Article

A global analysis of how losing an election affects voter satisfaction with democracy

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Abstract

In this article, we argue that a deeper understanding of citizen satisfaction with democratic elections requires a global perspective. Regional research found that a gap in satisfaction with democracy emerges after an election, between those who supported winning parties and those that did not, and also, crucially, that this gap can be reduced under proportional electoral institutions. In this article we argue instead that these theories of the winner–loser gap actually apply to only a narrow set of countries. We use a comprehensive global dataset to show that the predictions of this theory about the effects of proportional institutions are accurate for Western Europe, but not outside it. Beyond a small cluster of established democracies in Western Europe, the electoral environment is characterized by more fundamental uncertainty. This uncertainty alters the incentives created by proportional institutions. We conclude that the winner–loser gap and 'losers' consent' are concepts that vary systematically around the world. We discuss the implications of this for democratic stability.

Keywords

Losers' consent, democracy, elections

Introduction

The term 'losers' consent' refers to voters who continue to endorse their democracy, even after that democracy declares that their preferred party has lost the election. High levels of losers' consent are an unmistakable marker of democratic stability (Dowding and Kimber, 1983; Manin et al., 1999; Przeworski, 2015). But losers' consent is never guaranteed. Voters often react negatively in

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the wake of elections where their chosen party did not make it into government. Contemporary academic literature argues that levels of losers' consent are, in large part, determined by a country's electoral rules. Using data from Western Europe, Anderson et al. (2005), demonstrate that the presence of proportional electoral institutions is positively associated with losers' consent. This is also the flagship finding from an important body of literature on institutions and satisfaction with democracy (Aarts and Thomassen, 2008; Anderson and Guillory, 1997; Banducci and Karp, 2003; Bernauer and Vatter, 2012; Fjelde and Höglund, 2016; Lijphart, 2012).

In this article we assess whether this institutional argument can be extended around the world, or whether it is limited to Western Europe. We argue that in Western Europe, although satisfaction with democracy may vary, there is not a high degree of fundamental uncertainty about the stability of democratic institutions (Przeworski, 2015). We suggest that in the presence of such uncertainty – caused by clientelism and by shorter experience with democracy – institutional arguments may lose much of their vigor. Institutions create incentives for mass and elite actors to behave in certain ways, but if information is scarce and other players' strategies are hard to anticipate, then political actors may not respond to these incentives (Andrews and Jackman, 2005; Boix, 1999; Fey, 1997; Persson and Tabellini, 2003; Pierson, 2004; Selb, 2012; Shvetsova, 2003). Thus, the effect of institutions on satisfaction with democracy will be different in established versus emerging democracies.

The article proceeds as follows. In the first section, we define the concept of losers' consent. We then argue that democracy is more established in Western Europe, and that institutional explanations for losers' consent are less powerful outside this region. The second section outlines our research design. We introduce additional survey data from Africa, Asia, and Latin America – all regions with shorter histories of democracy. We also describe how length of experience with democracy affects how institutions operate differently outside Western Europe. The third section describes our analysis. We find that the argument of Anderson et al. (2005) holds up well in Western European democracies, but that electoral rules have a weaker and less consistent effect elsewhere. The results of our analysis suggest that the effect of institutions is conditional upon how long a country has been a democracy. The difference between majoritarian and proportional institutions only becomes pronounced when a country is a well-established democracy. Our final section discusses the implications of these findings for the study of democratic stability.

Losers' satisfaction with democracy and the effects of institutions

The concept of losers' consent begins with the proposition that democratic elections create winners and losers, and those two groups may have meaningfully different views about democracy. Anderson et al. (2005) and Anderson and Guillory (1997) provide the most comprehensive assessment of the winner–loser gap in satisfaction. They define losers as individuals who identify with parties that did not form a government after the election. They found that winners were consistently more satisfied with democracy than losers, but the size of this winner–loser gap varied by country. Democracies with more proportional electoral systems had higher overall satisfaction and smaller winner–loser gaps in satisfaction than more majoritarian systems.

Thus, Anderson et al. (2005) posit that electoral institutions are a key determinant of satisfaction with democracy. In first-past-the-post electoral systems, electoral districts produce only one winner, whereas in proportional representation (PR) electoral systems, there are more winners; and, with more seats available, seat shares more accurately reflect vote shares (Cox, 1997; Lublin, 2014). In PR systems, voters who did not support the first-placed party will feel more satisfied with democracy, because their preferred party is more likely to have gained at least a number of seats. Anderson and Guillory provide a succinct summary:

> Losers in systems that are more consensual display higher levels of satisfaction with the way democracy works than do losers in systems with majoritarian characteristics. Conversely, winners tend to be more satisfied with democracy the more a country's political institutions approximate pure majoritarian government. (Anderson and Guillory, 1997: 66)

This finding is consistent with other work on the topic. For example, Lijphart (2012) argues that majoritarian political institutions polarize the consequences of winning and losing, thus raising the political stakes in divided societies, while more proportional institutions foster greater cooperation and inclusion of the losers. Bernauer and Vatter (2012) take advantage of improvements in methodology to extend Lijphart's (2012) work. They include direct democracy institutions as another type of 'proportional' institution, and they again find that these institutions are positively correlated with losers' consent. Other researchers have continued this emphasis on institutions and proportionality (Lublin, 2014), bringing in more fine-grained measures of satisfaction (Aarts and Thomassen, 2008; Fjelde and Höglund, 2016; Moehler, 2009), or arguments about how proportional institutions affect policy positions, which in turn affect losers' consent (Curini et al., 2012; Kuenzi and Lambright, 2005).

