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Geoffrey Evans, Pauline Rose

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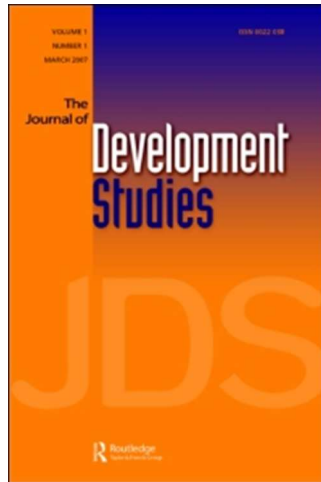
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**Understanding Education's Influence on Support for
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Understanding Education’s Influence on Support for Democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa

Abstract

Is education consequential for popular endorsement of democracy in developing societies and, if so, what are the mechanisms that account for this influence? We investigate the micro-foundations of the education-democracy nexus using a survey of 18 sub-Saharan African countries. We demonstrate that educational level is the strongest influence on support for democracy and rejection of non-democratic alternatives via its impact on comprehension of, and attention to, politics. This is consistent with a cognitive interpretation of the effects of education on democratic values rather than one which treats education as a marker of economic resource inequalities.

Keywords - education, sub-Saharan Africa, political attitudes, democracy.

1. INTRODUCTION

The debate over the ‘social requisites of democracy’, to use Lipset’s (1959) iconic phrase, has been central to discussions of democratization at both macro- and micro-levels for half a century. Yet the role of education as a social requisite remains unresolved. At the macro-level it appears that level of education and democracy are positively related, but it is not yet established whether this relationship is independent of the effects of economic development. Even in the most recent empirical disputes, some authors claim the impact of education on democracy is independent and important (Glaeser *et al.* 2007; Babbo and Coviello, 2007),¹ although there remain debates over whether the key factor is the size of the educational elite (Benavot 1996; Kurzman and Leahey 2004) or the level of education attained by the majority of the population (Castelló-Climont, 2007). Alternatively, others say that democracy can be explained by economic factors such as increases in GDP and equality (Boix and Stokes 2003), that education is significant but not as important as economic factors (Barro 1999; Przeworski *et al.* 2000), or that neither economic nor educational factors are causally related to the presence of democracy (Acemoglu *et al.* 2008).

At the micro-level, in contrast, though there have been many theoretical accounts of the role of modernization on democratic values there has been far less emphasis on an empirical analysis of the relative importance of education versus other economic and social factors in developing societies. Some of the earlier literature on modernization attributed an important role to education: It was a factor in Lipset’s (1959) thesis of the social pre-requisites of democracy, while Almond and Verba (1963) treated education as a major source of civic attitudes and support for democracy. Nonetheless, discussions of modernization including those by Lipset himself (1959; 1994), typically bundle together a range of influences – urbanization, industrialization, the growth of the middle class, education, affluence etc - without attributing any causal priority amongst them: “industrialization, urbanization, wealth and education are so closely interrelated to form one common factor” (Lipset 1959: 80). So although influential proponents of modernization theory have argued that education is important in promoting democratic values and thus facilitating the adoption and preservation of democratic practices in developing societies, the empirical evidence for its distinctive role is surprisingly thin.

1 In this paper we examine the micro-foundations of the relationship between education and democracy
2
3 identified in the macro political economic studies. Our central focus is on the importance of education for
4
5 pro-democracy attitudes in 18 Sub-Saharan African societies. We further examine how this relationship can
6
7 be interpreted. Our thesis is that though its impact on attention to, and comprehension of politics, education
8
9 increases support for democratic practices in developing societies to a greater degree than other social
10
11 structural characteristics of those societies. In this sense we return to the tradition in the study of
12
13 democratization that placed considerable emphasis on education as a facilitator of mass support for
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15 democracy (e.g. Inkeles 1983), but bring to bear detailed evidence on these effects and how they can be
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17 interpreted.
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23 Schooling is an area where interventions by international agencies can and have been made and it is
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25 important therefore to clarify its putative role in the process of mass endorsement of democratic procedures.
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27 Though it has been assumed that: ‘Broad and equitable access to education is thus essential for sustained
28
29 progress toward democracy, civic participation, and better governance (World Bank, 2001: 8), as yet there
30
31 has been little systematic research evidence to support such claims in developing country contexts,
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33 particularly in sub-Saharan Africa (Hannum and Buchmann, 2005).
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38 We examine the importance of education compared with occupation, economic resources, urbanization and
39
40 religious orientation using the third round of the Afrobarometer survey which covers a broad range of sub-
41
42 Saharan African countries with varying social and institutional legacies, including levels of educational
43
44 provision. In many of these countries there have been long periods of one-party/man rule and the
45
46 introduction of democracy has in part at least been externally-driven. Therefore support for democracy is
47
48 likely to have fragile foundations. The context is thus one where there is considerable scope for increases in
49
50 educational provision and such increases could make a difference to levels of mass support for democracy
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52 and in turn to the stability of such democracy. We estimate general patterns of educational influence on
53
54 support for democracy and then estimate models that test competing arguments that explain these effects.
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56 We demonstrate that not only does education far outweigh all other ‘modernization’ influences on
57
58 democratic attitudes, but also that primary and higher levels of education impact on different aspects of
59
60

democratic support. We further identify mechanisms of political attention and comprehension through which education can influence democratic support.

2. MODERNIZATION AND EDUCATION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Modernization theories link mass educational expansion and rises in literacy levels with democratic outcomes. In micro-level versions of modernization theory, schooling is expected to contribute to heightened political awareness which, via mass media consumption, leads to demands for greater political involvement – what Inkeles and Smith (1974) referred to as the inculcation of a more ‘modern’ outlook, stressing participation in decision-making.² Through this process education strengthens democratic practices and principles and “(m)odern schooling constitutes an important mechanism for the introduction and consolidation of democratic political regimes” (Benavot 1996: 384). None the less, though there is considerable evidence on the positive relationship between education and support for democracy in developed countries with considerable experience of democracy, there has been little or no evidence that establishes whether education is the prime-mover in developing societies or just one of many conditions facilitating democratic orientations. Most empirical studies of education and its impact on individuals’ cognitive skills, political values and participation have been undertaken in the US or other ‘Western’ societies (Hyman and Wright, 1979; Bobo and Licari, 1989; Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Barry, 1996; Sullivan and Transue, 1999). Evidence of this relationship has also emerged from transition societies in Eastern Europe (Gibson, *et al.* 1992; Miller *et al.*, 1994; Reisinger *et al.*, 1994; Evans, 1995; Diamond, 1999; Rose, *et al.* 1999). In both of these contexts, universal secondary education has been, or is close to being, achieved and the focus of research tends to be on the influence of intermediate and higher levels of education on popular support for democratic transition.

