

**DEMOCRACY WITHOUT INFORMED CITIZENS: THE
INFLUENCE OF PARTISAN CUES ON POLITICAL
PERCEPTIONS OF UNINFORMED KENYANS**

By

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ABSTRACT

The democratic theory assigns citizens key decision-making roles which require good understanding of the political system and its policy-making dynamics. Yet, empirical evidence, derived largely from studies of advanced democracies, shows that most people lack pertinent political information. This creates a democratic puzzle in which information-intensive democratic process is driven by information deficient citizens. Thus, the key research question is: If democracy requires informed citizens, then why does it work well in Kenya, despite a huge political information deficit among Kenyans? To address this question, I first developed a new political information index and, with the aid of Afrobarometer survey data, used it to measure political information levels among Kenyans. This is critical in order to avoid anchoring the study on an untested assumption that Kenyans, like citizens of advanced democracies, lack pertinent political information. The data show that, indeed, the mean political information level among Kenyans is very low, while the variance is very high. I then tested whether democracy works properly in the face of such a huge political information deficit. Using respondent knowledge, satisfaction, and support levels for democracy as proxy indicators of how well democracy functions, the results show that democracy, as understood by citizens, works fairly well, despite an information deficit. Citizens' evaluation of how well democracy works in Kenya seems accurate since it is corroborated by scholars (Semetko, 2010) and by expert assessment from Freedom House reports. Finally, I return to the research question above, and anchor the analysis on two interrelated assumptions derived from political cue theory and the extant literature. First, political behavior is primarily driven by subjective political perceptions rather than objective political facts. Secondly, uninformed citizens (respondents) tend to think heuristically rather than ideologically about political issues. The results largely support political cue theory and the core hypothesis. Specifically, partisanship reduces the perception gap between uninformed and informed citizens, thereby enabling the uninformed to behave as if they are informed.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CBK	Central Bank of Kenya
CCM	<i>Chama Cha Mapinduzi</i> (Party of Revolution)
CDF	Constituency Development Fund
CD Plot	Conditional Density Plot
CI	Condition Index
DK	Don't Know
DP	Democratic Party
FHI	Freedom House Index
FPE	Free Education Policy
FORD-Asili	Forum for Restoration of Democracy <i>Asili</i> (Original)
FORD-K	Forum for Restoration of Democracy in Kenya
GDI	Gender-Related Development Index
KBC	Kenya Broadcasting Corporation
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KPU	Kenya People's Union
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
NAK	National Alliance Party of Kenya
NARC	National Rainbow Coalition
NDP	National Development Party
ODM	Orange Democratic Party
PID	Information Deficit
PII Index	Political information index
PNU	Party of National Unity
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programs
SD	Standard Deviation
SDP	Social Democratic Party
VDP	Variance Decomposition Proportions
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
VT	Variance Tolerance

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND THE RESEARCH DESIGN

1.1 Introduction

Tracing back to the classic works of John Stuart Mill, John Locke and Alexis de Tocqueville, most democratic theorists converge on the idea that democracy requires well-informed citizens (Dalton and Klingerman, 2007; Dalton, 2008; Blais, 2010). In this regard, democratic theory assigns citizens decision-making roles that require a good understanding of the structure and functioning of the political system, as well as its policy process, goals and options (Lasswell, 1966; Dalton and Klingerman, 2007). Quintessentially, as Berelson *et al* (1954:308) observes:

The democratic citizen is expected to be well-informed about political affairs. He is supposed to know what the issues are, what their history is, what the relevant facts are, what alternatives are proposed, what the party stands for, what the likely consequences are.

Moreover, the democratic theory assumes that only informed citizens can make sound judgments and reasoned choices; take actions consistent with their interests; and hence govern themselves effectively (Carpini and Keteer, 1996; Dalton 2000; Aalberg, 2003; Lutz 2006). Indeed, if the public is unable to distinguish policy positions held by different political parties and candidates, then “the public will be unable to cast its ballots wisely and, hence, [be] unable to hold elected leaders accountable for their actions” (Craig *et al*, 2005:483). It is further assumed that informed citizens are more likely to be attentive to politics, committed to democratic ideals, develop informed perceptions, and effectively engage in political activities (Althus, 2003; Aalberg, 2003; Craig *et al*, 2005).

The preferences and interests of the less-informed tend to be poorly reflected in decision outcomes (Lutz, 2006). This is hardly surprising considering John Stuart Mill's observation over a century ago that political participation ensures that citizens' interests are accommodated in the decision making process. In essence, "the informed citizen is the basic foundation of the democratic process" (Dennis, 1970:150), or better still, "political information is to democratic politics what money is to economics: it is the currency of politics" (Carpini and Keteer, 1996:8).

Despite the internal logic underpinning the theoretical expectations of a well-informed citizenry, empirical evidence, derived largely from studies of advanced democracies, indicate that most citizens generally lack pertinent political information (Converse, 1964; Page and Shapiro, 1992; Carpini and Keteer, 1996; Lippia and McCubbins, 1998; Galstone, 2007; Shenkman, 2008). For example, in 1952, only 26% of Americans could correctly identify two branches of government; in 1978, only 30% knew the length of one term in the US House of Representatives; and in 1991, only 25% of Americans knew the length of one term in the US Senate (Shenkman, 2008). Even more interestingly, in the run-up to the 1992 presidential elections, only 15% of Americans knew that George Bush support death penalty, yet 85% knew that he had a dog named Millie (Caplan, 2007). In addition, Galstone (2007:101) observes that:

Today's [American] college graduates know no more about politics than high school graduates did fifty years ago, and today's high school graduates are no more knowledgeable than were the high school dropouts of the past

Although systematic studies of political information levels among African citizens are scant, an extrapolation of the above depiction of American citizens implies that Africans might be less informed. This extrapolation is not without scholarly support. Norris (2011a) argues that information deficit exists not only in advanced democracies, but is likely to be more acute in countries without democratic experience, and in developing societies where access to information is limited. In fact, it has been pointed out that, “for the most part, Sub-Saharan Africa remains a low-information environment in which ambitious elites can easily take advantage of mass ignorance” (Bratton *et al*, 2005:204). Moreover, ‘the claim that citizens lack political information has a long and respected history’ (Lupppia and McCubbins, 1998:17).

Several researchers have discussed the gap between voter information assumptions in democratic theory and the actual citizen’s behavior. The bottom-line is that, “there is a mismatch between the requirements of democracy and most people’s ability to meet these requirements” (Lutz, 2006:66). Using the American citizens as the reference point, Taber (2003: 455) succinctly summarizes this democratic puzzle as follows:

The American voter, as revealed in public opinion research over the past half-century, is a wretched caricature of the noble citizen of normative democratic theory. Uninterested in politics, poorly informed on public matters, intolerant of diversity, ideologically unsophisticated - it seems a miracle that any system dependent on such a creature could have survived, let alone prospered.

One expectation is that this mismatch between the theoretical expectations and empirical evidence would render democracy unworkable (Carpini and Keteer, 1996; Taber, 2003). However, citizens somehow form political perceptions that inform their decisions and actions, and keeps democracy going. Yet, in reality, ‘there [are] no longer

respectable alternatives to democracy; it is part of the fashionable attire of modernity’ (Zakaria, 1997:2) and remains ‘the most common form of government in the world today’ (Lansford, 2008:9). That is, ‘‘it is hard to find anybody these days who doesn’t believe in democracy...democracy, or at least its mechanics, are now the common currency of political life’ (Swift, 2010:13). Moreover, there is a resurgence of direct democracy in many countries, where citizens not only elect political parties and leaders, but also make public policies, enact laws and legitimize constitutions directly through referendums (Marxer and Pallinger, 2004). In a nutshell, ‘the contemporary world is no longer divided between those who favor and those who oppose democracy; the vast majority favors democracy, and the main distinction now is whether people support democracy for instrumental or intrinsic reasons’ (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005:270).

Despite the myriads of problems and challenges that dodge democracy in Africa for instance, the substance of the discourse on African democracy by Africanists such as Archie Mafetje and Claude Ake has not been on whether democracy is suitable for Africa but what kind of democracy is suitable. According to Lumumba-Kasongo (2005), ‘Africans should invent their own form of democracy as a means of social progress. The question is, what kind of democracy can serve as a tool for social mobilization and social participation?’ (p. 5). While not many scholars, including the writer, subscribe to the notion of a uniquely African brand of democracy, the bottom line is that ‘Africans are seeking democracy as a matter of survival; they believe that there are no alternatives to this quest, that they have nothing to lose and a great deal to gain’ (ibid, 1).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The evidence reveals a democratic puzzle whereby citizens lack pertinent political information, but make decisions and take actions that require enormous amounts of political information. In other words, the information-deficient citizens seem to effectively drive the information-intensive democratic process. For instance, as one scholar points out, ‘in elections, the passive and disorganized mass of voters becomes the arbiters of the political conflict. Elections enable the masses to remove from office an elite group which is unresponsive to their wishes’ (Axtmann, 2007:127). However, this seems an almost impossible task for citizens who are not even attentive to elite activities and their effects, and who, perhaps, may not even know what is in their own self interest. Put differently, ‘the amazing thing about democracy is that the selectors and reviewers are substantially incompetent, but the process nevertheless generates able, even superior leaders, and tends to keep them responsive and responsible’ (Mueller, 1992:997).

How do we reconcile the very compelling theoretical postulation that democracy requires informed citizens to function well, with the equally strong empirical evidence which suggests that democracy works well even when most citizens are poorly informed? This dissertation primarily seeks to resolve this puzzle, and thus the key research question is: *If democracy requires informed citizens, then what makes it possible for democracy to work well in Kenya despite an acute political information deficit among Kenyans?*

To answer this research question, it is imperative to recognize and empirically verify the two underlying assumptions. First, the question is based on the assumption that since citizens in advanced democracies lack pertinent political information, it follows that citizens in new and emerging democracies are also poorly informed, or perhaps less

informed. The second assumption is that despite their information deficiency, citizens in new and emerging democracies effectively participate in the democratic process, or better still, democracy functions well even in the face of significant political information deficit. But, do these assumptions hold in the new and emerging democracies such as Kenya?

Against this background therefore, the key research question raised above can be reduced to three more specific questions, which this study will address:

- (i) What are the levels and determinants of political information among Kenyan citizens?*
- (ii) Does democracy function well in Kenya despite an acute political information deficit?*
- (iii) What makes it possible for 'politically uninformed' Kenyans to develop 'politically informed' perceptions that guide their actions and decisions in the democratic process?*

1.3 The Study Rationale

1.3.1 Reconceptualizing Political Information

Political information¹ is increasingly playing a significant role in most political behavior studies. Indeed, 'there is growing interest in the concept of political knowledge' (Bennie, 2001:11). Yet, its conceptualization continues to be problematic to the extent that 'there are as many ways to measure political knowledge as there are studies of political knowledge' (Dolan and Holbrook, 2001:32). Thus, Kuklinski and Quirk (2001) chastise political behavior scholars for failure to develop coherent conceptual framework for measuring political information. Similarly, Jacoby (2002) notes that, 'it is imperative that political scientists continue to refine the definitions and improve the measurements of concepts that have already been identified as important within the sub-field' (p. 133).

¹ I use the term *Political Information* interchangeably with *Political Knowledge* in this study, consistent with Levendusky's (2011) approach, to refer to estimates of how much an individual is informed about politically relevant issues.

The failure to develop a refined measure of political information has contributed to ‘the lack of consistent, comparable indicators of political knowledge’ (Milner, 2010:99). This in turn has not only hampered comparative studies in the field, but has also rendered the replication of past studies difficult. It is not surprising that ‘despite the large number of studies in which political knowledge is a factor, there have been few international studies that take us much further in comparing political knowledge’ (Milner, 2010:100). Hooghe (2011:205) has succinctly noted one regrettable consequence of this failure:

Comparative tests of political knowledge (to be applied in a number of countries simultaneously) are almost totally absent from research. Even within a country, various questions have been raised about the validity of political knowledge tests

This study takes these challenges head on and makes two major contributions to the field regarding political information. First, in light of the flaws inherent in the existing measures of political information that are well documented in the literature (Mondak, 1993; Carpini and Keteer, 1996; Kuklinski and Quirk, 2001; Prior and Lupia, 2008), I develop a new index for measuring political information levels to resolve this problem. The index will facilitate construction of standardized political information indices that cut across time and space. Secondly, given scanty systematic studies on information levels in Africa, this study uses the new index to measure political information levels in Kenya.

1.3.2 Bringing Perceptions back into the Study of Political Behavior

Although the distinction between political perceptions and political reality is important in understanding political behavior, few scholars pay adequate attention to this distinction. It is not uncommon for scholars to describe politics in terms of objective

events, even when they measure it in terms of political perceptions (Cropanzano and Li, 2006). For instance, economic voting studies often depict opinions about the state of the economy as if they are the true state of the economy. Some scholars even argue that ‘one need not be an economist to see which way the economy is going’ (Popkin, 1991:23). Yet, the true state of the economy at any time is difficult to estimate even for well trained economists. It requires huge data and intricate computational skills that are beyond an average mind. To a large extent, ‘people form attitudes about the economy on the basis of how they think the economy is doing’ (Arceneaux, 2004:202). Thus, ‘what really matters are voters’ own perceptions, not the economic realities’ (Blais *et al*, 2002: 129). Yet, ‘economic perceptions are affected by partisan predispositions’ (Blais *et al*, 2002:131).

A key point of departure for this study therefore is the distinction between political perceptions and political reality, and emphasis on the fact that perceptions play a critical role in shaping political behavior. While previous studies assume that there is a direct relationship between political information and political participation (Zaller, 1992; Krause, 1997; Fearon, 1999), I advance the view that the relationship is indirect, and that political information only serves as raw materials for the mind to process and produce political perceptions (Walsh, 2004; Mondak, 2010). Therefore, individual perception is the intervening variable between concrete political information and the observed political behavior. Ultimately, it is the subjective perceptions rather than objective facts that shape political behavior (Morris, 2008). Hence, it is clear that political information does not in itself shape political behavior; the influence of information on behavior is mediated by many factors like information source, intensity and credibility as well as how information is processed, and the mental images and personal impressions derived from it.

To put it concisely, ‘every opinion is a marriage of information and predisposition: information to form a mental picture of the given issue, and predisposition to motivate some conclusion about it’ (Zaller, 1992:6). According to Cottam, *et al* (2010:142), the processing of information into political decisions and actions occur through many stages:

Information is received, and the appropriate nodes or schema is primed; the information is matched to the knowledge structure and appropriate nodes; the information is assessed and stored in memory, finally that evaluation is retrieved from memory when the individual is called upon to make a decision about political action.

Furthermore, past studies have treated political perceptions as though people develop political perceptions about different issues the same way, regardless of whether the issues are political or economic, or whether they are about the past, the present or the future. In this dissertation, I advance and test the hypothesis that people develop political perceptions differently depending on *issue-reference* (whether the focus is on politics or the economy), and *time-reference* (whether the focus is on the past, present or the future).

Besides, much of what we know about political perceptions and political behavior is derived from studies of advanced democracies (Dalton, 2000; Aalberg, 2003). In fact, “public perception of facts has been a neglected field of study, and the few studies that have been conducted have studied American data” (Aalberg, 2003:95). As a result, little attention has been given to perceptions and its influence on political behavior in Africa (Kuenzi and Lambright, 2007; Rose, 2007). Admittedly, a few largely descriptive studies in Sub-Saharan Africa have recently refocused on partisanship and political perceptions (Bratton *et al*, 2005; Ishiyama and Fox, 2006; Fernandez and Kuenzi, 2009).

Yet, the studies have not paid sufficient attention to the key concern of this study: the link between political information and political perceptions in Sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, past studies found that public safety predicts support for democracy better than it predicts perceptions about the national economy in Africa (Fernandez and Kuenzi, 2009). Besides, low education levels and high exposure to mass media negatively affect perceptions about quality of democracy and national economy (Bratton *et al*, 2005), and the poor are more likely than the rich to hold partisan views (Ishiyama and Fox, 2006).

1.4 Literature Review

The literature review is organized around the possible solutions to the democratic puzzle, and revolves around democracy, political information and political perceptions.

1.4.1 The Democratic Puzzle: A Problem of Poor Theory and Measurement?

One response to the democratic puzzle is both theoretical and conceptual. Some scholars downplay the problem of information deficit among citizens, and attribute the apparent democratic puzzle to poor theoretical definition of democracy (Borchert, 2010). Thus, democratic elitists argue that the democratic puzzle would dissipate if democracy is understood as an elitist “representative system with limited citizen involvement” (Borchert, 2010:29), rather than a participatory process based on majoritarian principles.

These theorists argue that the solution to the democratic puzzle is not to “re-invent” better citizens, but to reframe the democratic process into one in which the ability of citizens to influence policy is limited (Schumpeter, 1950; Schattschneider, 1960). The theory of democratic elitism regards the elites not only as better informed, but also as agents of democracy, who should be empowered to shield democracy from the ignorance of the uninformed masses (Feddersen and Pesendorfer, 1997; Peffley and Rohrschneider,

2007). The rationale for this view is that since most citizens are uninformed, ‘an overactive citizenry is likely to make ill-considered, short-termist and generally poor policy decisions’ (Faulsk, 1999:144). Thus, the democratic process should be reframed to limit citizens’ ability to influence policy (Schumpeter, 1950; Schattschneider, 1960).

Yet democratic elitism does not resolve the democratic puzzle, but instead, it exacerbates the problem by posing yet another kind of puzzle. While it suggests that citizens should be stripped of the power to decide policies that govern them due to their deficiency in political information, it allows the information-deficient citizens to elect leaders. Does it mean that policies are more important than leaders who make them? Or is political information not required for the selection of leaders and parties at elections?

If we treat political parties as embodiments of policies and ideas that compete for the attention of citizens at elections, then the act of election in itself involves a simultaneous selection of public policies associated with those who have been elected. Democratic elitism therefore attempts to “rescue democracy by weakening its meaning”, since ‘the paradox of modern democracy cannot be resolved by eliminating the need for a broadly and equitably informed citizenry’ (Carpini and Keteer, 1996:49).

At the conceptual level, several scholars have sought to challenge the methodology used to measure political information. They view the democratic puzzle as an artifact of poor measurement of political information. Political information is often measured in terms of correct answers to a set of civic questions that require identifying politicians or political facts (Kingdon, 1970; Sanders, 1999; Cao and Brewer 2008; Toka, 2009). Another measure involves summing up correct answers to civic questions, then dividing

by the maximum score, leading to a standardized score ranging from zero to one (Carpini and Keteer, 1993; Barker, 2002; Althus, 2003).

Critics argue that using civic questions to measure political information ignores many things that citizens know, and underrates their ability to make up for information deficit (Popkin, 1991; Mondak, 1999). They note that most questions testing political information require instant information retrieval from memory and do not motivate people to access and piece together relevant information. That is, retrieval and use of political information is situational. However, when faced with consequential judgments, citizens are able to acquire and use political information (Prior and Lupia, 2008).

1.4.2 The Democratic Puzzle: Does Political Information Matter?

Another set of responses to the democratic puzzle typically revolve around whether information matters in the development of political perceptions. One group of scholars argues that the limited information citizens are able to acquire is adequate for political decision making (Popkin, 1991; Sniderman *et al*, 1991; Wittman, 1995; Popkin and Dimock, 1999). Specifically, they argue that, “voters do not need all the information about their government that theorists and reformers wish them to have, because they learn to use ‘information shortcuts...’” (Elkin and Soltan, 1999:117). The shortcuts consist of lessons from past experience, daily life, media and political activities like campaigns.

Radical versions of this line of scholarship even suggest that information does not influence whether or not people make reasoned decisions; it merely influences how citizens integrate new information into their decision-making calculus. They argue that citizens have *apriori* knowledge that provides the context within which they interpret new information, and ‘knowledge of government and its institutions is not a simple

function of education' (Popkin and Dimock, 1999:123). Thus, education basically provides the background context for evaluating new information.

Others have identified a micro-macro paradox whereby the aggregate perceptions tend to be accurate even if individual perceptions are flawed (Parker-Steven, 2004). At the micro-level, politically attentive partisans tend to adopt extreme political perceptions, while non-partisans adopt accurate perceptions. Errors from extreme perceptions are assumed to be random, and cancel out in large samples (Granberg, 1985; Page and Shapiro, 1992; Parker-Steven, 2004). That is, 'the inadequacies of individual citizens, when combined, are more likely to cancel than to multiply' (Kinder, 1998:797). In essence, although the individuals may hold inaccurate political perceptions, 'when the perceptions of a sample of people are considered collectively, the correspondence between political perceptions and political reality is very close' (Granberg, 1985: 506).

However, some equally robust empirical evidence shows that uninformed voters make similar errors in the same direction, and hence errors cannot simply cancel out (Bartels, 1996; Althus, 2003). According to Althus (1998), those who argue that errors cancel out base their arguments on a "hypothetical fully informed public". He found that if all citizens are as informed as the most informed people in the society, then their policy preferences would differ considerably from the results obtained from the "hypothetical fully informed public". Similarly, in a study of the US presidential elections from 1972 – 1992, Bartels (1996) found that although heuristic cues raise political information levels significantly, voters who rely on them for political decision-making take considerably different decisions than they would if they had complete information.

These scholars present strong evidence that the errors from uninformed citizens are systematic rather than random (Bartels, 1996; Kuklinski and Quirk, 2000). For instance, Bartels found that the uninformed make political decisions that differ systematically from those they would make if they were fully informed, so that ‘relatively uninformed voters are more likely, other things being equal, to support incumbents and Democrats’ (p. 218).

Similarly, Aalberg (2003:89) observes that:

People have the facts wrong, often in systematic ways, and confidently believe that they have them right. [This] misplaced confidence leads them to resist accepting and using the correct facts even if they are made available.

Although ‘the final word has not been written in this debate’ (Jones, 2001:105) regarding whether errors are random or systematic, the importance of political information has an established presence in the literature dating back to the seminal work of Berelson *et al* (1954). This landmark study outlines three core functions of political information: ‘it activates predispositions²; it reinforces standing predispositions, and it (perhaps only rarely) converts predispositions’ (Alvarez and Brehm, 2002:219).

In addition, if citizens lack information about the incumbent party’s policies, they can neither hold the government accountable nor compare its policies with the alternatives offered by opposition parties during elections. This is because ‘without knowledge about how government works, it is difficult to assess the true priorities of legislators’ (Popkin and Dimock, 1999:125). In any case, even those who underestimate the value of political information, ‘ultimately fail to show that a political system can operate effectively and

² Political predispositions are ‘stable, individual-level traits that regulate the acceptance or non-acceptance of the political communications the person receives’ (Zaller, 1992:22).

democratically without an informed citizenry' (Carpini and Keteer, 1996:23). Moreover, studies show that those who turn out to vote tend to be more informed than those who do not (Zaller, 1992; Lutz, 2006).

More substantively, scholars have noted that political information 'stimulates and facilitates political participation' (Carpini and Keteer, 2005:22), thereby playing a very significant normative role (Levendusky, 2011: 43). It is further argued that information considerably changes patterns of political behavior (Levendusky, 2011). In this regard, it has been pointed out that political information 'enables citizens to comprehend the political world and develop attitudes about politics that are consistent with one's basic values and orientations' (Carpini and Keteer, 2005:22).

1.4.3 The Democratic Puzzle: Can Democracy and Information Deficit Co-exist?

Another possible solution to the democratic puzzle is to admit that political information is important for democracy to work well, and argue that democracy does not usually work well when most citizens have a huge information deficit. The literature suggests that democratic political systems by their nature tend to make public policies that reflect citizens' preferences, values and interests (Dahl, 1957; Saward, 1998; Jacoby, 2002; Amy, 2002). Thus, democracy is '[the] necessary correspondence between acts of governance and the equally weighted felt interests of citizens with respect to these acts' (Budge, 2006:595). Since democracy is government for and by the people, '[democratic] government should do what its citizens want done' (Krosnick *et al*, 2010:1289).

Moreover, democratic governments tend to derive stability and legitimacy, at least in part, from their tendency to enact and implement policies that are congruent with the preferences of the electorate (Dahl, 1957; Krosnick, 1990). In this regard, a long research

tradition that dates back to the work of Edmund Burke and John Dewey recognizes that while citizens are good at identifying problems facing them, they are poor at articulating solutions to those problems. Burke and Dewey proposed social division of labor between citizens and leaders so that the role of citizens is to identify problems that affect them, while the leaders design solutions for them (Althaus, 2003).

To play this role effectively, citizens need to be informed and able to express their problems to their leaders for solution (Krosnik *et al*, 2010). As Dalton (2000:919) notes:

For voters to make meaningful decisions, they must understand the options that the polity faces. Citizens must have sufficient knowledge of the workings of the political system if they intend to influence and control the actions of their representatives

The skepticism about the ability of uninformed citizens to drive democracy, and the concomitant emphasis on politically informed citizens is based on the near unanimity in the literature that informed and uninformed citizens tend to exhibit different political behavior, with the former exhibiting political behavior that is more supportive of democracy (Converse, 1964; Zaller, 1986; Carpini and Keteer, 1996, 2005; Campbell, 2003; Carpini, 2009). In the first instance, the processes by which the informed and the uninformed citizens make political decisions are different (Sniderman *et al*, 1991; Carpini and Keteer, 2005). It is noted that ‘compared with uninformed voters, informed voters are likely to use a broader range of considerations in reaching a candidate choice and are much more likely to use issues as a criterion’ (Carpini and Keteer, 2005:22).

At the same time, Abrajano and Alvarez (2010:102) observe that:

Politically knowledgeable individuals behave differently from those who are less knowledgeable because they possess a more tightly connected cognitive structure that allows them to organize their political beliefs and ideology

The literature also suggests that the informed tend to differ from the uninformed citizens in terms of ‘the structure, consistency and stability of their political attitudes and ideologies’ (Bennie, 2001:11). In this regard, uninformed citizens tend to exhibit political behavior that is not only inconsistent with their policy preference, but is also inconsistent from one election to another (Reilly, 2010). It is noted for instance, that because of huge information deficits among Americans, ‘people getting their fundamental interests wrong is what American political life is all about. This species of derangement is the bedrock of [American] civil order; it is the foundation on which all else rests’ (Frank, 2004:1-2).

For instance, Bartels (2008) cites some survey researches which show that most Americans support greater federal spending in several government programs, feel that the rich are taxed too little, and detest income inequality. Yet these same people actively support public policies whose net effect reduce tax burdens for the rich, widen income gaps and reduce federal spending. He attributes these contradictions to information deficit, and wonders how these people would reconcile their contradictions if they were to recognize them. Though most Americans support greater public spending in health, environmental protection, and education, their voting behavior do not reflect these ideals, as the same people vote for legislators who back expenditure cuts (Lewis, 2001).

Largely due to such contradictions, Alan Wolfe (2006:30) has observed that:

Americans have been very lucky for quite some time. Despite their lack of information about politics, they have done a fairly good job evaluating candidates and the public policies they support

While I share the sentiments of Wolfe, I do not agree that Americans have been lucky to make credible decisions despite lack of information. It is not out of sheer luck that they have been able to evaluate candidates and public policies, but due to underlying mechanisms like partisan cues, through which they overcome their information deficit and hence behave as though they are well informed.

These examples are drawn exclusively from American experience largely because studies in this area typically focus on America. Moreover, there is no indication that the situation is different elsewhere, given the observation that ‘self-interest is seldom a guide to behavior since some people often do not recognize their interests or may choose to act in an altruistic manner’ (Campbell, 2003:7). The critical question arising from these inconsistencies has been well posed by Frank (2004:1): ‘how [can] so many people get it so wrong?’ He was puzzled that residents of Kansas would support Republicans when it is Democrats who stand for issues that are in their interest. One argument presented in the literature is that people often subordinate self-interest to the collective or group interest.

According to Lakoff (2004:19):

It is not that people never care about their self interest. But they vote their identity. And if their identity fits their self-interest, they will vote for that...it is a serious mistake to assume that people are simply always voting in their self-interest

Subordinating self-interest to group interest as stated by Lakoff (2004) is not necessarily a problem as long as an individual's self-interest coincides with his or her group identity. But there is no guarantee that this is often the case. Yet there is a long research tradition drawing inspirations from among other political thinkers, John Stuart Mill, which argue that democracy best serves the interests of those who are informed, since they tend to engage in it more than those who are poorly informed (Lutz, 2006).

According to Campbell (2003:1):

The politically active are more likely to achieve their policy goals, often at the expense of the politically quiescent. And the ability of the politically active to do so is in part a legacy of existing public policy

In other words, political information facilitates political participation which in turn has a mutually reinforcing relationship with public policy. Campbell (2003) argues that policy design creates impressions on the part of target groups, particularly the designated beneficiaries, of how much the government values and cares about them. The perceptions in turn influence how target groups view and relate to the government, and whether or not they become politically active. Studies along this line coalesce into the *policy feedback framework*, which holds that 'policies create incentives for targets to organize to preserve and expand their benefits or to minimize their costs' (McDonnell, 2009:66). The target groups organize within a framework of institutionalized rules and structures created by the policy. The nature of the feedback generated by a policy is a function of the incentive structures it creates, the type of access to governmental system it provides, and 'the signals it sends about the political standing of its targets' (McDonnell, 2009: 66).

A large volume of literature endorses the key premise of the normative democratic theory that democracy works well when citizens have adequate political information. However, it still remains unclear how to empirically verify if democracy is working well. The common practice is to begin from the key premise of liberalism, that ‘individuals are the best judges of their well-being’ (Wegner, 2008:78). Building on this premise, scholars have noted that ‘some type of linkage exist between how citizens define democracy and their practice of and support for democratic institutions over the long run’ (Camp, 2001: 11). More precisely, a correlation has been noted between how people define democracy, what they expect from it, and how they evaluate it (Camp, 2001).

Dalton *et al* (2008) outlines two models that explain how the public understands democracy. First, the *Diffusion Model* suggests that democratic norms usually flow from those areas that have already become democratic to those that are not yet. This free flow and ready acceptance of democratic ideals is reinforced by the fact that democracy is naturally appealing. Given that knowledge of democracy has little to do with national conditions or even the democratic experiences of each country, it is possible to develop a good understanding of democracy even if one does not live in a democratic country.

Secondly, the *Learning Model* suggest that democratic ideals are learnt through experience and therefore the longer one lives in a democratic country, the better he gets to know democracy (Dalton *et al*, 2008). At the aggregate national level, the model can be interpreted to imply that the longer a country has been democratic, the more its citizens understand democracy. Thus, citizens of Western Europe and North America can be expected to be more knowledgeable about democracy than African citizens.

A study by Norris (2011b) found evidence supporting the *Learning Model*. She found that an individual's knowledge of democracy is significantly influenced by their historical experiences with democracy, their education levels, political information levels and use of news media. In fact, she found that there is a curvilinear relationship between an individual's knowledge of democracy and the length of time lived in a democratic state. She concluded that 'citizens who have grown up in long-standing democratic states have learnt how the democratic procedures and principles do and do not work [and that] knowledge of democracy also strengthens with age' (p. 163).

Other studies have also shown that 'support for democracy is high in most stable democracies and relatively high in newly consolidated democracies, but not as high in societies that were undergoing transition or consolidation at the time of the survey' (Moreno, 2001:32). In essence, the more democratic a country is, the more its citizens are likely to be satisfied with the way democracy functions there. As a result, the aggregate level of satisfaction with democracy indicates how well democracy is working.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

1.5.1 The Heuristic Cues Framework and Political Perceptions

Heuristics has been defined as 'convenient, informal guides that people find helpful and often follow in making decisions or predictions' (Oskamp and Schultz, 2005:23), or more precisely, as 'shortcuts used to understand something when the full range of information about that object is not possessed by an individual' (Pfau *et al*, 2007:52).

According to Pamela Conover and Stanley Feldman (1982: 231):

If the candidates adopt relatively unambiguous issue positions and this information is readily available, then voters are able to rely on it for prediction purposes. If, on the other hand, there is only ambiguous information then the voter is forced to infer the candidates' issue positions from other information about the candidate

The *heuristic cues framework* is based on the assumption that most citizens think heuristically rather than ideologically about political issues (Oskamp and Schultz, 2005). Beyond this point, theorizing and research on heuristics cues have developed in different directions. Some scholars argue that heuristics substantially narrow the political information gap between informed and uninformed citizens, thereby enabling the latter to make decisions which approximate the decisions they would make if they had complete information (Popkin, 1991; Lippia, 1994; Sekhon, 2004; Kam, 2005; McDermott, 2006). It is further argued that cues enable the uninformed not just to behave like the informed, but to 'be knowledgeable in their reasoning about political choices without necessarily possessing a large body of knowledge about politics' (Sniderman *et al*, 1991:19).

Others question the ability of heuristics to remedy citizen information deficits, and empower uninformed citizens to behave as if they are informed (Bartels, 1996; Kuklinski and Hurley, 1996; Taber, 2003). They argue that heuristic cues are error-ridden, and hence may sometimes mislead rather than enlighten citizens (Bartels, 1996; Althaus, 2003; Kuklinski and Quirk, 2000; Lau and Redlawsk, 2006; Taber, 2003). Some scholars even argue that heuristic cue-taking is fatally error-bound (Kuklinski and Hurley, 1996).

Brady and Sniderman (1985) developed a version of heuristic cues model known as *Likeability Heuristics*. According to this model, an individual's perceptions about the political preference of others depend on whether they like or dislike them. When an individual likes a group, he or she is likely to believe that the group shares his or her perceptions on *all* issues. For example, if one likes a political party but does not know its policy position on abortion, he or she is likely to believe his or her position on abortion is shared by the party. The model also holds that both informed and uninformed citizens use heuristics, though the latter rely more on it than on facts.

Although there is near consensus among heuristic scholars that citizens typically rely on readily available heuristic cues which they trust and presume to be better informed than them (Oskamp and Schultz, 2005), scholars differ on the main sources of heuristic cues. One version of the heuristic cues model holds that citizens derive cues from fellow citizens, and that "political activity is rooted in social structure" (Mutz, 2002: 839). Repeated social interactions are said to instill in individuals a general culture of political participation, which in turn, drives them to participate in politics. However, the model leaves open the question as to whether *all* forms of social interactions lead to similar political mobilization, and hence similar levels of participation. The idea that all forms of social interactions promote voter turnout is doubtful. It is reasonable to expect some forms of social interactions to promote apathy, and others to promote participation.

Similarly, the *Social Proof Theory* postulates that people derive cues from those who are similar or related to them (Cialdini, 2001). The *Social proof* works best under conditions of uncertainty and similarity. Uncertainty can induce similar and like-minded

people operating within the context of a group, to accept as correct, and therefore follow, the actions of others. In this regard, Katz and Lazarsfeld (2006:44) have pointed out that:

Interpersonal relationships seem to be “anchorage” points for individual opinions, attitudes, habits and values. That is, interacting individuals seem collectively and continuously to generate and maintain common ideas and behavior patterns which they are reluctant to surrender or to modify unilaterally

Another group of scholars offer a contrary view that people derive cues from the opinion of “distant impersonal others” (Mutz and Soss, 1997; Mutz, 1998). The weakness of these theories is that they suggest that uninformed people take cues from the majority, yet empirical evidence so far shows that the majority are often politically uninformed.

The masses also derive heuristic cues from elites (Lewkowicz, 2006; Chong and Druckman, 2007). Political elite refers to ‘those who devote themselves full-time to some aspects of politics or public affairs’ (Zaller, 1992:6), and include politicians, high-level government officials, journalists, some activists, experts and policy specialists (Ibid). Yet, ‘the elites do not create predispositions, they [merely] activate them’ (Alvarez and Brehm, 2002: 219). The masses do not just accept any elite cue; they evaluate, interpret, and only pick cues they perceive to be credible. For example, in the Canadian referendum of 1992 on the Charlottetown Accord, voters rejected elite cues and voted against the accord despite strong elite support for it (see Ginsberg and Stone, 1996; Norris, 1997).

Elites do not usually convey objective and balanced political information. Much of elite discourse with the masses involves efforts ‘to create a depiction of reality that is sufficiently simple and vivid that ordinary people can grasp it’ (Zaller, 1992: 13). For that reason, ‘much of the information carried in elite discourse is neither neutral nor strictly

factual...since they have been framed for partisan purposes' (Zaller, 1992: 22). That is, "mass politics is socially constructed" at two levels: elites strategically select information that they present to the masses, who in turn, select what to hear, and what cue to take (Kuklinski and Hurley, 1996; Gilens and Murakawa, 2002; Baum and Groeling, 2010).

As Gilens and Murakawa (2002:43) observe:

If elite cues and other decision shortcuts lead citizens to the same aggregate preference that they would form if they had the time, interest, and expertise to reason through the substance of each issue, then the public can fulfill its democratic role while remaining largely ignorant of the substantive complexity of government policy.

However, 'if heuristics leads to aggregate preferences that are strongly at variance with what an informed public would desire, then democracy is at risk' (ibid, p.34). That is, heuristic cues can either promote or undercut democracy. It is suggested that two minimum conditions are necessary for effective decision-making based on heuristic cues. First, the masses must be able 'to distinguish between potential cue givers who share their political orientations and those who do not' (ibid, 31). Secondly, they must be able to identify the policy preferences of the cue givers. Only this can secure elite-mass policy congruence (Gilens and Murakawa, 2002). For instance, citing the 2003 US invasion of Iraq at a time when public opinion was against this move, Swift (2010) observes that 'we have been treated to other recent examples of our political elite giving us not what we wanted but what they thought we needed' (p. 12).

Chong and Druckman (2007) argue that the ability of a frame to shape individual's opinion depend on an individual's perception of the frame's applicability, its strength and frequency. Although one-time exposure to a frame is adequate to induce framing effects

on informed citizens, uninformed citizens require greater exposure for framing effects to occur. Thus, political information levels influence the formation of political perceptions.

Mass media has also been identified as a source of heuristic cues, although there is selective attentiveness to media (Mondak, 2010). People generally seek information and cues that echo their beliefs, while rejecting the uncongenial ones (Zaller, 1992; Taber, 2003). It is well established in the literature that “citizens will resist information that is inconsistent with their prevailing worldview” (Aalberg, 2003:87), and hence tend seek media content that support their beliefs. Recent appraisal of the role of media in shaping political participation in advanced democracies show that due to a decline in partisanship, the media has replace parties as the source of political information (Frode *et al*, 2008).

People also rely on ethnicity and racism as heuristic cues (Squire and Smith, 1988). Indeed, until recently, African voters were thought to use ethnic cues as a guide for their voting decisions. Yet, recent studies in Kenya, and in many African countries, show that African voters and by extension, African parties, are less “ethnic” than earlier thought, and that ethnicity plays at best, a modest role in vote choice (Bratton *et al*, 2008; Young, 2009; Keefe, 2010). For instance, the influence of race in South African elections has less to do with ‘race’ as a heuristic cue, and more to do with its unique historical role as the basis for defining the struggles between the oppressed and the oppressors in apartheid era (Schulz-Herzenberg, 2008). Major parties and candidates in most African elections usually acquire broad-based support beyond the ethnic group of the party leader (Bratton, *et al*, 2005; Kasongo-Lumumba, 2005; Birnir, 2006; Stroh, 2010). Thus, some scholars have argued that African voters continue to be misunderstood, since they have not been properly researched (Schaffer, 2000; Lindberg and Morrison, 2008). In a nutshell, ‘recent

publications have challenged the most popular approach to African party politics, one that assumes ethnic structure plays a determining role in party success' (Stroh, 2010:1).

These revelations call for closer examination of how African voters make political decisions. In any case, fairly recent studies have concluded that 'contemporary scholarly studies of mass politics have mostly failed to elucidate the role of ordinary citizens in the broader political process' (Bartels, 2004:153).

1.5.2 Political Cue Theory

One of the theories within the broader *Heuristic Cues Framework* that attempt to resolve the democratic puzzle is *political cue theory* developed by Pamela Conover and Stanley Feldman. The theory hold that democracy works well even when there is a huge political information deficit among citizens given that uninformed citizens are able to surmount information deficits by developing and using *schemas*. In this regard, *schema* refers to "more or less integrated set of beliefs and implicit rules concerning stimulus, including what goes with what, how things operate, and how cues can be used to infer features that go beyond information that is given" (Iyengar and McGuire, 1993:93). Thus, *political schemata* refer to 'enduring cognitive structures that influence the processing of political information across multiple elections' (Lau, 1986:114).

In order to be able to make sense of the political world, people develop various types of *political schemata*, depending on their experience with the political world. Once a schema is well established, then several implications can be inferred from it as need arises (Iyenger, 1989). More importantly, 'schemata organize the processing and storage of incoming information, and they guide the recall and interpretation of information already in memory' (Lau, 1986: 95). In a nutshell, 'schemas can affect what information

is attended to, how it is perceived or interpreted, how (and if) it is stored in long-term memory, and when it is recalled for later consideration' (Carpini, 2009:27)

Consistent with the political cue theory, Lau (1986) identifies political parties as one of the most important political schemata, and argues that 'if a person holds a strong party schema, his or her evaluation of a political candidate should be strongly based on the party affiliation of the candidate' (p. 117). People with a strong party schema usually make political decisions and take actions that reinforce their partisan predispositions. As Jacoby (2010:263) rightly observes:

Stimuli associated with one's own party - primarily candidates and policy stands - are viewed more favorably while those from the other party [or parties] are regarded more negatively. The clarity and intensity of such connections are mediated by the strength of individual partisan attachments

The *political cue theory* emphasizes 'cognition, information processing and the drawing of inferences' (Iyengar and McGuire, 1993:93). Conover and Feldman (1984) argues that the political environment is characterized by scarcity of political information, and where information is available, it tends to be ambiguous, and open to myriads of interpretations. Under the circumstances, coping with political environment requires making inferences. Like other theories that emphasize information processing, political cue theory is based on the assumption that 'individuals do not respond directly to objects in the environment, but rather to their mental representation of these objects' (Cassino *et al*, 2007:211). Hence, it recognizes that subjective perceptions rather than objective facts drive political behavior (Morris, 2008). That is, cues enable citizens to form their political perceptions which in turn, inform and guide their political decisions and actions in the

information-intensive democratic process (Carpini and Keteer, 1996). In essence, the political cue theory is basically a theory of political perceptions (Granberg, 2001).

In short, the central hypothesis of the political cue theory is that citizens take cues from the political parties they trust in order to abridge their political information deficit and to aid in the formation of political perceptions (Baker *et al*, 1981; Conover and Feldman, 1984; Iyenger and McGuire, 1993; Carpini and Keteer, 1996; Hacker, 2004). The theory holds that political parties offer enduring and reliable cues which shapes political perceptions (Iyenger and McGuire, 1993). Party identity is thus treated as a perceptual screen through which individuals filter public policies and political ideas, and base their evaluation of candidates (Hacker, 2004). As Jacoby (2010: 263) puts it:

Partisanship acts as a “perpetual screen” which helps individuals to evaluate incoming information about the political world, formulates attitudes, and determines subsequent behaviors in an efficient manner

Political parties “orient the way people think about politics” so that those with ties to parties turn to them for cues (Baker *et al*, 1981). Indeed, ‘a central idea in political cue theory is that political parties act as abiding and reliable anchors, serving as strong cues in deriving political perceptions’ (Iyengar and McGuire, 1993:94).

1.6 Political Cue Theory, Political Parties and Partisanship in Kenya

1.6.1 Theoretical and Empirical Literature on Kenyan Political Parties

Political cue theory treats political parties as the most important source of political cues on which partisan citizens rely to bridge their information deficit. To appreciate the relevance of political cue theory in explaining political behavior in Kenya, it is necessary

to understand the nature of political parties and party systems in Sub-Saharan Africa. In doing so, two critical points must be born in mind. First, although political parties have existed in Africa since the mid 19th century, empirical study of African parties remain scanty (Erdmann *et al*, 2007; Cussac, 2009). Consequently, ‘we really know little about how African political parties are managed’ (Salih, 2007:85), and much of what we know is largely based on anecdotal evidence from cursory observations (Erdmann *et al*, 2007).

Secondly, recent systematic studies on African political parties conclude that these parties significantly differ from those in the advanced democracies of Western Europe and North America, and therefore should not be viewed using the same lenses (Salih, 2003; Burnell, 2007; Erdmann, 2007). Whereas parties in the advanced democracies are typically institutionalized, stable and ideology-driven, most of African parties are neither ideological nor institutionalized (Asingo, 2003; Bratton *et al*, 2005; Gyimah-Boadi, 2007; Basedau and Stroh, 2008; Young, 2009). Consequently, ‘African political parties rarely present policy alternatives and the few who have sought to win power by campaigning on policy or ideological platform have rarely been successful’ (Gyimah-Boadi, 2007:25-6).

These sentiments echo my specific observations regarding the 2002 elections to the effect that, ‘very few political parties had prepared manifestos and even where such manifestos existed, there is no evidence that they played any significant role in determining election outcomes’ (Asingo, 2003:30). Evidently, nothing seems to have changed so far given that recent scholarship continues to affirm that ‘all parties in Kenya have no discernible ideology’ (Oloo, 2007:112).

In the absence of ideology, support for political parties is in most cases based on expected material benefits. As Sisk and Reynolds (1998) correctly observes, ‘in agrarian societies, people evaluate both parties and candidates in terms of their potential for, or past record of, constituency service’ (p.59). The constituency services that African voters expect in return for their support of a political party include *personal benefits* and favors like public jobs and payment of school fees, as well as *public goods* like roads, water, education and health facilities (see Levy and Kpundeh, 2004). It is noted that ‘Kenyan voters have continued to understand the primary role of their representatives as being one of linking the community to sources of influence and patronage’ (Cheeseman, 2009:95).

In response, most political parties typically focus on short-term populist policies of immediate appeal to the masses, rather than a long term pursuit of a definite ideology. In most cases, ‘there tends to be very little party activity between elections’ (Gyimah-Boadi, 2007: 25). Even the short-term policies that various parties espouse during elections tend to be remarkably similar (Ndegwa, 2001; Oloo, 2007; Chege, 2010).

As Prempeh (2010:25) observes:

Beyond the platitudes of party manifestos, there is no programmatic difference among rival parties in most [African] political systems. All offer vague campaign promises of better governance and better times to come, while prophesying a dismal future should the people make the “mistake” of choosing the other party.

Similar observations have been made specifically with respect to Kenya. Wanjohi (2003) notes that, ‘nearly all party manifestos in Kenya look alike, often using the same phraseology, and even identical paragraphs’ (p.251). As a result, Oloo (2007) adds that ‘it

has been difficult for voters to tell what the different parties really stand for, as all the manifestos are different only in language but not in substance' (p. 111).

Since most parties lack ideology and espouse more or less similar policy promises, party support also tend to be based on trust in the party leadership and not necessarily party policies. Moreover, making policy promises is just the easy party. Indeed, most serious parties usually make promises during elections, even if their promises are based on ideas that are not consistent enough to constitute ideology, and even when they do not intend to implement them. Studies show that even in the United States, winning parties only implement about 60% of the campaign promises (Grynaviski, 2010). The hard part to which voters seem to be attentive is the ability of the party to fulfill its promises.

For instance, in Kenya's first multiparty elections in 1992, the incumbent KANU almost lost to FORD-Asili, which lacked even a manifesto! FORD-Asili's catchy slogan: *Kuga na gwika* (saying and doing), was viewed as reflection of the character of its leader, Kenneth Matiba, and signaled leadership intent on *doing* (fixing problems) and not just *saying* (articulating ideas). The slogan enabled FORD-Asili to package itself as an action-oriented party, while depicting KANU as a party of empty rhetoric. Thus, 'FORD-Asili supporters apparently attached importance to the person of Matiba rather than party policies, which in any case were not articulated in its manifesto' (Kanyinga, 1995: 86).

The trend was also evident in the 2007 elections when '[incumbent] PNU based its campaign on trust in Kibaki's competent economic stewardship, which it asserted would ensure a better quality of life of Kenyan people, as opposed to the "empty rhetoric" of the [opposition] ODM' (Chege, 2010:207). In fact, the party adopted the *Kazi Iendelee* [let us

continue the good work] slogan. It boasted that in just five years, it had done more than KANU did for 39 years. In response, ODM adopted the slogan: *Kazi Iaanze Sasa* [let good work begin now]. ODM held that KANU's development record was so dismal that just surpassing it would not be magical; PNU's slogan of *Kazi Iendelee* means preserving the status quo; for them the time to start serious work is now (Cussac, 2009). This sloganeering had the potential of shifting the focus from the policy promises by various parties to the parties themselves and their leaders – which party is more action-oriented?

It is this emphasis on perceived ability and credibility of party leaders rather than party policies that lead some scholars to think that 'African parties tend to be dominated by personalities' (Gymah-Boadi, 2007:25). However, these scholars do not go far enough to explore the reasons behind the seeming dominance of party leaders. In Kenya for instance, ten major parties and serious candidates have contested presidential elections from 1992 when multiparty politics was re-introduced up to 2007, as shown in table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Party Leaders and Presidential Candidates in Kenya (1992 – 2007)

Party	Party Leader and Presidential Candidate			
	1992	1997	2002	2007
KANU	<i>Daniel Moi</i>	<i>Daniel Moi</i>	Uhuru Kenyatta	-
DP	Mwai Kibaki	Mwai Kibaki	-	-
FORD-A	Kenneth Matiba	-	-	-
FORD-K	Oginga Odinga	Kijana Wamalwa	-	-
NDP	-	Raila Odinga	-	-
SDP	-	Charity Ngilu	-	-
NARC	-	-	<i>Mwai Kibaki</i>	-
PNU			-	<i>Mwai Kibaki</i>
ODM	-	-	-	<i>Raila Odinga</i>
ODM-K	-	-	-	Kalonzo Musyoka

Four of the candidates (Matiba, Oginga, Wamalwa and Raila) played a pivotal role in the struggle to reintroduce multi-party politics. In the process they paid dearly at the hands of the then authoritarian KANU regime, including being detained. Their charisma, audacity and commitment to a just society at the expense of risking their lives made them heroes to their supporters. Although Kibaki was part of the change-resistant KANU regime against which the other four were fighting, his sterling performance as the finance minister during the memorable periods of economic growth from 1969 to 1978 was an asset. Moreover, he also served as Moi's vice-president for ten years, from 1978 to 1988, when he was unceremoniously sacked. On her part, Ngilu was a new entrant into the national politics, but caused great excitement in the political scene in 1997 as the first woman to take a serious stab at the presidency. This shows that, in most cases, the party leaders are not just everyday politicians who are easily replaceable. As Webb and Lewis (1998) notes, charismatic leaders have been very strong magnets that attract members to parties in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and hence foster the growth of their parties.

Besides their heroic images, party leaders, at least in Kenya, also derive dominance from the fact that in most cases, they fund their party activities. It should be noted that the nature of inter-party competition in Kenya is such that political parties do not just seek to defeat others in the quest for power, but they actually seek to destroy opponents. Indeed, 'the nature of Kenya politics predisposes both leaders and followers to see politics as do or die zero sum game' (Mueller, 2011:102). Hence, without adequate resources, a party cannot survive even if it has huge support. In the absence of state funding, and with a decline in the number of card-carrying party members, most parties rely on personal resources, networks and the fundraising ability of leaders. Yet, 'a party that depends

financially on the wealth of its leader is likely to be run as if it is the leader's personal property' (Oloo, 2007:106-7). This changed when Political Parties Act was enacted in 2007 to provide for state funding of parties.

While dominant party leaders can potentially stifle intra-party democracy, Kenya's experience since 1992 show that it also serves a positive role of stabilizing the party. It is now recognized that 'the leader of the party is often what keeps the party together in Sub-Saharan Africa...and support for the party is based on the leader's charisma and capacity to distribute patronage' (Ezrow and Frantz, 2011:44). Moreover, whenever parties have two or more strong leaders, the tendency is to split. For instance, FORD, the umbrella opposition movement that coordinated the struggle for introduction of multiparty politics, split in 1992 because it could not accommodate two equally strong personalities - Oginga Odinga and Kenneth Matiba. Its split gave rise to FORD-K and FORD-A respectively headed by each of the two leaders. However, when Oginga died in 1994, a leadership tussle erupted between Wamalwa and Raila, with the former taking FORD-K leadership, and the latter forming the NDP. Similarly, in the 2002 elections, Raila, Wamalwa and Ngilu supported Kibaki under NARC, but this too was short-lived. While Wamalwa died in August 2003, Ngilu, Raila, and Kalonzo walked out on Kibaki in December 2005 to form the ODM. The leadership rivalry ghost continued in ODM, with Kalonzo deserting it to form the ODM-K (see also Wanjohi, 2003; Asingo, 2003; Chege, 2010).

As already noted, a total of ten political parties have been active in Kenya since 1992, suggesting that Kenya has a highly volatile party system. With many parties and no ideologies, it is hardly surprising that 'defections have been prevalent in Kenya since the return of multiparty politics in Kenya in 1992' (Oloo, 2007: 112). However, as shown in

table 1.1, no new party with a set of political newcomers has been able to penetrate and make an impact in the political scene since 1992. Most of the so-called new parties result from mergers or splits in existing parties, hence the “party newness” is at best symbolic. Even as parties change names with catchy slogans, policies and key actors are the same. Voters somehow understand this comedy and adjust party support accordingly.

Another often cited feature of African political parties that emanate from lack of ideology is that they tend to be ethnic-based (Gyimah-Boadi, 2007). There is no denying that ethnicity is a salient social cleavage in Africa. Indeed, ‘fourteen out of fifteen most ethnically heterogeneous societies in the world are in Africa’ (Easterly and Lavine, 1997: 1219). Scholars have noted that most parties formed in Africa after the rebirth of multi-party politics in the 1990s are ethnic parties (Dowd and Driessen, 2008), where an ethnic party is one that embodies the aspirations of one ethnic group, and seeks to pursue the interest of that group (Horowitz, 1985). Others argue that ‘the single most important factor explaining party loyalty is ethnicity or region’ (Van de Walle, 2006:63).

However, the high level of ethnic fragmentation in Africa, particularly in Kenya, makes ‘ethnic parties’ unviable. In Kenya, there are more than 40 ethnic groups, none of which is sufficiently large to govern at the exclusion of others. The largest ethnic group is the *Kikuyu* who constitute only 20% of the population. The other four large groups are the *Luhya* (14%), *Luo* (11%), *Kalenjin* (11%) and *Kamba* (10%) (Beetham, 2002). It is true that the parties formed at the onset of democratization tended to derive support from their leader’s ethnic groups. Indeed, the five major parties which participated in the 1997 elections were headed by a leader from the five largest ethnic groups. However, from 1997, major political parties began to build cross-ethnic coalitions so that the 2002 and

2007 elections were basically fought between two main political parties. It is ironic that ‘in Africa, ethnicity is almost never absent from politics, yet at the same time it does not provide its basic fabric’ (Bayart, 2009:55).

The 2002 elections were particularly critical in neutralizing ethnicity in Kenya, since the two major parties in the election fielded *Kikuyu* presidential candidates. As a result the *Kikuyu* split their support between the two parties, and even more importantly, they had to use a criterion other than ethnicity to decide on party support. The elections also tested and confirmed that Kenyans are not ethnic voters, but can support candidates from other ethnic groups. The results of that election suggest that the factors that shaped party support among the *Kikuyu* may not have been different from the rest of the country. For instance, in Central province where 94% of residents are *Kikuyus* (Alwy and Schech, 2004), Mwai Kibaki who was NARC candidate, got 69% while KANU’s Uhuru Kenyatta got 30.3% of the votes. This is not virtually the same as the national tally which was 62% for the former and 31% for the latter (Asingo, 2003). In any case, ‘a broader overview of African elections- including Kenya’s December 2007 contest- reveals that voters consider factors other than ethnicity in deciding how to vote’ (Bratton and Kimenyi, 2008:1).

