

# AFRO BAROMETER

Working Paper No. 71

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AND MISTRUST IN INSTITUTIONS IN  
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: A MICRO-  
LEVEL ANALYSIS**

by Wonbin Cho and Matthew F. Kirwin

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The Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA)  
6 Spin Street, Church Square  
Cape Town 8001, South Africa  
27 21 461 2559 • fax: 27 21 461 2589  
Mattes (bob@idosact.org.za)

Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana)  
14 West Airport Residential Area  
P.O. Box 404, Legon-Accra, Ghana  
233 21 776 142 • fax: 233 21 763 028  
Gyimah-Boadi (cdd@ghana.com)

Michigan State University (MSU)  
Department of Political Science  
East Lansing, Michigan 48824  
517 353 3377 • fax: 517 432 1091  
Bratton (mbratton@msu.edu)

[afrobarometer.org](http://afrobarometer.org)

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by Wonbin Cho and Matthew F. Kirwin

**September 2007**

Wonbin Cho is Assistant Professor in the Political Science Department at the University of Kentucky.

Matthew F. Kirwin is a Ph.D student in the Political Science Department program at Michigan State University and research assistant with the Afrobarometer.

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# A Vicious Circle of Corruption and Mistrust in Institutions in sub-Saharan Africa: A Micro-level Analysis

## *Abstract*

How are corruption and mistrust in political institutions related to each other? Does corruption produce mistrust, or does mistrust produce corruption? Using Afrobarometer survey data, this paper investigates the relationship between corruption and trust in institutions. We will argue that political corruption worsens governmental performance, thus reducing popular trust in institutions' capacity to address citizens' demands. In addition, lack of trust in institutions actually favors corruption insofar as it transforms citizens into clients and bribers who use patronage networks to gain access to rent-seeking decision-makers. The relationship between corruption and popular trust in institutions is therefore not one in which the direction of causality may be easily traced. On the contrary, corruption and mistrust feed each other, producing vicious circles. For example, corruption makes informal institutions the most effective means by which to obtain goods and services, which in turn increases levels of corruption.

## INTRODUCTION

Corruption is one of the most important constraints on economic growth and political development in Africa. Excessive state control of economic activities has turned the institutions of government into instruments to loot the economy to generate benefits for individuals and politically dominant groups. Moreover, although privatization of nationalized industries and utilities has been regarded as an antidote to corruption, the process has been dominated by crooked deals and corrupt practices. Therefore, it is difficult for citizens to determine if economic reform programs are designed to provide avenues for politicians and bureaucrats to enrich themselves or if they are genuine vehicles for alleviation of poverty in this region.

Corruption violates the rules of democracy and threatens the inclusiveness of the political community. Warren (2004: 329) argues that “corruption is always a form of duplicitous and harmful exclusion of those who have a claim to inclusion in collective decisions and actions.” Corruption is likely to deliver private benefits for those included in decisions or actions and public costs for at least some of those who are excluded from the process. For example, corruption delays access to public administration for those people who do not pay bribes. In many parts of Africa, corruption has become a pervasive almost banal practice in the provision of goods and services.

As numerous studies have shown, corruption lowers levels of popular trust in government (Rose, Mishler, and Haerpher 1998; Mishler and Rose 2001; Porta 2000; Seligson 2002; Catterberg and Moreno 2005; Chang and Chu 2006). By distorting the delivery of public works, corruption decreases the efficiency and efficacy with which public administration performs its official function of enhancing the public good. Citizens evaluate the functioning of democratic institutions on the basis of their actual performance. People are likely to show trust in political institutions only to the extent that they believe that the functions and procedures of institutions are fair and reasonable. But violations of fairness- whether through frequently reported scandals, purposively long delays in the delivery of public goods, and public officials who demand bribes in exchange for services- undermine citizens’ trust in political institutions.

Corruption may even be thought of as an informal institution that alters the rules and norms that govern how individuals act in society (Bratton 2007). As informal institutions replace formal rules, citizens realize that to follow the formal rules is to diminish one’s expected utility (Helmke and Levitsky, 2006). As more citizens arrive at the conclusion that bribery is a necessary component of interactions with the government, instances of corruption increase and trust in political institutions decreases. Citizens no longer believe that political institutions are beholden to formal rules. Mistrust in political institutions and parallel growth in informal institutions in turn assure growth in the practice of corruption.

As a stark example, we can consider the recent case of the toxic waste disaster in Cote d’Ivoire. The Dutch multinational oil company Trafigura, with the complicity of the Ivoirien government, dumped toxic waste in poor neighborhoods that resulted in the deaths of at least ten people and sickened more than 5000 people. Although the civil servants who were blamed for the disaster were sacked, days later they were reinstated (BBC 2006). One can easily imagine how a situation such as this one could lead an Ivoirien citizen to have less trust in the political institutions in Cote d’Ivoire. Impunity for the corrupt decreases trust in institutions. This lack of accountability and apparent corruption on the part of public officials contributes to the vicious circle.

This article empirically examines predictions about the relationship between corruption and mistrust through cross-national survey data collected from 17 sub-Saharan countries. While most existing studies only look in one direction, namely that corruption causes mistrust in political institutions, we systematically examine the reciprocal relationship between corruption and mistrust. The results of our investigation are consistent with pessimistic predictions: experiences of corruption act to lower trust in

institutions and higher levels of mistrust in turn increase experiences with corruption.<sup>1</sup> This examination uses experiences with as opposed to perceptions corruption in order to measure citizens' exposure to quotidian forms of forms of graft. We also look at both popular trust in institutions and mass satisfaction with specific government services as dependent variables. Even when controlling for social, political and economic factors we still find that the reciprocal relationship between people's direct experiences with corruption and the two dependent variables is significant.

The organization of the paper is as follows: in the first section, we look specifically at corruption within the African context and review how scholars have explained the existence of corruption in developing nations. In the second section we provide a literature review of the studies that have examined the relationship between corruption and mistrust and develop our arguments concerning the vicious circle. The third section presents issues of measurement and empirical analysis. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of the results and implications of our analysis.