Inferences derived from these studies are not easily transferable to the sub-Saharan African context.³ Most of the countries in the region have only achieved the status of being democratic since the 1990s as a result of internal struggle and international pressure. African politics also has distinctive features of ‘neopatrimonialism’ – where authority derives from patronage, with the right to rule ascribed to the person

1 rather than the office. Moreover, despite progress in the region over the past decade, economic
2
3 development continues to lag far behind, with GNP per capita only reaching around \$950 in 2007
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5 (UNESCO 2010).
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9 Education is also distinctive in this region. Compared with the contexts in which studies of the social
10
11 underpinnings of democracy have usually been undertaken, educational attainment remains extremely low.
12
13 Those in secondary school are around 34% of the school-aged population, with 6% at the tertiary level. This
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15 compares unfavourably with global averages of 66% and 26%, respectively (UNESCO 2010). These low
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17 levels of education are reflected in the Afrobarometer surveys, where only 40% of the sample has had access
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19 to post-primary schooling. Moreover, most of those of voting age received their education at a time when
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21 democracy was not in place. While more recently, with the abolition of primary school fees high on the
22
23 agenda of political parties during election campaigns, the resultant massive increase in primary school
24
25 enrolment has given rise to concerns for the quality of education. This gives rise to particular challenges for
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27 teaching with classes of over 100 pupils, and raises questions concerning what children are actually able to
28
29 learn in school (Kadzamira and Rose, 2003, Stasavage, 2005a).
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36 Partly in response to these concerns there is increasing attention to ‘civic education’ aimed at teaching about
37
38 democratic practices and values (Finkel, 2003). The goal of this has been, more or less explicitly, to teach
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40 people how to support democracy as a political practice, to understand what democracy is, and to participate
41
42 in the democratic process. Such education programs have often been undertaken with the financial support
43
44 of international agencies. For example, concern for strengthening democracy has been central to USAID’s
45
46 mission from its outset (see Valverde, 1999) and is clearly evident in its 2005 Education Strategy which
47
48 includes an opening quote from George W. Bush: ‘Education is the foundation of democracy and
49
50 development – in every culture, on every continent’ (USAID, 2005: 1). The strategy paper cites Barro
51
52 (1999) to stress that ‘Education is a powerful tool to promote support for democracy and enhance civil
53
54 liberties’ (USAID, 2005: 3).
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60 Despite the emphasis placed on education programmes in the quest to strengthen democratic support in the
region there is, however, limited evidence on this relationship in sub-Saharan Africa. Bratton *et al.* (2005)’s

study covers many issues relating to political and economic reforms, with education being one of numerous factors considered in their analyses. They find (2005: 205) that ‘education induces support for democracy, and it does so mainly at the expense of attachment to non-democratic alternatives’. Elsewhere, education appears as one of several indicators of cognitive awareness (Mattes and Bratton 2007). Most recently, an Afrobarometer Working Paper by Mattes and Mughogho (2009) provide evidence that education facilitates some aspects of democratic citizenship but not others, with higher education having more limited effects than might be expected. In general, there is clearly still much to examine with respect to education’s role in democracy in the region.

Is education a proxy for resources?

In contrast to the idea that education works primarily through its impact on cognitive and motivational processes an alternative approach stresses instead its role as a marker for social inequalities. Thus Nie *et al.* (1996: 47) argue that education operates through two separate mechanisms: one of a cognitive nature, developing skills at the individual level, and the other of a positional character, allocating citizens to different positions in a social hierarchy. Indeed, it has long been suggested that ‘not all schooling is education. Much of it is mere qualification-earning’ (Dore, 1976: 11) which is not geared towards curiosity and critical reasoning. It has been further argued that education is an arena for the reproduction of social inequalities (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). These interpretations of the social functions of schooling counter the assumption in much of the education literature that schooling is an effective instrument for the generation of human capital through skills acquisition.

A related view is advanced by Inglehart and Welzel (2005: 37-38; see also Abramson and Inglehart, 1995) with particular reference to the relationship between education and political values. They claim that education’s importance to a large degree derives from the fact that “Throughout the world, children from economically secure families are more likely to obtain higher education” (Inglehart and Welzel 2005: 37). This particular interpretation of education as a marker rather than a cause has been subject to criticism (Duch and Taylor 1993; De Graaf and Evans 1996) but is a potentially important perspective from which to

1 assess the importance or otherwise of schooling for political values. It implies to a substantial degree, that
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3 education's effects are spurious.
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10 **Specifying hypotheses**
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12 Our expectation is that the effects of education on influencing democratic attitudes are more important than
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14 has hitherto been recognized in the African context. We predict strong effects of level of schooling that are
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16 not removed by controlling for possible confounds such as religion, age, gender, or even partisanship
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18 (Hypothesis Ia). We also predict that because of its particularly pronounced impact on cognitive skills, the
19
20 effects of education should be considerably stronger than and should dominate those of other aspects of
21
22 modernization, such as social class and urbanization (Hypothesis Ib). In contrast, the generic version of
23
24 modernization theory predicts that a range of indicators – such as urbanization, the growth of the middle
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26 class, affluence and access to media - would have substantial effects on support for democracy. In this
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28 account education would not be privileged (Hypothesis II).
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34 We also argue that education's effects can be interpreted through its impact on cognitive and motivational
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36 attributes, facilitating attention to and comprehension of political choices. In contrast, the 'education as a
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38 marker for inequality' argument states that even where education predicts political values its effects are not
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40 derived so much from its impact on cognitive factors as through its status as a proxy for economic
41
42 inequalities. If our emphasis on the cognitive/motivational interpretation of education's effects is valid we
43
44 predict that controlling for differences in resources associated empirically with level of education should not
45
46 substantially reduce the coefficients for level of schooling on support for democracy (Hypothesis III). If,
47
48 however, the education as marker argument is valid we would expect that controlling for differences in
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50 resources associated with educational level should substantially reduce the strength of education's effects on
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52 support for democracy (Hypothesis IVa); and in consequence resource inequalities should have stronger net
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54 effects on support for democracy than education (Hypothesis IVb).
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We further test the cognitive/motivational interpretation of education's effects by introducing measures of
'attention to politics' and 'political comprehension'. The inclusion of measures of the consumption of

political information, expressed interest in politics, and engagement in political debate, provides a test of the role of political attention in mediating education's impact on democratic attitudes. We therefore hypothesise that controlling for political attention substantially weakens education's effects (Hypothesis Va). Similarly, the inclusion of measures of respondents' understanding of democracy and the political system provides a test of political comprehension. We further hypothesise that political comprehension should substantially attenuate the coefficients for levels of schooling on support for democracy (Hypothesis Vb).