The quest for broad-based support forces party leaders to accommodate the diverse ethnic and regional interests to win their support (Cussac, 2009). While the party leader is in most cases the face of the party, his authority is counterbalanced by various interests in the party. The leader cannot act arbitrarily without invoking party structures. Thus, it is the party as an institution and not the party leader as an individual that matters.

1.6.2 Political Parties and Partisan Cues in Kenya

The foregoing discussion highlights several characteristics of African political parties, with significant implications for political cue theory. In a nutshell, what sets African parties apart from their western counterparts is that they are not institutionalized, fairly unstable, and lack ideological orientation. The concern at this point is whether it is possible for citizens to derive meaningful political cues from such political parties.

I argue that there is nothing inherent in the nature of African political parties that would jeopardize the prospects of African citizens to rely on them for political cues. Despite their weaknesses, African and indeed, Kenyan parties still serve as important institutional frameworks for structuring political discourse. Of course, people support parties for a variety of reasons, particularly in a context in which parties are not ideology-based. These may include ethnicity, religion, party leader's charisma, or lack of viable alternatives. The Political cue theory is concerned less with the reasons why people join, support, or aligns with parties, and more with whether and how the alignments influence political behavior. To the extent that Kenyans align with existing political parties, even if those alignments are highly volatile, political cue theory helps to explain how uninformed citizens develop credible opinion, make decisions and take actions that would otherwise require enormous information in the democratic process. After all, long-term attachment to parties is a uniquely American trend and hardly evident in other regions of the world (Baker *et al*, 1981; Bartle, 2001; Blais *et al*, 2002; Miller and Klobucar, 2005).

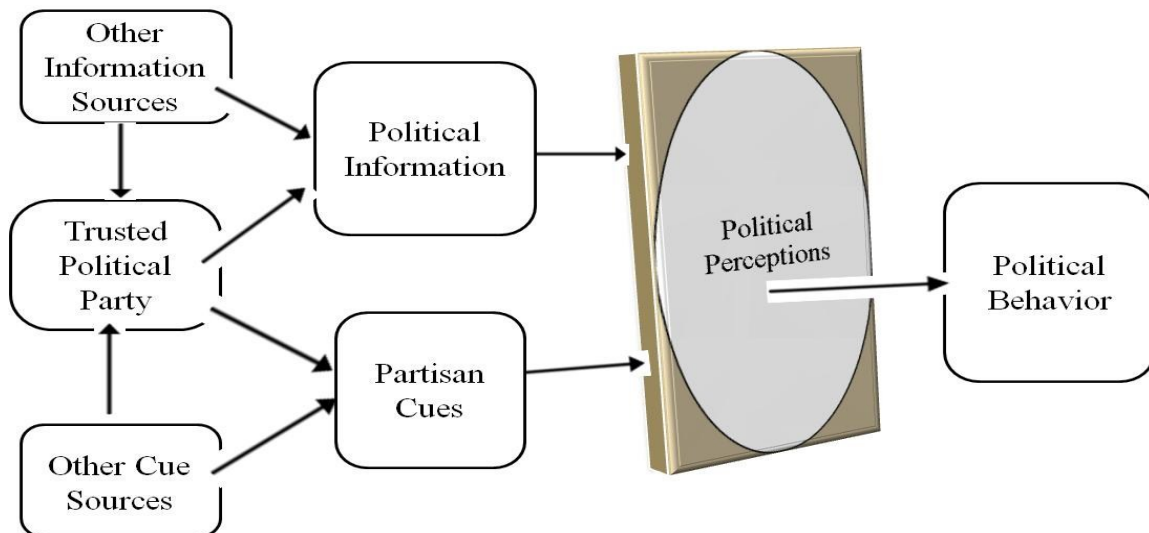
However, some adjustments must be made in order to apply political cue theory in the Kenyan case. Kenya has one of the highest number of political parties per capita. By November 2007, there were 134 registered political parties in Kenya. While the

presidential elections were largely a two-party affair between ODM and PNU, a total of 23 political parties won parliamentary seats (Cussac, 2009). This large number of parliamentary parties, coupled with their lack of ideology, imply that the American party identification scale which runs from strong Democrats to strong Republicans, cannot be used in Kenya, and indeed in any multiparty system (Bartle, 2001; Blais *et al*, 2002; Miller and Klobucar, 2005; Saha, 2005). This calls for an innovative alternative measure of party identity that bring on board all the parties (Greene, 2002; Kroh and Selb, 2009).

1.7 The Study Conceptual Framework

The democratic puzzle arises out of *normative democratic theory's* rigid emphasis on political information while ignoring other mechanisms, through which the uninformed can surmount information deficit. *Political cue theory* seeks to cure the defect by opening an avenue through which the uninformed can emulate the informed by taking cues from political parties and thus behave as if they are informed. The conceptual framework for this study therefore fuses the two theoretical standpoints as shown in Figure 1.1

Figure 1.1. The Study Conceptual Framework



Author's Conceptualization, 2012.

The conceptual framework provides for example, that information sources such as *education, media* and *political discussions* can be a basis for identifying a political party to align with. With time, people build trust and confidence in their party of choice and draw either information or cues from them, on the basis of which they form perceptions. Alternatively, informed people may not rely on parties, but just use information as the basis for their perceptions. Similarly, people, especially those who are uninformed rely on cue sources such as ethnicity, race, and religion to either identify a party to trust or as a basis for forming perceptions. If they use these cues to identify a party, then they can derive information from the party or simply use partisan cues. Whatever root one follows, it is perceptions that ultimately guide political behavior, and which holds the key to understanding how democracy works even when people are so poorly informed.

1.8 Study Hypotheses

This dissertation is conceptualized within the context of normative democratic theory, and draws several hypotheses from *political cue theory* and the broader *heuristic cues framework*. I discuss these hypotheses under three sub-titles corresponding to the three specific research questions that the study seeks to address.

1.8.1. The Political Information Hypothesis

At the core of this dissertation lies the democratic puzzle that revolves around the mismatch between normative democratic theory and empirical evidence. While the theory presupposes that democracy is unworkable without informed citizens, several studies have reported that citizens generally lack pertinent political information requisite for democracy, and that democracy seems to function well even when citizens are poorly informed. Unfortunately, despite enormous volumes of such studies, and the robustness

of their findings, these studies have focused mainly on advanced democracies. Systematic studies of political information levels among African citizens remain very scanty. In the circumstances, and given the consensus in the political behavior literature that citizens are generally very poorly informed (Lupia and McCubbins, 1998), I begin from the assumption that Kenyan citizens are equally poorly informed:

H 1.1: Kenyans generally have low political information levels

Political cue theory postulates that political parties offer reliable cues which help to reduce the information gap between informed and uninformed citizens. It is therefore reasonable to expect that, while uninformed partisans abridge their deficit by taking cues from political parties which they trust, their non-partisan colleagues have no such mechanisms for making up the political information deficit.

Hence, partisanship raises information levels:

H 1.2: Partisans are likely to have higher levels of political information than non-partisans

I also argue that uninformed citizens who are unwilling to admit lack of political information are likely to make every effort either to appear informed, or at least to hide their deficiency. Such efforts may include developing information-seeking attitudes which enhance their information level; taking cues from trusted sources; or just making blind guesses when faced with totally unfamiliar choices or decisions. Since some of these strategies may succeed in hiding their true level of political information, they may appear more informed than they actually are. Hence, the penchant for hiding a deficit

may artificially raise one's political information scores. Hence, if indeed there is a difference in the information levels between partisans and non-partisans, then it is possible that this difference may also result from the unwillingness to admit deficit:

H 1.3: Partisans are more likely to admit information deficit than non-partisans

1.8.2. The Functionality of Democracy Hypothesis

One way of gauging the extent to which democracy has taken root and is working properly is how well people understand democracy itself. If democracy is the only game in town, its features should become part of everyday discourse, and many people should be able to identify at least some of its features.

H 2.1: Kenyans generally have high level of understanding of Democracy

Moreover, the assumption that people who are informed on one or a set of issues are likely to be informed on other issues, make it reasonable to expect that those with a good understanding of a wide range of issues captured by the political information index are likely to have a good understanding of democracy.

H 2.2: The Informed are more likely than the uninformed to understand democracy.

In addition to the assumption that the informed are more likely to understand democracy than the uninformed, there is also the assumption that partisanship raises the general level of political information. This means that partisans are more likely than the non-partisans to understand democracy. Taken together, these two assumptions imply that the informed partisans are more likely than uninformed partisans to understand

democracy. Besides, if the influence of partisanship on knowledge of democracy is independent of information levels, then partisans are more likely to know democracy than non-partisans, regardless of information levels. Hence I expect uninformed partisans to have a better understanding of democracy than uninformed non-partisans:

H 2.3: Uninformed partisans are more likely to understand democracy than the uninformed non-partisans.

A better way of gauging whether democracy has taken root and is functioning properly is the extent to which citizens are satisfied with how it is working in their country. Recent empirical evidence shows that those countries where citizens are satisfied with how democracy works happen to be those that are acclaimed even by scholars to be democratic (Moreno, 2001; Norris, 2011b). Indeed, satisfaction with democracy is a characteristic of a well functioning democracy. In line with the assumption that democracy is working fine despite information deficit, I hypothesize that:

H 2.4: Kenyans generally have a high level of satisfaction with Democracy

The prominent role that normative democratic theory assigns to citizens in the democratic process can only be played effectively by well informed citizens. Moreover, both the theoretical literature dating back to John Stuart Mill as well as some recent empirical evidence show that democracy best serves the interests of those who are well informed because they tend to engage in it more than those who are poorly informed (Lutz, 2006). I therefore hypothesize that:

H 2.5: Informed citizens are more likely than uninformed citizens to be satisfied with the way democracy works in Kenya.

Alternatively, the political cue theory suggests that even poorly informed citizens are somehow able to surmount their information deficit and effectively participate in the democratic process by taking cues from the political parties that they trust. If this is true, then I expect that uninformed partisans are more satisfied with how democracy works in Kenya than uninformed non-partisans:

H 2.6: Uninformed partisans are more likely than uninformed non-partisans to be satisfied with the way democracy works in Kenya.

Several studies have documented the glaring gap between the usually high levels of support and relatively low levels of satisfaction with democracy (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005; Bratton *et al*, 2005; Doorenspleet, 2010; Norris, 2011b). I argue that support for democracy shows the extent to which citizens embrace democratic values and principles, while satisfaction indicates how well these values and principles are put into practice. Hence, the level of support for democratic ideals also indicates that democracy is taking root against what Bratton *et al* (2005) call ‘Africa’s political legacy of autocracy’ (p.72).

H 2.7: Kenyans generally have a high level of support for Democracy

Credible support for democratic values and principles requires one to be familiar with the values. I expect that those who already have a high level of knowledge in terms of political information also have a better grasp of democratic values, and hence are more likely to support democracy:

H 2.8: Informed citizens are more likely than uninformed citizens to support democracy

In the same way people derive heuristic cues from the political parties that they trust, they can also acquire democratic values and principles through engagements with their political parties, and hence learn to support democracy

H 2.9: Partisans are more likely than non-partisans to support democracy

Pulling hypothesis H 2.8 and H 2.9 together we get the following hypothesis:

H 2.10: Uninformed partisans are more likely than uninformed non-partisans to support democracy

Although political cue theory is premised on the assumption that partisanship is beneficial to uninformed citizens, it can also be counterproductive. In fact, one implicit assumption of political cue theory is that rather than citizens shaping the behavior of elected representatives, they typically ‘look to the very representatives whose decisions they are supposed to guide’ (Carmines and Kuklinski, 1990:248). It is therefore possible that if political cues serve the interest of cue-givers rather than citizens, cue reliance can lead uninformed partisans to make decisions and take actions that are inconsistent.

H 2.11: The uninformed are more likely than the informed citizens to develop inconsistent attitudes towards democracy

1.8.3 The Political Perceptions Hypothesis

The *political cue theory* resolves the democratic puzzle by suggesting that democracy works well even when there is a large political information deficit among citizens, because uninformed citizens are able to surmount information deficiency by

taking cues from the political parties they trust. The cues help to shape the political perceptions, which inform and guide their decisions and actions in the information-intensive democratic process.

H 3.1: Partisan cues have a greater influence on the perceptions of the uninformed than the informed people.

H 3.2: The influence of partisan cues on the perceptions of the uninformed citizens varies with issue-area.

H 3.3: The influence of partisan cues on the perceptions of the uninformed citizens varies with issue-timeline.

1.9. Study Methodology

1.9.1 Data Sources and Description

This study utilizes round three of the Afrobarometer survey dataset on Kenya, collected from September, 6th to September 28th, 2005. The data was collected through face-to-face interviews conducted in the language best understood by each respondent. The survey used the Kenya national census at its sampling frame, with the universe comprising all male and female adults aged eighteen years or older. Since the voting age limit in Kenya is eighteen years, all the respondents are potentially voters. The Survey sample was selected through stratified multistage area probability sampling. The survey had 60% response rate and yielded a nationally representative sample of 1278 cases, with a margin of error of $\pm 3\%$ within a 95% confidence level. Generally, Afrobarometer is a reputable dataset as exemplified by the fact that it won the 2004 data set award for the Comparative Politics section of the American Political Science Association.³

³Detailed description of the third round of the Afrobarometer Survey Dataset for Kenya is found at: <http://www.afrobarometer.org/>

1.9.2 Variable Selection, Data Analysis and Model Diagnostics

This study uses a variety of statistical analysis strategies, including Pearson product moment correlations, test of difference of proportions, robust regression, multiple logistic regressions, proportional ordered logistic regression, and graphics. Virtually all the data analysis in this dissertation has been done using the *R project for statistical computing*.⁴ I used a two-pronged approach to test collinearity among the independent variables, and to fit the regression models. Each model was first tested for collinearity by constructing Condition Index (CI) and associated Variance Decomposition Proportions (VDP) using the *colldiag* function in the *perturb* library of the R program. The CI enables us to detect collinearity, while VDP helps to identify the responsible variables. When CI is equal to or greater than 30 then almost certainly there is collinearity (Belsley, 1991). Alternatively, if CI exceeds 5, and there are two or more corresponding *VDPs* larger than 0.5, then there is collinearity among the variables involved (Callaghan and Jie, 2008). Where collinearity was detected, the liable variables were substituted or omitted.

In addition, I used Variance Tolerance (VT) and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). VT measures the amount of variability in a given independent variable that does not depend on other independent variables (Walker and Maddan, 2008). It tests the degree of independence of each independent variable, and ranges from 0 to 1, where the closer to 1, the more independent a variable is. Its suggested cut-off is 0.25 (Walker and Maddan, 2008). However, VIF, which is the reciprocal of VT, measures the amount by which the correlation between a given independent variable and other independent

⁴ R Development Core Team. 2008. R: A Language and Environment for Statistical Computing. Vienna, Austria. ISBN 3-900051-07-0, URL: <http://www.R-project.org>.

variables inflates the standard errors of a regression coefficient. The smaller the VIF, the better the variable fits in the model so that ‘A VIF of 4 or less indicates no problem with multicollinearity in the model. A VIF of 5 is acceptable, but anything greater should lead you to explore other collinearity diagnostics to assess the problems’ (ibid, p. 294).

As Walker and Maddan (2008: 294) observe:

The Variance Inflation Factor is one of the most trusted measures of multicollinearity because it not only indicates if there is a problem, it also indicate which variables are problematic, how severe the problem is, and what happens if the standard error is high

1.10 Explanation and measurement of Key Variables

This study revolves around three key variables – partisanship, political information, and political Perceptions. The discussion on political information is reserved for chapter two, where I develop an index for measuring political information. In addition to the three key variables, the study uses several other variables, whose measurement and indicators are shown in appendix 1. I devote this section to explain *partisanship, political perceptions, satisfaction with democracy, and relative deprivation*.

1.10.1 Partisanship

There is considerable debate over the precise meaning and measurement of partisanship (Baker *et al*, 1981; Bartle, 2001; Jones, 2001; Blais *et al*, 2002; Best and Radcliff, 2005; Miller and Klobucar, 2005; Settle *et al*, 2009; Kroh and Selb, 2009). Partisanship has traditionally been defined in terms of the long-term “psychological attachment to a particular political party” (Best and Radcliff, 2005: 502), or what is often referred to as “card carrying party membership” (Baker *et al*, 1981). Even so, the flaws of this measure are well documented in the literature (Greene, 2002). In the first instance,

‘lifetime loyalties anchoring voters to parties have been eroding in many established democracies’ (Norris, 2011a:220). The situation is not any better in new and emerging democracies with the literature suggesting that ‘new electorates are also unlikely to hold long-term party attachments that might guide their behavior’ (Dalton, 2000: 925-6).

The conceptualization of partisanship as long-term attachment to political parties has origins in *The American Voter*. However, “while *The American Voter* measure of party identification works well in two party system like that of the United States, it is less readily applicable to a multiparty situation” (Miller and Klobucar, 2005: 245). This measure is particularly unsuitable for the present study since the party system in Kenya since 2002 has been both complex and volatile so that partisanship in the sense of long-term attachment is virtually non-existent. In 2002, Kenya African National Union (KANU) lost elections for the first time since independence in 1963, and assumed an unfamiliar role of official opposition party. The National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), which won the elections, was itself a coalition of two opposition blocs –the National Alliance Party of Kenya (NAK) and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Since the law did not recognize coalitions, NARC was registered as a political party under which LDP and NAK sponsored candidates. Moreover, NAK was also a coalition of several political parties and civil society organizations (Asingo, 2003). This complex, highly volatile party system, characteristic of party systems in emerging democracies, is shown in appendix 2.

Thereafter, LDP and NAK had a falling-out and by 2005, LDP was a *defacto* opposition party, even campaigning against government policies, while still legally part of government. The final straw came in 2005, when LDP teamed up with the radical KANU MPs to defeat a government-backed constitutional referendum. President Kibaki,

who was from the NAK wing of the coalition, replaced the LDP ministers with conservative KANU MPs. This led to a situation where legally, NARC and KANU were the ruling and opposition parties respectively. In reality, the legislators from both parties were in government and in the opposition. In the circumstances, the line between the ruling party and the opposition is obscure and largely depends on who is drawing it.

Accordingly, there have been many efforts to refine the concept of partisanship (Bartle, 2001; Blais *et al*, 2002; Miller and Klobucar, 2005). Partisanship can also be conceptualized in terms of biased evaluative attitude towards a party (Greene, 2002). In this regard, partisanship has been defined as “an ordinal attitudinal variable referring to the intensity with which an individual prefers a victory for one party rather than another” (Powell, 1976:5). On their part, Baker *et al* (1981) developed the concept of *attitudinal partisanship* to refer to the “attitudinal attachment to political parties” (p. 194). Relatedly, Clarke *et al* (1996) distinguish between ‘durable partisans’ and ‘flexible partisans’, where the former refer to those who have weak, unstable and sometimes inconsistent partisan orientations, while the latter have strong, stable and consistent partisan leanings.

In a nutshell, Jacoby (2010:263) puts it even more succinctly:

Party identification does not imply a formal organizational membership or even any degree of overt activity in support of a political party. Instead, it is simply an individual’s sense of personal attachment to the party label...party identification exists entirely as a psychological state, “in the heads” of citizens

This study uses measures of *partisanship* that capture voters’ own judgment on whether the party (or faction) they belong to, or relate to, is in government or opposition. In this regard, I take *partisanship* first as self-reported closeness, rather than attachment

to, or membership of a party. I refer to this as *general partisanship* and use it as an indicator of whether one view oneself as closer to any of the parties. I use dummy variable to measure it, with 0 = not close to any party and 1 = close to some party.

In addition, I treat *partisanship* as an evaluative attitude towards existing parties. I then distinguish between *incumbent partisanship*, and *opposition partisanship*. I measure the two forms of partisanship in terms of the levels of trust in the incumbent party and the opposition parties respectively. In doing so, I am guided by Russell Hardin’s argument that ‘to say we trust you means we believe you have the right intentions towards us and that you are competent to do what we trust you to do’ (Hardin, 2006:17). I am equally guided by the emerging view that any activity that demonstrates or implies preference of one political party over the others can be taken as indicator of partisanship. I treat both *incumbent* and *opposition partisanship*s as ordered ordinal variables with values ranging from no trust (0) to a lot of trust (3) as shown in table 1.2 and appendix 2.

Table 1.2 Descriptive Statistics for the Partisanship Variables

	General Partisanship	Opposition Partisanship	Incumbent Partisanship
Non-Partisan	407 (33.6%)	459 (38.4%)	257 (21.0%)
Weak Partisan	-	395 (33.0%)	361 (29.6%)
Partisan	804 (66.3%)	234 (19.6%)	309 (25.3%)
Strong Partisan	-	108 (9.0%)	293 (24.1%)
Mean	0.66	0.99	1.52
Median	1.0	1.0	1.0
Valid Observations	1211	1196	1220

1.10.2 Political Perceptions

As a concept, political *perception* is variously referred to in the literature as *opinion, beliefs, or attitude* (Aalberg, 2003). However, the literature clearly distinguishes political perception from political information and political knowledge. While knowledge has to do with correspondence of opinion to reality, perception is an opinion that may not necessarily correspond to reality (Aalberg, 2003). More precisely, political perception has been defined as “the process by which people develop impressions of the characteristics and positions of political candidates, parties, and institutions” (Iyengar and McGuire, 1993:70). In this study, I define political perception not just as the process of developing impressions, but as the impressions themselves. In addition, these impressions are not necessarily about views held by candidates or political parties on certain political issues. They can also be, and indeed, are about any politically relevant issue such as the extent of democracy, or the status of the national economy. Opinion about the latter qualifies as political perception because ‘economic conditions are at least as significant as political conditions, if not more so, in their influence on election outcomes’ (Medvic, 2010:291).

This study departs from previous studies which treats political perceptions as if they are shaped by the same set of factors, regardless of whether they are about politics or the economy, or whether they refer to the past, the present or the future. I advance and test the proposition that political perceptions vary along two critical dimensions: *issue-area* and *issue-timeline*. The former refer to whether the focus is on the economy or politics, while the latter has to do with whether the focus is on the past, present or future.

Therefore, the study tests whether the influence of partisanship on perceptions vary with *issue-area* and *issue-timeline*. This way, the study contributes to the quest to resolve the democratic puzzle by shifting the study arena from its usual base in Western Europe and North America to Kenya, and by attempting to develop a broad taxonomy of perceptions based on *issue-area* and *issue-timeline*, as shown in table 1.3.

Table 1.3 Types of Political Perceptions

Issue-Area	Issue-Timeline		
	Past	Present	Future
Economic Issues	Retrospective Economic Perceptions	Present Economic Perceptions	Prospective Economic Perceptions
Political Issues	Retrospective Political Perceptions	Present Political Perceptions	Prospective Political Perceptions

This taxonomy of political perceptions draws from the recent political psychology literature. For instance, it has been noted that ‘people draw their opinion from the set of available beliefs stored in memory’ (Chong and Druckman, 2007:111). Scholars define memory as “store of information”, and distinguish between retrospective memory, which stores the past, and prospective memory, which stores projections into the future (Styles, 2005). These clues yield the idea that the process of forming perceptions involves tapping from different memories. Moreover, some scholars emphasize the need to recognize that there is heterogeneity in the way people make political decisions (Sniderman *et al*, 1991). These taxonomies help to provide explanations that accommodate heterogeneity.

Thus, in line with political cue theory, political perceptions about current issues are likely to be relatively easy to predict, depending on current party alignments, and the fact that the masses have the propensity for ‘group-serving attribution biases (Rudolph, 2003).

Quite the reverse, retrospection and prospection are likely to be relatively more complex, since party alignments may change (in the case of retrospection) or too uncertain (in the case of prospection). As past studies show, the masses are incapable of accurately recollecting basic politically relevant facts (Lupia and McCubbins, 1998; Pasek and Krosnick, 2010). This is partly because ‘people tend to assume that they always believed what they believe today’ (Pasek and Krosnick, 2010: 41).

The taxonomy depicted in table 1.3 also make it possible to test whether or not the factors that shape perceptions about the economy and politics are the same, and whether or not the perceptions about the past, present and future are defined by the same set of factors. In addition, the study seeks to establish whether cue-taking from political parties is the preserve of the uninformed people, or whether all people take cues from political parties regardless of their levels of political information. Table 1.4 and 1.5 shows the descriptive statistics for the six political perception variables.

Table 1.4 Descriptive Statistics for Perception of Democracy

Perception of Democracy	Retrospective Political Perceptions	Present Political Perceptions	Prospective Political Perceptions
Very Undemocratic	493 (41.6%)	32 (3.1%)	51 (5.2%)
Fairly Undemocratic	503 (42.5%)	370 (35.4%)	177 (18.0%)
Fairly Democratic	143 (12.1%)	512 (49.0%)	515 (52.4%)
Very Democratic	45 (3.8%)	131 (12.5%)	239 (24.4%)
Mean	1.8	2.7	3.0
Median	2.0	3.0	3.0
Valid Observations	1184	1045	982

Table 1.5 Descriptive Statistics for Economic Perceptions

Perceptions of the Economy	Retrospective Economic Perceptions	Present Economic Perceptions	Prospective Economic Perceptions
Very Bad	131 (10.5%)	302 (24.2%)	99 (9.2%)
Fairly Bad	416 (33.2%)	384 (30.7%)	221 (20.5%)
Not Good or Bad	315 (25.2%)	205 (16.4%)	205 (19.1%)
Fairly Good	352 (28.1%)	326 (26.1%)	465 (43.2%)
Very Good	38 (3.0%)	33 (2.6%)	86 (8.0%)
Mean	2.8	2.5	3.2
Median	3.0	2.0	4.0
Observations	1252	1250	1076

1.10.3 Satisfaction with Democracy

In this study, I treat *satisfaction with democracy* as an indicator of how well democracy functions in Kenya from the citizens' perspective. There is a debate on what *satisfaction with democracy* actually measures (Canache *et al*, 2001). Some scholars view it as an indicator of support for the incumbent regime based on her performance (Bratton *et al*, 2005). In fact, Bratton and colleagues (p. 81) observe:

We draw a sharp distinction between support for democracy and satisfaction with democracy. The former refers to an abstract normative preference, absent constraints, of one's political system. The latter refers to an empirical assessment of the concrete performance of an actual elected regime.

Some scholars treat *satisfaction with democracy* as a measure of contentment with a country's system of government irrespective of who is the incumbent (Klingermann, 1999). Others view it as a measure of an individual's evaluation of the general political milieu, including political institutions and processes, and incumbent regime structure and performance (Canache *et al*, 2001). This debate tends to revolve around the meaning of democracy rather than satisfaction with it. Yet, 'democracy is a concept with multiple meanings that is the product of more than 2500 years of history' (Carrion, 2008:27).

There are several reasons that justify the use of *satisfaction with democracy* as an indicator that democracy is functioning well. First, empirical evidence from recent cross-national studies demonstrate that 'people are indeed, happier with how democracy works in states characterized by good quality of governance, where regimes respect the rule of law, prove effective in managing the delivery of public goods and services, and are open and transparent on the policymaking process' (Norris, 2011b:126). That is, people tend to be satisfied with democracy where it actually works and produces satisfactory outputs.

Secondly, it has been observed that 'popular satisfaction with the way democracy works is an essential characteristic of a well-functioning democracy as satisfaction supports the link between citizens and the representative institutions' (Guldbrandtsen and Skaaning, 2010:164). This link is essential, since it promotes the stability of democratic regimes. Yet it is additionally true that 'observable characteristics associated with a given concept are often termed indicators of the concept or its empirical references' (Waltz *et al*, 2010:28). To the extent that satisfaction with democracy is a characteristic of a well functioning democracy, using it to estimate how well democracy is functioning is fair and

reasonable. Third, if citizens who know the meaning of democracy are satisfied with how it works, it can be concluded that in their assessment, democracy is working well.

Table 1.6 Descriptive Statistics for Satisfaction with Democracy

Satisfaction Levels	Respondents
Not Satisfied	107 (8.5%)
Not very Satisfied	294 (23.4%)
Fairly Satisfied	528 (42.1%)
Very Satisfied	124 (9.9%)
Don't Know	202 (16.1%)
Total Valid Observations	1255

1.10.4 Relative Deprivation

Relative deprivation has been defined in terms of ‘wanting what one does not have, and feeling that one deserves whatever it is one wants but does not have’ (Walker and Smith, 2002:2). It is ‘a psychological condition that obtains when individuals feel that those “goods and conditions of life to which they are rightfully entitled” fall short of those they are actually capable of achieving, given the social means available to them’ (Gurr, 1970:13). Runciman (1966:10) formally specified this definition as follows:

A is relatively deprived of X when (i) he does not have X, (ii) he sees some other person or persons, which may include himself at some previous or expected time, as having X (whether or not this is or will be in fact the case), (iii) he wants X, and (iv) he sees it as feasible that he should have X

Evidently, relative deprivation can be variously defined in terms of egoistic relative deprivation, where one compares his or her present living condition: (1) with that of other people; (2) with his or her previous “better” condition; or (3) with an abstract, imaginable or desirable condition which may even be unattainable (Folger *et al*, 1983; Walker and Smith, 2002). In this study, I restrict the term to feelings of deprivation relative to one’s past living conditions. Indeed, scholars have long recognized that relative deprivation is mainly an intra-personal cognitive process, which does not depend on comparisons of individual life situations with that of others (Folger *et al*, 1983).

In addition, I argue that simply observing other individuals and noticing that their living condition is better than our condition, does not necessarily instill in us a sense of deprivation. After all, we may not even understand other people’s living conditions properly. Hence, it is our own past living conditions, rather than the conditions of others, which provides a more useful reference point when defining our sense of deprivation.

Table 1.7 Descriptive Statistics for Relative deprivation

Deprivation Levels	Respondents
Not at all Deprived	31 (2.5%)
Not very Deprived	349 (27.6%)
Same	414 (32.7%)
Deprived	344 (27.2%)
Very Deprived	121 (9.6%)
Don’t Know	5 (0.4%)
Total Valid Observations	1264

1.11 Dissertation Chapter Outline

The prime objective of this dissertation is to investigate how information-deficient citizens surmount this deficiency so as to engage effectively in the information-intensive democratic process. This task is undertaken in five chapters. This first chapter has mainly provided an outline of the research design. I began by situating the research problem within the context of the democratic puzzle, presented a rationale for the study, and an overview of key theoretical and empirical literature, the hypotheses, and methodology.

In chapter two, I develop a new political information index and use it to evaluate political information levels among Kenyans, and to establish whether the information levels vary in a systematic way, and the factors that account for the variation. This is important in order to avoid undergirding the study on the largely untested assumption that Kenyans, like citizens of advanced democracies, lack pertinent political information.

In chapter three, I examine whether (not how or why) democracy functions well in Kenya despite the lack of a critical mass of informed democratic citizens. In so doing, I use the knowledge, satisfaction, and support levels for democracy as proxy indicators of how well democracy works in Kenya. Chapter four examines how uninformed Kenyans form political perceptions that guide their actions and decisions in the democratic process. It is in this chapter that I test the main hypothesis of political cue theory, namely: citizens use party identity as cues to overcome information deficit and form political perceptions. Chapter five presents a summary of the key study results and implications.

CHAPTER TWO

QUANTIFYING POLITICAL INFORMATION LEVELS AMONG KENYANS

2.1 Introduction

One of the key assumptions underpinning this study is that citizens generally lack pertinent political information, and yet political information is vital for democracy to function well. Indeed, the major concern of this study is how information-deficient citizens successfully navigate the information-intensive democratic process. Surprisingly, although ‘political knowledge has attained the status of a cornerstone construct in research on political behavior’ (Mondak, 2001), there is virtually no agreement on how to measure political information or even what it means (Jacoby, 2010).

As Jones and McDermott (2009:39) succinctly observe:

There has been a long-running debate in the field of political information about how exactly to measure political knowledge...Most researchers tend to forge their own way in this regard, choosing their own particular set of questions and indices to measure political knowledge... While they may do so in ways that are logical, the end result remains that their studies are not comparable to others, and they can therefore only draw conclusions that are particular to their own technique

The idea that citizens generally lack pertinent political information is based on findings of studies done largely in advanced democracies. There is virtually no evidence of systematic efforts to quantify political information in Africa in general and Kenya in particular. Consequently, information deficiency among citizens must be treated not as a universal fact, but as a feature of advanced democracies that need to be retested in the

new and emerging democracies like Kenya. This study therefore seeks to fill the void by providing a comprehensive evaluation of political information levels in Kenya.

Against this background, the present chapter addresses three key issues. First, I develop a new political information index. This is very important in light of the warning sounded to political information scholars several decades ago that, ‘we shall not get very far without decent measurement’ (Luski, 1987: 857). This chapter provides great details on the subject of political information, not only because its conceptualization is a major contribution of this study, but also because its understanding is key to understanding the subsequent chapters and the entire dissertation. I begin with an attempt to delimit the concept of political information, and a critical examination of traditional measures of political information, especially the Carpini and Keteer index, which is most widely used in the literature. In the process, I highlight some weaknesses of this measure, and identify its strengths which I incorporate into the new index of political information.

Secondly, I use the new index to assess the political information levels among Kenyans, and to establish whether information levels vary in a systematic way. In this regard, I test three political information models built on the political cue theory, while controlling for known correlates of political information such as education, media, gender, and political discussions. These tests seek to establish whether partisans are better informed than non-partisans, and hence whether partisanship is information-enhancing.

Finally, I treat ‘incorrect guesses’ and ‘don’t know’ responses to survey questions not as shades of political knowledge (as suggested by Mondak, 2001), but as manifestations of individual’s underlying predilection to reveal or hide their political information deficit.

I limit the concept of political information to factually accurate responses to questions testing grasp of political issues. I then try to identify factors that account for individual's predisposition to hide or reveal information deficit. In the process, I test whether there is a correlation between the predisposition to guess and political information levels, and hence whether guesswork considerably infiltrates the political information scores. The results are expected to serve as a basis for further research on how to estimate and eliminate guesswork from inflated political information scores. The chapter ends with a conclusion and a summary of its key findings.

2.2 Traditional Measures of Political Information

2.2.1 What is Political information?

The terms *political information* and *political knowledge* are used interchangeably⁵ in the literature to refer to the extent to which an individual is either knowledgeable or unknowledgeable about pertinent political issues (Althus, 2003). According to Carpini and Keteer (1996), political knowledge is 'the range of factual information about politics that is stored in the long-term memory' (p. 10). This definition underscores the fact that political information has to do with facts (Zaller, 1992; Mondak, 2001) as opposed to opinion. Indeed, Carpini and Keteer (1993) notes that 'a common conclusion in an increasing number of studies is that factual knowledge is the best single indicator of sophistication' (p. 1180). Political knowledge resides in "the realm of verifiable correct information" (Carpini and Keteer, 1996:10-11). Thus, 'to be informed requires, first, that people have factual beliefs and, second, that the beliefs be accurate. If people do not hold factual beliefs at all, they are merely uninformed' (Kuklinski *et al*, 2000:793).

⁵Converse (2000) identifies several other terminologies used to refer to virtually the same phenomenon – *political awareness*, *political expertise* and *political sophistication*.

The rationale for insisting in factual questions for measuring political knowledge is that such questions, ‘capture what has actually gotten into people’s minds, which, in turn, is critical for intellectual engagement of politics (Zaller, 1992:21). Factual questions tend to reduce the researcher’s “judgmental calls” since they have consensual answers (Kahn and Kennedy, 1999). Also, “[factual] questions assessing an individual’s level of political knowledge are relatively immune to self-report biases such as social desirability response sets or differences in “standards of self-description”” (Kahn and Kennedy, 1999:180).

It is noteworthy that ‘political knowledge is not about education attained but rather what citizens know about politics specifically and how they use that as part of their political sophistication as citizens and voters’ (Reilly, 2010:136). It is important to stress this point because as Carpini and Keteer (1996) notes, several studies rely on the levels of educational attainment as an indicator of political information levels. Besides, the term *political information* as used in this dissertation transcends the standard political science definition of “what is political”, and among others, ‘includes economic and social events that have political significance’ (Remington, 1988: 49). For example, to the extent that information relating to popular culture often influence authoritative allocation of scarce resources, such information constitutes political information (Carpini and Keteer, 1996).

The new index of political information which I develop in this chapter differs from the traditional measures, particularly the one proposed by Carpini and Keteer (1996) in two major ways. The first one which I label *Political Information Questions* refers to the type and format of questions for measuring political information. The second one which I call *Political Information Computation* refers to the computation of information scores.

2.2.2 Political Information Questions

The literature identifies four crucial areas of concern when deciding the type and format of questions used to measure political information. These include, ‘the number of information items needed to form an acceptable scale; the use of open-ended vs. closed-ended formats; the number of response options to use on closed-ended measures; and the treatment of possible “don’t know” responses’ (Mondak, 2006:3).

In addition, as Carpini and Keteer (2005:41) have correctly observed:

The most appropriate way to measure political knowledge remains a matter of some controversy, centering on issues such as the dimensionality of knowledge, the use of open-versus closed-question formats, question ordering and placement, the number of response options, and the encouragement or discouragement of “don’t know” responses.

(a) Number Of Questions

There is a near consensus that a long battery of questions is not necessarily useful in measuring political information (Carpini and Keteer, 1996; Mondak, 2001). The study by Carpini and Keteer concluded that a few carefully selected questions can still yield a good measure of political information. As they observe, ‘a short scale covering a modest range of topics can constitute a reliable measure of general political knowledge’ (p. 301).

Three rationales can be cited to support the view that few carefully selected questions are sufficient for measuring political information. First, it is argued that since the survey instruments need to be concise, there is a limit to the number of questions that can be asked in a survey instrument (Mondak, 2001). Secondly, there is the fear that flooding a survey instrument with many questions that test political knowledge can create a sense of “being quizzed”, which can render respondents less cooperative. Some studies

show that respondents tend to ignore questions that seek to test their knowledge levels (Aalberg, 2003). In particular, ‘many people do not enjoy participating in a survey that tests their general knowledge and intelligence’ (Aalberg, 2003:96). Yet, other studies using large battery of questions, have found no decline in respondents’ co-operation that can be blamed on feelings of “being quizzed” (Carpini and Keteer, 1996; Mondak, 2001). Given these mixed results, it is safer to have few questions than risk low response rates.

Third, it has been noted that most citizens tend to be generalists rather than specialists so that ‘[those] individuals knowledgeable about one aspect of politics were apt to be knowledgeable about others’ (Carpini and Keteer, 1993: 1185).

As Althaus (2003:284) puts it more succinctly:

An emerging consensus suggests that since most citizens tend to be generalists when it comes to political knowledge, knowledge of specific issues can be predicted with some accuracy from a person’s score on a test of general knowledge consisting of only a few questions.

The idea that most citizens tend to be generalists is supported by a detailed item analysis by Carpini and Keteer (1996) which found that no specific topics were harder or easier to measure than others. Hence, ‘measures of national political knowledge in one domain can provide reasonably good – though not ideal – measures of overall knowledge about national politics’ (Carpini and Keteer, 1993: 1185). This does not mean that a person can be evenly well informed on all issues. Neither does it imply that knowledge of one issue is a sufficient measure of information. In fact, “no matter how great a citizen’s overall knowledge of politics, there will always be some issues that political junkies know well and others that they know nothing about” (Alvarez and Brehm, 2002:36).

Nonetheless, as Carpini (2009:25) observes:

Despite some evidence of specialization, knowledge about different areas of national politics appears to be highly intercorrelated. Citizens who are more informed about one area of politics (e.g., foreign affairs) are generally more likely to be informed about other areas of politics

Based on the few-questions approach, Carpini and Keteer selected five from a pool of several questions, which they prescribe as ideal for making information index (p. 306):

'[First,] do you happen to know what job or political office is now held by (insert current vice-president)? [Secondly,] whose responsibility is it to determine if a law is constitutional or not...is it the president, the Congress or the Supreme Court? [Thirdly,] how much of a majority is required for the US Senate and House to override a presidential veto? [Fourth,] do you happen to know which party had the most members in the House of Representatives in Washington before the election this/last month? [Fifth] would you say that one of the parties is more conservative than the other at the national level? Which party is more conservative?'

However, Carpini and Keteer seem to have since veered off this initial position in their more recent work. For instance, in their 2005 study, they developed a political information index with a total of 51 political knowledge questions. In the same study, they also constructed another information index comprising 16 items from the National Election Studies Survey (Carpini and Keteer, 2005).

(b) Closed-Ended vs. Open-Ended Questions

It is clear that apart from Carpini and Keteer's second question, which is closed-ended, their other four questions are open-ended, consistent with the popular view in the literature (Hagen, 1995; Krosnick *et al*, 2010). Carpini and Keteer (1996) found that

neither open nor closed-ended questions perform better than the other. Their study found that ‘open and closed-ended [question] formats were represented among the best and the worst performers [in equal measure]’ (p. 300). Nonetheless, other studies have found that ‘the readiness with which a political issue comes to mind when talking about politics naturally is best assessed with survey questions that are “open-ended”, asking respondents to speak for themselves’ (Hagen, 1995:52). On the contrary, ‘closed-ended questions cannot be used to assess proportions of people who do or do not know a particular fact sufficiently well to receive credit for it’ (Krosnick *et al*, 2010:1291). This is because they provide incentive for blind guessing, which, as already noted, potentially inflate political information scores. For instance, Lau (1986), argues that multiple choice questions cannot be used to distinguish those who are informed from those who are not, since ‘it is too easy for anyone to pick a number between one and seven irrespective of schema content’ (p. 99). A more general defect of closed-ended questions is the *response order effect* – the tendency for uninformed respondents to pick the first option (*primacy effect*) or the last option (*recency effect*) (Pasek and Krosnick, 2010; Brennan, 2011).

Moreover, it has been argued that closed-ended questions guide people’s thought process in very limited number of directions, unlike the open-ended questions which ‘encourage respondents to think about issues from multiple perspectives, which may then trigger appropriate memories’ (Graber, 2001:51). For example, suppose one is presented with a closed-ended version of the Carpini and Keteer’s first ‘ideal question’: *do you happen to know what job or political office is now held by Joe Biden... is he the vice-president, a Supreme Court judge, or the Secretary of State?* This question force one to think in terms of a very restricted range of Biden’s responsibilities, mainly as a member

of the executive arm of government. However, without the options, one's search area increases to include even the legislature. Such an expanded horizon would be an asset if for instance, one only know Joe Biden as the president of the US Senate rather than the vice-president, which would still be accurate, even if not a complete depiction of his job.

The other deficiency of the set of questions proposed by Carpini and Keteer is that they all revolve around the relatively more stable political institutions and processes, focusing on constitutionality; the executive; the political parties; the legislature and the legislative process. As a result, the questions are not sufficiently broad to capture the whole range of knowledge items that democratic citizens should have. This significantly limits the *content validity*⁶ of their indices. More specifically, the questions do not tap knowledge of the information on outputs of the political process such as public policies. Yet, from the democratic citizens' perspective, it is expected that political behavior is influenced more by perceptions about the relatively dynamic public policy issues rather than the more stable political institutions and processes. Information relating to parties' and candidates' policy positions for example is of immediate political relevance to a voter than knowledge of the constitutional provisions for a legislative veto.

Finally, the questions are tailored for the American political context, and may not be wholly applicable in other settings. For instance, African political parties are rarely based on any clear ideological platforms and hence it makes little analytical sense to ask which party is more or less conservative. I argue that rather than specifying the questions to be used in creating information index, there is need to identify and classify the relevant

⁶ *Content validity* refers to the extent to which an index fully encapsulates the range of issues envisaged by the concept it purports to represent.

questions into a broad taxonomy, and ensuring that questions from each category are reflected in the political information index. Although there is no consensus on the sort of knowledge requisite for effective democratic citizenship (Carpini and Keteer, 1996; Krosnick, 1998; Kuklinski and Quirk, 2001), it is possible to create broad taxonomies that incorporate a broad range of issues. For instance, using David Easton's input-output model as a framework for organizing our questions, we can classify questions into those that relate to the *inputs*, the *political system*, the *outputs*, and the *environment*.

Ironically, it is Carpini and Keteer (1996) who have made perhaps the most vital contribution on this front. They classify political information needed by a democratic citizen into three. First, the *Rules of the game* include political institutions and processes. Second, the *substances of politics* include salient local and international topical issues, social and economic conditions as well as public policies. Third, *People and parties* include key actors in the political sphere as well as political parties and party systems.

This classification is however, problematic in at least two ways. First the three categories are not mutually exclusive. For instance, political parties are by definition, part of the *rules of the game*. Secondly, questions relating to familiar issues are not very suitable for testing the effects of heuristic cues on opinion (Mondak, 1993). The names of public officers such as the vice president for example, may be too obvious for many people to warrant any external cues. On the flip side, some public figures are only known by nicknames. Moreover, even if we admit that questions on personalities are important, there is still a debate as to whether people best identify others by their photographs or by names (Krosnick *et al*, 2010). Besides, mere knowledge of the name or the position held by any public officer is less informative compared to (or if we cannot match it with) the

tasks vested in his/her office. Essentially, the *People and parties* category can easily be eliminated without much harm if political parties are treated (as they ought to) as *rules of the game*, and people's names are omitted from questions testing political information.

(c) Handling Don't Know Responses

When it comes to *don't know* responses, the main contention has been whether or not to encourage them in questions that seek to test political information. Carpini and Keteer (1996) argue that questions that test political information should be worded in a way that allow, if not encourage, *don't know* responses for those who are unsure of the correct answers. More specifically, they recommend that the following hints should accompany such survey questions: 'many people don't know the answers to these questions, so if there are some you don't know just tell me and we'll go on' (p. 305).

Yet, other scholars reject this view, arguing that *don't know* responses should be discouraged as much as possible. Instead, respondents should be encouraged to give 'best guesses' when they are unsure of answers. Mondak (2001) suggest that Carpini and Keteer's hints should be reworded to read: 'many people don't know the answers to these questions, but even if you are not sure I'd like you to tell me your best guess' (p. 226).

Mondak's views have been supported by Pasek and Krosnick (2010:37) who note:

Discouraging "Don't Know" responses collects more valid data than does encouraging such responses. And respondents who truly are completely unfamiliar with the topic of a question will say so when probed, and that answer can be accepted at that time, thus avoiding collecting measurements of non-existent "opinions"

I argue that neither of the two approaches is flawless. If respondents are actively encouraged to give *don't know* responses, they may not think hard enough to be able to retrieve information from the long-term memory. Hence, their responses may be based solely on the information stored in the short-term memory, or information at their finger tips. That is, they are likely to use *don't know* responses even for questions which they may be able to answer accurately with a little more reflection. The result is that such respondents are likely to have deflated political information scores. However, if the respondents are encouraged to substitute 'blind guesses' for *don't know* responses, some guesses may turn out to be correct answers (especially for multiple choice questions), and this artificially inflates information scores. Indeed, in his later work, Mondak recognizes this double-edged nature of his proposal as noted in Mondak and Canache (2004:548):

Where DKs are prevalent, uninformed respondents who guess will receive inflated knowledge scores while partially informed respondents who are reluctant to guess will take refuge in the DK causing real knowledge to go undetected

The futility of encouraging or discouraging the respondents to give "*don't know*" responses is further exposed by the contradictory results of studies using either approach. In this regard, some studies show that when respondents who gave *don't know* response initially are asked to make "best guess", they tend to get it right. This shows that guessed responses can conflate what respondents know with what they do not know (Pasek and Krosnick, 2010), thus artificially inflating information scores. In contrast, other studies including a recent experimental study found that 'when people who initially select a DK alternative are subsequently asked to provide a "best guess", they fare statistically no better than chance' (Sturgis *et al*, 2008: 90). This latter finding suggests that encouraging

DK response adds no value. In addition, it has also been found that *don't know* responses can be prevalent even without any conscious efforts to encourage them.

The debate on the precise meaning and utility of *don't know* responses simply skirt around what seems to be the main issue, which in my view, is whether the survey method is a reliable means of obtaining objective and reliable data. Why for instance, should one accept a respondent's response about age, educational attainment, religion, income, state of the economy or democracy without a grain of doubt, yet doubt the same respondent when he or she offers a *don't know* response to a particular question? Does it mean that respondents are infallible so that they know answers to all questions? Given the high cost of information and human cognitive limits, it is reasonable to expect that even the most informed people may not know answers to all questions. Hence, when respondents say they *don't know*, we need to give room to the possibility that they actually *don't know*.

I advance the argument that "*don't know*" responses should neither be encouraged nor discouraged. Instead, respondents should be free to answer survey questions without any shade of influence. As will be explained later, *don't know* responses do not constitute political information, and therefore, actively encouraging or discouraging respondents to make "best guess" cannot improve political information scores. In fact, if the goal is to insulate political information scores from extraneous factors, then that goal miserably fails since it is nearly impossible to do so. This is partly because the line between blind guesses and outright dishonest survey responses is never too clear. Even if blind guesses are controlled, there is no watertight remedy for dishonest responses, and thus extraneous factors will still filter into political information measures. For now therefore, we have to live with the fact that we can only offer the best estimates of political information levels.

The other critical debate in the literature is whether *don't Know* and *incorrect answers* mean the same thing and whether they can be lumped together when computing the political information index. It has been pointed out that 'knowledge scales typically define "knowledge" as the sum of a respondent's correct answers on a battery of items, meaning that incorrect answers and DKs are collapsed into one category' (Mondak, 1999:58-9). According to Mondak, *incorrect answers* can only be lumped together with *don't Know responses*, if knowledge is discrete so that you either know something or you don't. However, he argues that knowledge is not discrete since there are some shades of grey in between knowing and not knowing. Besides, *don't know* and *incorrect answers* do not mean the same thing since they produce different results when regressed against a set of demographic variables. As a result, *incorrect responses* should not be lumped together with *don't know responses* when computing the political information index.

Mondak's arguments are flawed in many ways. First, the rules of logical inference do not allow us to jump from the premise that correct answers constitute knowledge, to the conclusion that all other things that are not correct answers (in this case incorrect answers and DKs) mean the same thing. To do so, as Mondak does, is to commit what, in the science of logical inference, is known as *fallacy non-sequitur* – lack of a clear nexus between the underlying premises and the conclusion reached. *Don't know responses* and *incorrect guesses* are usually lumped together in the calculation of political information index not because they mean the same thing, but because they have some "undesirable" common trait in that they do not constitute *correct responses*, and *ipso facto* have to be isolated from correct responses, which is the proper domain of political information.

Second, political information is about factually accurate responses, and hence any response that is not factually accurate falls outside the sphere of political information. A good political information index should strive to consolidate the factually accurate responses, while isolating them from any other responses that are not factually accurate. This should not necessarily be misconstrued to imply that all the other responses that are not entirely factually accurate mean the same thing, or that they should relate in the same way with a set of demographic variables as Mondak argues. Indeed, even if we admit his idea that knowledge is not discrete for argument's sake, we must still draw a line between what comprise knowledge and what does not, and this is where he misses the point.

Third, some scholars have also attempted to distinguish between the *misinformed* and the *uninformed* citizens (Kuklinski and Jerit, 2000; Mondak, 1999). For instance, Mondak (1999:59) highlights this distinction as follows:

To be misinformed implies that exposure to information occurred and that the processing and storage of the information were somehow flawed. To be uninformed, in contrast, implies that no information was received and stored

To explore this distinction, let us consider Carpini and Keteer's first 'ideal question': *Do you happen to know what job or political office is now held by Joe Biden?* Suppose one respondent says: *"I don't know Biden"*, and another one say: *"Biden is the Secretary of State"*. According to Carpini and Keteer (1996) and Mondak (1999), the first respondent is uninformed and therefore does not know Biden, while the second one is misinformed but somehow knows him partially since he can give at least an inaccurate response. This distinction is hardly convincing, borders on splitting hairs, and is founded on largely untested conjectures. The reality is that both respondents do not know Biden,

going by their responses. The difference between them is that one is honest enough to admit information deficit, while the other one is either unwilling to admit information deficit or do not know how information deficient he or she is. Either way, the bottom-line is that anyone who lacks political information on anything is *uninformed* about that thing.

Furthermore, it is notable that Mondak (1999) distinguishes the *misinformed* from the *uninformed* on the basis of whether they are exposed to information and whether they perfectly processed and properly stored the information. But, what if the information that one is exposed to is inaccurate in the first place? Does flawless processing and storage of flawed information make a respondent *informed* or *misinformed*? The underlying point here is that I do not find the distinction between being *misinformed* and *uninformed* to be analytically useful, at least for this study as already pointed out.

(d) Number of Response Categories in Closed-Ended Measures

Advocates of closed-ended questions suggest that although the actual number of response categories⁷ for questions that test political information varies with question text and context, the optimum number should be three (Mondak, 2001). Nevertheless, one can also argue that the fewer the response options the higher the mathematical probability of making correct guesses, which would otherwise erroneously pass out as knowledge. As I have already indicated in the preceding discussions, there is little value in discussing this matter in great depth except to re-state that closed-ended questions are not useful in determining the levels of political information for reasons already explained.

⁷ Response categories refer to the ‘categories offered for respondents to select among or to interviewers for recording answers’ (Schaeffer and Dykema, 2011; 928).

2.2.3 Political Information Computation

The starting point in discussing the traditional measures of political information is Carpini and Keteer's index which is 'probably the most thoroughly tested and widely used political knowledge index in current use' (Michaud *et al*, 2009:34). It is a simple additive political information index which measure political information levels in terms of the proportion of correctly answered factual questions about politics.

The weaknesses of this and the other measures of political information are well documented in the literature (Popkin, 1991; Mondak, 1993; Carpini and Keteer, 1996; Krosnick, 1998; Sanders, 1999; Kuklinski and Quirk, 2000; Prior and Lupia, 2008). In fact, Carpini and Keteer recognize the limit of their index, and note that 'the percentage who answered correctly is, of course, not necessarily the same as the percentage who knew the answer' (Carpini and Keteer, 1996: 65). Correct answers especially for multiple choice questions are not accurate measures of political information because the answer may also include (reflect) blind guesses. Being politically informed means much more than just knowing some correct answers to a set of civic questions. The number of correct answers must significantly exceed the incorrect ones. As Madison notably remarked, 'knowledge must forever govern ignorance' and thus to be politically knowledgeable requires that the balance between *what we know* and *what we do not know* is in favor of the former. This study develops a political information index based on this principle.

2.3 The New Political Information Index

Several conclusions drawn from the above discussion will guide the development of the new index. In the first place, since the problems associated with blind guessing and outright respondent dishonesty cannot be completely eliminated, it is virtually impossible to accurately measure political information. As a result, the new index provides the best estimate rather than the precise measure of political information. In fact, this study treats political information as an estimate of how knowledgeable, or how much an individual is informed or uninformed about politically relevant issues. Relatedly, as already explained, a good measure of political information should not be based solely on correct answers to relevant civic questions. It must also take into account the incorrect answers.

In developing the political information index, I begin from the assumption that everybody knows at least something about politics, and thus “it is hard to find people whose political knowledge is literally non-existent” (Caplan, 2007: 95). Indeed, ‘heuristic models [which guide this study] are based on low information rationality, not *no* information rationality’ (Carpini, 2009:29). It is also critically important to note that the main reason for developing a political information index is to help determine whether and how the political behavior of informed citizens differ from that of uninformed citizens. Hence, a crucial stage in the construction of the index is to define a standardized cut-off point that separate the informed from uninformed citizens. Those whose information levels lie at this cut-point are neither informed nor uninformed, but instead are referred to as *average citizens*. In this regard, I define an *average citizen* as one who knows as much as he or she does not know. Given a set of factual questions that test political knowledge, it is expected that an average person would get half correct, while the other half would be

incorrect answers. An individual's information level is thus measured in terms of how far above or below the *average citizen* he or she is located.