Importantly, most of this work only examines one region at a time, and the strongest findings tend to come from a small cluster of established democracies in Western Europe. Our starting point in this article is that in this cluster of countries, enough peaceful alternations of power have taken place for the stability of democracy to be taken for granted by most citizens.[1] When a country manifests that level of stability, losers can realistically believe that there will be an indefinite number of future elections, each of which is an opportunity to become a winner. Although this belief may be affected by repeated losses (Chang et al., 2014; Curini et al., 2012), in general this will lead to high overall levels of losers' consent, and any remaining variation in losers' consent may well be attributed to electoral rules. However, we argue that the effect of electoral rules on losers' consent is much less significant when democracy is less stable.

This is a possibility that some regional studies have addressed, but which has not been explored in a comprehensive empirical way (Fjelde and Höglund, 2016; Moehler and Lindberg, 2009; Przeworski, 2015). For example, there have been a number of single-nation studies. Rose (2008) finds little evidence of a winner-loser gap after the 2007 election in Turkey. But Cho and Bratton (2006) find that electoral losers were less dissatisfied with democracy in Lesotho after the country transitioned to a more proportional electoral system. Finkel et al. (2012), Orji (2010), and Taylor et al. (2017) draw attention to how Kenya seemed to experience a 'breakthrough' democratic election in 2002, only for severe post-election violence to occur in 2007 as the result of a contested election. Analysts suggested that changes in the electoral rules could help prevent further violence (Chege, 2008). There have also been some studies that have looked at multiple countries, within the same region. Anderson et al. (2005) examined the winner–loser gap in Eastern European democracies, and Booth and Seligson (2009) bring in evidence from eight Latin American countries. These analyses are valuable, but they do not examine whether the effects of institutions vary systematically around the world.

The Western European cases may be some of the most important cases to look at in order to understand how democracies can successfully sustain themselves. However, theories of losers' consent should be wary of selecting on the dependent variable of 'democratic stability'. Anderson et al. (2005) are commendably aware of this danger, including analysis of new democracies in Europe. However, they focus only on how newer democracies experience less satisfaction with democracy and larger winner–loser gaps, concluding simply that: 'losers have not yet learned to lose in countries where democratic governance is of such recent vintage' (Anderson et al., 2005: 108). They do not examine whether electoral rules have a different effect on losers' level of

satisfaction with democracy in newer democracies. Moreover, even the newer democracies in their sample only represent a fraction of the global variation in democratic countries. Thus, it is vital to take the analysis even further by examining a much broader array of democratic countries where uncertainty about democratic stability may vary more widely.[2]

We conceptualize uncertainty about the stability of democracy in two different ways. First, we simply compare the cluster of Western Europe countries that Anderson et al. (2005) examine, to the other areas of the world that Polity IV identifies as democratic. This approach does not tell us precisely which elements of the historical trajectories of these countries, or of their democratic cultures, or of their institutions, lead to this stability – rather, it simply tests the hypothesis that the Western European cluster of countries is somehow different. Second, we measure length of democratic stability. Expectations about future elections are derived in large part from what happened in past elections. A long history of free and fair elections followed by peaceful alternations in power should give electoral losers greater confidence in the prospect of returning to power in the near future. Thus, this second conceptualization more directly captures the causal mechanism.

The argument behind both conceptualizations is that in areas where democracy developed along a different – and often shorter – historical trajectory, electoral rules may well have different effects. There are three main reasons for this: voter coordination; coalition politics; and responsible parties (Andrews and Jackman, 2005; Cox, 1997; Manin et al., 1999; Rose and Shin, 2001; Shvetsova, 2003; Stokes, 2001). More specifically, in established democracies, political parties have clear brand names backed up by long records (Budge and Farlie, 1983; Budge et al., 2012; Egan, 2013). This makes it easier for voters to choose the party that reflects their interests. If it is clear what each party stands for, then an important mechanism by which electoral rules improve losers' consent can kick in: a wide selection of ideologically diverse parties can help satisfy extremist voters. These voters are likely to be losers, but by having the chance to cast a vote for their sincerely preferred option, their general satisfaction with democracy is likely to be higher than it would otherwise be. PR is usually associated with larger and more diverse party systems (Budge et al., 2012; Cox, 1997). However, in situations of high uncertainty about parties' ideological positions and about their levels of public support, then any electoral system may produce large and potentially confusing sets of ideological offerings (Cox, 1997; Fey, 1997; Kuenzi and Lambright, 2005). Thus PR may not necessarily improve losers' consent in non-established democracies.