## **CORRUPTION IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT**

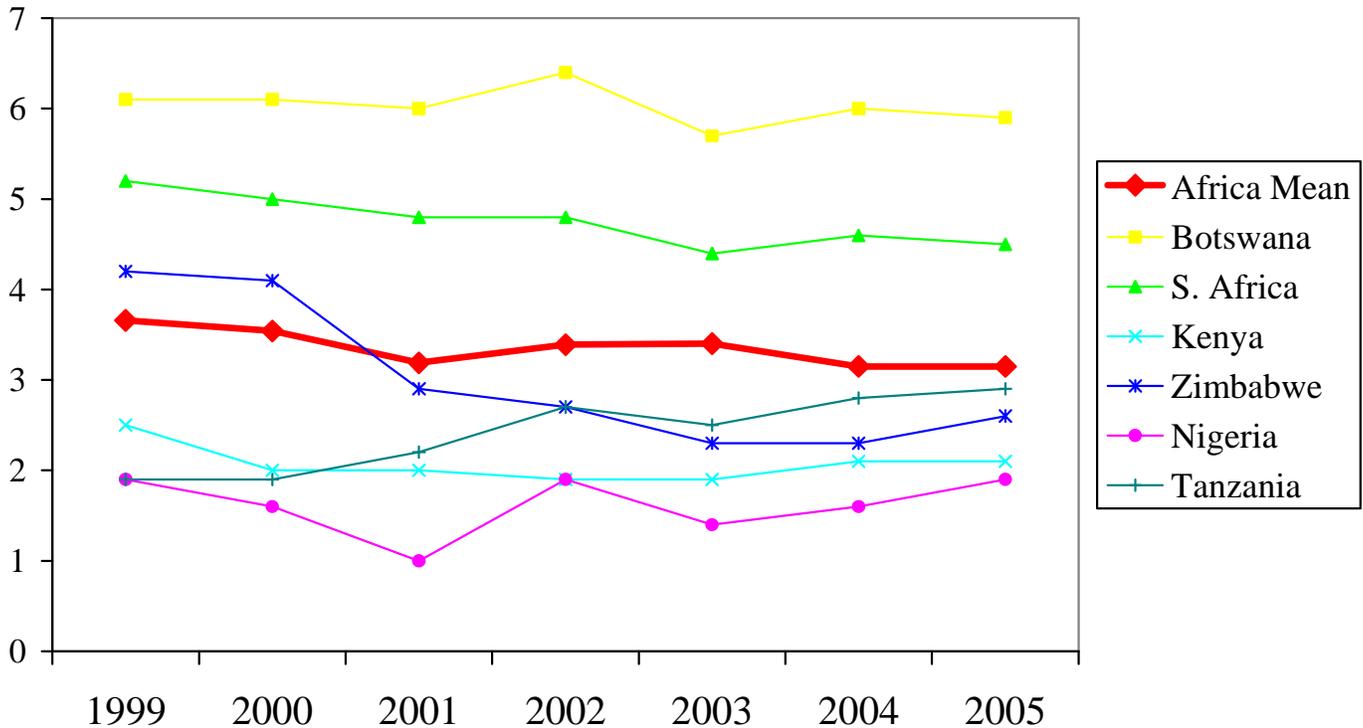
According to the Transparency International report of 2005, 19 of the 35 most corrupt countries in the world are found in Africa. Figure 1 clearly shows that corruption is getting worse in Africa. Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) decreases from 3.7 in 1999 to 3.1 in 2005. It is no surprise that Nigeria ranks the worst and Botswana does the best on the continent. Figure 1 also shows that while corruption in Zimbabwe is getting worse, the CPI for Tanzania improved from 1.9 in 1999 to 2.9 in 2005.

While there has been both external and internal pressure on African governments to act against corruption, we have observed little significant progress in this critical matter that faces the region. In Nigeria, for example, while the President Obasanjo has placed emphasis on curbing government official corruption, the anti-corruption movement is persistently accused of focusing on selective investigations, that target his political opponents (BBC 2006). The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), an anti-corruption agency government headed by Nuhu Ribadu, has investigated a former chief of police, a government minister and an impeached state governor. On the other hand, as April's presidential and general elections approached, the EFCC selective investigation against Vice-President Atiku Abubakar, who was one of the leading candidate for the presidential election and who fell out publicly with the president when he opposed the campaign to allow Mr. Obasanjo's attempt for a third term in office. This high profile example shows that governments often use anti-corruption campaigns as a political weapon against opponents.

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<sup>1</sup> Della Porta and Vannucci (1999), Uslander (2005), and Razafindrakoto and Roubaud (2007) examine the reciprocal relationship.

*Figure 1. Trends of Corruption Perceptions Index in Africa*



In theory, multiparty elections allow citizens to remove corrupt politicians from office by means of elections and thereby force governments to be more accountable. In addition, foreign donors and international institutions are no longer willing to be patient with government corruption, and now provide continuous financial support based on conditionalities of evidence of improving democracy, good governance and accountability. Often, however, democratic transfer has not resulted in reduced levels of corruption. Kenya's current president Mwai Kibaki was elected in 2002 on a platform that pledged to end the corruption that characterized the previous regime led by Daniel arap Moi. But, Kibaki's anti-graft promises have proven largely hollow as his administration has been accused of corrupt practices that rival the levels experienced under his predecessors (Nasong'o 2007, Transparency International Kenya 2007). Kenya's Permanent Secretary for Governance and Ethics John Githongo, a Kibaki appointee, was forced to flee the country in 2005 after revealing the Anglo Leasing scandal in which government contracts were awarded to a non-existent company. The case of Kenya suggests that persistent corruption will decrease citizens' trust in institutions, especially when new brooms are as corrupt as the administration that they swept out. It is possible that the situation in Kenya will reinforce the vicious circle that we discuss in this paper.

The explanations for the existence of corruption in Africa vary. Some studies focus on external impacts and others on internal ones. Bayart (1999) cites "Africa's insertion in the international economy in the mode of dependence" as a factor that contributes to the growth in corrupt political practices. Bayart also argues that the current levels of corruption are "a revival of the predatory economy which predominated in the nineteenth century" (1999). Ekeh (1975) cites as a cause of corruption the dilemma of "the two

publics” that government officials must face. Once in office, political elites are obliged to face two different and conflicting publics. By this it is meant that primordial and civic duties become intertwined and democratic ideals may in some instances become marginalized. Schatzberg (2001) posits that the prevalent paternal and familial metaphors purveyed by the state foster an environment that promotes corrupt practices such as the payment of tributes to politicians and leaders. The patronage system of ‘Big Man-Small Boy’ politics was institutionalized during the colonial period as a way to govern through chiefs and headmen, but remains salient in contemporary African politics and contributes to corrupt practices (LeVine 1980, Nugent 1995). According to Joseph (1987) ethnic based patron-clientelism and prebendalism, gives officeholders and bureaucrats the opportunity to use official decisions as vehicles for personal or clan enrichment. Finally Engelbert (2000) views the state as an assemblage of “ghostly institutions” lacking legitimacy and he argues that as trust and respect for institutions diminishes, corruption spreads. Although the origins and causes of corruption may be debated, there is less disagreement about the pernicious effects of corruption. Bratton et al (2005) found that higher levels of perceived corruption result in lower levels of individual trust in state institutions.

There have already been a few qualitative, comparative studies that discuss the relationship between corruption and mistrust in institutions in Africa. Olivier de Sardan (1999), through a broad examination of African states, found that corruption does occur and it is impunity that undermines mistrust. Berman (2003: 39) argues that experiences with corruption “produce a vicious circle reinforcing reliance on the ethnic solidarity and patron-client that dominate bureaucratic processes in the post-colonial state.” Hibou (1999: 96) describes a powerful effect by which “the venality of some civil servants weakens the capacity and the legitimacy of the state in general.”