3. DATA AND MEASUREMENT

The Afrobarometer surveys are the most comprehensive datasets of their kind undertaken in the African context. The 2005 third wave of the Afrobarometer survey used here is composed of 18 nationally representative, multi-stage cluster, stratified random sample of households producing interviews with 1200-2400 eligible voters, 18 years and older in each country.⁴ We use the weighted data which sets all country samples to $N = 1200$.

Measuring democratic attitudes

The Afrobarometer survey allows us to examine support for democracy using not only a question which establishes whether a person considers democracy always to be the best form of government but also further questions identifying those who reject alternative regimes – including one-party 'democracy', military control, and presidential autocracy:

Support for democracy. Although a sizable minority of sub-Saharan Africans in the sample fail to endorse democracy unconditionally (including those of the view that in some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable or that it makes no difference, or express no opinion), there is substantial agreement (67%) with the statement that democracy is preferable to any other form of government.

1 *Rejection of non-democratic alternatives.* We also examine responses to several questions that probe
2
3 respondents approval of decision-making procedures associated with democracy. The phrasing of these
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5 questions deliberately avoids the use of word ‘democracy’ and, in the survey, preceded the above question in
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7 relation to support for democracy. This allows a more nuanced assessment of whether, instead, respondents
8
9 reject practices inconsistent with a democratic system. The variable used in the analysis aggregates
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11 responses that indicate clear rejection of three key alternatives to democracy: army, presidential and one-
12
13 party rule. It therefore produces a scale ranging from 0, where none of these are rejected, to three, where all
14
15 are. This measure provides greater differentiation in responses, with 9.6% of the sample not rejecting any of
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17 the alternatives, 12.5% rejecting one of the alternatives, 25.2% rejecting two of the alternatives, and 52.8%
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19 rejecting all three.
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28 **Measuring education**
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31 Educational attainment is often measured by years of schooling (Smith 1995). However, the comparative
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33 study of education has increasingly moved away from relying on years of education as a measure of
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35 educational attainment (Braun and Müller 1997). Breen and Jonsson (2005) point to the problems of
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37 neglecting the conception that most actors have of education as a series of transitions between levels. Thus
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39 in continuous metric regression models, variation in the coefficients resulting from one unit changes in the
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41 independent variable do not correspond with a real qualitative difference in the educational credentials of the
42
43 individual, since the latter are primarily a result of levels and transitions completed. The continuous metric
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45 of the years of schooling variable imposes a linear form on changes that occur only at specific points in an
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47 educational trajectory. Bratton *et al* (2005) go some way to dealing with this problem by using relevant
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49 institutional transitions (no formal education, primary, secondary and post-secondary education) as the
50
51 measure of education but these are modeled as a 4-point, scaled variable. This modeling procedure obscures
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53 non-linear effects, constrains different one unit changes to be equivalent and does not provide information
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55 on the specific effects of different schooling levels - the consequences of the provision of which is of
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57 particular concern to national governments and international agencies. In our analysis, therefore, the effects
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of respondents' education are estimated by comparing the effects of five levels of attainment: some primary, primary completed, secondary, and post-secondary with no formal education (see Table 1).⁵ This enables us to focus on the distinctive consequences of these different levels of educational experience.

Control variables

The choice of control variables is guided by theoretical considerations and the findings of previous research (see, for example, Hyman and Wright, 1979; Nie et al, 1996; Diamond, 1999; Bratton *et al.* 2005; Evans and Rose, 2007). Our aim is to include those socio-demographic attributes that could, independently of educational level, cause citizens to have a more or less supportive attitude towards democracy. These attributes are in part those identified in modernization accounts of democratic development and also those that have been proposed more specifically in sub-Saharan Africa.

Firstly, we might expect that there could be a generational and gender influence on support for democracy. Younger people who have more experience of democracy and exposure to democratic propaganda, and have grown up in an era when democracy is more commonplace, might be expected to be more supportive. In addition, given that women in the region tend to continue to play traditional roles while men have greater spatial and occupational mobility, males could be anticipated to benefit more from the modernizing influences of democracy and therefore be more supportive.

We can also expect there to be a relationship between age, gender and educational level, which is indeed the case (Table 2). For example, amongst respondents aged above 45, only 6.1% have had post-secondary education. However, amongst those 25-34 this figure rises to 11.3%.⁶ Conversely, amongst those 25-34, only 15.5% report no education at all, whereas this figure is 35.9% for those aged over 45. It is also true that males are considerably more likely to have received post-secondary education (10.7% for males, compared with 7.0% for females).

We also consider whether respondents are part of the dominant language group in their country. Minorities can be expected to have greater concerns about representation in democracies compared with majority

1 language speakers. Support for the ruling party/president is also likely to be associated with satisfaction
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3 with levels of political representation and, therefore, more support for democracy as a form of decision-
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5 making.
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9 Finally, it is difficult to discuss the social factors conditioning support for democracy in developing societies
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11 without taking note of a recent influential argument concerning the influence of Islamic religion on the
12
13 emergence of such preferences. Huntingdon’s (1996) notion of ‘the clash of civilizations’ and the supposed
14
15 incompatibility between Islam and democracy generated considerable fervor. Recent empirical literature
16
17 produces divided opinions on whether being a Muslim/living in a Muslim country influences support for
18
19 democracy. Most studies look at the country/regional (e.g. Norris and Inglehart 2004), rather than individual
20
21 level, with very little research into the consequences of being a Muslim in sub-Saharan Africa. An exception
22
23 is Bratton (2003), which finds that Muslims are generally not less supportive of democracy and the more
24
25 frequently they attend a mosque, the more likely they are to support democracy (2003; see also Tessler 2002
26
27 for evidence from Arab states). Where there is ‘any hesitancy about supporting democracy among the
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29 African Muslims we interviewed [it] is due more to deficits of formal education and other attributes of
30
31 modernization than to the influence of religious attachments’ (2003: 494). We would therefore expect that
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33 with education included in our models, Muslims should be no less supportive of democracy than Christians
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35 or other religious groups.
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39 As controls we thus include indicators of age, gender, party support, language group, religion, and frequency
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41 of religious service attendance (a scale from never (1) to more than once a week (6)).
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51 Table 1 here
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56 **Indicators of modernization and access to resources**
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59 The presence of an urban population and a middle class of professional and managerial white collar workers
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is a key component of modernization theories of democratic development. These attributes can be expected

to correlate with education and therefore provide possible alternative explanations for the relationship between education and support for democracy. In the sample, urban residence and occupation have a particularly strong relationship with education, as would be expected (Table 2).