A second reason is that in established democracies, PR increases the likelihood of a coalition government, and so there is a higher probability that smaller parties will be influential in the legislature (Bawn and Rosenbluth, 2006; Budge et al., 2012). This again helps narrow the winner–loser satisfaction gap, because even parties that did not make it into the formal government are likely to have some bargaining power. However, if there is no settled party system, then coalition dynamics may be equally unpredictable in both PR and SMD systems. No voters, whether winners or losers, can be confident that their party will long remain in power. This idea is key because it also implies that the regular alternation of parties is critical. Chang et al. (2014) demonstrate that individuals whose parties lose multiple times in a row are less satisfied with democracy than individuals whose parties lose a single election. Majority rule will not produce a stable democratic system if the majority group systematically outvotes the minority group in every election. Excluded minority groups will likely try to exit the system if they have no hope of getting into government, thus making democracy unstable. These scenarios are less likely to occur if there is alternation in the party in charge.

Finally, in more established democracies there is more certainty about what parties will do in government. This helps voters to co-ordinate their choices. The effects of electoral rules on losers' consent will be curtailed if this condition is not met. For example, Stokes (2001) looks at several cases in Latin America in the 1990s where parties dramatically shifted their ideologies once in

power. This can lead to a situation where even if PR increases the number of choices available, voters are still likely to be confused about how to cast their ballots, and to be uncertain about what will happen after the election.

These conditions about voter coordination, coalition politics, and responsible parties, are met routinely in the cluster of established democracies in Western Europe. However, around the world it is less clear that these conditions can be taken for granted. Some of this may be attributed to the shorter history of democracy in other places, but we believe that contextual factors related to the specific nature of the democratic transition in a particular country are also likely to be significant (Pierson, 2004; Przeworski et al., 2000; Skocpol, 1979). Thus, we take two approaches to measuring whether democracy is well established. First, we simply compare European data to other data sources from around the world, where democracy has followed different and often shorter histories. Second, in an effort to pinpoint the causal mechanism somewhat more precisely, we interact proportional institutions with a measure of the length of democratic stability. We find that having a long-established constitution increases the effect of electoral rules. The next section describes the data that we use to test this argument.

Data and design

Our argument is that the institutional effects of electoral rules are unlikely to apply if democracy is less stable. We test this proposition by first replicating the original Anderson et al. (2005) model, and then extending the model to include updated methods (i.e. specifying the model as multilevel), updated measures of electoral institutions, and additional data from other regions of the world. Anderson et al. (2005) used Eurobarometer data – a public opinion survey conducted regularly in European countries since the 1970s – to test their argument. We take this same Eurobarometer data, and replicate their model on it. We then use Afrobarometer, Asianbarometer, and Latinobarometer data to test how well this model holds up around the world.

Utilizing the various barometer surveys offers some useful advantages. Most importantly, perhaps, is the fact that the Afrobarometer, Asianbarometer, and Latinobarometer are based on the Eurobarometer. As a result, the question wordings are nearly identical, as described in Online Appendix A. Additionally, there have been multiple iterations of all of the various barometer surveys, including a wide array of countries. Using these data, first we assess whether the effect of electoral institutions on losers' satisfaction with democracy is different in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, relative to Europe.

Our dependent variable is satisfaction with democracy. Across all barometer surveys individuals were asked to respond to the following question: '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, or (4) very satisfied'. The specific question wording and coding is almost identical across all of the various barometer surveys. We are interested in whether the effect of political institutions on satisfaction with democracy is consistent across continents.[3] Our primary institutional variable is electoral system. Our electoral system variable takes on the values of proportional (0), mixed (0.5), and majoritarian (1). Lijphart (2012) developed an alternative framework for categorizing democratic institutions based on five criteria (concentration of executive power, legislative–executive relationships, two-party versus multiparty systems, majoritarian electoral systems vs. proportional electoral systems, and pluralist versus corporatist interest group systems). However, we view our measure of electoral institutions as a proxy for majoritarian versus consensual institutions writ large. We make this choice for several reasons. The main reason is that the electoral system largely, but not entirely (Farrer, 2017), determines the nature of the party system and the types of coalitions that form, so we view the electoral system as the most central institution for mitigating losers' fears. The second reason is simply logistical constraints.

We examine whether the effect of electoral institutions is conditioned by how long the state has been a stable democracy, measured by the number of years that a state has been above six on the Polity IV scale; this tests whether the effect of electoral institutions on satisfaction with democracy becomes stronger the longer a state has been a democracy. The summary statistics for each of these four datasets is displayed in Table 1.