Two main theoretical schools attempt to explain why corruption is more prominent in developing countries: moralists and functionalists. The first group of scholars emphasizes the roles of social norms such as gift-giving and loyalty to family or clan (Banfield 1958; Wraith and Simkins 1963). A political leader or public official who aids friends, family members, and supporters may seem natural in these societies. They argue that high levels of corruption, grounded in these social norms, have a negative impact on both economic and political development. By contrast, functionalists emphasize the positive effects of corruption on development (Leff 1964; Ney 1967; Huntington 1968). They argue that corruption is likely to increase the efficiency of government; it helps overcome bureaucratic obstacles and divisions in a ruling elite that might otherwise result in destructive conflict.

Empirical results, however, tend to reject functionalist arguments that justify corruption. Using available cross-national data, recent empirical studies show that high levels of corruption are associated with lower levels of investment and economic growth (for reviews, see Rosa-Ackerman 1999; Montinola and Jackman 2002). Studies using formal economic models have also demonstrated the negative effects of corruption on economic growth (Shleifer and Vishney 1993, Mauro 1995). Corruption reduces incentives due to the negative aspects of rent-seeking behavior by the state (Shleifer and Vishney 1993). These studies conclude that corruption discourages entrepreneurial creativity, which in turn has negative impacts on economic development.

## **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CORRUPTION AND MISTRUST: A VICIOUS CIRCLE**

The number of studies systematically exploring the impact of corruption on popular attitudes toward

government is increasing. This is largely due to the availability of individual level survey data collected from a large number of countries including both emerging and established democracies in the regions of Europe, Latin America and East Asia. The results of these studies consistently show citizens' perception of corruption has a negative effect on trust in political institutions. Using survey data collected from Central and Eastern European countries, Rose and his colleagues find that higher levels of perceptions of corruption have a negative impact on citizens' attitudes toward a political system (Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998; Mishler and Rose 2001). Della Porta (2000) found that political corruption worsens governmental performance, which in turn diminishes trust in the capacity of the government to respond to the demands of citizens. Seligson (2002) also finds that citizens who experience corruption are likely to show lower levels of support for democratic regime in four Latin American countries. By contrast, Catterberg and Moreno (2005) found that corruption has a significant effect on distrust in Eastern Europe, but a negligible effect in Latin America. For Asian countries, Chang and Chu (2006) find that higher levels of perceptions of corruption are associated with lower levels of institutional trust.

However, we have few systematic cross-national studies examining the effects of corruption on citizens' attitudes toward political systems in sub-Saharan Africa (Bratton et. al. 2005, Bratton 2007). This study attempts to explore the relationship between corruption and citizens' political trust. In addition to studying the effect of corruption on one general attitude toward political system – trust in state institutions – this article explores one specific sector particularly relevant to the question of corruption – popular satisfaction with health and education services. By comparing the effects of corruption on these attitudes towards state institutions and services, we can determine whether citizens associate corruption with the political system generally and/or with specific government services. Moreover, this comparison will help us to understand how ordinary Africans respond to corruption in a general way as well as specifically.

Most of the existing studies on the relationship between corruption and popular trust in political institutions are looking at one direction: corruption produces lower levels of trust in political system. These studies do not explain why the problem of corruption is getting worse and more pervasive in some regions. In Africa, for example, only two countries – Botswana and Mauritius – score above five, which is commonly seen as the threshold for serious corruption, in the 2006 CPI. Some 32 of the 45 African countries listed on the CPI 2006 scored less than three – “a sign of rampant corruption.” According to a survey by the World Bank, corruption costs Africa \$148-billion a year and increases the cost of goods by as much as 20 percent.

Della Porta and Vannucci (1999) argue that corruption lowers popular trust in political institutions and as a result popular distrust facilitates an increase in corruption. Inefficient government performance created by corrupt public officials tends to reduce public confidence in the political system. By contrast, Fjeldstad (2004) offers evidence of how good governance has the opposite effect on growth in corruption. He argues that a competent and transparent bureaucracy not only lowers the incentives for corruption and rent-seeking, but also enhances the chances for cooperation and compliance by citizens.

We concur about the negative effects of corruption on trust in political institutions, unlike previous studies. But we argue that high levels of mistrust lead to more experiences with and higher levels of corruption. Levi (1998: 95) argues that corruption and falsifications erode citizen's confidence in government. “For example, revelations of tax –evasion schemes may convince the public of the government's commitment to equitable enforcement or it may induce more noncompliance by providing evidence of the extent to government has permitted exceptions.” We argue for the latter especially in light of the impunity that corrupt politicians enjoy. Braithwaite (1998) states that a more trust-based society engenders an efficient public sector. A public sector that operates efficiently is less likely to foster an environment that requires corrupt practices to strike deals. As such we can extend Braithwaite's argument to propose that mistrust creates an inefficient public sector that in turn raises levels of corruption. Furthermore, Braithwaite (1998: 350) argues that, “the more economically backward regions (i.e. Africa),

where distrust dominates, are also the regions where political corruption festers.” In short, trust in political authorities has a significant impact on the willingness of a citizen to follow the rules (Rose-Ackerman 2001, Scholz 1998, Tyler 1998).

If citizens think that the government is not working in their interests and that its performances are not fair and reasonable, they are less likely to trust the government and the institutions. As a result, people who have low expectations regarding the efficiency and impartiality of government try to look for an alternative to obtain access to public resources. For example, they are willing to buy access by means of bribes. In some public hospitals in Africa, patients say they have to put some money in the doctor’s consultation book before they are given medical attention. Dissatisfaction with government performance and incentives to gain privileged protection through bribery increases among those initially excluded from the network of corruption. When people know many peers who pay bribes to procure a public service, they are more likely to follow the same practices. Pervasive corruption is likely to impoverish average citizens. While they dislike corruption and distrust government, voters are likely to pay a bribe to increase rather than decrease their own material welfare. Since the costs of corruption are shared by the nation as a whole, the bribers’ share of the costs will be less than their gains. Bribers can gain by shifting the costs of corruption to non-bribers. As corrupt practices are generalized, corrupt civil servants are likely to have an incentive to create mechanisms to distort the demand for public works and delay the provision of public services for those who do not pay bribes. In some schools, a student cannot pass examinations without bribing the teachers. The processes increase levels of corruption, which in turn undermine popular trust in the state. Thus, corruption and the lack of institutional trust feed each other, producing “a vicious circle.”

Unlike existing studies, this research examines the reciprocal relationship between citizens’ direct experience with corruption and their mistrust in institutions. The relationship between corruption and mistrust in institutions has been tested in some areas in the world, yet not yet in the African context. Moreover, although the theoretical concept of the vicious circle in Africa has been forwarded and anecdotal evidence abounds to support it (Hibou 1999; Olivier de Sardan 1999; Berman 2003), the theory has not yet been tested systematically. Furthermore, the connection between mistrust and corruption in Africa has not been examined by the cross-national approach that we propose.