The proposed index is therefore, a *relative measure*⁸ that defines an individual's information level as a function of, or relative to, the *average citizen's* information level. It estimates how much an individual's level of political information differs from that of an *average citizen*, rather than how it differs from "know-nothings". Those whose levels of information are above the *average citizen* are regarded as well-informed or informed, while those who fall below the *average citizen* are poorly-informed or uninformed.

This is a significant departure from what we find in much of the political behavior literature. Virtually all the political information indices developed so far, including the Carpini and Keteer index, are *absolute measures* that try to locate an individual's precise scores on an information scale, independent of the other individuals' scores. Such indices typically treat zero as their baseline when measuring political information. This implies that political information levels cannot go below zero. The zero baseline itself comprise of citizens whose 'political minds' are some sort of John Lock's *tabula rasa* in the sense that they have no political information at all. From this baseline, an individual's political information level is expressed as a function of some supposedly maximum information level that all citizens are expected to have.

However, this approach has several defects. For instance, with a baseline set at zero, a score of 60% translates into an index of 60 (or 0.6) on Carpini and Keteer scale. Conceptually, this not only implies a score of 60 above the zero-baseline which is the

⁸ Detailed discussions on the meaning and differences between the *absolute* and *relative* measurements as used in this study can be found in Cardinet *et al* (2010).

most common interpretation, but also a score of 40 below the maximum level which is commonly ignored. This raises an important question: What justification does Carpini and Keteer, and others who use *absolute measures* have for preferring 60 and not 40 or both, as the information level? In contrast, the proposed index uses both scores in estimating the political information levels as I explain shortly. Allegorically put, while *absolute measures* focus on how full and ignore how empty the glass is, the new index takes into account both how full and how empty the glass is.

Since *absolute measures* are usually constructed with little attention to the cut off-point between informed and uninformed citizens, they usually draw arbitrary distinctions between the informed and uninformed citizens. In fact, virtually all studies that use the *absolute measures* are never transparent enough to display their cut-off line. Thus, their line between informed and uninformed citizens remains arbitrary, anonymous, and more importantly, subjective. As one scholar has pointed out, ‘with the essentially contested concept of democracy, it is difficult to establish an appropriate clear-cut factual baseline of agreed truth against which to assess the levels of knowledge’ (Norris, 2011a:148). This problem dissipates when we adopt a theoretical cut-off based on the average citizen.

Even more importantly, the *absolute measures* unjustifiably assume that there is a fixed mass of information that a democratic citizen need to know. Yet, no study has been able to define the universe of political information that democratic citizens need to have (Krosnick *et al*, 2010; Norris, 2011a). Moreover, as Marcus (2009:363) rightly observes:

What people must know depends on the circumstances in which they find themselves. Ignoring the context and setting forth an arbitrary array of things that all citizens should know is to set forth a test that citizens will fail.

Thus, *Political information index (PII Index)*, is the total number of factually correct answers minus the total number of answers that cannot be considered as factually correct (including incorrect guesses and ‘don’t know’ answers), divided by the total number of relevant questions. A score of 60% is read as 60 on a scale of zero to 100, or 60 above the minimum possible score and 40 below the maximum possible score. Hence, the *PII Index* = $[(60-40) / 100] = 0.2$ on a scale of -1 to +1.

This can be expressed using a simplified mathematical notation:

$$PII\ Index = \left(\frac{2x}{Z}\right) - 1 \dots\dots\dots\text{Equation 1}$$

where x is an individual’s total score or the total number of questions answered correctly, while Z is the maximum possible score or the total number of relevant questions.

The need to define knowledge in terms of both correct and incorrect answers is already evident in the literature, even if in disguised forms. For instance, with respect to measurement of knowledge of democracy, it is suggested that, ‘Knowledge of democracy is calculated by measuring the perception that procedural features are important minus the identification of the instrumental or authoritarian characteristics’ (Norris, 2011a:163).

However, equation 1 holds true if and only if x lies within the domain: $0 \leq x \leq Z$. That is, if the possible values of x ranges from zero for the least informed people, to Z for the most informed people. This ensures that the values of $\left(\frac{2x}{Z}\right)$ range from zero (if $x=0$) to two (if $x=Z$), so that the equation, $\left[\left(\frac{2x}{Z}\right) - 1\right]$ yields a standardized index with values ranging from -1 (if $x=0$) to +1 (if $x=Z$). This condition can be met in a variety of ways such as creating dichotomous information test items so that correct answers = 1, and

incorrect answers =0; creating ordered polytomous information test response items with the lowest possible score being zero (for instance, least informed=0, fairly informed =1, well informed =2); or transforming the test scores into ratio scales like percentages.

The question is: what happens when the information test responses do not begin from non-arbitrary zero-point? If for instance, there are ten dichotomous information test items, and each of them is coded: 1= inaccurate answers; and 2= correct answers, then the values of x would range from 10 to 20 rather than from 0 to 10. Although, the maximum possible score, Z would still be +1, the lowest score, w will be zero rather than -1. If the scale is changed to 2=incorrect and 3= correct, then x will now range from 20 to 30. The highest possible information score would remain +1 but the lowest possible score would be 0.3. Worst still, when [-1, 0] coding is used for incorrect and correct responses respectively, then every test-taker scores -1 regardless of the number of correct responses.

This problem arises because equation 1 defines political information as a function of the actual scores and the maximum possible scores, while ignoring the minimum possible scores (or at least assuming that it is always zero). Yet, the value of minimum possible scores has a significant bearing on the scale. For instance, a score of 90 on a scale of zero to 100 is not equivalent to a similar score on say a scale of 50 to 100. The former translates into 90% while the latter is only 80% of total score.

To overcome this problem, I insert the minimum possible score, w into equation 1:

$$PII Index = \left[\frac{2(x-w)}{Z-w} \right] - 1 \dots\dots\dots \text{Equation 2}$$

Conceptually, the numerator of equation 2 is a measure of an individual's level of political information compared to the most ignorant person in town. The denominator of the equation is the range of possible information scores or the distance between the most and the least informed persons. If x is a typical case or an average score, then the distance between x and the least possible score, w is the same as that between x and the highest possible score, Z . That is, for an average person, $x - w = Z - x = \frac{1}{2} (Z - w)$, and hence $2(x - w) = (Z - w)$, and therefore $\frac{2(x-w)}{Z-w} = 1$.

Put differently, the political information scores for an *average citizen*, as defined by the formula, $\left[\frac{2(x-w)}{Z-w}\right]$ is 1 on a default scale of zero to two. Yet, this is inconsistent with my definition of *average citizen* as someone who knows as much as he or she does not know. For the score of an *average citizen* to be in line with my definition of *average citizen*, the *average citizen's* score has to be set at zero. To accomplish this task and to standardize the index, I introduce the constant, -1 to the above formula, resulting into the formula set out in equation 2. This formula basically compares an individual's score with that of a typical case or an *average person*. Hence, an individual's political information level is defined in terms of how different he or she is from the *average person*.

It is evident that when $w = 0$, then equation 2 is the same as equation 1. However, since there are instances when $w \neq 0$, equation 2 is the formal specification of the index of political information. Equation 2 will yield a [-1, +1] scale regardless of the minimum possible score, the test item coding format used, the number of test items, or the number and type of scores per response item (whether the item responses are dichotomous, polytomous or some rating scale). Even [-1, 0] coding, which according to equation 1

grants every test-taker a score of -1, can fit the scores on a [-1, +1] scale using equation 2. Another plus for equation 2 is that it works even when the value assigned to correct response is smaller than the one for incorrect answers such as when 1=correct answer and 2= incorrect answer. Moreover, the equation is also applicable when the different test items to be included in the information index or any other test score are coded differently. For instance the Afrobarometer dataset codes knowledge of education policy as [1, 2], and Presidential term limits as [2, 3] for incorrect and correct responses respectively.

As is already apparent, in the new information index, +1 is the highest political information level, while -1 is the lowest information level. Another way of interpreting the *PII* index is to consider negative as information deficit, zero as average information, and positive as information credit. In this sense, a *PII* score of 1 is maximum political information (highly informed); zero is average information (averagely informed or people who know as much as they don't know); and -1 is minimum information (least informed).

The index has at least six distinct advantages over traditional political information measures. First, although the need to take into account both correct and incorrect answers in determining competence has long been recognized in most psychological testing, it has not received sufficient attention in the estimation of the political information scores. For instance, correct and incorrect answers are used in calculating most statistical coefficients used to estimate the internal reliability of a test such as the *Cronbach alpha* and the *KR-20* (Kuder-Richardson Formula 20) reliability coefficients (Miller *et al*, 2011:166).

Secondly, unlike the other measures which arbitrarily distinguish informed from the uninformed citizens, *PII* provides criteria for consistently distinguishing informed from uninformed citizens by using the positive and negative signs as benchmarks. Previous literature presents a number of instances in which the distinction between well-informed and poorly informed citizens has been done arbitrarily. To begin with, various definitions have been assigned to well-informed voters: ‘(1) voters above the mean level of political information; (2) voters above the 33rd percentile of information (i.e. above the bottom third of the information distribution); and (3) voters above the 67th percentile of information (i.e. above the top third of the information distribution)’ (Levendusky, 2011:46). This approach is unsuitable since the mean and the percentiles depend on raw information scores of those involved, and thus vary from one distribution to another. Hence, they cannot be used to compare information levels across different distributions.

Thirdly, although *PII* is primarily an index for measuring political information, it can also be used to measure information deficit (*PID*), or information gap, or the extent to which an individual lacks pertinent political information. Beyond the general statement that people lack information, it is important to quantify the magnitude of information deficit. To do this, we obtain *PID* which is the additive inverse of *PII* or $(PII)^{-1}$:

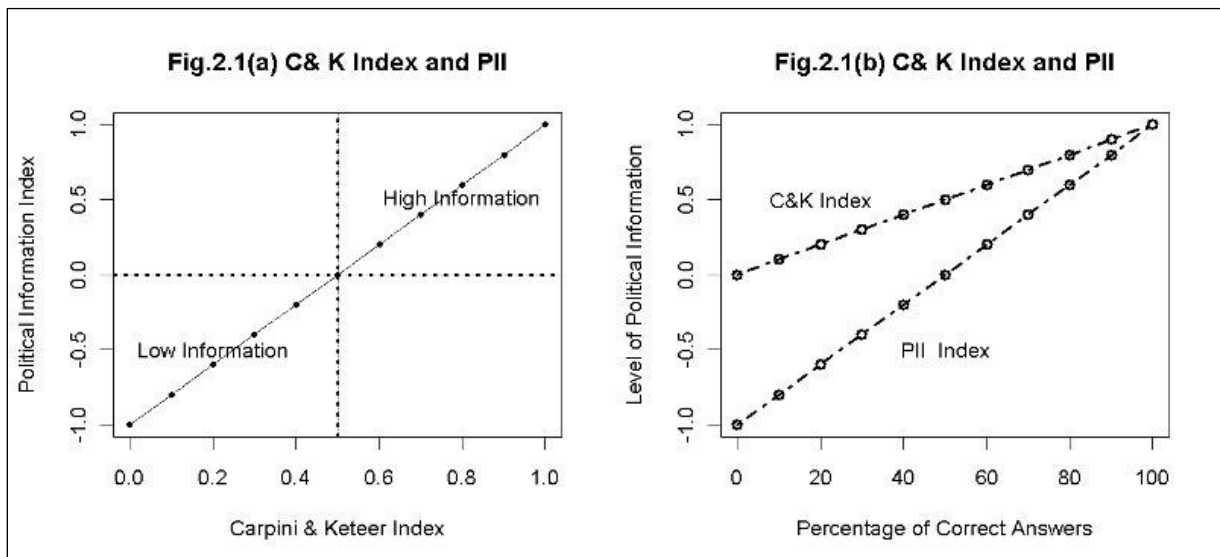
$$PID = (PII)^{-1} = 1 - \left(\frac{2(x-w)}{z-w}\right) \dots\dots\dots \text{Equation 3}$$

Using *PID*, -1 is the lowest and +1 the highest levels of information deficit. Since *PID* is an additive inverse of *PII* Index, the two scores add up to zero, and consequently, the difference in *PII* Index and *PID* is just involve a switch in the (+) and (-) signs. Since the additive inverse of zero is zero, if an individual’s *PII* Index =0, then his/her *PID* =0.

Fourth, since the minimum and maximum possible scores do not depend on the value of Z , the PID index is independent of the number of test items. That is, proportional scores results in similar PII index regardless of the number of items in the test score. For instance, if $x=18$, $w=0$, $Z=20$, then PII index = 0.8 just as would be the case if $x=9$, $w=0$, $Z=10$ or if $x=9.5$, $w=5$, $Z=10$. In all these cases the actual score is 90% despite the difference in the number of test items which are 20, 10 and 5 respectively.

Fifth, PII Index can be used at the three higher levels of measurement –ordinal, interval and ratio. The advantage of this flexibility is that it raises the range of statistical tools which can be used whenever PII Index or PID Index are the dependent variables. Also, unlike most indices which have a narrow range from zero to one, both indices range from -1 to +1, thereby allowing for a wider variation of the political information score.

Finally, *PII* index correlates well with other indices, and has a perfect linear correlation with Carpini and Keteer index ($r = 1.0$; $\alpha = .05$) as shown in figure 2.1(a). Figure 2.1 (b) shows that the gap between the two indices widens as the number of correct answers to questions testing political knowledge decreases.



2.4 Afrobarometer Dataset and Political Information Questions

In line with Carpini and Keteer's suggestion that a small number of carefully selected questions can yield a good index, this study will measure the PII Index using a panel of six questions that meet most of the criteria I have set up in the above discussion. In this regard, the first set of three questions tests knowledge of key political institutions and processes, namely the judiciary and the constitution; the presidency and elections; and the legislature and the political parties. This broader category of questions subsumes what Carpini and Keteer refer to as *rules of the game*, *substance of politics*, and *parties*.

That is, with the exception of their questions about names of public officers, all the other questions they propose fall in this category. The other three questions are about the outputs of the political processes, namely governmental policies. They test knowledge of public policy on key policy areas, namely health, education, and fiscal devolution (CDF):

Q1. Do you happen to know: Whose responsibility it is to determine whether or not a law is constitutional? 1=Know but can't remember, 2=Incorrect guess, 3=Correct name, 9=Don't Know

Q2. Do you happen to know: How many times someone can legally be elected President? 1=Know but can't remember, 2=Incorrect guess, 3=Correct name, 9=Don't Know

Q3. Do you happen to know: Which political party has the most seats in parliament? 1=Know but can't remember, 2=Incorrect guess, 3=Correct name, 9=Don't Know

Q4. Can you tell me whether the Kenyan government has a policy to provide: Free health care at public clinics, that is, no fees for visits or medicine? 1=Incorrect answer, 2=Correct Answer, 9=Don't Know.

Q5. Can you tell me whether the Kenyan government has a policy to provide: Free primary education, that is, parents do not have to pay school fees? 1=Incorrect answer, 2=Correct Answer, 9=Don't Know.

Q6. Have you heard of the Constituency Development Fund [CDF]? 1=Yes, 2=No, 9=Don't Know.

The descriptive statistics for each of these variables/items used to construct the *Political Information Index* are presented in table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Descriptive Statistics for the Political Information Items

Information Items	Observations	Incorrect Guess	Correct Answer	DK
Parliamentary Majority Party	1263	230 (18.2%)	716 (56.7%)	317 (25.1%)
Presidential Term Limit	1264	426 (33.7%)	508 (40.2%)	330 (26.1%)
Constitutionality of the Law	1256	561 (44.7%)	254 (20.2%)	441 (35.1%)
Education Policy	1267	49 (3.9%)	1184 (93.4%)	34 (2.7%)
Health Policy	1267	347 (27.4%)	829 (65.4%)	91 (7.2%)
Fiscal Devolution (CDF) ⁹	1267	334 (26%)	883 (69.7%)	50 (3.9%)

⁹ In the case of Fiscal Devolution (CDF), what appear as *Incorrect Guess* in the table are “No” Answers, while what appears as *Correct Answers* are “Yes” Answers. The actual number of observations in each case is 1267, but the few who said they know but cannot remember were omitted. I have calculated these values from individual level data. The CDF as a fiscal devolution policy was enacted by Kenyan parliament in 2003. It provides that 2% of total government annual incomes be distributed to all constituencies according to some defined formula. It is up to the citizens of each constituency through their local committee under the direction of the area legislator to decide what projects to implement with the CDF Funds through a local participatory process.

It is noteworthy, that the Afrobarometer survey questionnaire neither explicitly encourages nor discourages the respondents to make guesses when they are unsure of the answers. Moreover, the six questions selected from the Afrobarometer questionnaires are open-ended. The responses were coded after questionnaire administration. In computing the new index, I re-coded the responses to the six questions so that correct answers were coded as 1. Those respondents who gave incorrect guesses or ‘don’t know’ responses, were coded as 0. However, in question six, ‘Yes’ was marked 1, while ‘No’ and ‘Don’t Know’ were marked 0. This is in line with my argument that questions testing political information must isolate factually accurate responses from all other forms of responses.

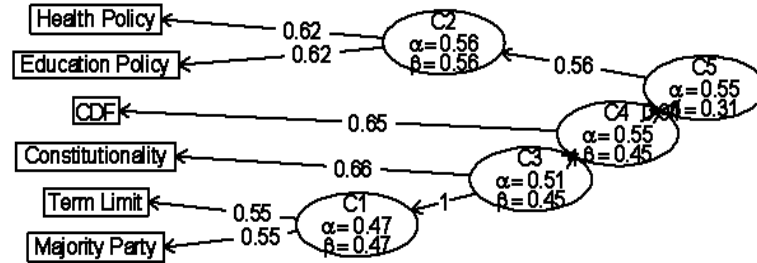
2.5 Reliability and Inter-Item Correlation for the PII Index

2.5.1 Item Cluster Analysis

To determine the reliability and the internal consistency of the political information index resulting from the selected questions, I performed *Item Cluster Analysis* (ICA).¹⁰ The results in Figure 2.2 show the standardized Cronbach alpha and Revelle’s β .

¹⁰ I performed the *Item Cluster Analysis* using the *iclust* function in the *psych* package of the R Project for Statistical Computing. The *psych* package was developed by Revelle William and can be found at: <http://personality-project.org/r>. The *Item Cluster Analysis* identifies the most similar items in an index and combines them into clusters. Similar clusters are likewise combined together and the process repeated until either of the two measures of internal consistency - the standardized Cronbach reliability coefficient α (which is the average half split reliability), or Revelle’s β (which is the worst half-split reliability that estimate the general saturation of the index) reaches the saturation point or the point at which none of them increase (Revelle, 2011).

Fig. 2.2 Item Cluster Analysis for Political Information Index



As expected, two of the public policy items - health policy and education policy – strongly cluster together with ($\alpha = 0.56$), and constitute the strongest cluster in the whole index. It is also notable that the presidential term limits and majority party initially cluster together ($\alpha = 0.47$), and then cluster with Constitutionality of law ($\alpha = 0.51$), thus completing *cluster three* ($\alpha = 0.51$) which comprise political institutions and processes. The deviant item in the analysis is CDF which I expected to cluster with the other policy items, but instead joins with the political institutions and processes to form *cluster four* ($\alpha = 0.55$). Finally, the PII Index has reliability $\alpha = 0.55$, $\beta = 0.31$ and Guttman $\lambda_6 = 0.53$.

One possible way of improving the reliability of the index is to remove some items. The first criterion for doing so is to eliminate an item or items that fail to cluster with the rest in the theoretically expected way. In this regard, CDF would be the best candidate for elimination since it clusters with the political institutions and processes items instead of clustering with the other public policy items. However, if CDF is eliminated, then the

reliability of the resultant index reduces to $\alpha = 0.51$, $\lambda_6 = 0.49$. Therefore the removal of CDF from the items that constitute the index is not a viable option.

The other solution suggested in the literature is to use either item-total correlation (an item's multiple correlation with the entire index) or the item difficulty (the proportion of correct answers for each information item), to eliminate some item(s) from the index. Indeed, it has been noted that 'item-total correlation and item difficulty are the two most common statistics used in item analysis' (Carpini and Keteer, 1996:297). The problem with the item difficulty option is that 'no standards for choosing items based on difficulty exists' (ibid), though it is suggested that extremely high ($\geq .90$) or extremely low ($\leq .10$) should be eliminated (ibid). Using this criteria imply that education policy should be eliminated. Yet, even with education, the average test difficulty is 0.58, which is good, given that the closer the test difficulty is to .50 the better it is (Coaley, 2010). Moreover, removing education weakens the index to $\alpha = 0.52$, $\lambda_6 = 0.48$ as shown in table 2.2.

The item with least item-total correlation is health policy ($\alpha = 0.53$), which reduces to $\alpha = .21$ for corrected item-total correlation. Yet the suggested cut off is $\alpha \leq .20$ for the former (Coaley, 2010), with some suggesting an even more conservative cut off of $\alpha \leq .15$ (Kehoe, 1995). This means that each method proposes a different item to be eliminated. Table 2.2 shows that the reliability of the index would be weakened further if any item is removed. Besides, since *Alpha* typically underestimates index reliability, and depends on several factors like the number of items in the index, it has been suggested that $\alpha \geq .50$ is acceptable when the test items are few (Kehoe, 1995; Omoeva, 2010; Lindmeier, 2011), and more so when the underlying latent variable is as complex as political information.

Table 2.2 Inter-Item Reliability for PII Index

Political Information Items	Criteria for dropping items from PII Index			Reliability of PII Index when one item is dropped	
	Item Difficulty	Item-Total Correlation	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Standard α	Guttman λ_6
Majority Party	0.57	0.55	0.35	0.51	0.48
Term Limit	0.40	0.61	0.41	0.48	0.45
Constitutionality	0.20	0.55	0.34	0.51	0.49
Education Policy	0.93	0.54	0.15	0.52	0.48
Health Policy	0.65	0.53	0.21	0.52	0.48
CDF	0.70	0.56	0.30	0.51	0.49

Table 2.2 shows that *Item Difficulty* has a huge range from 0.20 to 0.93. This is in line with Zaller’s (1992) suggestion that when the political information index comprise of few items, as in this case, there should be a mix of easy and difficult questions. While this tends to yield low average inter-item correlations, it nonetheless results into an index with better differentiation of the political information levels, than if questions have an average difficulty level (Zaller, 1992; Carpini and Keteer, 1993; Mondak, 1995; Converse, 2000).

2.5.2 The Inter-Item Bivariate Regression for PII Index

A rule of thumb in the construction of an index is that there should be sufficient empirical relationship between the items constituting the index so that responses to any one item can be used to predict responses to any of the other items (Coaley, 2010; Babbie, 2010). Thus, table 2.3 shows an inter-item correlation matrix constructed using a combination of simple logistic regressions and robust regression. It shows the *beta* estimates, with the associated t-scores or z-scores in bracket. More specifically, the base of the matrix is constructed using robust regression, with PII Index as the dependent

variable. The rest of the matrix is constructed using simple logistic regression, where the item on the right of each cell is the dependent variable while the one on top is the independent variable. The PII Index was measured on interval scale [-1, +1], while other variables are measured on nominal scale [0=incorrect; 1= correct answer].

Table 2.3: Bivariate Regression Coefficients Matrix for PII Index

	Majority Party	Presidential Tenure	Education Policy	Health Policy	CDF	PII Index
Constitutionality	1.09*** [6.80]	1.37*** [9.24]	1.0.05** [2.62]	1.00*** [5.85]	1.12*** [6.02]	0.27*** [7.53]
Majority Party		1.33*** [10.62]	0.73** [3.13]	0.36** [3.04]	0.82*** [6.60]	0.51*** [21.34]
Presidential Tenure			0.66** [2.57]	0.61*** [4.87]	1.21*** [8.60]	0.52*** [21.40]
Education Policy				0.66** [2.90]	0.77** [3.35]	0.54*** [9.24]
Health Policy					0.47*** [3.75]	0.14*** [4.64]
CDF						0.51*** [19.01]

The results in table 2.3 show that there is a strong bivariate empirical relationship between the six items constituting the index. That is, respondents who answered any one question correctly had a higher chance of answering each of the other questions correctly. For instance, the probability that someone who knows the constitutionality of law would also know presidential term limits is 34%, compared to 11% for someone who does not know the constitutionality of law. Similarly, someone who knows presidential term limits has 95.7% chance of knowing education policy, compared to an equally significant but slightly lower chance of 92.0% for someone who does not know the former.

Relatedly, those who answered any question correctly were likely to score highly in the PII Index, compared to those who did not answer the same question correctly. That is, those who knew one question, were relatively more likely to know the other questions, and hence more likely to get a higher PII Index. The results support the view that citizens are generalists rather than specialists (Carpini and Keteer, 1993; Althaus, 2003), and offer strong empirical rationale for including all the six items in the political information index.

Although responses to one question can predict responses to other questions, this does not imply that any information item can replace another item, or effectively supplant the index. The range and intricacy of issues captured by political information as a concept require harnessing synergies between information items, rather than using any one item alone. For example, a person who knows the constitutionality of law has 85.5% chance of knowing CDF, but one who knows CDF has only 24.8% chance of knowing the former.

2.6 Political Information in Kenya

2.6.1 Measuring Information Levels among Kenyans

Figure 2.3 shows the political information index for each information item as well as the average national political information index. It is clear that Kenyans are generally poorly informed, with the overall national political information index of 0.151 on a scale of -1 to +1. That is, on average, Kenyans are aware of just 57.5% of the information they need to be effective democratic citizens, while unaware of a significant 42.5%.

What is even more disturbing is the fact that Kenya's mean information level of 0.151 is not only low, but is further worsened by an equally high standard deviation of 0.477. Why do I consider the standard deviation of 0.477 as very high? According to *the three-sigma rule*, $mean \pm 3 SD = 99.73\%$ of cases, which is virtually all the cases. Thus,

given the distribution of political information scores among Kenyans, the normal level of $SD = [(0.997-0.151) / 3] = 0.282$. Even if we take a lower threshold of 95% confidence level which is conventionally used in social sciences, $mean \pm 1.96 SD = 95\%$, and hence $SD = [(0.950-0.151) / 1.96] = 0.408$. Evidently the SD of 0.477 is much higher than both. Nonetheless, the results are consistent with past studies that report a pattern where, ‘there is high variance in political awareness around a generally low mean’ (Zaller, 1992: 18).

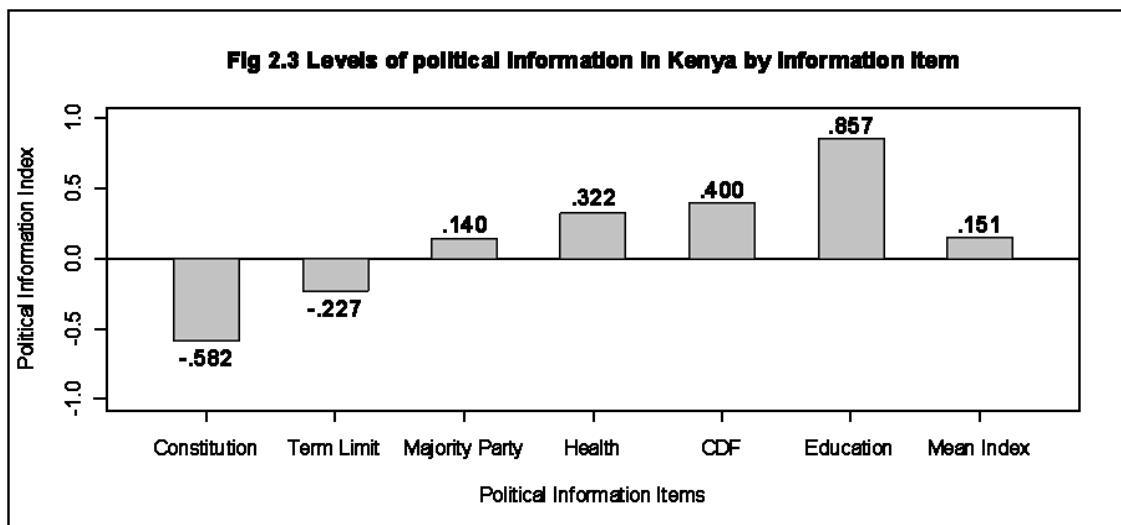


Figure 2.3 show that there is a significant variation in terms of information levels for each of the items. As already evident in tables 2.1 and 2.2, education policies are the most known, while constitutionality of law is the least known political information item. The salience of education policy can be attributed to the fact that Free Education Policy (FPE) had just been introduced in Kenya in 2003, with several memorable outcomes that significantly raised its saliency. For instance, ‘as a result of the bold move [to adopt FPE], Kenya has earned a place in the history books as having enrolled the oldest primary school student on earth’ (World Bank, 2009:157). This is in reference to the late *Kimani Maruge* who enrolled in standard one in 2003 at the age of 82 (ibid).



Kimani Maruge, the world's oldest student, started his primary education at the age of 82, when FPE was introduced in Kenya in 2003. Photo taken by Action Aid International and accessed online on January, 10 2012 at: <http://www.actionaid.org/stories/whatever-happened-first-grader>.

Further, unlike other social service facilities such as hospitals which are scarce, primary schools are dotted all over Kenya, and hence, a major change that affects them like FPE becomes easily noticeable to nearly all Kenyans. The policy also became popular for some wrong reasons resulting from poor and hasty implementation. For instance, as the World Bank (2009:148) notes:

Absence of prior planning led to crowded classrooms with too many children sharing few and inadequate facilities...enrolment rates soared, class sizes increased significantly...construction of additional schools and classrooms was not part of the initial FPE initiative...in some schools, multishift or multigrade classrooms were created in response to the shortage of teachers and classrooms

When we group constitutionality of law, the presidency and political parties into *political institutions and processes*, and health, CDF and education into *public policies*, it is notable that Kenyans are fairly well informed about public policies (PII = 0.526), but

have serious information deficit on matters relating to political institutions and processes (PII = -0.223). This is surprising since the survey was done just a month before the 2005 constitutional referendum. With campaigns in climax, one expected constitutionality of law and presidential tenure to be very salient issues then. The low information levels on these issues may be an indicator that the referendum campaigns could have veered off pertinent issues and instead was being driven by extraneous issues.

Nonetheless, the fairly high level of information on public policy is good to the extent that electoral contests revolve around the relatively dynamic governmental outputs like public policy, rather than the more stable political institutions and processes. As a result, attentiveness to public policy issues is important, not only for electoral decisions but also for purposes of holding leaders accountable. However, information about public policy may not be very useful without corresponding knowledge of political institutions. For instance, if one does not know which party has majority legislators, and hence which party espouses public policies, he or she cannot accurately attribute the success or failure of those policies to the responsible party. Moreover, he or she may not appropriately distribute electoral rewards or punishments during elections. This is, at least partly, why Carpini and Keteer's selection of information items is inadequate since they completely neglect governmental outputs when computing political information index.

2.6.2 Determinants of Political Information among Kenyans

The selection of the variables to include in the political information models tested in this section has been informed by two key factors. First, the political cue theory, which guides this study, suggests that citizens derive political cues from the political parties that they trust and that political cues enable those who are uninformed to act as though they

were informed (Conover and Feldman, 1984; Popkin, 1991; Luppia, 1994; Sekhon, 2004; Kam, 2005; McDermott, 2006). However, two critical issues remain unresolved. In the first place, it is unclear whether partisan inclinations towards the incumbent party and the opposition parties yield similar cues. To address this, I use three independent variables – *General Partisanship* (closeness to a political party regardless of whether it is the opposition or the ruling party); *Incumbent Partisanship* (trust in the ruling party) and *Opposition Partisanship* (trust in the opposition parties). The goal in this regard is to see whether any or all of these variables drive political information levels.

The second unsettled issue with regard to the political cue theory has to do with whether these cues comprise political information, or whether they just transmit signals that citizens use without being attentive to the underlying issues. To test this, I blend the political cue theory with Petty and Cacioppo's likelihood cue taking model. According to this model, cue taking follows two paths – the central route which involves focusing on the substance or content of the cue issue, and the peripheral route which focus on issues that are extraneous to the cue issue (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981).

I argue that cues derived from political parties through the central route, are likely to contain useful information clues that enable partisans to fill information gaps and thus become more knowledgeable. If this is correct, then I expect that partisans would be more knowledgeable than non-partisans. On the other hand, if cues follow the peripheral route, then the issues at hand are relegated to the periphery and people just adopt positions that they believe are in line with their party position regardless of the issues at hand. In the circumstances, partisanship is not a knowledge-enhancing cue source, and hence there are no significant differences in information levels between partisans and non-partisans.

Allegorically put, partisan citizens unreservedly trust political parties the way disciplined motorists trust traffic lights to guide them in road intersections, and thus, hardly try to understand or just cannot comprehend the process by which traffic lights change colors.

In addition, the political information model being tested here takes into account the observation that ‘building a model to explain political information presents a serious difficulty [because] several key variables cause one another’ (Smith, 1989:192). To begin with, ‘there is virtual unanimity on one point: formal education is the strongest, most consistent correlate of political knowledge’ (Niemi and Junn, 1998:13). Yet, diagnostic tests show that education highly correlates with the other variables believed to be strong predictors of political information like mass media. Indeed, education correlates with radio news ($r = 0.34$), newspapers ($r = 0.56$), and TV news ($r = 50$). Also, the three forms of mass media (radio, newspapers and TV) are highly correlated among themselves as shown in table 2.4. As a remedy, I created a media news index ($\alpha = 0.69$; $\lambda_6 = 0.63$), which is similar to the *exposure to news media index* developed by Bratton *et al* (2005).

Table 2.4: Bivariate Correlation Matrix for Media Index

	Radio	Newspapers	TV	Media Index
Radio	r=1.000 rho = 1.000	r = 0.307	r = 0.344	r = 0.632
Newspapers	rho = 0.311	r =1.000 rho = 1.000	r = 0.615	r = 0.838
TV	rho = 0.341	rho = 0.615	r=1.000 rho = 1.000	r = 0.871
Media Index	rho= 0.578	rho = 0.850	rho = 0.879	r=1.000 rho = 1.000

Note: r = Pearson correlation coefficient and rho = spearman correlation coefficient.

However, the media index is also highly correlated with education ($r = 0.60$). I therefore, I tested three separate models. Model I includes partisanship, education, gender and political discussion. Model II replicates model I but replaces education with media. Model III combines models I and II by interacting education and media. The dependent variable in all the models is *Political Information*, while the key independent variables are the three measures of partisanship- *General*, *Incumbent* and *Opposition Partisanship*. The regression results are shown in table 2.5.

Table 2.5: Determinants of Political Information Levels in Kenya

	Model I	Model II	Model III
General Partisanship	0.09** (3.04)	0.10** (3.19)	0.09** (3.20)
Opposition Partisanship	-0.04** (3.11)	-0.05* (3.38)	-0.04** (3.28)
Incumbent Partisanship	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.37)	0.00 (0.30)
Political Discussions	0.11*** (5.44)	0.12*** (5.82)	0.10*** (5.12)
Gender: Female	-0.17*** (6.36)	-0.16*** (5.72)	-0.17*** (6.26)
Education	0.10*** (13.53)		0.06*** (3.54)
Media News		0.11*** (9.20)	-0.01 (0.45)
Education x Media News			0.01* (2.19)
Intercept	-0.21*** (4.56)	-0.13]** (2.67)	-0.16** (2.57)
RES	0.42	0.42	0.40
Observations	1129	1129	1129

Entries are Robust Regression Coefficients with t-values in brackets.
Significance: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

In all the three models, partisans on the *general partisanship* scale tend to be more informed than their non-partisan counterparts. The average political information index for the partisans is 0.224 compared to 0.034 for non-partisans, suggesting that partisanship on *general partisanship* scale is an asset in political information acquisition since it raises an individual's information level by 0.190. In line with Petty and Cacioppo's likelihood cue taking model, it can be inferred that cue taking from political parties follows 'the central route', thereby enhancing information levels. While it can be counter-claimed that it is information that drives partisanship and not vice versa, the direction of causality in this study is firmly anchored on the political cue theory.

However, the picture gets messier when the focus shifts from *General Partisanship* to *incumbent* and *opposition partisanship*s. In all the models, *Opposition Partisanship* has negative influence on information levels, and hence a source of misinformation rather than a source of credible political information. Whereas the average political information level among those who are non-partisan on the *opposition partisanship scale* is 0.168, it is only 0.010 among strong *opposition partisans*. Hence, partisanship on the opposition scale reduces an individual's political information level by 0.158. This may be attributed to the fact that opposition parties may be presenting to their supporters distorted versions of government policies so as to discredit the incumbent party. The upshot this is that opposition partisans who rely on partisan cues may have distorted public policy images.

Certain contextual factors may have had deflating effects on the information levels since they undercut the ability to correctly answer questions on political institutions and processes. For instance, the uninstitutionalized party system characterized by unclear delineation between opposition and incumbent parties in Kenya, could have jeopardized

the ability to correctly identify which parties constitute the ruling coalition. Moreover, the culture of impunity that had taken roots in Kenya over the years also makes it difficult to precisely identify who determines the constitutionality of the law.

It is hardly surprising, that the three items that comprise political institutions and processes (majority party, presidential term limits, and the constitutionality of the law) have the lowest item difficulty levels as shown in table 2.2. Indeed, the average item difficulty for political institutions and processes is just 0.39 compared to 0.76 for public policies. It is also notable that the average political information levels for the former is a paltry .222 compared to the latter are 0.524. Taken together, the results imply that at least theoretically, knowledge of public policy represent nearly two-thirds of an individual's political knowledge. Consequently, an individual's overall information levels to a large extent depend on how well he or she understands the policy component of the information index. Accordingly, if opposition partisans have hazy public policy images, as I suspect is the case, they would have low political information scores.

Even more intriguing is the fact that *incumbent partisanship* has no statistically significant influence on political information. That is, the informed are just as likely as uninformed citizens to be partisans on the incumbent partisanship scale. Since, as I noted earlier, *general partisans* tend to be relatively more informed than non-(general) partisans, and opposition partisanship tends to undercut political information, I expected strong incumbent partisans to be better informed than non-(incumbent) partisans. Hence, one possible interpretation of this result is that the incumbent party may be conveying both factual information and some distorted information in equal measure.

The results reveal some sort of a puzzle whereby partisanship in general enhances political information levels; partisanship on opposition scale reduces information levels; while partisanship on the incumbent scale has insignificant effect on information levels. There are at least two possible explanations for this. First, the three continuums along which partisanship has been measured (general partisanship, partisanship in relation to the incumbent party, and partisanship in relation to the opposition parties) are completely independent of each other. Consequently, being partisan along one continuum does not necessarily predict one's position in the other continuums. Secondly, general partisanship has been measured as a dichotomous variable, while the other two have been measured as ordered variables. In the circumstances, the temptation would be to reduce the latter into a dichotomous variable. However, some recent literature discourage collapsing ordinal categories to create dichotomous variables (unless very necessary), since this tend to raise standard errors and reduce variable explanatory power (Agresti, 2010).

The results also show that gender, political discussion, education and media news are significant predictors of political information levels. There is a significant gender gap in political information levels, with an average of 0.022 for women and 0.282 for men. Similarly, the average level of information among those who frequently engage in political discussions is 0.342, as compared to -0.096 for those who never engage in discussions. Further analysis shows that the average level of information level among those with no formal education is -0.225. It increases to 0.083 for primary school graduates, 0.282 for secondary school graduates, and 0.772 for university graduates.

Similarly, the average level of political information is -0.279 among those who have no access to media news, and 0.495 among those who have had the greatest access. Media news is regarded as a potential source of political information and heuristic cues. It is argued that, 'media news expand the range of considerations that people bring to bear in forming their political and economic attitudes' (Bratton *et al*, 2005:209). Yet it is apparent from model III, that when media is interacted with education, then its effect on political information levels out. Thus, it is not independent but dependent on education so that highly educated people have greater access to media news. Also, information levels increase as education levels increase regardless of the level of access to media news.

There are three reasons why the media may not play a useful information role in Kenya. To begin with, the apparent inability of the Kenyan media to exert tangible influence on information levels is attributable to its limited circulation. For instance, although *radio* is the most widely used outlet, the 38 radio stations existing by 2006 had an estimated receivership of three million, in a country of 35 million people. In addition there were eight Television stations with an estimated 730,000 TV sets in use, as well as five daily newspapers with a daily circulation of 250,000 (Ongong'a, 2010).

Secondly, even among those who are attentive to media news, biases in the media news may serve to reinforce their beliefs rather than improve knowledge of politically relevant information about Kenya. Yet, it has been observed that 'voters can use party positions or media opinion only when they trust these opinions and they only trust them if they have a previous record of knowledge of the party or media position' (Lutz, 2006:80). Hence, when people develop the perception that the media is biased, they may not take it as credible information source. With reference to the 2007 elections for instance, media

monitoring reports in Kenya concluded that, ‘there was a general bias [by media] favoring the incumbent president in both state-owned and private media, in terms of more time and space in all major media, with largely favorable coverage’ (Semetko, 2010:169).

Finally, even among the few who have regular access to media news, there is still the generic tendency to seek media content that buttresses what one already believes, while rejecting the uncongenial ones (Zaller, 1992; Taber, 2003; Mondak, 2010). This selective attentiveness and consumption of media content also has the same effect as media news biases. Indeed, ‘because citizens often feel most gratified when information reinforces existing knowledge, preferences or world views, they are selective in their attention and assimilation of information’ (Bimber, 2003: 208).

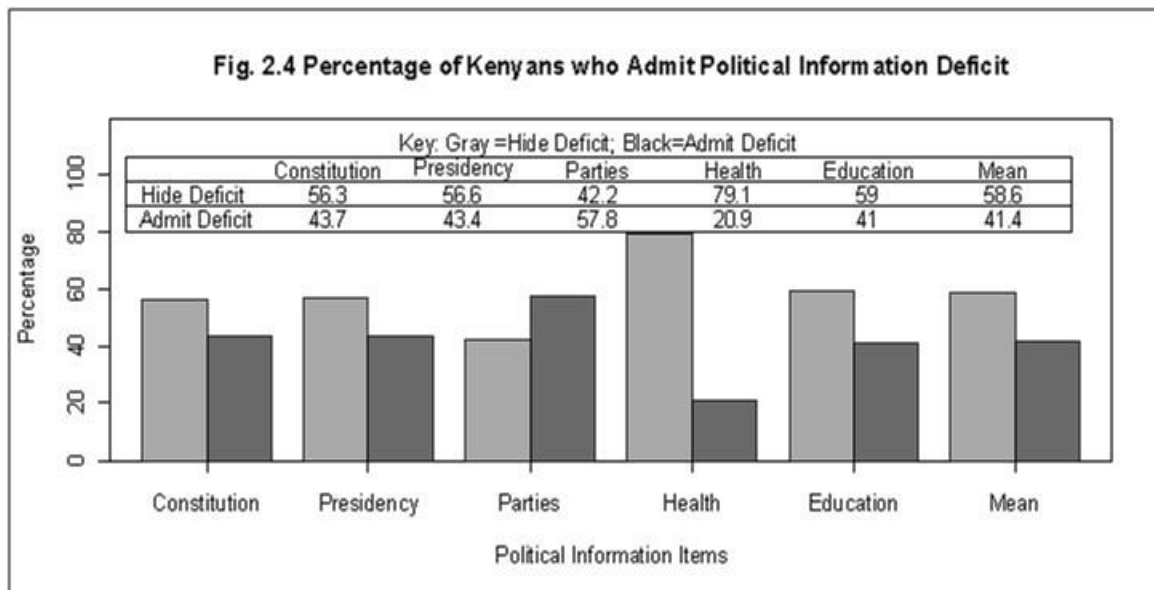
Hence, it is possible, and indeed very likely as Bratton *et al* (2005: 219) puts it that:

To a degree, ordinary Africans can compensate for low levels of education by learning, probably from discussions among themselves rather than via the radio, about the virtues of a set of procedures like free speech and open elections that point to a regime called “democracy”

2.6.3 Are Kenyans aware of their political information Deficit?

The final question which I address in this section is whether Kenyans are aware of and willing to reveal their political information deficiency. This question is less than trivial because, if people are not aware of their information deficiency, they are less likely to look for information. The problem is more severe if people think they know when in fact they lack requisite information to participate meaningfully in the democratic process. Indeed, ‘not only are most citizens effectively disenfranchised by their ignorance, but they aren’t even aware of it’ (Carpini and Keteer, 1994:37).

Figure 2.4 shows both the respondents who readily admitted lack of information by stating that they ‘don’t know’, and those who tried to hide their lack of information by making incorrect guesses.¹¹ These values are calculated as percentages of the total number of respondents who did not provide inaccurate answers to the questions posed. Besides, the analysis excludes CDF since the question testing knowledge of CDF was framed in a way that does not enable the respondents to reveal or hide deficit.



On average, Kenyans are more likely to hide than to admit lack of information. For every five Kenyans who do not have information on a given political institution or public policy, two are likely to admit ignorance, while three will either be unaware of their ignorance or they will try to cover it up by offering guessed answers. It is curious that the ratio of correct to inaccurate responses (58:42) is more or less the same as that for *incorrect guesses* and ‘*don’t know*’ responses (60:40) implying that guessed responses could have contributed greatly to the observed information levels. Moreover, it is notable

¹¹ I have drawn figure 2.4 as well as figure 3.8 using *barp* and *addtable2plot* functions in the *plotrix* package of the R Project for Statistical Computing by Jim lemon *et al.*

that education and health, which had the highest ratio of correct to incorrect answers, also had the highest ratio of guessed responses to don't know answers.

To test the likelihood of honestly admitting political information deficit as opposed to trying to hide it through inaccurate guesses, I selected all the respondents who did not correctly answer all the three factual questions testing knowledge of political institutions and processes (constitutionality of the law, presidential term limit and majority party). That is, I selected all those respondents who had a total score of zero on the knowledge of political institutions and processes, and whose final PII Index only reflect their scores on the public policy items. On the surface, it might seem that three questions are too few. Nonetheless, since the focus here is on *extremely uninformed respondents*, an increase in the number of questions automatically increases the likelihood that many of the respondents answered at least one question correctly. Thus, using a large number of questions would have considerably reduced the sample size for this particular test.

In the final analysis, there were 198 *extremely uninformed respondents*, with 56 *incorrect guesses* and 142 *don't know responses*. From these responses, I constructed a dummy dependent variable, *admitting information deficit*, with 0 = hide deficit (where all answers are *incorrect guesses*) and 1= admit deficit (where only *don't know responses* are given). As an index, *admitting information deficit* is sufficiently reliable (N = 385; Cronbach $\alpha = 0.61$), and hence it may be an indicator of an underlying respondent trait.

I then estimated a logit regression model for determinants of *admitting information deficit* as shown in the equation below. The results are presented in table 2.6:

Table 2.6: Determinants of Admission of Political Information Deficit (don't Know)

	Model I	Model II	Model III
General Partisanship	-1.08*** (2.50)	-0.99** (2.38)	-0.91** (2.19)
Incumbent Partisanship	0.60*** (2.95)	0.62*** (3.06)	0.55*** (2.74)
Opposition Partisanship	-0.46** (2.15)	-0.40** (1.96)	-0.36* (1.72)
Respondent Honesty	1.80*** (2.87)	1.73*** (2.78)	1.76*** (2.87)
Gender: Female	1.30*** (2.92)	1.23*** (2.73)	1.12*** (2.53)
Religiosity	-0.25 (1.39)	-0.31* (1.87)	-0.30* (1.83)
Education Level	-0.42*** (3.18)		
Question Difficulty		0.85** (2.08)	
Media News			-0.33* (1.83)
Intercept	2.16** (2.16)	0.79 (0.88)	1.86** (1.95)
Model χ^2	54.08	47.3	44.72
Pseudo R ²	0.402	0.358	0.344
Observations	161	161	161

Entries are logit regression coefficients with z-values in brackets. The dependent variable is *Admission of Information Deficit*: 0 = Hide Deficit and 1=Admit Deficit. Significance: 0.001 '***' 0.01 '**' 0.05 '*' 0.10.

Several interesting conclusions can be drawn from Table 2.6. Broadly speaking, the results show that *incorrect guesses* and *don't know responses* do not occur haphazardly, but instead, follow some systematic pattern. Not only do they mean different things, but they also produce different results when regressed against a set of independent variables as argued by Mondak (1999). With respect to *don't know responses* for instance, scholars maintain that 'it is difficult to know what "Don't Know" means' (Jamieson, 2000:84),

and suggest that it can imply ignorance, lack of clarity about the questions, indecision, or just the unwillingness to respond (see Jamieson, 2000). Yet, Table 2.6 shows that honest respondents are likely to admit that they *don't know* rather than to offer *incorrect guesses* when they are not very sure of the answers to survey questions. In contrast, the dishonest respondents are more inclined to guess than to admit lack of information. In essence, when honest respondents say they '*don't know*', most likely they '*don't know*'. However, dishonest respondents can pretend to know even when they clearly do not know.

These results are important since they strongly support the argument I made earlier in passing, that *incorrect guesses* and *don't know responses* to survey questions do not constitute political information, and hence should not be regarded as shades of political information as suggested by Mondak (2001). The results also support my argument that *incorrect guesses* and *don't know responses* should be viewed as some sort of outward manifestations of individual respondent's underlying predilection to either admit lack of information by saying "*I don't know*", or hide lack of information by making inaccurate guesses. Hence, it adds no value to either encourage or discourage respondents to say "*I don't know*" or to urge them to make *wild guesses*. Honest respondents are already predisposed to say "*I don't know*" if indeed, they don't know. For this reason, *don't know* and *incorrect guesses* should be excluded when computing political information indices.

Another important finding is that, just like honest respondents, those respondents who find survey questions to be difficult for them are likely to admit that they *don't know* rather than attempt to make wild, and often, *incorrect guesses*. This further fortifies the preceding argument that when respondents say they '*don't know*', it is most likely that the question is difficult for them and they are honest about it. It should be underscored

that *respondent honesty* and *question difficulty* variables are constructed from *respondent* non-verbal behavior observed during the interview process. In fact, a major strength of the Afrobarometer dataset worth noting at this point is that it provides vital quantifiable information about the interview process and environment, thus enabling us to investigate whether and how the interview environment may have affected the respondents' answers.

It is also notable that the influence of partisanship on the likelihood of admitting or hiding lack of information depends on the type of partisanship. Whereas the uninformed *incumbent partisans* are more likely to admit that they *don't know* than to try to hide their ignorance through guesses, uninformed *general partisans* and *opposition partisans* more likely to hide than to admit that they *don't know*. Moreover, the educated people and those who pay keen attention to media news are less likely to admit lack of information. Given that education and media are considered as vital assets in information acquisition, higher educational attainments and greater access to media news can create a sense of infallibility which can either make people think they know everything, or at least make it embarrassing for them to admit that they *don't know* basic facts such as majority party, presidential term limits or the constitutionality of the law.

More importantly, when the results in table 2.6 are interpreted alongside those in table 2.5, a consistent and statistically significant pattern emerges, whereby the variables which were significant and positive in Table 2.5 (*general partisans*, education, and media news) are still significant but negative in Table 2.6 and vice versa (gender). This suggests that those who make incorrect guesses usually end up with higher political information index than those who honestly admit information deficit. Indeed, Table 2.5 shows that general partisans, educated people, and those with greater access to media news are more

likely to be more informed, while Table 2.6 shows that people with these attributes are less likely to be honest enough to admit their lack of political information. Relatedly, women are less likely than men to be politically informed, yet more likely to admit information deficit. The average PII Index for all the respondents who admitted that they *don't know* the political institutions and processes is -0.390, compared to -0.238 for those who tried to hide their deficit by giving incorrect answers.

A surprising result is that although strong opposition partisans tend to guess than to admit that they *don't know*, they are less likely to be politically well informed compared to non-(opposition) partisans. Similarly, strong *incumbent partisans* are likely to admit than to hide lack of information compared to the non-(incumbent) partisans, yet there is no statistically significant difference in the likelihood that either of them would end up with higher political information index than the other. Relatedly, even though religion is expected to cultivate virtues like honesty, there is no indication that uninformed religious people are likely to admit information deficit. In fact, religiosity is only significant at $\alpha = .10$. Even then, its coefficients are all negative, suggesting that religious people are in fact, more likely to hide than to admit that they *don't know*.

In short, most of the factors that determine the likelihood of hiding lack of information are the same factors that determine information levels, suggesting the possibility that a sizeable amount of guesswork infiltrates political information indices.

2.7 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I have created a robust formula for measuring political information and used the new political information index to demonstrate that the level of political information is low even in new and emerging democracies. More specifically, the results show that Kenyans are generally poorly informed, with a low mean national political information index of 0.151, and an equally high standard deviation of 0.477. Worst still, most Kenyans tend to be unwilling to reveal their information deficit and therefore might not engage in information-seeking activities. This supports results of several earlier studies of advanced democracies, and anchors the dissertation on a sound empirical base: Kenyan citizens generally lack pertinent political information.

In addition, I have shown that the influence of partisanship on political information depends on the type of partisanship scale used. The *general* and *opposition partisanship* have positive and negative influence on political information respectively, while the incumbent partisanship has no statistically significant influence on political information. I attribute this partly to the messy party system existing at the time of data collection, and substantively, to the fact that the three partisan scales used in this analysis are radically independent of each other. Finally, I find a strong correlation between the predisposition to make guesses when respondents are unsure of correct answers, and levels of political information. This opens avenues worth further exploring to determine how to estimate and eliminate the influence of guesswork from the inflated political information indices.

CHAPTER THREE

CAN DEMOCRACY WORK WITHOUT INFORMED CITIZENS? EVIDENCE FROM KENYA

3.1 Introduction

Most democratic theorists converge on the idea that ‘citizen participation is at the heart of democracy’ (Verba *et al*, 1995:1) and effective participation in democratic processes require informed citizens (Lutz, 2006; Blais, 2010). Hence, they conclude that democracy requires well-informed citizens (Dalton, 2008; Blais, 2010). However, the data in chapter two show that the political information levels in Kenya are generally very low (PII Index = 0.151), suggesting that the informed democratic citizens prescribed by the normative democratic theorists are largely absent in Kenya.

This chapter addresses the second dissertation research question: *Does democracy function well in Kenya even with such an acute political information deficit among its citizens?* The prime focus of this chapter is to verify whether (not how or why) democracy works well despite lack of a critical mass of informed democratic citizens, or whether political information deficit undercuts democracy. This remains a sticky issue in the literature, with scholars arguing that the uninformed can subvert democracy (Craig *et al*, 2005), and suggest that, ‘questions about whether, when and how the uninformed or misinformed citizens can harm democracy deserves to be asked...’ (Gans, 2004:58).

In a nutshell, the study identifies three indicators of a well functioning democracy. These include *knowledge of democracy*, *satisfaction with democracy*, and *support for democracy*. I begin with a model of a properly functioning democracy built around these

three indicators. The three subsequent sections address each of these indicators, and how they vary with partisanship and political information. These indicators individually and collectively offer reasonable basis for determining if democracy works well. Finally, I examine the internal consistency of democratic attitudes, especially the extent to which support for democracy is consistent with other democratic attitudes - *support for rule of law, support for universal adult suffrage, support for free and fair elections, opposition to one-man rule, opposition to one-party system, and opposition to military rule.*

In terms of the analysis strategy, I take advantage of the flexibility of the political information index developed in chapter two, and measure it at the ordinal level, creating an ordered variable with three categories – the uninformed citizens [PII Index <0]; the Average citizens [PII Index = 0]; and the informed citizens [PII Index > 0]. I then divide the data into three sets corresponding to the three groups. The goal is to perform a comparative analysis of the two extreme groups (PII Index < 0 and PII Index > 0] to test whether there is significant difference in the way they rationalize their evaluations of how well democracy works in Kenya. Technically, uninformed citizens are the experimental group whose behavior is the focus of this chapter. Rather than examine them in isolation, to the extent necessary and feasible, I compare them with the informed citizens.