It is important to note that while our analysis is firmly rooted in the work of Anderson et al. (2005), we make some key methodological distinctions from these authors in our extension. We begin by replicating their results, but we also go further. First, we specify a hierarchical linear regression rather than just an ordinary least squares model. We make this choice because failing to account for the nested structure (i.e. individuals within country-years) of the data can lead to under-estimated standard errors that increase the risk of type I error (Gelman and Hill, 2007). Second, we use a different measure of electoral institutions than Anderson et al. (2005), who derive a four-point measure of electoral institutions (running from majoritarian to proportional) from the Database of Political Institutions (DPI).[4] In our extension we supplement the barometer data with institutional data from Bormann and Golder's (2013) Democratic Electoral Systems dataset, which contains a more comprehensive electoral system coding.[5] A table containing all of the coding details can be found in Online Appendix B. Third and finally, we also include several additional control variables in an effort to account for some additional potentially competing explanations. We introduce a measure of clientelism (from the Varieties of Democracy dataset, Coppedge et al. 2016). Our expectation is that individuals in less clientelistic systems should be more satisfied with democracy than those in more clientelistic systems. The measure ranges one through four, with one being the most clientelistic and four being the most programmatic.

An analysis of the institutional determinants of satisfaction with democracy

We now move on to the results of our analysis. First, we replicate a crucial regression specification from Anderson et al. (2005) and obtain very similar coefficients. Next, we take this specification and apply it to barometer data from outside Europe. As expected, we find a much smaller effect of electoral rules on satisfaction with democracy. Thus, Table 2 contains four columns of coefficients. The first set of coefficients are not the result of our estimation, but instead are taken directly from Anderson et al. (2005), namely the first column of Table 7.1 on their page 131. They run this regression on survey data from the Eurobarometer, No. 52 from 1999, across the 15 member-states. This regression is the most comprehensive specification in their chapter on political institutions. In it, they predict the degree of satisfaction with democracy as a function of winner or loser status, electoral rules, age of democracy - which they code using Freedom House data and which we therefore also code using Freedom House data for this table only (Anderson et al. 2005), and a number of other control variables.[6] We replicate this specification first on all available Eurobarometer data, and then on the other regions: see Online Appendix A for more replication details.

For the most important variables – those indicating 'loser' status, and the electoral system variable – our European results quite closely approximate the original Anderson et al. (2005) results.[7] For example, where Anderson et al. (2005) estimate that supporting a losing party is associated with a -0.14 reduction in satisfaction with democracy, we estimate that number to be -0.16. Our model returns a set of coefficients that are almost always similar in direction, magnitude, and statistical significance to the Anderson et al. (2005) original coefficients.[8] We find that moving one step on the 4-point scale towards more majoritarian electoral systems is associated with a reduction of -0.08 in predicted satisfaction with democracy. This is quite a bit stronger of

Table 1. Summary statistics.

Variable	n	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Africa					
Satisfaction with democracy	24022	2.21	1.00	1.00	4.00
Opposition	24022	0.29	0.45	0.00	1.00
Don't know	24022	0.28	0.45	0.00	1.00
Gender	24022	0.48	0.50	0.00	1.00
Education	24022	2.30	1.15	1.00	4.00
Clientelism	24022	1.87	0.97	1.00	3.00
Electoral system	24022	0.46	0.47	0.00	1.00
Federal	24022	0.13	0.33	0.00	1.00
Next year looking better	24022	3.42	1.16	1.00	5.00
Economic evaluations	24022	2.93	1.11	1.00	5.00
Parties in government	24022	3.62	2.85	0.00	11.00
Democracy years	24022	12.52	10.12	1.00	42.00
Asia					
Satisfaction with democracy	20227	2.63	0.73	1.00	4.00
Opposition	20227	0.35	0.48	0.00	1.00
Don't know	20227	0.21	0.41	0.00	1.00
Gender	20227	0.51	0.50	0.00	1.00
Education	20227	2.71	1.13	1.00	4.00
Clientelism	20227	2.87	0.75	1.00	4.00
Electoral system	20227	0.62	0.27	0.00	1.00
Federal	20227	0.24	0.43	0.00	1.00
Next year looking better	20227	2.99	1.04	1.00	5.00
Economic evaluations	20227	3.01	1.03	1.00	5.00
Parties in government	20227	2.18	2.30	1.00	8.00
Democracy years	20227	22.93	19.86	2.00	66.00
Europe					
Satisfaction with democracy	38567	2.54	0.82	1.00	4.00
Opposition	38567	0.35	0.48	0.00	1.00
Don't know	38567	0.30	0.46	0.00	1.00
Gender	38567	0.50	0.50	0.00	1.00
Education	38567	2.47	1.14	1.00	4.00
Clientelism	38567	3.84	0.37	3.00	4.00
Electoral system	38567	0.83	0.38	0.00	1.00
Federal	38567	0.32	0.47	0.00	1.00
Next year looking better	38567	2.06	0.79	1.00	3.00
Economic evaluations	38567	2.68	1.03	1.00	5.00
Parties in government	38567	2.05	1.25	1.00	5.00
Democracy years	38567	64.99	42.34	8.00	141.00
Latin America					
Satisfaction with democracy	106949	2.34	0.86	1.00	4.00
Opposition	106949	0.21	0.41	0.00	1.00
Don't know	106949	0.50	0.50	0.00	1.00
Gender	106949	0.50	0.50	0.00	1.00
Education	106949	2.76	1.20	1.00	4.00