In this study, we estimate two models with individual-level survey data. The first model looks at the relationship between experiences with corruption and mistrust in institutions generally. The second model looks at the relationship between experiences with corruption and satisfaction with selective government services (health care and education). If we find the same results in the services model as in the institutions model we can have greater confidence in our argument. While the first model shows the effects of experience with corruption on general attitudes toward political system, the second model helps to understand the effects on basic, and essential government services in Africans’ day-to-day interactions with the state.

## **DATA AND INDICATORS**

This study draws upon individual-level survey data collected in 17 sub-Saharan Africa countries from March 2005 to March 2006 by Afrobarometer (Benin, Botswana, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia). The data is derived from national probability samples whose size varies from 1,161 in Lesotho to 2,400 in South Africa, Nigeria and Uganda.<sup>2</sup> The combined data set consisted of a sample of 23,149. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and in local languages respondents preferred.

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<sup>2</sup> This information is taken from the Afrobarometer web site at [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org).

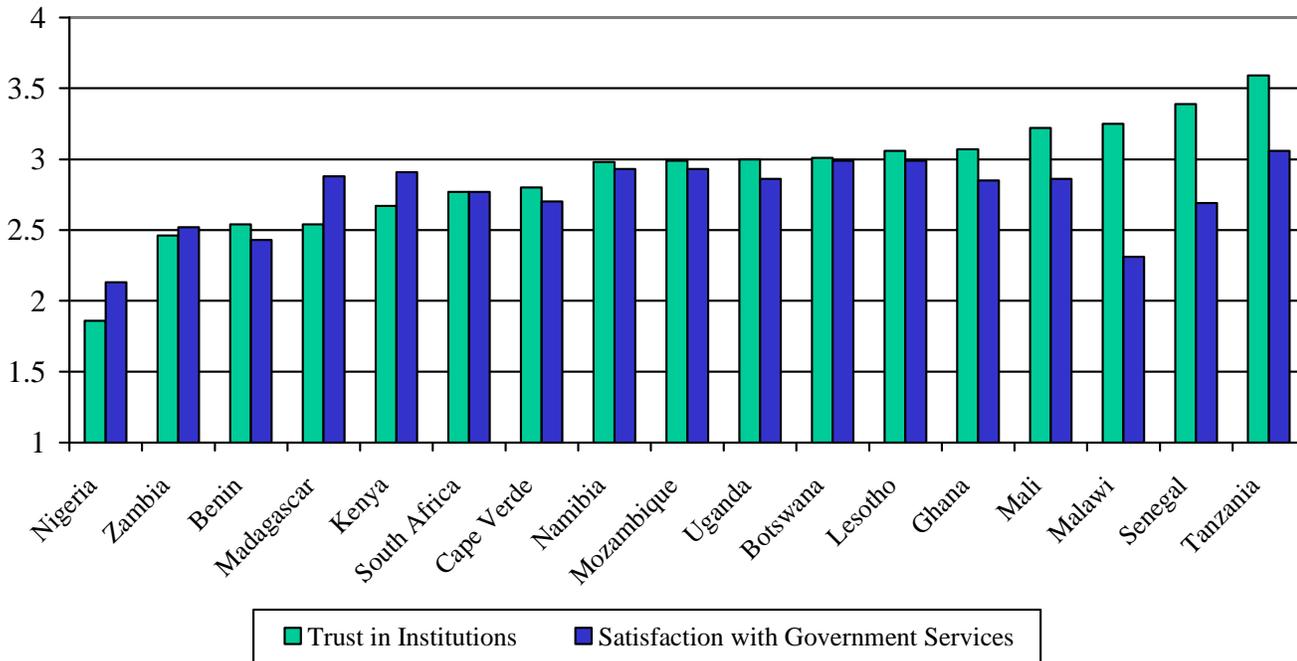
## Dependent variables

We wish to explain various dimensions of support for the political regime, with one dependent variable geared toward general evaluations of system performance and another based on popular evaluations of government performance on health and educational services. To measure popular attitudes toward their political system, respondents were asked: “How much do you trust each of the following institutions?” The answer categories were: “Not at all; just a little; somewhat; a lot.” These answer categories ranged from 1 to 4, with 4 denoting the most positive and 1 the most negative evaluation. Institutional Trust is an average index of popular trust in five political institutions (Cronbach’s Alpha = .83): the president, parliament, the army, courts of law, and the police.

To gauge popular evaluation about the performance of the current government for health and educational services, respondents were asked the following question: “How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters?” They could answer “very badly,” “fairly badly,” “fairly well,” and “very well.” The answer categories were from 1 to 4, with 4 denoting the most positive evaluation. Satisfaction with Government services is an average index of popular evaluation about two areas (Cronbach’s Alpha = .74): improving basic health services and addressing educational needs.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of mean values of the two dependent variables across countries included in this study. On the average, countries score 2.86 on a 4 point scale for popular trust in institutions and 2.73 for satisfaction with government services. The graph shows that there is considerable cross-national variation in popular trust in political institutions. Specifically, the mean values of trust in institutions range from 1.9 in Nigeria all the way to 3.6 in Tanzania. The graph also shows that there is variation across 17 sub-Saharan African countries with regard to popular satisfaction with government performance in both health care and education services. Comparisons over time show that popular satisfaction with government performance at delivering both basic education services and health services are high and rising (Afrobarometer Network 2006). The levels of popular satisfaction with government health services increased from 59 percent in 2000 to 67 percent in 2005, and satisfaction with education services increased from 54 percent in 2000 to 63 percent in 2005. While Tanzanians express quite positive evaluations of their government’s health care and education services with the mean value of 3.1, people living in Benin (2.4), Malawi (2.3), and Nigeria (2.1) are considerably less positive toward government services.

*Figure 2. Trust in Political Institutions and Satisfaction with Government Services*