3.2 Model of a Properly Functioning Democracy

Although democracy has been treated largely as an institutional variable, it also has a behavioral dimension. I argue that building and sustaining a democratic society requires democratic attitudes and behaviors as much as it requires democratic institutions. Indeed, some scholars have argued that the functionality of democracy should be measured using a combination of behavioral, attitudinal and institutional dimensions of democracy (Linz

and Stepan, 1996; Diamond, 1999). However, others argue that such an approach would yield unnecessarily complex measure (Schedler, 2009). In this study, I adopt a behavioral approach in explaining how democracy works. In this case, I use respondents' aggregate attitudinal and cognitive predispositions towards democracy as indicators of how well democracy works in Kenya (see Guldbrandtsen and Skaaning, 2010; Norris, 2011b).

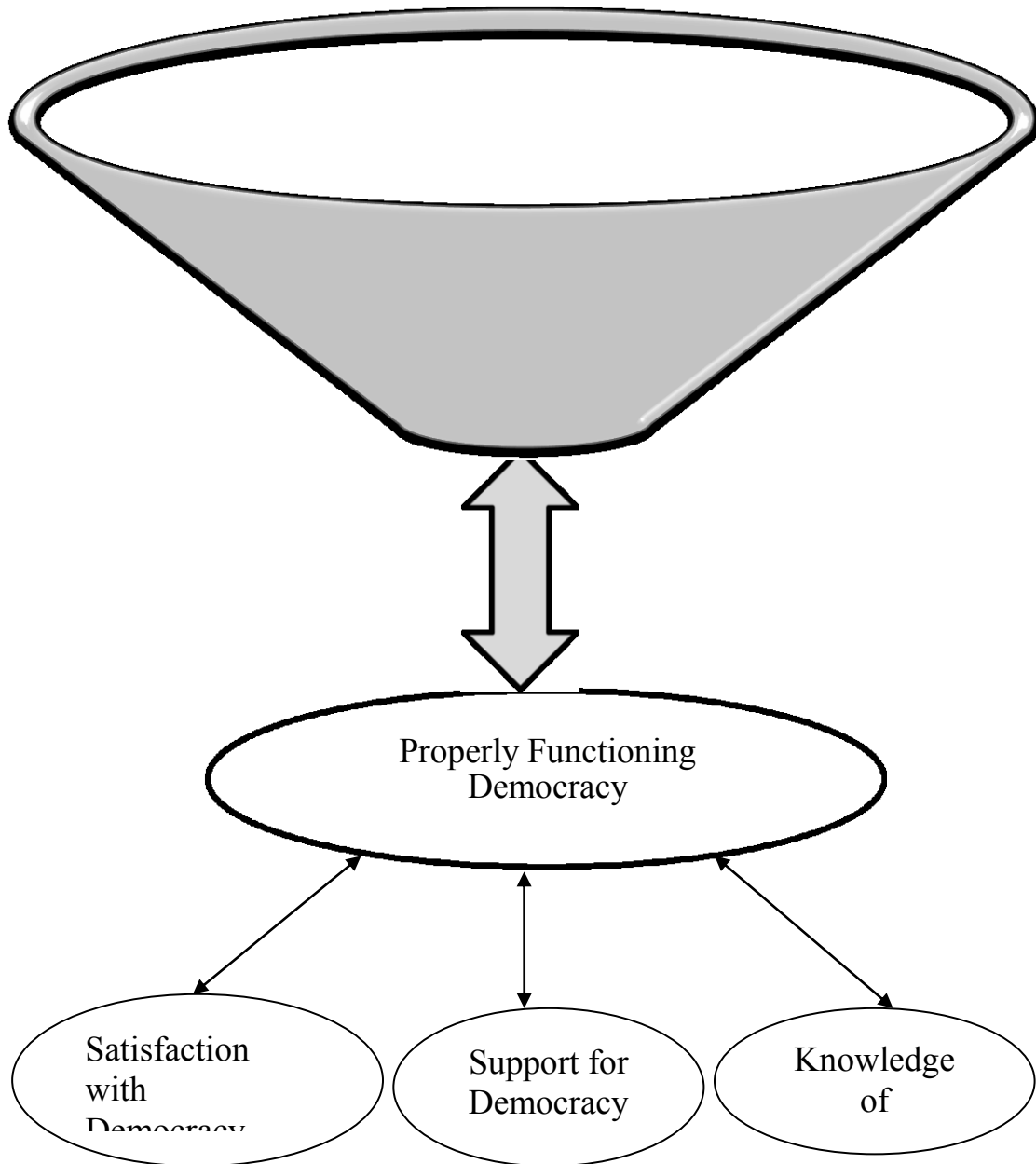
In its basic formulation, the model used in this chapter identifies one cognitive and two attitudinal indicators of a properly functioning democracy. The former refer to high aggregate level of knowledge of democracy, while the latter refer to a strong aggregate support for democracy as a form of government, and a greater degree of satisfaction among citizens with how democracy is working in their country. These three elements individually and collectively, give indications of how well democracy is working.

The model which is shown in figure 3.1 has three components. The top part depicts aggregate level of *knowledge, support* and *satisfaction with democracy* literally lumped together in one container. In the middle part, there is the democratic space characterized by a properly functioning democracy. The bottom part separately shows each indicator - *knowledge, support* and *satisfaction with democracy*. The arrows show the four ways in which the identified indicators relate to a properly functioning democracy.

For instance, knowledge of democracy is critical for the sustenance of a properly functioning democracy. It is only when people know their civil rights for example, that they can hold the government accountable for either protecting or violating those rights. Without such knowledge, people risk cheering autocracy and jeering democracy. Yet, at the same time, a properly functioning democracy reinforces knowledge of democracy.

This is because, when democracy works well, it becomes “the only game in town”, and hence people are likely to know what it is (Przeworski, 1991; Camp, 2001; Cook, 2005).

Figure 3.1 A Model of Cognitive and Attitudinal Dimensions of Democracy



Author’s Conceptualization of a properly Functioning Democracy, 2012

3.3 Knowledge of Democracy among Kenyans

There are three reasons why people's aggregate knowledge of democracy is vital in understanding whether democracy works well. First, recent evidence from cross-national studies on Africa show that people who know the meaning of democracy tend to be very supportive of it. In contrast, 'individuals who cannot define democracy are much less attracted to it as a preferred form of regime' (Bratton and Mattes, 2001:117). In essence, knowledge of democracy enhances an individual's ability to acquire and nurture attitudes that are supportive of democracy. According to Gunther *et al* (2007: 30):

Mass-level attitudes supporting democracy are often regarded as the bedrock of democratic stability and an important ingredient for the functioning of a healthy democracy, and much of the literature on democratic consolidation therefore places considerable emphasis on the establishment and dissemination of democratic attitudes and values.

It is therefore unlikely that people who understand democracy would support it if they are not satisfied with the way it is working, or at least, if there is a better known alternative. It has been argued for instance, that, 'if a strong and lasting democracy is to be achieved in Kenya, the general citizenry must understand, believe in and embrace democratic practices – not just in the political arena, but also in other areas affecting their lives' (Gathuo, 2004:3, cited in Ibelema, 2008:49). On this score, aggregate knowledge of democracy is a necessary even if not a sufficient condition for a properly functioning democracy. Not only does knowledge of democracy herald democratic consolidation, but it is actually indicative of the level of democratic consolidation itself.

Second, the link between knowledge of democracy and its functionality is also anchored on the democratic consolidation literature. According to Linz and Stepan (1997), a consolidated democracy is ‘a political regime in which democracy as a complex system of institutions, rules and patterned incentives and disincentives has become, in a phrase, ‘the only game in town’ (ibid, p. 15). They identify three critical dimensions of a consolidated democracy – *behavioral*, *attitudinal* and *constitutional*. *Behaviorally*, consolidation occurs when a state is devoid of actors and actions bent on creating non-democratic regimes or seceding from that state; *Attitudinally*, democracy is consolidated when mass public opinion is in favor of democracy as the best way to manage public affairs; and *Constitutionally*, consolidation is attained when legal resolution of conflicts is institutionalized within the framework of rule of law. They conclude that:

In most cases after a democratic transition has been completed, there are still many tasks that need to be accomplished, conditions that must be established, and attitudes and habits that must be cultivated before democracy could be considered consolidated¹²

On the same vein, Adam Przeworski (1991:26) observes that:

Democracy is consolidated when under a given political and economic conditions a particular system of institutions becomes the only game in town, when no one can imagine acting outside the democratic institutions, when all the losers want to do is to try again within the same institutions under which they have just lost

¹² Linz and Stepan (1997:5)

Thus, from both the *behavioral* and the *attitudinal* perspectives, if democracy works well, then citizens as key actors in the democratic process, would desist from behaviors and attitudes that jeopardize democracy, and embrace those that support it, thus making democracy “the only game in town”. Moreover, if democracy becomes “the only game in town”, then “citizens of that town” should be able to understand the game and its rules. As Robert Putnam puts it, ‘if you don’t know the rules of the game and the players, and don’t care about the outcome, you are unlikely to try playing yourself’ (2000: 35).

Finally, how people define democracy significantly influences what they expect from it, which in turn shapes how they evaluate it (Camp, 2001). It has been noted that ‘among the conditions of democracy, the one recalled least is that wrong ideas about democracy make democracy grow wrong’ (Nwankwo, 2003:13). If the citizens do not understand democracy, they cannot tell how well it is working, and hence cannot make credible claims that they support, approve or are satisfied with it. Metaphorically put, ‘democracy is like a party. It won’t work if nobody knows about it, nobody cares, and nobody comes’ (Cook, 2005:203). Therefore, when people say they support democracy, ‘we need to know more about what people mean by democracy and hence what they are actually supporting’ (Doorenspleet, 2010:111). Without a clear understanding of what democracy means, people are likely to anchor their evaluations of democracy on “the myth of democracy”. As discussed elsewhere (Asingo, 1995:4):

The myth of democracy refers to those ideas, beliefs and hopes about democracy held supreme and even glorified due to lack of a clear understanding of what democracy is ... inadequate definitions and an illusory paradise on earth thought to accompany democratic ideals are at the core of this mythology.

The Afrobarometer Survey asks respondents an open-ended question suitable for testing knowledge of democracy: ‘*What if anything does democracy mean to you?*’

Table 3.1 Valid Response to Knowledge of Democracy Question

Response	Frequency
1. Understood Democracy in English	748 (60.1%)
2. Required Local Language Translation	185 (14.9%)
3. Did not Understand Either	311 (25.0%)
Total Valid Responses	1244 (100%)

The first two response categories imply that respondents know the meaning of democracy but differ in the language used to extract the responses. Since even experts do not agree on the meaning of democracy (Dalton *et al*, 2008; Norris, 2011a), the main concern here is not how accurately respondents define democracy, but whether their definitions reflect at least some basic understanding of the concept. In any case, scholars have noted that in Afrobarometer datasets, ‘all survey respondents who could offer any sort of meaning [of democracy] were held to possess basic awareness of democracy’ (Bratton *et al*, 2005:66). Using this simple criteria used by Afrobarometer to determine those who understand democracy, I dichotomous *knowledge of democracy*, by recoding response 3 to 0 (*doesn’t know*) and merging responses 1 and 2 to 1 (*Know Democracy*).

3.3.1 How Knowledgeable are Kenyans about Democracy?

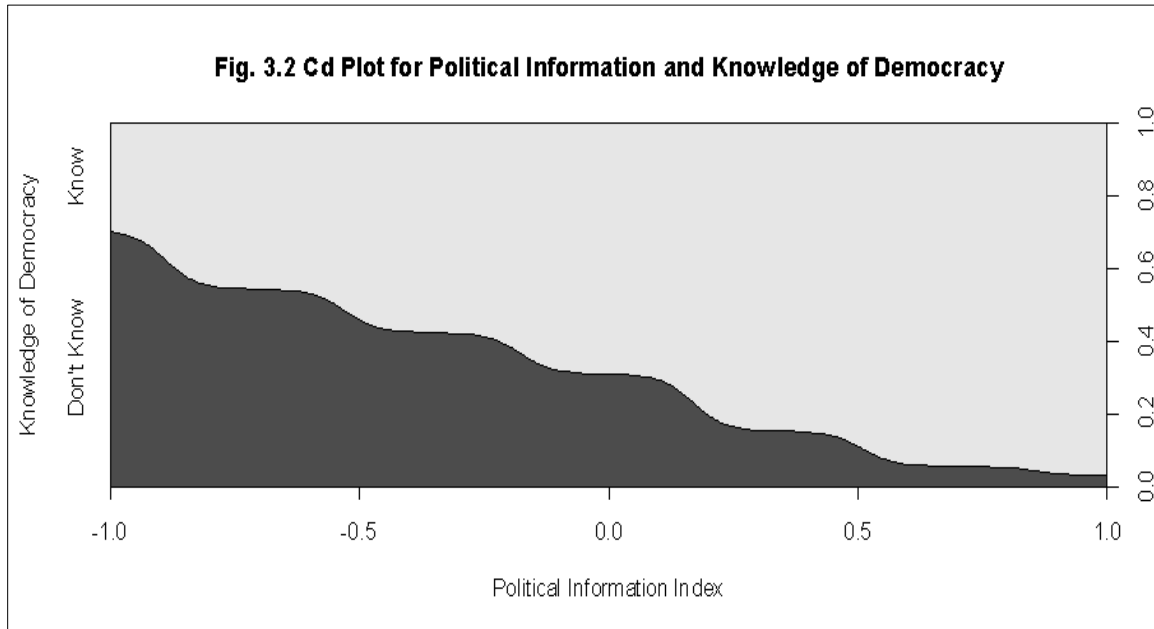
As already pointed out, one way of determining the degree to which democracy has taken root and working well is to assess how well the masses understand democracy itself. When democracy becomes “the only game in town”, its principles and ideals should also permeate everyday discourse, and hence many people should be able to identify at least its salient features. The key objective of this section therefore, is to test hypothesis ***H 2.1***: *Kenyans generally have a high level of understanding of Democracy.*

Given the low information levels in Kenya, I had expected that most people would be unable to correctly define democracy. As already evident in table 3.1, the results show that 75% of Kenyans understand the meaning of democracy. That is, three in every four Kenyans can correctly define democracy. This translates into a PII Index of 0.500 for democracy, suggesting that Kenyans are more informed about democracy than they are about most political issues such as party system, electoral system, the constitution, health policies, and fiscal devolution policies (CDF), as already evident in figure 2.3. It is only education policies that appear to be much better known than democracy.

3.3.2 Political Information and Knowledge of Democracy

Hypothesis ***H 2.2*** is *informed citizens are more likely than uninformed citizens to know the meaning of democracy.* The results show that there is a big and statistically significant difference in the level of understanding of democracy between informed and uninformed people. More precisely, 90.3% of informed people know the meaning of democracy, as compared to 52.9% of uninformed people. In other words, the informed are 37.4% more likely to know democracy than the uninformed.

To explore the link between political information and knowledge of democracy, I created the *Conditional Density Plot (Cd Plot)*¹³ shown in figure 3.2, which illustrates the conditional distribution of knowledge of democracy over different levels of information.



To begin with, I take advantage of the Cd Plot to show the proportion of Kenyans who can define democracy by comparing the grey region (representing those who know the meaning of democracy) with the black region (representing those who do not know the meaning of democracy). Since the grey region is nearly three times the black region, it is apparent that three-fourth of Kenyans knows the meaning of democracy.

¹³ I drew the conditional density plot using the *cdplot* function in the *graphics package* of the R program for statistical Computing, developed by Achim Zeileis in Hofmann (2005): (<http://stat.ethz.ch/R-manual/R-patched/library/graphics/html/cdplot.html>). The *Cdplot* is used when the dependent variable is categorical while the independent variable is continuous to depict the conditional distribution of the former over different levels of the latter.

Substantively, the Cd plot shows that the proportion of Kenyans who understand democracy increases significantly and consistently as political information levels increase from -1 to +1. As this happens, the proportion of Kenyans who cannot define democracy declines at the same rate. Reading from the second y-axis, only 30% of the extremely uninformed citizens (PII Index = -1) know what democracy means, compared to almost 70% of the *average citizens* (PII Index = 0), and 98% of extremely well informed citizens (PII Index = +1) who understand democracy. Further analysis shows that, the average PII Index is 0.255 for those who know democracy and -0.167 for those who do not.

These results not only support the hypothesis that informed citizens are more likely than the uninformed citizens to know the meaning of democracy, but also show that, as the political information level increases, the likelihood of knowing democracy increases too. The findings also support the widely held view that people tend to be generalists as opposed to specialists so that those who know an issue or set of issues (such as those who know the issues used to compute political information index) are likely to know other issues (such as the meaning of democracy) (Zaller, 1986; Carpini and Keteer, 1993).

3.3.3 Partisanship and Knowledge of Democracy

The next hypothesis is ***H 2.3: the uninformed partisans are more likely than the uninformed non-partisans to understand democracy.*** The idea here is that knowledge of democracy varies along two important continuums - the political information levels, and partisanship. I have shown in the previous section that the informed are more likely than uninformed citizens to know the meaning of democracy. I also argue that even among the uninformed, understanding of democracy varies with the extent of partisanship, so that partisans are expected to have better understanding of democracy than non-partisans.

This is because the political cue theory on which the study is anchored, hypothesize that uninformed partisans use partisan cues to abridge information deficit, and hence should be relatively better informed than uninformed non-partisans. Besides, as shown in chapter two, citizens are typically generalists rather than specialists so that those who know an aspect of politics are likely to know others too (Carpini and Keteer, 1993; Althaus, 2003)

Since the dependent variable, *knowledge of democracy*, is a binary variable, I use the logistic regression. Rather than treat political information as a variable in one model, I isolate the informed and the uninformed citizens and ran two identical logit regression models for the uninformed (PII Index < 0) and informed citizens (PII Index > 0).¹⁴ While uninformed citizens are the focus of this section, I use the informed citizens as a control group. In each model, the three forms of partisanship - *general*, *incumbent* and *opposition* - are the key independent variables. I also include several control variables like interest in public affairs, education, ethnicity, residence, patriotism and living conditions.¹⁵

The resultant logit regression coefficients are presented in table 3.2.

¹⁴ This strategy is important in this context because political information is correlated with key independent and control variables included in the logit regression models below as was already evident in chapter one. Thus, if it is included in the model as a normal independent variable, it would result in a needlessly complex model that may nonetheless be affected by collinearity. Moreover, it makes better analytical sense to run two identical models for the informed and the uninformed citizens since this allows for comparison of how the dependent variable and the key independent variables behave in each data group.

¹⁵ Both models are statistically significant ($p < .05$), and all the variables are sufficiently independent of each other and hence no collinearity problems noted.

Table 3.2 Determinants of Knowledge of Democracy

	<i>Uninformed</i>	<i>Informed</i>
Opposition Partisanship	0.03 (0.20)	-0.22 (1.31)
Incumbent Partisanship	-0.25 (1.53)	0.06 (0.34)
General Partisanship	-0.28 (0.83)	0.14 (0.36)
Education	0.29** (2.84)	0.40*** (3.90)
Ethnicity	-0.86* (2.00)	0.18 (0.39)
Interest in Public Affairs	0.26 (1.70)	0.68*** (4.21)
Residence: Rural	0.38 (1.03)	-1.24** (2.70)
Patriotism	0.11 (0.83)	-0.07 (0.50)
Living Conditions	0.15 (1.04)	-0.21 (1.44)
Intercept	-1.74* (2.03)	2.52* (2.28)
Model χ^2	23.0	53.8
Pseudo R^2	0.16	0.21
Observations	186	554

Entries are Logit regression coefficients with t-values in brackets. Significance: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05
 Dependent variable: *Knowledge of Democracy*: 0 = Does not know democracy; 1 = knows democracy

The results in table 3.2 do not support the hypothesis that *uninformed partisans are more likely than uninformed non-partisans to understand democracy*. In the first place, none of the three partisanship variables is statistically significant predictor of knowledge of democracy among the uninformed citizens. That is, regardless of which partisan scale we adopt, and regardless of the level of political information, partisans are just as likely

to understand democracy as the uninformed non-partisans. In fact, generally speaking, the partisanship does not aid partisans in their quest to understand democracy.

These results suggest that Kenyan political parties are not effective as conduits for disseminating political information perhaps due to structural constraints, failure to instill internal democracy, and lack of internal party discipline (Asingo, 2003; Oloo, 2007). Hence, partisans cannot understand the meaning of democracy by observing what goes on in political parties, at least in Kenya. Most Kenyan parties are characterized by party anarchy, where politicians disregard party rules but cannot be disciplined for fear that the party will be seen to be less democratic, even if these defiance borders on anarchy.

This trend has roots in the struggle for the country's liberation from the British colonial rule, and more recently, from the struggle to restore multiparty in Kenya and the removal of KANU from power after ruling for 39 years. The two historic events required immeasurable courage, defiance and disregard for the very laws designed to preserve the dominance of authoritarian regimes. The few politicians who exhibited these "virtues" and laid the foundation for the rebirth of multiparty in Kenya in the early 1990s such as Oginga Odinga, Kenneth Matiba, Charles Rubia, Martin Shikuku, Masinde Muliro, Raila Odinga, and George Anyona, were treated as heroes of second liberation.

Today, most aspiring leaders in Kenya still build their political careers through the same tactics of defiance, rebellion and disregard for existing order, especially within the political parties. This undermines democracy and promotes anarchy. It seems that the *authoritarian party* structure of the one party era is increasingly being supplanted by an

anarchical party structure. Yet, just like authoritarianism, the emerging anarchy stifles intra-party democracy. Indeed, one commentator on Kenyan politics noted recently that:

Kenya is full of amazing characters we call leaders... Should one find his aspirations, personal ideologies and or principles not in tandem with the sponsoring party, the most honorable thing to do, from a moral and principled point of view, is to resign and seek fresh mandate from the electorate not only in line with this Act [Political Parties Act] but as a matter of self conviction and deep rooted principles...However, we have seen a number of politicians, “mortally” divorced from the ideologies of sponsoring parties and yet remain holed up in parties with whom they share literally nothing. This is not only fraud; it is an abuse of democracy.¹⁶

These sentiments were separately echoed by another keen observer of Kenyan politics:

You cannot undermine your party and continue to enjoy privileges of membership if you consistently vote against party positions, campaign against party candidates in elections, petulantly insult party leaders, openly declare intention to move to another party or conspire with rivals to weaken the party. Is that democratic conduct or political anarchy? Dissent is healthy and spices up the practice of democracy. But dissent must be within the bounds of party rules. Dissent is not destroying your party.¹⁷

3.2.4 Education, Political Discussions and Knowledge of Democracy

Of all the control variables, only education is a significant predictor of whether or not one understands democracy for both the informed and the uninformed citizens. As expected, the probability of knowing democracy increases as education level increases

¹⁶ Sungu Otieno. 2011. ‘Kenya: Political Fraudulence - Time to Reject the Architects’. *Jaluodotcom* on January 12, 2012 at: <http://blog.jaluo.com/?p=12308>

¹⁷ Namwamba Ababu. 2011. ‘Democrats do not set out to create disorder’ *Daily Nation Newspaper*. March 5 2011. Accessed at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201103070068.html>

regardless of whether one is informed or uninformed. In particular, nearly all university graduates understand democracy, regardless of their political information level.¹⁸

What is surprising though is that a significant proportion of people without formal education (43%), are also able to define democracy. I attribute this to the fact that after decades of authoritarian rule, the struggle for change that led to the rebirth of democracy in Kenya in 1991 may have been guided by populist definition of democracy as ‘the sum of *correct* ways of doing all the *wrong* things associated with past authoritarianism’.

As Bratton *et al* (2005:348) notes:

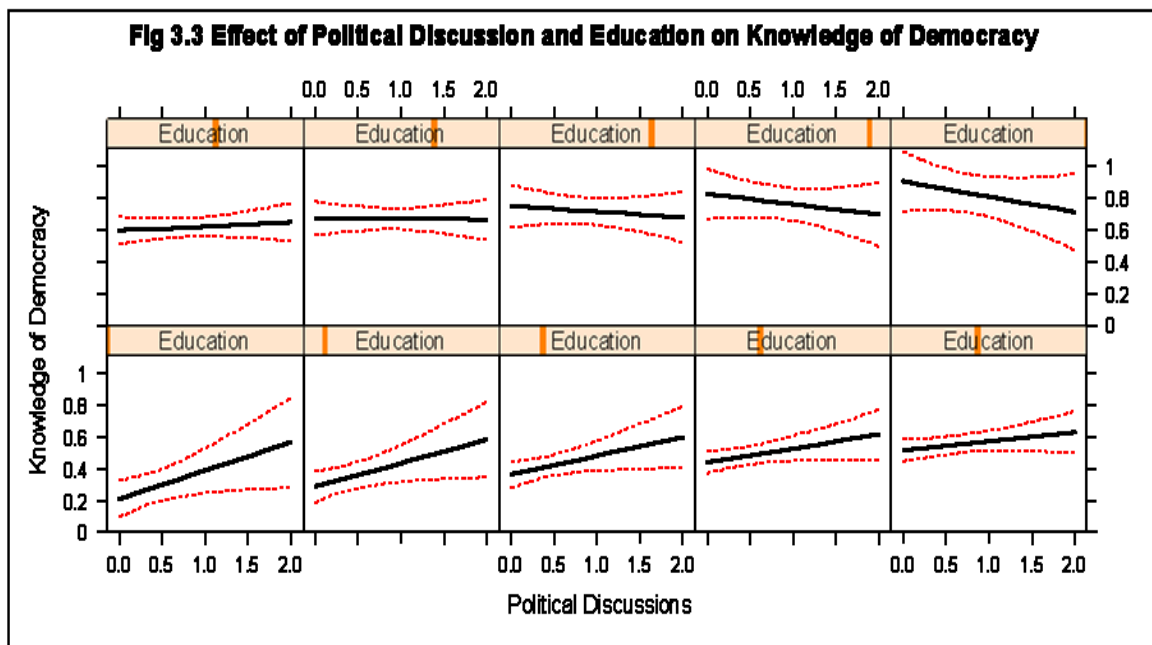
People compare the performance of a succession of regimes over the long run: those who suffered through their adult lives under the poorly planned economies of indigenous African dictators are quick to endorse liberalized regimes – even in incomplete hybrid versions – as long as they regard these as perceptibly better than the *status quo ante*

As a result, by intuitively applying John Stuart Mill’s *method of difference*, those who associate past regimes with arbitrary arrests and detentions without trials may view democracy as justice or rule of law; those who link it with the systematic marginalization of communities or groups perceived as unsupportive of the regime may define democracy in terms of equality among citizens; while those who link the past regimes to imposition

¹⁸ Age was omitted from the model presented in table 3.2 since it is strongly correlated with education among uninformed people ($r = -0.39$; $\alpha < 0.01$), though only modestly correlated with it among the informed people ($r = -0.19$; $\alpha < 0.01$). Age is only significantly correlated with the knowledge of democracy among the uninformed ($r = 0.13$; $\alpha = 0.02$), but not the informed ($r = 0.01$; $\alpha = 0.82$). Thus, uninformed youth tend to be more educated and knowledgeable about democracy than the uninformed older folks.

of unpopular leaders on citizens may view it in terms of free and fair elections. These are simple cues that attentive citizens can use even without any formal education.

Political discussion is one avenue through which uninformed but attentive people can learn and be able to define democracy without formal education. However, I did not include it in the model shown in table 3.2, since it correlates with *general partisanship* among informed ($r = 0.22$) and uninformed people ($r = 0.31$). Yet, *general partisanship* is a key independent variable. Figure 3.3 is *effects plot*¹⁹ showing how education moderates the effect of discussions on uninformed people’s ability to understand democracy.



¹⁹ I constructed the effect plot using *effect* function developed by John Fox in the *effects* package of the *R Program*. It shows the effects of ethnicity on knowledge of democracy across different education levels. The successive education levels are marked by vertical orange lines and begin from *no formal education* in the bottom left box to *postgraduate education* in the top right box. The ten education levels are outlined in appendix 1.

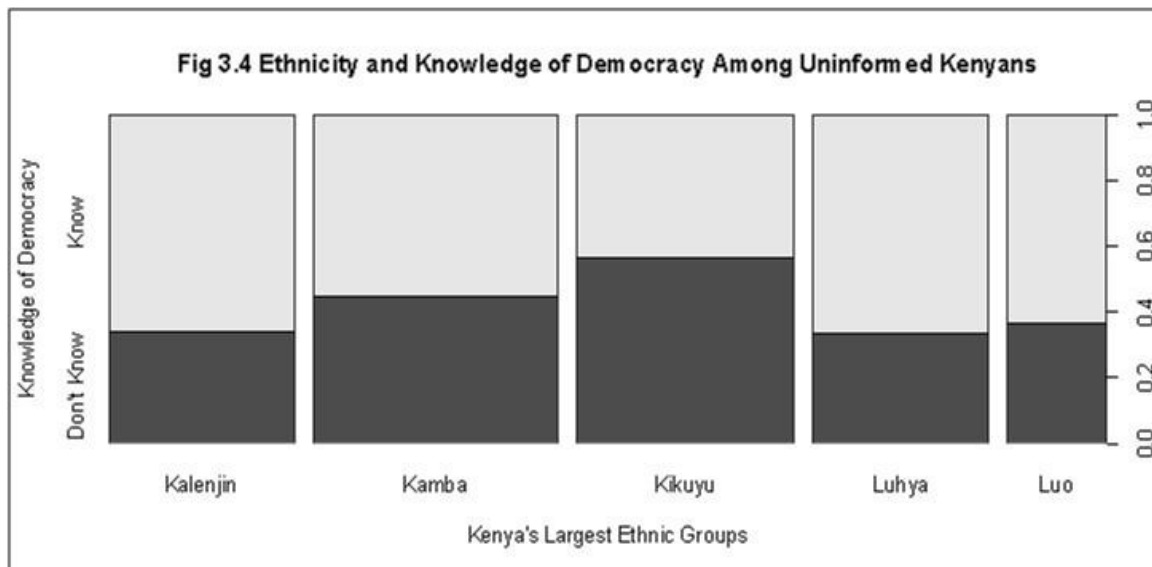
The bottom-left box in figure 3.3 shows the effect of political discussions on the likelihood that uninformed people without formal education will understand democracy. It is clear that uninformed people who lack formal education but participate in political discussions more frequently are more likely to have a better understanding of democracy than those who do not discuss politics, suggesting that they gain from these discussions. However, the effect of political discussions on the likelihood that uninformed people will understand democracy is significantly moderated by the level of education, to the extent that as education levels rise beyond high school (top-left box), engagement in political discussions hardly generates useful political cues that can alter one's knowledge of democracy in a significant way. Political discussions at this level may be taking place largely among like-minded people thereby merely reinforcing partisan positions.

Beyond high school level, frequent engagement in political discussions undermines one's ability to properly conceptualize democracy. In this regard, the more a very highly educated Kenyan (top-right box) engages in political discussions, the less likely he or she will have a good understanding of democracy. Though this finding sounds surprising, it is not entirely unexpected. It is surprising since political discussions among highly educated people are supposed to enhance not impede knowledge; it is not entirely unexpected since we already know from chapter two (table 2.6), that highly educated people are typically reluctant to admit political ignorance, even for things that they clearly do not know. It is likely that political discussions at this level succumb to factors known to impede the ability to understand the meaning of democracy such as ethnicity (see table 3.2).

3.2.5 Ethnicity and Knowledge of Democracy

In addition to education, table 3.2 shows that *ethnicity* is the only other significant predictor of knowledge of democracy among the uninformed citizens. This is consistent with the heuristic cues literature which suggests that ethnicity is a potential source of heuristic cues especially for the uninformed citizens (Squire and Smith 1988). *Ethnicity* has negative effect on the uninformed people's ability to define democracy, implying that the uninformed members of the president's ethnic group (*Kikuyu*) are less likely to understand democracy than the other Kenyans. Surprisingly, ethnicity has no statistically significant influence on the knowledge of democracy among informed citizens. This may be due to the fact that the informed citizens have their facts correct and therefore their understanding of democracy is less colored by ethnic or even party cues.

I explore further the influence of *ethnicity* on the uninformed citizens' knowledge of democracy using a *spine plot*²⁰ in figure 3.4.



²⁰ I drew the *spine plot* using the *spineplot* function in the *graphics package* referred to in footnote 13. It is interpreted the same way as the *cdplot*, only that it used where both the dependent and independent variables are categorical.

Two critical observations can be made from figure 3.4. First, since the width of each bar in the *spine plot* shows the proportion of each ethnic group in the population defined, it is clear that among the five largest ethnic groups in Kenya, the *Kamba* have the highest number of uninformed people followed by *Kikuyu*, *Kalenjin*, *Luhya* and *Luo*. Secondly, consistent with the results in table 3.2, uninformed *Kikuyus* are least likely to understand democracy even when compared to uninformed members of the other four large ethnic groups. Only 43.3% of uninformed *Kikuyus* understand democracy compared to *Kambas* (55.6%), *Luos* (63.6%), *Kalenjins* (65.9%), and *Luhyas* (66.7%).

The question is: why would uninformed members of the president's ethnic group (the *Kikuyu*) be disproportionately unable to define democracy compared to uninformed members of the other ethnic groups? This question is compelling particularly since the *Kikuyu* generally have some of the best educational facilities in Kenya and are fairly well educated. For instance, *Central* province, where 94% of residents are *Kikuyus* (Alwy and Schech, 2004), had the highest primary school completion rate of 91.8% in 2004, as compared to 81.2% for the second placed *Eastern* province. It also had the best teacher-pupil ratio of 36.5% compared to other provinces (World Bank, 2009). Yet, as shown in Table 3.2, education significantly influences the ability to understand democracy. Taken together, these findings suggest that ethnicity may not have an independent influence on the ability of the uninformed Kenyans to understanding democracy.

Thus, I used the *effect plot* shown in figure 3.5 to demonstrate whether the effect of ethnicity on the ability of an individual to understand democracy is conditioned by his or her level of education. The suspected interaction between ethnicity and education does not necessarily mean that the two variables strongly correlate. In fact, their correlation is

very weak ($r = 0.04$), suggesting that the conditional distribution of ethnicity over various education levels is inconsistent, and therefore statistically insignificant.

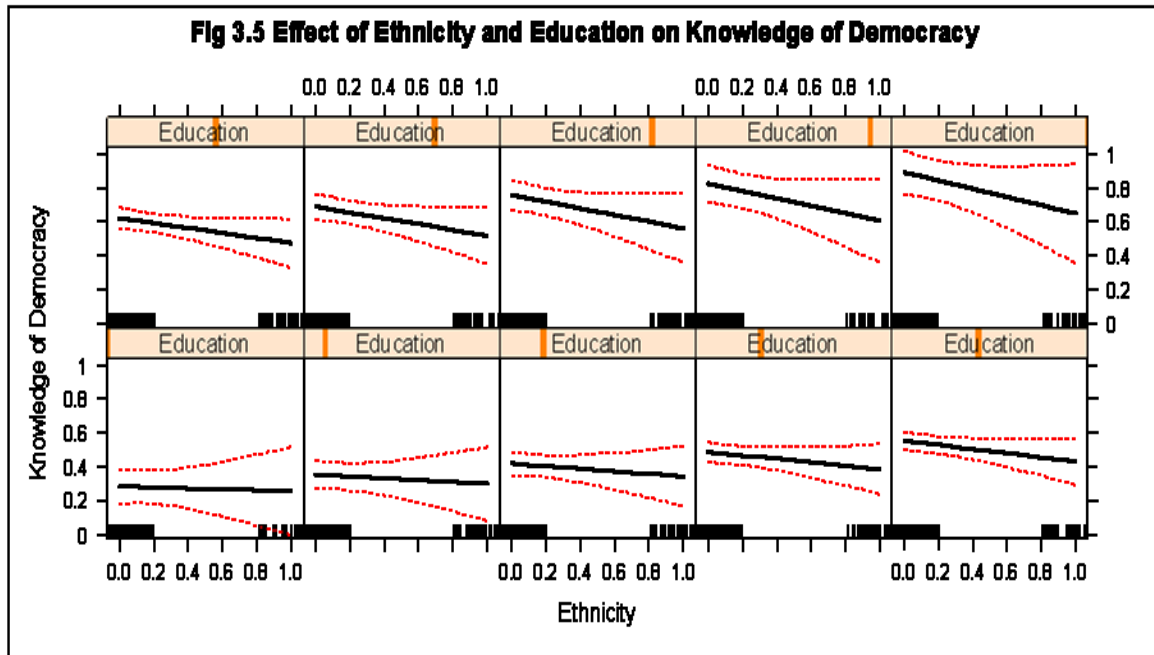


Figure 3.5 supports my expectation that the effect of ethnicity on the ability of the uninformed Kenyans to understand democracy varies with the level of education. It is instructive to note that the level of understanding of democracy is generally low among the uninformed Kenyans without formal education (bottom-left plot). Nonetheless, this low level of understanding does not vary significantly between the ethnics (members of the president's ethnic group) and non-ethnics (non-members of the president's ethnic group). That is, among uninformed Kenyans without formal education, members of the president's ethnic group are just as likely to understand democracy as the members of the other ethnic groups. However, the effect of ethnicity changes as education level increases so that uninformed *Kikuyus* with educational attainment beyond primary school are less likely to understand democracy compared to *non-Kikuyus* with the same attainment.

It is difficult to tell if we would get the same results if the president's ethnic group is not *Kikuyu*. What is clear is that the relatively low level of understanding of democracy among the *Kikuyu* elite is reflected in *Kikuyu* voting patterns, suggesting that elite cues may be having considerable influence on voting decisions of the masses. In all the four elections that Kenya has held since the advent of multiparty democracy in 1992, the *Kikuyu* are the only ethnic group in Kenya that are yet to shed off the tag of *ethnic voters* because they have never supported a presidential candidate from a different ethnic group. In contrast, *Kalenjins* supported a *Kikuyu* candidate in 2002 and a *Luo* candidate in 2007; while *Kambas*, *Luhyas* and *Luos* supported a *Kikuyu* candidate in 2002.

Thus, a twisted logic of democracy may be taking root among the *Kikuyus* whereby democracy means a chance to elect "one of their own". Indeed, the perception that the *Kikuyu* are atypical *ethnic voters* permeates everyday political discourse in Kenya. For instance, in a recent opinion article, one commentator observed that:

The *Kikuyu*, the most numerous and influential of the Mt Kenya communities, are infamous for their insular voting habits, their tenacious collective refusal to vote for anyone else, but one of their own at presidential elections. Whatever else it is based on, whatever strain of political DNA, this bad and blinkered habit cannot possibly be blamed on council of elders.²¹

²¹ Adama Joe. 'What Must Raila do to regain Rift Valley?' *The Nairobi Star Newspaper*. June 13, 2011.

3.2.6 Urban, Rural Residence and Knowledge of Democracy

Although an individual's residence (whether urban or rural) significantly influence knowledge of democracy among the informed people, it has no statistically significant effect on the uninformed people. In particular, while informed urban residents tend to understand democracy better than their rural counterparts, residence has no significant influence on the uninformed people's knowledge of democracy. This is partly due to differences in urban and rural settings in Kenya in terms of availability of resources and opportunities like media news that can enhance one's ability to understand democracy.

For instance, while both the state-owned Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) and some private television channels were already available in key urban areas by 2005, only KBC which is largely government mouthpiece had close to national coverage, and could therefore reach rural audience. Evidently, the information needed to understand democracy is relatively more accessible in urban than rural areas. Yet, it has also been noted that 'it takes information to get information' (Converse, 2000:334). In other words, 'as information cost fall and information sources multiply, the information-rich get richer and the information-poor stay poorer' (Bimber, 2003: 206).

Therefore, I argue that the difference in the ease of access of information between Kenya's urban and rural settings, together with the differences in the information-seeking behavior of the informed and uninformed people explains why residence influences knowledge of democracy among the informed but has no significant effect on the uninformed people. I present this in table 3.3 and show the percentage of each of the four resultant categories of people (informed-urban, informed-rural, uninformed-urban and uninformed-rural) that understand democracy.

Table 3.3 Residence, Information-Seeking Behavior and Knowledge of Democracy

Information Status	Residence		Effect of Residence	χ^2 Significance
	Rural <i>[Information Inaccessible]</i>	Urban <i>[Information Accessible]</i>		
Uninformed <i>[Don't seek Information]</i>	52.3%	54.9%	2.6%	0.82
Informed <i>[Seek Information]</i>	87.0%	96.0%	9.0%	0.04***
Effect of Information	34.7%	41.1%	5.4%	0.43
χ^2 Significance	$p < 0.01$ ***	$p < 0.01$ ***	0.10	

Source: Author's Conceptualization, 2011.

Consistent with the information-accessibility and information-seeking model, the results in table 3.3 show that the *informed urban residents* are 9.0% more likely to understand democracy than the *informed rural residents*. However, the *uninformed urban residents* are just as likely to understand democracy as the *uninformed rural residents*. Thus, *residence* influences informed but not uninformed citizens. This is due to the fact that the former seek information while the latter do not, and while information is readily accessible to urban residents it is not equally accessible to rural residents. Moreover, since the *uninformed* do not seek much information, the mere accessibility of information does not have a significant bearing on whether or not they understand democracy. It is also notable that although general political information significantly enhances knowledge of democracy among both the rural and urban residents, the effect is slightly greater among the latter than the former. Nonetheless, this difference is statistically insignificant ($p = 0.43$). On the whole, one stands better chance of understanding democracy if he/she seeks information in urban areas where it is relatively more accessible than in rural areas.

3.3.7 Interest in Public Affairs and Knowledge of Democracy

As was shown in Table 3.2, interest in public affairs has a statistically significant positive effect on knowledge of democracy among the informed people. In fact, it is the most significant predictor of knowledge of democracy among informed people. This is consistent with the results of recent cross-national studies on Africa which also noted that ‘individuals who lack awareness about public affairs are also very likely to be oblivious to the meaning of democracy’ (Bratton *et al*, 2005: 217). Yet, the influence of interest in public affairs on knowledge of democracy among the uninformed is very weak ($\alpha = .10$).

To understand why interest in public affairs has significant influence on knowledge of democracy among the informed people but not among the uninformed, I take recourse to the discussion in the previous section. I argued then that a major distinction between the informed and the uninformed people is that the former tend to show relatively greater information-seeking behavior than the latter. Yet we also know that, at least in electoral contexts, ‘information seeking occurs when a sufficient level of interest in ideas or candidates can be generated’ (Baran and Davies, 2011: 285). Hence, I argue that, while interest in public affairs and the inclination to seek information can independently render one informed, the interaction between them enhances the likelihood of being informed.

Table 3.4 basically reproduces table 3.3 by replacing residence with interest in public affairs. It illustrates how the interaction between information-seeking behavior and interest in public affairs affects the chances of knowing democracy. I show the aggregate level of understanding of democracy among four groups of people (*informed-interested*, *informed-disinterested*, *uninformed-interested* and *uninformed-disinterested* people).

Table 3.4 Interest, Information-Seeking Behavior and Knowledge of Democracy

Information status	Interest in Public Affairs		Effect of Interest	χ^2 Significance
	Disinterested	Interested		
Uninformed <i>[Don't seek Information]</i>	40.9%	57.5%	16.6%	0.03***
Informed <i>[Seek Information]</i>	76.6%	91.7%	15.1%	0.01***
Effect of Information	35.5%	34.2%	1.5%	0.97
χ^2 Significance	$p < 0.01$ ***	$p < 0.01$ ***	0.92	

Source: Author's Conceptualization, 2011.

Table 3.4 shows that someone who is interested in public affairs has higher chances of understanding democracy than someone who is disinterested in public affairs. This is true for both the informed and the uninformed. Indeed, 91.7% of people who are both informed and interested in public affairs know democracy as compared to just 40.9% who are neither informed nor interested in public affairs. Moreover, those who are informed and interested are 15% more likely to know democracy than those who are only informed but disinterested in public affairs. Put differently, if someone who is both uninformed and disinterested develops interests, the probability that he will know democracy increases by 16.6%. However, if he opts to seek information instead, then the chances of knowing democracy increase considerably by 35.5%. Alternatively, if he/she seeks information while also developing interest in public affairs, then his likelihood of knowing democracy will significantly increase by 50.8%. Oddly, interest alone does not significantly reduce knowledge gap between uninformed and informed people. Yet, information alone also does not significantly reduce knowledge gap between the interested and the disinterested.

Thus, the best strategy for enhancing knowledge of democracy is to encourage people to seek credible political information and simultaneously develop interest in public affairs.

It is likely that interest in public affairs predisposes one to engage in information-enhancing activities, even when they do not primarily seek information. For instance, interest in public affairs may encourage engagement in local decision-making, taking community leadership roles, joining others in communal tasks, or monitoring community projects. Such activities engender interactions that can either expose one to information or lead one into contact with those who are better informed.

3.4 Satisfaction with Democracy among Kenyans

Another indicator of how well democracy is working is the aggregate level of satisfaction with democracy among citizens²². Several studies have shown that citizens' evaluation of how well democracy is working tends to mirror the reality so that whenever citizens are satisfied, even scholars concur that democracy is functioning well in that particular country (Guldbrandtsen and Skaaning, 2010; Norris, 2011b).

I use satisfaction with democracy as indicator of how well democracy is working in Kenya. Table 3.5 shows satisfaction with democracy for various information levels.

²² For detailed justifications of the use of *satisfaction with democracy* as an indicator of how well democracy functions, see Chapter One, section 1.10.3.

Table 3.5 Satisfaction with Democracy by level of Political Information

Satisfaction with Democracy	Uninformed Citizen	Average Citizens	Informed Citizens	All Citizens
Not at all Satisfied	27 (8.1%)	30 (9.6%)	50 (8.2%)	107 (8.5%)
Not Very Satisfied	62 (18.5%)	70 (22.5%)	162 (26.6%)	294 (23.4%)
Fairly Satisfied	98 (29.2%)	123 (39.6%)	307 (50.4%)	528 (42.1%)
Very Satisfied	25 (7.5%)	36 (11.6%)	63 (10.4%)	124 (9.9%)
Don't Know	123 (36.7%)	52 (16.7%)	27 (4.4%)	202 (16.1%)
Total Valid Observations	335	311	609	1255

It is evident from table 3.5 that the number of people who answer 'Don't know' to the question testing levels of satisfaction with democracy is disproportionately higher for the uninformed people compared to the other information levels. Indeed, as the political information level increases, the proportion of those who answered 'Don't know' declines. This is not surprising because we already know from chapter two that uninformed people tend to be more honest when answering survey questions. In contrast, informed people are sophisticated and tend to guess rather than admit information deficit. Of course, this does not preclude the possibility that the tendency to honestly admit information deficit through 'Don't know' answers may depress the information levels of uninformed people.

3.4.1 Levels of Satisfaction with Democracy among Kenyans

I begin discussions on levels of satisfaction with democracy by testing hypothesis ***H 2.4*** which states that *Kenyans generally have high level of satisfaction with democracy*. For analytical purposes, I reconstructed table 3.5 by omitting ‘Don’t know’ answers.²³ The results show that despite differences in sample size, the valid responses to the question on satisfaction with democracy tend to be roughly the same across the three ordinal levels of political information, as well as for all citizens. Generally, relatively few Kenyans are either completely dissatisfied (10.2%) or completely satisfied (11.8%) with the way democracy is working in Kenya. Most people tend to be fairly satisfied (50.1%).

It is apparent that 61.9% of Kenyans are either *fairly satisfied* or *very satisfied* with the way democracy functions in their country. The aggregate satisfaction level is 63.6% among the informed and 58.0% among the uninformed. Thus, the differences in the levels of satisfaction between the informed and the uninformed are statistically insignificant ($\alpha = 0.51$). These results imply that Kenyans have fairly modest levels of satisfaction with democracy. Moreover, a satisfaction level of 61.9% for a new and emerging democracy is a pointer to the fact that democracy is taking root even if it is not fully consolidated.

In addition, the mean satisfaction level for all Kenyans is 2.64, while the median satisfaction level is 3, on a scale of one to four. Given that the level of satisfaction with democracy is a categorical rather than continuous variable, it makes more sense to round

²³ I have provided detailed discussion on the need to isolate ‘Don’t Know’ answers from concrete responses in the context of political information in chapter two. However, there is need to add that even in other contexts like satisfaction with democracy, ‘it is difficult to know what “*don’t know*” means’ (Jamieson, 2000:84). It could imply ignorance, lack of clarity about a question, indecision, or just unwillingness to respond (see Jamieson, 2000). None of these are useful in determining the level of satisfaction with democracy. Henceforth, I restrict my analysis to concrete responses and omit ‘Don’t Know’ answers.

the mean to 3, or better still, to use the median rather than the mean. In other words, the majority of Kenyans who expressed their feelings about the way democracy functions in their country (50.1%) are *fairly satisfied* with it.

The median satisfaction score of 3 on a scale of 1 to 4 seems to be a fair appraisal, since Kenya has made significant democratic gains since 2002. Thus, her *Freedom House Index* (FHI) improved from 5.5 in 2001 to 4.0 in 2002 and then to 3.0 from 2003 to 2005 when the Afrobarometer data was collected (Freedom House, 2006). Yet, the FHI is still considered as '[the] best available empirical indicator of liberal democracy' (Diamond, 1999:12). Indeed, a score of 3 on the FHI scale of 7 to 1 translates into a score of 5 on a scale of 1 to 7 or 71.4%. Similarly, a score of 3 on a scale of 1 to 4 is equivalent to 2/3 or 66.7%. The difference between the two scores is not statistically significant ($\alpha = 0.57$).

3.4.2 Political Information and Satisfaction with Democracy in Kenya

The primary concern here is to test hypothesis ***H 2.5*** which states that *informed Kenyans are more likely than the uninformed to be satisfied with how democracy works in Kenya*. I perform two-sample equality of proportions test, which involves comparing the proportions of informed and uninformed Kenyans who are either fairly satisfied or very satisfied with democracy. The results show that differences between the proportions of informed and uninformed Kenyans who are either fairly satisfied or very satisfied with how democracy is working in Kenya are not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 1.81$; $\alpha = 0.19$). More specifically, 58% of uninformed citizens and 63.6% of the informed Kenyans are very satisfied or at least fairly satisfied with democracy. Similarly, the mean satisfaction level is 2.66 for the informed people and 2.57 for the uninformed. The differences in the two mean satisfaction levels is also not statistically significant ($t = 1.30$; $\alpha = 0.20$).

Thus, the results do not support the hypothesis that informed Kenyans are more satisfied with how democracy works in Kenya than the uninformed. Generally, Kenyans are fairly satisfied with democracy, but this satisfaction does not vary significantly by level of political information. The uninformed are just as likely to be satisfied as the informed citizens. This is surprising since the range of issues that one needs to consider to evaluate democracy seems to be beyond the capacity of the uninformed citizens.

The question arising from the preceding discussion is: How did Kenyans arrive at the apparently accurate appraisal of how well democracy is working, given their very low information levels? Or better still: What enabled uninformed Kenyans to arrive at nearly the same verdict as informed Kenyans, with respect to how democracy is functioning? To address these questions, I take recourse to the political cue theory. I attribute the unexpected ability of uninformed citizens to arrive at fairly accurate evaluation of how well democracy is doing to their reliance on political cues. If this is true, then satisfaction levels would vary even among uninformed citizens, depending on whether or not they are partisans. Accordingly, I test hypothesis **H 2.6: *Uninformed partisans are more likely than uninformed non-partisans to be satisfied with the way democracy works in Kenya.***

Since satisfaction with the way democracy works, which is the dependent variable, is an ordered variable with four categories, I fitted two proportional ordered logit regression models –for the uninformed and for informed citizens. The three partisanship variables- General, Incumbent and Opposition- are the key independent variables. I have included ethnicity and living condition and two variables that test for pertinent issues that one ordinarily expect citizens to base their assessment of how well democracy is working - economic policy approval and freedom of speech. The results are in Table 3.6:

Table 3.6 Determinants of Satisfaction with Democracy

	<i>Uninformed Kenyan</i>	<i>Informed Kenyan</i>
General Partisanship	0.14 (0.44)	0.47* (2.29)
Incumbent Partisanship	0.61*** (3.65)	0.44*** (4.66)
Opposition Partisanship	-0.25 (1.60)	-0.11 (1.11)
Freedom of Speech	-0.01 (0.08)	0.35** (2.88)
Government Corrupt	-0.29 (1.23)	-0.40** (2.94)
Economic Policy Approval	1.04** (2.64)	0.93*** (3.97)
Relative Deprivation	-0.15 (1.04)	-0.02 (0.25)
Ethnicity	0.17 (0.40)	0.30 (1.26)
Model χ^2	35.85	114.49
Pseudo R^2	.228	.228
Observations	154	501

Entries are Proportional Ordered Logit Regression Coefficients with t-values in brackets. Cut points are omitted for simplicity. Significance: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

Table 3.6²⁴ shows that *incumbent partisanship* and *economic policy approval* are the only variables that have consistent, significant and positive influence on satisfaction with democracy for both the uninformed and the informed people. In fact, the former is the

²⁴ Both models are fit and statistically significant ($\alpha = .05$). The model condition indices and variance decomposition propositions show that there are no collinearity problems. Each independent variable in the models estimates the ordered log-odds of the expected level of satisfaction with democracy, if that variable increases by one unit as others are held constant. For instance, a change from non-incumbent partisan to incumbent partisan raises the log-odds that an uninformed people will be very satisfied with democracy by 0.61. This crude interpretation suffices, but I also use graphs for refined interpretations.

strongest predictor of satisfaction with democracy for both informed and uninformed people. It is also notable that while satisfaction with democracy for both informed and uninformed people is primarily driven by *incumbent partisanship* and *economic policy approval*, the former's satisfaction with democracy is further influenced by *freedom of speech*, *general partisanship*, and *government corruption*. This supports the argument that informed people tend to pay attention to, and hence anchor their satisfaction with democracy on a wider range of issues than uninformed people (Carpini and Keteer, 2005; Abrajano and Alvarez, 2010; Bennie, 2001). Moreover, ethnicity and relative deprivation have no significant effect on the likelihood of being satisfied with democracy for either informed or uninformed people. I discuss these results under the following four subtitles.

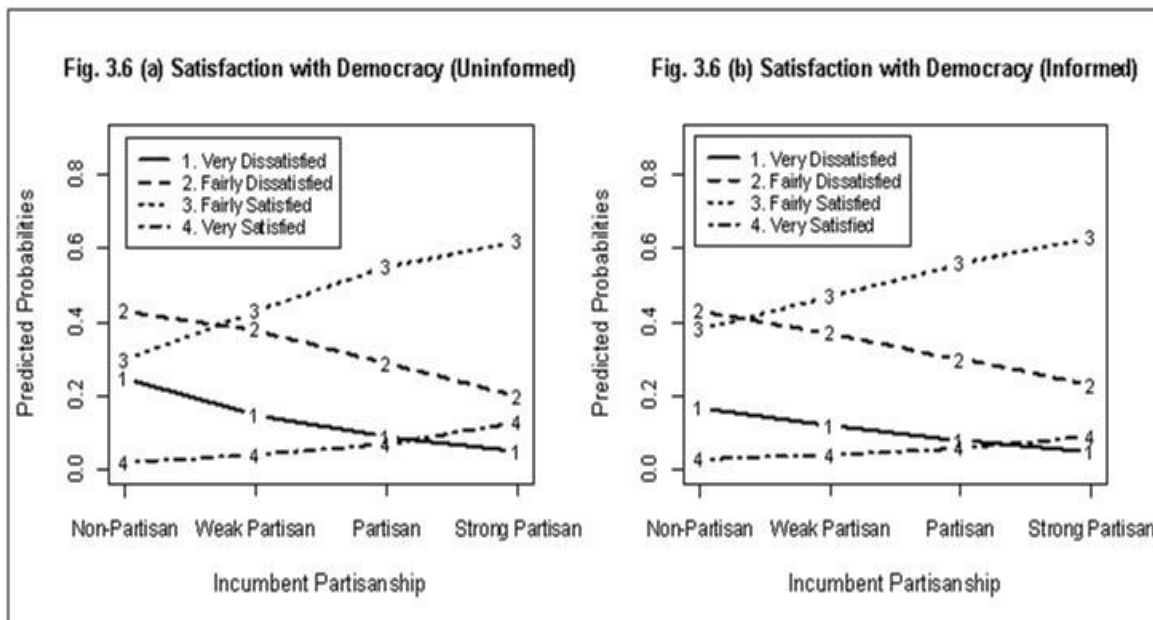
3.4.3 Partisanship and Satisfaction with Democracy

In line with the political cue theory, I had expected incumbent partisanship to have strong positive influence, and opposition partisanship to have equally strong negative influence on satisfaction with democracy. I expected these relations to persist regardless of the information levels, or the actual status of democracy. This is because people often derive political cues heuristically from political parties, rather than through rational calculation of relevant issues, especially when evaluating complex issues like the state of democracy. Indeed, 'empirical findings generally support the prediction that citizens will look to source cues more when evaluating hard issues' (Gilens and Murakawa, 2002:20).

