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UNDERSTANDING LOCAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN WEST AFRICA

by

KELLY ANN KRAWCZYK

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

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MAJOR: POLITICAL SCIENCE

Approved by:

Advisor

Date

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DEDICATION

To Ray, who even when this was so incredibly hard, never, ever gave up on me, or on us. Without complaint, you worked hard to support our family while I pursued my dream, while also doing whatever it took to pitch in at home. You made sure to celebrate every milestone along my path, and encouraged and reassured me when I stumbled along the way. Whatever the future brings, it is ours to face together. I hope to make you proud.

And to my Hannah (Roo) and Emma (Zippy). Through this, I hope you understand that you should never, ever give up on your dreams; that anything is possible; that education is priceless; that your hard work will pay off; and that the future holds amazing opportunities for you both.

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CHAPTER 1 LOCAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN WEST AFRICA: AN INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH

“(The) globalization of our world compels us to rethink the context of what we call Public Administration” (Riggs 1991, 473).

The lines at the polls to vote in the 2011 national elections in Liberia were unbelievably long. In some places, citizens queued as early as 3am for a place in line, and waited upwards of eight hours in the rain and mud to cast their votes.¹ Liberia is a young democracy still recovering from a prolonged civil war, and voting in national elections is a privilege of citizenship that is still very new. In fact, it is one of few mechanisms available for citizens to participate in the political environment. Public officials are working to create and design an entirely new system of local governance that will allow citizens more opportunities to be heard. This will be especially important in an environment such as Liberia, where corruption remains rife, the capacity of governmental institutions is extremely low, and citizens must learn to use participation effectively in order to extract change.

Liberia’s limited democratic experience can be compared to that of Ghana, often showcased as West Africa’s shining democratic star. The first country to achieve colonial independence, Ghana has decades of experience conducting democratic elections, building and strengthening mechanisms for voice and accountability, and involving citizens in the decision-making process. Yet in Ghana, one also found long lines at the

¹ Personal observation, Monrovia, Liberia, October 2011.

polls during the 2012 national elections, in this case when the failure of biometric voting identification equipment led to accusations of electoral fraud. And despite sophisticated systems of local governance and expanded opportunities for citizens to participate in the decision-making process, Ghana still faces development challenges such as poverty and corruption, and struggles with inoperable mechanisms for citizen participation at the local level. Large numbers of citizens are dissatisfied with how local government operates.

Thus, we see developing democracies face many similar challenges, and public administrators struggle to find more effective voice and accountability mechanisms that will help improve democratic development in the long-term. In fact, local governments often face similar issues the world over, in both the developed and developing world, highlighting the need for a global perspective.

Globalism encompasses integration of the economic, financial, political, social, and cultural lives of countries, and includes an emphasis on democratic governance and accountability (Kettl 2000, 490-492). For a variety of compelling reasons, numerous scholars are now calling for such an integrated, “global” perspective to be applied to the field of public administration. In fact, as the US becomes increasingly involved in the world’s governance, many believe the adoption of a “wider-angle” view of the world is “imperative” to public administration (Jresiat 2005, 231). An example of such a “wider-angle” perspective has been coined “public administration with a global perspective,” or PAGP. This concept has been defined by scholars as a way of conceptualizing public administration that bridges local context with the larger global environment. PAGP considers the specific ethnic, cultural, and political context in which public administration takes place, while also seeking wider practical implications and

opportunities to share knowledge across the field, resulting in more informed policy (Hou, Ni et al. 2011).

This global perspective is essential for developing administrative theory, and for improving the practice of public administration throughout the world (Heady 2001). Global public administration research should add to our understanding about the relationships of institutions and administrative processes in different countries in order to develop typologies and theories. The purpose of such research is to understand what works in certain settings and not others, and to compare across cultures to examine contextual factors that influence the success of institutional practices in public administration (Fitzpatrick, Goggin et al. 2011).

Problem Statement and Significance

This dissertation utilizes the “public administration with a global perspective” (PAGP) approach applied in the developing world, specifically in West Africa. Broadly, my research examines citizen participation at the local level in Ghana and Liberia. While I examine individual-level factors that influence local participation, I also rely heavily on an institutional approach that asks whether certain subnational institutions influence local-level political participation. I develop and apply a theoretical framework for evaluating how institutions affect local political participation in West Africa.

While scholars sometimes differ on their definition of an “institution,” I utilize a new institutional approach encompassing a broader, more informal definition of institutions that includes national and subnational bureaucratic structures and even structures

sometimes viewed as being distinct from the state, such as civil society organizations.² I consider prior work on political participation in the US, as well as build upon work in Latin America and Africa in order to move beyond traditional models and consider institutional factors that may affect political participation. This approach is in line with the goals of PAGP, which seeks to assess which mechanisms work and don't work, in what context, and whether or not they will work in other contexts (Hou, Ni et al. 2011).

This research fills a void of information and theory regarding citizen participation in four ways. First, relatively little research on political participation has been done in West Africa. In the broadest sense, a basic synopsis is needed that tells us who participates, what forms this participation takes, and at what levels. Second, a theory of political participation that moves beyond socioeconomic (SES) and attitudinal factors has not been developed for West Africa. However, a growing body of research, especially in Latin America and cross-nationally in Africa, suggests that institutional performance affects citizen participation (see Bratton, Mattes et al. 2005; Hiskey and Bowler 2005; Wampler 2007; Holzner 2010). Applying the lessons of this emerging research to political participation in West Africa builds on current scholarship. Third, while scholars recognize the importance of the subnational political environment, there has been little examination of citizens' engagement with the local political system in developing countries in West Africa. This study will help fill that gap. Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, developing and applying a theoretical framework for evaluating how institutions affect local participation in West Africa can contribute to the design of

² I use the term "institutional variable" to mean a contextual variable, and use these terms interchangeably throughout this dissertation.

higher-performing institutions that result in increased citizen satisfaction, greater legitimacy in government, and deeper democratic citizenship. In the following paragraphs, each of these of these four gaps in current research and opportunities to make new contributions to the field are discussed in greater detail.

A Better Understanding of Political Participation in West Africa

There is little research that explores local political participation in West Africa. The region struggles with issues ranging from lack of safety and rule of law, to lack of economic opportunity and human rights. It is plagued by poor governance that undermines legitimacy, strength of institutions, and ethics of leaders. While research is less common in West Africa, this is a region of the world that will not meet many of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals by 2015. It is a region that is in dire need of scholarship that provides both practical and theoretical insights on how governments can better provide basic services, foster economic development, and contribute to public administration theory-building (Fitzpatrick, Goggin et al. 2011).

Many early reform strategies in Africa did not advocate accountability as an objective, and are failing to produce intended outcomes. This has resulted in current reform strategies that call for extensive consultation with citizens in order to promote accountability (Jresiat 2010). But while much discourse has taken place about the rights, conceptions, and actions surrounding citizenship, John Gaventa (2002) reminds us that the question of "How do people, particularly poor citizens in developing countries, perceive their rights of citizenship?" has not been answered. Little empirical work has been done to understand how citizens in West Africa perceive their governments and

their rights, how they act on these perceptions through political activity, and how they may be restricted by gaps in knowledge and representation. This leads me to propose further exploration of citizens' attitudes and behavior relative to political participation in West Africa.

While lack of reliable data has been an issue in the past for research in Africa, the Afrobarometer is now a trustworthy and comprehensive cross-national data source that measures individual citizen attitudes and behaviors relative to democracy, governance, and participation in the region, and this survey data can be utilized as a basis for further research (Afrobarometer 2013). There has been valuable scholarship that has come from this data source. For example, an Afrobarometer working paper on Ghana compiles baseline information that taps into citizen perceptions about which responsibilities should fall within the realm of local government, as well as how the public feels local government is performing in these countries (Afrobarometer Working Paper No. 52 2008). In Liberia, there is a working paper that taps into Liberian opinions about democracy and trust in local government institutions (Afrobarometer Working Paper No. 73 2009). Additional research is needed to understand which participatory mechanisms are utilized by citizens at the local level in West Africa, to track trends and changes in citizen attitudes and levels of participation, as well as to examine differences in participation among subnational regions. But simply measuring participation is not enough. Participation depends in large part on the motivations, opportunities, resources and constraints of those who enter the participatory sphere, and on what "participation" means to them (Holzner 2010, 44-45). So first, I empirically test to see which parts, if any, of the traditional SES and attitudinal framework can be applied to local participation

in West Africa. From there, I develop and apply a theoretical framework for evaluating how institutions affect local citizen participation in West Africa.

Consideration of the Effects of Institutions on Local Political Participation in West Africa

Moving beyond the traditional SES and attitudinal models of political participation offers benefits for developing countries in West Africa. Traditional participatory models are fairly static and often unable to explain fluctuations in individual participation. An institutional approach allows for comparisons across time, space and groups. Examining institutional dimensions such as level and quality of decentralization or density and strength of civil society organizations can help explain differences in local participation across districts and counties, as well as shed light on cross-national country comparison. Perceptions about variations in levels of fraud and competitiveness of elections are a reflection of citizen attitudes about the performance of local governments, yet these perceptions also invite comparison across local, national, and cross-national contexts, and may help explain changes in participation over time.

Understanding which institutional factors affect citizen attitudes and consequently stimulate or stifle participation, and exploring differences and changes in these attitudes among various populations, can contribute to the development of an enhanced framework for understanding local citizen participation in West Africa that more fully considers a complete range of socioeconomic, attitudinal, and institutional factors. The importance of applying an institutional approach when determining patterns of citizen participation can be summarized by Claudio Holzner:

“...institutions shape behavior...by determining the benefits, costs, and expectations of success of...political activities; by constraining the range of activities from which individuals can...choose; and...by shaping the preferences citizens have for political activities. To ignore these effects of institutions is to completely misunderstand human behavior.” (Holzner 2010, 45)

Scholars of global public administration also recognize that reform strategies, specifically in Africa, call for an emphasis on institutional capacities (Jresiat 2011). In fact, a global public administration approach that recognizes differences in governance contexts, and specifically differences in institutions, has been the key part of many studies conducted by comparative public administration researchers (Fitzpatrick, Goggin et al. 2011). But despite this recognition of the importance of institutions, research into the institutional determinants of political participation is inadequate and fragmented. This dissertation attempts to contribute to an understanding of citizen participation in West Africa through the lens of institutional factors versus simply individual-level determinants.

A Focus on Local Political Participation

One way to advance the concepts of voice and accountability that are part of good governance is through a process known as democratic local governance (DLG). DLG is a “process of decentralization whereby real responsibility and authority are transferred to local bodies that are accessible and accountable to local citizens who enjoy full political rights and liberties” (Blair 2000, 21).

DLG encompasses two central ideas: participation gives citizens a meaningful voice in local government decisions, while accountability allows people to hold local government responsible (Blair 2000). The benefits of DLG echo those of good

governance, and are purported to include better policy decisions that benefit all constituents, leading to improved service delivery and reductions in poverty. Democratic local governance (DLG) posits that by bringing the government closer to the people, more will participate. Offering citizens more opportunities to participate and to influence resource allocation will result in local policy decisions that better reflect the needs of all groups, thereby increasing equity and decreasing poverty (Blair 2000; Smoke 2003). There is therefore a great deal of interest in increasing political participation at the local level and making government more responsive to the needs of all constituents, particularly underrepresented ones. Through democratic local governance, citizens participate in their own governance in locally important matters. They are the key decision-makers in determining their priorities, how they will respond to them, what and how resources will be raised, and how to manage and learn from those responses (Olowu and Wunsch 2004).

Why focus on such a model that emphasizes participation at the local level? Alexis de Tocqueville suggested that a high degree of citizen participation at the local level was important to a successful democracy (Tocqueville 1990). While Tocqueville was speaking specifically about the United States, the significance of the subnational political environment for both developed and developing countries has been recognized by other scholars (Nickson 1995; Cornelius, Eisenstadt et al. 1999). Traditional comparative public administration has been mostly concerned with national political institutions, but the potential of local institutions for affecting national development is being recognized as increasingly important in light of public administration with a global approach (Jresiat 2011). There has been little systematic examination, however, of the effect of the local

environment on citizens' support of the political system, as well as on citizens' engagement with this political system (Hiskey and Bowler 2005). Much of the literature on political participation makes little distinction between level of participation (local, state, or national), and groups local participatory activities as one aspect of broader political participation versus as independent and theoretically distinct activities (Baybeck 2011).

But certain arguments indicate that local participation, while critical to understanding broader political participation, should still be viewed separately. Studies involving a subnational level of analysis can provide insights on factors that can be overlooked by the sole use of national comparisons (Fitzpatrick, Goggin et al. 2011). For example, institutional variation at the local level results in different opportunities and constraints for individual participation. If we view local level political participation as a "critical starting point for understanding citizens' connections with their political system," and adhere to the belief that "local context, perceptions of the system, and political behavior are intimately connected" (Hiskey and Bowler 2005, 57), then whether or not citizens perceive their local governmental institutions as functioning fairly, proficiently, and without corruption will have an impact not just on local participation. Citizen perceptions at the local level will also stimulate democratic change and participation at the national level (Beer 2003). These changes can be viewed as positive or negative, however. A focus on local participation may provide impetus for deeper national democratic citizenship through increased access to political institutions (Holzner 2010). This can build political interest, engagement, and efficacy that support future political activity at multiple levels. But if the local environment contains institutions that are marred by

fraud, corruption, or clientelism, they can be sources of “inertia and resistance to democratization, rather than the prime breeding ground for democratic advances” (Cornelius, Eisenstadt et al. 1999, 3-16). Thus, a focus on local settings can either support or thwart national development efforts, and both macro and micro levels must be considered.

Much of the scholarship stemming from so-called comparative public administration uses the country as the unit of analysis. This is appropriate for issues with national impact, but does not provide useful information to practitioners at the regional or local levels in order to allow for understanding of differences within countries (Fitzpatrick, Goggin et al. 2011). Therefore, I use subnational units of analyses in this dissertation to offer insights on factors that shape public administration outcomes, insights that may be missed if the comparison is restricted to the national level.

Enhancing Citizen Participation Through Strong Institutions

Conceptualizing and testing an institutional framework for evaluating local participation in West Africa can contribute to the development of improved participatory mechanisms that increase citizen satisfaction, resulting in greater legitimacy in government and deeper democratic citizenship, and contributing to the achievement of good governance. And such improved participatory mechanisms may also be applicable and useful in other parts of the world. Well-designed institutions can combat barriers to effective citizen involvement. According to Feiock, Jeong, and Kim, well-designed core institutions have the ability to reduce economic and political uncertainty, create

conditions for more equal political access, and even constrain individuals that pursue personal interests at the expense of others (Feiock, Jeong et al. 2003).

It is not enough to simply promote participatory mechanisms and then attempt to measure the results. We need to take into account the beliefs and attitudes of citizens about government, participation, and citizenship; understand how and why these attitudes may shift over time; and relate these shifts to variations in political participation. In addition, we need to recognize that what works in one setting may or may not work as well in others, and there is a need to compare and examine the effectiveness of a variety of institutions (Fitzpatrick, Goggin et al. 2011). This will allow for the creation and application of meaningful local participatory structures and institutions, completing an interlocking “governance wheel” where citizenship affords the right to hold others accountable, and this accountability is expressed in the process of participation (Gaventa 2002).

Cases and Methods

I utilize two country cases, Ghana and Liberia, in this dissertation. They are selected to highlight important similarities and differences inherent in the region, and this is illustrated through a comparison of Ghana and Liberia based on international indices and political, socio-economic, and human development indicators.

I employ mixed methods in my research, using both qualitative and quantitative analyses. Qualitative analyses are based on field work conducted in both countries, and include personal interviews with government officials, citizens, and members of multilateral aid agencies, and analyses of primary source governmental documents. I use

this qualitative analyses in order to assess the institutional environment and capacity in both countries, and to examine hypotheses related to my four institutional variables. I use Afrobarometer survey data in combination with contextual data from censuses and governmental statistics. Drawing on this data, I use Poisson regression for my quantitative analyses, producing individual-level and contextual models for Ghana and Liberia, as well as a two-country pooled model, to help explain local political participation.

Ghana is called the “shining star” of African development (Address to the Nation delivered by Ghanaian President John Dramani Mahama on August 15, 2012). Ghana was the first colony to gain independence from British rule in 1957 and has a history of holding regular elections since 1992, with peaceful alternance of power since 2000. Ghana’s level of development is higher than in many other countries in the region and on the continent. This is evidenced by Ghana’s preferred status as a Partnership for Growth (PFG) country. Coordinated by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and other US government agencies, PFG is a partnership between the United States and a select group of high-performing developing countries designed to accelerate and sustain broad-based economic growth.

Ghana can be contrasted to Liberia. Liberia is an extreme example of total state collapse due to prolonged civil war, and it is now undergoing a lengthy process of reconstruction. Since 2003, a new period of extended peace has been strengthened by Liberia’s two successful multiparty elections in 2005 and 2011. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Africa’s first female president, was elected in 2005 and re-elected in 2011. While Liberia has made progress during the past decade, many development challenges remain. The

country struggles with high levels of poverty and unemployment, lack of access to education, and lack of basic services.

Liberia and Ghana are in the same geographic region of West Africa and have some demographic and economic similarities. However, the two countries also differ sharply in important ways, including in their political and institutional environments, making them a good choice for comparison. The countries exhibit variations in overall level of development, as well as differences in the major institutional variables under study. In the following section, the overall performance of the two countries will be compared using international indices. Next, the countries are compared on the basis of political, socio-economic, and human development indicators.

Country Performance Based on International Indices

Several international indices help paint a picture of the similarities and differences between the two selected countries of study, Ghana and Liberia. The Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) consists of 88 indicators compiled from 23 independent international data providers to build an annual assessment of governance performance in Africa. According to the 2011 Ibrahim Index of African Government, where higher scores indicate better governance, Ghana scored 66 out of 100 on a variety of governance indicators, including safety and rule of law, participation, and human rights. This is higher than the average African country score of 50 out of 100, and also higher than Liberia's score of 45 out of 100. Ghana ranks seventh out of 52 African countries in overall governance, scoring in the top 15%. Liberia ranks 34th out of 52 countries, which puts it in the bottom third. However, Liberia has shown the greatest improvement in

overall governance score over the past six years out of all 52 countries in the index (2012 Ibrahim Index).

The 2011 Freedom House Index rates Ghana's status as "free," but Liberia as only "partly free." Ghana also scored higher than Liberia in the delivery of political rights and civil liberties to its citizens. According to Freedom House, Ghana is holding steady on overall governance trends from 2006 to 2010. While Liberia's scores are lower than Ghana's, they continue to improve, which is an optimistic sign of post-war redevelopment (2011 Freedom House Index).