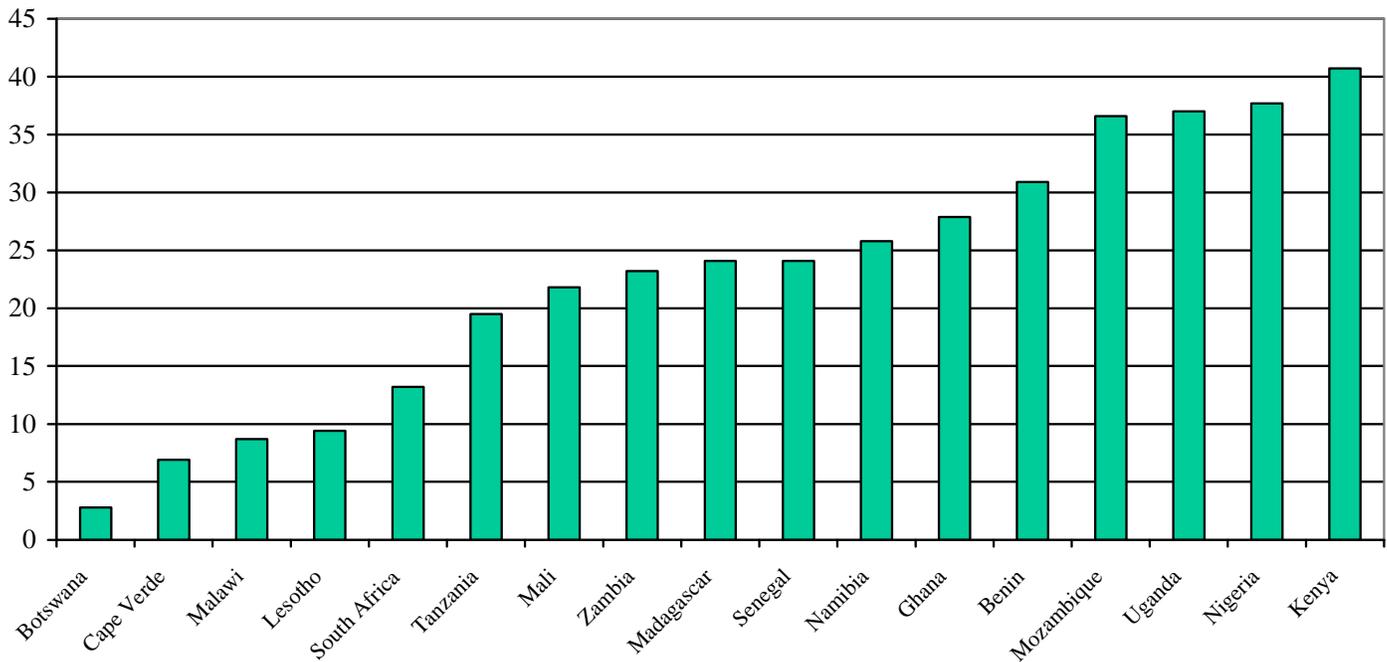


**Independent variable: Experience with Corruption**

Corruption in this study is measured by a respondent's direct encounter with the practice. Respondents were asked a series of five questions examining their experience with corruption in: (1) getting a document or a permit; (2) getting a child into school; (3) getting a household service (like piped water, electricity or phone); (4) getting a medicine or medical attention from a health worker; and (5) avoiding a problem with the police (like passing a checkpoint or avoiding a fine or arrest). Respondents were asked: "In the past, how often (if ever) have you had to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favor to do these things government officials in order to do these things." They could answer "never (= 0)," "once or twice (= 1)," "a few times (= 2)," and "often (= 3)." Corruption is an average index of popular experience with corruption in these five different contexts (Cronbach's Alpha = .80).

For the purpose of this study, popular perceptions of corruption do not allow us to make a direct link between acts of corruption and popular attitudes toward their political system or satisfaction with specific government services. According to Seligson's (2002) critique, popular perceptions of corruption may already be a function of their mistrust in political institutions. While our measurement of experience with corruption cannot include high-level corruption, it very effectively measures citizen exposure to day-to-day corruption. Recently, a few studies have emerged which use experience with corruption in individual-level analysis (Kaufmann 1998; Seligson 2002).

*Figure 3. Levels of Experience with Corruption*



Africa frequently lays claim to possession of some of the most corrupt states in the world. Figure 2 shows the distribution of the levels of experiencing corruption across the countries included in this study. Those levels are strongly associated with 2005 CPI scores.<sup>3</sup> The distribution includes respondents saying they had experience with corruption in at least one of the five different situations in the past twelve months. The data show considerable cross-national variation in popular experiences with corruption. The countries range widely, with 2.8 percent of Batswana having experienced corruption in the year prior to the survey, compared to 40.7 percent in Kenya.

### **Control Variables**

Our model controls for a variety of factors that have been found to predict popular trust in political institutions in previous analyses. The control variables fall into three categories: social structure, political performance, and economic performance. In addition to personal experience with corruption, first, this study includes five other variables to look at the effects of political performance on popular trust in the state: satisfaction with democracy, free and fair elections, political interest, political freedom and partisan status (“winner” and non-partisan). Diamond (1999) emphasizes the roles of political performance on democratic consolidation, particularly in emerging democracies. Increasing political freedom, greater accountability, and guaranteed constitutionalism can increase levels of popular trust in democratic institutions. Many studies consistently find political performance has a significant effect on increasing levels of trust in political institutions (Mishler and Rose 2001; Seligson 2002; Chang and Chu 2006). The political performance of democratic institutions and actors does not constitute the only dimension shaping citizens’ attitudes toward their political system. Economic growth and distribution also have an

<sup>3</sup> Pearson correlation is  $-0.684$  ( $p=0.002$ ). A lower score means more corruption in CPI.

important role in increasing levels of popular trust in democratic institutions. Sustainable economic growth that broadly improves incomes and reduces very high rates of poverty and unemployment is strongly associated with democratic consolidation (Haggard and Kaufman 1995; Przeworski et al. 2000). To test the effects of citizens' evaluations of economic performance, this study includes four variables: citizens' perceptions of current household economy, current macroeconomy, prospective household economy, and prospective macroeconomy. Four standard demographic predictions are also included in the model: age, education, gender, and urban-rural.

## **ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

### **Experience with Corruption and Trust in Institutions**

As we have indicated, there is reason to believe that the relationship between popular trust in institutions and experiences with corruption are reciprocal. Despite anecdotal evidence that supports this theory, thus far the only study that provides empirical evidence is the study by Chang and Chu (2006), which estimates a simultaneous-equation model with survey data collected from five Asian countries. Most of the remaining studies restrict their attention to one direction and argue that corruption has negative effects on levels of trust in political institutions. We find that this limitation excludes the possibility that lower levels of popular trust increase the experience of corruption. There are reasons to believe that mistrust in institutions is likely to lead people to obtain access to public resources by means of bribes which raises experience with corruption, yet there is little empirically-based literature that looks at this relationship. We argue that as the formal rules of state institutions are increasingly circumvented by corrupt practices and mistrust of the state grows, more people turn to informal means to obtain public goods and services. Mistrust in the transparency and efficaciousness of institutions signals citizens to follow informal rules such as bribery and nepotism. If, for example, a governmental institution, such as the Ministry of the Interior cannot be adequately trusted to deliver a public good, such as an identity card without an illicit inducement, citizens in need of such a service are compelled to use a personal contact or illicit inducement in order to obtain it.

To investigate whether the relationship between experience of corruption and popular trust in political institutions has an endogeneity bias (in other words, whether the experience of corruption is reciprocally influenced by trust), we first run an OLS regression analysis as presented in Table 1 and conduct a Hausman test (Wooldridge 2000: 484). We find a significant coefficient of residuals term, confirming the existence of the endogeneity bias in the OLS analysis.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The OLS estimate of residuals is  $-0.145$  (s.e. =  $0.038$ ).