Table 2 here

Given that in countries in sub-Saharan Africa occupationally-based class distinctions do not necessarily identify important inequalities in the distribution of resources, we also employ alternative resource indicators namely access to water, cooking fuel and basic sustenance. For example, of those who report always going without food, 4.6% have post-primary schooling, compared with 32.9% of those who report always experiencing deficiencies.

Attention to politics

Our next set of measures index respondent characteristics that are likely to be highly influenced by level of education. First, we include three variables associated with frequency of media consumption – including radio, television and newspapers. Each of these is presented on a five-point scale, ranging from never to every day. These are included separately as they are seen to have different characteristics, with access in part influenced by supply-side constraints. Radio access is commonplace in both urban and rural communities in sub-Saharan Africa with as many as one in four people having a radio and others having access through group listening. Access to TV is less prevalent, with an estimated 1 in 14 having access to a television set (UN ICT Task Force, 2002). The distribution of newspapers is unlikely to reach many non-urban areas so again is less accessible and as a regular purchase requires disposable income. Importantly, access to information from newspapers requires individuals to be literate. In this sense radio is more accessible and less resource dependent as a source of political information. As further measures of attention to politics we

1 measure whether respondents indicate that they are very interested in politics and how frequently they
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3 discuss political issues (frequently, occasionally or never).
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10 **Comprehension of politics**
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12 Finally, we include indicators of respondents' comprehension of politics. We measure this in two ways:
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15 *Understanding of democracy:* This question asked in the survey asked about the understanding of the term
16
17 'democracy' in English in the first instance, and then translated the term into indigenous languages where
18
19 the respondent did not understand initially. The effects of providing an explanation of democracy in English
20
21 or indigenous language are similar. We therefore treat those respondents who said they knew what
22
23 democracy meant but then said 'don't know' on probing as not understanding the meaning of the term
24
25 'democracy'.
26
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30 *Political knowledge:* An indicator of political knowledge is constructed through aggregating whether
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32 respondents give correct answers to six questions: the name of their MP, local government councilor, the
33
34 Deputy President, the political party with the most seats, and the length of Presidential term limits. This
35
36 creates a scale of zero (incorrect answers to all questions) to six.
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43 **4. ANALYSIS**
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45 Preliminary analysis indicates there is an association between educational level and preference for
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47 democracy and rejection of non-democratic alternatives across the region. This pro-democratic endorsement
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49 increases monotonically across different levels of schooling and is found in all countries in our dataset.
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51 None of the 360 combinations (2 dependent variables x 18 countries x 10 comparisons between categories of
52
53 education) indicate a significant negative association between the two indicators of pro-democratic attitudes
54
55 and increasing levels of education.⁷ Our primary interest therefore is in the general patterns of association
56
57 for the 18 countries as a whole. For this purpose, we use fixed effects models that control for differences in
58
59 levels of all variables between countries.⁸
60

Preference for democracy

Table 3 presents the analysis of support for democracy. We start by estimating the effect of levels of schooling on support for democracy in Model 1. This indicates that each stage of educational attainment provides a highly significant increment to democratic support. The pattern of effects is broadly linear, with each level of schooling significantly more positive than the one before, even the 'some primary' category has a substantial and significant impact relative to no education.

In Model 2 we introduce socio-demographic and political attributes that could, independently of educational level, cause citizens to have a more or less supportive attitude towards democracy and which need to be controlled for a rigorous test of education's effects. Several of these are significant in their impact on democratic support – ruling party supporters, men, majority language speakers, and Muslims are all more supportive than their reference categories. Young people are distinctive in their lack of support relative to all others. The gender effect is particularly substantial. Muslims, as Bratton (2003) found in some of his analyses are not less, but more likely to support democracy. Remarkably, however, the coefficients for levels of education remain untouched by the inclusion of these significant effects. Education is clearly more important than any other factor and is not affected by their presence in the model, consistent with Hypothesis Ia.

Table 3 here

In model 3 we introduce attributes identified in modernization accounts of democratic development (class, urban-rural residence) and also those that are relevant indicators of resource inequalities in the sub-Saharan African context (lack of food, water and cooking fuel). Urban residence and social class have a strong relationship with education, while the more specific resource indicators have moderate associations (see Table 2).

1 We find that urban, non-manual, adequately resourced respondents are more likely to support democracy
2
3 than are those in rural areas, manual workers/farmers, and those with deficiencies of food and cooking fuel
4
5 (though reporting having gone without water is not significant). Some of these effects – particularly those
6
7 for class position – are reasonably strong, but they are dwarfed by those for education. The latter’s
8
9 coefficients show a modest decline once other aspects of modernization and resources are included, but their
10
11 magnitude is still of a different order to those observed for other variables in the analysis. The dominance of
12
13 the effects of education relative to other resource and demographic indicators is illustrated in Figure 1,
14
15 which presents predicted probabilities taken from Model 3.
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24 Figure 1 here
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29 Consistent with Hypothesis III, not only is education vastly more consequential than the other modernization
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31 or resource indicators, but it is not substantially weakened by their inclusion, thus also disconfirming
32
33 Hypotheses IVa and IVb.
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37 So far we have not considered respondent characteristics such as political attention or political
38
39 comprehension, which we have argued can provide mechanisms through which education works - so that to
40
41 include them in our initial models would inappropriately obscure the influence of education. The first step in
42
43 estimating these mediating effects is shown in model 4 in which we introduce indicators of media
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45 consumption and political interest and discussion. We can see that all of these variables have the predicted
46
47 positive effects on democratic support.⁹ The effects of education are weakened, though they are still strong.
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49
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51 There is some evidence here of mediation consistent with Hypothesis Va.
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54 Finally Model 5 includes political comprehension operationalised through measures of democratic
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56 understanding and knowledge of politics. We expect the inclusion of these measures to heavily reduce the
57
58 size of the education parameters, whereas there is no reason for other indicators, such as class and resources,
59
60 to be so strongly affected. As can be seen by comparing the education coefficients in Models 3, 4 and 5, the
effect of including understanding of democracy in the model is to massively reduce education’s direct

effects, thus giving support to Hypothesis Vb. While political comprehension also substantially reduces gender effects and the difference between young people and others, this is to a considerably lesser degree than the effect on education. Similarly, the coefficients for social class are only moderately attenuated while those for resource deficiencies not at all. Perhaps unsurprisingly those who support the current governing party remain more likely to support democracy, as do Muslims.