Transparency International publishes a yearly global Corruptions Perception Index (CPI) that measures how corrupt the public sector of a country is perceived to be on a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 means a country is perceived as highly corrupt and 100 means a country is perceived as very clean. The top ranking countries, Denmark and Finland, received scores of 90 in 2012. North Korea and Somalia, perceived as two of the world's most corrupt countries, received scores of 8. In 2012, Ghana ranked 64th out of 176 countries, with a score of 45 out of 100, and Liberia was ranked 75th out of 176, with a score of 41 out of 100 (2012 Corruptions Perception Index). This illustrates both Ghana and Liberia struggle with corruption.

According to the 2011 Human Development Index (HDI), Ghana's level of human development is categorized as "medium," ranking of 135 out of 187 countries scored. Ghana's Voice & Accountability ranking- the extent to which citizens can participate in selecting their own government, as well as a measure of freedom of expression, association, and the media- is in the 63rd percentile. Liberia's 2011 HDI,

categorized as “low,” is ranked 182 out of 187 countries scored, and Liberia’s Voice & Accountability ranking is in the 40th percentile (2011 Human Development Index).

Taken together, the international indices illustrate that Ghana has higher levels of overall development and stronger governance than Liberia. However, both countries still struggle with development and governance issues, especially relative to perceived corruption. The similarities and differences in these two countries make them a good choice for the application of an institutional framework for local political participation in West Africa. It will allow us to examine two countries with different institutional environments and capacities in order to see if the same factors matter for local political participation.

Ghanaian Political, Socioeconomic, and Human Development Indicators

Ghana is roughly twice the geographic size of Liberia, and it is also much more densely populated. The estimated 2009 population of Ghana was 23,837,000, and the population grew to 24,652,402 in 2012 (UN Statistics Division 2012). The capital city of Accra had 2.269 million inhabitants in 2009. Kumasi, another major city in south-central Ghana, had a population of 1.773 million (CIA World Fact Book 2010).

Ghana is a constitutional democracy and grants universal suffrage at 18 years old. Ghana’s legislature is unicameral, and the parliament has a total of 275 seats, all directly elected by popular vote every four years. Figure 1.1 is a map that highlights Ghana’s 10 regions, the first level of subnational government. There are multiple levels below the regional level, and most of the business of local government is conducted at the district level.



Figure 1.1: Map of Ghana. Nations Online Project © 1998-2011.

Ghana is classified by the World Bank as a “lower middle income” country. The 2012 gross domestic product (GDP) per capita was \$3,300. In 2007, 28.5 % of the population lived below the poverty line. Unemployment was reported to be 11% in 2000 (CIA World Fact Book 2010).

The Central Intelligence Agency’s World Fact Book (2010) and the World Bank (2013) provide a range of statistics on Ghana’s people and society. English is the official language in Ghana and was spoken by 36.1% of people in 2000, although other ethnic languages are common. In Ghana, 68.8% of the population identifies as Christian, and 15.8% are Muslim. The 2011 life expectancy in Ghana was 64 years. The overall literacy rate is 67.3%, with 73.2% of males and 61.2% of females literate. The 2012 fertility rate was 4.15 and the infant mortality rate was 40.9 per live 1000 births. 1.8% of the adult population lived with HIV or AIDS. Life expectancy and literacy rates are higher in Ghana than in Liberia, and fertility and infant mortality rates are lower.

Liberian Political, Socio-Economic and Human Development Indicators

According to Liberia’s 2008 National Population and Housing Census, the country’s population was approximately 3.5 million people. But the post-war population continues to grow, and the World Bank reports the 2011 population to be 4.129 million people (2013). The country’s population is heavily concentrated in the capital city of Monrovia, which has approximately 882,000 inhabitants (CIA World Fact Book 2010).

Liberia is a republic and grants universal suffrage at 18 years old. Liberia is divided into 15 counties (illustrated in Figure 1.2), which is the primary and sole division of subnational government. Local government structures are virtually nonexistent in the

post-civil war environment. The political system of Liberia is a presidential system modeled on that of the United States. Unlike the United States, however, Liberia is an overcentralized state and power is heavily concentrated in the central government, especially in the executive branch (Sawyer 2005). The bicameral legislature consists of a House of Representatives and a Senate. The House of Representatives has a total of 75 members, each elected in population-based districts. Each of the 15 counties is represented by two senators, for a total of 30. Liberians overwhelmingly approve of democratic forms of government, express democratic values and support core democratic practices such as regular, open multi-party elections (Afrobarometer Briefing Paper No. 73, 2009). Political participation is widespread, as is evidenced by voter turnout of 74.9% and 71.6% in the first round of voting in the 2005 and 2011 elections, respectively (NEC 2005; NEC 2011). Yet Liberia's democracy is new and fragile.



Figure 1.2: Map of Liberia. From Perrv-Castaneda Library Map Collection. The University of Texas at Austin.

Liberia is classified by the World Bank as a “low income country” and relies heavily on foreign assistance. The GDP per capita income for 2012 was only \$700. But the 2012 GDP growth rate of 9% reflects a positive move towards redevelopment (CIA World Fact Book 2010). In 2000, during the throes of the country’s civil war, 80% of the population lived below the poverty line. By 2007, that figure dropped to 63.8% (The World Bank Group 2013). In 2003, at the end of a 14-year civil war, the unemployment rate was reported to be a massive 85%. Yet this unemployment rate declined rapidly and dramatically, reported to be 5.5% in 2007 and 3.7% in 2012 by the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-information Services (2013). Perhaps a more accurate employment picture is that 78.4% of those who are employed have what is called “vulnerable employment,” an indicator that is defined as people who are self-employed in unsustainable jobs such as car loading, motorcycling and wheelbarrow riding (LISGIS). Only about 19% of people are employed in the formal sector (Liberia 2010 Labor Force Survey).

English is the official language in Liberia although ethnic languages are also spoken. There are approximately 16 major ethnic tribes. The 2010 CIA World Fact Book offers a wide range of statistics about Liberia’s people and society. In 2010, 85.6% of the country was Christian, and 12.2% was Muslim. Life expectancy in Liberia was 57.41 years; 55.82 for males and 59.02 for females. The overall literacy rate was 60.8%, with 61.8% male literacy and 56.8% female literacy. The fertility rate was 4.7 and the infant mortality rate was 72.71 per 1000 live births. In addition, 1.5% of the adult population lived with HIV/AIDS (CIA World Fact Book 2010).

Overall, we can see the political, social and human development indicators for Liberia paint a picture of a country struggling with development issues, yet making steady progress since the end of the civil war in 2003. Liberia's recent transition to democracy offers a contrast to Ghana's more established democratic values and experiences, which offers an interesting comparison in terms of institutional variation and local political participation relative to my research questions.

Table 1.1 compares Ghana and Liberia based on the international indices and statistics presented so far in this chapter. While international indices and statistics illustrate that Ghana has reached a higher level of development than Liberia, both countries grapple with many of the same issues that characterize developing African nations: high levels of poverty, and lack of educational and economic opportunities. The fact that both countries share some of the same development challenges, yet are at different levels on other indicators, lends itself well to the selection of these two cases. Examining the two countries separately allows me to compare differences in local context, while analyzing the two countries together in a dual-country model lets me to apply an institutional model of local political participation that builds regional knowledge and provides a framework for future research in West Africa.

Table 1.1: Country Profiles – Ghana and Liberia³		
	Ghana	Liberia
Population/Demographics:		
Surface Area	238,533 km ²	111,369 km ²
Total Country Population	23.837 million (2009)	4.129 million (2011)
Population in Capital City (2009)	2.269 million	882,000
Country Growth Rate (2010-2015)	2.0%	2.6%
Socio-Economic Indicators:		
Life Expectancy (2012)	64 years	57 years
Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births) (2012)	40.9	72.71
Fertility Rate (2012)	4.15	5.02
% of Population Living Below Poverty Line	28.5% (2006)	63.8% (2007)
Literacy rate (2010)	71.5%	60.8%
% of Adults Living with HIV/AIDS (2012)	1.8%	1.5%
GDP Per Capita Income (2012)	\$3300	\$700
GDP Real Growth Rate (2012)	8.2%	9%
Government:		
Type	Constitutional democracy	Republic
Suffrage	Universal at age 18	Universal at age 18
Units of Subnational Government	10 regions 170 districts Additional subunits below districts	15 counties
Legislative Branch	Unicameral 275 seats parliament directly elected by popular vote every 4 years	Bicameral 30 seat Senate (2 per county) elected by popular vote every 9 years House of Representatives has 73 seats elected by popular vote every six years

³ Adapted from: 2008 Liberia Population & Housing Census
2010 CIA World Fact Book
The World Bank
The United Nations

A Call for Public Administration with a Global Perspective

Public administrators should have a deeper role in encouraging good governance, democratic development, and authentic citizen participation within our global environment, but how do we go about providing a deeper explanation and rationale for such a global mindset? Traditionally, comparative administration, defined as “the comparative study of institutions, processes, and behaviors in many contexts” (Jresiat 2002, 1), has been a subfield of US-based public administration that has been used to investigate problems and practices of governance in developing societies (Jresiat 2010). Comparative administration was viewed separately, and often traditional, US-based scholarship relevant to developing nations was not disseminated or applied in these areas. But even early scholars of traditional, US-based public administration, such as Waldo (1948) and Appleby (1949), called for consideration of not just concrete administrative outputs, but were also concerned with broader public administration issues such as the ethics of public service, the greater public interest, and issues surrounding conceptions of citizenship. Contemporary scholarship continues to develop these issues and ideas (Denhardt and Denhardt 2007). These considerations also lend themselves to the idea of public administrators as relationship-builders and negotiators in the linkages between public administrators, citizens, and government. And nowhere, Haruna argues, are these new considerations and conceptions surrounding public administration more important than in regions like Africa, where democracy is fragile, public administration structures and capacity faces serious obstacles, and public administration reforms are failing to live up to expectations (Haruna 2001).

If we look to contemporary scholarship, we find that attendees of the Minnowbrook III Conference, designed to bring together leading public administration scholars to discuss the future and relevancy of the field, make a strong case for the “public administration with a global perspective” (PAGP) approach (Hou, Ni et al. 2011). They argue traditional, US-oriented public administration is no longer appropriate, nor is the separate subfield referred to as comparative public administration. This does not mean public administrators should forgo attention to questions applicable in specific ethnic, cultural, political, or even country contexts. It simply means they must also simultaneously seek greater explanatory power, wider practical implications, informed policy learning, and transfer of knowledge within these contexts (Hou, Ni et al. 2011). This means keeping in mind the extensive experience and valuable knowledge base and lessons learned from the US and other industrial societies, while at the same time recognizing the need for scholarship that is specific to societies in the developing world that are actively seeking democratization and development. We need to stop viewing traditional US-based public administration as the mainstream, with all other country studies falling into the subfield of comparative public administration. PAGP is a perspective that all public administration scholars should embrace in order to integrate and advance the field of public administration, especially throughout developing countries that struggle with poor bureaucratic systems.

Developing countries frequently have a dire need to improve their public administration systems as they have often not performed as expected after receiving foreign assistance and aid. This has been the case in many African states, where public administration has been a vital part of governance since post-colonial independence, with

an emphasis on recognizing and addressing problems in a way that will lead to reform, change, and improvement. But awareness and knowledge does not automatically equate to effective reform strategies, however. For example, many newly independent systems in Africa do not have the necessary institutions that hold public administrators accountable and pave the way for effective delivery of basic governmental services. Problems include lack of basic institutional capacity relative to rule of law, regulatory ability, voice mechanisms, and control of corruption; lack of basic infrastructure and ability to deliver essential services; and a weak bureaucracy that lacks resources, technical skills, leadership, ethics, and professional development.

Public administration with a global perspective can offer benefits that may help improve bureaucratic systems suffering from the weaknesses mentioned above. First, considering global perspectives helps to develop theory and understand why governance differs across countries. Second, global research has resulted in changes to the ways in which public administration is taught. Global public administration helps provide the tools, strategies, and processes that can address policy formation and implementation challenges that governments face in an increasingly globalized world (Fitzpatrick, Goggin et al. 2011). A global approach helps public administrators recognize similarities and differences among systems, and establishes general patterns that can help uncover unsuccessful practices and define successful ones. This leads to new strategies that can improve the performance of public institutions throughout the world.

Voice and accountability through citizen consultation and participation- this principle of good governance has no national boundaries. And public administrators are responsible for facilitating this principle of good governance. A United Nations-

sponsored study indicates important skills for public managers of the future, regardless of region, include integrity, vision and leadership, capacity for policy analysis, judgment and capacity for decision-making, and also, the capacity for citizen empowerment, performance management, trust-building and accountability. It therefore becomes critical for public administrators in developing countries to understand the motivations and concerns of citizens, and to encourage their input and voices, as well as take their needs and desires into consideration when making public policy decisions. A deeper understanding of political participation in West Africa, and specifically in Ghana and Liberia, including the motivations behind citizen participation, the institutions that enhance or inhibit participation, and the ways in which public administrators can effectively promote authentic citizen participation, can help reach these goals.

The following chapters in this dissertation attempt to accomplish the goals set out in the preceding paragraph – to take a closer look at citizens’ beliefs and attitudes about government in West Africa, and to see what motivates them to participate in the local political system. Specifically, I ask if certain local-level institutions help or hinder local political participation in Ghana and Liberia. Chapter 2 contains a detailed discussion of what we know about political participation in both the developed and developing world, focusing first on traditional US-based participation literature, and then considering recent scholarship in Latin America and Africa. This sets the stage for moving to an institutional focus in Chapter 3, where I lay out my rationale for examining the relationship between four local West African institutions to local political participation. Chapters 4 and 5 provide qualitative analyses of these four local institutions in a country-specific context, based on relevant scholarship as well as on field work conducted in each country during

2011 and 2012. Chapter 6 contains empirical analyses of the determinants of local political participation at both the individual and contextual level, for Ghana and Liberia separately and also for a dual-country model. Chapter 7 ties it all together and contains a discussion of the broad implications and conclusions that can be drawn from this research, as well as a plan for future research.

CHAPTER 2 THEORY AND EMPIRICAL RESEARCH RELATED TO POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Developing and applying an institutional approach to local citizen participation in West Africa involves a thorough review of not only the traditional literature on political participation in the United States and other developed nations, but also additional discussion of political participation in the context of the developing world. Therefore, this chapter begins with a discussion of traditional participation literature that emphasizes a socioeconomic and attitudinal approach, while also offering some consideration of the institutional roots of political participation that can be found in the US-based literature. Below I offer a chronological discussion of US-based participation literature that ends by taking institutional factors into consideration, and follow with a discussion of more recent political participation literature in the context of the developing world, specifically Latin America and Africa. This sets the stage for a discussion of political participation in West Africa at the individual level and builds rationale for why an institutional approach makes sense for this region.

As discussed in Chapter 1, I utilize a new institutional approach that encompasses a broader, more informal definition of “institutions.” I include subnational bureaucratic structures and structures sometimes viewed as being distinct from the state, such as civil society organizations, within my definition of “institutions.” This allows me to focus on the differences that can occur due to institutional design and capacity. I emphasize throughout my research my belief that institutions shape political attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, I use the term “contextual” variable interchangeably with “institutional” variable in order to convey my belief that context matters. Chapter 3 builds upon this

institutional foundation with an analysis of how four specific subnational institutions may affect citizen participation at the local level in West Africa.

Traditional Political Participation Literature: Towards an Institutional Approach

What, exactly, is political participation? Verba, Nie, et al. (1978, 46) define it as “legal activities by citizens aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and/or the actions they take.” Verba, Scholzman and Brady; however, view participation as more than simply selecting public officials. They define it as the “mechanism by which citizens can communicate their interests, preferences, and needs and generate pressure to respond” (Verba, Scholzman et al. 1995, 1). In other words, political participation becomes a means by which citizens can elicit governmental accountability and responsiveness.

When modeling political participation, traditional scholarship emphasizes a socioeconomic and attitudinal approach. For example, early work on political participation by Almond and Verba (1963) connects attitudinal factors and political participation. Specifically, an individual’s sense of trust and his or her perceived ability to influence politics is related to political participation (Almond and Verba 1963).

In their seminal work, *Participation in America: Political Democracy & Social Equity*, Verba and Nie divide political participation in the United States into two categories: electoral activity and nonelectoral activity, and from these two categories, they split participation into four types. Electoral activity includes voting, and nonelectoral activity includes campaign activity, cooperative activity, and citizen-initiated contacts (Verba and Nie 1972). They focus on citizens as voters because they find the percentage

of people who engage in nonelectoral activity is low. They find citizens of higher SES participate more in politics, and this holds using measures of SES such as income, education level, and occupation. This is because higher-status individuals have more resources, skills, and knowledge. This can lead to underrepresented groups at lower socioeconomic levels, unless some other force leads to deviations in the SES model (Verba and Nie 1972).

Even in this early work on political participation that uses SES factors as the basis for political motivation and activity, we see some consideration of institutions and how they affect political participation. Verba and Nie contend that “participation is fully comprehensible only if one takes into account the individual’s institutional context” (Verba and Nie 1972, 174). They support this claim through their consideration of associational life as a factor affecting political participation. Voluntary organizations themselves can participate in the political process, participating and advocating on *behalf* of their members. But citizens can also use associational membership as a route to gain access to government, participating *through* the organization. Citizens may also participate directly *because* of their affiliation with an organization (Verba and Nie 1972). The bottom line is that Verba and Nie have found associational affiliation to be a powerful predictor of citizen participation.

In *Participation and Political Equality: A Seven Nation Comparison* (1978), Verba, Nie and Kim attempt to answer a question previously laid out in *Participation in America* (1972). They ask why the SES model as a predictor of political participation worked well in the United States and other developed democracies, but not in other, less developed countries. They attempt to answer this question by demonstrating that

individual-level resources and motivation give a “participatory advantage” to some individuals in society, but this advantage can be “modified” by institutions that are able to mobilize individuals to engage in political activity. They argue that individuals would convert socioeconomic resources and motivation to political activity at a similar rate across nations if it weren’t for the interference of “group-based forces” derived from institutions (Verba, Nie et al. 1978, 19). These institutional forces can either mobilize citizens to increased political activity above what would be predicted by their SES level, or these institutions can inhibit political activity at levels below what would be expected on the basis of an individual’s SES characteristics. Verba, Nie et al. propose that these institutional effects depend on 1) which groups are engaged and organized, and 2) the pattern of affiliation with institutions. In other words, “In countries where disadvantaged groups have a better organizational base, organizational affiliation and activity...(this) act(s) to mediate the standard SES model” (Verba and Nie 1972, 208).