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

Variable	*n*	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Clientelism	106949	2.27	0.98	1.00	4.00
Electoral system	106949	0.87	0.29	0.00	1.00
Federal	106949	0.40	0.49	0.00	1.00
Next year looking better	106949	2.15	0.92	0.00	4.00
Economic evaluations	106949	1.94	0.80	1.00	3.00
Parties in government	106949	1.43	1.36	1.00	7.00
Democracy years	106949	28.35	27.83	4.00	136.00

an effect than what Anderson et al. (2005) found. Given that our sample is almost three times as large as the original, this constitutes strong evidence that proportional electoral systems lead to higher average satisfaction with democracy.

However, the other important message from Table 2 is that this finding, whilst reliable in Europe, does not emerge on a global level. In the Afrobarometer and the Asianbarometer, the effect of electoral rules is statistically significant in the opposite direction from the original coefficient. This refutes the idea that proportional systems inevitably lead to better satisfaction with democracy. It is only in the Latinobarometer that we find a similar coefficient to that returned by the original model.[9]

We see Table 2 as a comprehensive demonstration that proportional electoral institutions do not reliably lead to greater levels of satisfaction with democracy or more ameliorated feelings on the part of electoral losers. If they did, we should see similar coefficients on this variable across all four samples. Theories about electoral rules in Western Europe do not seem to translate to other contexts.

Our next step is to assess whether these relationships hold using updated methods and additional controls. After the regression reported in their Table 7.1, Anderson et al. (2005) go on to split their sample into four parts, one for each of the four types of electoral system, and then examine if the coefficient on 'loser status' is different across these subsamples. They interpret the results as evidence of how electoral rules effect not only overall satisfaction but also the extent of the winner–loser gap: 'Electoral system effects are apparent as well: greater proportionality does help alleviate the impact of losing' (Anderson et al., 2005: 134). This subsample technique is reminiscent of the method used by Anderson and Guillory (1997) to reach the same conclusion about how PR reduces the winner–loser gap. We do not employ this subsample technique, largely because recent scholarship has come out strongly in favor of interaction terms to test these types of hypotheses (Berry et al., 2010; Brambor et al., 2006). Below we present a series of models with interaction terms between loser-status, and electoral rules and between 'don't know' status and electoral rules.

We specify the model as a hierarchical linear regression, with random intercepts for each country-year. We also include an additional control variable for clientelism and replace 'new democracy' with 'democracy years'. Table 3 reports on these updated sets of models. We find that proportional electoral rules strongly reduce the winner–loser gap in three out of the four samples, but not at all in Africa. At least, that is the naïve interpretation of the coefficients. It is important to go further and calculate the marginal effects (Brambor et al., 2006). To begin in Europe, if we hold all other variables at their means or modes, then the difference between winning and losing (i.e. the marginal effect of the 'loser' variable) is -0.12 in proportional systems, but it is -0.21 in majoritarian systems. These two predictions are statistically significantly different at the 95% level. Therefore, electoral rules have a significant effect on the winner–loser gap in Europe, cutting it approximately

Table 2. Ordinary least squares models replicating and extending Anderson et al. (2005) to other regions.

Variables	Anderson et al (2005) 1999 Eurobarometer	Afrobarometer 2005-2009	Asiabarometer 2001-2011	Eurobarometer 1982-1994	Latinobarometer 2005-2011
Opposition	−0.14*	−0.45*	−0.14*	−0.16*	−0.19*
		(0.04)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Don't know/non-voter	−0.12*	−0.32*	−0.05*	−0.19*	−0.26*
		(0.01)	(0.0)	(0.01)	(0.01)
New democracy	−0.14*	−0.40*	0.20*	~~	−0.07*
		(0.03)	(0.02)		(0.01)
Loser * new democracy	−0.15*	0.18*	−0.12*		−0.06*
		(0.04)	(0.02)		(0.01)
Female	−0.001*	−0.03*	−0.05*	0.00	0.01
		(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Education	−0.00	−0.03***	−0.03*	0.03*	−0.01*
		(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Age	−0.02*	~~	0.002*	0.001*	0.00*
			(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Electoral system	−0.02*	0.03*	0.24*	−0.08***	−0.06*
		(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Federal	−0.001	−0.31*	−0.07**	0.06*	0.04*
		(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Satisfaction with life	−0.22*	~~	~~	−0.29*	~~
				(0.01)	
Next year looking better	−0.17*	0.12*	0.002*	0.09*	0.11*
		(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)
Economic evaluations	−0.04*	0.09*	0.01*	0.16*	0.23*
		(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.0)	(0.00)
Number of parties in government	−0.14*	0.12*	0.02	−0.01	−0.22*
		(0.011)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Number of parties in Government^2	−0.02*	−0.01*	0.01*	−0.01*	0.02*
		(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Left-wing	−0.09*	~~	~~	−0.11*	−0.01
				(0.01)	(0.01)
Right-wing	−0.05*	~~	~~	0.00	0.05*
				(0.01)	(0.01)
Constant	2.73*	2.24*	1.80*	2.79*	2.05*
		(0.05)	(0.08)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Observations	11,815	22,328	18,957	38,317	85,358
R^2	0.12	0.29	0.10	0.23	0.14