Rejection of non-democratic alternatives

We employ the same modeling procedure with respect to our second dependent variable. In Table 4 we present the analysis of respondents' rejection of non-democratic alternatives to electoral democracy. As these responses form a four point scale we use OLS estimation rather than logit.¹⁰

Table 4 here

The first Model again presents the effects of education alone. As in Table 3, we see a similar pattern to that observed for the support for democracy measure. Each extra level of completed education – primary, secondary, post-secondary – is consequential for respondents' tendency to reject alternative non-democratic forms of government when compared with no formal education. These strong, linear education effects are also of very similar magnitude, in terms of the ratio of coefficient to standard error, to those for support for democracy.

Turning to Model 2, which includes demographics and ruling party support, we again find no signs of attenuation: the education parameters remain clearly significant and of similar magnitude to Model 1. Younger people are less likely to reject non-democratic alternatives, as are majority language speakers and women. Those who attend religious services are more likely to do so. Support for the ruling party/president and being Muslim does not increase rejection of non-democratic alternatives.

1 In Model 3 we include class, urban residence, and resource deficiencies. There is some but only a very
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3 modest amount of attenuation of the education parameters, less so than in the case of support for democracy.
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5 The significant effects for young people, majority language speakers, religious service attendance and
6
7 gender are unaffected.
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11 Though urban residence has significant effects, social class has only a very weak effect, for farmers versus
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13 non-manual workers. Resource deficiencies with respect to food and cooking fuel have similar negative
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15 effects in Model 3 to those obtained with support for democracy. In general, however, this analysis provides
16
17 strong confirmation of the dominance of education's effects over other modernization variables and
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19 indicators of resource inequalities.
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23 Model 4 introduces variables for media consumption and political discussion/interest. These are all
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25 significant and noticeably attenuate all of the education parameters as in the equivalent model in Table 3.
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27 The effects of the other significant variables are not affected with the exception, as before, of urban
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29 residence and food deprivation. In Model 5, we see further substantial attenuation of education parameters
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31 though not to quite the degree observed in Table 3 – the residual effects of education are significant at all
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33 levels including 'some primary'. This more than likely relates to the less obvious link between
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35 understanding democracy and rejecting non-democratic alternatives, than between both understanding and
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37 supporting democracy.
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43 The general message of the two sets of models is that education is by far the strongest social factor
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45 explaining democratic attitudes – whether measured as explicit support or the rejection of alternatives - and
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47 these effects increase in a linear form as levels of education attained increase. Other effects are not only
48
49 weaker but less consistent across the two outcome measures of democratic attitudes. Gender is the strongest
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51 other influence – women are less pro-democratic in their attitudes – though, as with education, this
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53 difference is much attenuated by political comprehension. Age has a very specific effect – being young is
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55 negatively associated with democratic support – and is again heavily attenuated by political comprehension.
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57 Religion, religious service attendance, ruling party/presidential support, and language had effects on one or
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59 other of the outcome measures, but were not consistent across both. Modernization indicators were generally
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relatively consistent in their effects - though social class was marginal for the non-democratic alternatives measure. However, these were far weaker than education.

In summary, not only was the effect of education far stronger than the effects of other demographic or modernization indicators, but these indicators did not seriously attenuate the impact of education. By comparison, political comprehension had a powerful attenuating effect as did, to some degree, political attention. The extent to which different theoretical indicators attenuate the effects of education is illustrated in Figure 2, which presents the predicted likelihood of supporting democracy by level of education in the five different models: Model 1 presents the effects of education without controls, Model 2 controls only for demographics, Model 3 also controls for modernization indicators, Model 4 includes political interest and discussion, and Model 5 further controls for political comprehension.

Figure 2 here

Controlling for modernization indicators removes the pronounced higher education effect, leaving a more linear pattern of increments in support for democracy deriving from education. Controlling for attention to politics and comprehension effectively reduces education's effects so that only trivial differences between educational levels remain. These findings are consistent with our argument that education works primarily through its impact on cognitive and motivational attributes and not because it is a marker for economic resource inequalities.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Modernization is a process involving the interplay of various aspects of social change. Many discussions of its effects on social attitudes do not seek to specify what aspects are most important. In this paper we have distinguished the various components of modernization and focused on the one factor that our results indicate really matters: education. Level of education strongly predicts mass endorsement of democratic