As we can see, Verba, Nie and Kim move beyond the individual-level, SES model of participation by also considering what they call “group-based forces,” or institutions, that may shape political activity, specifically considering political parties and voluntary associations as examples. They focus on macro-level, cross-national variations to develop a typology of institutional affiliation that categorizes citizens based on the extensiveness of their ties to political institutions (Verba, Nie et al. 1978, 106). They also propose that specific characteristics of a participatory activity determine how susceptible it is to institutional-level forces: institutions should have greater effects on “easy” political acts that depend less on individual motivation, such as voting. In addition, there are some political acts that institutions are particularly interested in stimulating, and some political

activities cannot be carried out alone by individuals and therefore require an institutional channel. The findings of Verba, Nie and Kim confirm some of their hypotheses. An individual's institutional affiliation has an impact on participation, particularly for acts such as voting. They find differences in participation across nations can be attributed to differences in strength of institutions, in access to institutions, and in how necessary institutions are to political activity.

Development of the Civic Volunteerism Model and Further Consideration of the Effects of Institutions

In their seminal work *Voice and Equality: Civic Volunteerism in American Politics* (1995), authors Sidney Verba, Kay L. Scholzman, and Henry E. Brady build upon earlier definitions of political participation to position it as the mechanism through which citizens communicate information about their interests, preferences, and needs, as well as how citizens generate pressure on public officials to respond. They define the participation of citizens in the process of governing as one of the “hallmarks of democracy” (Verba, Scholzman et al. 1995, 1). This ability to participate becomes increasingly important in the context of developing countries that are attempting to consolidate transitions to democratic regimes despite barriers such as civil conflict, poverty, and lack of human rights. Voice and equality are central to democratic participation and help elicit governmental accountability and responsiveness.

The authors of *Voice and Equality* also expand consideration of the effects of institutions on political participation beyond the work of Verba and Nie (1972) and Verba, Nie and Kim (1978) by developing what they call a “civic volunteerism” model,

which is based on citizens' motivation and capacity to become involved, as well as on "networks of recruitment" through which an individuals' political acts take place. They attempt to show an individual's ability and decision to take part in politics is based in part on non-political institutions that individuals are associated with throughout their lives: families, schools, jobs, non-political organizations, and religious institutions (Verba, Scholzman et al. 1995). They argue certain institutional arrangements facilitate political acts in different ways. Similar to previous scholarship, they find that citizen access to resources such as time and money are related to an individual's political activity. But they also introduce the idea that a citizen's level of civic skills, which can be honed and encouraged through affiliation in certain non-political institutions- such as jobs, nonpolitical organizations and religious groups- also matter when it comes to individual political activity.

Mobilization Models

Other scholars, while agreeing with part of the work on SES and attitudinal models, argue that the key to understanding political participation on any level is mobilization, "the process by which candidates, parties, activists, and groups induce other people to participate" (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 25).

Echoing earlier work, Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) link participation to the role of organizations such as voluntary associations and political parties. But they also link participation to the choices of politicians and political leaders about who should be subsidized, rewarded, and sanctioned for political activity. They propose consideration of mobilization "completes the story" on political participation in American politics

(Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Their viewpoint starts to provide an explanation for changes in political participation over time, which they claim cannot be explained by individual-level, resource-based SES explanations. They cite examples such as a decline in attendance at local political meetings in the 1970s, and a surge in letter writing to Congress in the 1980s as fluctuations in political activity over time that can be explained using a mobilization model. They claim to explain not only *who* participates, but also *when* they participate: “People participate in politics when they get valuable benefits that are worth the costs of taking part” (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 10).

The mobilization model builds upon SES and attitudinal explanations and is able to explain fluctuations in political participation at the individual and aggregate levels, as well as show political activity is not spontaneous and depends on the opportunities and costs imposed by political leaders. It provides the basis for a shift from an individual-level model of political participation, to a model that also considers the effects of institutions, such as political parties and elections. But critics claim that the mobilization model still has weaknesses, the main one being that it does not consider the effects of state institutions in its analysis (Holzner 2010, 37).

Institutions and Political Participation – The Weak Link

As we can see from the previous discussion, weaknesses to traditional SES and attitudinal models of political participation exist, and scholars have made limited attempts to incorporate the effects of institutions into models of political participation. Once individual factors like income, education, and skills exist, they are fairly constant and cannot account for fluctuations in the political participation of individuals over time. And

while they may apply in the context of developed nations such as the United States, a strong correlation between these individual-level factors and political participation is often not replicated in emerging democracies. And even mobilization models, which Rosenstone and Hansen contend can help explain fluctuations in political participation by individuals over time, acknowledge that it is the affluent – those who are wealthy, educated, and/or partisan- who are more likely to be targeted for mobilization.

Attitudinal models that emphasize political engagement and attitudes – factors that shape motivations for involvement in the political system – assume these attitudes develop independently of experiences with the political system, through processes of socialization and due to levels of education or income. But what about political participation of the poor and underrepresented groups, specifically in developing countries? What if political preferences were not simply the product of socialization, but also influenced by citizen's direct and recent experiences with the political system? While Putnam cautions us that institutional design is not the only factor that explains variations in political participation (Putnam 1995), mounting evidence shows that it does indeed have its place in models of participation. This means that we can look to emerging scholarship for support for an institutional approach to political participation in West Africa. Next, I specifically examine a body of work on Latin American participation, as well as scholarship on participation coming to light in Africa, that embodies this institutional approach.

The Institutional Basis for Political Participation in the Developing World

It is no surprise that several scholars of Latin America have found an institutional approach useful when studying political participation, especially when considering the participation of poor and marginalized groups in many new democracies. As Amartya Sen reminds us, “Individuals live and operate in a world of institutions” (Sen 1999, 142). The work of Claudio Holzner in *Poverty of Democracy: The Institutional Roots of Political Participation in Mexico* echoes some of the concerns touched upon in the introduction to this dissertation: the poor in Mexico and other Latin American countries have had few political opportunities, resulting in a slow decline in the participation of this group. The poor are participating less, are less interested in politics, and are less trustful of the outcome of elections and of the political system overall. These findings may not be particularly surprising, since it seemingly replicates a lot of US-based research that finds the poor participate less than the rich. But these findings pose a dilemma, since the reaching the goal of deepening democracy depends on representation and participation in the political process from all groups, not just those with greater resources, and on the responsiveness and accountability of the political system to the demands of all stakeholders. Holzner’s work attempts to explain why this stratified pattern of political participation emerged in Mexico- in other words, why the poor in Mexico participated less than the rich. He finds that conventional explanations, such as those discussed in earlier in this chapter- individual explanations that claim people participate according to their level of individual resources, explanations based on an individual’s associations with organizations and groups, or explanations based on mobilization by political leaders (Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Nie et al. 1978; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba,

Scholzman et al. 1995)- do not fully explain citizen participation. Holzner argues that these conventional explanations ignore the powerful influence of political institutions and activities of the state:

”Although there is little doubt that personal characteristics matter for political activism, and (that) organizations ...do much of the work in mobilizing people into politics, individuals must also have incentives and opportunities to become involved” (Holzner 2010, 3).

Holzner examines the conditions present when the poor participate less than the rich, and he contributes to achieving the goal of equitable representation by asking under what conditions participation rates become more equal. He looks closely at connections and relationships between individual-level factors, political institutions, and participation, specifically in the era of political reforms and democratic transition taking place in Mexico in the 1990s and early 2000s. It is during this period that scholars began paying more attention to political participation in Latin America, and reliable data became available for this region of the world that indicates who participates, in what activities, and how often.

Holzner considers state-level factors occurring during a period of rapid institutional change in Mexico, including transformations in party systems, state-society links, and actions of the state. His approach places political and institutional variables at the center of explanations of how, when, and why individuals become active in politics. His argument is that understanding individual needs, resources, and preferences is not sufficient to explain political behavior. We must remember that human behavior, including political activity, occurs within an institutional environment that shapes incentives or disincentives, and opportunities or obstacles for political action (Holzner 2010, 13). Institutional features of the political system and direct experience with

national, state and local institutions can affect citizen attitudes and, over time, explain changes in participation. His argument gains support through empirical evidence that illustrates variations in individual political participation in Mexico, where under certain institutional conditions at the state level, the poor participated in a greater mean number of political acts than medium- and high-income individuals (Holzner 2010).

We can look to the work of Claudio Holzner for ideas about which subnational institutional factors and conditions may affect political participation in West Africa. Holzner argues that:

“The level of formal and informal access citizens have to political institutions...is also important for political participation and depends in part on the state’s formal structures.” (Holzner 2010, 41)

Holzner goes on to propose some of the institutional factors that may affect political participation, including the strength and capacity of local governments to carry out infrastructure projects, the differences in the competitiveness of local party systems, variations in levels of fraud, and the density and strength of organizations in civil society. He maintains these institutional structures are all important for understanding differences in levels of political participation across subnational environments within the same country (Holzner 2010, 41-48).

The work of other Latin American scholars offers additional support for Holzner’s institutional approach to political participation, and specifically speaks to the effects of local institutions on citizen interaction with the political system. Hiskey and Seligson (2003) analyze citizens’ level of support for the national political system using public opinion survey data in Bolivia from 1998 and 2000. They find citizens’ views of the political system, specifically local views on how well decentralization is

implemented, play a part in shaping citizens' attitudes towards the national political system. They find local decentralization institutions, if implemented well, have a positive effect on citizens' views of the political system. Conversely, poorly executed local decentralization institutions can contribute to negative views of the system (Hiskey and Seligson 2003). This substantiates the idea that support for the political system is not just a product of individual attributes, but is also in part a function of local institutions' performance and citizens' perceptions and attitudes about this performance.

The work of Hiskey and Bowler (2005) provides further support for this argument, and goes even further by linking citizens' perceptions and evaluations of the political system to citizens' interactions with the political system. Hiskey and Bowler analyze public opinion data collected just prior to the 2000 Mexican elections, using multiple regression analysis to demonstrate that local context affects citizens' evaluations of the legitimacy of the political system, and these evaluations in turn shape the willingness of citizens to engage with the system. They found participation is not solely a function of socioeconomic status, but also depends partly on citizens' views of the political process itself. Citizens are more willing to participate if they think the system and its processes and institutions are fair, and if the political system provides evidence of such fairness. But if citizens see the political system as unfair and corrupt, they may be less inclined to participate (Hiskey and Bowler 2005).

Broadly speaking, the works of Hiskey and Seligson (2003) and Hiskey and Bowler (2005) support Holzner's argument that political participation is not just a function of individual socioeconomic attributes such as income and education, but also a function of citizens' views of the political system. Furthermore, Holzner argues citizens'

views can be affected by their interactions and experiences with the institutions of the political system (2010).

These ideas are also echoed in the work of Latin American scholar Brian Wampler, who surveyed 833 elected delegates in 11 municipalities in Brazil's Participatory Budgeting (PB) program to determine which factors influence participants' attitudes and behaviors towards local political participation. Participatory budgeting is a citizen-driven process of identifying, discussing, and prioritizing local projects, with citizens ultimately deciding how to allocate part of a municipal budget. Wampler asked if citizens believe they have decision-making authority and if they have modified their strategies for securing public goods through the use of participatory budgeting mechanisms. Wampler's findings also support the idea that institutions can alter citizen attitudes and behaviors relative to the political system (Wampler 2007). Similar to Holzner, Wampler's work also deals mostly with marginalized citizens – those with little income and minimal educational attainment, living in neighborhoods with low levels of basic infrastructure and social services. Participatory budgeting was intended to reach out to these poorer segments of the population. His findings support the idea that institutions, in this case participatory institutions, can play an important role in altering citizens' attitudes and political behaviors, and can contribute to deepened democratic governance. These participatory budgeting institutions reduced the barriers and costs associated with participation, particularly for marginalized groups such as the poor, allowing them to mobilize, form groups, and participate in the local political system. Wampler's findings are in line with other evidence that institutional design can counter effects of social inequality and actors' capacity for action (Fung and Wright 2001; Avritzer 2002).

This work on political participation continues to advance in Latin America because of institutional innovations in the region. Participatory budgeting is one such example. We can apply this body of research in the African context, where as yet it is largely untested.

Political Participation in the African Context

Research on political participation in Africa also finds weaknesses in individual resource models that stress individual participation is costly and requires resources such as skills and time, and finds individual-level models do a poor job of explaining individual variation and group inequalities in political participation. In fact, when conducting analysis of Afrobarometer data from more than 27,000 respondents in 20 emerging African democracies, Isaksson (2010) found resource-poor groups participated to a larger extent than the resource rich. This contradicts traditional SES models. Others scholars conducting research on political participation also find traditional SES models don't always work in developing countries and in the African context in particular. Therefore, we must look to additional scholarship that begins to consider the effects of institutions on political participation. Recent works by Kuenzi and Lambright (2007 and 2011), Bratton (2010), and Cho (2004) demonstrate the need for a more comprehensive, institutional approach.

Kuenzi and Lambright (2007) explored determinants of voter turnout cross-nationally in Africa. This study found support for the influence of two institutional variables: 1) type of electoral formula and 2) concurrency of presidential and legislative

elections. However, this 2007 study looked only at cross-national variation in state-level institutional variables and used only 32 cases.

Kuenzi and Lambright then conducted additional analysis of voting behavior using Afrobarometer survey data from more than 17,000 people in 10 countries and found further evidence that challenges some SES findings (Kuenzi and Lambright 2011). Some demographic variables do appear to influence voter turnout, but findings are inconsistent. Age has a significant and positive relationship with voting, and educated Africans are more likely to vote than less educated counterparts, as the SES model would predict. But their findings also show poorer Africans are much more likely to vote than wealthier counterparts. In addition, they find party identification and attitudes towards democracy influence voting decisions (Kuenzi and Lambright 2011, 775). These findings support the idea that institutional and political context also influences propensity to vote. Kuenzi and Lambright also examined several different contextual variables, including a measure of ethnic diversity and contextual variables relating to voting. Their methodology reflects use of both individual-level survey data plus aggregate data measured at the county level. They find support for individual-level variables such as voluntary group membership, age, urban/rural, income, gender, and efficacy variables, as well as several contextual variables, including performance evaluations of parliament. Overall, when it comes to voting behavior, they expect Africans to be driven by many of the same forces as people in the rest of the world, while taking into consideration the specific “political landscape” of Africa: high poverty levels, low education attainment rates, and high concentrations of rural agrarian lifestyles. Differences also exist in electoral and political party institutions - clientelist politics are still the norm in many

African countries. Kuenzi and Lambright's work is valuable as it introduces the use of contextual variables that examine the effects of state-level institutions on voting behavior. But their work does not consider any other types of political participation beyond voting, nor does it consider the effects of any subnational institutions on participation.

I consider traditional SES and attitudinal factors that affect political participation, as well as consider individual-level factors that we know may affect political participation in the African context. Therefore, I include in my model the following individual-level variables held to predict political participation: urban/rural geographic location, gender, age, education, interest in public affairs, local political efficacy, voluntary association membership, electoral cleanliness, and party attachment.

An institutional approach similar to that utilized by scholars such as Holzner, Hiskey and Bowler, and Wampler is reflected in Michael Bratton's examination of African local government performance from the perspective of citizens as customers. In a study conducted in 20 countries during Round 4 of the 2008-2009 Afrobarometer survey, Bratton found that citizens' assessments of quality and accountability were driven by their attitudes about performance of local government institutions and whether citizens felt elected leaders "delivered the goods" (Bratton 2010). Using Afrobarometer survey data from 10 democratic sub-Saharan African countries, Wonbin Cho also demonstrated that political institutions, such as a one-party versus two-party system, influence citizens' attitudes toward the democratic system (Cho 2004). Although this work does not specifically relate institutions to participatory behavior, it does relate citizen attitudes to satisfaction with political institutions in African countries. More recent scholarship on local political participation in Liberia is able to relate institutions to political behavior.

Krawczyk, Muhula et al. (forthcoming) find citizens' perceptions of local government transparency to be positively related to local political participation. Using Round 4 Afrobarometer survey data from Liberia, they find citizens who perceive local transparency to be higher are also more likely to participate in the local political environment. Therefore, I hypothesize that three additional individual-level factors will help explain local political participation: citizens' experience with corruption, citizens' perceptions of local service delivery, and citizens' perceptions of local governmental transparency.

Hypothesis 1: Citizens who have greater experience with actual corruption (paying bribes, doing favors, giving gifts) will be more likely to engage in the local political system in order to advocate for increased accountability. Citizens with less experience with corruption will be less likely to engage in local politics.

Hypotheses 2: If citizens have positive perceptions of local service delivery, they will be more likely to engage in the local political system. If they have negative perceptions of local service delivery, they will be less likely to participate.

Hypothesis 3: If citizens perceive local government as being more transparent, they will be more likely to participate in local politics. If they perceive local government as less transparent, they will be less likely to participate in the local political system.

One of the most comprehensive works on political attitudes and behaviors in Africa is *Public Opinion, Markets, and Democracy in Africa* (Bratton, Mattes et al. 2005). This work includes discussion of political participation in Africa, moving beyond an SES model of participation to consider the effects of attitudes about and experiences with institutions of the political system, and how these attitudes and experiences can shape participation in the system. Bratton, Mattes et al. argue that “public opinion is shaped by policy performance” (2005, 3). They define public opinion broadly, taking into consideration values, attitudes, and behaviors, which echoes the sentiments of Claudio Holzner (2010) in the Latin American context above. Bratton, Mattes et al. explore the role of public opinion in the development of democracy and economic reform in Africa, using pooled Round I Afrobarometer survey research conducted in 12 countries from 1999-2001 to answer their questions. As advocated by scholars of public administration with a global perspective, they move beyond monocausal, country-case comparisons in favor of quantitative analysis using a large number of observations. They are interested in “big questions” surrounding democratic consolidation and economic liberalization in Africa, however; they use a microlevel approach to investigate these questions and offer a specific focus on modeling citizens’ attitudes and political behavior. They ask what comes first, attitudes or behavior. They find political participation to be a product of institutional mobilization, and they make the argument that political behavior is less about typical socialization experiences such as formal education and more about direct experiences in adulthood. Bratton, Mattes et al (2005) remind us that new institutionalism says that rules shape behavior, and therefore, behaviors shape attitudes. They use the example of civic education in new democracies to support this argument, where some

research finds that the act of voting, especially for those new to the experience, can build support for democracy. This positions participation as an educative, transforming force on institutions: people learn to be good citizens through practice, and this in turn contributes to improving institutions so they become more effective instruments of democracy (Berry, Portney et al. 1993, 5).

Like Hiskey and Seligson (2003) and Hiskey and Bowler (2005) in Latin America, Bratton, Mattes et al. (2005) talk about how attitudes can also shape behaviors, using the lens of citizens' evaluations of the political system. Basically, they argue that political socialization and learning takes place throughout life, not simply in early childhood and early in the life cycle, and that contemporary learning affects citizens' evaluations of the system as well as their attitudes about that system. Specifically, Bratton, Mattes et al ask whether attitude changes encourage active participation (behavior). They find many people voice verbal support for democracy, but this doesn't always translate into actively taking part in political life (2005, 157). But they do find support for some institutional influences in their models of participation, such as party attachment, although the institutions they examine are measured at the individual (versus contextual) level.