Note: standard errors in parentheses *$p < 0.05$; year dummies included but not shown.

in half. We find a similar pattern in Asia, where we find a winner–loser gap of -0.18 in mixed systems, and 0.04 (not statistically different from zero) in proportional systems (there are no true majoritarian systems in our Asian sample). However, we find a very different pattern in Africa and Latin America. In Africa, the winner–loser gap is -0.33 in proportional systems, as opposed to -0.21 in majoritarian systems. In Latin American, the gap is -0.14 in majoritarian systems and -0.21

in proportional systems. These differences are all significant at the 0.05 level. Once again, the Anderson et al. (2005) findings do not have broad generalizability. This is true whether we look at Anderson et al. (2005)'s original specification in Table 2 or our updated model in Table 3 – these differences are not driven simply by differences in model specification (the results are also significant and broadly comparable when we specify the model as an ordered logit).

Table 3. Hierarchical linear modeling interacting electoral rules with loser status.

Variables	Africa	Asia	Europe	Latin America
Opposition	−0.21*	−0.41*	−0.31*	−0.14*
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Don't know	−0.31*	−0.27*	−0.29*	−0.22*
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Gender	−0.04*	−0.04*	−0.01	−0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)
Education	−0.04*	−0.03*	0.01*	−0.02*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Clientelism	−0.01	0.16*	−0.01	0.03
	(0.11)	(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.04)
Electoral system	0.09	−0.08	0.05	0.09
	(0.24)	(0.10)	(0.20)	(0.16)
Electoral system * opposition	−0.11*	0.46*	0.15*	−0.07*
	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.02)	(0.03)
Electoral system * don't know	0.01	0.26*	0.11*	−0.03
	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Federal	−0.09	−0.14*	−0.05	0.03
	(0.29)	(0.06)	(0.17)	(0.09)
Next year looking better	0.09*	0.00	0.13*	0.11*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)
Economic evaluations	0.08*	0.01	0.17*	0.20*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Number of parties in government	0.16	0.03	0.03	−0.03
	(0.17)	(0.05)	(0.09)	(0.09)
#Number of parties in government^2	−0.01	0.01	−0.01	0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Constant	1.63*	2.28*	1.96*	1.81*
	(0.32)	(0.12)	(0.30)	(0.17)
Observations	24,022	20,227	38,567	106,949
Number of groups	13 countries	8 countries	12 countries	17 countries
	4 years	8 years	8 years	7 years

Note: standard errors in parentheses *$p < 0.05$; models include random intercepts for each country-year.

The models in Table 3 also reveal some other interesting findings. First, the interaction between 'don't know' and electoral system is statistically significant in Europe and Asia, but not distinguishable from zero in Africa and Latin America. The direction of the effect is the same as interaction between loser status and institutions (when significant), but the magnitude is roughly half as large. This finding provides some evidence that political institutions might affect satisfaction with democracy among the politically disengaged – who in many instances are nearly as dissatisfied with democracy as the supporters of losing parties. We also find that the level of clientelism is

statistically significant in the Asian case – individuals that live in less clientelistic countries are more satisfied with democracy than those in more clientelistic countries.[10]

Thus far we have established that electoral rules have an effect on losers' satisfaction with democracy, but the direction and magnitude of this effect is not consistent once we move beyond Western Europe. Now, we assess whether this is due to the amount of time a country has been a stable democracy. To test this possibility, we present a model that pools the observations from all four continents together. This is necessary because there is much more variation in institutions and length of democratic stability across continents than within continents. We specify a three-way interaction term between 'length of democratic stability (i.e. the number of years the country has been above an 8 on the polity scale)' with 'electoral rules' and 'loser' status.[11] These models speak directly to our proposed causal mechanism of uncertainty about democratic elections. Rather than simply assuming that democracy is more likely to be taken for granted in Europe, and uncertain elsewhere, we now use 'length of experience with democracy' to measure whether democratic elections are uncertain in a country, or whether they are taken for granted in a country.