The results presented in table 3.6 are more complex than hypothesized. *Incumbent partisanship* is the only form of partisanship that significantly influences satisfaction with democracy for both the informed and the uninformed. In fact, it is the strongest predictor of satisfaction with democracy for both groups. In contrast, *opposition partisanship* has

no significant effect on satisfaction with democracy for either informed or uninformed people. Besides, *general partisanship* has positive influence on the informed, but has no effect on the uninformed. It seems that people tend to evaluate democracy in terms of the performance of incumbent rather than opposition parties, and thus satisfaction depends on where they place themselves on the incumbent rather than opposition partisanship scale.

For better interpretation of these results, figures 3.6 (a) and (b) shows the predicted probabilities of being satisfied with democracy among informed and uninformed people.



Figures 3.6 (a) and (b) show that, when other variables in the two models are held constant at their medians, the uninformed non-partisans (on the *incumbent partisanship* scale), are more likely to be very dissatisfied with democracy (probability=25%) than the informed non-partisans (probability =17%). That is, without the influence of *incumbent partisanship*, the probability that someone who is non-partisan will be very dissatisfied with democracy is 8% greater among uninformed than informed people.

Relatedly, the probability of being fairly dissatisfied with democracy is 43%, and does not depend on information levels. However, *incumbent partisanship* reduces the probability of being very dissatisfied by 12% for the informed and 20% for uninformed people. It also reduces the probability of being fairly dissatisfied by 23% among uninformed and 20% among informed people. Thus, *incumbent partisanship* has a greater effect on dissatisfaction with democracy among uninformed than informed people.

Similarly, the likelihood that non-*incumbent partisan* will be fairly satisfied is 30% among the uninformed and 38% among informed people. A change from non-partisan to strong partisan on the incumbent partisanship scale raises the probability of being fairly satisfied with democracy by 25% for the informed people, and by 32% for uninformed people. A similar change increases the probability of being very satisfied by 6% and 11% for informed and uninformed people respectively. On this score, it seems that *incumbent partisanship* has greater positive influence on the uninformed than the informed people.

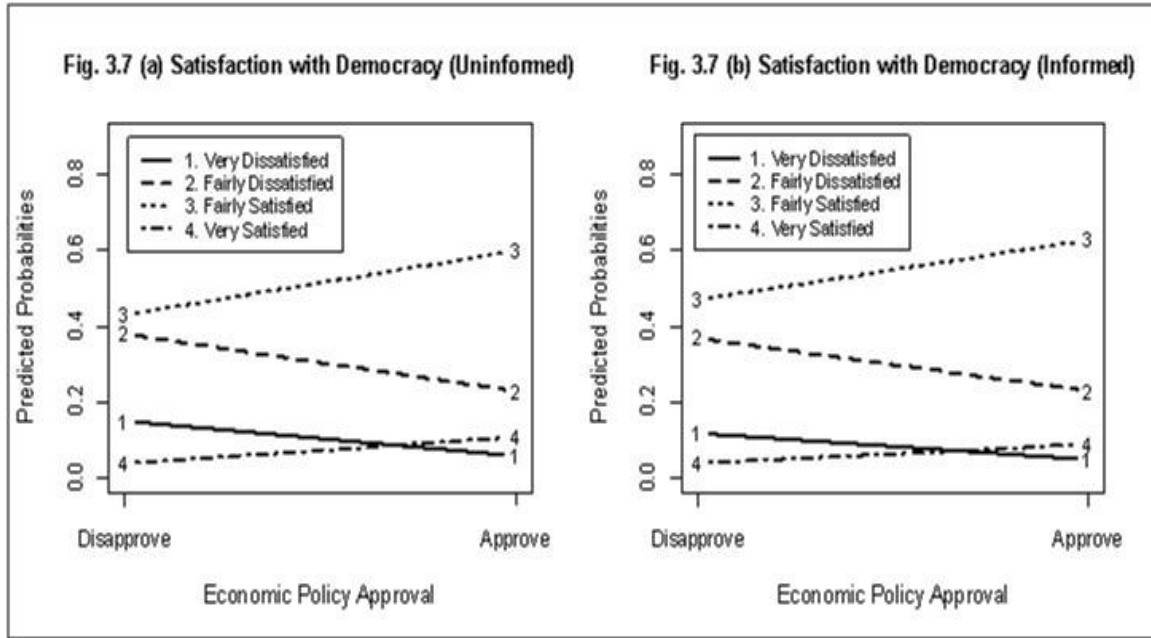
In a nutshell, the results show that there is a statistically significant difference in the net effect of *incumbent partisanship* on satisfaction with democracy among informed and uninformed people. The effect of *incumbent partisanship* on satisfaction is greater on the uninformed than informed people. This is hardly surprising because, unlike the latter whose satisfaction with democracy is also influenced by several other factors (*economic policy approval, general partisanship, freedom of speech and government corruption*), the former only relies on the *incumbent partisanship* and *economic policy approval*.

Notwithstanding these differences, we noted earlier that the level of satisfaction with democracy is the same among both the informed and the uninformed Kenyans. We have also noted that *incumbent partisanship* is the strongest predictor of satisfaction with democracy among both informed and uninformed people. On the strength of these results, it can be concluded that *incumbent partisanship* raises the level of satisfaction with democracy among uninformed to almost the same level as the informed people.

3.3.4 Economic Policy Approval and Satisfaction with Democracy

The performance of government polices and the general economic conditions are widely seen as determinants of satisfaction with democracy (Norris, 2011b). In fact, some fairly recent studies on Africa have noted that ‘satisfaction with democracy is influenced principally by evaluations of government performance’ (Bratton *et al*, 2005:83). For instance, using the case of structural adjustment programs (SAPs), Bratton *et al*, (2005) found strong correlations between economic policy approval and satisfaction with democracy across several African countries. Consistent with these earlier findings, table 3.6 shows that approval of economic policies has a significant positive influence on the level of satisfaction with democracy in Kenya among informed and uninformed people.

For substantive analysis of the effect of economic policy approval on satisfaction with democracy, I use the predicted probabilities in figures 3.7 (a) and (b)



Figures 3.7(a) and (b) show that Kenyans tend to avoid extreme satisfaction levels regardless of whether they approve or disprove economic policies. They would rather be fairly satisfied or fairly dissatisfied than very satisfied or very dissatisfied. Still, approval of economic policy reduces the probability of being very dissatisfied with democracy by 7% among the informed and 9% among the uninformed. It also reduces the probability of being fairly dissatisfied by 14% among the informed and 15% among the uninformed.

In contrast, the informed and the uninformed who approve economic policies tend to be fairly satisfied with democracy than their counterpart who disapproves the policies by 16% and 17% respectively. In essence, approval of economic policies substantially reduces dissatisfaction, while increasing satisfaction with democracy for both informed and uninformed people. However, the effect of policy approval on satisfaction levels of the informed and uninformed people is not different in a statistically significant way.

The results should be understood against a backdrop whereby democratic political systems are typically expected to make public policies that reflect the preferences, values and interests of their citizens (Saward, 1998; Jacoby, 2002; Amy, 2002). In fact, democracy is often viewed as '[the] necessary correspondence between acts of governance and the equally weighted felt interests of citizens with respect to these acts' (Saward, 1998: 51). Better still, 'the ultimate aim of democracy is to ensure that officials pass policies that reflect the political preferences of the citizens' (Amy, 2002:184).

Therefore, to the extent that both the informed and uninformed Kenyans base their satisfaction with democracy on evaluations of government economic policies, they seem to be attentive to the instrumental value of democracy. The ability to link democracy to the broader economic policies is critical because the literature suggests that sustainability of democracy depend on its ability to spur economic development, and that democratic governments derive stability and legitimacy from their tendency to enact and implement policies that are congruent with the preferences of the electorate (Lipset, 1959; Krosnick *et al*, 2010). Hence, 'to evoke compliance and participation, democracy must generate substantive outcomes: It must offer all the relevant political forces real opportunities to improve their material welfare' (Przeworski, 1991:32).

While the instrumental value of democracy is critical, it should not be overprized to the point of misconstruing 'benevolent dictatorships' for democracies. It is notable for instance that the uninformed Kenyans seem to be guided more by the instrumental rather than the intrinsic value of democracy given that they do not pay attention to civil liberties inherent in a democracy such as freedom of speech. In contrast, the uninformed Kenyans derive their satisfaction from both the instrumental and the intrinsic values of democracy.

3.4.5 Official Government Corruption and Satisfaction with Democracy

I used corruption as an indicator of bad governance and expected that, regardless of political information levels, those who perceive the government to be very corrupt would be less satisfied with democracy, compared to those who feel that she is not corrupt. However, the results in table 3.6 show that this is only true with regard to the informed people, and that perceptions of corruption in government has no significant influence on satisfaction with democracy among the uninformed. Yet, surprisingly, the differences in the mean levels of official corruption in government as perceived by the informed (1.37) and uninformed Kenyans (1.41) are statistically insignificant. Moreover, 41.5% of the informed feel that either most or all government officials are corrupt compared to 39.4% of the uninformed. This difference is also statistically insignificant.

The fact that the perceptions about corruption in government influences the level of satisfaction with democracy among the informed but has no effect on the uninformed is not merely an artifact of the distribution of respondents in the two information groups. This is because the informed and uninformed Kenyans have nearly congruent perceptions about the prevalence of corruption in government circles. But while the former uses this as a basis for evaluating how democracy is functioning in Kenya, the latter does not.

A possible explanation why the uninformed Kenyans appear to ignore corruption is that they tend to appeal to a very narrow range of factors when forming perceptions about democracy, and as long as those factors enable them to make satisficing decisions, they do not seem inclined to employ all information at their disposal. For instance, besides not being bothered about corruption, uninformed incumbent partisans, or those who approve their policies, also do not worry about civil liberties such as freedom of speech. However,

the informed do surmount this apparent deficiency given that ‘political knowledge seems to increase citizen’s ability to consistently connect their policy views to evaluations of public officials and political parties and to their political behavior’ (Carpini, 2009: 26). Alternatively, it is possible that corruption has been so prevalent that people hardly pay attention to it. Indeed, it has been noted that ‘Corruption is deeply engrained in Kenyan society so much so that in some cases it has been seen as a way of life’²⁵, and yet as I have argued elsewhere, ‘when corruption runs in the veins, it takes time to tackle it’.²⁶

It should also be noted that the mean corruption levels in Kenya noted earlier is very modest given that the 2005 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index ranked Kenya 144 out of 169 countries, while the 2005 Kenya Bribery Index showed that corruption was rampant even in public institutions like the judiciary (Freedom House, 2006). Furthermore, the 2005 International Commission of Jurists report directly noted the link between corruption and democracy, stating that ‘corruption in the administration of justice as well as in the judiciary remains a serious impediment to the rule of law in Kenya’ (ibid, 385). Thus, Kenyans tend to report lower corruption levels in government that do not seem to match the objective evaluations by experts. This does not necessarily imply dishonest evaluations, but perhaps lack of information on the extent of corruption in government, which lead them to merely report personal experiences or perceptions.

²⁵ Government of Kenya. 2009. ‘The Kenya Anticorruption and Economic Crimes Act’. *The Kenya Gazette Notice*. Number 268. Vol. CXI. (4). January 9, 2009. p. 120.

²⁶ Report on an interview I gave to the BBC on the fight against corruption in Kenya in May 2004: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/3648885.stm>

Lack of information on corruption in government may be a product of the Official Secrets Act which, at least up to the period under review, prohibited public officers from releasing information relating to government transactions, and thus they cannot blow the whistle when they notice corrupt activities within government. Indeed, the Kiswahili²⁷ word for government is *Serikali* (deep secrets). The fate of civil servants who have blown the whistle in corruption cases is well depicted by Schroder who notes that (2009:31):

David Munyeki who exposed the infamous Goldenberg [corruption] scandal by detailing how 24 billion Kenya shillings [about 0.3 billion US Dollars] was siphoned off from the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK) within a week in 1993 through the bank's pre-shipment finance scheme was consequently immediately sacked from the CBK.²⁸

Alternatively, people may deliberately underreport corruption either because they are co-ethnics of those implicated in mega corruption cases in Kenya or because they are political clients who benefit or expect to benefit from the proceeds of corruption. Either way it has been pointed out that, 'in principle, African populace support anticorruption campaigns but when it snags their *prebendal* office holder, the attitude is different' (Ibelema, 2008:51). Indeed, there have been cases when Kenyans protest in support of, rather than against, people (especially politicians and senior bureaucrats) who have been implicated in corruption simply because they share ethnic identity with that person.

²⁷ Kiswahili is the national language, while English is the official language in Kenya. In other words, since Kenya comprise of forty two distinct ethnic groups, each speaking its own language, Kiswahili is the recognized language with which all Kenyans identify, and through which they communicate with each other. On the other hand, English is the language through which Kenya and Kenyans communicate with the rest of the world.

²⁸ The Goldenberg corruption scandal still hits headlines partly because of its devastating effects on the economy, and partly because its key architects are still in government.

Besides, since those who engage in corruption, especially high level corruption, are usually well connected in government circles, ordinary Kenyans may rate corruption low just for fear that subsequent questions in the questionnaire may require them to name corrupt people, thus exposing them to reprisals. This argument is anchored on the fact that 41.7% of respondents in the 2005 Afrobarometer survey for Kenya actually believed that the survey was sponsored by the Kenya government.

Yet, although Kenyans tend to undervalue the extent of corruption in government, they still match their feelings about corruption with reasonable levels of satisfaction with democracy that one would expect if they had made correct evaluations. The results show that satisfaction declines as the feeling that the government is corrupt increases. This is the same conclusion reached by some recent cross-national studies. For instance, Norris (2011a) found ‘a strong and significant relationship between each society’s perceived level of corruption and how satisfied citizens felt about the performance of democracy in their own country’ (p. 178). She observes that countries with high corruption levels have low satisfaction levels, while those with low corruption levels have high satisfaction levels (Norris, 2011a). What she overlooks, but which this study show, is the fact that the corruption only influence satisfaction with democracy significantly among the informed.

3.4.6 Freedom of speech and Satisfaction with Democracy

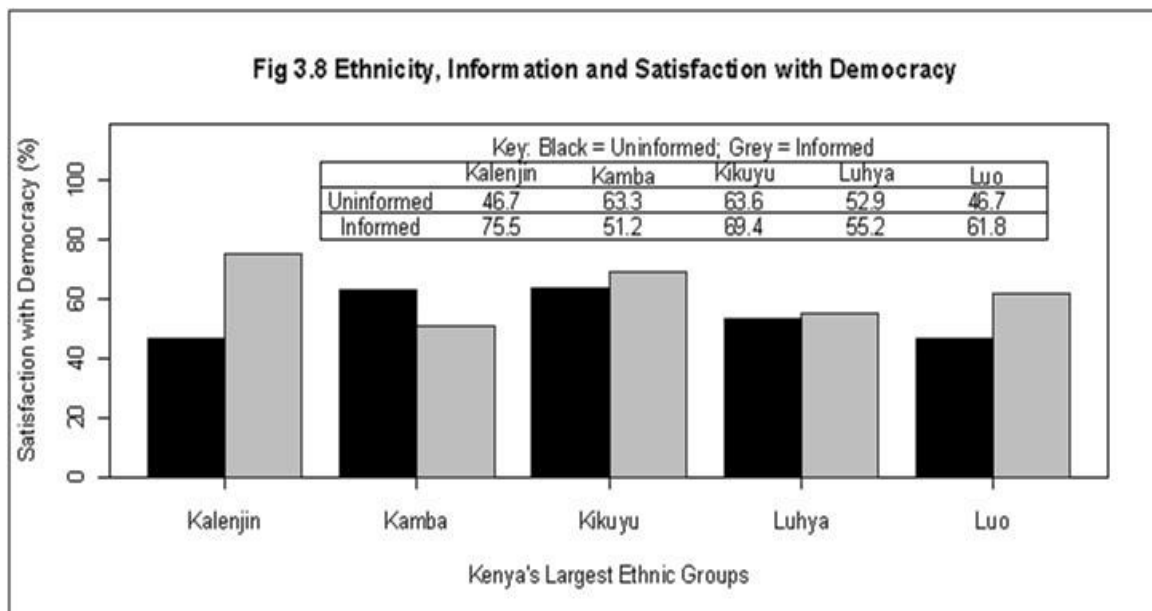
I expected that both the informed and the uninformed Kenyans who feel that there is greater freedom of speech now than before would be more satisfied with democracy than those who feel that there is less freedom of speech now than before. This expectation is based on the fact that civil liberties and personal freedoms were the most frequently mentioned indicators of democracy by respondents (46.0%) when asked the meaning of

democracy. Indeed, a meta-analysis of nearly 50 recent national public opinion surveys by Dalton *et al* (2008) found that in a significant majority of those studies, ‘democracy is broadly identified in terms of freedoms and liberties’ (p. 6) even by ordinary citizens in countries with limited media access. Moreover, recent cross-national studies on Africa found that Africans often tend to define democracy in liberal terms, by ‘valuing above all, freedom of speech’ (Bratton *et al*, 2005:347). It has even been argued that due to the tendency by most Africans to reduce democracy to freedoms, ‘many citizens fall prey to a fallacy of liberalization in which they too readily mistake the availability of a few new freedoms for fully functioning democratic regimes’ (Bratton *et al*, 2005:345).

The results in table 3.6 only provide partial support for these expectations. While freedom of speech significantly influences satisfaction with democracy among informed citizens, it has no statistically significant influence among the uninformed citizens. These results are particularly interesting given that recent cross-national studies on Africa show that suppression of the freedom of speech does not affect satisfaction with democracy (Guldbrandtsen and Skaaning, 2010). The results in table 3.6 update these earlier results by suggesting that the effect of freedom of speech on satisfaction with democracy varies with the level of political information. Even more substantively, the results underscore the inattentiveness of the uninformed citizens on the intrinsic values of democracy such as freedom of speech. Yet freedom is important ingredient of democracy that one would expect to guide opinion formation with respect to whether democracy is functioning well.

3.4.7 Ethnicity and Satisfaction with Democracy

The results in table 3.6 also show that ethnicity does not significantly influence the satisfaction with democracy either among the informed or the uninformed Kenyans. This is inconsistent with part of the heuristic cues literature which portrays ethnicity as a major source of heuristic cues especially for uninformed citizens (Squire and Smith, 1988). The mere fact of sharing ethnic identity with the president (*Kikuyu*) may not necessarily make one satisfied with democracy. Figure 3.8 shows the level of satisfaction with democracy among five largest ethnic groups in Kenya. It also illustrates how the level of satisfaction among these ethnic groups varies with the political information levels.



Beginning with the *Kalenjin*, there is a statistically significant difference in levels of satisfaction with democracy between the informed and the uninformed, signifying some kind of disconnect between the two groups in terms of how they form perceptions about democracy. On the one hand, informed *Kalenjins* are not just very satisfied with the

way democracy works, but are in fact the most satisfied of the ethnic groups considered here. In contrast, the uninformed *Kalenjins* are the least satisfied with the way democracy is working. Besides, while satisfaction with democracy is significantly lower among uninformed *Kalenjins* than uninformed *Kikuyus*, the difference in the levels of satisfaction among their informed counterparts is statistically insignificant.

A similar pattern of intra-ethnic group disconnection between the informed and the uninformed is also evident among the *Luos*, so that the former have a significantly higher probability of being satisfied with democracy than the latter. Also, while the satisfaction levels among informed *Luos* and informed *Kikuyus* are not much different, uninformed *Kikuyus* have a significantly greater probability of being satisfied than uninformed *Luos*.

However, a comparison of satisfaction levels among *Kikuyus*, *Kambas* and *Luhyas* yields a reverse pattern from the one observed above. Satisfaction levels among informed and uninformed *Kambas* are not significantly different. The same applies to *Luhyas* and *Kikuyus*. Moreover, there is no significant difference in the satisfaction levels between uninformed *Kikuyus* and *Kambas*, or uninformed *Kikuyus* and *Luhyas*. Yet, uninformed *Kikuyus* have significantly higher satisfaction levels than uninformed *Kambas* or *Luhyas*.

Taken together, the results suggest a very complex relationship between ethnicity and satisfaction with democracy. When we limit the focus to the informed Kenyans, it is notable that *Kikuyus* are more satisfied with democracy than *Kambas* and *Luhyas*, but just as satisfied as *Luos* and *Kalenjins*. Yet, when we shift focus to the uninformed, then the pattern is reversed so that *Kikuyus* are more satisfied than *Luos* and *Kalenjins*, but just as satisfied as *Kambas* and *Luhyas*. Further analysis reveals that, at least at the time of the

survey, the *Luos* and *Kalenjins* were less attached to the incumbent party, while *Kikuyus*, *Kambas* and *Luhyas* tended to be relatively more attached to the incumbent party.²⁹

What emerges is that the non-*Kikuyus* who are less attached to the incumbent party (*Luos* and *Kalenjins*) tend to rely on the objective information at their disposal. If they are sufficiently informed, they are likely to be just as satisfied with democracy as the *Kikuyu*. However, if they lack information then they tend to have very low levels of satisfaction. On the other hand, non-*Kikuyus* who are strongly attached to the incumbent party do not need information in order to be satisfied with democracy. *Incumbent partisanship* itself is sufficient to raise their satisfaction levels close to that of the *Kikuyus*. In fact, political information appears to weaken their satisfaction levels well below that of the *Kikuyus*. Thus, the influence of ethnicity on satisfaction with democracy is significantly moderated by both by the level of political information and the strength of *incumbent partisanship*.

3.4.8 Relative Deprivation and Satisfaction with Democracy

I had expected that relatively deprived people would be less satisfied with the way democracy works in Kenya, particularly if they are uninformed. This expectation is based on a definition of relative deprivation as a sort of frustration that arises out of unfulfilled expectations. This frustration generates disaffection and anger which is typically directed to those in charge of government. Consequently, when people with a sense of deprivation have a double tragedy of lacking information, and are asked to evaluate democracy, they are expected to use the opportunity to vent their frustrations through negative evaluations.

²⁹ The actual distribution of those who are either partisan or strong partisans on incumbent partisanship scale are: 20% of uninformed and 23.3% of informed *Luos*; 26.3% of uninformed and 25.4% of informed *Kalenjins*; 48.7% of uninformed and 43.3% of informed *Luhyas*; 53.2% of uninformed and 44% of informed *Kambas*; and 62.5% of the uninformed and 71.5% of informed *Kikuyus*.

Contrary to these expectations, the results presented in table 3.6 show that relative deprivation has no significant influence on satisfaction with democracy either among the informed or the uninformed Kenyans. A possible explanation of these results is that the sense of deprivation may not be strong enough, even among those who appear to be very deprived, to generate destructive frustrations. For instance, it is possible that people do not necessarily attribute their deprivation to the incumbent party or government. Indeed, there is no significant difference between the proportion of those who are not deprived at all and those who are very deprived, who still profess to be strong incumbent partisans.

Alternatively, it is also possible that even when people attribute their deprivation to the incumbent party, there may be other compelling factors like ethnicity, or even lack of viable alternatives, which still make them less inclined to adopt a negative attitude towards the incumbent party. More importantly, it is also likely that people look beyond material benefits that may accrue from democracy, and therefore whether their material conditions improve or worsen has no significant effect on their evaluations of democracy.

3.5 Support for Democracy among Kenyans

Support for democracy is usually considered as a measure of the extent to which people embrace democracy as a form of government rather than an empirical verification of how well democracy works in reality. Nonetheless, being supportive of democratic principles is a vital attitude for a democratic citizen. I argue that while support for democratic ideals may not necessarily mean that democracy is working well, it is unlikely that a democracy would function well without a citizenry that embrace democratic values and attitudes. It is more likely that, 'citizens may be dissatisfied with the way democracy

works in their country but still be deeply committed to the principle of democracy and willing to countenance any other form of government' (Diamond, 1999:169).

As Boxil *et al* (2007:35) have rightly argued:

Indeed, history has taught us that even staunchly democratic regimes can become vulnerable if anti-democratic opposition forces are successful at undermining citizen support for that system of government. Keeping track of citizen support can therefore be an effective means of assessing the state of a democracy – gauging the extent to which the system is in the process of fracturing, stabilizing or consolidating

3.5.1 How Much Support Does Democracy Enjoy in Kenya?

In this section I tested hypothesis **H 2.7: Kenyans generally have a high level of support for democracy**. The results support this hypothesis, so that 85.6% of Kenyans support democracy. The high level of support for democracy may be a result of perceived instrumental rather than intrinsic value of democracy. Indeed, past studies in new and emerging democracies have reported that 'mass support for democracy is not intrinsically motivated but reflects instrumental motives, such as the belief that democracy will bring prosperity like that of the established democracies' (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005:119). But it is also possible that support for democracy may be due to lack of viable alternatives.

More substantially, Kenya's history may explain the high level of satisfaction with democracy. In a study of the democratic experiences of several African countries up to 2005, Bratton (2010) found that countries which had just held elections in which the incumbent party lost, specifically Ghana, Senegal and Kenya, had the highest support for democracy. In the case of Kenya, democracy made it possible to cut links with very long

periods punctuated by three different versions of authoritarianism- traditional, colonial, and modern. Of course some can argue that traditional African societies were democratic.

However, as explained elsewhere (Asingo, 1995:15-16):

Both the [African] traditional and the colonial administrative structures were far from being democratic....The very structure of the traditional African societies militated against democratic ideals. Never were leaders determined by the consensus of the majority and never were decisions collectively made. By and large, leadership was hereditary and based on social status rather than the will of the majority. Decision-making on the other hand was the preserve of a few clan elders – the community sages assumed to be some sort of Platonic Philosopher-kings.

The *Maasai* of Kenya and Tanzania provide an example of how history promotes or undermines support for democracy. A study of the *Maasai* of Tanzania revealed deep competing interpretations of democracy, pitting the youths against elders. Many young *Maasais* regard democracy as freedom from the chains of their age-old customs, and the authoritarian claws of their traditional elders. Hence, a large segment of the youth voted for the opposition NCC-Mageuzi presidential candidate as part of the quest to break from the past which has politically been dominated by the incumbent *Chama Cha Mapinduzi* (CCM). As the relatively liberal youths view democracy as freedom to rebel against elders and customs, and thus shift support to the opposition, the conservative elders view it as an affront to their authority, and support the incumbent (Cowen and Laakso, 2002).

3.5.2 Political Information and Support for Democracy in Kenya

The primary objective of this section is to test hypothesis **H2.8**: *Informed citizens are more likely than uninformed citizens to support democracy*. The two-sample test for equality of proportions shows statistically significant difference between the proportions of the informed and uninformed citizens who support democracy. Specifically, 71.6% of uninformed and 92.3% of informed citizens support democracy. Hence, the informed are 20.7% more likely to support democracy than the uninformed.

I construct a *Conditional density plot* (Cd plot) to further explore the relationship between political information levels and support for democracy in Kenya. It shows the conditional distribution of support for democracy over different political information levels as depicted in figure 3.9

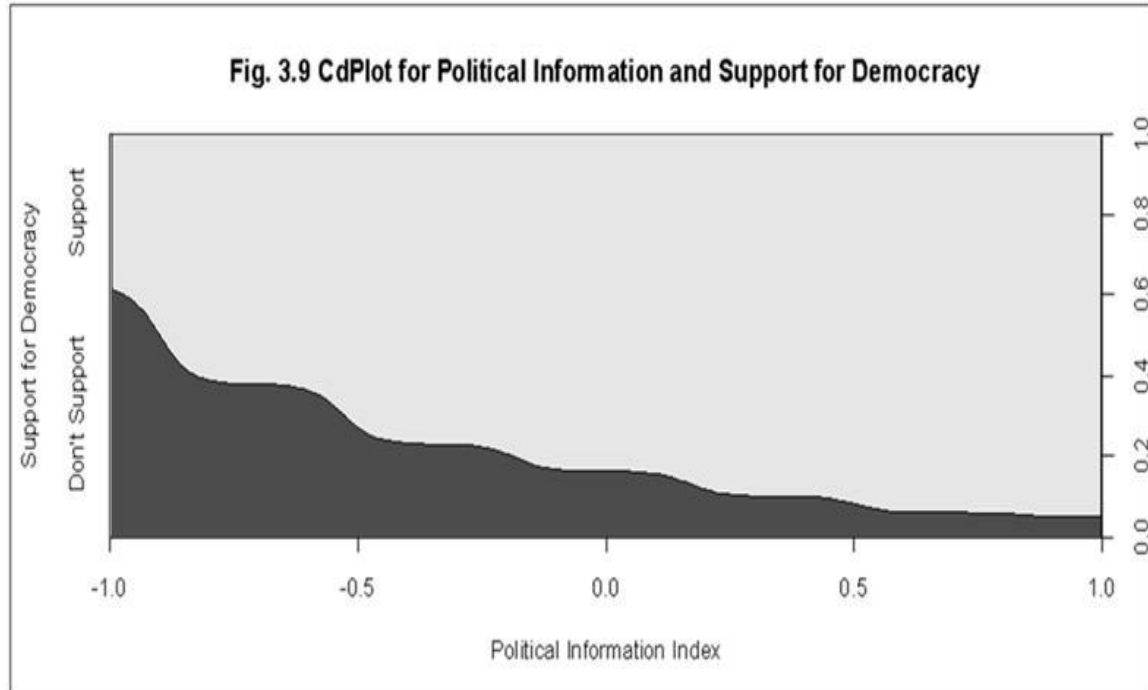


Figure 3.9 shows that as the level of political information increases, the proportion of Kenyans who support democracy also increase consistently, as those who do not support it declines. 95% of those who are extremely well informed (PII Index = +1) support democracy, while only 37.5% of those who are completely uninformed (PII Index = -1) support it. Thus, informed respondents are 57.5% more likely to support democracy than the uninformed. On the flipside, the finding that a non-trivial proportion of uninformed Kenyans (37.5%) also support democracy underscores the fact that besides information levels, there are other factors that drive support for democracy in Kenya. One such factor suspected to influence support for democracy is partisanship.

3.5.3 Partisanship and Support for Democracy in Kenya

This section test hypotheses *H 2.9: Partisans are more likely than non-partisans to support democracy*. I perform three different tests for each of the three partisanship variables. – Incumbent, Opposition and General Partisanship. Since the former two are polytomous variables with four ordered categories I reduce them to dichotomous forms to be able to compare partisans with non-partisans in each case. Accordingly I retain the first category as *non-partisans* and combine the last three categories into *partisans*. For each partisanship variable, I perform the two-sample test for equality of proportions in order to establish their influence on the likelihood of supporting democracy.

The results for the two-sample test for equality of proportions show that the proportion of the incumbent partisans uninformed that support democracy (86.1%) is identical to that for the uninformed (86.2%). Hence, incumbent partisanship has no statistically significant influence on the likelihood of supporting democracy. Similarly, 86.6% of the uninformed and 85.9% of the informed opposition partisans support

democracy. Once again, the proportions of the opposition partisans who support democracy are not different from that of opposition non-partisans who support it. Hence, opposition partisans are just as likely as opposition non-partisans to support democracy.

However, this picture changes with regard to general partisanship. The test results show that 58.3% of non-partisans and 69.7% of the partisans on the general partisanship scale support democracy. The fact that the 11.4% difference between the two proportions is significant ($\chi^2 = 7.24, \alpha < 0.01$), suggest that the general partisans are more likely to support democracy than the general non-partisans. In a nutshell, the effect of partisanship on citizen's support for democracy depends on the type of partisanship. While opposition and incumbent partisanship have statistically insignificant influence, general partisanship has statistically significant positive influence on citizen support for democracy.

3.5.4 Information, Partisanship and Support for Democracy

In this section, I test hypotheses *H 2.10* which states that: *Uninformed partisans are more likely than uninformed non-partisans to support democracy*. While uninformed partisans are the primary focus of the present study, informed partisans serve as controls. For both uninformed and informed respondents, I cross-tabulated support for democracy with each of partisanship variable (general, incumbent and opposition). The results were used to perform *two-sample proportions test* to determine the significance of the effect of partisanship on informed and uninformed Kenyans. The results are shown in table 3.7.³⁰

³⁰ Table 3.5 shows three 2 X 2 tables for each type of partisanship - *General, Incumbent* and *Opposition Partisanship*. Each of the 2X2 tables corresponds to the four types of voters initially developed by Dalton (1984) and later modified by Lutz (2006). These are the *Cognitive Partisans* (informed partisans); *Ritual Partisans* (uninformed partisans); *Apartisans* (informed non-partisans); and the *Apolitical* (uninformed non-partisans).

Table 3.7: Effect of Information and Partisanship on Support for Democracy

Type of Partisanship	Level of Political Information	Level of Partisanship		Test of Proportions of Kenyans who support Democracy	
		Non-Partisans	Partisans	Effect of Partisanship	χ^2 Statistical significance
<i>General Partisanship</i>	<i>Uninformed</i>	67.6%	76.0%	8.4%	0.24
	<i>Informed</i>	91.6%	92.7%	1.1%	0.81
<i>Incumbent Partisanship</i>	<i>Uninformed</i>	64.3%	73.9%	9.6%	0.28
	<i>Informed</i>	94.7%	91.8%	-2.9%	0.35
<i>Opposition Partisanship</i>	<i>Uninformed</i>	75.0%	71.4%	-3.6%	0.67
	<i>Informed</i>	93.8%	91.7%	-2.1%	0.44

Two important observations can be made from table 3.7. First, it is notable that the effect of partisanship on support for democracy appear to be greater among uninformed than informed people. This is true across all three forms of partisanship. However, these differences are not only small but also statistically insignificant. In essence, these results do not support the hypothesis that *uninformed partisans* are more likely than *uninformed non-partisans* to support democracy. For instance, incumbent partisanship appears to have the strongest effect on support for democracy among the uninformed, it accounts for only 1.4% of the variance in the levels of support for democracy.

Second, the informed tend to exhibit higher levels of support for democracy than uninformed people, regardless of whether they are partisans or non-partisans. On the *incumbent partisanship* scale for instance, someone who is neither informed nor partisan, has a 64.3% chance of being supportive of democracy. If the person becomes *incumbent* partisan, but remains uninformed, the chances become 73.9%. If instead, the person

becomes informed, but remains non-partisan, the chances radically increases to 94.7%. In other words, while *incumbent* partisanship modestly increases levels of support for democracy by 9.6%, political information increases it even more significantly by 30.4%. Thus, people need information more than partisanship to be supportive of democracy.

The fact that partisanship has no significant effect on support for democracy can be attributed to lack of internal party democracy in Kenya. As already explained, political parties, at least in Kenya, are not effective in terms of inculcating democratic values on those who rely on them for cues. That is, general political information does not emanate from parties. Partly due to lack of capacity to organize credible elections on a national scale, and partly due to the desire by party leaders to secure the election of those who will not question their actions, internal party elections in Kenya are almost always chaotic. In fact, filling party posts through elite compromises and consensus yields more acceptable results than filling them through competitive elections, due to emerging political culture in Kenya where losers and their supporters never concede defeat. Yet, elections are a major cornerstone of democracy. Being closer to political parties under the circumstances does not make one acquire values that are supportive of democracy.

3.6 Consistency of Democratic Attitudes among Kenyans

In this section, I proceed from the premise that democratic citizens are informed and that informed citizens are more likely to embrace democratic values, ‘to hold more intense opinions, to hold more stable opinions over time, and to hold opinions that are more ideologically consistent with each other’ (Carpini, 2009:25). Consequently, if democracy becomes “the only game in town”, then it is reasonable to expect citizens to fit these descriptions. Thus, the consistency with which citizens hold democratic attitudes

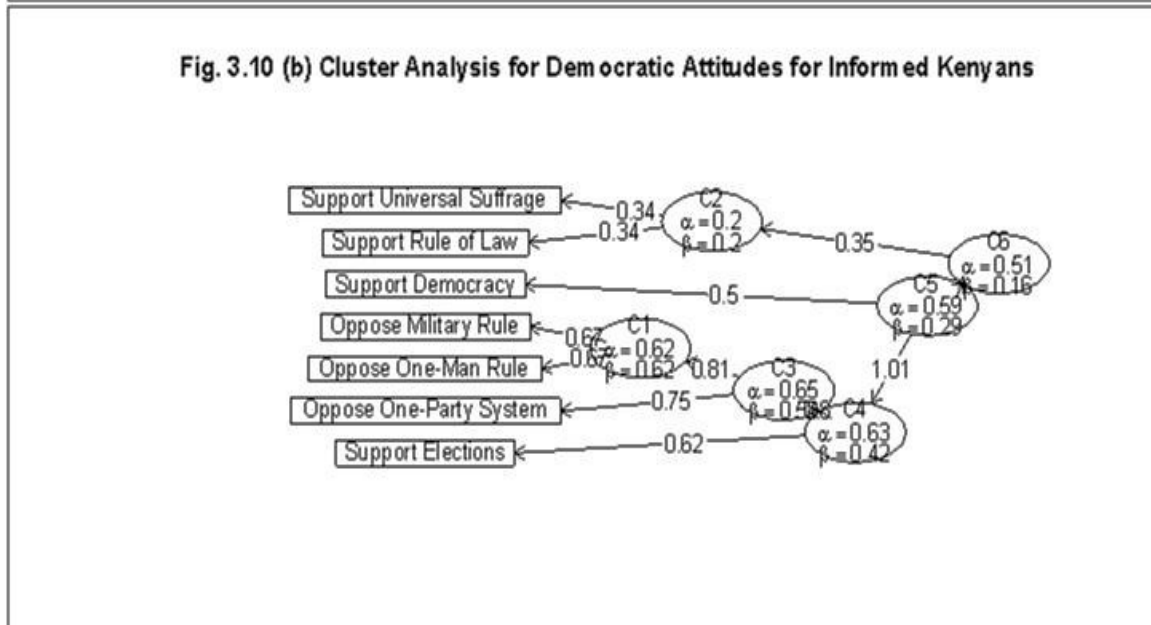
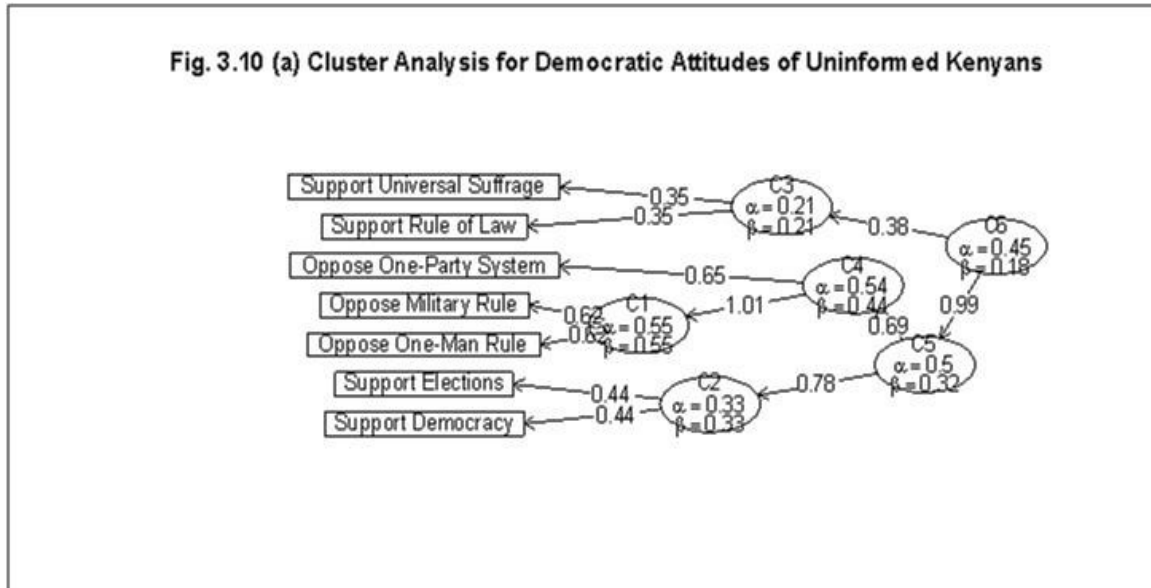
show how much they embrace democratic values, which in turn indicates of how well democracy has taken root. Indeed, ‘to truly commit themselves to democracy, people must not only say they prefer it as the best form of government, but they must simultaneously abandon nostalgia for authoritarian alternatives’ (Bratton *et al*, 2005:28).

I test the internal consistency of democratic attitudes³¹ to determine whether and the extent to which citizen evaluations of democracy are consistent with appraisals of related democratic attitudes. In particular, I compare the consistency of attitudes of uninformed with those of informed citizens with a view to establish whether information deficit among citizens undercut this consistency. I test hypothesis, **H 2.11: *The uninformed are more likely to develop inconsistent attitudes towards democracy than the informed.*** That is, the *uninformed* are more likely to support democratic and nondemocratic ideals.

The literature suggests that the best way to do this kind of test is to identify and measure several characteristics of the underlying variable/concept and perform factor or cluster analysis (Olson and Maio, 2003). Consequently, I perform *item cluster analysis* for both the informed and the uninformed citizens. For each of them, I use a set of seven variables which are ordinarily assumed to constitute democratic attitudes - *support for democracy, support for universal adult suffrage, support for the rule of law, support for free and fair elections, opposition to one-man rule, opposition to one-party system and opposition to military rule.* I expected these variables to be correlated with each other so

³¹ The term *attitudes* as used here refer to ‘the approval or disapproval of certain types of regime principles and ideals, such as whether governments derive legitimate authority from the ballot box, from spiritual authority, or from monarchical descent’ (Norris, 2011). Thus, democratic *attitudes* refer to approval of democratic principles and ideals, as well as the disapproval of other principles and ideals that are contrary to democracy.

that those who support democracy should *ipso facto* support most if not all of the others. The Item cluster analysis³² results for democratic attitudes are in Figures 3.10 (a) and (b).



³² I performed the Item Cluster Analysis using the *iclust* function in the *psych* Package of the R program for statistical Computing, developed by William Revelle (2010:91), and available at: (http://personality-project.org/r/psych_manual.pdf). I corrected correlations for reliability, and weighted intercluster correlation by the size of the two constituting clusters. I set minimum clustering for beta at 0.2, with 3 iterations to purify clusters.

In line with the stated hypothesis, the results in figure 3.10 (a) and (b) show that informed citizens tend to have slightly greater attitudinal consistency towards democracy ($\alpha = 0.51$) than uninformed citizens ($\alpha = 0.45$). Both scores are statistically significant at 95% confidence level. The results also reveal that attitudes towards universal adult suffrage and the rule of law constitutes the least consistent cluster of variables for both the informed citizens ($\alpha = 0.21$) and for the informed citizens ($\alpha = 0.20$).

This low consistency level implies that the two variables do not measure the same latent trait, and are not motivated by the same considerations. It is evident from figures 3.10 (a) and (b) that support for universal suffrage and the rule of law significantly weakens the overall consistency of the evaluative attitudes to democracy. Indeed, when the two variables are removed from the analysis, the overall consistency improves a great deal for both the uninformed ($\alpha = 0.50$) and the informed citizens ($\alpha = 0.59$). These improved consistency scores are shown in cluster 5 of figures 3.10 (a) and (b).

An equally important observation from the analysis results is that attitudes towards non-democratic values (one party system, military rule and one-man rule), not only cluster together but actually constitute clusters with the greatest level of consistency. Opposition to both military rule and one-man rule constitutes the strongest cluster for the uninformed citizens ($\alpha = 0.55$), and an even stronger, though not the most consistent cluster, for informed citizens ($\alpha = 0.62$). In both cases, attitudes to one-party system join this cluster to form the second most consistent cluster for uninformed citizens ($\alpha = 0.54$) and the informed citizens ($\alpha = 0.65$).

It is also notable that while support for democracy clusters directly with support for elections among the uninformed ($\alpha = 0.33$; $\beta = 0.33$), this is not the case among the informed. In the latter, elections first join with opposition to the three non-democratic values (one-man rule, one-party system and military rule) before linking with support for democracy to create cluster C5 ($\alpha = 0.59$). Thus, support for democracy by the informed citizens, is consistent with their attitudes towards a larger set of variables (four in total), suggesting that they tend to have a much broader view of democracy that goes beyond mere elections. This reinforces the earlier observation that informed people tend to pay attention to a relatively wider range of considerations when making political evaluations and decisions (Carpini and Keteer, 2005; Abrajano and Alvarez, 2010; Bennie, 2001).

On the contrary, uninformed citizens seem to associate democracy with elections so that those who support for democracy as the best form of government are also highly likely to support elections as the best way to select leaders. This in itself does not mean necessarily that their support for democracy is merely instrumental. It only underscores the fact that they support democracy because it accords them the opportunity to elect their leaders. Moreover, although they support elections, they are less bothered by the extent to which universal suffrage is entrenched, yet this is an integral part of credible elections.

Taken together, the cluster analysis above reveals that disdain for the authoritarian alternatives to democracy (*one-man rule*, *one-party system* and *military rule*), is much stronger than the actual support for democracy. Among the uninformed for instance, there is greater consistency in the dislike for *one-man rule*, *one-party system* and *military rule* ($\alpha = 0.54$), than either *support for universal adult suffrage* or *the rule of law* ($\alpha = 0.21$),

or even *support for free and fair elections and democracy* ($\alpha = 0.33$). It is thus, possible that support for democracy is driven more by the disdain for the alternatives to it than by a genuine commitment to democratic values and practices.

To have a better sense of the item cluster analysis results above, I present the correlations between support for democracy and the other six variables in table 3.8.

Table 3.8 Correlation between democratic attitudes and support for democracy

	<i>Uninformed Kenyans</i>	<i>Informed Kenyans</i>
Support Elections	0.20** (3.07)	0.09* (2.20)
Support Rule of Law	0.12 (1.76)	-0.07 (1.59)
Support Universal Suffrage	-0.05 (0.72)	0.01 (0.13)
Oppose Military Rule	0.09 (1.44)	0.13** (3.26)
Oppose One-man Rule	0.14* (2.19)	0.17*** (4.25)
Oppose One-Party System	0.12 (1.77)	0.07 (1.58)
Observations	337	612

Entries are Pearson Product Moment correlation Coefficients with the associated t-values in brackets. Significance: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.0.

Table 3.8 shows that, of all the indicators of democracy included in the item cluster analysis in figures 3.10 (a), *support for elections* has the greatest correlation with *support for democracy* among uninformed citizens. The more the uninformed citizens believe in elections as the best mode of selecting political leaders, the more they are likely to support democracy as the best form of government. This is hardly surprising as it was already evident in the cluster analysis, where the two variables formed cluster C2.

Opposition to one-man rule is another indicator of democracy that has statistically significant correlation with support for democracy among uninformed citizens. Thus, the stronger the opposition to one-man rule (authoritarianism), the greater the likelihood of supporting democracy. The two variables also significantly correlate with *support for democracy* among informed citizens, alongside *opposition to military rule*. The fact that three of the indicators of democracy (support for rule of law; support for universal adult suffrage; and opposition to one-party system) are not significantly correlated with support for democracy reinforces the idea that the consistency of the evaluative attitudes towards democracy is generally weak, and even much weaker among uninformed citizens.

These results need to be interpreted in the context of Kenya's political history. At independence in 1963, Kenya was a liberal democracy with parliamentary system of government, headed by an executive Prime minister, and characterized by federalism, bicameralism and multipartism. However, within the first six years of independence, these institutions were systematically dismantled and supplanted with centralized one-party authoritarianism. The first president, Jomo Kenyatta, used political rather than legal means to create, sustain and preside over *de facto* one-party authoritarianism. By 1970 he had completely dismantled the institutions of federalism and bicameralism, and created a powerful executive president. This drift towards authoritarianism was accelerated by his successor, Arap Moi, who took the legal route, by engineering constitutional amendment in 1982 which transformed Kenya into a *de jure* one-party state.

Despite these changes, Kenya remained in a league of few African countries that have never been under military rule, and which have held elections every five years since independence, even at the peak of authoritarianism in the 1970s and 1980s. Some scholars have noted that 'Kenya [was] probably the most unrestricted of Africa's one-party democracies, where [parliamentary] elections regularly result in a high level of participation and a large turnover of elected politicians' (Jackson and Rosberg, 1998 :38). It is against this backdrop that multiparty democracy was restored in Kenya in 1991.

It is evident that the apparent inconsistency in democratic attitudes may be a product of these historical developments. For instance, even under a one-party regime, Kenyans still had elections under universal suffrage. While only those who were viewed to be sufficiently loyal to the ruling party and the president could be candidates for political office (in both legislative and civic authority elections), all Kenyans of voting age were allowed to vote for any of the 'loyalist' candidates. It is thus understandable if the level of support for universal suffrage does not correlate with that for democracy. This historical interpretation should not be misconstrued to imply that older people who lived under authoritarianism are more likely to exhibit greater inconsistency than the youth. Just as the older people lived this experience, educated and or attentive youths are also able to learn about them through education and related experiences.

On the other hand, opposition to the excesses of one-man rule (authoritarianism) was a key motivating factor in the struggle for democracy in Kenya in the early 1990s. It is thus not surprising that opposition to one-man rule is significantly correlated with support for democracy regardless of the level of political information. Also, since Kenya

has never had military regime, the fact that opposition to military rule correlates strongly with opposition to one-man rule, and strongly cluster with it for both uninformed citizens ($r = 0.38$; $|\alpha = 0.55$) and informed citizens ($r = 0.45$ | $\alpha = 0.62$) suggests that one-man rule may be the closest experience that Kenyans can compare with military rule.

In the final analysis, and consistent with hypothesis 2.11, the results of item cluster analysis in figure 3.9 which is summarized in table 3.8 and discussed in the subsequent paragraphs show that informed people tend to have slightly greater attitudinal consistency towards democracy than the uninformed people.

3.7 Chapter Conclusions

The primary objective of this chapter was to determine whether democracy works well even when there is a huge political information deficit among citizens, or whether an information deficit can harm democracy as suggested by Gans (2004). I focused on three indicators of a well functioning democracy - *Knowledge of democracy*, *Satisfaction with democracy*, and *Support for democracy*. I found that Kenyans understand democracy fairly well, so that three in every four Kenyans can correctly define it. Also, the informed tend to be more knowledgeable of democracy than the uninformed, reinforcing the idea that citizens tend to be generalists rather than specialists with respect to knowledge. Also, since political cue theory suggests that partisanship enables the uninformed to make up for information deficit, I tested if uninformed partisans are more knowledgeable about democracy than the uninformed non-partisans. The results show that partisanship has no significant effect on knowledge of democracy among the uninformed. Uninformed partisans are as likely as uninformed non-partisans to understand democracy.

The study also found that Kenyans are fairly satisfied with how democracy works in the country. These satisfaction levels seem to be fairly consistent with evaluations by the Freedom House. While satisfaction levels do not vary much with political information levels, they are significantly influenced by partisanship. Indeed, incumbent partisanship and economic policy approval are the only variables with consistently significant effect on satisfaction with democracy for both informed and uninformed people. In particular, incumbent partisanship increases satisfaction levels among the uninformed to nearly the same level as the informed. However, the informed are further influenced by general partisanship, government corruption and freedom of speech, suggesting that the informed are attentive to, and thus base satisfaction on a wider range of issues than the uninformed.

The ensuing question that lies at the heart of the dissertation puzzle is: what makes it possible for the uninformed to be equally satisfied with democracy as the informed? This question underscores the fact that ‘one intriguing political research puzzle is that people can make seemingly informed political decisions even though they appear to lack the requisite levels of political information to do so’ (Lewkowicz, 2006:52).

Finally, the study found that the level of support for democracy among Kenyans is generally very high. Moreover, the level of support consistently increases with the level of political information. However, the effect of partisanship on support for democracy depends on the type of partisanship. While opposition and incumbent partisanship have no significant effect, general partisanship has a significant positive influence on support for democracy. On the whole, information has a much greater influence on support for democracy than partisanship. Moreover, informed people seem to have more consistent democratic attitudes than the uninformed citizens. Further analysis also reveals that

disdain for the authoritarian alternatives to democracy (*one-man rule, one-party system* and *military rule*), appear to be much stronger than the actual support for democracy.

Taken together, the chapter findings show that democracy, as viewed by citizens, works fairly well in Kenya despite the huge information deficit. These results also raise a very critical question which forms the basis of the next chapter: How can uninformed people with relatively poor understanding of democracy, poor attention to critical issues, and inconsistent democratic attitude, make the same evaluations of democracy as the informed who have better knowledge of democracy, are attentive to pertinent issues, and have relatively more consistent evaluative attitudes towards democracy?

CHAPTER FOUR

HOW KENYANS OVERCOME POLITICAL INFORMATION DEFICIT: PARTISANSHIP AND POLITICAL PERCEPTIONS

4.1 Introduction

One key finding in chapter three was that uninformed Kenyan respondents usually have relatively poor understanding of democracy, are inattentive to pertinent issues in the democratic process, and have inconsistent attitudes towards democracy. In contrast, well informed Kenyans understand democracy better, are attentive, and have fairly consistent democratic attitudes. Nevertheless, both informed and uninformed respondents arrive at nearly the same verdict regarding how well democracy is working in Kenya. Moreover, their evaluation of how well democracy is working is accurate to the extent that it is corroborated by expert assessment from the Freedom House reports. Indeed, ‘in recent decades, until the fateful elections of December 2007, Kenya was viewed as one of Africa’s most stable democratic countries’ (Semetko, 2010:167). Thus, democracy seems to work fairly well in Kenya despite the acute information deficit noted in chapter two.

It is therefore puzzling how democracy works well in Kenya despite the generally low political information levels. It is particularly puzzling that uninformed Kenyans are able to behave as though they are informed, to the point that their evaluation of how well democracy is working seems to be just as good as those of informed citizens. To unravel this puzzle, I take recourse to political cue theory, from which I draw two important clues. First, uninformed people tend to think heuristically rather than ideologically about political issues. They typically rely on readily available heuristic cues from trusted and better informed sources to abridge the information gap between them and the informed

citizens (Oskamp and Schultz, 2005). To this end, ‘one mechanism that has been offered as the bridge between the public’s general ignorance of relevant information and the “rational” behavior of its collective opinion is the use of information shortcuts or heuristics’ (Gilens and Murakawa, 2002:33). Incidentally, the literature presents a strong and compelling case for partisanship as the most vital heuristic cue that people use (Lau and Redlawsk, 2006), and suggests that, ‘as a general rule, political parties are more enduring source cues than individuals’ (Gilens and Murakawa, 2002:33).