1 procedures as well as rejection of commonplace non-democratic alternatives. Education dominates the
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3 other social influences on democratic support examined in our analysis.
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6 These conclusions hold even though the estimation procedure we have adopted has provided a demanding
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8 test of the robustness of education's effects, as it controls for many social factors that are associated with
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10 both education and attitudes towards democracy. Some of these factors, such as urban residence and gender,
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12 will have influenced the levels of education obtained by respondents while others, such as class position and
13
14 resources, are likely to have resulted at least in part from having attained a certain level of education. The
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16 former set of influences may well influence attitudes to democracy in part through their influence upon the
17
18 level of education obtained. Similarly, the latter set of influences will have in part been conditioned by prior
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20 education attainment, and may also partly reflect that formative experience. By controlling for the
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22 relationship between these confounding factors and education, we are doubtless under-estimating the
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24 contribution of education to the explanation of democratic attitudes. We can be confident, therefore, that the
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26 resulting estimates of education's effects are conservative.
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33 In addition to these robustness tests we have provided evidence of the mechanisms through which
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35 education's consequences can be understood. These findings have theoretical importance as they indicate
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37 that education's effects cannot simply be reduced to economic resource inequalities that are inevitably
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39 correlated with access to schooling but are plausibly interpreted as cognitive and motivational attributes
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41 related to experience of education. Thus education effects are in part mediated via mechanisms such as
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43 increased attention to politics and, most substantially, comprehension of politics. This is so even though
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45 schooling for the vast majority of our respondents will have been undertaken in a non-democratic setting and
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47 without civic education in the school curriculum. As a tool of intervention for the promotion of democratic
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49 cultures, education *per se*, would thus seem to represent a good investment - especially as it is effective even
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51 when provided at only relatively elementary levels. Thus primary schooling has a strong positive effect on
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53 support for democracy and the rejection of non-democratic alternatives. A positive effect, though somewhat
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55 weaker, is even found when primary schooling is only partly completed.
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Inevitably, there are qualifications to the inference we can draw from this study. One concerns whether the effects of education generalise to other aspects of democratic culture. The recent Afrobarometer Working Paper by Mattes and Mughogho (2009) indicates that education has a more limited effect on indicators of political orientations broadly defined, such as trust in others, and some indicators of political participation. The reasons why education does not have such strong effects in these areas remains a topic for further research. It is also possible that the relationship between educational experience and attention to/comprehension of politics is further influenced by factors such as the networks formed in the educational process, type of school attended (whether private, religious or state schools), or unmeasured selection biases. Additional research is thus required to identify some of the more intricate mechanisms underlying education's impact on democratic attitudes.

These qualifications notwithstanding, however, we believe we have shown that education is special in at least two ways with respect to understanding the social influences on democratic attitudes. First, education is important because of the sheer magnitude of its effects compared with other social indicators highlighted by previous research as influential, including social class or religion. Almost half a century after Almond and Verba's path-breaking comparative analysis we can confirm that "the uneducated man or the man with limited education is a different political actor from the man who has achieved a higher level of education." (1963: 315). Second, education is a key vehicle for external intervention in a region where democracies are not stable and where education is still not available to many, thus leaving considerable room for growth at even relatively basic levels of provision.

Contrary to the modernization approach of authors such as Lipset and Inglehart, our results can be taken to suggest that the contribution of education in promoting democracy is to some degree independent of other aspects of development. As a consequence, intervention in educational institutions and levels of educational enrolment can *ceteris paribus* enhance the possibility of democratic consolidation. To this end, the national governments, and international agencies for whom democratic consolidation is a stated goal, could usefully focus on providing more children with the opportunity to experience formal schooling. The greatest aggregate gains in support for democracy are likely to be obtained by increasing the proportion of the population who complete primary education, which currently is still beyond the reach of the majority of

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children in sub-Saharan Africa. But both secondary and post-secondary education provide further substantial increments in endorsement of democracy and rejection of non-democratic alternatives, so that large gains in mass support for democracy might also be made with further expansion at those levels. Moreover, if the converse positive effects of democracy on educational provision itself are taken into account (Stasavage 2005b), there is the possibility of a virtuous cycle in which education can provide a basis of support for democracy which, in turn, can increase access to higher levels of education. This cycle can reinforce the social foundations of democratic practices in a region in which there remains a clear need for the consolidation of non-repressive governments.

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Tables

Table 1 *Descriptive statistics for independent variables*

	Coding	Range	Mean	Standard deviation
Gender	Male (0); Female (1)	0-1	.50	.500
Language group	Other (0); Majority (1)	0-1	.50	.500
Religious service attendance	Never (1) to more than once a week (6)	1-6	4.16	1.633
Party support	Other (0); Ruling (1)	0-1	.40	.489
Residence	Rural (0); Urban (1)	0-1	.35	.476
Gone without food in the last year	From never (0) to always (4)	0-4	1.14	1.264
Gone without water	From never (0) to always (4)	0-4	1.16	1.389
Gone without cooking fuel	From never (0) to always (4)	0-4	.917	1.221
Radio	From never (0) to every day (4)	0-4	3.09	1.320
TV	From never (0) to every day (4)	0-4	1.67	1.730
Newspaper	From never (0) to every day (4)	0-4	1.12	1.444
Interest in politics	Other (0) very interested (1)	0-1	.377	.4889
Understand democracy	No/don't know (0) Yes (1)	0-1	.74	.436
Knowledge of politics	See text	0-6	2.48	1.689

	No.	%	
Education	No education*	4321	20.7
	Some primary	4390	21.0
	Primary completed	3417	16.3
	Secondary	6925	33.1
	Post-secondary	1852	8.9
Age	18-24	5595	26.8
	25-34	5993	28.7
	35-44	4057	19.4
	45 and above*	5259	25.2
Occupation	Non-manual*	2691	12.9
	Manual workers	5649	27.0
	Farmers	6794	32.5
	Other	5771	27.6
Religion	Christian*	14564	69.7
	Muslim	4094	19.6
	Other	2246	10.7
Discuss politics	Frequently	4794	22.9
	Sometimes	9428	45.1
	Never*	6683	32.0

* Reference group
N = 20,904

Table 2: *Relationships between education and other independent variables*

	None %	Some primary %	Complete primary %	Secondary %	Post- secondary %
Age					
18-24	11.4	16.5	14.1	49.7	8.4
25-34	15.5	18.8	18.3	36.1	11.3
35-44	21.4	22.1	19.3	27.8	9.4
45 and above	35.9	27.5	14.3	16.2	6.1
Language					
Majority language	20.9	23.3	14.8	33.6	7.4
Other	20.4	18.7	17.9	32.7	10.4
Gender					
Female	23.9	21.4	16.5	31.2	7.0
Male	17.5	20.6	16.2	35.0	10.7
Religion					
Muslim	47.9	17.0	11.1	18.1	6.0
Christian	12.0	22.1	18.5	37.5	9.9
Other	27.5	21.3	12.0	32.0	7.2
Party support					
Ruling party	16.3	22.5	20.3	33.2	7.7
Other	23.6	20.0	13.7	33.1	9.6
Occupation					
Non-manual workers	4.8	8.0	9.8	40.3	37.0
Manual workers	18.4	21.0	17.9	37.4	5.2
Farmers	30.6	29.9	20.6	17.5	1.4
Others	18.6	16.6	12.8	43.9	8.1
Residence					
Urban	12.8	14.0	13.1	43.3	16.8
Rural	24.8	24.7	18.0	27.7	4.7
Interest in politics					
Interested	18.6	20.1	17.7	32.9	10.8
Other	21.9	21.6	15.5	33.3	7.7
Understand democracy					
Yes	17.1	18.5	15.0	37.9	11.5
No	31.1	28.3	20.3	19.1	1.3
Discuss politics					
Frequently	15.9	17.5	18.6	35.3	12.7
Sometimes	17.9	20.0	15.7	36.2	10.2
Never	28.0	25.0	15.6	27.2	4.6
			Pearson's R		
Religious service attendance			.086**		
Gone without food			-.196**		
Gone without water			-.148**		
Gone without cooking fuel			-.123**		
Frequency of radio consumption			.215**		
Frequency of Newspaper consumption			.488**		
Frequency of TV consumption			.369**		
Political knowledge			.343**		