We present these results in Table 4. We include all of the variables from the models in Table 3 in addition to the new 'length of democratic stability' variable and continent level dummy variables. Because the coefficients on interaction terms are difficult to interpret directly, we present the results of our key three-way interaction in Figure 1. As Figure 1 makes clear, proportional electoral rules are associated with more satisfied losers, but only in countries that have been stable democracies for some time – the cutoff for statistical significance is roughly 40 years. Most countries in Europe have been stable democracies (according to our definition) for at least this long. This period of democratic stability is a comparative rarity in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (although there are exceptions, such as Costa Rica and Japan). These findings suggest that proportional electoral rules do result in more satisfied losers, but the effects are not automatic: they require a number of years of democratic stability to emerge. Length of democratic longevity does not appear to greatly effect winners' levels of satisfaction. Here the slope of the line is positive but the effects are not statistically distinguishable from zero. We can therefore conclude that the mitigating effect of proportional institutions on losers' dissatisfaction is limited to older democracies. In newer democracies, the effect of proportional electoral rules on satisfaction with democracy is severely attenuated.

Table 4. Pooled hierarchical linear modeling interacting electoral rules with loser status and length of democratic stability.

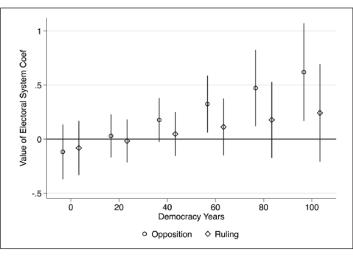| Variables	Model 1
Opposition	−0.24*
	(0.01)
Don't know/non-voter	−0.30*
	(0.01)
Gender	−0.00
	(0.00)
Clientelism	0.07*
	(0.04)
Electoral system	−0.11
	(0.13)
Electoral system * opposition	−0.04*
	(0.02)

(Continued)

Table 4. (Continued)

Variables	Model 1
Electoral system * don't know	0.07*
	(0.01)
Federal	0.01
	(0.08)
Number of parties in government	−0.07*
	(0.03)
Number of parties in government^2	0.01*
	(0.00)
Democracy years	−0.00
	(0.00)
Democracy years * electoral system	0.00
	(0.00)
Africa	−0.07
	(0.15)
Asia	0.12
	(0.12)
Latin America	−0.10
	(0.11)
Opposition * democracy years	−0.00*
	(0.00)
Opposition * electoral system * democracy years	0.00*
	(0.00)
Constant	2.56*
	(0.18)
Observations	301,055
Number of groups	41

Note: standard errors in parentheses *$p < 0.05$; models include random intercepts for each country-year.

Figure 1. The marginal effect of electoral rules on winners and losers' satisfaction with democracy across varying level of democratic longevity.

There are a number of reasons why this might be the case. One potential explanation is that party systems take some time to 'settle' in emerging democracies. Thus, the slate of party offerings might not look terribly different in SMD and PR systems before the party system becomes institutionalized. Institutionalization means that political actors 'have clear and stable expectations about the behavior of other actors' (Mainwaring and Torcal, 2006: 206). There is more volatility and dramatic swings in support from one party to the other in systems that are less institutionalized. In more institutionalized systems, the parties have clear sociological bases of support and voters cast their ballots for the same party most of the time. Electoral institutions shape the party system in a fundamental way, but the party system likely requires some degree of institutionalization in order for the effects of electoral institutions to take hold. The coefficient on the three-way interaction term presented in Table 4 directly speaks to this possibility.

Discussion and conclusion

A core argument in the study of satisfaction with democracy is that proportional institutions matter for satisfaction with democracy, and for the winner–loser gap. We have demonstrated that this argument, though compelling, does not travel well. The mechanisms that seemed so strong in the Eurobarometer were much weaker in the Asianbarometer and the Afrobarometer. We have put forward an explanation for why this might be the case. Europe's party systems and electoral dynamics are relatively settled: parties have well-established brand names; citizens know what to expect from election campaigns and coalition negotiations; and mechanisms for accountability and representation operate with relative regularity (Budge et al., 2012; Manin et al., 1999). There is evidence that electoral volatility is increasing in Western Europe (Chiaramonte and Emanuele, 2017), but it is for future researchers to analyze whether this volatility will develop to the point where its effects outweigh the effects of the long prior stability. The effects of electoral rules within the Eurobarometer are strong because these mechanisms are exerting powerful incentives that guide mass and elite actors towards an equilibrium that is more generous to losers if the electoral rules are more proportional. The Afrobarometer and Asianbarometer are conducted in a huge variety of different national contexts, but often the party systems are in a less settled equilibrium because democracy is newer. This means that electoral rules have less of an effect.