**Table 1. Experience of Corruption and Trust in Institutions**

| Dependent Variable                 | Model 1               | Model 2                      |                          |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
|                                    | OLS Model             | Simultaneous Equations Model |                          |
|                                    | Trust in Institutions | Trust in Institutions        | Experience of Corruption |
| Political performance              |                       |                              |                          |
| Experience of corruption           | -0.145***<br>(0.014)  | -2.218***<br>(0.287)         |                          |
| Satisfaction with democracy        | 0.176***<br>(0.007)   | 0.137***<br>(0.007)          |                          |
| Free and fair elections            | 0.130***<br>(0.007)   | 0.107***<br>(0.009)          |                          |
| Political freedom                  | 0.158***<br>(0.008)   | 0.130***<br>(0.018)          |                          |
| Political interest                 | 0.065***<br>(0.006)   | 0.052***<br>(0.007)          |                          |
| Winner                             | 0.100***<br>(0.016)   | 0.063***<br>(0.015)          |                          |
| Non-partisan                       | -0.066***<br>(0.006)  | -0.055**<br>(0.017)          |                          |
| Economic performance               |                       |                              |                          |
| Current household economy          | -0.024***<br>(0.006)  | -0.025***<br>(0.007)         |                          |
| Current macroeconomy               | 0.067***<br>(0.006)   | 0.053***<br>(0.007)          |                          |
| Prospective household economy      | -0.016<br>(0.008)     | -0.012<br>(0.008)            |                          |
| Prospective macroeconomy           | 0.039***<br>(0.008)   | 0.034***<br>(0.008)          |                          |
| Social structure                   |                       |                              |                          |
| Gender (female)                    | -0.018<br>(0.012)     | -0.009<br>(0.015)            |                          |
| Urban (= 1)                        | -0.081***<br>(0.013)  | -0.071***<br>(0.011)         |                          |
| Age                                | 0.001*<br>(0.000)     | 0.001<br>(0.001)             |                          |
| Education                          | -0.063***<br>(0.003)  | -0.056***<br>(0.003)         |                          |
| Trust in institutions              |                       |                              | -0.078***<br>(0.009)     |
| Unequal treatment under the law    |                       |                              | 0.028***<br>(0.004)      |
| Ethnic group's economic condition  |                       |                              | -0.001<br>(0.002)        |
| Ethnic group's political influence |                       |                              | -0.007***<br>(0.003)     |
| Generalized trust                  |                       |                              | -0.015*<br>(0.006)       |
| Constant                           | 1.276***<br>(0.042)   | 2.040***<br>(0.156)          | 0.367***<br>(0.031)      |
| N                                  | 14105                 | 12337                        | 12337                    |

Note: \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ .

Our primary interest is the potential two-way relationship between experience of corruption and popular trust in institutions. To estimate this relationship, we need to specify a simultaneous-equations model, which includes both an equation for popular trust in political institutions and an equation for experience of corruption. This simultaneous-equations model incorporates enough exogenous variables to meet the conditions for identification. We also need to control for factors that may obscure the relationship between these two variables. Specifically, in addition to the equation for popular trust in political institutions, which specifies a series of significant predictors presented in Model 2, we create another equation for experience of corruption and test whether the citizens' experience of corruption is dependent on their level of trust in political institutions.

The citizens' experience of corruption equation in Model 2 also controls for people's perception of unequal treatment under the law, the economic conditions of their own ethnic group, the political influence of their own ethnic group, and generalized trust. A few scholars argue that the more people perceive that they are treated unequally under the law the more they try to pay a bribe either to receive a public service (getting a document, a permit, piped water, or electricity) or to avoid a problem with the police (passing a checkpoint or avoiding a fine or arrest) (Tyler 1990; Tresiman 2000; Lambsdorff 2002). People who perceive their own ethnic group's economic conditions to be relatively worse than other groups are more likely to pay a bribe to get a public service from government. By this same logic, people who belong to an ethnic group with relatively less influence in politics than other groups are more likely to give a gift to government officials in order to obtain a public service. Finally, Uslaner (2005: 76) finds "trusting societies have less corruption." Generalized trust (the belief that most people can be trusted) is more likely to endorse strong standards of moral and legal behavior, and as a result act to reduce corruption. Since previous studies have shown the existence of a relationship between interpersonal trust and corruption, we include interpersonal trust as an independent variable for an equation for experience with corruption.

The results, presented in Model 2, provide strong evidence for a vicious cycle between experience of corruption and popular mistrust in political institutions, at least for the 17 sub-Saharan Africa countries included in the analysis. We estimate Model 2 with three-stage least squares. The coefficient of the experience of corruption in Model 2 is statistically significant and negative as expected. When simultaneity is explicitly taken into account, the magnitude of the experience of corruption is significantly increased (-2.218) compared with the OLS model (-0.145). Experiences with corruption lower popular levels of trust in political institutions. In addition, the coefficient of trust in institutions of the experience of corruption equation is negative, showing that citizens who express lower levels of trust in political institutions are more likely to pay a bribe or give a gift to government officials in order to receive a public service.

Most of the other variables included in this analysis also achieve conventional levels of statistical significance. The results show that good political performance can boost citizens' levels of trust in political institutions. People who perceive more satisfaction with democracy and higher levels of fairness in elections are likely to express higher levels of trust in political institutions. People who think that political freedoms are better than they were a few years ago also show higher levels of trust in political institutions. Similarly, people who are more interested in public affairs tend to show higher levels of institutional trust. The results also show that citizens who identify with parties in power ("winners") reveal higher trust in institutions than those who support opposition parties.

Only two out of four economic performance evaluations have positive effects on popular trust in political institutions. Citizens in 17 sub-Saharan Africa countries place more emphasis on macro-economic issues rather than micro-economic issues. Those who are more optimistic about the national economy in the coming twelve months are much more likely to trust current political institutions. On the other hand, household's future economic prospects have no significant effect on popular trust. Individual evaluations

of current macro-economic conditions have strong and positive effects on trust, but evaluations of current household conditions have negative effects.

Three out of four aspects of social structure have statistically significant effects on shaping citizens' trust in political institutions. Older people tend to express higher levels of trust in their political system than the young. People with higher levels of education tend to show lower levels of trust, and individuals who live in urban areas are less trusting of institutions as well. It may be that individuals with higher levels of education and those in urban areas have better access to media and thus have a more skeptical or critical analysis of political institutions. Autocratic African leaders, such as Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, frequently take advantage of this phenomenon and rely on popular support in rural areas (Chikwanha, Sithole and Bratton: 2004).

As predicted, results also show that people who think that the justice system is unfair and that they are subject to unfair treatment are more likely to pay a bribe to government officials to receive a public service or to avoid a problem with the police. The same is true of those who think their own ethnic group has less influence in politics than other groups. In terms of these results, it is understandable that individuals in socially and politically inferior positions, whether real or perceived, may be more likely to experience acts of corruption. For people who are treated unfairly, a bribe may be a means by which he or she may "level the playing field." Moreover, victims of a corrupted justice system and those lacking political influence may need to make an illicit offering in order to gain access to public goods, such as government jobs and resources. However, citizens who believe that most people can be trusted are less likely to pay a bribe or give a gift to government officials to receive a public service.