Table 3. *Logit models of support for democracy (country fixed effects)*

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Intercept		-.218** (.073)	.213* (.100)	.838** (.122)	.741** (.131)	-.189 (.145)
Education (ref. = none)	Some primary	.341** (.048)	.333** (.049)	.281** (.049)	.212** (.050)	.030 (.056)
	Primary	.709** (.053)	.715** (.055)	.622** (.056)	.485** (.057)	.152* (.065)
	Secondary	1.167** (.047)	1.227** (.051)	1.060** (.054)	.850** (.056)	.273** (.063)
	Post-secondary	1.614** (.071)	1.620** (.074)	1.291** (.081)	.976** (.085)	.274** (.093)
Age (ref. = 45 upwards)	18-24	-	-.281** (.045)	-.258** (.047)	-.254** (.048)	-.067 (.053)
	25-34	-	-.066 (.044)	-.077 (.044)	-.082 (.045)	-.002 (.049)
	35-44	-	.030 (.047)	.018 (.047)	.003 (.048)	.026 (.053)
Gender	female	-	-.439** (.031)	-.438** (.032)	-.334** (.033)	-.080* (.037)
Language group	Majority language	-	.088* (.036)	.069 (.036)	.049 (.036)	-.037 (.040)
Religion (ref. =Christian)	Muslim	-	.199** (.058)	.172** (.058)	.162** (.059)	.178** (.065)
	Other	-	-.052 (.349)	-.034 (.056)	-.004 (.057)	.013 (.063)
Religious service attendance		-	.010 (.011)	.007 (.011)	-.001 (.011)	-.015 (.012)
Party support	Ruling party	-	.332** (.034)	.342** (.034)	.271** (.035)	.224** (.039)
Residence	Urban	-	-	.113** (.037)	.031 (.039)	-.007 (.043)
Occup. (ref.=nonmanual)	Manual	-	-	-.192** (.061)	-.139* (.061)	-.061 (.066)
	Farmers	-	-	-.402** (.062)	-.320** (.063)	-.194** (.068)
	Other	-	-	-.338** (.062)	-.256** (.062)	-.163* (.067)
Gone without food		-	-	-.073** (.014)	-.049** (.014)	-.033* (.016)
Gone without water		-	-	.002 (.012)	.005 (.012)	.001 (.014)
Gone without cooking fuel		-	-	-.030* (.014)	-.030* (.014)	-.038* (.015)
Radio		-	-	-	.116** (.013)	.056** (.014)
TV		-	-	-	.032* (.013)	.018 (.014)
Newspaper		-	-	-	.046** (.015)	-.007 (.016)
Interest in politics	Very interested	-	-	-	.134** (.036)	.101* (.040)
Discuss politics	Frequently	-	-	-	.448** (.048)	.273** (.053)
	Occasionally	-	-	-	.024 (.044)	-.022 (.048)
Understand democracy		-	-	-	-	2.278** (.045)
Knowledge of politics		-	-	-	-	.102** (.014)
N.		20,904	20,904	20,904	20,904	20,904
Pseudo R ²		.12	.15	.15	.18	.35

** significant at 1% * significant at 5%

Table 4. *OLS models for rejection of alternatives to democracy (country fixed effects)*

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Intercept		2.253**	2.331**	2.437**	2.422**	2.325**
		(.032)	(.042)	(.050)	(.053)	(.053)
Education (ref. = none)	Some primary	.151**	.140**	.119**	.095**	.055**
		(.020)	(.020)	(.020)	(.020)	(.020)
	Primary	.310**	.293**	.259**	.209**	.132**
		(.022)	(.023)	(.023)	(.023)	(.023)
	Secondary	.464**	.454**	.399**	.313**	.191**
		(.019)	(.020)	(.021)	(.022)	(.022)
	Post-secondary	.615**	.579**	.488**	.357**	.210**
		(.026)	(.027)	(.030)	(.031)	(.031)
Age (ref. = 45 upwards)	18-24	-	-.068**	-.060**	-.061**	-.018
			(.018)	(.019)	(.019)	(.019)
	25-34	-	.008	.005	.002	.020
			(.018)	(.018)	(.018)	(.018)
	35-44	-	.001	-.001	-.007	-.003
			(.019)	(.019)	(.019)	(.019)
Gender	female	-	-.148**	-.145**	-.107**	-.055**
			(.013)	(.013)	(.013)	(.013)
Language group	Majority language	-	-.059**	-.067**	-.072**	-.086**
			(.015)	(.015)	(.014)	(.014)
Religion (ref. =Christian)	Muslim	-	.018	.008	.008	-.006
			(.022)	(.022)	(.022)	(.022)
	Other	-	-.026	-.023	-.011	-.011
			(.023)	(.023)	(.023)	(.023)
Religious service attendance		-	.021**	.020**	.018**	.017**
			(.004)	(.004)	(.004)	(.004)
Party support	Ruling party	-	-.012	.017	-.008	-.031*
			(.014)	(.014)	(.014)	(.014)
Residence	Urban	-	-	.096**	.052**	.054**
				(.015)	(.016)	(.016)
Occup. (ref.=nonmanual)	Manual	-	-	.017	.039	.057*
				(.023)	(.023)	(.022)
	Farmers	-	-	-.035	.001	.029
				(.023)	(.024)	(.023)
	Other	-	-	-.053*	-.021	.002
				(.023)	(.023)	(.023)
Gone without food		-	-	-.019**	-.010*	-.008
				(.006)	(.006)	(.006)
Gone without water		-	-	.004	.005	.005
				(.005)	(.005)	(.005)
Gone without cooking fuel		-	-	-.022**	-.022**	-.022**
				(.006)	(.006)	(.006)
Radio		-	-	-	.019**	.005
					(.005)	(.005)
TV		-	-	-	.022**	.018**
					(.005)	(.018)
Newspaper		-	-	-	.031**	.023**
					(.006)	(.006)
Interest in politics	Very interested	-	-	-	.039**	.027*
					(.014)	(.014)
Discuss politics	Frequently	-	-	-	.169**	.123**
					(.019)	(.019)
	Occasionally	-	-	-	.015	.004
					(.017)	(.017)
Understand democracy		-	-	-	-	.218**
						(.016)
Knowledge of politics		-	-	-	-	.065**
						(.005)
N.		20,904	20,904	20,904	20,904	20,904
R ²		.15	.16	.16	.17	.19