The contribution of Lauren MacLean in her work *Informal Institutions and Citizenship in Rural Africa: Risk and Reciprocity in Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire* is in her emphasis on local-level (versus state-level) variations in state institutions, specifically in the context of level of decentralization. Local-level variations shape what she terms "informal institutions of reciprocity" and individual conceptions of citizenship (MacLean 2010). She emphasizes the need for further research that analyzes and investigates the

interactions between state and local-level actors and institutions. Like scholars of Latin America (Hiskey and Seligson 2003; Hiskey and Bowler 2005; Holzner 2010), she also finds that local-level institutional variations can shape citizens' ideas about citizenship, and how citizens perceive and participate in local- and national-level politics. Her work also supports the idea that differences in the practice of local-level politics may have implications at the national level (MacLean 2010, 231). Like Bratton, Mattes et al. (2005), she offers support for the argument that citizens' experiences with state institutions (in this case, at the local level) can shape political attitudes, participation, civic engagement, and notions of citizenship (MacLean 2010, 241).

An Institutional Approach to Local Political Participation in West Africa

The growing body of cross-national research referenced above suggests that traditional resource- and attitudinal-based models do not adequately explain political participation, especially in developing countries. When it is costly for individuals to act, institutions impact behavior by shaping preferences and ideas about what is politically desirable and possible (Wildavsky 1987; North 1990; Koelble 1995). Institutions determine which resources and skills matter, and how much, in order to promote political participation. More importantly, institutional performance affects how citizens interact with the political system, and aspects of this interaction are influenced or controlled by public administrators. This is because citizen attitudes and beliefs vary based on concrete experiences with the political system, and preferences are developed and formed within an institutional context (Wildavsky 1987; March and Olsen 1995). In other words, citizen attitudes are shaped by direct and recent political experiences. The state, its policies, and

institutional features of the political system impact participation by shaping the motivations and opportunities actors have for becoming involved, and by shaping their attitudes, preferences, and engagement with politics. Expanding opportunities for political participation can decrease the costs associated with participation, thereby increasing activity and making citizens feel as if they can successfully influence the system of government. Lower levels of participation become evidence not of disinterest, but of negative experiences with political institutions and processes.

Using an institutional framework does not ignore the importance of SES, attitudinal, and mobilization models, but it shows us that resources and preferences create the potential for action. We need to understand how institutions shape the motivations that result in action or inaction in the political system, and which institutions matter most in shaping these motivations. Emphasizing an institutional approach that looks at local-level institutions, but still taking into consideration a full range of individual-level factors such as income and education, allows us to develop a more complete model of political participation in West Africa. Thus to develop an institutional framework, I employ a model of local political participation that includes SES and attitudinal factors, plus a series of relevant institutional factors for West Africa. Chapter 3 offers support and rationale for the selection of four institutional variables, measured at the subnational level, that I hypothesize will affect local political participation in this region.

CHAPTER 3 INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS THAT AFFECT POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN WEST AFRICA

In order to develop and apply an institutional framework for studying political participation in West Africa, the institutions that matter for citizen participation must be identified. But identifying which institutions matter can be difficult. As Chapter 2 illustrates, scholars have started to explore the idea that institutional design can impact citizens' level of political system support, and this level of system support and citizens' corresponding political behavior are not solely functions of individual attributes.

Based on the recent work of the scholars referenced in Chapter 2, plus the specific environmental and institutional conditions in Ghana and Liberia that are explored in detail in Chapters 4 and 5, this study proposes four key independent variables that affect citizen participation in West Africa. These institutional variables⁴ include: 1) level and quality of decentralization, 2) breadth and depth of enhanced participatory mechanisms, 3) density and strength of civil society organizations, and 4) competitiveness and fairness of local elections. I hypothesize these institutional factors may affect citizen perceptions of political system performance and consequently impact how citizens interact with the political system, thereby helping to explain patterns of local political participation. Each of the four factors is discussed in turn throughout the remainder of this chapter.

Level and Quality of Decentralization

A popular method in Africa- and, in fact, many other parts of the world- for attempting to reach the goals of deeper democratic governance has been the

⁴ I use the term "institutional variable" to mean a contextual variable, and use these terms interchangeably throughout this dissertation.

decentralization of government from the center to the local level. Decentralization reforms are legal and administrative acts that initiate transfer of authority, responsibility, resources, accountability, and rules (institutions) from central to local government (Olowu and Wunsch 2004). In the devolutionary form of decentralization, real transfer of public authority, resources, and personnel is necessary from the national level to sub-national jurisdictions (Crook and Manor 1998). Local government must have the authority to implement decisions made using citizen input, and this requires decentralized local institutions with real power. This also means local institutions need control over the resources required to implement these decisions. Not all decentralization efforts have the authority and resources necessary to attain this devolutionary form of decentralization.

Devolution can be contrasted with the concept of deconcentration, where public policy is still dictated by the central government but simply implemented locally. Devolution can also be contrasted to a type of decentralization known as delegation, which transfers some decision-making authority to the local level while the central government continues to maintain control over key policy areas (Oxhorn, Tulchin et al. 2004).

Olowu and Wunsch promote a devolutionary form of decentralization. They refer to it as “democratic decentralization,” meaning significant elements of authority, responsibility for services, and resources (fiscal and human) are transferred to local governments from the central government (Olowu and Wunsch 2004). Democratic decentralization also includes accountability, with citizens maintaining a significant role in their own governance. Fung and Wright (2001) agree this devolutionary form of decentralization requires state power channeled down to the local level. This involves

developing and implementing local solutions, and requires accountability. Specifically, this requires decentralized, local structures that do not act in just an advisory role, but that have their own substantial authority and capacity. For the remainder of this dissertation, I use the term “decentralization” to mean this devolutionary and democratic form of decentralization.

There has been great interest in decentralization and its role in development since the 1990s, and it has been advocated by aid organizations such as the World Bank and the United Nations due to its perceived benefits. Decentralization is thought to lead to improvements in governmental efficiency, responsiveness, accountability, and equity, ultimately leading to poverty reduction and development (Smoke 2003). US-based scholarship also promotes decentralized governance with higher levels of citizen participation as a route to greater efficiency, sustainability, and equity (Ostrom 1999). Since the devolutionary form of decentralization is marked by the true transfer of political, administrative, and fiscal responsibility and power, hopefully resulting in stronger local governments and improved local service delivery, arguments for decentralization also center around the fact that it should result in better use of resources and in decisions that reflect the needs and priorities of local citizens (Devas and Grant 2003).

The economic and social benefits of decentralization discussed above are based on the assumption that local citizens have influence on the decision-making process. Decentralization should *increase* opportunities for political access at the local level, especially among the poor, who may face barriers to interacting with officials at the state and national levels. Decentralization should *decrease* the costs of participating, which

should also increase the ability of citizens to participate (Abers 1998, 531-532). Thus, we would expect higher levels of decentralization to result in increased participation at the local level.

There is some research to support this idea. For example, Crook and Manor's study in Asia and West Africa found that decentralization increased participation in some cases (Crook and Manor 1995), and Blair's study of the impact of decentralization in six countries concluded that democratic local governance (DLG), which encompasses initiatives including decentralization, encouraged participation and increased representation (Blair 2000). But quality of decentralization matters, as well. True transfer of authority, accompanied by the necessary fiscal, political, and administrative resources, should result in greater citizen access to the local political system and improved service delivery. Consequently, citizen attitudes about the performance of local government should be more positive, resulting in greater political participation. But decentralization that does not function properly because it does not have true transfer of authority, is lacking the proper resources, or is marred by clientelism and corruption at the local level will have the opposite effect on citizen attitudes and participation. Decentralized systems can have weaknesses, including uneven involvement by local citizens, the possibility of "local tyranny" and discrimination, lack of innovation, and inability to cope with large common pool resources (Ostrom 1999), all of which can hinder the ability to bring about intended results. In fact, Crook and Manor found improved performance of government services as a result of decentralization only some of the time (Crook and Manor 1995).

Additional evidence is mixed regarding the impact of decentralization. In a US urban environment, Berry et al. found no evidence at the individual level that decentralized

institutions, in this case neighborhood associations, increased political participation, nor did they find these institutions can overcome socioeconomic biases inhibiting participation (Berry, Portney et al. 1993). But when they ranked the organizational strength of neighborhood associations, the neighborhoods with the most solid organizations had the strongest activity among low- and middle- class residents. These stronger institutions were also linked to certain types of political activity such as making complaints and requests.

Other scholarship in the developing world attempts to measure the impact of decentralization and also looks at what contributes to successful decentralization efforts. Devas and Grant (2003) argue the impact of decentralization depends on both the local and national institutional and political context. They propose factors that affect decentralization efforts and outcomes include the presence or absence of political will, sequencing of reforms, design of intergovernmental transfers, capacity of local governments to manage their finances, and the power of local elites. Hiskey and Seligson explore how Bolivia's decentralization efforts shape citizen attitudes towards the political system. They offer a "first cut" at trying to identify the potential results of decentralization by analyzing the impact local institutions have on system support (2003, 68). They also offer subnational analysis within one country versus cross-national analysis, which controls for other determinants. Their findings support the contention that decentralization has the potential to increase citizen support of the political system at the national level, but they find this is not a given, and decentralization can actually have the opposite effect of producing more negative views of the political system if the performance of local institutions is inadequate.

The Impact of Decentralization in Africa

There has been little systematic study of decentralization specific to the African environment. Existing scholarship finds the results of decentralization efforts are not overwhelmingly positive and reveals many cases where continued central control interferes with effective decentralization- in other words, true devolutionary decentralization is rarely occurring. Current work focuses on how decentralization contributes to enhanced local development; not much work has been done that examines the impact of African decentralization on participation. For example, Kakumba reviewed the decentralized system of local governance in Uganda and evaluated how its participatory mechanisms have enhanced rural development (Kakumba 2010). The argument in favor of decentralization was that it could promote democratic local governance and development through popular participation in local elections. This improved representation and empowerment would lead to effective local planning, decision-making and implementation of development projects. This was based on two assumptions: 1) local citizens would participate in making effective local development decisions and be able to enforce responsiveness and accountability from government leaders, and 2) elected leaders would serve the best interests of their constituents. The actual reality on the ground showed mixed results. Kakumba's evaluation of five decentralized participatory mechanisms and their effects on development found that results are weak. The community action plans of local government councils were thwarted by central government control, local elite capture and lack of citizen knowledge and skills (2010, 178). While decentralization enhanced representation on local councils,

especially for underserved populations such as women, youth, and the disabled, it did not translate into enhanced rural development (2010, 180). Central control continued to impede effective local decision-making.

Other African scholars agree there is difficulty in translating decentralization reform efforts into specific initiatives that support effective local planning, capital investment, budgeting and financial management, revenue and resource mobilization, and production (Wunsch 2001; Crook 2003; Olowu 2003). The major reasons for this difficulty are African central governments' reluctance to relinquish authority in these key areas, and the complexity of the organizational and institutional redesign needed to support decentralization. This stems from the fact that in many African governments, power is heavily concentrated in the center, yet many central governments have low levels of capacity. Johnson offers three prevailing examples in the literature as to why the outcomes of decentralization have been disappointing: inadequate capacity, insufficient fiscal decentralization (lack of transfer of resources), and a lack of citizen accountability (Johnson 2002). Johnson's examples reflect the concerns of Jamil Jresiat, who maintains lack of institutional capacity and insufficient decentralization of fiscal resources have contributed to poor overall decentralization results (Jresiat 2002).

Difficulties in Measuring Decentralization Efforts

One reason research on decentralization efforts in Africa can be challenging is that measuring decentralization can be problematic. As Crook explains, "Finding systematic evidence for decentralization outcomes in Africa...is difficult" (Crook 2003, 78). Crook also notes that empirical analyses, especially analyses dealing with fiscal

decentralization that use subnational expenditures as a construct, can be flawed indicators of decentralization (see also Huther and Shah 1998). Case study analyses of decentralization also have limitations: they are not systematically comparable due to lack of internal validity, they provide no baseline and longitudinal data, they offer no sense of significance and scope of local expenditures in relation to local needs, and they lack impact assessments (Crook 2003). But Crook proposes that one way to investigate the extent to which decentralization is associated with more participatory governance is by actually measuring changes in quantity of participation, and measuring changes in the range of participating groups to gauge whether it has become more inclusive. He cautions, though, that “more” participation does not necessarily equate to “more effective” participation (2003, 79).

The Complex Relationship Between Decentralization and Participation

Heller argues that “strengthening and empowering local government has been justified not only on the grounds of making local government more efficient but also on the grounds of increasing accountability and participation” (Heller 2001, 132). Many of the more direct forms of citizen participation, such as participatory planning and budgeting, are especially suited to execution at the local level, making decentralization a vehicle for enhanced citizen participation. In some cases, democratic decentralization has opened up new spaces for citizen participation in local governance by establishing meaningful elected deliberative bodies that can enhance participation and responsiveness (Charlick 2001).

In fact, the idea that decentralization facilitates participation is often taken at face value, reflecting the notion that if government is just brought closer to the people, government will seek citizen input when making decisions. The problem with this view is that it ignores differences in decentralization reform strategies, local settings, and the congruence between these two issues. This view also ignores the interests of local government officials, to whom resources and responsibilities are devolved through decentralization reforms. In many societies, local government officials are simply not interested in sharing their political power and control over financial resources with local citizens. Because of their traditionally elevated standing, local politicians may draw on their political and economic clout to limit the influence of citizens in decision making (Andersson and Laerhoven 2007). In fact, in societies where inequalities prevail, it is unlikely that local institutions for citizen participation will simply emerge as a natural consequence of decentralization reforms. Several recent studies have suggested that exactly the opposite may occur—that decentralization may exacerbate existing inequalities through increased opportunities for corruption and elite capture of rents (Bardhan and Mookherjee 2000; Harris, Stokke et al. 2005). Thus, as we can see, decentralization has the possibility of both enhancing and hampering participation in local governance.

In order to achieve the proposed benefits associated with decentralization, such as enhanced service delivery, increased local government accountability, local citizen empowerment, and deepened democracy, authentic and effective citizen participation is needed (Gaventa and Valderrama 1999; Francis and James 2003). Decentralized decision-making mechanisms can facilitate citizen participation, articulate local priorities,

and ensure programs are appropriate for local needs. In fact, there is limited evidence that the extent and quality of participation and representation are increasing, specifically through use of participatory forms of planning and budgeting (Conyers 2007; Wampler 2007).

Thus whether decentralization reforms consistently result in expanded participation, and whether that participation produces accountability and responsiveness to citizens, is an empirical question to be answered (Charlick 2001). And as Crook (2003) reminds us, even if decentralization reforms do result in increased quantity of participation, this does not guarantee it is effective: it may not be evenly distributed or representative, and local governments may still remain unresponsive and unaccountable. There is also an important difference between “participation” and actual “influence.” It is easier to simply increase the number and range of people who participate in local government than it is to increase the extent to which they influence decision-making (Blair 2000; Conyers 2007). The key factor in whether decentralization produces authentic and effective citizen participation becomes the local institutional structure, which determines how decisions are actually made at the local level.

For these reasons discussed above, I hypothesize that level and quality of decentralization will be associated with political participation. By “level and quality” of decentralization, I mean that regions with greater amounts of political, administrative, and fiscal decentralization – regions with more transfer of resources and authority resulting in a devolutionary type of decentralization – will have higher levels of political participation. But it is clear that decentralization can be effective or ineffective – issues such as local conflict, capture by local elites, poorly designed local institutions, and lack

of resources can all impede effective decentralization efforts. Based on current research in Africa, I expect many instances of incomplete and ineffective decentralization. This will adversely affect levels of local participation, and, subsequently, impede good governance and development efforts. Similar to the findings of Henry Blair (2000), higher levels of effective decentralization should result in increased citizen satisfaction and, consequently, higher levels of political activity at the local level. But ineffective decentralization will have negative outcomes at the local level and should result in less interaction with the political system by citizens. Additionally, the impact of decentralization should vary based on the particular institutional and political context (Wunsch 2001; Smoke 2003). In Chapter 6 I explain the measure and construct I use as a proxy for level of decentralization in my empirical analyses.

Hypothesis 4: Higher levels of decentralization will be associated with increased citizen satisfaction, thereby leading to higher levels of local political participation. Lower levels of decentralization efforts will be associated with decreased citizen satisfaction with local government, leading to lower levels of citizen participation at the local level.

Availability and Quality of Local Participatory Mechanisms

Political participation can be increased in two ways: one is to expand the range of opportunities available for citizens to participate using decentralization as discussed above, and the other is to make that participation more meaningful (Berry, Portney et al. 1993). While decentralization may increase opportunities for participation, we know that more participation does not always equate to more meaningful, effective participation. As

we can see from the preceding discussion of decentralization, some scholars have promoted the idea that decentralization is related to increased participatory mechanisms at the local level, and can result in more opportunity for subnational political access. But this is not always the case, and even when decentralization does result in increased access, simply having more local participatory mechanisms does not mean they are strong, well-designed vehicles for participation. We therefore expect while decentralization affects opportunities for local political participation, meaningful and authentic participation also requires well-designed, high-performing local participatory mechanisms. One way to make participation more meaningful is through use of enhanced participatory mechanisms. What types of mechanisms reflect these ideals? Various scholars advocate for moving beyond voting and embracing mechanisms that encompass a broad range of direct citizen-governmental interactions.

Existing studies on local democracy in developing countries focus on formal mechanisms and institutions for political representation, especially on those related to voting such as political parties, electoral systems, and voter registration (see Bratton 1999; Fornos, Power et al. 2004). But while free, fair, and regular elections and universal suffrage are the most well-known mechanisms for citizen participation in developing countries, scholars promote the need for more than these blunt instruments. Pointing to successful cases of participatory local governance throughout the developed and developing world, Ackerman argues that, “state reformers should move beyond strategies based on exit and voice...to establish spaces of full co-governance with society. Instead of sending sections of the state off to society it is often more fruitful to invite society into the inner chambers of the state” (Ackerman 2004a, 448).

Henry Blair (2000) moves beyond elections as a singular mechanism for participation and advocates for the use of enhanced participatory mechanisms such as public meetings, formal grievance procedures, and opinion surveys. John Gaventa & Camilo Valderrama (1999) promote enhanced participatory mechanisms such as participatory planning, budgeting and appraisals; monitoring of institutions; and citizen education and awareness-building. Cornwall (2002) agrees that enhanced participatory mechanisms that are more inclusive and accountable are necessary, and such mechanisms include participatory budgeting and planning, project appraisal, poverty assessment, monitoring and evaluation. All of these enhanced mechanisms offer broader, more direct interaction between public and private social actors, and are especially conducive to execution at the local level (Gaventa and Valderrama 1999).