### **Experience of Corruption and Satisfaction with Government Services**

Table 2 shows the results of OLS estimation and the simultaneous equation model of the effects of experiences of corruption on popular satisfaction with government services, measured as a composite index for health care and education services<sup>5</sup>. This model provides an additional picture of the vicious circle phenomenon of citizens' responses to facing corrupt government officials in the health and education services. The models we estimated are identical to those in Table 1: the only difference is in the dependent variable, which is satisfaction with government services, and experience of corruption. In this analysis, the independent variable of experience of corruption consists of only two items: paying a bribe to get a child into school and to get a medicine or medical attention from a health worker. The results are clearly consistent with the vicious circle argument: the experience of corruption lowers popular satisfaction with government service delivery at basic health care and education sectors and, on the other hand, popular dissatisfaction with government services encourages citizens to access public services by means of bribes.

In Model 2, the coefficient of experience of corruption is statistically significant and negative and the coefficient of government services is also significant and negative. The payment of a bribe decreases citizens' satisfaction with two basic government services. The results are not consistent with Bratton's work (2007). He finds that the experience of corruption has a positive effect on satisfaction with government service delivery in the basic health care and education sectors, but significant only for health care and when both services are combined. The contrasting result may be due to the fuller specifications of our models which include more on citizens' perceptions of political and economic performance as opposed to service accessibility and service experiences other than corruption.

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<sup>5</sup> A Hausman test confirms the existence of the endogeneity bias in the OLS analysis. The OLS estimate of residual is -0.106 (s.e. = 0.032).

Unlike popular trust in political institutions, there is no significant difference in satisfaction with government services between supporters of winning and losing political parties. But, people who support no party are less likely to be satisfied with government services than “losers.” Among economic performance evaluations, only two macro-economic conditions have significant effects on popular satisfaction with basic health care and education services. Results show that good economic performance increases positive attitudes toward government service delivery. People who think their own ethnic group’s economic conditions are better than other groups are less likely to give a bribe to government officials to receive basic health care and education services. Unlike the trust in political institutions model, generalized trust has no significant effect on the experience of corruption for two basic government services.

**Table 2. Experience of Corruption and Satisfaction with Government Services**

| Dependent Variable                 | Model 1              | Model 2              |  |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--|
|                                    | OLS Model            | Government Services  | Simultaneous Equations Model<br>Experience of Corruption |
| <b>Political performance</b>       |                      |                      |  |
| Experience of corruption           | -0.073***<br>(0.012) | -0.974***<br>(0.210) |  |
| Satisfaction with democracy        | 0.120***<br>(0.007)  | 0.108***<br>(0.007)  |  |
| Free and fair elections            | 0.079***<br>(0.006)  | 0.072***<br>(0.008)  |  |
| Political Freedom                  | 0.120***<br>(0.007)  | 0.113***<br>(0.014)  |  |
| Political interest                 | 0.020***<br>(0.006)  | 0.017***<br>(0.006)  |  |
| Winner                             | 0.032**<br>(0.016)   | 0.007<br>(0.016)     |  |
| Non-partisan                       | -0.053***<br>(0.016) | -0.044**<br>(0.017)  |  |
| <b>Economic performance</b>        |                      |                      |  |
| Current household economy          | 0.005<br>(0.006)     | 0.001<br>(0.006)     |  |
| Current macroeconomy               | 0.086***<br>(0.006)  | 0.076***<br>(0.006)  |  |
| Prospective household economy      | 0.018<br>(0.008)     | 0.014<br>(0.008)     |  |
| Prospective macroeconomy           | 0.041***<br>(0.008)  | 0.041***<br>(0.008)  |  |
| <b>Social structure</b>            |                      |                      |  |
| Gender (female)                    | 0.003<br>(0.012)     | 0.006<br>(0.012)     |  |
| Urban (= 1)                        | -0.020<br>(0.012)    | -0.005<br>(0.012)    |  |
| Age                                | 0.001<br>(0.001)     | 0.001<br>(0.001)     |  |
| Education                          | -0.004<br>(0.003)    | -0.005<br>(0.003)    |  |
| Government services                |                      |                      | -0.082**<br>(0.014)                                      |
| Unequal treatment under the law    |                      |                      | 0.030***<br>(0.004)                                      |
| Ethnic group's economic condition  |                      |                      | -0.011**<br>(0.004)                                      |
| Ethnic group's political influence |                      |                      | -0.007<br>(0.004)  |
| Generalized trust                  |                      |                      | -0.001<br>(0.009)  |
| Constant                           | 1.255***<br>(0.041)  | 1.573***<br>(0.120)  | 0.320**<br>(0.049)                                       |
| N                                  | 14911                | 12988                | 12988  |

Note: \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ .

This study shows, first, that ordinary Africans seem to use similar processes of reasoning in regards to corruption within both the general political system and specific government services. The results of our first model are supported by the results of the second model, which uses government services. In other words citizens' experiences with corruption and its concomitant relation with mistrust find expression both within interactions with the general political system and health and education services.

Second, as noted before, scholars have examined the relationship between corruption and mistrust in institutions on a general level, yet they did not look at the relationship of corruption and mistrust in specific government services. We argue that our examination of day to day interactions with government services by individuals gives us insight into the way that individuals view the dishonesty of their government. Although many such governments are now democratic the levels of civic involvement by citizens remains low and interactions with public services, such as health and education, are perhaps one of the only intimate ways that they can judge the trustworthiness of the government on a first-hand basis. Due to public health problems and low levels of education in Africa, schools and health clinics are public spaces that act as an interface between individuals and the government on a nearly daily basis. By considering frequently used specific government services we add an important dimension to our analysis of the relationship between corruption and mistrust in institutions. This contribution to the literature on corruption and mistrust provides a window on a concrete experience with which most Africans are familiar.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this paper suggest a circular relationship between mistrust in the state and experiences with corruption, and a "vicious" one at that. We find that citizens' experience of corruption lowers their trust in political institutions and lower levels of trust are likely to increase the experience of corruption. Our findings are robust and significant. We test the vicious circle with citizens' satisfaction with specific government services and the results are consistent with the model of people's attitudes toward political institutions. The results show that the experience of corruption decreases popular satisfaction with government service delivery in basic health care and education sectors and perceptions of an unjust government service delivered by corrupt public officials motivates citizens to pay a bribe or give a gift to obtain public services. This conclusion lends to support to Rose Ackerman's (2001: 16) assertion that "Corruption is a coping strategy for citizens facing untrustworthy, dishonest officials."

The results offered in this paper demonstrate that the liberalization of political life has not resulted in a concomitant amelioration in the destructive nature of corrupt practices and their negative effects on individual trust in the state. Our results demonstrate that the relationship between corruption and trust in institutions is bi-causal and complex. The fact that this relationship is salient in a period of increased democratization is troubling, particularly for nations that are seeking democratic consolidation.