** significant at 1%

* significant at 5%

Figure 1: Predicted probabilities – support for democracy (taken from model 3)

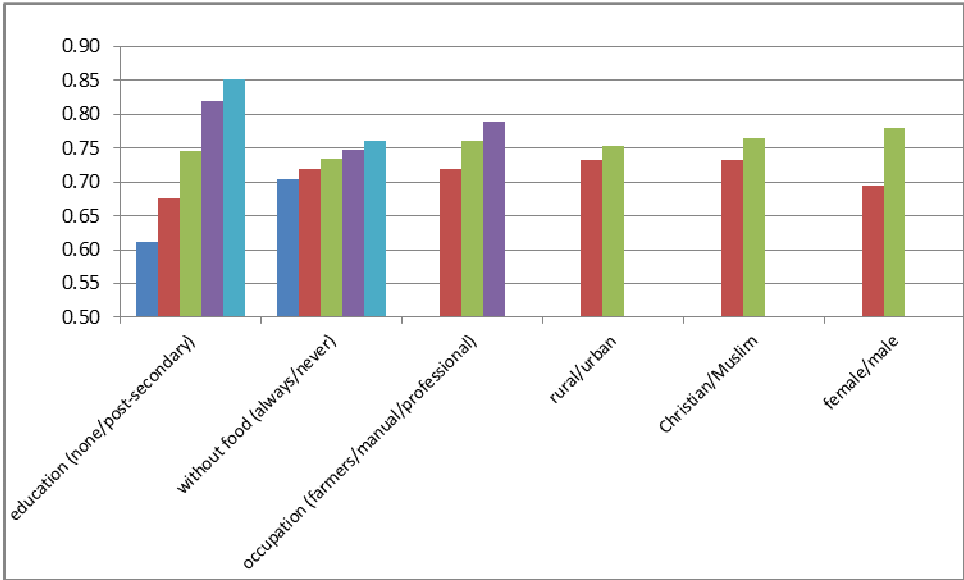
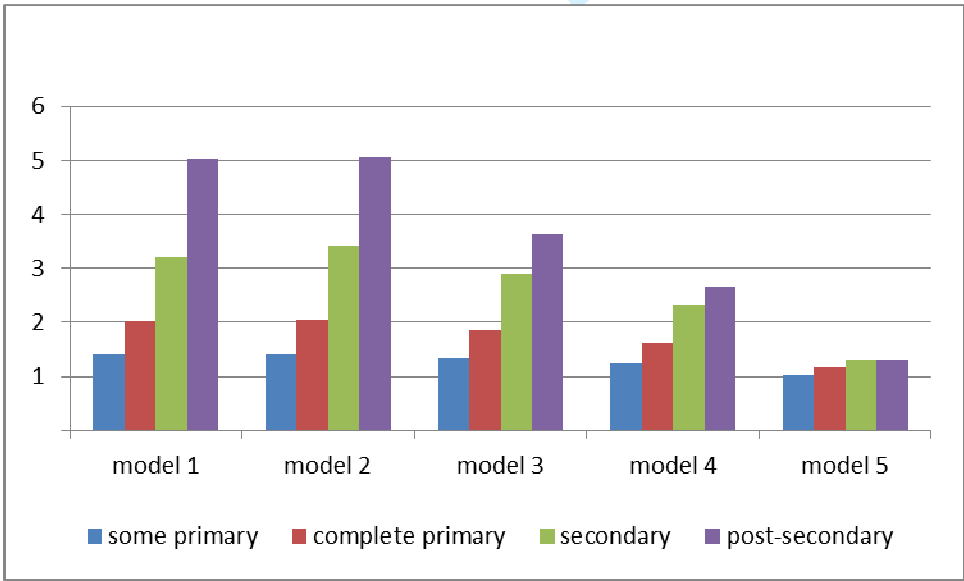


Figure 2: Predicted odds of supporting democracy by education level



Endnotes

¹ Glaeser *et al.* (2007) present evidence linking education with socialization and therefore build a model where education fosters democracy by shaping incentives for joining political participation.

² Modernization theories have taken various forms. Here we are primarily concerned with the approach examining 'individual modernization' (e.g. Inkeles and Smith, 1974; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005).

³ A recent study of the impact of schooling on democratic attitudes in Malawi provides evidence of a strong relationship between educational level and support for democracy (Evans and Rose 2007) although this does not examine the mechanisms through which education impacts on democratic attitudes.

⁴ The eighteen countries are: Benin, Botswana, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe. See www.afrobarometer.org for further information on the surveys and sample design.

⁵ The dataset also contains a response category referring to informal education. This includes 4.4% of respondents, the majority of whom are Muslims, which suggests that it is probably composed mainly of pupils at madrasahs. We estimated models with 'informal education' distinguished from 'no education' but found no significance differences.

⁶ The proportion of those aged 18-25 with post-primary education is lower (8.4%), probably because some of this age group are still in secondary school (half of this age group have achieved this level of education).

⁷ One of our initial hypotheses was that the impact of education on democracy would be stronger in Anglophone compared with Francophone and Lusophone countries because of the difference in their colonial inheritance. Interaction between effects of education on measures of support for democracy and type of colonial inheritance proved not to be significant.

⁸ We carried out extensive checks on the robustness of estimates to case selection. We found no evidence that our estimates were substantially affected by outliers.

⁹ It is possible that there is variation across and within countries with regard to the political content found in mass media. There is no reason to think that this would change the *general* pattern of substantive findings regarding the strength of education effects reported here, although it could be a useful area for further research.

¹⁰ Ordered Probit can also be used for analyzing such coarsely scaled dependent variables, but these models bring in further assumptions of their own. The advantage of OLS is its robustness to violations of its assumptions and general interpretability.