The second important clue which I draw from political cue theory is that it is subjective political perceptions rather than objective facts that drive political behavior (Cassino *et al*, 2007; Morris, 2008). Hence, to understand why uninformed people seem to be able to evaluate democracy just as well as informed citizens, it is imperative to focus on how uninformed citizens form political perceptions. Given these two clues, I proceed from the premise that uninformed people typically develop perceptions that guide their political decisions and actions from partisan cues that they derive from trusted political parties. Accordingly, this chapter addresses the third study research question: *What makes it possible for ‘politically uninformed’ Kenyans to develop ‘politically informed’ perceptions that guide their actions and decisions in the democratic process?*

The rest of the chapter is organized into five sections, with the first two sections addressing two critical preliminary concerns. In the first place, since this chapter uses the perceptions about democracy and the economy to show how the uninformed make up for information deficit, it is imperative to offer a justification for selecting *democracy* and the *economy* as the two issue-areas on which to focus. In this regard, attempts are made to answer the question: why focus on perceptions about democracy and the economy?

In the second section, I examine whether it is only uninformed people who rely on political party cues, or whether informed citizens also use the cues. This is an important starting point, since it enables us to understand from the onset if uninformed people, who are the principal focus of this chapter, disproportionately rely on cues than the informed. At this point, I limit the analysis to perceptions about the extent of democracy in Kenya.

In the third part of this chapter, I introduce the *issue-area* dimension of political perceptions discussed in chapter one. I focus on the influence of each of the three forms of partisanship (*general, incumbent, and opposition partisanship*) on the perceptions of uninformed citizens about the extent of democracy and the state of the Kenyan economy at the time of the interview in 2005. The primary goal in this regard is to test whether the effect of partisanship on political perceptions varies across the two *issue-areas*. This task involves comparisons at two levels. In the first place, I test whether there are significant differences in the factors that influence perceptions of the informed and the uninformed people. That is, do they pay attention to the same set of factors when forming political perceptions? At the second level, which is even more critical, I test whether the factors that influence perceptions of uninformed people about the extent of democracy are the same ones that influence their perceptions about the economy.

In the fourth section, I move the analysis further by introducing the *issue-timeline* dimension of political perceptions outlined in chapter one. I examine how the influence of each of the three forms of partisanship varies for each of the three perception timelines - the past (*retrospective perceptions*), the present (*present perceptions*), and the future (*prospective perceptions*). Since by default, the *present perceptions* are addressed in section two, the focus here is only on *retrospective* and *prospective perceptions*. As was

the case in section two, the analysis is restricted to the perceptions of uninformed people about the extent of democracy and the state of the economy. Nonetheless, I also examine the perceptions of informed people who constitute the control group.

In the final section, I draw from the findings of all the other sections to check for any emerging patterns in the formation of political perceptions by the uninformed people. The primary concern here is to determine whether there is sufficiently robust evidence to sustain the thesis that partisanship influences political perceptions, and whether its effect varies along the two suggested dimensions - *issue-area* and *issue-timeline*. Thus, besides testing the central hypothesis of political cue theory, the other concern is whether there is evidence to sustain my proposition that the influence of partisanship on political perceptions depends on the issue in question and its time-line.

4.2 Why focus on Perceptions about Democracy and the Economy?

This chapter recognizes the distinction between objective political reality and the subjective political perceptions, and note that it is the latter that has significant influence on political behavior (Morris, 2008). For instance, it has been noted that ‘voters base their decisions on their perceptions of the world (e.g., state of the economy)’ (Benoit, 2007:4), even though, ‘these perceptions may not necessarily be an accurate reflection of reality’ (*ibid*). For instance, Bartels (2008) found that ‘public perceptions of economic inequality bare so little relationship to actual trends in inequality’ (p. 146), but correctly adds that ‘it does not follow that perceptions of economic inequality are meaningless or politically inconsequential’ (*ibid*). Hence, to understand the political behavior of uninformed people, we need to know how they form perceptions that shape their decisions and actions.

Evidence shows that perceptions about *democracy* and *the* economy substantially influence democratic attitudes and their concomitant political behavior (Camp, 2001). For instance, it is widely agreed that perceptions about the extent of democracy influences the electoral or voting decisions. Studies have found that people who believe that the country is undemocratic are likely to abstain from voting (Herron, 2009). Indeed, there are critical differences in the voting intentions of those who regard Kenya as a strong democracy and those who feel that she is not, so that if elections were held at the time of the survey, those who feel that Kenya is a democracy are 12.5% more likely to vote than those who do not. The rationale for this difference is that, ‘if the democratic quality is poor, then participation in elections is likely to be viewed as less meaningful’ (Herron, 2009:70).

There is also considerable consensus in the extant literature that perceptions about economic conditions influence individual and collective political behavior. To start with, it has been noted that ‘support for democracy rests upon mass satisfaction with a range of past, present and future economic conditions’ (Bratton *et al*, 2005:225). Other studies also show that ‘economic dissatisfaction undermines regime support under democracy, but generates demand for democratization under dictatorship’ (*ibid.* p. 228). Besides, past studies have converged on the conclusion that ‘public opinion about the economy goes a long way towards explaining electoral outcomes’ (Arceneaux, 2004:211).

Indeed, economic voting theories cast voting decisions as a function of economic conditions, so that the incumbent parties win or lose elections depending on the state of the economy (Kramer, 1971; Kinder and Kiewiet, 1981). More specifically, when voters feel that their personal or national economic conditions are less than satisfactory, they tend to blame the incumbent party and vote against it (Bratton *et al*, 2005; Lindberg and

Morrison, 2008). Therefore, in advanced democracies, where political contests revolve around issues, ‘incumbents often pay the price for unpopular policies associated with their party’ (Dona-Gine, 2009:111). Similarly, the literature shows that ‘disenchantment—reflected in prospective and retrospective economic evaluations—affects the likelihood of [political] participation’ (Herron, 2009:71). In a nutshell, as Dalton (2004:115) observes:

It would be problematic for democracy if poor government performance did not generate disaffection and pressure for political change among the public (since) this is the logic of electoral competition

Nonetheless, these past studies have tended to ignore the fact that political behavior is not necessarily motivated by what people know, but by what they believe or think they know. More specifically, ‘public opinion is largely a function of perceptions. People form perceptions about the economy on the basis of how they think the economy is doing’ (Arceneaux, 2004:202), and hence, ‘what really matters are voters’ own perceptions, not the economic realities’ (Blais *et al*, 2002: 129).

Since perceptions about the economy influence political behavior, it is imperative to understand how these perceptions are developed, particularly whether the informed and uninformed people are guided by the same factors when making them. Indeed, the central thesis of this dissertation is that partisanship intervenes in the process of forming political perceptions in ways that enable uninformed people to either close the political information gap between them and their informed colleagues or simply draw useful cues which enable them to behave as if they are well informed.

4.3 Who Uses Partisan Cues: Informed Or Uninformed Kenyans?

One of the unwinding debates in political behavior is whether only uninformed people use political cues or whether the informed people also rely on cues. According to Popkin and Dimock (1999), the uninformed people are more likely to use cues than the informed. However, Lutz (2006) found that the reverse is true, and hence, ‘the better people are informed, the more they use cues and heuristics to make a political choice’ (Lutz, 2006:96). Yet, Lau and Redlawsk (2006) found that in fact, all people use the heuristic cues, and concluded that: ‘political heuristic use is nigh onto universal’ (p. 236). Therefore, my contribution in this debate is to compare the effect of partisan cues on the perceptions of informed and uninformed people regarding the extent of democracy.

4.3.1 Do Partisan Cues affect Perceptions of the Uninformed than Informed Kenyans?

In this section, I test hypothesis *H 3.1* that *partisan cues have a greater effect on the perceptions of the uninformed than the informed people*. I measured the effect of partisanship on the perception that Kenya is a strong democracy in terms of the difference between the proportion of the partisans and non-partisans who feel that Kenya is a strong democracy.³³ I also measured the effect of political information as the difference between the proportion of the informed and uninformed Kenyans who feel that Kenya is a strong

³³ As shown in appendix 1, *the extent of democracy* is an ordered categorical variable with four response categories. The term *strong democracy* combines its upper two response categories (*democracy with minor problems*, and *full democracy*). For purposes of this analysis, I reduced opposition and incumbent partisanship to their dichotomous forms by treating their first categories as *non-partisans*, and labeling the rest as *partisans*. I cross-tabulated *incumbent partisanship* with each of the three forms of perceptions about democracy. I then used the two-sided test of equality of proportions to compare the proportions of informed and uninformed Kenyans who feel Kenya is a *strong democracy*.

democracy. The focus of the analysis at this point is more about the magnitude rather than the direction of the differences. The results are shown in table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Effect of Partisan Cues on the Perception that Kenya is Strong Democracy

Type of Partisanship	Level of Information	Partisanship		Test of Equality of Proportions for “Kenya is a Strong Democracy”	
		Partisans	Non-Partisans	Effect of Partisanship	χ^2 Significance
General Partisanship	<i>Informed</i>	65.1%	60.0%	+ 5.1%	0.32
	<i>Uninformed</i>	57.9%	54.0%	+ 3.9 %	0.69
Incumbent Partisanship	<i>Informed</i>	71.9%	56.9%	+15.0%	$p < 0.01^{***}$
	<i>Uninformed</i>	60.2%	33.3%	+ 26.9%	$p < 0.01^{***}$
Opposition Partisanship	<i>Informed</i>	59.4%	70.9%	-11.5%	$p < 0.01^{***}$
	<i>Uninformed</i>	52.0%	60.3%	-8.3%	0.34

The table shows that *general partisanship* has a 5.1% effect on the perceptions of the informed and 3.9% effect on the perceptions of the uninformed. Evidently, not only is the effect of *general partisanship* on the perceptions about the extent of democracy very small, but even more importantly, its effects on the perceptions of the informed does not significantly differ from its effects on the perceptions of the uninformed Kenyans.

On the other hand, *incumbent partisanship* has a statistically significant positive effect on the perception that Kenya is a strong democracy among both the informed and uninformed Kenyans. Uninformed incumbent partisans are 26.9% more likely to view Kenya as a strong democracy compared to uninformed non-(incumbent) partisans. Also, *informed incumbent partisans* are 15.0% more likely to view Kenya as a strong

democracy than the informed non-(incumbent) partisans. Thus, the effect of *incumbent partisanship* on the perceptions of the uninformed is 11.9% greater than that for informed Kenyans. These results are robust to the extent that the effect of incumbent partisanship on informed and uninformed Kenyans are individually statistically significant, while at the same time, the difference between these effects is also statistically significant.

On the other hand, *opposition partisanship* has mixed effects on the perception that Kenya is a strong democracy. It has a strong and statistically significant effect of -11.5% on the perception that Kenya is a strong democracy among informed Kenyans. That is, opposition partisanship reduces the likelihood that an informed Kenyan would view the country as a strong democracy by 11.5%. However, its effect on the perceptions of the uninformed is statistically insignificant. These particular results suggest that, contrary to hypothesis *H3.1*, the effect *opposition partisanship* on perceptions about the extent of democracy is greater among the informed than the uninformed Kenyans.

The preceding analysis show that the influence of partisanship on the perception that Kenya is a strong democracy, vary from one type of partisanship to another, and also depends on whether one is informed or uninformed. For instance, both incumbent and opposition partisanships exert nearly the same degree of influence on the perceptions of informed people. While the former increases the chances of viewing Kenya as a strong democracy among the informed by 15.0%, the latter diminishes it by 11.5%.

These details have largely been missing in the political behavior literature because past studies have treated partisanship as a unidimensional variable from partisans to non-partisans, without distinguishing between incumbent and opposition partisans. The results

show that if I had used only *general partisanship*, then like Lau and Redlawsk (2006), I would have concluded that the effect of partisanship on the perception that Kenya is a strong democracy is not significantly different among the informed and the uninformed. But, if only *opposition partisanship* is used, then like Lutz (2006), the conclusion would be that the informed are more likely to use cues than the uninformed. Still, if *incumbent partisanship* is used then, like Popkin and Dimock (1999), I would have concluded that the uninformed are more likely to use cues and heuristics than the informed.

Thus, all the three groups of scholars are correct in their conclusions even though their results are different. A possible explanation for the differences could be the structure of the sample. It would appear that the partisans in the Popkin and Dimock (1999) study may have been mostly allied to the incumbent party; those in the Lutz (2006) study may have been mostly allied to the opposition; and those in the Lau and Redlawsk (2006) sample may have been uniformly distributed between incumbent and opposition parties. This justifies the very decision to isolate the three forms of partisanship in this study.

I have demonstrated that the way the masses understand democracy determines what they expect from it, and how they evaluate it (Camp, 2001). I further observed that at least in Africa, the masses tend to define democracy in terms of liberal values whose propagation or infringement are easier to observe in the incumbent than in the opposition parties. These observations, coupled with the fact that most people tend to be motivated by ‘group-serving attribution bias’ (Rudolph, 2003) in making decisions, accounts at least in part, for the effect of the incumbent and the opposition partisanship explained above. It seems that incumbent partisans tend to take up perceptions that are favorable to the incumbent party, and are *ipso facto* relatively more optimistic about democracy. This

view is bolstered by the fact that *informed incumbent partisans* have a larger proportion of people who view Kenya as a strong democracy compared to the *informed opposition partisans* and *general partisans*. Even among uninformed people, *incumbent partisans* still have the highest proportion of people who are optimistic about democracy.

It is also notable that regardless of the type and strength of partisanship, informed Kenyans generally tend to be more optimistic that Kenya is a strong democracy than the uninformed. For instance, when *uninformed non-(incumbent) partisan becomes* partisan, then the probability that he/she will form the perception that Kenya is a strong democracy increases by 26.9%; when he/she becomes informed, it increases by 23.6%; and if he/she becomes both informed and partisan, it increases by 38.6%. All these increments are statistically significant, suggesting that *incumbent partisanship* increases optimism about democracy slightly more than political information does.

On the other hand, when *uninformed non-(opposition) partisans* become partisans, the likelihood that they will view Kenya as a strong democracy increases by 10.6%, but if instead, they become informed, then it reduces by 8.3%. Whereas none of these changes is statistically significant, they are indicative of the fact that instead of being *opposition partisan*, one would rather seek political information if he/she is to be optimistic about democracy, and by extension, if he/she is to align his/her perceptions with the actual/real extent of democracy. Otherwise, one risks being misled by false opposition propaganda.

These results suggest that *incumbent partisanship* could be bridging the perception gap between the informed and uninformed so that the latter inches closer to behaving like the former. Moreover, the fact that *incumbent partisanship* and political information have

virtually the same effect on perceptions about democracy, suggests that if one cannot get both, then one would still be better off with either. Therefore, incumbent partisanship can be an effective substitute for political information. However, *opposition partisanship* and information produces diametrically opposed effects and thus cannot substitute each other.

An alternative explanation of the apparent congruence in the effects of *incumbent partisanship* and political information on perceptions about *the extent of democracy* is that *incumbent partisans* actually derive valuable information from their preferred party rather than just adopting positions that portray it in good light. Indeed, past studies have noted that partisan cues significantly narrow the information gap between informed and uninformed citizens to the extent that they exhibit similar voting behavior (Sekhon, 2004). For example, in a study of voting behavior in California, Lupia (1994) found that those who lacked information on the insurance reforms which were subjected to a vote relied on elite endorsements. This act of emulating the behavior of informed voters led them to vote the same way as those who had information.

This explanation would be difficult to sustain since we already saw in chapter two that *incumbent partisanship* is in fact, the only form of partisanship with no statistically significant effect on political information levels. We also saw in chapter three that all the three forms of partisanship, including *incumbent partisanship* do not have a significant influence on an individual's understanding of the meaning of democracy. It would appear from these results that *incumbent partisanship* does not produce information-enhancing cues, and therefore cannot be a source of valuable political information for the partisans.

An equally important conclusion that emanates from table 4.1 is that it is not just uninformed citizens who rely on partisan cues to shape their political perceptions. Even informed citizens use partisan cues. Whether the informed and uninformed citizens use cues for the same purpose is beyond the scope of this analysis. Yet, it is possible that the motives are different since informed voters already have requisite information to make rational decisions and possibly needs no reference to partisan ties unless such reference helps to align their beliefs with group (party) interest. However, the uninformed lack and needs information from trusted and better informed allies (Oskamp and Schultz, 2005).

While I reserve investigations into these matters for future studies, it is notable that the study by Lau and Redlawsk (2006) found that informed and uninformed citizens tend to be attentive to different cues. Specifically, they found that informed voters are more attentive to group endorsements and party ideology, while the uninformed pay attention to candidate appearance and party image. Consistent with these results, Lutz (2006) also found that ‘voters with high knowledge and strong party attachment use different cues most; voters with no partisanship and low knowledge use different cues least’ (p. 93).

Additionally, Gilens and Murakawa (2002) report a 1982 study done by Kuklinski, Metlay and Kay, about public preferences on California anti-nuclear energy initiative. The study found that while both the informed and the uninformed derived cues from the same labor unions and lobby groups, they utilized these cues differently. They note that: ‘better informed citizens responded to elite cues like those with less information, but because they made use of a wider range of information, the better informed depended less on elite cues in forming their preferences’ (Gilens and Murakawa, 2002:23).

4.3.2 Why Care About Partisan Cues if all Partisans use them?

If both the informed and the uninformed people use partisan cues, as the preceding analysis reveals, then one may wonder why we should even care about partisan cues. I argue that the fact that both informed and uninformed people use the same cues does not necessarily reduce partisanship into a constant. Yet, to the extent that it is not a constant, it is imperative to understand why and how it varies. For instance, Table 4.1 reveal that although *incumbent partisans* draw cues from the same party (incumbent party), they still form different perceptions. In particular, informed *incumbent partisans* tend to form more optimistic perceptions about the extent of democracy, than the uninformed *partisans*.

Even more revealing is the fact that differences between uninformed and informed *incumbent partisans*, seem to translate into dissimilar patterns of political behavior. In fact, there is a statistically significant difference in the voting behavior of informed and uninformed incumbent partisans, where informed are 20.1% more likely to have voted in 2002 than the uninformed. More precisely, 72.9% of the informed *incumbent partisans* indicated that they had voted in 2002, while only 52.8% of the uninformed *incumbent partisans* did so. The difference in the political behavior of the informed and uninformed *incumbent partisans* is not limited to conventional politics but is statistically significant even for contentious political activities like protests. Indeed, 52.0% of the informed *incumbent* partisans indicated that they have participated or can participate in protests if they had the chance to do so as compared to 42.1% of uninformed partisans.

Hence, we care about partisan cues because, even when informed and uninformed *incumbent partisans* rely on the same cue source (in this case the incumbent party), the uninformed citizens still appears to be politically less active. This means that there is a lot

more that could be going on in the processing of cues into political perceptions, beyond the mere fact of being a member of or trusting a political party. This makes it compelling to seek to understand the specific mechanisms by which partisanship influences the formation of perceptions. For instance, the differences between informed and uninformed partisans observed so far, may be attributed to either differences in their attentiveness to cues, or differences in the processing of the cues into relevant political perceptions. In short, we care about partisanship because the political cue theory which guides this study elevates it above other factors that influence the formation of political perceptions.

4.4 Perceptions about the Extent of Democracy and State of the Economy

In the rest of this chapter, I run a series of ordered logit regression models for more detailed analysis of the influence of partisanship on political perceptions. Specifically, I seek to establish whether the effect of partisanship on political perceptions noted so far, persist even when other key variables are controlled, and whether this effect varies with the issue in question, and or the timeline under review. In all the models, the focus is on the uninformed, while the informed people are the control group against which to assess the behavior of the uninformed. All models are significant, with no collinearity problems.

In this section, I test hypothesis *H3.2: The influence of partisanship on perceptions of uninformed citizens varies with issue-area*. I focus on the influence of partisanship on perceptions about the extent of democracy and national economic conditions in Kenya.³⁴

³⁴ These two political perception variables are explained in appendix 1, and descriptive statistics shown in table 1.4. In addition, the model used in this section will be replicated in the subsequent sections of this chapter for meaningful comparisons between perception issues (democracy and the economy); perception time-lines (past, present and future) and between the two political information levels (informed people and uninformed people).

I include some control variables from the literature (Squire and Smith, 1988; Alberg, 2003; Visser *et al*, 2008). The ordered logit model results as shown in table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Determinants of perceptions about Democracy and National Economy

	Current state of Democracy		Current state of Economy	
	<i>Uninformed Kenyans</i>	<i>Informed Kenyans</i>	<i>Uninformed Kenyans</i>	<i>Informed Kenyans</i>
General Partisanship	-0.17 (0.58)	0.11 (0.55)	-0.13 (0.56)	0.01 (0.03)
Incumbent Partisanship	0.78*** (5.11)	0.37*** (4.29)	0.23* (2.01)	0.40*** (5.07)
Opposition Partisanship	0.14 (0.96)	-0.32** (3.41)	-0.13 (1.15)	-0.13 (1.45)
Education	-0.11 (1.11)	-0.15** (2.98)	0.22** (2.94)	0.20*** (4.25)
Ethnicity	0.47 (1.20)	0.22 (0.98)	0.42 (1.29)	0.40* (1.99)
Patriotism	0.01 (0.10)	0.05 (0.66)	0.07 (0.72)	-0.03 (0.41)
Relative Deprivation	-0.17 (0.90)	-0.16 (1.70)	-0.31** (2.73)	-0.49*** (5.56)
Gender: Female	-0.51 (1.61)	-0.24 (1.34)	-0.48 (1.85)	0.05 (0.33)
χ^2 Likelihood Ratio	39.8	61.19	36.74	108.47
Observations	179	542	266	564

Entries are Proportional ordered logit regression coefficients with t-values in brackets. Cut points are omitted for simplicity. Significance: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

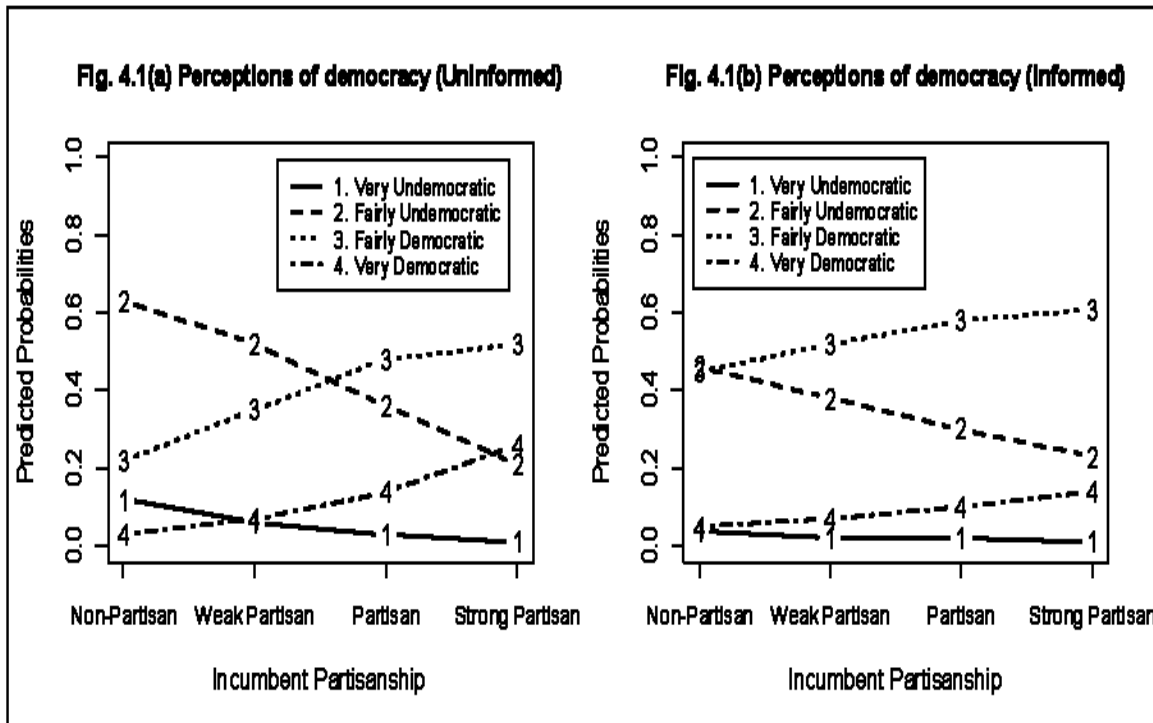
In discussing the results in table 4.2, I begin by focusing on perceptions about the extent of democracy, proceed to examine the perceptions about the current state of the national economy, and finally undertake a comparison of the two perceptions.

4.4.1 Partisanship and Perceptions about the Extent of Democracy

The general picture emerging from Table 4.2 is that uninformed Kenyans typically form perceptions about the extent of democracy solely on the basis of where they place themselves on the *incumbent partisanship* scale. In contrast, the perceptions of informed people about the extent of democracy are further refined by education and modified by their position on the *opposition partisanship* scale. Furthermore, since the informed and uninformed people seem to use different criteria when forming perceptions about the extent of democracy, it is not surprising that they form statistically significantly different perceptions about the extent of democracy. Indeed, 55.8% of uninformed and 64.1% of informed people feel that Kenya is a strong democracy.

More specifically, Table 4.2 shows that *incumbent partisanship* is the only form of partisanship that is consistently significant in all the four models. *Incumbent partisans* are more likely than non-(incumbent) partisans to form the perception that Kenya is a strong democracy, as opposed to a non-democratic country. In contrast, *opposition partisanship* only has a significant influence on the perceptions of the informed but not the uninformed people. Moreover, this influence is negative suggesting that strong *opposition partisans* are less likely than non-(opposition) partisans to view Kenya as democratic. Furthermore, *general partisanship* has no effect on the perceptions of informed or uninformed people. These results seem to suggest that an individual's perceived level of democracy in Kenya depends on whether the individual's party is in power or not.

For a closer examination and comparison of the specific influence of the *incumbent partisanship* on the perceptions of uninformed and informed people, I use the predicted probabilities shown in figures 4.1(a) and (b). The predicted probabilities are calculated with all the other variables in the respective models held constant at their medians.



Figures 4.1(a) and (b) shows that the uninformed non-partisans (incumbent) are 8% more likely to feel that Kenya is a non-democratic country than informed non-partisans (incumbent), and these uninformed non-partisans are also 17% more likely to feel that Kenya is a weak democracy. This suggests that without the intervention of *incumbent partisanship*, uninformed Kenyans tend to form more pessimistic perceptions about democracy in Kenya than informed Kenyans.

Strong *incumbent partisanship* reduces the perception that Kenya is not democratic by 11% among the uninformed, but has no significant effect among the informed. It also reduces the perception that Kenya is a weak democracy by 56% among the former, and 23% among the latter. In contrast, Strong *incumbent partisanship* increases the chances of forming the perception that Kenya is a democracy by 30% among the uninformed and 16% among the informed Kenyans. It also increases the perception that Kenya is a strong democracy by 23% among uninformed and 9% among the informed. The general picture that emerges is one where the effect of *incumbent partisanship* on perceptions about the extent of democracy in Kenya is greater among the uninformed than informed Kenyans. In fact, this was already evident even without the use of any control variables in table 4.1.

4.4.2 Partisanship and Perceptions about the State of the Economy

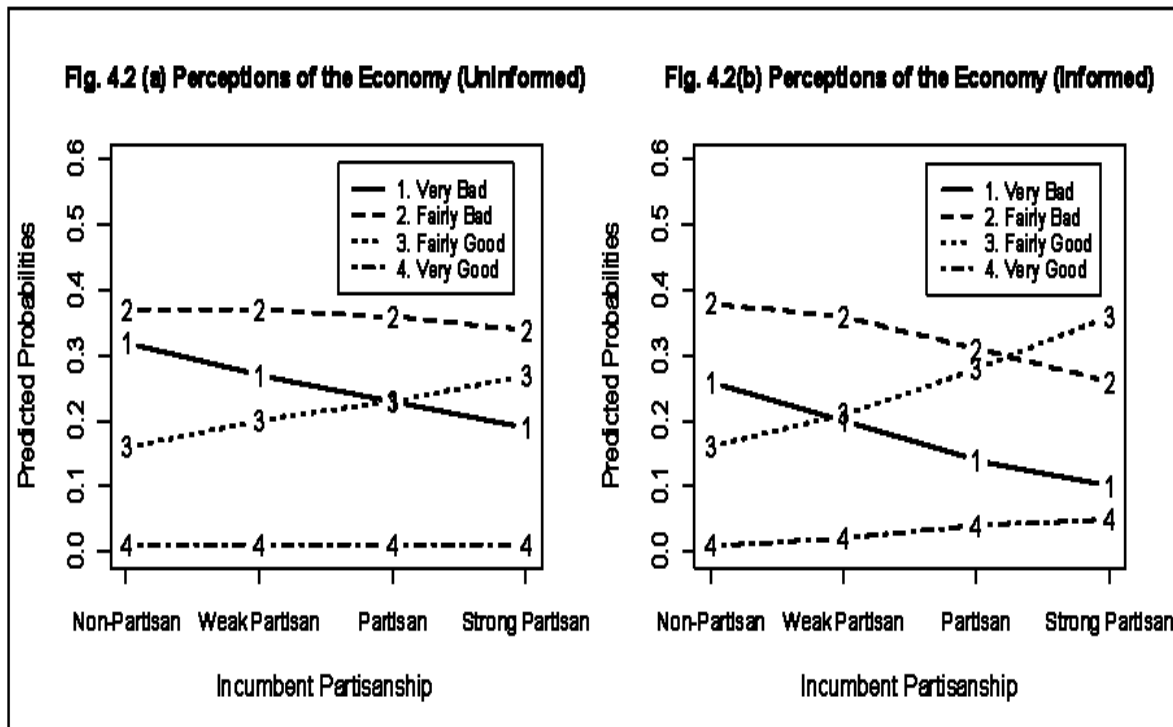
When it comes to perceptions about the current state of the Kenyan economy³⁵, it is clear that both informed and uninformed Kenyans are influenced by nearly the same set of factors. When evaluating current state of the economy, both uninformed and informed people tend to be guided by the incumbent partisanship, their education and whether their individual living conditions have changed for the better from what it was in the previous

³⁵ In order to appreciate the influence of partisanship on perceptions about the state of the economy, it is imperative to sketch Kenya's economic outlook at the time of survey in 2005. Kenya registered an impressive real GDP growth rate of 5.8% in 2005 compared to 4.9% in 2004. The agricultural sector, which is a key pillar of the country's economy, grew by 6.7% in 2005 compared to a slower growth of 1.4% in 2004. Significant growth was reported in tourism, manufacturing, transport and communication, as well as building and construction sectors. Moreover, there was 5.9% increase in new jobs created in 2005, compared to the previous year. These improvements resulted from changes in the country's macroeconomic policy from 2003. The Human Development Reports summarizes these changes so that country's Human Development Index in 2005 was 0.532 compared to 0.520 in 2004 and 0.474 in 2003 (for details see *The Kenya Human Development Reports 2006* available and accessed online on January 5 2012, at: http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/nationalreports/africa/kenya/KENYA_2006_en.pdf).

year (relative deprivation). The only noteworthy difference is that the perceptions of the informed Kenyans are further influenced to a lesser extent by ethnicity.

Since informed and uninformed Kenyans focus on nearly the same mix of factors, it is hardly a surprise that the difference between informed and uninformed Kenyans who feel that the national economic conditions are either fairly good or very good is just 4.7%, and thus statistically insignificant. Only 24.5% of uninformed and 29.2% of informed people feel that the economy is either fairly good or very good.

The predicted probabilities for the effects of *incumbent partisanship* on perceptions of informed and uninformed Kenyans about the economy are shown in figures 4.2 (a) and (b). Once again, all other variables in the models are held constant at their medians.



According to figures 4.2 (a), the predominant perception among the uninformed, regardless of the strength of *incumbent partisanship* is that the Kenyan economy is fairly bad. Although this perception is dominant even among informed non-partisans and weak partisans, this changes a great deal among informed Kenyans as the strength of *incumbent partisanship* increases. In essence, while partisanship has no effect on the likelihood that uninformed Kenyans would hold these perceptions, it considerably influences the likelihood that informed people would form the same perceptions.

More precisely, the uninformed non-partisans are 6% more likely to feel that the Kenyan economy is very bad as compared to the informed non-partisans. However, they have an equal probability of perceiving the economy to be good or very good, just as the informed Kenyans. While *incumbent partisanship* reduces the perception that the economy is very bad by 16% among the informed and 13% among the uninformed, it raises the perception that the economy is fairly good by 20% among the former and 11% among the latter. Thus, *incumbent partisanship* has a greater influence on the perceptions of the informed than uninformed Kenyans regarding the state of the national economy.

A tentative conclusion from the preceding discussion is that when the informed and uninformed people focus on the same set of factors, as is the case with perceptions about the state of the national economy, they are more likely to form similar perceptions. However, when they are attentive to different issues, as is the case with perceptions about democracy, then they are likely to form different perceptions. Therefore, if perceptions influence political behavior as I have argued, then the documented differences in political behaviors of the informed and the uninformed (Aalberg, 2003; Lutz, 2006; Carpini, 2009;

Abrajano and Alvarez, 2010), may be due to differences in their perceptions, which in turn reflect differences in the range and mix of issues that shape those perceptions.

For instance, my analysis shows that the proportion of uninformed people who feel that Kenya is undemocratic but still intend to vote for the incumbent party is extremely low (16.7%), and significantly different from that of the informed people with similar perceptions and voting intentions (50%). Yet, when the uninformed feel the economy is very bad, they are just as likely as the informed to express the intention to vote for the incumbent party if elections were held now. That is, the differences in the perceptions of informed and uninformed people about democracy translate into differences in their likelihood of voting for the incumbent party, while similarities in their perceptions about the economy translate into similarity in their likelihood of voting for the incumbent party.

4.4.3 Education and perceptions about Democracy and the Economy

Education enhances optimistic perceptions about the state of the national economy among both the informed and uninformed Kenyans. However, when it comes to the extent of democracy in Kenya, education promotes pessimistic perceptions among the informed people, but has no significant effect on the perceptions of the uninformed. This suggests that the effect of education on political perceptions also vary with the level of political information. Hence, studies which lump together informed and uninformed people may not yield accurate results. It is notable for instance that using more or less the same data, Bratton *et al* (2005) concluded that higher levels of educational attainment positively affects perceptions about the quality of democracy and the state of the national economy.

The effect of education on perceptions of informed people is of particular interest. Since Kenya posted the best democracy score in over ten years in 2005,³⁶ I expected that informed people who are highly educated would be sufficiently empowered with information to overcome partisanship, recognize the democratic gains that the country has made over the years, and correctly judge her as fairly democratic, if not a strong democracy. This expectation is born out of the fact that, ‘knowledge equips people with the information they need to plan and execute effective behavioral strategies, enabling them to engage in attitude-expressive behaviors efficiently’ (Visser *et al*, 2008:133).

It is therefore surprising that even the highly educated people failed to overcome the influence of *incumbent partisanship*, and hence could not make unbiased evaluation of democracy. Indeed, the uneducated people, whose only information lifeline is party cues, made more accurate appraisal of democracy than the highly educated people. These results are consistent with those from past studies which show that ‘individuals often do not use the knowledge they acquire in the context of education, even when the tasks they perform would seem to require it’ (Johnson, 2009:57). They also attest to Berinsky’s view that ‘in the battle between facts and partisanship, partisanship always win’ (p. 124). Indeed, most scholars tend to concur on the fact that ‘partisanship seems to be a stronger overall predictor of the use of other cues than knowledge’ (Lutz, 2006:93).

³⁶ Freedom House, *Freedom in the World*, 382-387.

It should also be recalled that in addition to posting the best democracy score in ten years, Kenya also had her best economic performance in five years in 2005.³⁷ It is hardly surprising that both the informed and the uninformed Kenyans with higher educational attainments were able to recognize this and form the correct perception that the Kenyan economy was fairly good or very good. While these results suggest that education raises optimism about the economy but reduces optimism about democracy, it may be the case that highly educated Kenyans are more likely to accurately assess the economy, but less likely to make equally accurate assessment of democracy, and *vice versa*. Even more radically, it is possible that educated Kenyans are more attentive to the economy than to politics, while the uneducated are more attentive to politics than to the economy. These are issues that require more detailed investigations beyond the scope of this dissertation.

4.4.4 Relative Deprivation and perceptions of Democracy and the Economy

As expected, the results also show that relatively deprived Kenyans, regardless of whether they are informed or uninformed, are less likely than those who are not deprived, to form the perception that the national economic conditions are very good. Since Kenya registered her best economic performance in five years in 2005, it would appear that the relatively deprived people may have been blinded by their individual living conditions to believe that since their individual economic fortunes had changed for the worse, then the national economic conditions must have also taken a similar turn. Indeed, other recent studies have also reached the conclusion that ‘if one believes that his or her personal situation has improved over the past year, then he or she is also more likely to think that the national economy has done well in the past’ (Anderson, 2010:150).

³⁷ See the various issues of the *Human Development Reports*, from 2000 to 2006.

These findings do not necessarily imply that those who are not deprived are more attentive to economic indicators and hence more knowledgeable about the economy than those who feel deprived. It is possible that even those who are not deprived arrived at the right evaluation of the economy not because they pay attention to the right indicators of the national economy, but because they based their evaluations on their individual living conditions, which in this case, happened to coincide with the national living conditions.

Moreover, economic voting theories predict that if elections were held in Kenya in 2005 when the survey was done, those whose economic fortunes have changed for the worse and are hence relatively deprived, would be less likely to vote for the incumbent, compared to those who do not feel deprived. Consistent with this prediction, my analysis reveal that whereas 33.3% of those who do not feel deprived expressed the willingness to vote for the incumbent NARC party, only 19.1% of relatively deprived people expressed similar voting preference if elections were held at the time of the survey. Either way, the tragedy is that these voting intentions are based on wrong perceptions. This underlines a major point in this dissertation: *perceptions are key to understanding political behavior*.

Ordinarily, it is expected that perceptions about the economy can either stimulate grievance-driven political participation aimed at “throwing the rascals out”, or encourage withdrawal from politics if ‘economic deprivation renders politics a remote concern’ (Herron, 2009:70). In the latter case for instance, it has been argued that ‘a hungry stomach has an angry mind that has no time for popular participation in decision-making. The concern of a hungry stomach is not how decisions are made, but whether the decisions made, will put something in it’ (Oyugi and Gitonga, 1987:106). Besides, some studies on Africa have found that relative deprivation influence democratic commitments

(Bratton *et al*, 2005). In contrast to these expectations, table 4.2 shows that deprivation has no significant effect on perceptions about the extent of democracy in Kenya.

It will be recalled from chapter three that relative deprivation also had no influence on satisfaction with democracy among informed and uninformed Kenyans, and that those who feel deprived are just as likely to be strong incumbent partisans as those who are not deprived. Since the incumbent party (NARC) just assumed power three years earlier, after decades of misrule, it is likely that even those who felt deprived may have taken it as part of short term painful sacrifices necessarily for long term economic stability. These results are comparable to those of Bratton *et al* (2005) who found no relation between economic dissatisfaction and public support for economic reforms in Africa. They noted that dissatisfaction with economic reforms does not necessarily lead to disapproval of the economic policies. Bratton *et al* (2005: 225) suggest that this may be due to the fact that:

African supporters of economic reforms correctly recognize that, under an adjustment regime, economic conditions often worsen before they get better; accordingly, they are willing to wait patiently for eventual economic recovery.

While the resultant sense of deprivation may be sufficient for them to conclude that the national economy is not doing well, it may be neither strong enough to generate anti-incumbent party sentiments, nor sufficient to use as a criteria for evaluating the extent of democracy. Moreover, it is also likely that people look beyond material benefits that may accrue from democracy, and hence whether their material conditions improve or worsen has no significant effect on their evaluations of the extent of democracy in Kenya.

4.4.5 Patriotism and Perceptions of Democracy and the Economy

I had expected that those with greater sense of patriotism would be proud of their country and thus form optimistic perceptions about both the state of the national economy and the extent of democracy in Kenya. This expectation was grounded on the fact that patriotism places national honor and pride ahead of all else. Patriotism in this sense is a political cue that people take not necessarily because they lack information, but for the need to show one's love for country by always striving to portray her in good light.

Contrary to these expectations, the results show that patriotism has no significant effect on perceptions about the state of the economy or the extent of democracy in Kenya. This implies that the patriotic cue is not very strong among Kenyans, particularly with regard to current issues about which facts may still be available. Patriotic cues neither translates readily into unquestioned loyalty, nor yield to suspension of rational judgments in order to portray Kenya in positive light as very democratic and with a strong economy. To use Berinsky's (2009) phraseology, in the battle between patriotism and partisanship among both the informed and the uninformed Kenyans, partisanship always win. In fact, patriotism does not influence any of the six forms of political perceptions examined in this chapter; it simply is not an important consideration for Kenyans.

Lack of patriotism among Kenyans is a historical problem. During the one-party era (1969-1991), the ruling party (KANU) promoted a perverted form of patriotism, where patriotism was defined in terms of fawning loyalty to KANU and the president, rather than to the nation. In this regard, patriotic people were those who had KANU party membership cards; wore KANU t-shirts, or hats; or hanged a portrait of the president in their houses or offices, while patriotic songs were those sung in praise of the president.

However, as resentment for KANU grew so was the defiance of this perverted patriotism. Unfortunately, even after the advent of multipartism no efforts were made to cultivate a true sense of patriotism. The problem of patriotism even became subject of discussion in the Kenya national assembly in June 1993, when Mr. Jillo Falana, the fiery MP for *Saku* constituency, succinctly captured the problem of patriotism among Kenyans:

The other problem which affects all Kenyans is that one of lack of patriotism. We are not patriotic. Let us not cheat ourselves; we Kenyans are not patriotic. We are not concerned about Kenya and we do not really care what happens to Kenya³⁸

More recently, there have been initiatives to promote patriotism among Kenyans such as *Najivunia Kuwa Mkenya* (I am proud to be Kenyan) initiative launched in 2004 by the office of the president. It aimed at inspiring Kenyans to be patriotic and proud of their country. Unfortunately, this initiative was not spearheaded by the president himself, but by some junior officer in his office. As expected, the reaction took partisan turn, with those supporting the president and his party supporting it, while those aligned to the opposition denigrating it. The latter group developed corrupted versions of the initiative such as *Navumilia Kuwa Mkenya* (I am just persevering to be a Kenyan). The primary theme behind *Navumilia Kuwa Mkenya* is that to say you are proud to be Kenyan is to accept that you are benefitting from the current government at a time when the majority wallows in poverty and misery. Yet again patriotism gave way to parochial partisanship.

³⁸ Kenya National Assembly Official Record (Hansard). June 30, 1993 p. 1160.

4.4.6 Gender and Perceptions of Democracy and the Economy

Similarly, perceptions about the state of the economy and the extent of democracy, do not significantly vary with gender. This surprising finding must be understood in the context of women and politics in Kenya. Women continue to play second fiddle to men in virtually all aspects of the Kenyan politics, notwithstanding their numerical superiority and a raft of measures aimed at women political empowerment. This is partly attributable to the patriarchal nature of the Kenyan society, the violent and masculine nature of the Kenyan politics, and women's lack of both intellectual and financial resources. Hence, by 2005 when the study data was collected, only nine out of the 200 elected members of the national assembly (4.5%) were women. Yet this was celebrated as the largest number of elected women ever in a single national assembly election in Kenya's history.

The challenges that women face in the democratic process in Kenya extend beyond the elite women seeking elective political offices, to the ordinary women voters. Women face physical violence during political campaigns from at least two fronts. First, they face violence from "strangers", mostly youths, hired by opposing candidates to intimidate those who support their opponents. Secondly, and even more disturbing, women also face violence from the "loved ones" like their spouses and parents if they support a candidate or party which they do not approve. Yet there is a weak legal framework for redressing gendered political violence, let alone the reluctance of the police to prosecute such cases. In short, 'the kind of violence that attends political campaigns in Kenya are such that many women intent on running for political office are often forced to withdraw and leave the dirty game of politics for men to fight out' (Nasong'o and Ayot, 2007:189).

Against this background, it is reasonable to expect women to feel that Kenya is not democratic given that they still face numerous obstacles in the political process. It is thus surprising that women are as likely as men to feel that Kenya is democratic. It is possible that women do not necessarily view these challenges as expression of lack of democracy itself, but as unorthodox behavior of fellow political actors. Besides, their sense of exclusion may have been assuaged by the fact that the incumbent party, and by extension, the government signaled better times and greater attention and opportunity for women. In fact, eight of the nine elected women legislators were elected on incumbent NARC party ticket. Women may also have been mollified by the manifest improvement in Kenya's Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) from 0.538 in 2004 to 0.547 in 2005.³⁹

4.4.7 Ethnicity and Perceptions of Democracy and the Economy

Table 4.2 reveals that while ethnicity is a significant predictor of perceptions about the present economy among informed Kenyans, it has no significant effect on the other forms of perceptions. I explore these results further by directly comparing perceptions of the president's ethnic group (the Kikuyu) with the perceptions of nine selected Kenyan ethnic groups. I calculated the proportion of each ethnic group who feel that the national economy is either good or very good, as well as those who feel that Kenya is either fairly democratic or very democratic. I then plotted each ethnic group's perceptions about the national economy against perceptions about democracy for both informed and uninformed respondents as shown in Figures 4.3 (a) and (b). To give us a better sense of the results shown in Figures 4.3 (a) and (b) and the discussion that follows, I have also provided a map showing the geographical distribution of Kenyan ethnic groups.

³⁹ *The Kenya Human Development Reports 2006. p. Xi.*

Fig. 4.3 (a) Perceptions of Uninformed Kenyans

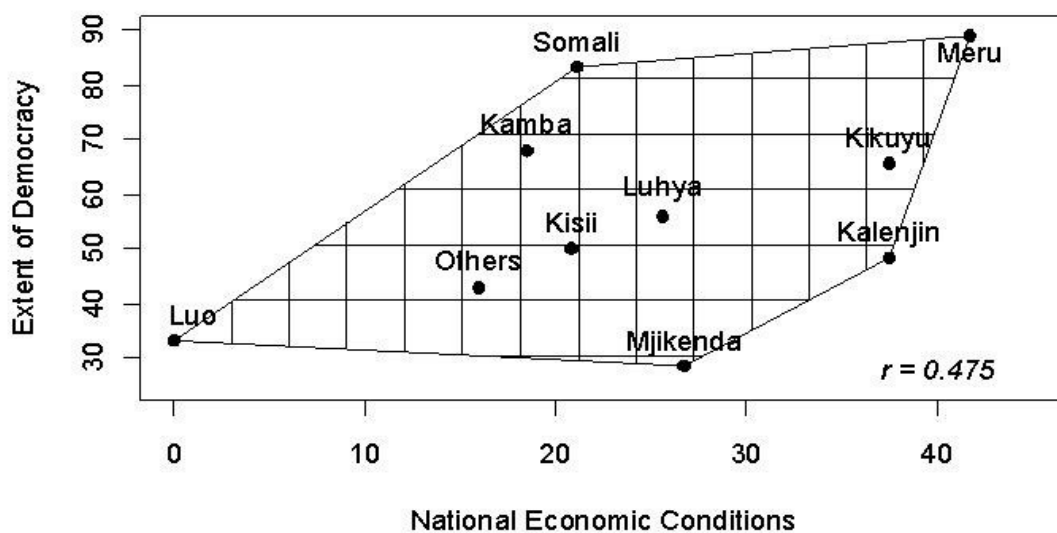
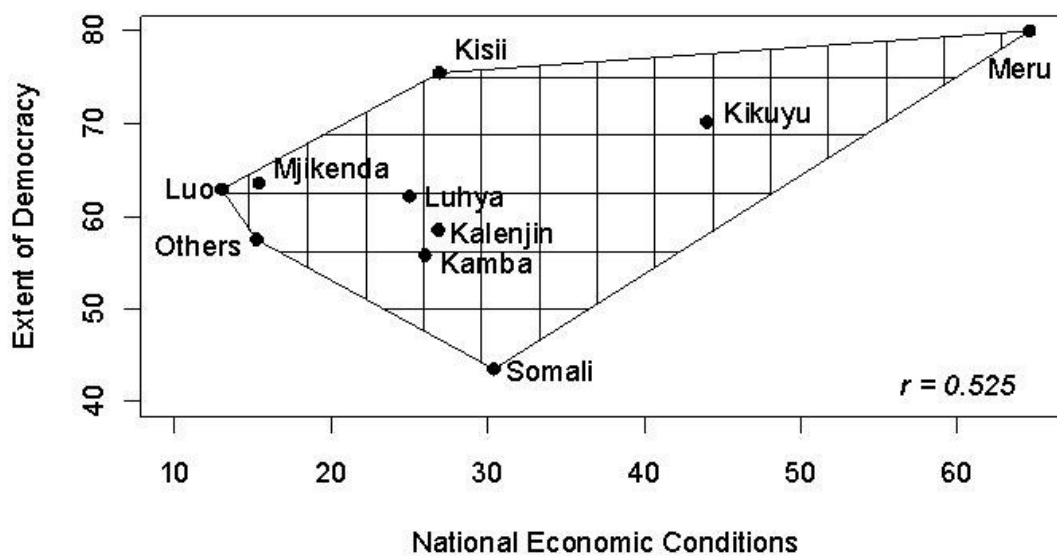
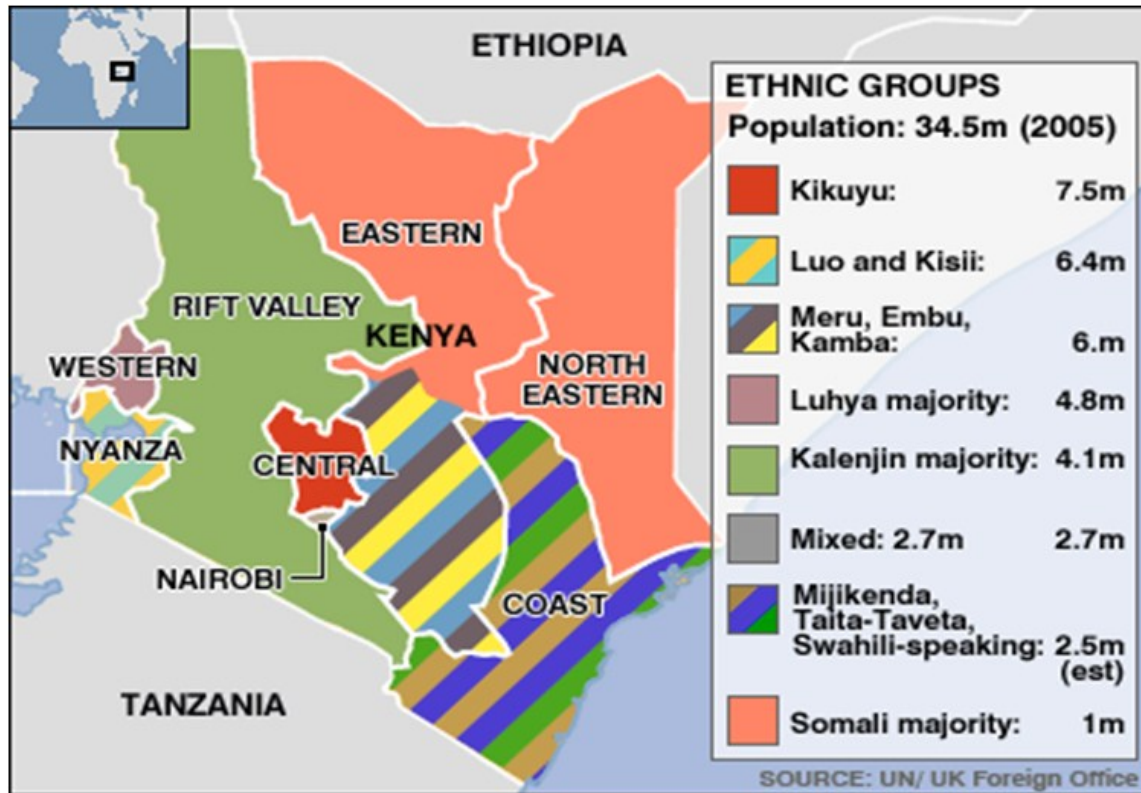


Fig. 4.3 (b) Perceptions of Informed Kenyans



Map 4.1: The Geographical Distribution of Kenyan Ethnic Groups



Source: Online sourced map attributed to the UN/UK Foreign office, available and last accessed on March 22, 2012 at: http://www.uusc.org/content/map_ethnic_groups_kenya.

Figures 4.3(a) and (b) reveals that the aggregate ethnic perceptions about the national economy is significantly correlated with perceptions about the extent of democracy in Kenya among the uninformed ($r = 0.475$) and the informed ($r = 0.525$). As is now clear from previous sections, the informed tend to be more consistent in their evaluations than the uninformed and hence their evaluations of the national economy and democracy connect more strongly. Moreover, those communities that significantly feel that the national economy is good such as the *Meru* and *Kikuyu* also feel that Kenya is a strong democracy. Alternatively, communities like *Luos* who do not feel the economy is doing well are equally less enthusiastic about the extent of democracy in Kenya.

It is notable for instance, that it is the *Meru* rather than the *Kikuyu* who are the most enthusiastic about the economy and democracy. The *Meru* are the seventh largest ethnic group in Kenya, and are linguistically closest to the *Kikuyu* than any other ethnic group. Besides, the *Meru* whose economic mainstay revolves around the cultivation and sale of a controversial stimulant drug, khat or *miraa* (*Catha edulis*),⁴⁰ have consistently supported Kibaki ever since the first multiparty election of 1992.



A man carrying *miraa* (*Catha edulis*), that is largely chewed to produce a stimulant drug, which according to experts, can cause some serious health problems including infertility. Picture sourced from Daily Nation Newspaper, May 11, 2011.

The genesis and reasons for their ardent support for Kibaki defies explanations. For instance, by October 1990, Kibaki was an avowed anti-*miraa* crusader, calling for a ban on its cultivation, sale and consumption. As health minister, he stated in parliament that, ‘we do not need to plant *miraa*... *miraa* should be forgotten. As you know, *miraa* is actually a drug’.⁴¹ When Mr. Joseph Muturia who is an ardent pro-*miraa* legislator from Meru, challenged him to apologize for calling *miraa* a drug, Kibaki responded that: ‘the

⁴⁰ *Miraa* is banned in many countries including the United States, UK and Netherlands.

⁴¹ Kenya National Assembly Official Record (Hansard). October 2, 1990.

honorable member [Mr. Muturia] would better be advised not to raise this issue. It would be better to leave it quite because it may become a [health] crisis sooner than he thinks'.⁴²

Ironically, in the first multiparty elections held two years later in 1992, the *Merus* overwhelmingly voted for Kibaki in his first failed bid for presidency, while Mr. Muturia lost his parliamentary seat. This underscores the fact that people at times make decisions that undercut their self-interests (Lukes, 1974; Lewis, 2001; Frank, 2004; Bartels, 2008). The critical question arising from this inconsistency has been so well framed by Frank (2004): 'how [can] so many people get it so wrong?' (p.1). Could it be the case as Lupppia (2011) notes that 'in politics, citizens must sometimes make inconsistent choices in order to ultimately have made a consistent one'? (p. 2). While the basis of this support remains unclear, it is notable that during Kibaki's presidency, he has rewarded *Meru* elites with plum government jobs. While the tangible returns to the *Meru* masses from their support for Kibaki are hard to quantify, they have consistently supported his government.