In fact, most of the world's recent decentralization experiences have incorporated mechanisms for enhanced citizen participation in local governance that go beyond formal election procedures. Public administration literature gives several reasons for local governments to utilize these enhanced participatory mechanisms, including broader citizen support for policy decisions, and more effective and legitimate decisions (Fung and Wright 2001; Goldfrank 2002; Ackerman 2004a). But making the case for this sort of "participatory democracy" using theory is much easier than showing it works. While enhanced participatory mechanisms may be advantageous, it is also possible that they may not be very effective and may lack measurable outcomes (Wampler and Boulding 2010). Even worse, they may also be inherently dangerous as participation can be ambiguous and unpredictable, resulting in new forms of control that simply reproduce

negative patterns of inequity versus being spaces for real democratic change (Cornwall 2002; Michels and Graaf 2010).

Enhanced Participation in Public Administration Theory

In the field of public administration, the core ideas of “new public service” are grounded in serving the public interest, embracing the ideas of democratic governance, and in renewing civic engagement (Denhardt and Denhardt 2007). This model of public administration implies that citizenship is viewed as membership in the political community, and it is concerned with an individual’s capability to influence the political system. This requires active citizen involvement in political life where citizens must look beyond self-interest to consider the greater public interest. This sense of public spirit embraces the ideals of justice, participation, and deliberation. In essence, it calls for a citizen-run government. Scholars see citizens as sharing in authority and control, and as collaborators in a citizen-run government (King and Stivers 1998). Box (1999) moves the argument to the local level, suggesting ways that local governments can be restructured to allow for greater citizen involvement in the governance process. The ideas of new public service reflect the goals of enhanced participatory mechanisms – shared values, collaborating with citizens, sharing responsibility, and helping citizens articulate and meet shared interests. Public administrators are using enhanced participatory mechanisms to achieve these goals.

Public administration scholars believe in the importance of the role of citizens in the decision-making process of state and local government, and seek to use enhanced participatory mechanisms as vehicles for real democratic change (Frederickson 1982;

Denhardt and Denhardt 2000). And public managers are redefining the role they play in involving citizens in the governmental process. For example, public administration research is interested in asking what factors affect government decisions about citizen involvement. Yang and Callahan (2007) focus on the community level and find government officials make citizen involvement decisions in response to external stakeholders who push for participation, in order to pursue responsiveness to participatory values that emphasize the importance and value of citizen participation, to seek responsiveness to administrative practicality, and due to pressure from stakeholders such as citizens, other elected officials, nonprofits, and the media.

Enhanced Participation and Development

I have discussed the role of enhanced participation in public administration theory. But scholars in other subfields of political science, particularly comparative politics and development, have also explored the notion of deepened democratic participation, and participated in debates about enhanced citizen participation in governance (see Fung and Wright 2001; Gaventa 2004; Ackerman 2004a). Some of the approaches associated with these ideas include strengthening representative democracy and participatory mechanisms; exploring deliberative policy-making through emerging new models such as citizens' juries and other 'deliberative inclusionary processes' (Holmes and Scoones 2000), bypassing traditional policy formulation processes; and exploring "empowered participatory processes" through debate and consensus-based forums (Fung and Wright 2001). These approaches are explored in development theory, and models are utilized and tested in both developed and developing areas of the world. Various terms are used to

describe these models that focus on enhanced citizen participation in the democratic process. But whether they are called “participatory democracy,” “participatory governance,” or “participatory publics” (Avritzer 2002), there is a belief that citizens’ participation in decision-making processes outside the structures of traditional elected government institutions, through alternative institutional arrangements within local government, can help address inequalities through the participatory process (McGee, Bazaara et al. 2003, 9-10). These new “democratic spaces” are opportunities for stakeholders to engage in the policy-making process in ways that help overcome obstacles to participation by marginalized groups.

The Impact of Enhanced Participatory Mechanisms

Participatory institutions are thought to be key components of local democratic governance, and are expected to lead to good governance, which includes higher levels of citizen participation. In other words, “The direct incorporation of citizens into new decision-making bodies is part of an effort to empower individuals to become active citizens, enhance the responsiveness of local governments to citizens’ demands, curtail government corruption, and overcome problems associated with representative democracy,” argues Avritzer (2002). But do these new participatory institutions influence citizens’ attitudes, resulting in changes in political behavior? These institutions can successfully deepen democratic governance only if they can do this. If we end up finding constraints and limitations on enhanced participatory mechanisms, how do we deal with them? Would the redesign of enhanced participatory mechanisms enable citizens to behave differently, or are people likely to behave the same way regardless of institutional

design (Roberts 2004)? If local institutions do not have effective designs, this can lead to principal-agent problems and public accountability issues, reducing the effectiveness of local institutions to solve problems, and weakening citizen involvement in the local political process (Olowu and Wunsch 2004). When institutions are weak and ineffective, citizen participation will remain fragmented and ineffective.

Various scholars have attempted to measure and gauge the effects of enhanced participatory mechanisms on various aspects of democratic governance. Examples of enhanced participatory mechanisms can be found throughout the world, specifically at the local level, that include direct citizen involvement in public policy decisions. In the province of Turin, Italy, citizens had seats on local commissions that deliberated over where to locate an incinerator and a landfill. The ideals of both efficiency and justice were successfully balanced and considered. In Bolzano, Italy, local government planning helped to deal with ethnic conflict through negotiation and development of cooperative relationships across neighborhoods (Denhardt and Denhardt 2007). Goldfrank (2002) illustrates how the Montevideo, Uruguay city government's approach to participatory planning had a direct impact on the quality of public services in the city. He found that institutions that actively involved citizens in decision making, rather than just consulting citizens about their preferences, achieved better results. These participation success stories show that it is sometimes possible for governments to design and facilitate the creation of local institutions that enhance democratic governance.

Use of Enhanced Participatory Mechanisms in Africa

Dele Olowu has categorized two types of participatory mechanisms or “voice mechanism” regionally applicable to Africa. He terms these “indirect” and “direct” mechanisms for participation. The “indirect” mechanisms include local elections, structure and operation of local assemblies and councils, and size of local governments (Olowu 2003). Olowu takes issue with indirect mechanisms. First, he claims local elections in Africa have not been the subject of much serious study. While local elections are important institutions for strengthening citizen participation, government accountability and provision of information to electors, they are often marred by bribery, violence, and corruption. They occur only every four to five years, making them a blunt instrument for citizen influence, a common critique of elections as accountability mechanisms. Second, problems also exist with the structure and operation of local governments. Often local governments do not possess the authority, facilities, resources, and personnel to provide effective oversight of public officials, resulting in ineffective sanctions when officials do not act in the public interest. Third, when it comes to size of local government, reforms have focused on consolidation of local units in order to improve capacity and viability. Many governments are beginning to understand that large jurisdictional size can stimulate inter-ethnic conflict and widen distance between citizens and local government. Economies of scale can be taken advantage of through contracting and joint production of services (Ostrom, Schroeder et al. 1993). Overall, these indirect mechanisms tend to perform imperfectly because they rely on citizen participation filtered through elected representatives.

Olowu advocates instead for the use of what he terms “direct voice mechanisms” that align with the sort of enhanced participatory mechanisms proposed by Ackerman (2004a), Cornwall (2002), Blair (2000), and Gaventa and Valderrama (1999). Olowu’s examples include participatory budgeting in Ugandan municipalities that link citizens to resource allocation; service delivery surveys conducted by government to better understand consumer needs in Senegal, Uganda, and Ghana; user groups and contracts in Malawi and Namibia to ensure sustainable service delivery; increased transparency in revenue sharing allocation and usage in Uganda; increased levels of local revenue autonomy to link local revenues and expenditures; ombudsman and complaint bodies in Benin, Nigeria, Uganda and South Africa; local judicial or conflict resolution agencies; traditional rulers and land boards to provide a community voice; and community governments evolving from community-based organizations with large amounts of social capital (Olowu 2003).

Evidence about the use of enhanced participatory mechanisms in local government is also available from Kenya, where the government established the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) through an Act of Parliament in 2003. The CDF was supposed to direct financial resources to the local level for community-based development projects. By bringing resources closer to the people and giving them decision-making power over use of these resources, the CDF was also supposed to promote local citizen participation. In practice, results have not met expectations. Control of the CDF has reverted to local government officials, who manipulate the membership of the various local citizen committees and exercise power in all decision-making processes. Patronage networks between local officials and citizens have resulted in unequal power relationships and

inequalities in representation that appear to have been institutionalized by the CDF Act (Brouwers 2011).

In *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Dahl 1963), Dahl constructs two parameters of political participation- depth and breadth- that encompass elements of an effective democracy. Depth of participation is the extent to which citizens who choose to participate have the opportunity to determine final policy outcomes through the decision-making process. Breadth of participation is the extent to which opportunity is offered to all citizens to participate at each stage of the policy process Berry, Portney et al use Dahl's two parameters in their work, *The Rebirth of Urban Democracy* (Dahl 1963; Berry, Portney et al. 1993, 55). I also adopt these parameters in my work, and I hypothesize that highly-functioning, well-designed, "direct" local participatory institutions that encompass the elements of both depth and breadth, such as those described by Ackerman (2004a), Olowu (2003), Cornwall (2002), Blair (2000), and Gaventa and Valderrama (1999), will result in positive citizen attitudes and consequently, greater local participation.

Hypothesis 5: Well-designed, "direct" local participatory mechanisms that have both depth and breadth result in positive citizen attitudes and higher levels of engagement with the local political system. The lack of such enhanced participatory mechanisms, or poorly designed enhanced participatory mechanisms, will result in increased citizen dissatisfaction, leading to lower levels of engagement with the local political system.

Density and Strength of Civil Society Organizations

Civil society is an additional institutional factor that influences the decisions of citizens to participate in the political system, especially among poor and middle class citizens. In *The Rebirth of Urban Democracy*, Berry, Portney, and Thomson contend that simply increasing political opportunities may not increase citizen participation, even through use of strong, more direct participatory institutions such as those discussed in the section above on enhanced participatory mechanisms. They argue what they call “community associations,” as part of civil society, also influence citizen participation (Berry, Portney et al. 1993).

The term “civil society” refers to formal and informal associations, organizations, and networks that are separate from, although deeply intertwined with, the government and private sectors (Sargeant 2005). Civil society organizations, or CSOs, include nonprofits (also known as NGOs, or nongovernmental organizations), trade unions, faith-based organizations, indigenous people’s movements, foundations, and community associations. Scholars have long recognized the importance of these organizations, also referred to as “voluntary associations,” relative to political participation. An individual’s involvement in voluntary associations can promote political activity; we see this exhibited via the civic volunteerism model described in Chapter 2 and through the importance of associational membership in predicting individual political participation. Associational membership causes people to be targeted for mobilization, voluntary associations expose their members to this mobilization, and associational membership offers individuals social rewards in the form of social capital. Putnam argues that this

associational membership, along with the formation of social capital, can ultimately affect civic engagement (Putnam 1995). In fact, civil society organizations engaged in advocacy activity know they will be far more effective if they are able to mobilize their constituents, as they are educating and mobilizing supporters who would otherwise remain uninformed and passive (Berry 2005).

The role of civil society organizations includes service delivery (meeting needs the government does not), civic education, mobilization, advocacy, and involvement in policy-making. In the US context, where the term “nonprofit” is most common, these organizations are engaged in service delivery, and sometimes in activities such as civic education, voter registration campaigns and other election-related activities. They are also involved in lobbying, attempting to influence the passage of legislation. Nonprofits also engage in policy advocacy, which can include any type of policy engagement other than political campaign activity and lobbying. In developing countries, the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) also includes delivery of public services and civic education activities, as well as watchdog functions to promote accountability, and grassroots lobbying and mobilization.

CSOs have a tradition of advocacy on behalf of clients, particularly those from underrepresented groups (LeRoux 2007). They can serve as intermediaries between the government and its citizens through use of participatory mechanisms for enhanced service responsiveness and accountability (Cornwall and Gaventa 2001). The fact that CSOs take part in activities of government offers an overlap between government and civil society that is conducive to CSOs acting as civic intermediaries (Verba, Scholzman et al. 1995), although this can make for an unclear distinction between political and non-

political acts. Civil society organizations can serve as a locus for requests for political involvement because these organizations lie between the individual and public spheres of politics. CSOs also themselves generate requests for participation (Verba, Scholzman et al. 1995). They can expose citizens to political cues and request that citizens take political action.

Civil society organizations can be organized places for engagement with local government, including participation in problem identification, prioritizing, and finding solutions. Where strong civil society organizations exist, with strong networks of citizen interaction, trust, and cohesion, public administrators can use the resulting social capital to open avenues for dialogue and debate, and to educate citizens about issues surrounding democratic governance (Woolum 2000).

There is scholarship that promotes the idea that civil society (with the inherent understanding that CSOs and nonprofits are organizations that are part of civil society) can impact political participation. For example, Yang and Callahan (2007) argue the activities of nonprofits can facilitate civic engagement and also stimulate government to seek the input of its citizens. According to Denhardt and Denhardt, the associational groups that constitute civil society become places where citizens can engage in the sort of dialogue and deliberation that is the essence of democracy. Citizens can become involved in grass-roots movements in neighborhoods and groups that constitute “laboratories of citizenship” (Denhardt and Denhardt 2007). These relationships allow citizens to engage with one another and with the larger political system, as well as provide an opportunity for government to reach out to citizens in order to build stronger ties, increase legitimacy and trust, and educate citizens. But variations in the activities of nonprofits – specifically

variations in the density and strength of civil society organizations – can have an effect on the ability of civil society organizations to impact citizen involvement (Holzner 2010, 48).

While some of the research discussed above supports the idea that civil society organizations produce engagement benefits, how local government reacts to associational life is still unclear. If civil society organizations are able to bring issues to the attention of local and even regional and national officials, this may strengthen linkages between local associations and the state and make government more responsive. This, in turn, can improve citizen attitudes and perceptions of legitimacy of the political system, thereby increasing citizen engagement with that system (Charlick 2001). Civil society organizations can be viewed in this case as an “institutional solution to people-centered, participatory and inclusive development” (Devas, Amis et al. 2001). And they are regarded in this way by many development agencies, including the World Bank and the United Nations. Civil society can be an organized force that engages with local governments in a wide variety of participatory ways. Through monitoring and agenda-setting, civil society can also become an institution for accountable government (Smulovitz and Peruzzoti 2000). However, civil society may not always function in this way. Marginalized groups such as the poor may not have their interests represented, and civil society organizations can sometimes reinforce patterns of inequality and exclusion (Beall 2001).

More Evidence on the Role of Civil Society in Participation

How do we decide whether civil society promotes democracy and participation, or reinforces patterns of inequality and exclusion of marginalized groups? Scholars in both the developing and developed worlds have provided evidence on the impact of civil society on political participation. Harry Blair embarked on qualitative field research in six countries to investigate democratic local governance (DLG) and its core components of participation and accountability. One of the mechanisms for achieving DLG he examined was civil society (Blair 2000). He examined the role civil society played at the local level in these six countries, and found even in the cases at the high end of the civil society spectrum, evidence was not all positive. The Ukraine exhibited virtually no civil society at the local level, and not much sign of social capital. Only one case, the Philippines, showed signs of civil society that functioned as an effective instrument of public accountability at the local level. His study leaves many unanswered questions, such as why some countries have made more progress than others, and whether variations in civil society at the local level lead to variations in local participation.

John Clark talks more specifically about the role of nonprofits in development, particularly in the context of what he terms a “demand side” emphasis to nonprofit activity, where nonprofits help citizens to articulate their concerns and participate in the development process, particularly in helping marginalized populations such as the poor to have their voices heard (Clark 1995). Although he acknowledges there are many barriers to NGOs taking on this “demand side” role, he advocates for NGOs and the state to pursue a collaborative and synergistic relationship that results in a greater number of NGOs adopting this responsibility.

A US-based research stream has begun investigating the use of nonprofits as civic intermediaries, empowering citizens to become active participants in the political process. The research of Kelly LeRoux suggests nonprofits (in this case urban social service agencies) are able to encourage individuals to vote and contact public officials through civic education activities (LeRoux 2007). Emerging findings suggest that this nonprofit civic education can increase the likelihood of voting by up to 9 percentage points per activity (LeRoux and Krawczyk forthcoming).

Additional work focuses specifically on the impact of civic education training activities on individual political participation. A study in three countries- South Africa, the Dominican Republic, and Poland- assesses the effects of adult civic education programs administered through civil society organizations on political participation and on levels of key democratic traits such as trust, political tolerance, and sense of individual efficacy (Finkel 2003). Individuals who were exposed to civic education training were significantly more active in local politics than individuals in the control group. These findings confirm that conducting civic education through civil society organizations has mobilization effects that lead to increased citizen involvement in the political system. Finkel found the type of civic education program also made a difference in increasing levels of political participation. Those that focused directly on local problem solving and community action and that provided opportunities for individuals to interact with local officials did more to increase participation than general information-based sessions. The greatest impact was on individuals who received reinforcement of the civic education message from existing civil society organizations to which they belonged and on those

who had more existing social networks through which they could engage in the political system.

Civil society in Africa is more likely to match the size and scale of local government than national government (Olowu and Wunsch 2004). This is reflected in the large number of small, community-based organizations that are part of civil society in Africa. This makes the role and impact of civil society on participation unclear. Does civil society have the strength and capacity to empower individuals to enter the political system? I hypothesize where there are subnational environments with a higher density of civil society organizations, the result will be increased citizen engagement. Where it is less dense, the result will be lower citizen engagement. A higher civil society density means there are more opportunities for these organizations to act as “civic intermediaries” that encourage and empower citizens to become involved in the political system.

Hypothesis 6: Subnational environments in areas with a higher density of civil society organizations will have higher levels of local political participation. Where civil society is less dense, there will be lower levels of local political participation.

Competitiveness and Fairness of Elections

In addition to decentralization, enhanced participatory mechanisms, and civil society, I also propose electoral cleanliness is an institutional factor that affects local political participation in West Africa. According to Claudio Holzner, variation in levels of fraud help explain differences in local political participation within countries (Holzner 2010,

47-48). Widespread perceptions of, and experiences with, fraud and corruption can lower political efficacy and result in lower levels of participation. As Transparency International reminds us, the local environment can be highly vulnerable to corruption and fraud for many reasons, including its increased proximity to citizens as well as greater opportunities for citizen interaction. Local government is also a locus of resource allocation, and the local level often gives greater discretion to public officials, but with less oversight (2009). This can extend to increased discretion and lack of oversight in the electoral process, since local government is responsible for helping execute elections.

If high levels of corruption and fraud are present in elections, they can reduce citizen support for democratic political institutions across mature and newly established democracies. Anderson and Tverdova empirically show that corruption has a negative effect on citizen beliefs about government that gets filtered through voters' political allegiances (Anderson and Tverdova 2003). But they also find corruption has less of a "corroding" effect on people's evaluations of political system performance among supporters of government than those who oppose it. Those who voted for the incumbent are more likely to evaluate performance of institutions positively. Corruption is assumed to have negative economic, political, and social consequences but there is little systematic examination of how it affects people's views of the political system and institutions of government.

