democratic regimes.

In practice, the presence of minority representatives in Lesotho’s new parliament has enabled increased scrutiny of the incumbent LCD government. Leaders from opposition parties serve as chairpersons of all five sessional select committees of the National Assembly.¹⁵ While the opposition’s 41 seats cannot overcome the advantage of the ruling LCD’s 79 seats, opposition parties are at least able to bring important issues to public attention, including the government’s management of the budget. As a result, ordinary people in Lesotho are more likely to pay attention to government business and to have a more solid basis for forming opinions about the government’s policy performance. And, even if they do not always get their way, they are more likely to acknowledge the democratic regime – and especially key institutions like parliament – as their own.

Thus we confirm that, even in new democracies where institutions are generally weak, institutions still seem to matter to the formation of mass democratic attitudes. By way of conclusion, however, we wish draw attention to two key qualifications to any institutional theory of democratization.

First, in new democracies, informal political ties mediate the effects of formal institutions. In African contexts, electoral reforms may change the legal formula for converting votes into seats,

¹⁵ Business Committee, House Committee, Committee on Standing Orders, Public Accounts Committee, Staff Committee, Committee of Privileges, and HIV/AIDS Committee.

but they do not fully displace the winner-take-all ethic of neopatrimonial rule. Political leaders are still likely to regard democracy as a means to gain access to the spoils of the state and to strongly favor partisan loyalists in the distribution of patronage rewards. All participants in neopatrimonial relations are acutely attuned to these informal rules, including clients who understand the benefits of openly expressing partisan fealty to a patron. It is according to calculations of this sort that winners – much more so than losers – always extend higher levels of political support to the prevailing government, as well as the regime and state. The persistence of patronage and corruption, even under electoral democracy, helps us understand why the gap in political support between winners and losers, while narrowing under formal changes of electoral system, never fully closes. Especially in new democracies, where expectations of neopatrimonial rule continue to loom large, informal institutions – like partisan loyalty to the “big man” and his party – mediate the relationship between formal rules and political attitudes.

Our final caveat concerns the object of inquiry in studies of political support. Leading analysts in this field have not adopted uniform constructs and measurements of this important dependent variable. Norris, who studies trust in state institutions, may not be fully justified in counterposing her research results against Anderson and Guillory, who are concerned with popular satisfaction with the regime of democracy. The only way to resolve the debate over the relative advantages of majoritarian versus consensual institutions is with reference to the same dependent variables. Fortunately, the Afrobarometer measures both satisfaction with democracy and trust in institutions. In this article, we have shown that proportional rules boost citizen political support when this concept is measured as satisfaction with democracy. But we have also found trace evidence among non-partisans in Lesotho that disproportional rules are more conducive to political support, at least when this concept is measured in terms of institutional trust.

At minimum, then, analysts should explicitly identify the referents of political support. If the object of study is democratization, then satisfaction with democracy is clearly the preferable indicator. But if a researcher is interested in the legitimacy of the state, then it is appropriate to measure trust in state institutions. Divergent approaches and findings in the current research literature have substantive implications, including what we see as the relative sophistication of citizens in new democracies. We have shown that the citizens of Lesotho, especially those who previously lacked representation, report that electoral reforms improve the quality of their country’s democracy. At the same time, however, these citizens doubt that a change in electoral institutions will alter the day-to-day operations of the executive agencies of the state. They recognize that, even where electoral democracy and parliamentary representation have been attained, power still resides with leaders who are driven by formal and informal norms of “winners take all.”

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Appendix A

Question Wording and Response Codes

Satisfaction with Democracy. “Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Lesotho?” [Response categories were 1 = “not at all satisfied”; 2 = “not very satisfied”; 3 = “fairly satisfied”; 4 = “very satisfied”].

Trust in Political Institutions. “How much do you trust each of the following, or haven’t you heard enough about them to say?” [0 = “not at all”; 1 = “a little bit”; 2 = “a lot”; 3 = “a very great deal.” The combined institutional trust scale for five items ranges from 0 to 15.]

Political Status. “Which party do you usually think of yourself as close to?” [If party choice matches with a government party = winner; if it matches with an opposition party = loser, otherwise = non-partisan].

National Economic Performance. “In general, how would you describe the present economic condition of Lesotho?” [1= “Very bad”; 2 = “Fairly bad”; 3 = “Neither good nor bad”; 4 = “Fairly good”; 5 = “Very good.”]

Personal Economic Performance. “In general, how would you describe your own present living conditions?” [1= “Very bad”; 2 = “Fairly bad”; 3 = “Neither good nor bad”; 4 = “Fairly good”; 5 = “Very good”].

Interest in Politics. “How interested are you in politics and government?” [0 = “not interested”; 1 = “somewhat interested”; 2 = “very interested.” For the analysis, a dummy variable was created with 1 = “very interested” and “somewhat interested”, 0 = otherwise].

Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Satisfaction with Democracy	1808	2.589	1.183	1	4
Trust in Political Institutions	2377	6.653	3.817	0	15
Loser	2377	0.171	0.377	0	1
Non-partisan	2377	0.380	0.486	0	1
Interest in Politics	2377	0.806	0.396	0	1
National Economic Performance	2377	1.863	1.088	1	5
Personal Economic Performance	2377	2.006	1.008	1	5
Gender	2377	0.497	0.5	0	1
Age	2377	43.025	17.376	18	92
Education	2377	2.659	1.593	0	9