On the other hand, *Luos* seem to be worlds apart from the *Kikuyus* and *Merus* in terms of perceptions, and appear to be least enthusiastic about democracy and the Kenyan economy. Their evaluation of the two issues underscores the deep-seated mutual distrust between them and the *Kikuyu*, dating back to the time of independence in 1963. The two communities fought for the country's independence together under the KANU party, but six years after independence, ideological differences led to a fallout between President Jomo Kenyatta (*Kikuyu*) and Jaramogi Oginga Odinga (*Luo* and Vice President). The latter resigned in principle both from the Vice Presidency and from the KANU party and formed Kenya People's Union (KPU), thus drawing political battle lines between the two

⁴² Ibid.

communities. In 1969, the only senior *Luo* politician remaining in KANU, Tom Mboya, was assassinated in broad daylight by a lone *Kikuyu* gunman, and ‘a bitter Luo nation accused the Kenyatta regime of having a hand in the assassination’ (Cohen and Atieno-Odhiambo, 2004:175). In the same year, Kenyatta banned KPU, and detained Odinga.

These events and subsequent ones created a strong foundation for political enmity between the two communities. Interestingly, it was Odinga’s son, Raila Odinga who declared “Kibaki *Tosha*” (Kibaki is equal to the task) in 2002, at a time when the NARC opposition alliance was grappling with how to agree on one presidential flag bearer. Then *Luos* overwhelmingly voted for Kibaki in 2002, but upon his election, he did not appoint Raila as the Prime Minister as agreed in the pre-election arrangements. It is these political developments that explain the gap between the *Kikuyu* and the *Luos* in both figures. Thus the perception of being betrayed for the second time is the most likely reason why the *Luo* were disproportionately less inclined to judge the economy as good or the country as a strong democracy since the president (a *Kikuyu*) had not only short changed “one of their own” (Raila), but in so doing had in fact betrayed the whole community.

The relative positions of the *Kikuyu*, *Kalenjin* and *Luos*, in terms of perceptions about the economy, as shown in figure 4.3 (a), is symptomatic of the history of Kenya’s political economy which is succinctly described by *The Economist* of February, 18, 2010:

Under Kenyatta’s presidency (1964-78) his own *Kikuyu*, easily the largest, richest and best-educated single group, dominated politics and business....to some extent he shared out the spoils of office across a tribal spectrum, giving chosen leaders of each group juicy rewards, while ensuring that his *Kikuyu* sat atop the pile...Under Daniel Arap Moi (1978-2002), the pendulum swung away from the *Kikuyu*, though they continued to dominate business. A coterie around Mr. Moi, particularly from his own much smaller *Kalenjin*

group of tribes, amassed vast wealth and accumulated a lot of land...Under Mr. Kibaki, the pendulum swung once more towards the *Kikuyu*, causing resentment among those who have perennially missed out, especially the sorely neglected *Luo*, the third biggest tribe, whose unchallenged leader is Mr. Odinga (and which numbers Barack Obama as one of its own).

It is equally interesting that the perceptions of informed and uninformed Kenyans vary considerably even within the same ethnic group. For instance, while the uninformed *Somalis* and *Kambas* tend to rate democracy in Kenya very highly, informed members of the same ethnic groups are far less enthusiastic about the state of democracy in Kenya. However, among the *Kisii* and *Mjikenda*, it is the informed people who rate democracy in Kenya highly compared to the uninformed. Still, there is a third group that seems to be fairly consistent in evaluating democracy, and comprise of *Merus*, *Kikuyus*, and *Luhyas*. Hence, perceptions about the extent of democracy and the state of the national economy vary not only from one ethnic group to the other, but also with the level of information.

In terms of inter-ethnic comparisons, there is a statistically significant difference between uninformed *Kikuyus* and uninformed *Luo*, *Kisii*, *Kamba*, *Somali* and “others” in their perceptions about the national economy. Except for *Somalis*, the differences persist even among the informed. In fact, apart from the *Somalis*, differences between informed *Kikuyus* and informed members of other ethnic groups are significant. When it comes to perceptions about the extent of democracy, uninformed *Kikuyus* significantly differ from all the other ethnic groups except *Kambas* and *Luhyas*. Once again, the differences diminish among those who are well informed except the *Somali*.

Finally, the two figures, especially figure 4.3(b) is a clear depiction of the Kenyan political scenario at least from 2005 to the chaotic 2007 elections. In the referendum held about a month of the survey, the *Meru* and *Kikuyu* voted with president Kibaki in favor of the draft constitution, while all the other tribes, except the *Kisii* voted against it. Just the way the *Kisii* appear to think like the *Kikuyu* in terms of the extent of democracy and more like the other ethnic groups in terms of the economy, so they split votes between the two voting blocs. A similar voting pattern was replicated in the 2007 elections. Hence the 2007 post-elections violence in Kenya can be explained in terms of these entrenched economic grievances against the *Kikuyu* and president Kibaki's administration.

4.5 Retrospective and Prospective Political Perceptions

Up to this point, I have only examined perceptions about the present, yet the way people form perceptions about the past, present and future may differ. In this section, I treat economy and politics as two distinct issue-areas, and introduce time-line dimension by dividing perceptions into three time-lines: *retrospective*, *present* and *prospective perceptions* as discussed in chapter 1. I then test the last dissertation hypothesis, *H3.3: The influence of partisanship on the perceptions of the uninformed citizens varies with issue-timeline*. Since I already addressed the perceptions about the present political and economic state of affairs in the previous section, the task here is limited to comparing *retrospective* and *prospective perceptions* about politics and the economy. For better comparison, I replicate the generic political *perceptions* model used in the last section.

4.5.1 Retrospective and Prospective Perceptions about Democracy

Table 4.3 shows results of ordered logit regression models for the effect of partisanship on *retrospective* and *prospective perceptions about democracy*. These results enable us to compare how effects of partisanship on perceptions vary with political information levels.

Table 4.3: Determinants of Retrospective and Prospective perception of Democracy

	Retrospective Perceptions		Prospective Perceptions	
	<i>Uninformed</i>	<i>Informed</i>	<i>Uninformed</i>	<i>Informed</i>
General Partisanship	-0.34 (-1.31)	0.34 (1.69)	0.26 (0.81)	0.02 (0.10)
Incumbent Partisanship	0.45*** (3.46)	0.20* (2.36)	0.48** (3.11)	0.43*** (4.94)
Opposition Partisanship	-0.02 (-0.20)	-0.16 (-1.75)	-0.02 (-0.16)	-0.12 (-1.27)
Education	0.05 (0.63)	-0.20*** (-4.06)	0.14 (1.39)	0.04 (0.80)
Ethnicity	0.71* (1.96)	0.26 (1.18)	0.80* (1.94)	0.55** (2.45)
Patriotism	0.16 (1.50)	0.13 (1.63)	-0.14 (-0.99)	0.01 (0.16)
Relative Deprivation	-0.17 (-1.52)	0.17 (1.80)	-0.12 (-0.93)	0.11 (1.13)
Gender: Female	-0.01 (-0.01)	-0.16 (-0.89)	-0.06 (-0.17)	0.10 (0.53)
χ^2 Likelihood Ratio	29.09	45.16	19.35	43.83
Observations	239	552	160	511

Entries are proportional ordered logit regression coefficients with t-values in brackets. Cut points are omitted for simplicity. Significance codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

It is apparent from table 4.3⁴³ that *prospective perceptions* of both the informed and uninformed people about democracy are influenced by the same set of factors. These perceptions are manifestly influenced primarily by *incumbent partisanship* and to a lesser

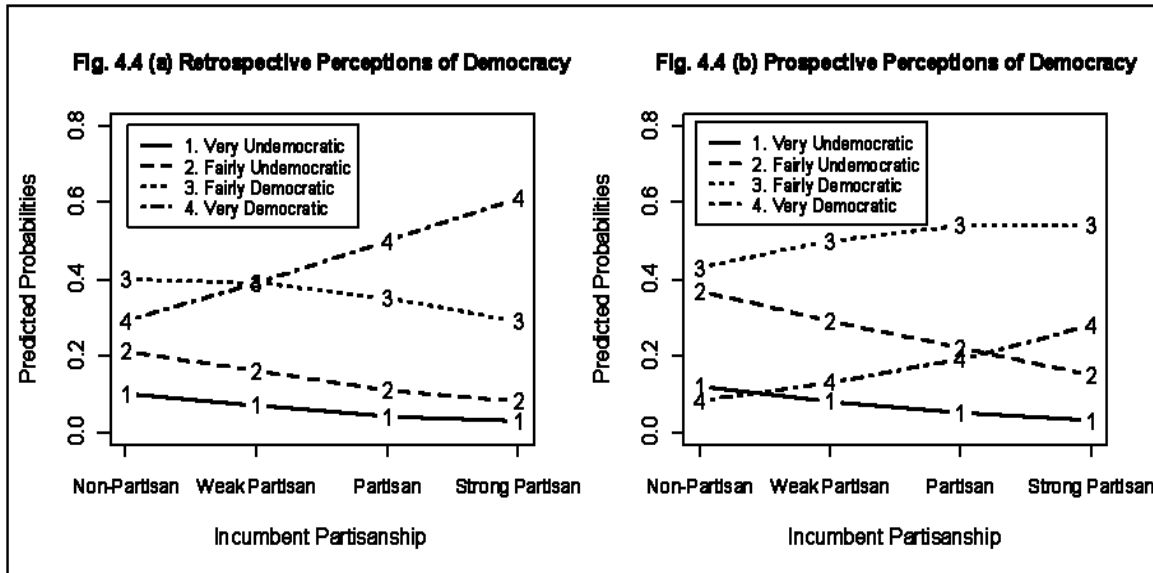
⁴³ All the models are statistically significant at $\alpha = .05$. Collinearity tests show that all the variables are sufficiently independent. Thus, the models have no collinearity problems.

extent by ethnicity. Hence, it is not surprising that the informed and uninformed people tend to form virtually the same *prospective perceptions* about democracy in Kenya. In fact, 23.7% of uninformed and 24.9% of informed people feel that Kenya is likely to be democratic in future. The difference between these two perceptions is just 1.2%, is highly improbable, and hence statistically insignificant.

In contrast, the *retrospective perceptions* of the informed and uninformed people appear to respond to a different mix of factors. The latter rely on *incumbent partisanship* and only to a lesser extent on ethnicity when forming *retrospective perceptions*, while the former rely more on education, and only to a lesser extent, on *incumbent partisanship*. This attentiveness to different mix of factors yield a statistically significant difference in their *perceptions* about the extent to which the 2002 elections were free and fair. More specifically, 43.9% of the uninformed and 58.3% of the informed people regard the 2002 elections as having been very free and fair.

Table 4.3 shows that *incumbent partisanship* has the strongest and most consistent influence on the *retrospective* and *prospective perceptions* of both the informed and the uninformed people about democracy. In particular, strong *incumbent partisanship* raises optimism about the future of democracy in Kenya, and drives both the informed and the uninformed people towards the conclusion that the 2002 elections were free and fair. Yet again, *general partisanship* and *opposition partisanship* are not statistically significant. These are precisely the same results observed with respect to perceptions about the current state of democracy. In fact, as was the case then, all the other variables, except ethnicity, have no statistically significant effect on the *retrospective* and *prospective perceptions* of uninformed Kenyans about democracy.

Figures 4.4(a) and (b) shows predicted probabilities for the influence of *incumbent partisanship* on the *retrospective* and *prospective perceptions* of the uninformed people about democracy. All other variables in the two models are held constant at the median.



Figures 4.4 (a) and (b) gives a clearer view of the effect of *incumbent partisanship* on the *retrospective* and *prospective perceptions* of informed people about democracy. It shows that non-incumbent partisans are 19% more likely to feel that the 2002 elections in Kenya were very democratic (free and fair), and 30% more likely to feel that the elections were fairly democratic than non-democratic. This means that even without the influence of *incumbent partisanship*, Kenyans are still more likely to feel that the elections were either very democratic or at least, fairly democratic as opposed to being non-democratic. Moreover, these perception gaps widen further as the strength of incumbent partisanship increases, so that strong partisans are 58% more likely to feel that the elections were very democratic rather than non-democratic. In other words, *incumbent partisanship* increases

the probability of viewing the elections as very democratic by 32% while simultaneously reducing the probability of viewing them as non-democratic by 7%.

With respect to *prospective perceptions*, non-incumbent partisans are 31% more likely to form the perception that Kenya will be fairly democratic in future as opposed to being non-democratic. However, they are also 25% more likely to project that in future Kenya is likely to be a weak democracy. Hence, the probability that they would form optimistic *prospective perceptions* about democracy is just 6% more than the probability of forming pessimistic *prospective perceptions*. A change from non-incumbent partisan to strong incumbent partisan raises the probability of forming the perception that Kenya will be a strong democracy in future by 20%, while also increasing the probability of projecting that she will be fairly democratic by 11%. Yet, it also reduces the likelihood of projecting that Kenya will be a weak democracy by 22%.

In comparative terms, it is evident that while *incumbent partisanship* has the same degree of influence on the retrospective and the prospective perception of Kenya as a fair democracy (-11% and 11% respectively), it has a much greater influence on retrospective (32%) than prospective perception (20%) of Kenya as a strong democracy. On this score, it is apparent that *incumbent partisanship* makes the uninformed people more optimistic about the past than the future, and less pessimistic about the future than the past. This is hardly surprising, since the past is an experience that is already lived, and about which facts are available in memory, and hence one can be more definitive about it. However, the future is a matter of speculation which at the very least, calls for cautious optimism.

It is also clear that the stronger the *incumbent partisanship*, the greater the feeling that the 2002 elections were very free and fair, and hence Kenya was very democratic at least then. The corollary is also true. This is interesting when interpreted in the context of the Kenyan politics at the time. Given that the *incumbent* party (KANU) lost in the 2002 elections, and considering that no major shifts in party preferences occurred after those elections, the partisanship roles were reversed so that a significant portion of the pre-2002 opposition supporters became the (new) incumbent party (NARC) supporters and *vice versa*. Therefore, those who were incumbent partisans by the time of the survey in 2005 had been opposition partisans in 2002. They are expected to view the elections as unfair; otherwise they would give credit to the ‘out-group’ contrary to ‘group-serving biases’.

I argue that because uninformed citizens lack an objective criterion for determining whether elections are free and fair, there are two possible, though not mutually exclusive, bias-driven cues available to both uninformed incumbent partisans and uninformed non-incumbent partisans. First, the former may view elections as free and fair simply because the party they are aligned to was in power at the time and oversaw the electoral process. To say that the party they trust organized flawed elections would cast their party in bad light contrary to the well documented human penchant for ‘group-serving biases’.

Second, the incumbent partisans can judge the elections as free and fair merely because the party they are aligned to won those elections. In this case, to say that the elections were not free and fair is to suggest that their party too did not win fairly, which sounds absurd. The study results suggest that this second explanation is stronger among Kenyans. The tendency is for Kenyans to view elections as free and fair when those they associate with wins, even if elections are organized by an *incumbent* party that they do

not trust. However, elections are viewed as not free and fair when those they associate with lose, even when organized by an *incumbent* party that they trust a lot.

This attitude seems to be so deep-rooted that at one time the then vice-president, Professor George Saitoti, made the following remarks in the Kenya national assembly:

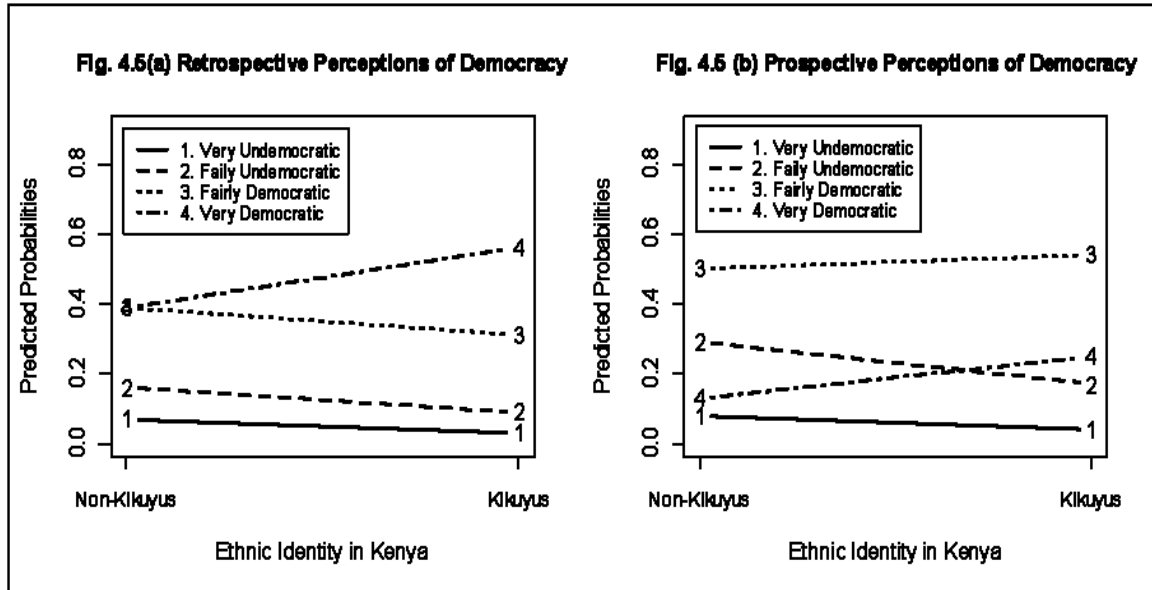
It should not always be that only if the opposition wins that elections will be free and fair and that when they do not win the elections are not free and fair. That is a wrong attitude.⁴⁴

Seen from a different perspective, the results suggest that *retrospective perceptions* about the 2002 elections were based on the respondent's party identity at the time of the survey in 2005 rather than their 2002 party identity. These findings open a useful line of research regarding whether people retain and defend previously held perceptions or shift those perceptions when their partisanship changes. Tentatively, it can be inferred that people adjust their previous perceptions whenever their partisanship attachments change from the ruling party to the opposition, or *vice versa*. However, the case presently under review may not be the ideal for such determination, hence the need for further research.

It is evident from table 4.3 that *ethnicity* is the only other variable that influences both the retrospective and prospective perceptions about democracy in Kenya among the uninformed Kenyans. Apparently, members of the president's ethnic group (*Kikuyus*) are more likely than the other Kenyans (non-Kikuyus) to form the perception that Kenya was democratic and will continue to be so in future. However, the effect of ethnicity appears to be minimal from table 4.3, suggesting that uninformed people rely more on *incumbent partisanship*, with ethnicity merely playing secondary role. I explore these clues using the

⁴⁴ Kenya National Assembly Official Record (Hansard). April 5, 1994. p.57

predicted probabilities or the uninformed Kenyans shown in figures 4.5 (a) and (b). The probabilities are computed while holding all the other variables constant at their medians.



Figures 4.5 (a) and (b) show that the probability of forming extreme pessimistic retrospective or prospective perceptions about democracy in Kenya is very low, and is not generally influenced in a significant manner by ethnicity. In other words, very few Kenyans, regardless of their ethnic identity, would neither argue that the 2002 elections were very undemocratic, nor forecast that Kenya could become very undemocratic in the future. The dominant perception among *Kikuyus*, just like the other Kenyans, was that the country would be fairly democratic in future. In fact, the proportion of *Kikuyus* holding the perception that Kenya will be fairly democratic in future (54%) is not significantly different from the proportion of other ethnic groups holding the same perception (50%). The only major difference in the prospective perceptions of the *Kikuyus* compared to other Kenyans is that the former is 12% more likely to feel that Kenya will be very democratic in future, and 12% less likely to feel that she will be fairly undemocratic,

compared to the latter. Thus, the overall picture is that *Kikuyus* are more likely to hold optimistic prospective perceptions about democracy than other Kenyans, and on average, Kenyans feel that the country will be fairly democratic in future.

Yet, just two years after the study survey data was collected, Kenya sunk deep into the undemocratic abyss, by conducting a thoroughly flawed election in 2007, that resulted in a catastrophic ethnic violence that left thousands of fatalities in its wake. The same Kenyans who did not foresee the country rolling back on its democratic gains, found themselves in the *Hobbesian* state of nature, cutting each other's throats with machetes at the instigation of the elite. As noted in the Freedom House (2010: 321), 'Kenya's December 2007 presidential election was a profound blow to the consolidation of electoral democracy that had gradually emerged over polls in 1992, 1997 and 2002 during the country's transition from three decades of post-independence one-party rule'.

With respect to retrospective *perceptions* about democracy, *Kikuyus* are 17% more likely than non-*Kikuyus* to perceive the 2002 elections to have been very democratic. It is tempting to think that since president Kibaki who won the 2002 presidential elections is a *Kikuyu*, the *Kikuyus* had overwhelmingly voted for him and his party (NARC), and therefore the elections were free and fair in their eyes simply because their preferred party and candidate won. However, the reality is more complex than this. Partly because Kibaki's main challenger in the elections was also a *Kikuyu*, he only secured 69% of the votes in his native central province, which is predominantly populated by *Kikuyus*. Yet, for instance, he received 76.3% and 72.5% of the votes in Eastern and Western provinces

respectively, where *Kikuyus* hardly constitute 1% of the population.⁴⁵ Hence, Kibaki did not get significantly more support from *Kikuyus* than from other Kenyan ethnic groups.

It seems that after Kibaki won elections, even *Kikuyus* who had not supported him or NARC in 2002, embraced him, while the *no-ethnics* who supported him like *Kambas*, *Luos* and *Luhyas*, began to drift away due to his failure to honor pre-election agreement. While the three ethnic groups overly voted for NARC in 2002, their attitude towards it was already tepid by 2005. For instance, 72.2% of *Kikuyus* expressed intentions to vote for NARC if elections were held in 2005, compared to 59.1% of the *Kamba*, 48.0% of the *Luhya*, and 15.7% of *Luos*. This behavioral disposition translated into a polarized voting pattern in the referendum held in November 2005, and in the disastrous 2007 elections, all of which turned out to be contests between the *Kikuyus* versus the rest of Kenyans.

This contextual information yields two crucial points. First, even those members of a president's ethnic group who did not vote for him in the elections, are likely to adopt positions that portray him/her and his/her party in good light during his/her presidency, and vote for him/her in the next elections. Indeed, in 2007, nearly all *Kikuyus* supported Kibaki's reelection. Ironically, even his 2002 challenger, Uhuru Kenyatta, "abdicated" his role as official opposition leader and momentarily abandoned his presidential quest to enhance Kibaki's re-election chances. While it can be argued that Uhuru did not contest the outcome as had been done by the losers in 1992 and 1997 elections largely to secure ethnic interests, the very fact that a loser conceded defeat presupposes that the elections were democratic (Lindberg, 2006). Taken together, these reasons explain why *Kikuyus* are more likely than non-*Kikuyus* to perceive the 2002 elections to have been democratic.

⁴⁵ European Union Observer Mission Report, 2003. P.72.

Consistent with the foregoing discussion, it is notable that though previous studies have emphasized that most people are incapable of accurately recollecting basic political facts (Lupia and McCubbins, 1998; Pasek and Krosnick, 2010), it also seems that people at times ignore facts for expediency even when they have them, and when they have effectively expressed them in the not so distant past. For example, Murunga and Nasongo (2006) notes that in the 2005 constitutional referendum, prominent Kikuyu elites who had demanded parliamentary system during the Moi era, including Kibaki, Koigi Wamwere, Paul Muite, John Michuki and Kamau Kuria, became its critics since a strong presidency was now in their ‘ethnic’ interest. While ‘concentration of power in the presidency was bad under Moi; it became reasonable once “one of our own” assumed power’ (*ibid* p.18).

Second, when the incumbent president or party loses an election, it is ideally in the interest of both winners and losers to portray the elections as free and fair since nobody wants to be viewed as having won flawed elections, or presided over flawed elections but still lost. It appears that people are more likely to view elections as free and fair if they share ethnic identity with the winner, but not if they share identity with the loser. Indeed, the likelihood that a *Kikuyu* would view the 2002 elections as fairly democratic or very democratic is 12.5% greater than that of *Kalenjins* (former president Moi’s ethnic group).

The final observation is that perceptions about the past, present and future state of democracy are positively correlated, so that those who think that the past was democratic think the same of the present and the future, and *vice versa*. Thus, depending on the other factors that influence perceptions about democracy, people either see Kenya as constantly if not increasingly becoming democratic or undemocratic. This is not surprising since nearly similar factors seem to influence the three forms of perceptions about democracy.

4.5.2 Retrospective and Prospective Economic Perceptions

In this section, I compare the impact of *partisanship* on the *retrospective* and *prospective perceptions* about the economy, by replicating the ordered logit regression model used in the previous sections. The regression results are shown in table 4.4. Once again, the four models shown are statistically significant, with no collinearity problems.

Table 4.4: Determinants of retrospective and prospective perception of the Economy

	Retrospective Perceptions		Prospective Perceptions	
	<i>Uninformed Kenyans</i>	<i>Informed Kenyans</i>	<i>Uninformed Kenyans</i>	<i>Informed Kenyans</i>
General Partisanship	-0.42 (1.70)	-0.11 (0.53)	0.42 (1.55)	0.36 (1.77)
Incumbent Partisanship	0.01 (0.08)	-0.22** (2.49)	0.30* (2.38)	0.55*** (6.43)
Opposition Partisanship	-0.31** (2.58)	0.02 (0.15)	0.04 (0.29)	-0.09 (0.96)
Education	0.02 (0.24)	-0.03 (0.64)	0.14 (1.65)	0.12* (2.35)
Ethnicity	-0.79* (2.30)	-0.41 (1.75)	0.52 (1.41)	0.89*** (3.98)
Patriotism	0.10 (0.98)	-0.03 (0.38)	0.11 (0.96)	0.11 (1.42)
Relative Deprivation	1.72*** (10.94)	2.57*** (17.71)	-0.63*** (-4.86)	-0.66*** (6.91)
Gender: Female	0.64* (2.36)	0.04 (0.22)	0.08 (0.27)	-0.01 (0.03)
χ^2 Likelihood Ratio	189.59	519.38	51.27	165.1
Observations	269	567	225	510

Entries are proportional ordered logit regression coefficients with t-values in brackets. Cut points are omitted for simplicity. Significance codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05

It can be inferred from table 4.4 that *relative deprivation* is the strongest and most consistent factor that influences the *retrospective* and *prospective perceptions* about the economy for both informed and uninformed Kenyans. It seems that relatively deprived Kenyans, regardless of whether they are informed or uninformed, are likely to develop optimistic *retrospective perceptions* and pessimistic *prospective perceptions* about the economy. This is not surprising because as narrowly defined in this study, one is viewed to be relatively deprived if his/her present living conditions are worse than the past living conditions. Hence, to be deprived in this sense implies that the past conditions were better than the present conditions. Yet, as past studies on Africa have found out, ‘views of the past strongly influence current and prospective perceptions’ (Bratton *et al*, 2005:225).

In essence, a person who feels that past economic conditions were better than the present is likely to form the perception that the conditions will be bad in future, and *vice versa*. That is, present economic perceptions are negatively correlated with retrospective perceptions, but positively correlated with prospective perceptions. Thus, people perceive their past, present and future economic conditions as a linear progression, so that when one moves from a *good economic past* to *bad present* or from *bad past* to *worse present*, he/she is likely to project the future economic conditions as bad or worse, and *vice versa*.

These results corroborate past studies which have found that, ‘if voters believe that the economy improved over the past year, then they might also be more likely to think that it will improve or continue to be strong in the future’ (Anderson, 2010: 150). Yet, the results counter the more curvilinear model proposed by Arceneaux (2004) who argues that, ‘when times are bad people tend to be optimistic about the future, but when times are good, they tend to be most pessimistic about the future’ (p. 201).

Figures 4.6 (a) and (b) show the predicted probabilities for the effects of relative deprivation on the retrospective and prospective economic perceptions.

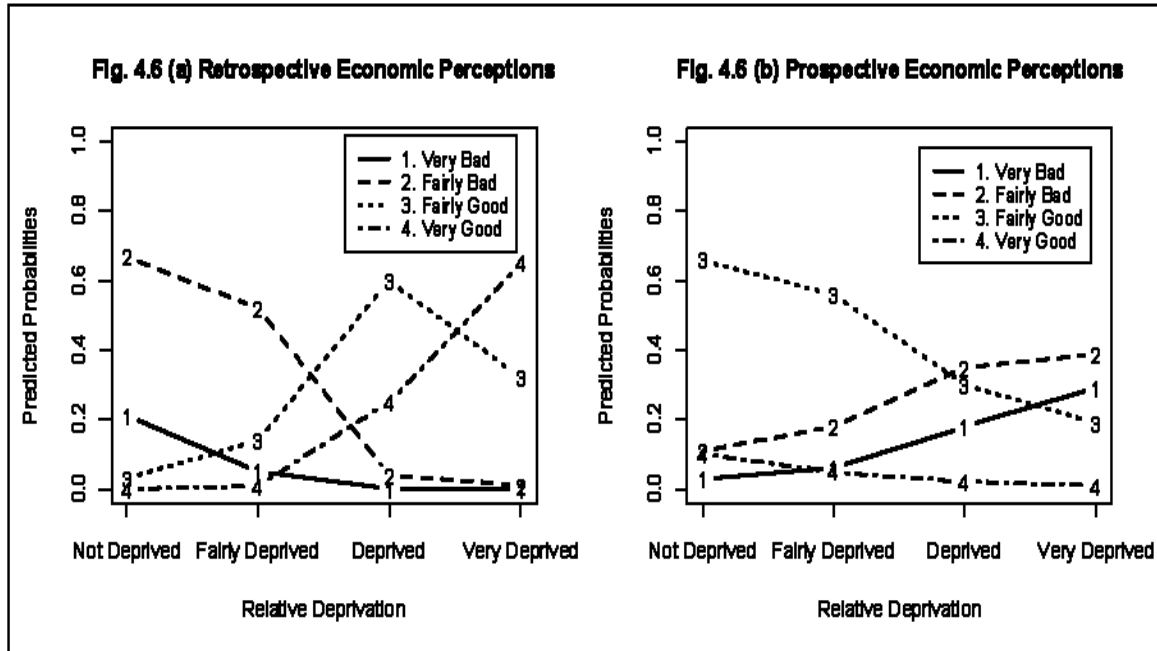


Figure 4.6(a) shows that as relative deprivation increases from not deprived to very deprived, the probability of forming the perception that the past economy was fairly bad or very bad decreases by 66%, and 21% respectively. A similar change raises the chances of judging the past economy as fairly good by 29% and very good by 65%. It is notable though that the predicted influence of relative deprivation on the perception that the past economy was fairly good increases only up to the ‘deprived’ level. Beyond this point, it declines by 28%, from 60% among deprived to 32% among very deprived people. These results suggest that an increased sense of deprivation enhances optimistic retrospective perceptions while reducing pessimistic retrospective perceptions. Thus, deprivation has an overall positive effect on retrospective economic perceptions of uninformed people.

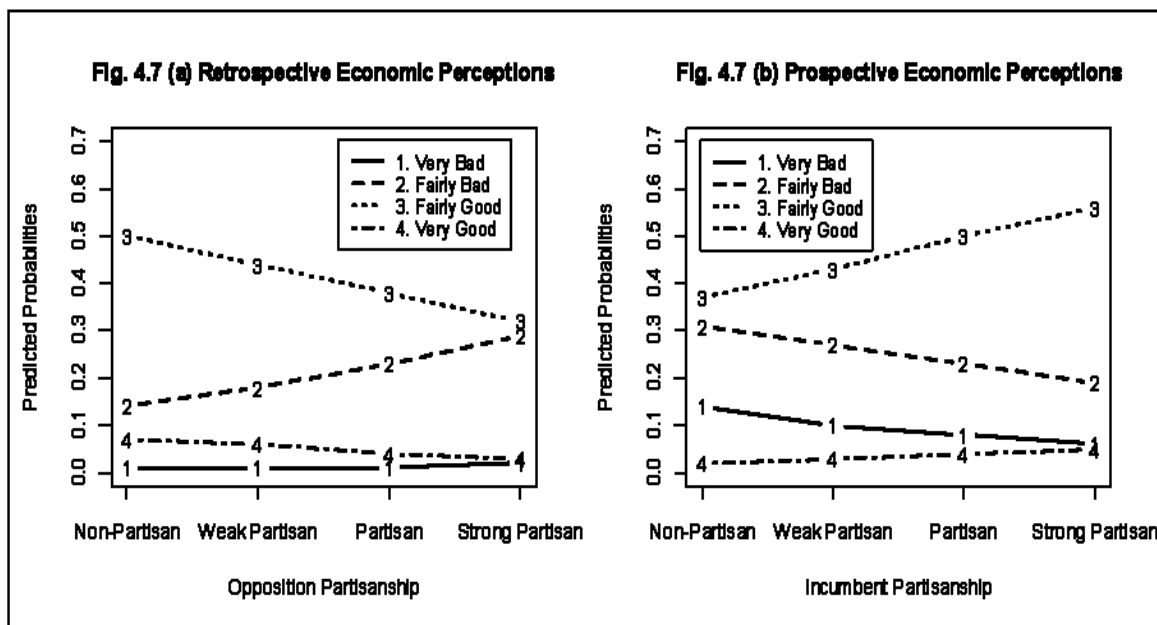
Similarly, figure 4.6(b) shows that a person who is not deprived is 63% more likely to form the perception that the future economy will be fairly good. Such a person is also 7% more likely to feel that the future economy will be very good, as opposed to very bad. However, a very deprived person is 38% more likely to project the future economy to be fairly bad, and 28% more likely to project it as very bad rather than very good. That is, relative deprivation increases the perception that the future economy will be fairly bad by 28%, and very bad by 26%. Yet, it reduces perceptions that it will be fairly good by 47% and very good by 9%. Given that relative deprivation reduces the likelihood of forming optimistic *prospective perceptions* while increasing pessimistic *prospective perceptions*, it has a negative net effect on *prospective economic perceptions* of uninformed Kenyans.

The fact that relative deprivation is a significant predictor of the retrospective and prospective *economic* perceptions of informed and uninformed people suggest that people may be using their individual living conditions to gauge national living conditions. If this is true then, the debate on whether voting decisions are motivated by individual economic conditions (*egotropism*) or by the national economic conditions (*sociotropism*) becomes immaterial, given that individual conditions are causally linked to the national conditions. This mindset overlooks the fact that individual conditions can be bad even with booming national economy (for instance, due to poor distribution of benefits of economic growth) and *vice versa* (for instance, individuals may still get jobs even amid employment crisis).

With regard to *partisanship*, table 4.4 shows that *incumbent partisanship* positively influences prospective economic perceptions of the informed and uninformed Kenyans. However, its effect on the retrospective economic perceptions is rather startling. To begin with, it does not significantly influence retrospective perceptions of uninformed Kenyans.

Moreover, its effect on the perceptions of informed people is negative. These findings are surprising given that its effect on the other five forms of perceptions under review in this study is significant and positive. Accordingly, *opposition partisanship* is the sole form of partisanship with significant effect on retrospective economic perceptions of uninformed Kenyans. Indeed, consistent with group-serving attribution bias, *opposition partisanship* has strong negative influence on their retrospective perceptions.

The predicted probabilities for the influence of the *opposition partisanship* on the *retrospective economic perceptions*, and the effect of *incumbent partisanship* on the prospective perceptions of uninformed people are shown in figures 4.7(a) and (b). All the other variables in each model are held constant at their medians.



It is clear from figure 4.7(a) that, regardless of where uninformed Kenyans place themselves on the *opposition partisanship scale*, they are more likely to view the past economy as either fairly good or fairly bad as opposed to very good or very bad. On the same vein, figure 4.7(b) show that, no matter their location on the *Incumbent partisanship scale*, uninformed Kenyans have a greater probability of viewing the country's economic future as either fairly good or fairly bad rather than very good or very bad. That is, they tend to avoid very high or very low retrospective or prospective economic perceptions.

Non-incumbent partisans are just 6% more likely to project that the future economy will be fairly good rather than fairly bad. This perception gap widens with increase in the strength of *incumbent partisanship*, so that strong partisans are 37% more likely to feel that the future economy will be fairly good as opposed to fairly bad. That is, *incumbent partisanship* raises the prospects of evaluating the future economy as fairly good by 19%, while reducing the prospects of evaluating it as fairly bad by 12%.

On the other hand, the probability that non-(opposition) partisans will view the past economy as fairly good is 37% greater than the probability that they would view it as fairly bad. However, the gap narrows as the strength of *opposition partisanship* increases in, so that strong *opposition* partisans are almost as likely to feel that the past economy was fairly good (32%), as they are to feel that it was fairly bad (29%). Thus, *opposition partisanship* reduces optimism by 22%, while increasing pessimistic perceptions by 15%.

Ethnicity is the other variable with significant influence on retrospective economic perceptions of the uninformed people. As already noted, Kenyans, regardless of ethnic identity, usually avoid extreme retrospective economic perceptions. They would rather depict the past economy as bad or good instead of very bad or very good. Surprisingly, an analysis of the predicted probabilities show that members of the president's ethnic group (*ethnics*) are 16% less likely to feel that the past economy was good, but 14% more likely to feel that it was bad, compared to other Kenyans (*non-ethnics*). While *non-ethnics* are 26% more likely to depict the past economy as good rather than bad, *ethnics* are almost as likely to depict it as bad (32%) as much as they are likely to say that it is good (28%). This is consistent with recent studies in Kenya which have reported that 'co-ethnics do not appear to gain materially from one of their own being in power' (Mueller, 2011:105).

I had expected that since the period referred to as "the past" in this context is just a year earlier, and the same president who was in power at the time of the interview had been in office for three years, the *ethnics* would form a more positive perception of the past, and indeed, the present economy. Just to be clear, the underlying assumption here is that uninformed people lack the capacity to know for certain how the national economy is doing, and even if they did, I expect them to take partisan and or ethnic cues and form perceptions that portray both the president and the incumbent party in favorable light that they are doing enough to improve the economy. Yet, the results show that the *ethnics* are in fact more disillusioned with the past economy than the *non-ethnics*. Up to this point, it is clear that uninformed people often use their living conditions to project the actual national living conditions, and hence the cynicism by the *ethnics* may reflect the fact that they may be expecting too much since the government is led by "one of their own".

These findings go to the heart of one of the paradoxes of ethnic voting. None of the more than 40 Kenya ethnic groups is large enough to win elections on its own. Even the largest ethnic group, *Kikuyus*, comprise only 20% of the population. Other larger ethnic groups are the *Luhya* (14%), *Luo* (11%), *Kalenjin* (11%) and *Kamba* (10%) (Beetham, 2002). In such a set up, even the most ethnic-minded leaders must reach out to some *non-ethnic* constituencies given that ethnic support cannot guarantee electoral victory. Indeed, despite Kibaki being from the largest ethnic group, he could not win the 1997 elections, and had to ride on the back of a multi-ethnic coalition to win in 2002.

After winning elections, the leader has to balance between keeping the *non-ethnic* supporters happy so as to retain their support in the future, and delivering the patronage resources to *the ethnics*. While *non-ethnics* can easily decamp to a more enterprising political client in the next elections, incumbent leaders hoping for re-election are more likely to secure the support of the *ethnics* even if for psychological reasons such as the self-esteem associated with sharing ethnic identity with the president. Hence, it is prudent for incumbent president to try and placate *non-ethnics* than the *ethnics*, if not both.

Apparently, after winning the 2002 elections, president Kibaki did not do enough to placate the *non-ethnics*, and by the time of the 2007 elections, he had lost the support of practically all the larger *non-ethnics* that had supported him in 2002 (the *Luhya*, *Luo*, and *Kamba*). The dramatic fallout was attributed to the perception that Kibaki was doing more for the *ethnics*, at the expense of the *non-ethnics*.

As Horowitz (2008:4) observes:

Kibaki had come to power on a promise to end tribalism in Kenya...Despite real achievements made by Kibaki government in terms of infrastructure, economic growth, education, and expanded political freedoms, many Kenyans felt Kibaki had failed to live to the promises he offered in 2002...But the Achilles heel for Kibaki was the perception that he had favored his own kikuyu ethnic group at the expense of others

While Horowitz provides a scholarly perspective to this issue, ordinary Kenyans have continued to echo similar sentiments even in daily discourses. As one reader noted in response to an article in *Daily Nation Newspaper*:

Admission of a problem is always the first form of therapy. But the problem is that most *Kikuyu* never admit nor do they talk against *Kikuyunization* of the government. It is this defense of this biasness that confirms to the rest of Kenyans that the *Kikuyus* are actually benefitting from the vice. Otherwise, if they were not, they would shout hoarse about it.⁴⁶

The fact that people seem to use individual living conditions as an indicator of the performance of the national economy, coupled with the finding that the *ethnics* are more upset with the economy than *non-ethnics*, show that the perception that Kibaki favored his ethnic group may not have been true after all, and that sharing ethnic identity with the president does not guarantee economic benefits. Yet, even when perceptions are devoid of facts, they still drive politics. An alternative explanation is that the perceptions may

⁴⁶ Anonymous comments on Gaitho Macharia. 2011. "Tibalistic Drivel Robbing Kenyans of Power to Reason and Common Sense". The *Daily Nation Newspaper* (Online Version), December, 23. Available online and last accessed on January 15 2012 at:<http://www.nation.co.ke/oped/Opinion/Tribalistic+drivel+robbing+Kenyans+of+power/-/440808/1295792/-/qe4t0u/-/index.html>

actually be accurate but as already noted, the *Kikuyu* folks were probably expecting too much from the Kibaki government given that it is led by “one of their own”.

How does the emerging pattern of the factors that influence retrospective and prospective economic perceptions, affect the actual perceptions of the informed and the uninformed? It is apparent from Table 4.4 that besides relative deprivation, which exerts strong influence on retrospective economic perceptions of the informed and uninformed people, no other variable concurrently influences both groups in statistically significant ways. The fact that informed and uninformed people appeal to different partisan scales, coupled with the latter’s further reliance on ethnicity, explains why they form different retrospective perceptions ($\chi^2 = 10.30, \alpha < 0.01$). In fact, 49.4% of uninformed and 61.0% of informed people feels that the past economy was either fairly good or very good.

In terms of *prospective economic perceptions*, Table 4.4 shows that the perceptions of both informed and uninformed people appear to be influenced primarily by two factors - relative deprivation and *incumbent partisanship*. To be precise, the perceptions of the former are further influenced by education and ethnicity. Yet, the *prospective economic perceptions* of informed and uninformed people are not different, since 52.6% of the uninformed and 51.0% of the informed feel that the future economy will be fairly good or very good. Thus, education and ethnicity do not alter perceptions of the informed much. These perceptions seem to be driven by relative deprivation and *incumbent partisanship*.

4.6 The Effect of Partisanship on Different Perceptions: Any emerging Patterns?

Up to this point, the study has established that partisanship significantly influences all the six forms of political perceptions under review. What remains now is to establish whether there are any emerging patterns in the formation of political perceptions by the uninformed people. To do this, I summarize the results obtained so far in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Significant Determinants of the Perceptions of Uninformed Kenyans

Perception Issue Area	Perception Timelines		
	Retrospective Perceptions	Present Perceptions	Prospective Perceptions
Politics (Democracy)	<i>Incumbent partisanship [3.46]**</i> <i>Ethnicity [1.96]*</i>	<i>Incumbent partisanship[5.11]***</i>	<i>Incumbent partisanship [3.11]**</i> <i>Ethnicity [1.94]</i>
The economy	<i>Relative Deprivation [10.94]***</i> <i>Opposition Partisanship [-2.58]**</i> <i>Gender [2.36]*</i> <i>Ethnicity [-2.30]*</i>	<i>Relative Deprivation [-2.73]**</i> <i>Incumbent partisanship [2.01]*</i> <i>Education [2.94]</i>	<i>Relative Deprivation [-4.86]***</i> <i>Incumbent partisanship [2.38]*</i>

The first observation is that *incumbent partisanship* is the only significant and most consistent predictor of all forms of political perceptions, except *retrospective economic perceptions* of the uninformed people, which is influenced by *opposition partisanship*. In essence, partisanship matters in the formation of political perceptions. More specifically, partisanship, particularly *incumbent partisanship*, is the single most significant predictor of perceptions about democracy. In contrast, even though partisanship is also a significant predictor of economic perceptions, its influence on economic perceptions is less strong compared to that of *relative deprivation*.

On this account, I make two conclusions. First, I now make a firmer conclusion, consistent with Iyenger's (1989) views, that perceptions about political issues are largely influenced more by political variables, while perceptions about the economy tend to be influenced more by economic variables. For instance, it has been argued that individual's socio-economic status influences their political perceptions, to the extent that 'individuals perceive the distribution of social goods – incomes, status, prestige – in relation to the extent to which they are in command of these goods' (Alberg, 2003: 89). Secondly, there is marked difference in the range and mix of factors that affect perceptions about political issues and those that affect perceptions about economic issues.

In terms of the specific forms of perceptions, it is notable that both the opposition partisanship and gender only comes into play in the formation of retrospective economic perceptions. Moreover, the effect of *relative deprivation* on retrospective economic perceptions is not only high compared to prospective and present economic perceptions, but is also in the reverse direction. While increased sense of relative deprivation promotes pessimistic economic perceptions about the present and the future, it evokes optimism about the past economy. Besides, education is only significant with regard to the present economic perceptions, and in fact, its influence on that perception even surpasses that of *relative deprivation*. Thus, it can be inferred that the factors that influence the formation of the three forms of economic perceptions are not only different from those influencing perceptions about democracy, but are, to a large extent, also different from each other.

As regards perceptions about democracy, it is notable that, while the set of factors that influence the formation of the retrospective and prospective perceptions are similar (*ethnicity* and *incumbent partisanship*), they differ from those that shape the perceptions

about the current state of democracy, which is only influenced by the former and not the latter. While further studies may be necessary to validate these findings, particularly the similarity between retrospective and prospective perceptions about democracy, evidence adduced up to now seems to sustain the thesis that political perceptions vary along two dimensions - *issue-area* and *issue-timeline*. This justifies the proposal to classifying perceptions by *issue-areas* and *time-lines* for better understanding.

4.7 Just how does Partisanship affect Political Perceptions?

So far, I have shown that, consistent with the political cue theory, partisanship has a significant influence on political perceptions. However, this only partially addresses the key question regarding what makes it possible for uninformed Kenyans to form informed perceptions that guide their actions and decisions in the democratic process. An equally important question which I turn to in the rest of this chapter is: just how does partisanship affect political perceptions? What does partisanship do to uninformed people that make them hold the same political perceptions as those who are well informed?

To address this question, I first focus on the influence of *incumbent partisanship* on the three forms of perceptions about democracy. The choice of *incumbent partisanship* should not be surprising for at least two reasons. First, as the results show, how people align themselves on the *incumbent partisanship* scale offers the best account of their perceptions about democracy compared to the other two forms of partisanship. Secondly, unlike the *general* and *opposition partisans* which are heterogeneous groups, *incumbent partisans* are a fairly a homogenous group. *General partisans* are heterogeneous since it lumps together both opposition and incumbent partisans; *Opposition partisans* are also

heterogeneous in that there are several parties that constitute the opposition, which may not necessarily send uniform cue signals to their respective partisans.

I reduced both the *incumbent partisanship* and the three types of perceptions about democracy to their dichotomous forms as shown in *footnote 28*. I then cross tabulated the *incumbent partisanship* with each of the three forms of perceptions about democracy. Next, I used the two-sided test of proportions to compare the proportions of informed and uninformed Kenyans who hold optimistic perceptions about democracy and how these proportions vary with the type and strength of partisanship. The results are in table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Effect of Partisanship on Perceptions about Democracy in Kenya

Type of Perception	Partisanship	Political Information		Test of Proportions with optimistic Perceptions	
		Uninformed	Informed	Difference	χ^2 Statistical Significance
Retrospective Perception of Democracy	Non-Partisans	67.3%	85.5%	18.2%	$p < 0.01^{***}$
	Incumbent Partisans	82.1%	89.3%	7.2%	0.22
	Effect of Partisanship	14.8%	3.8%	11.0%	0.01^{***}
Present Perception of Democracy	Non-Partisans	33.3%	56.9%	23.6%	$p < 0.01^{***}$
	Incumbent Partisans	60.2%	71.9%	11.7%	0.11
	Effect of Partisanship	26.9%	15.0%	11.9%	0.06
Prospective Perception of Democracy	Non-Partisans	50.0%	69.6%	19.6%	$p < 0.01^{***}$
	Incumbent Partisans	76.1%	81.9%	5.8%	0.40
	Effect of Partisanship	26.1%	12.3%	14.8%	0.02^{***}

The first observation that can be drawn from Table 4.6 is that the perception gap⁴⁷ between informed non-partisans and uninformed non-partisans is not only huge but also statistically significant across all the perception time-lines. More specifically, without the intervention of *incumbent partisanship*, informed Kenyans tend to have more optimistic perceptions about democracy than the uninformed Kenyans. This gap appears greater for perceptions about the present state of democracy (23.6%), but virtually the same for retrospective (18.2%) and prospective perceptions (19.6%). In contrast, the perception gap among partisans is smaller and insignificant across all the three perception time-lines.

These results have two significant implications. In the first instance, they suggest that political information has a much greater effect on perceptions of non-partisans than partisans. For instance, whereas political information increases optimistic *retrospective perceptions* about democracy by 18.2% among the non-partisans, it only raises optimism among partisans by 7.2%; and while it raises optimistic *prospective perceptions* by 19.6% among non-partisans, it only raises optimism among partisans by a meager 5.8%. In other words, while political information may not significantly change perceptions of incumbent partisans, well targeted political information can sway the perceptions of those who are not strongly aligned to the incumbent party with relative ease.

The other significant implication of these findings is that partisanship considerably reduces the perception gap between the uninformed and the informed to insignificant levels, thereby enabling the uninformed people to form virtually the same perceptions as the informed people. Indeed, it reduces the perception gap by 12% for the *retrospective*

⁴⁷ Perception gap is defined here as the difference in the proportion of the informed and uninformed Kenyans who feel that Kenya is either fairly or very democracy.

perceptions, 11.9% for *present perceptions*, and 14.8% for *prospective perceptions*. This supports a central thesis of this dissertation that partisanship intervenes in the process of forming political perceptions in ways that enable uninformed people to close either the political information gap or the perception gap between them and the informed, thereby enabling them to behave as if they are well informed.

The second observation, which is closely related to the first one, is that regardless of the type of perception time-line, the perceptions of uninformed partisan tends to be much closer to those of informed people than to those of uninformed non-partisans. That is, partisanship moves the perceptions of the uninformed closer to those of the informed. With respect to *retrospective perceptions* about democracy for instance, the perception gap between uninformed partisans and informed non-partisans is just 3.4%, while the gap between them and informed partisans is 7.2%. Yet, the perception gap between them and the uninformed non-partisans is a significant 14.8%. The same pattern is also evident in the present and prospective perceptions about democracy. This suggests that *incumbent partisanship* elevates the uninformed to the level of the informed.

It is also notable that *incumbent partisanship* and political information individually increases optimistic perceptions about democracy by nearly the same margin so that the difference between the effect of *partisanship* and the effect of political information on the perceptions about democracy are not only very small but also statistically insignificant. For instance, if uninformed non-(incumbent) partisans become *incumbent partisans*, their prospective perceptions about democracy become even more optimistic by 26.1%, but if instead, they become informed, it increases by 19.6%. The 6.5% difference is statistically

insignificant. In the case of present and retrospective perceptions, the differences are not only much smaller, but virtually the same (3.4% and 3.3% respectively). This suggests that partisanship can effectively serve as a substitute for political information.

To test whether the results also hold true for perceptions about the economy, table 4.7 compares proportions of the informed and the uninformed with optimistic economic perceptions, and how the perceptions vary with partisanship and political information.

Table 4.7 Effect of Partisanship on Perceptions about the Kenyan Economy

Type of Perception	Partisanship	Political Information		Test of Proportions with optimistic Perceptions	
		<i>Uninformed</i>	<i>Informed</i>	<i>Difference</i>	χ^2 Statistical Significance
Retrospective Economic Perception	Non-Partisans	59.5%	43.2%	-16.3%	0.01***
	Opposition Partisans	44.9%	39.3%	-5.6%	0.24
	<i>Effect of Partisanship</i>	<i>-14.9%</i>	<i>-3.9%</i>	<i>-10.7%</i>	<i>0.02***</i>
Present Economic Perception	Non-Partisans	20.3%	16.7%	3.6%	0.68
	Incumbent Partisans	25.7%	32.6%	6.9%	0.07
	<i>Effect of Partisanship</i>	<i>5.4%</i>	<i>15.9%</i>	<i>10.5%</i>	<i>0.03***</i>
Prospective Economic Perception	Non-Partisans	37.5%	31.4%	6.1%	0.53
	Incumbent Partisans	57.4%	56.4%	1.0%	0.89
	<i>Effect of Partisanship</i>	<i>19.9%</i>	<i>25.0%</i>	<i>5.1%</i>	<i>0.49</i>

Table 4.7 shows that, while the other forms of political perceptions are influenced by *incumbent partisanship*, *retrospective economic perceptions* are instead influenced by *opposition partisanship*. Furthermore, regardless of the level of political information, the proportion of *opposition partisans*, who are optimistic about the past economy, is smaller

compared to non-(opposition) partisans with similar economic perceptions. This suggests that *opposition partisanship* reduces rather than increase optimistic perceptions about the past economy. In contrast, the proportion of *incumbent partisans* who are optimistic about the present and the future national economy is greater than that of non-partisans, regardless of the information levels. Thus, consistent with what we observed with respect to perceptions about democracy, *incumbent partisanship* increases optimistic perceptions about the present and future economy. The *sine qua non* of these findings is that whether partisanship reduces or increases optimistic perceptions, its net effect is such that it tends to narrow the perception gap between the informed and the uninformed people.

The only apparent exception to this rule is perceptions about the present state of the economy. It is notable that the perception gap between the informed and uninformed non-partisans, with regard to the *present economic perceptions*, are already very small (3.6%), and statistically insignificant ($\alpha = 0.68$), even without the intervention of partisanship. *Incumbent partisanship* exacerbates this gap by increasing optimism about the current economy by a mere 5.4% among the uninformed, while considerably raising optimism by a massive 15.9% among the informed. The net effect of partisanship on *present economic perceptions* is that it widens the perception gap between the informed and uninformed.

Looked at from a different perspective, if the uninformed non-partisans become partisans, their likelihood of forming optimistic perceptions about the present economy would increase marginally by 5.4%. If instead they become informed, then the likelihood that they would form optimistic perceptions decreases equally marginally by 3.6%. Taken individually, the probability that these gaps would exist by chance is very high in both cases, and hence to a large extent, the differences are statistically insignificant. But taken

together, and considering that Kenya registered an impressive economic performance in 2005, these results show that the effect of *partisanship* on perceptions about the present economy is 10.5% greater than the effect of political information. This difference is not trivial any longer as it shows that it is *partisanship rather than* information that moves perceptions closer to the true state of the economy.

Since Kenya's 2005 economic performance⁴⁸ was the best in five years, those who are optimistic about the current state of the economy, are actually closer to the true state of the economy. Yet it is clear from tables 4.6 and 4.7 that one needs both partisanship and information to maximize optimism. Besides, if uninformed non-partisans are unable to secure both partisanship and information, then they are better off being *incumbent partisans* than being informed. This is because if they become partisans, they are likely to form perceptions favorable to the incumbent party, which in this case coincides with the real state of the economy. Yet, a partisan without information, which political cue theory treat as a perceptual screen that filters information, is unlikely to the cues meaningfully.

Several general conclusions can be drawn from the foregoing discussion. To begin with, *incumbent partisanship* is the most significant form of partisanship with the greatest effect on perceptions about democracy and the economy, except *retrospective economic perception*, which is influenced more by *opposition* rather than *incumbent partisanship*. Secondly, the effect of partisanship on perceptions about the economy is quite different from its effect on perceptions about democracy. While *incumbent partisanship* tends to raise optimism about democracy, it typically reduces optimism about the economy. In other words, the effect of partisanship on political perceptions varies with *issue-area*.

⁴⁸ See footnote 4 for more details on Kenya's economic outlook in 2005.