Some Latin American scholarship, however, provides support for the idea that citizens' perceptions about corruption and fraud, particularly relative to elections, impacts political participation. Claudio Holzner argues that the competitiveness and fairness of elections impacts political participation, even for political participation beyond voting

(Holzner 2010, 41). Klesner and Lawson (2001) found that citizens' views of the electoral process in Mexico did in fact affect turnout. Those that held a negative view of the process were less likely to turn out than those who saw the process as clean. Hiskey and Bowler used citizen perceptions of the cleanliness of electoral procedures in Mexico as the second of two main dependent variables measuring citizen views of the political system. Their study found local context, particularly in terms of perceived electoral cleanliness, had an effect on citizens' evaluation of the political system and subsequently, on citizens' willingness to engage in that system (Hiskey and Bowler 2005). They argue that an individual's level of political engagement is not simply a function of individual-level attributes such as education and income, but is also in part a product of how the citizen views the system. The electoral process can have an impact on these views: if a citizen views the electoral process as unfair, flawed, and corrupt, they may be less inclined to participate in the political system. A democratic local environment that has fair and clean elections may convince citizens that the political system is improving, motivating them to become more involved in the system. Scholars argue variations in the local context offer an understanding of citizens' attitudes and behaviors in the political system, and the local electoral context matters. Hiskey and Bowler propose that "procedural fairness" should be added to models of civic engagement as an independent variable in order to more fully understand and explain citizen participation in emerging democracies.

Claudio Holzner did in fact include a measure of procedural fairness in his research by considering whether the electoral process produced representative outcomes. He argues cleaner elections should increase turnout because citizens feel their vote matters,

while electoral fraud at the local level can skew perceptions about national politics. Holzner also argues that electoral competition matters (Holzner 2010). Greater competition in local elections should stimulate participation because it makes the election more relevant to citizens, political leaders have more incentive to mobilize voters, and people are exposed to more political stimuli through competition (Patterson and Caldeira 1983; Jackman 1987; Aldrich 1993; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993).

Competitive elections that are not marred by fraud and corruption should promote citizen participation in three ways: 1) they are themselves a form of participation, 2) they have the potential to enhance accountability, and 3) they provide information to citizens that shows the political system is working properly (Olowu and Wunsch 2004). But fraud, violence, and corruption can often be a problem in local African elections. Local participation in Africa can also fragment into clientelistic, personalistic, religious, kin-based, or patronage-based activity. I hypothesize that elections that are perceived by citizens as more competitive and fair should result in higher levels of local political participation, while elections seen as marred by fraud should reduce local political engagement. Higher levels of actual fraud and corruption at the local level, specifically in terms of electoral fraud, will result in lower civic engagement, while lower levels will result in more positive citizen attitudes and increased engagement in the political system.

Hypothesis 7: Higher levels of electoral fraud will result in lower levels of local political participation, while lower levels of electoral fraud will result in increased local civic engagement.

The state of these four institutions in Ghana and Liberia- decentralization, enhanced participatory mechanisms, civil society, and elections- is discussed in a detailed, country-specific context in Chapters 4 and Chapter 5. This is followed in Chapter 6 with a methodological discussion of how I operationalize and test each of these four concepts in each country.

CHAPTER 4 GHANA: AFRICA’S “SHINING STAR”?

Country Case Study Selection

Chapters 4 and 5 provide a comprehensive background for the two cases considered in this dissertation: Ghana and Liberia. Chapter 4 begins with a detailed discussion of Ghana, including historical background, analyses of the local governance system, as well as explicit discussion of the state of the institutions in Ghana that are being tested: decentralization, enhanced participatory mechanisms, civil society, and electoral cleanliness. Chapter 5 covers Liberia in the same manner, offering an in-depth look at Liberian history, local governance, and the state of the four institutions of research interest. I have conducted extensive background research using secondary sources. The research presented here is also based on field work in these two countries, including personal interviews with government officials, citizens, and members of multilateral aid agencies, and analyses of primary source governmental documents.⁵

Ghana – The “Shining Star” of Africa?

Ghana is often viewed as a leader in democratic development on the continent of Africa. As the first colony to gain independence from British rule in 1957, Ghana has had a history of holding regular elections since 1992, with peaceful alternance of power since 2000. Ghana’s level of development is higher than in many other countries in the region and on the continent. This makes Ghana an interesting comparison to Liberia, especially

⁵ I also served as an international election observer in both the 2011 Liberian national elections and the 2012 Ghanaian national elections. Due to the generosity of the Forum on Contemporary Issues in Society (FOCIS) and the Eugene Applebaum Chair in Community Engagement at Wayne State University, I conducted field work in Liberia from October 5 to October 17, 2011, and in Ghana from December 1-December 15, 2012. This field work provided access to public officials, citizens, and international agencies, as well as to data and documents unavailable outside the country. In addition, it allowed me to see and experience the conditions in each country, specifically relative to my institutions of interest.

in terms of the state of the four institutional variables of interest in this dissertation – decentralization, enhanced participatory mechanisms, civil society, and elections. The remainder of this chapter contains a discussion of Ghana’s historical background, as well as the current state of Ghana’s social and economic development, followed by an in-depth assessment of Ghana’s system of local governance and decentralization, enhanced participatory mechanisms, civil society, and electoral cleanliness.

Historical Background of Ghana

In 1874, Britain established the Gold Coast colony, part of the area that became the modern nation of Ghana. The Gold Coast was seen as a “model colony” until the late 1940s. It was extremely rich in natural resources, including gold, minerals, and cocoa. Its economic and educational systems were more advanced compared with those of other British colonies. In 1951, Britain organized a general election in the Gold Coast. It was the first general election held in a British colony, and was an effort to quiet increasing colonial unrest, and reduce Britain’s level of responsibility in the colony. Kwame Nkrumah was elected and focused on uniting the four territories that made up the Gold Coast, creating a free and independent Ghana. Ghana was the first British colony to gain independence in March 1957 and is still seen as a forerunner in Africa today (Birmingham 1998).

Despite Nkrumah’s hopeful rhetoric of freedom and independence, Ghana had effectively become a one-party state by 1960. The military removed Nkrumah in 1966 in a bloodless coup d’etat that took place while he was out of the country. A series of coups followed until J.J. Rawlings took power in 1979. Rawlings utilized military rule to

maintain authoritarian power until he was elected president in 1992 and again in 1996, although the legitimacy of these two elections was called into question. True democracy emerged in Ghana in 1992, bolstered by the 1992 Constitution of the Fourth Republic⁶ (Birmingham 1998). Regular elections were held every four years beginning in 1992, with relatively peaceful transitions of power taking place in 2000 and again in 2008.

Ghanaian Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development Progress

The 2010 - 2013 Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA) is the country's policy framework to increase economic growth and decrease poverty. It illustrates both Ghana's development progress, as well as the challenges still facing the country. It guides the preparation of development plans and annual budgets at both the sector and district levels. The 2010-2013 GSGDA covers the first phase of the Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies, which the president is constitutionally required to present within two years of taking office.

Although the proportion of Ghana's population defined as poor has fallen dramatically, from 51.7% in 1991-1992, to 39.5% in 1998-1999, and even further in 2005-2006 to 28.5%, poverty still remains an important challenge. Ghana's growth rate started to accelerate in 2001, and reached a high of 7.3% in 2008. In the wake of the global financial crisis of 2007-2008, the 2009 real GDP growth rate declined to 4.1% (GSGDA 2012). It has seen improvement in recent years, rising to 8.2% in 2012.

Ghana is on track to meet multiple Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, including those for income, poverty, hunger, primary school completion, gender

⁶ Historical context is also derived from a lecture delivered by Dr. Emmanuel Debrah, Head of the Department of Political Science at the University of Ghana-Legon, Accra, Ghana, on December 3, 2012.

parity at school and access to water. The stable and peaceful environment provides an atmosphere conducive to focusing on problematic public policy issues, including gender inequity, income inequality, and rural and slum poverty. But many challenges still exist, especially in meeting MDGs in the areas of health and improved sanitation. Bridging the development gap and reducing income inequalities between the mostly rural north and the more urban south is also critical to Ghana's continued development (GSGDA 2012).

Although Ghana has made significant progress in achieving a system of good governance compared with other countries in the region and on the continent as a whole, many challenges remain. There is conflict between and among governmental institutions, resource disparity, inadequate participation of civil society and citizens in the governance process, and a perception of corruption in the public sector (GSGDA 2012). With this in mind, the 2010-2013 GSGDA includes a policy focus on: deepened democracy and institutional reforms, effective decentralization and local governance, public sector reform, enhanced development communication, participation of women in governance, and reduced corruption.

Local Government in Ghana: From Colonial Influence to Early Decentralization Attempts

This section offers background on the history and development of Ghana's system of local governance, setting the stage for a detailed evaluation of decentralization reform in the country. I begin by briefly outlining the broad changes made to local government after independence. There was a limited push to democratize local councils using elections versus appointments, some independent revenue sources were established for

local government, and more councils and tiers were added to local government. According to Olowu and Wunsch, the key post-colonial attributes of local government included a traditional elected council; a local tax system; involvement of local government in infrastructure and public services including health, education, roads and water supply; and involvement in capital investment activities and community development projects (Olowu and Wunsch 2004, 31-32). But there was an attempt by post-independence leaders to stifle these developments since many leaders saw local governance as an obstacle to building a powerful state (Olowu and Wunsch 2004, 33). This resulted in a move away from local autonomy and towards central planning and control. For example, in the late 1950s and 1960s, Kwame Nkrumah focused on political independence through rapid development controlled through the central, not local, government (Birmingham 1998).

In the 1970s and 1980s, central government's attitudes and actions towards local government can be seen as a response to the global financial crisis that took place during that time. Deconcentration to the local level was seen as a way to reduce central government expenditures. Responsibility was devolved, but financial and human resources were not. This meant decentralized structures were simply extensions of central government (Olowu and Wunsch 2004, 34). During the 1980s, Ghana started to adopt a modern version of its decentralization policy. In the 1990s, there was a global push for democratization that emphasized decentralization as a mechanism for deepening democracy. This provided an additional impetus for continued decentralization reform. But similar to previous decades, Ghana can be classified in the 1990s as having a system

of deconcentration versus true devolutionary decentralization (Olowu and Wunsch 2004, 39).

Coinciding with the increased push for decentralization, there was an erosion of citizen attitudes about local government during the 1980s and 1990s. Richard Crook's 1994 study of Ghana's local government district assemblies found there was not much money left over for local development projects after administrative overhead such as salaries, facilities, and vehicles were paid (Crook 1994). Local residents paid more in taxes, but saw no benefits in return, and local service delivery actually eroded. This led to cynicism and apathy on the part of citizens. Joseph Ayee's findings support those of Crook. Ayee found recurring expenditures took up about 85% of local budgets, resulting in lack of development funds and in negative opinions about elected local government councils (Ayee 1996; Ayee 1997). Overall, this has led to increasingly negative citizen attitudes about Ghanaian local government. These negative attitudes are reflected in 2008 Round 4 Afrobarometer survey data on citizens' opinions about local government. A majority of survey respondents do not perceive their local governments to be transparent or responsive. Citizens are also concerned about misuse of resources and perceive high levels of corruption (Afrobarometer Working Paper 52 2008). This decreased citizen satisfaction with local government has led to less citizen participation in the local political system. The first Ghanaian local elections in 1988 had voter turnout of over 50%, but by 1992, only 22% of citizens felt elected assemblies were an improvement over the old unelected council, and 70% felt the assemblies were not capable of addressing development needs (Crook 1994, 354-355).

Modern Decentralization Reform in Ghana

Ghana's modern decentralization reform program was launched in 1988 during the military rule under Rawlings. The PNDC (Provisional National Defence Council) set up a committee to create a framework and timetable for decentralization in Ghana. This committee compiled a report, known as the "Blue Book," which became the "blueprint" for legislation on decentralization in Ghana. The Blue Book sought to establish: 1) an inclusive, participatory and democratic system of local governance, 2) accountability, 3) decentralization, 4) balanced and equitable development, and 5) district assemblies as the building blocks for other local governmental structures (Ahwoi 2010, 48). This new system of local governance attempted to combat previous barriers to participation. It addressed low levels of English literacy by allowing the business of local government to be conducted in other languages, and it fought the barrier of poverty through state-sponsored, free local elections. The new system also tried to keep urban elites from "hijacking" local public elected office. Often, urban elites would use financial resources to get elected in local villages and then disappear back to cities, leaving their responsibilities unattended. The new local governance system required elected local officials live in the local area in which they serve. Along with these sweeping changes, the first local elections were held in Ghana in 1988-1989.

This Blue Book "blueprint" resulted in Provisional National Defence Council Law (PNDCL) 207, the foundation for decentralization reform, and was reinforced through the 1992 Constitution of the Fourth Republic of Ghana (Ahwoi 2010). PNDCL 207 created District Assemblies (DAs) as the basic unit of local government in Ghana, identified decentralized functions to be performed by the DAs and the departments

decentralized to perform them, established the DAs as planning authorities, and created a funding mechanism for local government called “ceded revenue” (Ahwoi 2010, 2). DAs were established as the highest level of subnational political units in Ghana, responsible for planning, development, and budgeting. They have 86 specific functions that empower them to provide local public services. Initially, 100 DAs were created, although this number has grown over time to 170.

Legislation on local government and decentralization in Ghana is complex. In addition to PNDCL 207, the Blue Book also set the stage for Chapter 20 of the 1992 Constitution of the Fourth Republic of Ghana, which is devoted to Local Government and Decentralization. The 1992 Constitution also contains Article 240, which is a broad framework for decentralization that specifically addresses popular participation and local accountability. The existing Local Government Law was replaced in 1993 with Local Government Act 462.

Not surprisingly, despite an extensive legislative basis, the decentralization program made little progress initially under Rawlings’ authoritarian rule. Decentralization reform was at odds with core ideas of his administration, which pursued a highly centralized, clientelistic system. But now that Ghana has had decentralization reform in place for over two decades, including during a more recent period of democratic rule, how much progress has been made? Ahwoi (2010) finds Ghana’s current system of decentralization is still “deconcentrated.” Remember from Chapter 3, the concept of deconcentration means public policy is dictated by the central government, but locally implemented. Essentially, the central government maintains control. Ahwoi explains central ministries, departments and agencies have field offices in Ghana’s

regions and districts, and claims these field offices do not have adequate decision-making powers. Field offices of the central government do not have powers of appointment, promotion, pay, transfer, discipline, or termination. Ahwoi also notes the central government can cut budgets at will (2010, 4). This lack of local control supports his position that the central government in Ghana retains control of local government. Olowu & Wunsch (2004) also agree, and claim central control “strangles” true devolutionary decentralization efforts.

Ferrazzi (2006) also sees tension in the constitutional provisions of Ghana, stemming from the desire to give local government some level of significant autonomy, versus the attempt to retain central control. This is reflected in the mechanisms used to retain central power and control. For example, Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs) were established as central-level bodies to oversee the district assemblies. The president appoints local public officials, including the District Chief Executive (DCE) and 30% of the District Assembly members. National audits of local government also take place. Although the “intent of the Ghanaian constitution is to give some teeth to local governance,” whether these features still provide room for genuine local government autonomy depends on how they are wielded in practice (Ferrazzi 2006, 3).

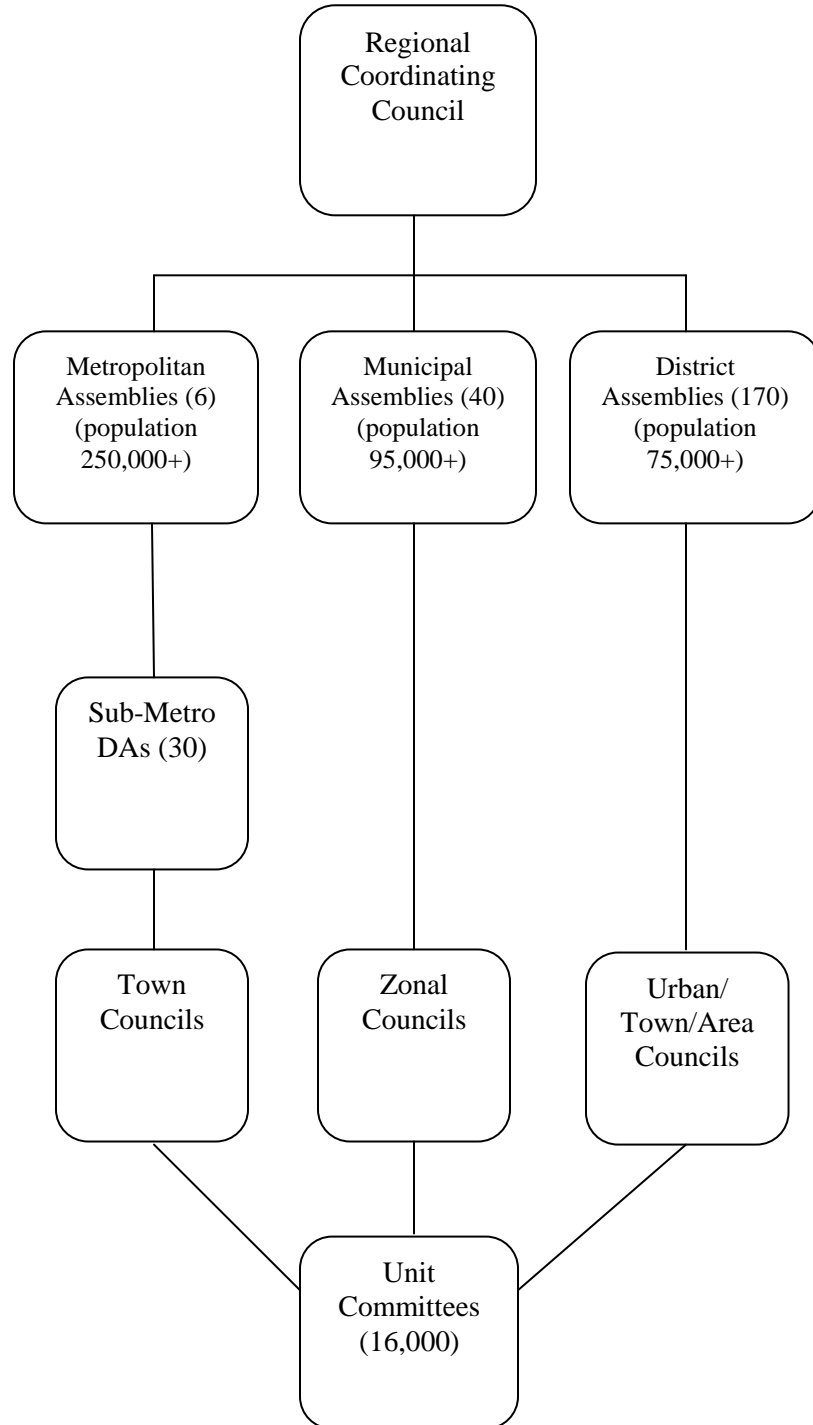
Current Structure of Ghanaian Local Government

Currently, Ghana is divided into 10 regions, each with a Regional Coordinating Council (RCC) that oversees all substructures of local government. RCCs are administrative and coordinating bodies, versus policy-making bodies (Ahwoi 2010, 67).