But more than this, we have argued that other factors are likely to remain important. We find that electoral rules do indeed have less of an effect outside Europe, but experience with democracy still exerts an independent effect outside Europe. This suggests that the unique historical trajectory of Europe had other effects on satisfaction with democracy, beyond galvanizing the effect of proportional institutions. In Europe, the stability of democracy is essentially taken for granted at this point. Public opinion surveys about satisfaction with democracy arguably tap into this sense of inevitable stability. A respondent in the UK who says that they are thoroughly dissatisfied with democracy may nevertheless be extremely unlikely to contemplate engaging in any anti-systemic political behavior. A respondent in Kenya who also says that they are maximally dissatisfied with democracy may be far more cognizant of the possibility of post-election violence, given that such violence has occurred in living memory. Therefore, losers' consent is likely to mean something very different in that context.

Future research could examine these issues. Questions about how colonial legacies, military interregnums, and experiences of electoral volatility (among others) can shape these variations in satisfaction outside Europe are valuable and are worth pursuing. Likewise, further research is also needed to identify the underlying mechanism driving the relationship between democratic longevity, institutional structure, and satisfaction with democracy. It is plausible that differences in voter coordination, coalition politics, and party structure (or a combination of all three) are driving our

findings. A test of these mechanisms is an important next step in building on the findings presented here. Democracies operate very differently in different parts of the world. Understanding these differences is key to understanding why democratic politics are stable in certain places and often volatile in others.

We believe that this difference is one of kind rather than of degree, and that future research should be wary of comparing attitudinal measures of satisfaction with democracy across contexts where democracy is taken for granted and where it is not (Przeworski, 2015). Instead, behavioral measures may be more fruitful (Fjelde and Höglund, 2016; Taylor et al., 2017). The results we have shared above illustrate that even strong foundational findings about satisfaction with democracy can vanish in different contexts. In the developed democracies of Europe, these surveys are measuring the degree of enthusiasm or reluctance with which respondents' support democracy. In many countries outside Europe, however, these questions are more likely to tap into the very real possibility that consent will be withdrawn.

Supplemental Material

Supplementary material is available for this article online. Please see journals.sagepub.com/home/ips.

Notes

1. To be sure, Western Europe is not homogenous. For example, Spain is a much newer democracy than the United Kingdom. To the greatest extent possible, our analyses reflect this within-continent heterogeneity.
2. Anderson et al. (2005) touch on this possibility with an analysis of the differences in the winner–loser gap in the established democracies in Western Europe versus the developing democracies in Eastern Europe (also see Esaiasson, 2011). The authors found that the winner–loser gap was generally larger in developing and transitional European democracies across a number of dimensions, including confidence in parliament, satisfaction with how democracy is developing, and support for democratic principles (Anderson et al., 2005: 104–108). However, their analysis included only European countries and the temporal span of the data employed was relatively limited (the authors employed the 1999 European Values Survey, see pages 97–108). There is some research that suggests that the winner–loser gap extends to African democracies (Moehler, 2009) as well as the Middle East (Rose, 2008). Thus, it is unclear how this gap between established and developing democracies might extend to democracies in other regions of the world.
3. One of the assumptions here is that 'satisfaction with democracy' means the same thing to all respondents. In Online Appendix B we explore this assumption in more detail.
4. Anderson et al.'s (2005) analysis used a 4-point scale of increasingly majoritarian rules, so a '1' is closed-list proportional representation, and a 4 is first-past-the-post single-member districts. In our extension, we depart from this approach.
5. Important details such as ballot structure, thresholds, quotas, nomination rules, and other factors are not always fully captured by any single variable (Cox, 1997; Lublin, 2014), and other non-electoral institutions can affect the electoral system too (Farrer, 2017). However, we contend that this single variable nonetheless highlights the key feature that demarcates majoritarian political systems and proportional systems around the world.

6. Wherever Anderson et al. (2005) provided details on how they coded their variables; we followed those details in our replication to the greatest extent possible. Online Appendix A provides more details on these coding decisions.

7. Since we are also using more data, we include year dummies (coefficients not reported).

8. The biggest discrepancy between our model and the Anderson et al. (2005) model is that their new democracy variables drop out of our model because we have no new democracies in the sample. This is one of the reasons we chose to use 'democracy years'.

9. Even there the coefficient on 'number of parties in government' is strongly negative. Since coalition governments tend to be more common in proportional representation systems, there is clearly a more complicated story emerging here too.

10. A country's level of ethnic diversity is another factor that might affect satisfaction with democracy and the nature of the party system writ large. We assessed the effect of ethno-linguistic fractionalization (ELF) by including it as a control variable in the models in Table 3. Generally speaking, the coefficient on the ELF variable was negative but not significant. Latin America was the one exception, where ELF had a statistically significant negative effect – individuals were less satisfied with how democracy functioned in places with high level of ethnic diversity. Including ELF did not substantively alter any of the primary findings. We also interacted ELF with our electoral system variable, but the effect of this interaction term was never significant.

11. Here, we further limit our definition of 'democratic stability' to countries that are above an 8 on the polity scale. The reason for this choice is that we want to isolate the effect of institutions on satisfaction; hence, we are looking to remove confounding cases where the country is a borderline democracy.

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