Figures 4.6 and 4.7 show that the effect of partisanship on political perceptions also varies across the three *perception timelines*. First, while partisanship decreases optimism about the past economy and increase optimism about the past democracy, the magnitude of these changes are virtually the same. In particular, the effect of *incumbent partisanship* on *retrospective perceptions* about democracy is -3.8% among the informed, and 14.8% among the uninformed. Similarly, the effect of *opposition partisanship* on *retrospective economic perceptions* is -3.9% among the informed and -14.9% among the uninformed. Secondly, partisanship uniformly changes perception gaps between the informed and the uninformed by about 10.0% for all forms of perceptions except prospective perceptions. However, partisanship reduces the perception gaps by roughly 15% for prospective perceptions about democracy, and by nearly 5% for prospective economic perceptions.

Finally, when we narrow the focus to *economic perceptions*, we notice for instance, that perceptions about the present economy differ from the others because it is the only one that is not significantly influenced by partisanship. Not only is optimism about the present economy very low, but it is neither significantly influenced by partisanship nor by political information. While these issues still need refinement, the results suggest that the effect of partisanship on perceptions varies with *issue-area* and *issue-timeline*, and justify classification of perceptions along the two continuums for better understanding.

4.8 Chapter Conclusion

The primary objective of this chapter was to address the third dissertation research question: *How do information deficient citizens form political perceptions that guide their decisions and actions in the democratic process?* To answer this question, I tested three hypothesis derived from political cue theory and anchored the study on the premise

that perceptions determine behavior (Conover and Feldman, 1984; Zaller, 1992; Walsh 2004; Cassino *et al*, 2007; Cottam *et al*, 2010). Thus, I began discussions in this chapter with a justification for focusing on perceptions about democracy and the economy.

The first hypothesis (*H 3.1*) postulates that partisanship has a greater effect on the perceptions of the uninformed than the informed people. To begin with, the results show that both informed and uninformed Kenyans use partisan cues. However, when it comes to who is affected most by partisan cues, the results are decidedly mixed, and vary from one partisanship scale to the other. For instance, the effect of *general partisanship* on the perceptions of the informed and uninformed Kenyans is virtually the same. In contrast, *opposition partisanship* has a greater effect on the perceptions of the informed than the uninformed people. It is *incumbent partisanship* which conforms to the above hypothesis.

Hypotheses *H 3.2* state that the effect of partisanship on perceptions of uninformed Kenyans vary with issue-area. Consistent with this hypothesis, perceptions about political issues are affected more by political variables, while those about economy are affected more by economic variables. These results support Iyenger's (1989) idea that perceptions about an issue depend on factors related to it. For instance, *incumbent partisanship* is the most consistent predictor of perceptions about both democracy and the economy, except *retrospective economic perceptions*, which are affected more by *opposition partisanship*. However, the effect of *incumbent partisanship*, which is a political variable, is stronger on perceptions about democracy, which is political, than on perceptions about the economy. While *incumbent partisanship* is the strongest predictor of perceptions about democracy, its effect on economic perceptions is secondary to that of relative deprivation

and education. Besides, relative deprivation, which is economic variable, affect economic perceptions of the informed and the uninformed, yet its effect on present perceptions about democracy, is insignificant. Moreover, *incumbent partisanship* raises optimistic perceptions about democracy, but reduces optimistic perceptions about the economy.

Hypothesis *H 3.3* suggests that the effect of partisanship on political perceptions varies with *issue time-line*. While perceptions about the current state of democracy are largely influenced by *incumbent partisanship*, *retrospective* and *prospective perceptions* about democracy are further influenced by ethnicity. Likewise, *opposition partisanship* and ethnicity influences *retrospective* economic perceptions, yet they have no effect on *present* or *prospective* economic perceptions. Further, *retrospective* and *prospective* economic perceptions are largely influenced by *relative deprivation*, yet this is not true in the case of present economic perceptions which are influenced more by education.

This chapter also found that *partisanship* intervenes in the process of forming the political perceptions in ways that reduces the perception gap between the uninformed and the informed, thereby enabling the former to develop similar behavioral dispositions as the latter. Indeed, *opposition partisanship* significantly reduces optimism about the past economy among the uninformed, but only slightly among the informed. Yet, *incumbent partisanship* radically raises optimism about the present economy among the informed but only slightly among the uninformed. In both cases, perception gaps between informed and uninformed citizens reduced noticeably. Lastly, partisanship can substitute political information well, since both produces congruent effects at least on perceptions about democracy. It also seems to drive perceptions in the direction of, or closer to reality.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

5.1 General Overview of the Study and its Findings

This study was conceived within the context of normative democratic theory which, among other things, postulates that democracy requires well-informed citizens in order to function properly (Berelson *et al*, 1954; Dalton, 2008; Blais, 2010; Levendusky, 2011). Informed people are said to exhibit political behavior that is more supportive of democracy than uninformed people (Converse, 1964; Carpini and Keteer, 1996; Campbell, 2003; Carpini, 2009). For instance, political information promotes political participation so that the informed tend to vote more than the uninformed (Zaller, 1992; Carpini and Keteer, 2005; Lutz, 2006). Information also empowers people not just to understand their political world, but to form political attitudes consistent with their values and aspirations (Carpini and Keteer, 2005). These alleged differences between informed and uninformed people arise because the former tend to consider a wider range of issues when making political decisions and engaging in political activities than the latter (*ibid*).

However, study after study, mainly in the advanced democracies, shows that most people lack requisite political information (Page and Shapiro, 1992; Carpini and Keteer, 1996; Shenkman, 2008; Brennan, 2011; Norris, 2011). Yet the information-deficient citizens somehow drive the information-intensive democratic process effectively (Zakaria, 1997; Lansford, 2008; Swift, 2010). The emergent democratic puzzle is: how do we reconcile the very compelling theoretical postulation that democracy requires informed citizens to function well, with empirical evidence suggesting that democracy works well

even when most citizens are poorly informed? That is, *if indeed, democracy requires informed citizens, what makes it possible for it to work well even in the face of an acute information-deficit?* It is this puzzle that I set out to resolve in this dissertation.

One possible answer to this question is to admit that people are actually well informed but it is the way we measure political information that is problematic. Indeed, there is virtually no agreement among scholars on how to measure political information, or even what it means (Jones and McDermott, 2009; Jacoby, 2010). Moreover, the idea that citizens lack political information is based on studies done largely in advanced democracies and must be treated not as a universal fact, but as a feature of advanced democracies that need to be retested in new and emerging democracies like Kenya.

I tested this first possibility in *chapter two* by developing a new and robust formula for measuring political information (PII Index), and using it not only to evaluate information levels among Kenyans, but also to determine whether information varies systematically among Kenyans, and the factors that account for the variation. The results do not support this informed citizen explanation. Instead, the data show that Kenyans, like citizens of advanced democracies, have low political information levels.

The second possible solution to the democratic puzzle is to admit that information is necessary for democracy to work well, and to argue that democracy cannot and does not work well whenever most citizens have huge political information deficit. Hence, in *chapter three*, I tested whether *democracy* functions properly even in the face of huge political information deficit. In doing so, I used three indicators of a well functioning democracy - *knowledge of democracy, satisfaction with democracy, and support for*

democracy. I offered several rationales for using each of these indicators. For instance, with respect to *knowledge of democracy*, I showed that people who know the meaning of democracy tend to support it (Bratton and Mattes, 2001). When democracy works well, people tend to adopt behaviors and attitudes that support it and abstain from those that put it at risk. Hence, democracy becomes “the only game in town” and citizens tend to know it and its rules (Przeworski, 1991; Linz and Stepan, 1997; Putnam, 2000). Once again, the results do not support this solution. Instead, democracy, as understood by the citizens, apparently works fairly well despite the information deficit among Kenyans. (Semetko, 2010). Moreover, expert evaluations by the *Freedom House* also support the idea that democracy seems to work well in Kenya, at least during the period under study.

Taken together, the results from chapters two and three raise an important question: *How can uninformed people who have poor understanding of democracy, are inattentive to critical issues, and have inconsistent democratic attitudes, nevertheless evaluate democracy with the same precision as experts and informed people with better knowledge of democracy, who are attentive to issues, and with consistent democratic attitudes?*

In chapter four therefore, I addressed the last possible solution to the puzzle. In this regard, I drew two important assumptions from political cue theory. First, political behavior is driven by subjective political perceptions rather than objective political facts (Canover and Feldman, 1984; Zaller, 1992; Walsh, 2004; Oskamp and Schultz, 2005; Cassino *et al*, 2007; Morris, 2008; Cottam *et al*, 2010). Secondly, uninformed people tend to think heuristically rather than ideologically about political issues. As a result, the uninformed draw political cues from the political parties that they trust. The cues shape their political perceptions, which, in turn, inform and guide their political decisions and

actions in the information-intensive democratic process (Canover and Feldman, 1984; Iyenger and McGuire, 1993; Carpini and Keteer, 1996; Lau and Redlawsk, 2001; Hacker, 2004; Jacoby, 2010). Hence, democracy works well even when there is a huge political information deficit among citizens, because the uninformed citizens are able to surmount information deficiency by relying on heuristic partisan cues.

The findings in chapter four largely support the prime hypothesis of political cue theory. More specifically, *partisanship* intervenes in the process of forming political perceptions in ways that fundamentally reduces the perception gap between the uninformed and the informed, thereby enabling the former to develop similar behavioral predispositions as the latter. To the extent that partisanship produces nearly the same effect on political perceptions as political information (at least in the case of perceptions about democracy), it can substitute political information well. In any case, partisanship often seems to drive perceptions in the direction of, or closer to, the reality.

Taken together, the study findings show that the reason why democracy appears to function well, even though study after study show that citizens are poorly informed, may be because citizens use political cues to abridge their lack of information. In conclusion, therefore, I concur with Canova and Feldman's (1982:242-243) observations that:

The prospects for democracy are not as bleak as some might suppose. Voters are enterprising souls who, when faced with adverse conditions do the best they can. Though it is not a perfect substitute for the unbiased perception of clear candidate stands, the use of political cues to infer candidates' issue positions is a reasonable response to candidate ambiguity... Reliance on party cues may be an effective means for voters to cope with an otherwise ambiguous political environment.

5.2 Specific Findings of the Study and their Implications

5.2.1 A New Robust Political Information Index (PII Index)

A major contribution of this study is the development of a new robust political information index. From an extensive literature search, I suggest that the questions used in constructing political information index should, as far as possible, meet the following conditions. First, the questions should be factual rather than matters of opinion (Zaller, 1992; Carpini and Keteer, 1996; Kahn and Kennedy, 1999; Kuklinski *et al*, 2000). Second, questions should be open-ended rather than closed-ended (Lau, 1986; Hagen, 1995; Graber, 2001; Krosnick *et al*, 2010; Pasek and Krosnick, 2010; Brennan, 2011).

In addition, the questions testing political information should be few but carefully selected (Carpini and Keteer, 1996; Mondak, 2001; Alberg, 2003; Althaus, 2003; Carpini, 2009). Since there is no fixed or readily accessible pool from which such questions can be drawn (Carpini and Keteer, 1996; Krosnick, 1998; Kuklinski and Quirk, 2001; Marcus, 2009; Krosnick *et al*, 2010), I suggest that instead of specifying a fixed number, or compiling a list of questions appropriate for information index, one should identify and classify questions that meet the above minimum thresholds into a broad taxonomy. The information index should incorporate questions from each category. I propose two broad categories of questions - questions on *key political institutions and processes*, and questions on the outputs of the political process, namely *public policies*. Fourth, there should be a mix of easy and difficult questions (Zaller, 1992; Carpini and Keteer, 1993; Mondak, 1995; Converse, 2000; Coaley, 2010). Fifth, questions should have sufficient empirical relationship among themselves so that responses to any of them can help to predict responses to any of the others (Coaley, 2010; Babbie, 2010).

Finally, in the context of open-ended factual questions, *incorrect guesses* and *don't know responses* should be viewed as outward manifestations of individual respondent's willingness to either admit lack of information (honesty) or to hide lack of information (dishonesty). Hence, it adds no value to encourage or discourage *don't know responses*, given that respondents will still bring them out depending on their mental predispositions. Besides, since *don't know responses* and *incorrect guesses* do not constitute meaningful information, they should neither be viewed as shades of information as suggested by Mondak (2001), nor included when computing the political information index.

I have conceptualized and operationalized political information as a *relative* rather than an *absolute measure*, so that each individual's information level is expressed as a function of, or relative to, the *average citizen's* information level, which is the cut-off between the informed and the uninformed. This is a marked departure from the arbitrary, anonymous, and often subjective distinctions between informed and uninformed citizens that currently prevail in the literature (Norris, 2011a). I have offered several advantages of the *PII Index* over traditional political information measures. The PII Index hopefully resolves measurement problems in the study of political information (Prior and Lupia, 2008; Jones and McDermott, 2009; Jacoby, 2010; Norris, 2011a) since it is robust enough to use in comparative study of political information levels across countries and regions.

5.2.2 Mean Political Information Level is Low, but Variance is very high.

Consistent with the findings of other past studies (Zaller, 1992; Converse, 2000), this study results show that Kenyans are generally poorly informed, with very low mean national political information, and an equally high variance. Hence, as Converse (2000) observed more than a decade ago, it is now even clearer that 'we hardly need to argue

low information levels any more' (p. 331). A major implication of this finding is that the problem of low political information levels is real and widespread even in the new and emerging democracies. It is neither a mere artifact of poor measurement of political information, nor a feature of the advanced democracies.

The high variance in the political information levels is partly because it is strongly influenced by several factors such as type and degree of partisanship, gender, educational attainment, and the extent of involvement in political discussions. For instance, *general* and *opposition partisanship* have significant influence on political information levels, while *incumbent partisanship* is not significant. When these results are interpreted in line with Petty and Cacioppo's likelihood cue-taking model, cues drawn from the *opposition* parties tend to follow 'the central route' by focusing on the substance of the issues at hand, thereby enhancing information levels. In contrast, cues taken from the *incumbent* party tend to follow 'the peripheral route' by focusing largely on extraneous issues, and hardly enhance information levels. Yet, our 2005 Afrobarometer data on Kenya show that it is the *incumbent partisanship* rather than the *opposition or general partisanship* which has a much greater and statistically significant influence on political perceptions.

In essence, partisan cues that purport to provide the uninformed with information hardly influence their perceptions in statistically significant ways, perhaps because the uninformed cannot interpret such information accurately, given that 'it takes information to generate new combinations of information' (Converse, 2000:336). Alternatively, it is also possible that the information is usually deliberately distorted given that 'much of the information carried in elite discourse is neither neutral nor strictly factual...since they have been framed for partisan purposes' (Zaller, 1992: 22). Moreover, Kenyan parties are

ineffective conduits for disseminating political information given that they are not well institutionalized. It is in this context that we need to understand the arguments that the heuristic cues may sometimes mislead rather than enlighten the citizens (Bartels, 1996; Althaus, 2003; Kuklinski and Quirk, 2000; Lau and Redlawsk, 2001).

5.2.3 The Propensity to Guess is highly correlated with Political Information Levels

Although *incorrect guesses* do not in themselves constitute political information, there is a strong positive correlation between the predisposition to make guesses when one is unsure of the answer, and one's level of political information. To begin with, the same set of factors that increase the likelihood of making *incorrect guesses* like *general partisanship*, education, and male-gender, are more or less the same factors that increase political information levels. Hence, respondents typically have higher information scores if they have the tendency to *guess* than if they honestly admit that they *don't know*. This suggests that either people who know most questions tend to guess the few they do not know, or alternatively, a significant proportion of what people guess usually turn out to be correct, thereby boosting their political information scores.

To underscore this discussion, it is noteworthy that the average PII Index for the uninformed respondents who tend to guess when unsure is -0.238, and for those who tend to admit they *don't know* when unsure is -0.390. The difference is 0.152, which is virtually the same as the national PII Index of 0.151 (which is the difference between *accurate* and *inaccurate responses*). Put differently, for an average person, the ratio of *incorrect guesses* to *don't know* responses (60:40) are nearly the same as the ratio of

*accurate responses to inaccurate responses*⁴⁹ (58:42). In other words, for every five questions that a respondent is unsure of answers, he/she is likely to *guess* three and admit he/she *doesn't know* two; and for all questions that a respondent is presented with, he/she will answer three correctly and give inaccurate response for two. The actual ratio of 3:2 would obviously change from one context to another, but the more fundamental question is whether the fact that the ratio of *incorrect guesses* to *don't know*' responses is the same as the ratio of *accurate to inaccurate responses*, is unique to this study or is a general pattern observable in other studies. However, a detailed examination of this issue is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Until then, it can be tentatively concluded that *guessed responses* significantly contribute to the observed political information levels.

5.2.4 Most people are Generalists rather than Specialists on Political Information

Consistent with the view that people tend to be generalists rather than specialists (Carpini and Keteer, 1993; Althaus, 2003; Carpini, 2009), the data shows that those who are knowledgeable about one issue, tend to be knowledgeable about other issues too, and thus tend to get a higher PII Index than those who are not knowledgeable, and *vice versa*. For instance, the probability that someone who is knowledgeable about constitutionality of law would also know the presidential term limits is 34%, while the probability that someone who is not knowledgeable about the former would know the latter is only 11%. Besides, 98% of all the respondents who correctly answered all the six questions I used to construct the PII Index were able to correctly define democracy too. In contrast, only 30% of those who did not answer any of the six questions correctly were able to correctly define democracy. However, the fact that people tend to be generalists should not be

⁴⁹ *Inaccurate responses* is a combination of *incorrect guesses* and *don't know*' responses.

misconstrued to imply that people know all things equally well. In fact, even the most informed people know some issues better than others (Alvarez and Brehm, 2002). For instance, I found that on average, knowledge of the public policy component of the PII Index represents nearly two-thirds of an individual's political knowledge reflected in the PII Index. Therefore, to a large extent, an individual's PII Index depends on how well he/she understands the public policy component of the political information index.

One implication of the preceding finding is that people tend to be relatively better informed about the dynamic outputs of the political process such as public policies, than the more stable political institutions and processes like the constitutionality of the law and the presidential tenure. This fairly high level of information regarding public policy is good, because it shows that citizens are attentive to public policies and can use it not only for electoral decisions, but also for purposes of holding elected leaders accountable. However, information about public policy is more useful if electoral politics revolves around issues, and if it is matched with knowledge of political institutions. But it is also important for the masses to be able to distinguish the policy positions held by different political parties and candidates for a more informed choice of leaders, and to be able to hold elected leaders accountable for their actions (Craig *et al*, 2005). Thus, what is needed is balanced knowledge of public policies and political institutions and processes.

5.2.5 The Partisanship Variable is multidimensional rather than Unidimensional

Although partisanship is a cornerstone variable in political behavior research, its conceptualization continues to be dogged with controversies (Baker *et al*, 1981; Bartle, 2001; Jones, 2001; Blais *et al*, 2002; Best and Radcliff, 2005; Miller and Klobucar, 2005; Settle *et al*, 2009; Kroh and Selb, 2009). A key point of contention in this debate is

whether partisanship is a unidimensional or multidimensional variable. I argue that, in the political contexts characterized by multiplicity of political parties, it is only reasonable to treat partisanship as a multidimensional variable. This is particularly critical in the new and emerging democracies where partisanship is fluid and being partisan relative to the opposition does not preclude being partisan relative to the incumbent party. In fact, even in the advanced democracies like the United States, it has been argued that ‘partisanship should not be measured on a single dimension running from strong Democrat to strong Republican, because adhering to any of the categories is not the polar opposite of another category on the scale’ (Best and Radcliffe, 2005:503).

Under the circumstances, I proposed and tested a three-pronged conceptualization of partisanship comprising *general partisanship* (self-reported closeness, rather than attachment to, or membership of a party); *incumbent partisanship* (partisanship relative to the incumbent party); and *opposition partisanship* (partisanship relative to the opposition parties). Consistent with Best and Radcliffe’s (2005) contention above, the study found that the three continuums along which I have measured partisanship (the *general partisanship* continuum, the *incumbent party* continuum, and the *opposition parties* continuum) are completely independent of each other so that being partisan along one continuum does not necessarily preclude being partisan on the other continuums. This suggests that none of the three partisanships are significantly correlated.

Moreover, the various models in which partisanship has been used as independent variable in the data shows that each type of partisanship influences the dependent variables differently. For instance, while, *general partisanship* has positive influence on political information levels, *opposition partisanship* has negative influence, while the

incumbent partisanship has no statistically significant influence. Hence, the tendency to treat partisanship as a unidimensional variable, ranging from *non-partisans* to *partisans*, without isolating *incumbent* from *opposition partisans*, should be reconsidered for studies in multiparty contexts. The results justify the use of a three-pronged conceptualization of the partisanship variable, and underscore the utility of incorporating all the three partisanship variables in models testing its influence in multiparty contexts.

5.2.6 Democracy Functions well in Kenya despite Information Deficit

The study results show that democracy, as viewed by citizens, works fairly well in Kenya even in the face of information deficit. More specifically, Kenyans generally have a high level of understanding of democracy, so that three in every four Kenyans are able to correctly define democracy. The relatively high level of knowledge of democracy can be interpreted as an indication that democracy may be increasingly becoming “the only game” in Kenya as Przeworski (1991) puts it, and hence Kenyans know it and its rules.

In addition, Kenyans are also generally satisfied with the way democracy works in their country. Indeed, three in every five Kenyans are generally satisfied with democracy. Citizens’ evaluation of how well democracy is working has been found to mirror reality so that when citizens say they are satisfied, it usually turns out that even scholars agree that democracy is functioning well in that country (Norris, 2011b). Finally, the study also found a very high level of support for democracy among Kenyans, whereby four in every five Kenyans support democracy. Yet again, support of democratic principles is a critical attitude for a democratic citizen. While support for democratic ideals may not necessarily mean that democracy is working well, it is unlikely that a democracy would thrive and function well without a citizenry that embraces democratic values and attitudes.

5.2.7 Education is Key but not the only Determinant of Knowledge of Democracy

The results show that education is the only variable with consistent, significant and positive influence on knowledge of democracy for both informed and informed people. Nonetheless a surprisingly significant proportion of people without formal education (43%), are also able to define democracy. Further analysis reveal that when uninformed people without formal education engage in political discussions frequently, they tend to have better understanding of democracy, suggesting that they gain from the discussions.

The results further show that as political information level increases, the likelihood of knowing democracy increases too, so that *informed citizens tend to understand the meaning of democracy more than the uninformed*. This reinforces the view that people tend to be generalists as opposed to specialists, so that those who know a set of issues (like the issues used to compute the PII Index) are equally likely to know other issues (such as the meaning of democracy) (Zaller, 1986; Carpini and Keteer, 1993).

I use a simple *information-accessibility* and *information-seeking behavior* model to account for the disparities in the levels of understanding of democracy between the urban and rural dwellers in Kenya. I begin from the two premises that information is relatively more readily accessible in urban than rural areas, and that informed people tend to engage in *information-seeking behavior* (Bimber, 2003; Converse, 2000). Thus, informed urban dwellers tend to be more knowledgeable about democracy. Relatedly, I have shown that the information-seeking behavior of informed people, coupled with their interest in public affairs, also explain their relatively better knowledge of democracy.

Surprisingly, none of the three partisanship variables has a statistically significant effect on knowledge of democracy. Hence, *partisans are just as likely as non-partisans to understand democracy*. Put differently, being closer to a party does not improve one's understanding of democracy. This is perhaps because the structure and operations of most Kenyan political parties neither makes them models of democracy, nor reliable conduits for disseminating democratic values and ideals. Under the circumstances, it is pointless for a partisan to try to discern the meaning of democracy by observing what goes on in the political parties, at least in Kenya, since the results would be thoroughly misleading.

5.2.8 People tend to adjust previous perceptions whenever their Partisanship changes

It is expected that in an election in which the incumbent president and or political party loses, it is in the interest of both winners and losers to portray the elections as free and fair since nobody wants to be viewed as having won flawed elections, and nobody wants to be seen to have presided over but still lost flawed elections. If this argument holds then *opposition partisans* may view elections as free and fair purely because their party was in power at the time and oversaw the election process. The *incumbent partisans* may also view the elections as free and fair just because to say that the elections were not free and fair is to suggest that their party too did not win fairly. In essence, partisanship would not influence perceptions about the elections since people would view elections as free and fair regardless of their locations on *opposition* or *incumbent* partisanship scales.

Contrary to these expectations, the results show that *incumbent partisans* are more likely than the non-(*incumbent*) *partisans* to view elections as having been free and fair. It is notable that since the *incumbent* party (KANU) lost the elections, partisan roles were supposed to have reversed so that a significant segment of the 2002 *opposition partisans*

became *incumbent partisans* and *vice versa*. Ideally therefore, *incumbent partisans* at the time of survey in 2005 were *opposition partisans* or at least *non-(incumbent) partisans* in 2002. These results show that *retrospective perceptions* about the 2002 elections were influenced more by closeness to the winning party rather than closeness to the party that organized the elections. More fundamentally, it appears that the perceptions were based on respondents' partisan identity at the time of survey in 2005 rather than their identity at the election time in 2002. This finding supports the view that 'people tend to assume that they always believed what they believe today' (Pasek and Krosnick, 2010: 41). Furthermore, it suggests that people tend to adjust their previous perceptions whenever their partisanship changes from *incumbent* to the *opposition*, and *vice versa*.

5.2.9 Informed Citizens pay attention to a wider range of issues than the uninformed

Consistent with the extant literature, the findings support the view that informed people tend to pay attention to, and hence anchor their evaluation of democracy on, a much wider range of issues than uninformed people (Bennie, 2001; Carpini and Keteer, 2005; Abrajano and Alvarez, 2010). In terms of knowledge of democracy for instance, the uninformed are influenced largely by education and, to a little extent, by ethnicity. However, the informed are influenced by education, interest in public affairs, and residence. Also, satisfaction with democracy among both informed and uninformed people is primarily influenced by *economic policy approval* and *incumbent partisanship*. However, in addition to these variables, satisfaction with democracy among the informed also depends on *general partisanship*, *freedom of speech* and *government corruption*.

5.2.10 The Informed have more consistent Democratic Attitudes than the Uninformed

A critical component of democratic consolidation, which is often ignored, is the extent to which citizens have gained and nurtured democratic attitudes. When democracy functions well and becomes ‘the only game in town’, citizens are likely to form attitudes that support democratic values and ideals, and hence are antithetical to non-democratic ideals and practices. Linz and Stepan (1997) capture these issues in two of their dimensions of democratic consolidation – *behavioral* and *attitudinal*. The former occurs when the forces bent on propagating non-democratic values are absent, while the latter occurs when mass public opinion favors democracy as the best form of government.

Against this background, I tested for the consistency of democratic attitudes among the informed and uninformed Kenyans, using seven related democratic attitude measures - *support for democracy, support for universal adult suffrage, support for rule of law, support for free and fair elections, opposition to one-man rule, opposition to a one-party system and opposition to military rule*. In line with the findings of several past studies (see Bennie, 2001; Reilly, 2010), the results show that informed people tend to have more consistent democratic attitudes than uninformed citizens.

5.2.11 Both the Informed and Uninformed Kenyans Use Partisan Cues

We already know from political cue theory, which guides this study, that citizens derive political cues from political parties they trust, and that the cues enable uninformed people to act as though they are informed (Canover and Feldman, 1984; Popkin, 1991; Luppia, 1994; Sekhon, 2004; Kam, 2005; McDermott, 2006). One of the issues that has remained unclear is whether it is only the uninformed people who use partisan cues, or

whether both the informed and the uninformed use partisan cues. This study has shown that both informed and uninformed people use partisan cues.

The other issue that has also been unclear among those who subscribe to the view that both informed and uninformed people use cues is whether partisanship has a greater influence on the perceptions of uninformed than informed people. This problem has been exacerbated by the fact that past studies have traditionally defined partisanship as a single *unidimensional variable* constructed on the basis of party ideology. This has made it difficult to tell whether partisan inclinations towards the incumbent party and the opposition parties influence the informed and the uninformed in the same way. The issue is critical, especially in new and emerging democracies with a plethora of parties that are hardly distinguishable on any meaningful ideological criteria.

I have shown that whether partisanship has a greater influence on perceptions of uninformed than informed people depends on the type of partisanship as well as the issue area. For instance, the influence of *incumbent partisanship* on *present* and *prospective economic perceptions* is greater among informed than uninformed people. Nevertheless, its influence on *retrospective, present, and prospective perceptions* about democracy is greater among uninformed than informed people. While *opposition partisanship* only influences *retrospective economic perceptions*, the influence is greater on the perceptions of the informed than the uninformed. In contrast, *general partisanship* has virtually the same effect on the informed and the uninformed.

5.2.12 Partisanship influences Perceptions, but its influence vary with Issue Area

Consistent with political cue theory, the study has established that partisanship significantly influences all six forms of political perceptions under review in this study. Specifically, *incumbent partisanship* is the only significant and consistent predictor of all forms of political perceptions, except retrospective economic perceptions, which are influenced by *opposition partisanship*. However, the influence of partisanship on the perceptions of uninformed Kenyans varies with the issue-area. Consistent with Iyenger's (1989) argument that perceptions about a given issue depend on factors related to that particular issue, the results show that perceptions about purely political issues are influenced more by political variables, while perceptions about the economy tend to be influenced more by economic variables.

For instance, while *incumbent partisanship*, which is a political variable, influences perceptions about the national economy and the extent of democracy, its influence on the latter, which is a political issue, is stronger than the former, which is an economic issue. Besides, while its effect on economic perceptions is strong, it plays second fiddle to relative deprivation and education. On the other hand, while relative deprivation, which is an economic variable, has a significant effect on economic perceptions, it has no statistically significant influence on perceptions about the extent of democracy in Kenya.

5.2.13 Partisan influences on Political Perceptions Vary with Issue Timeline

The study also found that the effect of partisanship on political perceptions varies with the perception *issue time-line*. For instance, while perceptions about the current state of democracy are largely influenced by *incumbent partisanship*, *retrospective* and *prospective perceptions* about democracy are further influenced by ethnicity. It would

appear that *incumbent partisanship* and ethnicity guide people's reflections about the past much in the same way they aid them to project into the future when thinking about democracy. However, when evaluating the current state of democracy, people's thinking depends solely on where they place themselves on the incumbent partisanship scale.

On the other hand, the range and mix of factors that influence the formation of *retrospective*, *present* and *prospective* economic perceptions are not only different from those that influence perceptions about democracy, but are also different from each other. While a total of five factors variously influence the three forms of economic perceptions, only *relative deprivation* influences all of them. For instance, *opposition partisanship* and ethnicity significantly influence the *retrospective* economic perceptions, yet they have no significant effect on *present* or *prospective* economic perceptions. Moreover, while *retrospective* and *prospective* economic perceptions are largely shaped by *relative deprivation*, present economic perceptions are influenced more by education.

5.2.14 Partisanship narrows perception gap between uninformed and informed citizens

Having established that partisanship significantly influences political perceptions, I also sought to establish the specific ways in which this influence occurs. What exactly does partisanship do to the perceptions of the uninformed that make them behave as if they were informed? The results show that people who are both uninformed and are also not (incumbent) partisan tend to form far less optimistic perceptions about democracy in Kenya. Hence, uninformed non-partisans form perceptions about democracy that are a lot different from those of informed non-partisans. This difference persists regardless of the perception timeline. However, *incumbent partisanship* drastically raises optimism among the uninformed while only mildly raising optimism among the informed. The net effect is

that *incumbent partisanship* drastically reduces the perception gap between uninformed and informed citizens, thus enabling the uninformed to behave as if they are informed. This pattern recurs in all the three forms of perceptions about democracy.

In the case of *retrospective economic perception*, which is influenced more by the opposition rather than incumbent partisanship, partisanship actually reduces optimism by a very huge margin among the uninformed and only slightly among the informed. In the case of *present economic perceptions*, *incumbent partisanship* mildly raises optimism among the uninformed while increasing optimism among the informed by a big margin to the extent that optimism among the latter surpasses that of the former. Despite this huge leap in optimism among the informed, the perception gap between them and uninformed people remains statistically insignificant. Either way, partisanship seems to intervene in the process of forming political perceptions in ways that significantly close the perception gap between uninformed and informed citizens.

5.2.15 Partisanship effectively serves as a substitute for Political Information

The study shows that *incumbent partisanship* and political information individually increases optimistic perceptions about democracy by nearly the same margin so that the difference between the effect of *partisanship* and the effect of political information is not statistically significant. For instance, if uninformed non-(incumbent) partisans become *incumbent partisans*, their retrospective perception about democracy becomes even more optimistic by 18.2%, but if, instead, they become informed, it increases by 14.8%. The 3.4% difference is statistically insignificant, with a 65% chance that the true difference could in fact be zero. The same pattern is replicated in all forms of perceptions except the

prospective economic perceptions. But even in this apparently deviant latter case, it is the effect of partisanship that significantly surpasses that of political information by 13.8%.

The results suggest that partisanship serves effectively as a substitute for political information, not just because it produces congruent effects with political information (at least in the case of perceptions about democracy), but more importantly, because it seems to drive perceptions in the direction of, or closer to the truth/reality. It is notable in the case of *present* and *prospective economic perceptions* for instance, that information actually reduces optimism about the economy, while partisanship increases the optimism. Yet, since the economy was doing fairly well at the time, optimism should increase rather than decrease. Hence, partisanship seems to drive perceptions in the right direction, while information is pulling it in the wrong direction. In the circumstances, one would rather be an incumbent partisan and get it right than seek information and get it wrong, perhaps due to the inability to properly process the information to derive correct inferences.

In addition, the study also found that the influence of ethnicity on satisfaction with democracy significantly varies with the political information levels, and the strength of *incumbent partisanship*. Non-ethnics who are also non-(incumbent) partisans tend to be just as satisfied with democracy as the ethnics if they are informed, but far less satisfied if they are uninformed. In contrast, non- ethnics who are strong *incumbent partisans* do not need information to be satisfied with democracy since incumbent *partisanship* itself is sufficient to raise their satisfaction levels close to that of the ethnics.

5.2.16 People perceive their past, present and future conditions as a linear progression

This dissertation has found that perceptions about the present economic or political conditions are negatively correlated with their respective retrospective perceptions, but positively correlated with prospective perceptions. That is, when a person perceives past economic conditions or the past state of democracy as better than the present, he/she is likely to form the perception that future economic conditions or the future state of democracy will be as bad if not worse than the present. This suggests that people perceive their past, present and future economic and political conditions as a linear progression, moving either from bad to good or from good to bad. Thus, an individual who perceives the past conditions as good and the present as bad, is likely to project the future to be as bad as the present if not worse, and *vice versa*.

These results seem to corroborate past studies that have found that voters who believe that the economy improved over the past year are likely to believe that it will improve or continue to be strong in the future (Anderson, 2010). However, they stand in stark contrast with the argument that people who feel that the conditions are not good now are likely to feel that they will get better in future and *vice versa* (Arceneaux, 2004).

5.3 General Implications of the Study Findings

5.3.1 Recasting the Democratic Theory

The study results have critical implications in terms of driving democratic theory forward. It is instructive to note that normative democratic theory suggests that a properly functioning democracy requires political information. Yet, consistent with political cue theory, this study has found that even in the absence of political information, democracy would function properly if citizens drew reliable political cues from the parties that they

trust. Evidently, the ideal situation for the proper functioning of democracy would be where citizens are either politically well informed or partisan, and the worst case would be where citizens are neither politically well informed nor partisan.

It is not surprising for instance, that the decline of American democracy, typified by dwindling voter turnouts, began nearly the same time as both partisanship and political information levels began to take a seemingly ceaseless nose dive. Paulson (2007:1) traces some salient changes in American democracy from the middle of the twentieth century:

American voters began to identify less with either of the major parties, and more as independents; voters began to split their tickets at the polls more frequently; divided governments appeared to become a systemic result of American elections because of a conscious rebuke, some argued, by the voters of both parties; and voter turnout declined to new, low levels that would prove to be habitual... [And] polling data began to indicate that Americans were feeling a declining faith in their political institutions generally, which have never recovered to previous levels

These developments, coupled with the well documented general lack of pertinent political information among most Americans highlighted in chapter one (Converse, 1964; Carpini and Keteer, 1996; Taber, 2003; Galstone, 2007; Shenkman, 2008), did not auger well for the future of democracy in America. I argue that by disembarking from political parties at a time when the political information deficit was also increasing, uninformed Americans lost access to partisan cues which would have enabled them to surmount their information deficit and effectively participate in the democratic process. Thus, to stimulate participation in politics in America, and indeed in any democracy facing the two challenges, requires either improved access to information, or re-energization of the political bases of leading political parties so as to enhance partisan ties.

5.3.2 The link between Political Behavior and Political Institutions

While a casual look at this dissertation is likely to reveal a rigid focus on political behavior, a deeper reading should reveal attempts to demonstrate the connection between political attitudes and behavior on the one hand, and political institutions and processes on the other. I have demonstrated that partisanship influences political perceptions, and by extension, therefore, that political parties are vital institutions in shaping mass political perceptions. To the extent that political parties play a key role in empowering uninformed citizens, democracy requires the strengthening and institutionalization of political parties.

Consequently, I advance a four-premised argument in order to recast the critical link between political behavior and political institutions, which is central to this study:

I. The informed tend to exhibit political behaviors that are more supportive of democracy than the uninformed, and thus the greater the number of politically informed citizens, the more likely democracy will work well (Carpini, 2009; Abrajano and Alvarez, 2010).

II. Political behavior is driven more by subjective political perceptions than objective political reality (Canover and Feldman, 1984; Zaller, 1992; Walsh, 2004; Oskamp and Schultz, 2005; Cassino et al, 2007; Morris, 2008; Cottam et al, 2010). Consequently, the differences in the democracy-enhancing behaviors of informed and uninformed citizens can be traced to the differences in their political perceptions (perception gaps).

III. Political perceptions are mainly influenced by political information and partisanship. The interaction between these two factors is critical for the formation of perceptions that promote democracy-enhancing political behaviors. Specifically, partisanship intervenes in the process of forming political perceptions in ways that reduce the perception gaps between informed and uninformed citizens, thus raising the probability that the former can acquire the same democracy-enhancing behavioral predispositions as the latter.

IV. The fact that partisan cues derived from political parties as institutions play a pivotal role in reducing perception gaps between informed and uninformed citizens and in re-engineering political perceptions of uninformed citizens towards democracy-enhancing behavioral predispositions underscores both the utility of political institutions in promoting democratic behavior, and the indelible link between institutions and behavior.

5.3.3 Understanding Ethnicity and its influence on Political Behavior

(a) Ethnic Groups are not necessarily a Homogenous Category

Part of the problem with most studies of ethnicity in Kenya, and indeed in Africa, is the propensity to treat an ethnic group as a homogenous category, while most ethnic groups exhibit significant internal disparities even in political behavior. This study reveals some profound intra-ethnic group disconnects, especially between the informed and uninformed members of several ethnic groups in terms of their political perceptions. Yet, it is political perceptions that considerably influence most political behavior. It is ironic for instance that among informed Kenyans, *Kalenjins* are the most satisfied with democracy (75.5%), yet among the uninformed, they are the least satisfied (46.7%).

Similarly, informed *Luos* are 15.1% more likely to be satisfied with democracy than uninformed *Luos*. Equally interesting is the fact that uninformed *Somalis* and *Kambas* tend to rate Kenya as extremely democratic, yet the informed members of the same ethnic groups are far less enthusiastic about the state of democracy in Kenya. The reverse is true for *Kisiis* and *Mjikendas*. Moreover, among informed Kenyans, *Kikuyus* are just as satisfied with democracy as the *Luos* and *Kalenjins*, but more satisfied than *Kambas* and *Luhyas*. Yet, among the uninformed, the pattern is reversed, so that *Kikuyus* are more satisfied than *Luos* and *Kalenjins*, but just as satisfied as *Kambas* and *Luhyas*. These results show that, at least in Kenya, the influence of ethnicity on political behavior

appears to be severely restrained by political information, and possibly by other factors beyond this study. Hence, in the battle between ethnicity and political information, it is ethnicity that loses. In a sense therefore, ‘in Africa, ethnicity is almost never absent from politics, yet at the same time it does not provide its basic fabric’ (Bayart, 2009:55).

(b) Ethnic Voting in Fragmented Societies is full of Unresolved Paradoxes

The study has also unmasked the paradox of ethnic voting in Kenya, and indeed in Africa. When no ethnic group is large enough to win elections on its own due to ethnic fragmentation, as is the case in Kenya, a winning coalition must be able to appeal to both *ethnic* and *non-ethnic* voters. After winning elections, the coalition leader has to balance between placating *non-ethnic* supporters to retain their support, and delivering patronage resources to *the ethnics*. The *ethnics* are more likely to continue supporting the incumbent president even if they do not disproportionately receive tangible material benefits from his government, due to psychological reasons like the self-esteem associated with sharing ethnic identity with the president. In contrast, *non-ethnics* can easily withdraw support if they do not feel sufficiently rewarded for their support. Thus, in light of scarce patronage resources, it is prudent for incumbent presidents to appease *non-ethnics* more than *ethnics* to forestall the perception that the *ethnics* are benefitting more at the expense of others.

The paradox is that those who vote for a candidate with shared ethnic identity often expect patronage resources in return. Yet, tactless delivery of such rewards to the *ethnics* is politically suicidal, both for an incumbent seeking reelection and for the legacy of an incumbent in his or her final term. In fact, excessive reward of one’s ethnic supporters alienates an incumbent from the *non-ethnics* and may undermine the stability of his or her

regime. In essence, it is neither in the interest of a voter to support a coalition presidential candidate from his or her ethnic group, nor for an incumbent president who is elected on a coalition ticket to skew resource distribution to overly benefit his ethnic constituency.

Failure to appreciate the paradoxes of ethnic voting underscores most of the study results relating to ethnicity. First, our data show that ethnics are more disillusioned with the economy than non-ethnics, and I attribute their cynicism to the possibility that they expected too much, since the government is led by “one of their own”. Second, the disintegration of the NARC coalition that defeated KANU in 2002 after being in power for 39 years is directly attributable to the failure of president Kibaki to placate the *non-ethnics*, and the concomitant perception among the restless *non-ethnics* that his ethnic group was unduly benefitting at the expense of other Kenyans. These perceptions in turn coalesced into an anti-*Kikuyu* sentiment, which transformed both the 2005 constitutional referendum and the 2007 general elections into a contest between the *ethnics* and the *non-ethnics*. The 2007 elections were bungled, produced no winner, and forced the incumbent party, PNU into a coalition with ODM to end the country’s worst-ever electoral violence.

5.4 Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research

5.4.1 External Validity and the Need for Cross-National Comparative Studies

One weakness in this study is that it focuses on a single country at one point in time. This threatens its external validity since there is no guarantee that replicating the study in a different context would yield similar results. It should be noted, regrettably, that most past studies have also tended to focus on a single country, with very few cross-national comparative studies (Saward, 1998; Milner, 2010; Hooghe, 2011). This trend has been attributed to problems of data as well as ‘lack of consistent, comparable indicators

of political knowledge' (Milner, 2010:99). Nonetheless, the external validity problem in this study is not so severe, since most of the findings of this dissertation support results of some earlier studies done in very different contexts. Moving forward, the new political information index developed in this dissertation should aid us to overcome measurement problems, and hence future studies should aim more at cross-national comparisons. Such comparative studies may target all or any part of this dissertation.

It should also be noted that the choice of this approach was informed by a number of other considerations. First, one of the things that set this study apart from most past studies is its focus on how democracy works without informed democratic citizens, in a geographical region which political information studies have tended to neglect – Africa. Yet most African countries, including Kenya, which is the focus of this study, have been characterized by a series of democratic gains and reversals. Indeed, 'in recent decades, until the fateful elections of December 2007, Kenya was viewed as one of Africa's most stable democratic countries' (Semetko, 2010:167). Therefore, the study had to focus on periods when democracy was at its zenith in the country of study. A way should be found around these problems to allow for studies of several countries over a period of time.

5.4.2 Purifying the Political Information Index from the Effects of Guesswork

This study has found a strong correlation between an individual's predisposition to guess and their political information levels, suggesting that guesswork greatly infiltrates the political information scores. I have noted that even the proposed PII Index is not immune to this problem. That is why the PII Index is defined as an estimate rather than a precise measure of an individual's political information levels. This opens avenues worth further exploring to determine how to estimate and eliminate or at least minimize the

influence of guesswork which tends to inflate the political information indices. This is a viable and worthy course that will constitute my future research endeavors. We suspect from this study that guesswork is a matter of an individual's predisposition – some people like guessing, while others do not. This can be verified. It is possible, for instance, to begin by calculating an individual's likelihood of guessing, construct a guessing scale, and then finding ways of using the scale to penalize inflated political information indices.

5.4.3 Do the Informed Use Partisan Cues for the same purpose as the Uninformed?

Although this study clearly shows that both the informed and the uninformed use partisan cues, there is still one crucial issue for which I have only provided tentative explanations - do informed people use partisan cues for the same purpose as uninformed people? In response, I have suggested that the informed and uninformed citizens may be using partisan cues for different purposes – the latter use it to make up for an information deficit, while the former use it to align their perceptions to party interest. This question requires greater scrutiny than could be accommodated in this dissertation.

5.4.4 Do people recant previous perceptions when their partisanship changes?

One of the tentative conclusions of this dissertation is that people typically adjust their previous perceptions to suit the present circumstances, whenever their partisanship changes from *incumbent* to the *opposition*, and *vice versa*. This is more likely when the opposition wins elections. There is need for a much broader cross-national comparative study of several post-election civic behaviors to find out whether the patterns noticed here persist even across different nations and over a longer period of time.

5.4.5 What makes partisan cues more accessible than political information?

A fundamental question arising from the findings of this dissertation is why uninformed people find it easier to try to gauge what their preferred political parties stand for rather than seek the political information that will empower them to form independent views on politically relevant issues. This question is less than trivial, because, intuitively, the cost of obtaining information about party position on any issue may be just as high as that of seeking the relevant information, particularly where the information cost is very high.

5.4.6 Why does education affect perceptions of economy and democracy differently?

The study results indicate that education raises optimism about the ‘current’ state of the economy but reduces optimism about the extent of democracy. Given the ‘current’ state of the economy and democracy, it would appear that highly educated Kenyans are more likely to accurately assess the economy, but less likely to make accurate evaluations of democracy, and *vice versa*. This raises several questions that require detailed inquiry beyond the scope of this dissertation. For instance, it is important to test whether the educated are more attentive to the economy than politics, while the uneducated are more attentive to politics than to the economy, and why this could be so.

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Appendix 1: Variable Indicators from 2005 Afrobarometer Survey for Kenya

Variables	Indicators and Measurements
Gender	1=Male, 2=Female
Education	<i>What is the highest level of education you have completed?</i> 0=No formal schooling, 1=Informal Schooling; 2=Some Primary Schooling; 3=Primary School Completed; 4=Some High school; 5= High School Completed; 6=Post-Secondary Qualifications but not University; 7=Some University; 8=University Completed; 9=Post-Graduate
Patriotism	<i>Let us suppose that you had to choose between being a Kenyan and being a _____ [respondent's identity group]. Which of these two groups do you feel most strongly attached to?</i> 1= Feel Only [ethnic] 2= Feel More [ethnic] than Kenyan; 3= Feel Equally Kenyan and [ethnic]; 4= Feel More Kenyan than [ethnic]; 5= Feel only Kenyan
Religiosity	<i>Excluding weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?</i> 1=Never, 2=About once a year or less, 3=About once every several months, 4=About once a month, 5=About once a week, 6=More than once a week
Living Conditions	<i>In general, how would you describe your own present living conditions?</i> 1=Very bad; 2=Fairly bad; 3=Neither good nor bad; 4=Fairly good; 5=Very good
Relative Deprivation	<i>Looking back, how do you rate the following compared to twelve months ago: Your living conditions?</i> 1=Much worse; 2=Worse; 3=Same; 4=Better; 5=Much better. <i>Recoded: 1=Not at all Deprived (5); 2. Not very Deprived (4); 3. Same (3); 4. Deprived (2); 5. Very Deprived(1)</i>
Present economic perceptions	<i>In general, how would you describe the present economic conditions of this country?</i> 1=Very Bad; 2=Fairly Bad; 3=Neither Good nor Bad, 4=Fairly Good, 5=Very Good
Retrospective economic perceptions	<i>Looking back, how do you rate the following compared to 12 months ago: economic conditions in this country?</i> 1=much worse; 2=worse; 3=same; 4=better; 5=much better
Prospective economic perceptions	<i>Looking ahead, do you expect the following to be better or worse: Economic conditions in this country in twelve months time?</i> 1=Much worse; 2=Worse; 3=Same; 4=Better; 5=Much better
Economic Policy Approval	<i>Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement A or B.</i> A: Government's economic policies have helped most people; only a few have suffered; B: Government's economic policies have hurt most people and only benefited a few. 1=Agree Strongly with A; 2=Agree with A; 3=Agree with B; 4=Agree Strongly with B <i>Recoded: 0 = Disapprove economic Policies (responses 3 and 4); approve economic policies (1 = responses 1 and 2)</i>
Political Discussion	<i>When you get together with your friends or family, would you say you discuss political matters:</i> 0=Never, 1=Occasionally, 2=Frequently
Interest in Public Affairs	<i>How interested would you say you are in public affairs?</i> 0=Not at all interested, 1=Not very interested, 2=Somewhat interested, 3=Very interested
Retrospective perceptions on democracy	<i>On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in 2002? Was it:</i> 1=completely free and fair; 2=Free and fair with minor problems; 3=Free and Fair with major problems; 4=Not free and fair <i>Recoded: 0 = very undemocratic; 1 = fairly undemocratic 2 = fairly democratic 3 = very democratic</i>

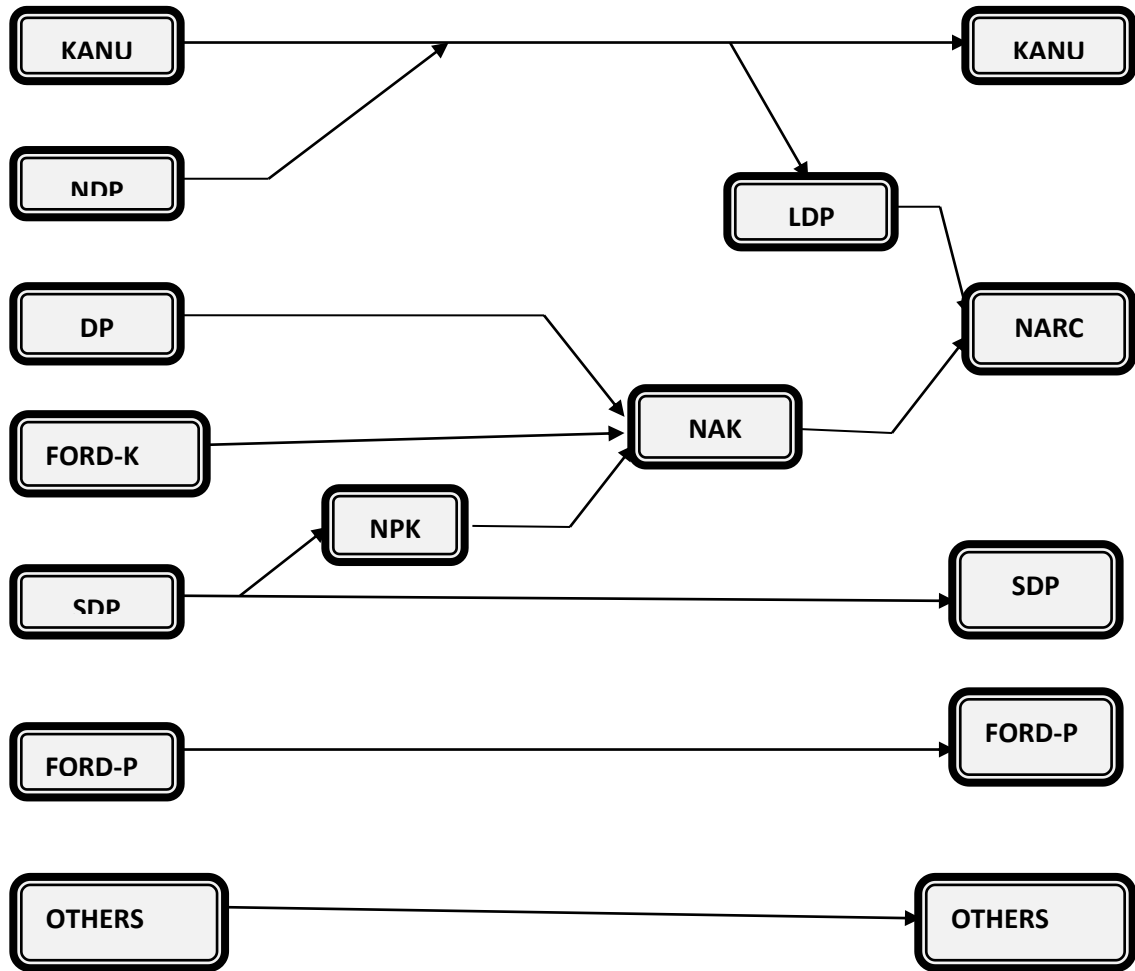
Present perceptions on democracy	<i>In your opinion how much of a democracy is Kenya today?</i> 0 = Not a democracy; 1 = A democracy with major problems; 3 = A democracy with minor problems; 4 = A full democracy <i>Recoded:</i> 0 = very undemocratic; 1 = fairly undemocratic 2 = fairly democratic 3 = very democratic
Prospective perceptions on democracy	<i>In your opinion, how likely is it that Kenya will remain a democratic country?</i> 0 = Not At All Likely; 1 = Not Very Likely; 2 = Likely; 3 = Very Likely <i>Recoded:</i> 0 = very undemocratic; 1 = fairly undemocratic 2 = fairly democratic 3 = very democratic
General Partisanship	Do you feel close to any particular political party? 0=No, not close to any party, 1=Yes <i>Recoded:</i> 0 = Non-partisan; 1 = partisan
Incumbent Partisanship	<i>How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The Ruling Party?</i> 0=Not at all; 1=Just a little; 2=Somewhat; 3=A lot
Opposition Partisanship	<i>How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: opposition political parties?</i> 0=Not at all; 1=Just a little; 2=Somewhat; 3=A lot
Freedom of Speech	<i>Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they were a few years ago, or are they about the same: Freedom to say what you think?</i> 1=Much worse, 2=Worse, 3=Same, 4=Better, 5=Much better
Knowledge of Democracy	<i>What if anything does democracy mean to you?</i> 1=Understood "democracy" in English; 2=Required local language translation; 3=Did not understand the word or question, even in the local language <i>Recoded:</i> 0= Does not Know Democracy (3) ; 1= Knows Democracy (1 and 2)
Satisfaction with Democracy	<i>Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Kenya? Are you:</i> 0=Not at All Satisfied, 1=Not Very Satisfied, 2=Fairly Satisfied, 3=Very Satisfied
Support for Democracy	Q37: <i>Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion?</i> A: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government. B: In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable. C: For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have. 0 =Statements B and C; 1 = Statement A
Respondent Honesty	<i>What was the respondent's attitude toward you during the interview? Was he or she: honest, in between, or misleading?</i> 1=Honest, 2=In between, 3=Misleading <i>Recoded:</i> 0 = Not Honest (Responses 2 and 3); 1 = Honest (Response 1).
Interview Question Difficulty	<i>What proportion of the questions do you feel the respondent had difficulty answering?</i> 0=None, 1=Few, 2=Some, 3=Most, 4=All

Source: 2005 Afrobarometer dataset for Kenya, available at: <http://www.afrobarometer.org/> last accessed on 03/2/2012.

Appendix 2: Strategic Party Alignments in Kenya

1997 Party System

2002 Party System



Author's Conceptualization, 2012.