However, the regional level is not the level at which most local government business is conducted.

Figure 4.1 fleshes out the structure of local government in Ghana. The main unit of local governance, the Municipal/Metropolitan/District Assembly (MMDA) (also referred to as a District Assembly or DA) is just beneath the regional level. The real business of local government is conducted in the 170 MMDAs. Metropolitan Assemblies have Sub-Metropolitan District Councils and then Town Councils beneath them. Municipal Assemblies have Zonal Councils underneath them, while District Assemblies have Urban/Town/Area councils below them. The lowest level of local government, the Unit Committee, is shared by all types of MMDAs.

Figure 4.1: Structure of Local Government in Ghana⁷



⁷ Adapted from Local Government & Decentralisation In Ghana, Kwanena Ahwoi, 2010

The Unit Committee, the lowest level of local government structure in Ghana, is designed to be closest to the people. It is intended to be the basic unit of local government at which participatory democracy occurs (Ahwoi 2010).⁸ Unit Committees are supposed to be in close touch with the people, playing a role in public education, organization of communal labor, revenue raising and environmental/sanitation issues, registration of births and deaths, and implementation and monitoring of local development projects (Ahwoi 2010, 103). Yet these unit committees exhibit weaknesses and have been the subject of criticism, which will be discussed in the next section.

Critique of Local Governance and Decentralization in Ghana

My hypothesis argues that higher levels of decentralization will be associated with increased citizen satisfaction, leading to higher levels of local political participation. Lower level of decentralization efforts will be associated with decreased citizen satisfaction with local government, leading to lower levels of citizen participation at the local level. Next, I discuss the current level of decentralization reform in Ghana in order to assess whether it is capable of contributing to increased local political participation.

Despite a highly sophisticated local governance system with a long history and a strong legislative foundation, a large body of scholarship highlights major weaknesses in Ghana's system of local governance and decentralization. For example, Olowu and Wunsch (2004) discuss limitations and weaknesses of the District Assemblies (DAs), specifically referencing excessive executive control, strong ministerial oversight, and lack of DA autonomy in strategic planning and resource distribution. My own field

⁸ Personal interview by K. Krawczyk with Dr. Emmanuel Debra, Chair of the Department of Political Science at the University of Ghana-Legon, Accra, Ghana, December 3, 2012.

research supports the findings of Olowu and Wunsch. While there is evidence that some DAs perform better than others due to differences in levels of infrastructure, natural resources, technology, leadership, and ability to collect own-source revenue, many core institutional weaknesses remain.⁹ DAs cannot hire and fire staff, their ability to exercise authority is limited due to national monitoring by the Regional Coordinating Council (RCC), and DAs are also subject to the guidance of the president on policy (Olowu and Wunsch 2004, 130). In fact, there is strong presidential oversight of the DAs. The president has “cause to be investigated (sic) the performance of any function of a district assembly and where necessary in the public interest declare a district assembly to be in default and transfer to a person or a body as he may think fit such functions of the district assembly” (1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 26). And although 70% of members of the District Assemblies are elected using nonpartisan, local elections, the president appoints the remaining 30% of DA representatives. This appointment feature has been criticized by some as undemocratic, but the central government has provided a supporting rationale. The central government views the presidential appointment of DA members as a mechanism for central control in a unitary state, a way to achieve gender equity, and a means to appoint people with special skills, talents, and expertise, to the District Assemblies.

In Ghanaian local elections, candidates cannot associate with a political party and must run on an individual basis, in a nonpartisan manner. This is to reduce the influence of elected officials on local government, and to facilitate mobilization of people towards

⁹ Personal interview by K. Krawczyk with Dr. Esther Ofei-Aboagye, Director, Institute of Local Government Studies, Accra, Ghana, December 12, 2012.

consensus formation (Ahwoi 2010).¹⁰ As mentioned in the preceding paragraph, 70% of District Assembly officials are selected through non-partisan local elections, held every four years, while the remaining 30% of DA members are appointed by the central government. According to recent Afrobarometer data, many Ghanaians have strong opinions regarding the appointment of municipal officials. Almost two-thirds agreed that MMDA chief executives should be elected and only one-fourth want central appointment to continue. On a positive note, more than half of all Ghanaians surveyed in 2008 report that MMDAs have performed well in various service areas, and close to two-thirds approve of elected officials' job performance. Perceptions of corruption in local government, however, are high and perceived responsiveness and accountability are low. Grassroots participation in local government is generally weak (Afrobarometer Briefing Paper 52 2008).

District Assemblies must also operate under the control of various ministries. The DAs need approval from the Ministry of Finance to borrow money in amounts over US\$10,000. DAs must also submit detailed budgets to their RCC, which are then forwarded to the Ministry of Finance. The Ministry of Local Government also has authority over DAs, including approving DA bylaws and issuing guidelines. District Assembly planning is also largely under central control despite the fact that the 1994 National Development Planning System Act 480 was designed to allow for a bottom-up planning approach that included participation, coordination, and integration of district assemblies (Olowu and Wunsch 2004, 131-132).

¹⁰ Nonpartisan elections, especially at the local level, are highly unusual, although some cases do exist. At the national level, Uganda attempted a period of "no-party democracy" for presidential elections from 1985-2005.

“Ceded revenue” is a central revenue mechanism for transferring funds to District Assemblies. There is also the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF), developed under the 1992 constitution, which directs no less than 5% of total Ghanaian revenue to be shared among DAs. The objective of the DACF is to achieve equalization, responsiveness, service pressure, and contingency for the DAs (Olowu and Wunsch 2004, 135). But attempts to direct financial resources using the DACF have actually increased instead of decreased central control, meaning DAs rely more heavily on central revenue streams instead of raising their own revenue. Because district-level development has been thwarted by non-viable districts, inadequate resources, weak financial management practices, and lack of effective revenue-sharing, District Assemblies have become too dependent on the District Assemblies Common Fund and other external grants. There is a general lack of accountability and transparency in the utilization of the District Assemblies Common Fund and other resources at the district level (Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda 2010-2013).

District Assemblies are supposed to be accountable to constituents by maintaining close contact with the area, by consulting with citizens and meeting with the electorate, and by taking part in development activities (1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana). However, these things do not happen regularly, in part due to financial constraints. And while the mandate of an elected member of a district assembly can be revoked if the electorate loses confidence in him or her, the removal process is complex and the likelihood of removal is low, further weakening accountability.

While Ghana has achieved some degree of decentralization success, District Assemblies (DAs) also suffer from a long list of weaknesses. DAs have problems

working effectively, remain heavily under central influence and control through appointments in local assemblies, and have difficulties in getting local professional personnel out from under the control of central ministries. There are also problems with the general performance of local assemblies, and national law and regulation in some cases does not reflect current decentralization policies (Olowu and Wunsch 2004, 125). For instance, the 2010-2013 Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda policy document finds the 2003 Local Government Service Act (656) is inconsistent with parts of the 1993 Local Government Act (462), causing role confusion and difficulties in administrative coordination and implementation at district and sub-district levels.

There are also weaknesses in the local government system at levels below the District Assemblies. For example, there are arguments against Unit Committees, including the contention that at 16,000 Unit Committees, there are simply too many of them. Critics also contend the membership of each Unit Committee (set at 15) is too large, and that the high number of non-operational Unit Committees (3,000 of the 16,000) shows lack of public interest, is expensive and does not provide a return on investment (Ahwoi 2010, 106).

In general, local government also suffers from poor quality personnel in part due to the reluctance of qualified staff to accept remote posts (Olowu and Wunsch 2004, 138). A remote post in a local district removes a person from the epicenter of political activity in Accra and is considered politically disadvantageous. The negative image of local government in the mind of citizens is also a deterrent for civil servants. Local government personnel in Ghana also face issues of local elite capture.

Olowu and Wunsch offer additional proof of the lackluster results of decentralization reform in Ghana. Using data gathered from primary and secondary sources during 1999-2001, they measured four conditions important to the success of decentralization: devolution of authority, deconcentration of resources, development of local political processes and local accountability, and development of local institutions of collective choice (Olowu and Wunsch 2004, 125). They conducted more than 100 interviews with government officials at the Ministry of Local Government, district chief executives, officials from the District Assemblies Common Fund, members of parliament, and heads of decentralized departments, and also used an accompanying survey instrument. Their results echo the conclusions reached in this section: decentralization in Ghana remains under control of the central government, and administrative decentralization does not seem to have advanced local governance in Ghana (Olowu and Wunsch 2004, 148). Ghana has top-down decentralization with little power and authority actually residing in the DAs, effectively limiting local accountability. The central-local relationship is a principal-agent relationship. Local government has not seen marked improvements to service delivery and/or responsiveness as the result of decentralization reform (Olowu and Wunsch 2004, 152-153). While the goal of decentralization in Ghana may be to “bring opportunities for democratic-decision making to the doorstep of every Ghanaian,”¹¹ it is evident the current reform strategy is not achieving this lofty goal. Therefore, I would not expect the current decentralization program has the capability to increase local political participation in Ghana.

¹¹ Personal interview by K. Krawczyk with Dr. Esther Ofei-Aboagye, Director, Institute of Local Government Studies, Accra, Ghana, December 12, 2012.

Enhanced Participatory Mechanisms in Ghana

I argue that well-designed, “direct” local participatory mechanisms that have both depth and breadth result in positive citizen attitudes and higher levels of engagement with the local political system. The lack of such enhanced participatory mechanisms, or poorly designed enhanced participatory mechanisms, will result in increased citizen dissatisfaction, leading to lower levels of engagement with the local political system. In line with my hypothesis, Ghana’s 2010- 2013 Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSDGA) promotes citizen participation in policy formulation and in the development process, and emphasizes the importance of the sort of enhanced participatory mechanisms I describe. But the GSDGA finds the participatory process in Ghana is not always effective, and citizens tend to have a “lethargic attitude” about the democratic participatory process. Therefore, the 2010-2013 GSDGA policy framework identifies strategies to achieve more effective citizen participation using direct mechanisms, including in-depth consultations between and among stakeholders, an institutionalized framework for development dialogue, and participatory mechanisms such as “peoples assemblies, town hall meetings, and policy fairs.” But are these strategies actually being developed and implemented?

As discussed in the section above, *Current Structure of Ghanaian Local Government*, the Unit Committee is supposed to be the basic unit of local government at which participatory democracy occurs (Ahwoi 2010)¹². Unit Committees are supposed to be in close touch with the people, providing opportunities for citizens to be involved in

¹² Personal interview by K. Krawczyk with Dr. Emmanuel Debra, Chair of the Department of Political Science at the University of Ghana-Legon, Accra, Ghana, December 3, 2012.

local policymaking and implementation (Ahwoi 2010, 103). Yet criticisms of Unit Committees include the contention that there are simply too many of them, the membership of each Unit Committee is too large, and that the high number of non-operational Unit Committees shows lack of public interest (Ahwoi 2010, 106). The critiques of Unit Committees, plus an emphasis by scholars on a wider range of enhanced participatory mechanisms (Gaventa and Valderrama 1999; Blair 2000; Cornwall 2002; Olowu 2003) makes it prudent to take a look at what other enhanced participatory mechanisms exist at the local level in Ghana.

Enhanced participatory mechanisms in Africa are often implemented in collaboration with international aid partners, and Ghana is no exception. For example, the Public Participation in Local Governance (PPLG) program was implemented in cooperation with IBIS West Africa, a Danish NGO. Phase I of the PPLG program began in 2002. It was a pilot program in three regions in Ghana (Upper East, Northern, and Greater Accra) that emphasized using civil society to increase citizen engagement, leading in increased accountability and dialogue. PPLG also supported local government structures (Unit, Area and Zonal Councils as well as Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies) in carrying out their roles and in fulfilling their obligations for citizen accountability. The program also had a mobilization and training aspect for local citizens. This pilot program forms the basis for the creation of a dichotomous variable that indicates the presence or absence of enhanced participatory mechanisms, which is then used for empirical analysis in Chapter 6.

Despite an awareness of the benefits of enhanced participatory mechanisms, programs such as the PPLG discussed above are not well-documented in Ghana. There

does not appear to be any documentation of the actual outputs and outcomes of this pilot project. And while some additional enhanced participatory mechanisms are in place at the local level in Ghana, such as participatory budgeting programs, there are also embedded features in the decentralization of local government in Ghana that effectively recentralize it and undermine grassroots mobilization (Olowu and Wunsch 2004).¹³ Promoting citizen participation in local governance will require accelerating the process of devolution of political power to the district and sub-district structures (Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda 2010-2013). Strengthening local governance within the concept of democratic principles implies citizens must become more involved in decision-making, especially at the grassroots level, to ensure a bottom-up approach to governance. This will require a much larger focus on the development and implementation of a wider range of enhanced participatory mechanisms. Given that enhanced participatory mechanisms in Ghana tend to be sparse, weak and there is little evidence they are achieving desired outcomes, I would not expect they are capable to eliciting higher levels of local political participation.

Civil Society Organizations in Ghana

This section assesses the state of civil society in Ghana, providing evidence relevant to my hypothesis on the effect of nonprofits/civil society on local political participation. I argue that subnational environments in areas with a higher density of civil society organizations will have higher levels of local political participation, and in areas where civil society is less dense, there will be lower levels of local political participation.

¹³ Personal interview by K. Krawczyk with Dr. Emmanuel Debrah, Chair of the Department of Political Science, University of Ghana-Legon, Accra, Ghana, December 3, 2012.

Ghana is a “highly instructive case study for...research on the emergence and potential role of the nonprofit sector in developing countries” (Salamon, Anheier et al. 1995, 1). Ghana’s civil society environment is diverse, and reflects the country’s traditional cultures, colonial past, and recent economic and political development. Many CSOs are products of distinct historical periods. Ghana's contemporary nonprofit sector includes indigenous grassroots organizations, government-sponsored community development organizations, religious organizations, international development and relief organizations, professional and business associations, local craft unions, market women's associations, migrant groups, and village associations (Salamon, Anheier et al. 1995).

Civil society organizations have been in existence in Ghana (formerly known as the Gold Coast) as far back as the 1780s. Community-based organizations during that time had a broad membership base and the main goal was to protect the rights of indigenous people against the British. Civil society activities also sustained growth due to increased urbanism and expansion of economic activity as a result of cocoa production (Gyimah-Boadi 2000, 7). The large number of independent voluntary associations that existed in Ghana in colonial times expanded rapidly after Ghana’s independence in 1957.

During the 1960s, however, civil society operated in an increasingly repressive climate, as government viewed voluntary associations as a way to link individuals to political parties and ultimately to the state. Because these voluntary associations cut across geographic and ethnic boundaries, they also functioned to dilute the power of ethnic and religious groups. The ability of civil society to articulate public opinion or exert influence over public policy became increasingly limited (Gyimah-Boadi 2000). This continued after Nkrumah was ousted in 1966, and throughout the military rule of

leaders such as J.J. Rawlings, Jr. from 1979 – 2000. Military force was used to break up demonstrations and left CSOs with little ability to organize and mobilize. Rawlings' regime did however encourage civil society to fill the “service delivery gap” created by structural adjustment programs and cuts in government expenditure. Growth in the role of CSOs also occurred during this period when multilateral aid agencies such as the World Bank and United Nations contributed huge sums for poverty alleviation programs, requesting that local CSOs assist in service delivery (Darkwa, Amponsah et al. 2006).

The Ghanaian nonprofit sector saw significant growth during the 1980s and 1990s, especially at local levels in the areas of relief and development activities.¹⁴ Two factors contributed to this increased size and role of the nonprofit sector in Ghana. First, international development assistance dramatically increased. Between 1989 and 1990, official development grants jumped from 5% to 8% of the country's GDP. Second, government policy adopted in the late 1980s encouraged rural development and intensified efforts to aid the poor (Salamon, Anheier et al. 1995). Overall, while we see a decline in the ability of civil society to perform advocacy activities during this period, there is an increase in capacity of civil society to deliver basic services.

Two extensive reports from international agencies that can be used to assess the current state of civil society in Ghana. The first is the CIVICUS Civil Society Index Analytical Report for Ghana (Darkwa, Amponsah et al. 2006), and the second is the CSO Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan Africa (2011). These two reports are used throughout the remainder of this section to provide a comprehensive portrait of contemporary Ghanaian civil society.

¹⁴ This growth was in spite of a period of government crack-down on the nonprofit sector in the 1980s and 1990s, specifically on religious and church-related organizations.

Currently, Ghanaian CSOs are able to register and operate under the Ghana Companies Code of 1963 (Act 179) with little difficulty, and CSOs suffer from no real state interference or harassment. There is currently a campaign for a not-for-profit organization bill to regulate the sector, but no draft bill has been produced yet (CSO Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan Africa 2011).

An 11% increase in the number of CSOs registered during 2011 is evidence the Ghanaian civil society sector continues to grow. The number of registered CSOs increased from 4,772 in 2010 to 5,232 in 2011. CSOs are vibrant and active in all 10 regions of Ghana and do work in all sectors, including health, education, environment, water and sanitation, depending on funding availability. The 2006 CIVICUS Civil Society Index Report groups Ghanaian civil society into three main categories. The most powerful civil society organizations are the trade and labor union groups, the next tier includes faith-based and professional organizations, and the least powerful group includes women's and consumer groups. Ghanaian civil society has been effective in providing basic local services and in assisting marginalized groups such as women, children, and the disabled, while having less success influencing public policy and ensuring accountability. Women and the rural population remain under-represented in the membership of most CSOs and are almost completely excluded from leadership roles (Darkwa, Amponsah et al. 2006).

Even though Ghana is one of the most stable, democratic, and developed countries in the region and on the continent, the country still faces a difficult socio-economic situation. Round 5 Afrobarometer results indicate 20% to 30% of citizens have gone without food, fuel, medical care and/or water at some point in the past year

(Afrobarometer Round 5 Summary of Social and Economic Conditions of Ghanaians 2010). Poverty and illiteracy are still widespread, and there is a wide socio-economic divide between urban and rural communities, and also between the north and south, since the north tends to be more rural. This means Ghanaian CSOs operate in a somewhat incapacitating environment due to poverty, illiteracy, and socio-economic problems such as poor health care and lack of service delivery. In addition, Ghana has high levels of corruption and ineffective decentralization of governance, which also makes the environment for CSOs difficult (Darkwa, Amponsah et al. 2006).