Our finding suggests that while citizens' experience of corruption is an important component of government performance for shaping their trust in political institutions, the levels of trust actually have significant effects on the experience of corruption. The experience of corruption leads people to believe that the political systems are less likely to be trusted and the lower levels of trust are more likely to encourage ordinary people to pay a bribe to government officials to get a public service. The results indicate that informal political practices do indeed interact with formal institutions which forces citizens to re-evaluate political system performance. The experience of corruption as an informal institution not only undermines trust in formal institutions but also is determined by the mistrust in formal institutions. Thus, this study has an implication for public policy that improves the conduct and performance of

political institutions by providing increased fairness, honesty and accountability. This may be the only way to stop the vicious circle in sub-Saharan Africa.

A further implication of our study is that the vicious circle witnessed in other regions in the world also finds expression in sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover the tepid results of high-profile anti-corruption campaigns in the transitional democracies of Nigeria and Kenya point to the challenge that the vicious circle poses. Our evidence demonstrates that the vicious circle portends a continued struggle for democratic consolidation in sub-Saharan Africa.

## *Appendix A. Measures and Coding*

Trust in Political Institutions: A mean value of five items (President; Parliament; Army; Police; Courts of law)

How much do you trust each of the following?

1 = Not at all, 2 = Just a little, 3 = Somewhat, 4 = A lot

Evaluations of government services: A mean value of two items (Improving basic health services; Addressing educational needs)

How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters?

1 = Very badly, 2 = Fairly badly, 3 = Fairly well, 4 = Very well

Experiencing Corruption 1: A mean value of five items (Get a document or a permit; Get a child into school; Get a household service; Get a medicine or medical attention from a health worker; Avoid a problem with the police)

In the past year, how often (if ever) have you had to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favor to government officials in order to?

0 = Never, 1 = Once or twice, 2 = A few times, 3 = Often

Experiencing Corruption 2: A mean value of two items (Get a child into school; Get a medicine or medical attention from a health worker)

In the past year, how often (if ever) have you had to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favor to government officials in order to?

0 = Never, 1 = Once or twice, 2 = A few times, 3 = Often

Political performance

Satisfaction with democracy:

Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in your country? Are you:

1 = Not at all satisfied, 2 = Not very satisfied, 3 = Fairly satisfied, 4 = Very satisfied

Free and fair elections:

On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election? Was it:

1 = Not free and fair, 2 = Free and fair, with major problems, 3 = Free and fair, with minor problems, 4 = Completely free and fair

Political Freedom: A mean value of three items (Freedom to say what you think; Freedom to join any political organization you want; Freedom to choose who to vote for without feeling pressured)

Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they were a few years ago, or are they about the same?

1 = Much worse, 2 = Worse, 3 = Same, 4 = Better, 5 = Much better.

Political interest:

How interested would you say you are in public affairs?

0 = Not at all interested, 1 = Not very interested, 2 = Somewhat interested, 3 = Very interested

Partisan status: A dummy variable for winner; a dummy variable for non-partisan

Which party do you feel close to?

1 = A party of parties in government, 0 = Opposition parties, 1 = No party

Economic performance

Current household economy

In general, how would you describe your own present living condition?

1 = Very bad, 2 = Fairly bad, 3 = Neither good nor bad, 4 = Fairly good, 5 = Very good

#### Current macro-economy

In general, how would you describe the present economic condition of this country?

1 = Very bad, 2 = Fairly bad, 3 = Neither good nor bad, 4 = Fairly good, 5 = Very good

#### Prospective household economy

Looking ahead, do you expect the following to be better or worse? Your living conditions in twelve months time.

1 = Much worse, 2 = Worse, 3 = Same, 4 = Better, 5 = Much better

Looking ahead, do you expect the following to be better or worse? Economic conditions in this country in twelve months time.

1 = Much worse, 2 = Worse, 3 = Same, 4 = Better, 5 = Much better

#### Social Structure

##### Gender

0 = Male, 1 = Female

##### Urban

0 = Rural, 1 = Urban

##### Age

Actual age

##### Education

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

#### Unequal Treatment Under the Law

In this country, how often are people treated unequally under the law?

0 = Never, 1 = Rarely, 2 = Often, 3 = Always

#### Ethnic Group's Economic Condition

Are your ethnic group's economic conditions worse, the same as, or better than other groups in this country?

1 = Much worse, 2 = Worse, 3 = Same, 4 = Better, 5 = Much better

#### Ethnic Group's Political Influence

Does your ethnic group have less, the same as, or more influences in politics than other ethnic groups in this country?

1 = Much less, 2 = Less, 3 = Same, 4 = More, 5 = Much more

#### Generalized Trust

Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you must be very careful in dealing with people?

0 = You must be very careful, 1 = Most people can be trusted

## *Appendix B. Descriptive Statistics*

| Variable                              | Obs.  | Mean    | Std. Dev. | Min | Max |
|---------------------------------------|-------|---------|-----------|-----|-----|
| Trust in institutions                 | 21125 | 2.86    | 0.85      | 1   | 4   |
| Satisfaction with Government services | 23337 | 2.73546 | 0.79      | 1   | 4   |
| Experience with corruption 1          | 24342 | 0.18    | 0.42      | 0   | 3   |
| Experience with corruption 2          | 24131 | 0.17    | 0.46      | 0   | 3   |
| Satisfaction with democracy           | 20215 | 2.61    | 1.01      | 1   | 4   |
| Free and fair elections               | 22035 | 3.05    | 1.06      | 1   | 4   |
| Political freedom                     | 22829 | 3.84    | 0.85      | 1   | 5   |
| Political interest                    | 24068 | 1.90    | 1.07      | 0   | 3   |
| Winner                                | 24349 | 0.41    | 0.49      | 0   | 1   |
| Non-partisan                          | 24349 | 0.41    | 0.49      | 0   | 1   |
| Current household economy             | 24260 | 2.65    | 1.18      | 1   | 5   |
| Current macroeconomy                  | 24333 | 2.77    | 1.55      | 1   | 9   |
| Prospective household economy         | 20939 | 3.50    | 1.10      | 1   | 5   |
| Prospective macroeconomy              | 20602 | 3.43    | 1.14      | 1   | 5   |
| Gender (female = 1)                   | 24349 | 0.50    | 0.50      | 0   | 1   |
| Urban (= 1)                           | 24349 | 0.38    | 0.49      | 0   | 1   |
| Age                                   | 24064 | 36.59   | 14.83     | 18  | 130 |
| Unequal treatment under the law       | 22020 | 1.46    | 1.06      | 0   | 3   |
| Ethnic group's economic condition     | 22000 | 3.16    | 0.99      | 1   | 5   |
| Ethnic group's political influence    | 21454 | 3.07    | 1.00      | 1   | 5   |
| Generalized trust                     | 24349 | 0.16    | 0.37      | 0   | 1   |

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