As far as governance capacity is concerned, most Ghanaian CSOs usually have defined mission statements, even in rural areas. More CSOs are developing and implementing strategic plans since they are becoming a requirement for grant funding. Some CSOs do have management structures and boards with clear division of roles. Smaller and rural CSOs generally have boards only to fulfill registration requirements though, resulting in ineffective oversight (CSO Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan Africa 2011). This was illustrated in interviews with several small nonprofits in Accra, Ghana, during field research in December 2012. None of the smallest grassroots organizations I interviewed had formal board structures.¹⁵ Only large CSOs are able to employ permanent staff, and most CSOs must hire on a contract or project basis. CSOs do use the services of various professionals on a regular basis, however; including professional staff and academics to conduct policy research and capacity-building. Most CSOs have office space and basic office equipment, and increased and improved internet

¹⁵ Personal interviews by K. Krawczyk with anonymous representatives from Madamfo Po and Streetwise Foundation, Accra, Ghana, December 2012.

connectivity means more access to technology for rural CSOs (CSO Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan Africa 2011).

Ghanaian CSOs “have passion but lack professionalism,”¹⁶ so this makes CSO training especially valuable. The West African Civil Society Initiative (WACSI) in Accra, Ghana provides training aimed at increasing the operational and institutional capacity of CSOs by offering seminars in areas such as grant funding and nonprofit governance. WACSI also conducts research on civil society in Ghana and in the West African region. Donor funding allows larger CSOs access to the sort of training opportunities and technical support that WACSI can provide, especially in the areas of project management, financial management, and reporting. The number and scale of trainings has declined, however, due to funding limitations, and smaller CSOs rarely have opportunities to participate.¹⁷

The level of human, financial, and technological resources vary in Ghanaian CSOs. Financial resources are limited and heavily dependent on foreign funding. Many organizations spend a lot of time applying for new funding or renewing current grants, versus spending time on grassroots activities in line with their missions. Human resources are more robust than financial resources (Darkwa, Amponsah et al. 2006). Most CSOs are concentrated in urban areas in order to gain access to basic infrastructure and technology such as electricity and telephone lines, and these urban CSOs tend to have the highest level of technological and financial resources.

¹⁶ Personal interview by K. Krawczyk with Charles Kojo Vandyck, West African Civil Society Initiative (WACSI), Accra, Ghana, December 2, 2012.

¹⁷ Ibid.

The financial situation of CSOs in Ghana is deteriorating due to high dependence on foreign donors and as a result of the global economic crisis. There is very little local philanthropic support, and even those CSOs attempting to diversify funding sources find their options limited. Competition for funding is increasing, and funder demands are becoming more complex, so more and more CSOs are conducting annual external audits and publishing annual reports in order to secure funding and comply with funder requirements. This capacity is still quite low, though, and very few CSOs, typically only those that are urban-based with access to resources, are able to publish annual reports (CSO Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan Africa 2011) . These assertions are in line with field work conducted in December 2012 in Accra, Ghana. Small grassroots nonprofits I interviewed produced documents such as annual reports and financial audits only to fulfill the reporting requirements of funders.¹⁸

Ghanaian CSOs are eligible for tax exemptions, but few know how to access this benefit. As a result, very few applications for tax exemption are completed. CSOs can earn income and are fairly successful in competing for government contracts at both the local and national levels (CSO Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan Africa 2011) .

The relationship between CSOs and government has evolved from limited interaction and conflict in the 1990s to increasing engagement and cooperation over the past decade. The 2011 CSO Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan Africa finds civil society organizations are often consulted by government on policy formulation, and CSO advocacy in the realm of policy making is common. This is in contrast to the findings of

¹⁸ Personal interviews by K. Krawczyk with anonymous representatives from Madamfo Po and Streetwise Foundation, Accra, Ghana, December 2012.

the 2010-2013 Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA), which promotes the role of Ghanaian civil society as key stakeholders and partners in the development process. The 2010-2013 GSGDA policy document finds the active participation of CSOs in the governance process would enhance grass-roots participation, and help contribute to accountability and transparency in governance. The policy document notes, however; that CSOs in Ghana have *not* been actively involved in the decision-making process. Recommendations to achieve this objective include reviewing the legal and institutional framework for the management and operations of civil society organizations, facilitating coordination among CSOs, and identifying clear and specific roles for civil society (GSGDA 2012).

Olowu and Wunsch note a level of distrust between District Assemblies and CSOs over funding. DAs sometimes feel CSOs are better funded through donors, allowing them to provide better services, and therefore undermining the legitimacy of DAs. This also causes feelings of superiority by CSOs due to their funding advantage and ability to better deliver basic services (Olowu and Wunsch 2004, 146).

CSOs in Ghana are capable of some level of networking and coalition-building. In addition, Ghana has a vibrant media sector and CSOs collaborate with the media. The public image of CSOs in Ghana is positive. Communities are receptive to CSOs and recognize the roles they play in delivering basic services. In fact, there is widespread citizen participation in civil society at the community level. The government and private sector's image of CSOs is also generally positive. There is, however; still an overall lack of accountability to the public on the part of CSOs. The financial information of CSOs is rarely made public. This lack of transparency feeds the perception that CSOs have a lot of

financial resources, as does excessive spending by CSOs on perks such as hotels, meals, and transportation. This negatively affects the public's perceptions of CSOs and the extent of community involvement (Darkwa, Amponsah et al. 2006).

The CIVICUS Civil Society Index Report (Darkwa, Amponsah et al. 2006) summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of the civil society sector in Ghana. Strengths include promotion of democratic values and pro-poor policies that help eradicate poverty, generally high levels of public trust in civil society, and ability to provide service delivery and initiatives to help meet societal needs. Despite its successes, Ghanaian civil society also has weaknesses, including: lack of diversity and low participation by marginalized groups, concentration in urban areas that contributes to neglect of rural populations, socio-economic conditions that limit the effectiveness of CSOs, weak relationship with the private sector, and limited ability to influence public policy. These strengths and weaknesses, coupled with the assessments provided throughout this section, make it clear that while Ghanaian civil society operates at a relatively high capacity level, challenges in the sector may reinforce patterns of inequality and exclusion by leaving out marginalized groups. However, despite these weaknesses, the capacity of civil society is so much higher in Ghana than in many other countries in West Africa, and specifically compared to Liberia, that I expect civil society organizations in Ghana will still have the ability to act as “laboratories of citizenship” (Denhardt and Denhardt 2007) or as “institutional solution(s) to people-centered, participatory and inclusive development” (Devas, Amis et al. 2001). This means Ghanaian CSOs will have the capacity to act as “civic intermediaries” that increase local political participation.

Ghanaian Elections

In Chapter 3, I hypothesize that higher levels of electoral fraud will result in lower levels of local political participation, while lower levels of electoral fraud will result in increased local civic engagement. In this section, I examine recent democratic elections in Ghana to gauge the level of electoral cleanliness and provide evidence for my hypothesis.

Ghana has a history of multiparty elections dating back to 1992, and elections have been held every four years since that time. Jerry Rawlings Jr.'s military rule was confirmed in the election of 1992, and again in 1996, although the legitimacy of these two elections is still questionable. The first peaceful turnover of power via election occurred in 2000 with the election of John Kufour of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), and again in 2008 with the election of John Evans Atta-Mills of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) during a runoff election. I take a closer look at the two most recent national elections in 2008 and 2012.

2008 Ghanaian National Elections

The period leading up to the 2008 national election was marred by isolated acts of violence, high levels of tension, and heated language from the main political parties. This instability was partly caused by Electoral Commission problems, including logistical and administrative difficulties and frequent changes to the electoral calendar. Throughout the pre-election period, Carter Center election observers reported “multiple delays in the procurement process for the voter registration period, widespread shortage of essential materials, gaps in voter education, and acts of intimidation by the two main political

parties, sometimes leading to violence” (The Carter Center Final Report on Observation Mission to Ghana's Presidential and Parliamentary Elections December 2008-January 2009). Public confidence in the Electoral Commission declined as a result of these difficulties. The Electoral Commission did attempt to address and fix these issues during the period leading up to the election, seeking the help of citizens, political parties, and civil society.

Because no candidate received the required majority in the general election on December 7, 2008, a runoff was held on December 28, 2008 between Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo of the ruling New Patriotic Party and John Evans Atta-Mills from the opposition National Democratic Congress. Approximately 4,000 domestic observers were deployed throughout Ghana during this runoff to conduct observation and parallel vote tabulation at more than 22,000 polling stations. The voting and counting process was deemed efficient and transparent by observers. Both domestic and international observers concluded that the Ghana Electoral Commission had conducted the election “in a credible manner that was peaceful, transparent, and generally free of intimidation or other threats” (The Carter Center Final Report on Observation Mission to Ghana's Presidential and Parliamentary Elections December 2008-January 2009).

John Evans Atta Mills defeated his opponent during the runoff election by a very slim margin of less than 1%, and his 2008 presidential inauguration marked the second peaceful transfer of power from an incumbent to an opposition political party in Ghana’s electoral history. Despite a tense election period with concerns about possible violence, the Carter Center found, “This extremely close election affirms Ghana’s democratic development, with all parties acting in good faith in accordance with the constitutional

provisions for the conduct of a competitive, democratic election” (The Carter Center Final Report on Observation Mission to Ghana's Presidential and Parliamentary Elections December 2008-January 2009).

Recent elections, such as that of 2008, indicate the political focus in Ghana is changing. The emphasis is now on issues such as access to education, health care, economic opportunity, and corruption, rather than on “divisive rhetoric appealing to ethnic loyalties or the politics of personality” (The Carter Center Final Report on Observation Mission to Ghana's Presidential and Parliamentary Elections December 2008-January 2009). Basic democratic principles protected in the Ghanaian Constitution prevailed, including protection of universal suffrage, an executive term limit, and guaranteed independence for an electoral commission subject only to judicial review. There was broad public participation in the election, with voter turnout higher than 70%.

2012 Ghanaian National Elections

Following the death of President John Evans Atta Mills, Vice President John Dramani Mahama took office in July 2012. Competing for the presidency in Ghana's general election on December 7, 2012 were incumbent president John Dramani Mahama of the National Democratic Congress, his main challenger Nana Akufo-Addo of the New Patriotic Party, and six other candidates. Because the incumbent president John Mahama obtained a majority, with 50.7% of votes, there was no runoff election. The main challenger, Nana Akufo-Addo, received 47.74%. Akufo-Addo and his party have made accusations of fraud, accusing the Electoral Commission of vote tampering. The case is currently still before Ghana's Supreme Court.

The Carter Center has not yet released its final report on the 2012 national election in Ghana. However, I conducted election observation during the 2012 election. With a team of certified international observers from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, I observed approximately eight polling stations in various districts in the Greater Accra region on December 7, 2012.¹⁹ Although this was only a small, non-representative sample of polling stations, it did allow me to observe first-hand the events that unfolded on election day. Polling stations had longer lines and were much more crowded in the morning than during the afternoon. In three polling stations, these long lines, coupled with agitated crowds, caused conflict between voters. In another polling station, police were called to settle a dispute over accusations of line-cutting. But in the remainder of polling places we observed, lines were shorter and voters remained orderly. By the late afternoon, none of the polling stations we visited in Accra had any lines. Orderly polling stations without massive lines that contribute to confusion and agitation of voters can provide a more stable environment during the electoral process, allowing polling officials to more carefully oversee events and decreasing the chance of fraud.

Ghana implemented a system of biometric voter identification used during the voter registration process and also used to identify voters at the polls on election day. Although the polls re-opened the following day in one northern region of Ghana due to failure of biometric voter identification equipment, none of the eight polling stations we visited in Accra reported any difficulties with biometric voter identification equipment.

¹⁹ Due to the generosity of the Forum on Contemporary Issues in Society (FOCIS) and the Eugene Applebaum Chair in Community Engagement at Wayne State University, I conducted field work in Ghana from December 1- December 15, 2012, and served as a certified international election observer on December 7, 2012.

Overall, our observation team did not observe any irregularities during either the voting or counting process. Our observations are in line with findings of recent Ghanaian elections which are generally viewed as fair. Percentage of spoiled ballots (one way to gauge level of electoral cleanliness) is low, ranging from 1.2% to 5.6%. However, accusations of fraud by public officials, political parties, and constituents are still common. This leads to questions on how electoral fraud, both perceived and actual, may affect local political participation in Ghana. Based on the literature and coupled with my field work, I predict increased electoral fraud in Ghana will be negatively correlated with local political participation.

This chapter has offered a comprehensive look at Ghana's history, socio-economic development, and local political environment. In addition, I have thoroughly assessed the condition of the institutions in Ghana that are being tested- decentralization, enhanced participatory mechanisms, civil society, and electoral cleanliness. Chapter 5 provides a similar assessment for Liberia, offering analyses of local government, decentralization reform, use of enhanced participatory mechanisms, and the state of civil society.

CHAPTER FIVE LIBERIA: REBUILDING A NATION

A Brief Historical Background of Liberia

Liberia is a particularly interesting case for two reasons. First, because it is emerging from a period of state failure, it exemplifies dramatic and urgent governance challenges. Second, despite these challenges, it has a long history of formal democratic institutions; the representative form of government is widely understood and accepted. While Liberians overwhelmingly approve of democratic forms of government as well as core democratic values and practices such as regular, open multi-party elections, trust in institutions is low and only half of Liberians are satisfied with the way democracy operates (Afrobarometer Briefing Paper No. 73 2009). In addition, Liberia maintains a highly centralized form of government with almost complete executive control, and while a decentralization plan has been drafted and approved by the legislature, it has not been fully implemented due to lack of political will and capacity.²⁰

Even if Liberia's decentralization plan is fully implemented, it may not result in increased opportunities for participation. Newly decentralized local governments often lack the skills needed to make use of new instruments of citizen participation (Devas and Grant 2003). Liberia has very few local-level government institutions. It is organized into 15 counties that are headed by county administrators appointed by the president, despite the fact that the constitution calls for election of county-level and municipal officials. Civil society organizations are just beginning to grow. This means that opportunities for participation at the local level are still sparse.

²⁰ Personal interviews conducted by K. Krawczyk in Monrovia, Liberia with Esther K. Richards-Freeman and Yarsuo Weh-Dorliae, October 13, 2011.

In the 1820s, Liberia was founded as a colony by the American Colonization Society (ACS) as an alternative to abolition in America. The ACS advocated repatriation of free African Americans back to the African continent. This puts Liberia in the unique position of being only one of two African countries that were not subject to some form of colonial rule.²¹ Liberia became a possession of the ACS, and colonists dominated and controlled indigenous Liberians, and led the political and economic sectors of the country. In fact, indigenous Liberians were denied citizenship until 1904. Since the United States was not interested in making Liberia a colony, it was declared independent in 1847. Liberia functioned as a one-party state from its independence in 1847 until 1980. The government was controlled by a settler minority of freed US slaves and their descendants.

Contemporary Liberian history is chaotic. William Tubman, regarded as the father of modern Liberia, was president from 1944 until his death in 1971. William Tolbert Jr., Tubman's vice president, took over in 1971 and remained in power until 1980. Tolbert's regime was able to make some progress in development of infrastructure and human resources in Liberia. But Tolbert was killed in a coup d'état in 1980, and Liberia entered a period of military rule with Samuel K. Doe presiding as a dictator. His regime lasted from 1980 until he was tortured and killed in 1990, and was characterized by corruption and ruthlessness (Sawyer 2005). After the bloody coup in 1980 that placed Doe in power, rigged elections that failed to restore democratic order in 1985, and the capture and killing of the Doe in 1990, the country descended into civil war from 1989 to 2003.

²¹ Ethiopia is the only African country besides Liberia that has been recognized in recent history as an independent country.

During this period the Liberian state collapsed. Except for a brief respite after a temporary peace agreement in 1995 and subsequent elections in 1997, the Liberian state was in chaos, earning the classification as a failed state (Pham 2004; McGovern 2005).

Charles Taylor took control of Liberia by waging guerilla warfare against Samuel Doe. The war began in 1989, and in 1990, Taylor successfully captured, tortured, and killed Doe. Taylor recruited young men to act as a small band of guerillas, called the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), and invaded Liberia from Cote D'Ivoire in December 1989. The group, which included many children, became armed bandits who terrorized local populations (Sawyer 2005). The people of Liberia attempted to find safety in the capital of Monrovia or by fleeing to neighboring countries. Ethnic groups sprang up in response to Taylor's armed bandits and reinforced cleavages among ethnic communities, further fueling the conflict. According to Amos Sawyer, "the plunder, pillage and carnage that characterized his (Doe's) rule seemed legendary at that time but later paled when compared to the excesses of Charles' Taylor's regime" (Sawyer 2005, 19).

Taylor, who ruled unofficially from 1989 to 1996 by waging guerilla warfare, was officially elected president in 1997 under the slogan, "He killed my ma, he killed my pa, but I will vote for him," reflecting the people's attempt to legitimize and neutralize him. Citizens hoped giving him what he wanted- control and official rule of the country- would stem the violence. This was viewed as a trade-off and seen as "liberty in exchange for peace" (Sawyer 2005, 40). But Taylor's guerilla warfare was part of a broader conflict between Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Cote D'Ivoire. After he was elected

president, Taylor continued to use armed bands as a method of ensuring state security and to conduct illegal transactions, including amassing huge sums of money and controlling Liberia's natural resources (Sawyer 2005).

By 2001, opposing rebel forces were a significant threat to Taylor's power. The conflict intensified, and in June 2003, more than a million people were trapped in Monrovia by fighting between Taylor's army, and two rebel forces, LURD (Liberians United for Resistance and Democracy) and MODEL (Movement for Democracy in Liberia). Both LURD and MODEL were rebel groups whose purpose was to oust Taylor, although LURD was based in Guinea and MODEL was based in Cote D'Ivoire. Citizens attempted to find refuge from the fighting and sought food, water, and medical supplies in the capital. But they ended up trapped by the fighting and in a single week in July, more than 600 people were killed from mortar and machine gun fire (Sirleaf 2009, 231-233).

The humanitarian crisis in Liberia, and the resulting threat to global security, produced increasing international pressure for Taylor to step down. Peace talks were held in Accra, Ghana in June of 2003. Taylor, LURD and MODEL representatives, and members of 18 additional political parties were invited to attend. The United States and the United Nations were outspoken in saying Taylor had to go. Taylor finally resigned, went into exile in Nigeria, and UN peacekeepers arrived in Liberia in August 2003. Taylor was indicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and violations of international humanitarian law during the peace talks in Accra. The Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed on August 18, 2003, and

a transitional government was inaugurated in October. Democratic institutions were reaffirmed as the desired method for rebuilding the state, establishing peace and ensuring political stability. By December, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was fully deployed with over 15,000 personnel. In April 2012, the Special Court for Sierra Leone found Taylor guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity in connection with his support of rebel forces in Sierra Leone and sentenced him to a 50 year prison term (Lean and Gerring 2013).

More than 200,000 people died during Liberia's 14-year civil war, and 1.8 million were displaced both internally and externally. The toll of prolonged civil war also included countless violent crimes such as rape, a decrease in life expectancy, and disintegration of social, political, and economic institutions. The result was a complete failure and collapse of the state (Sawyer 2005).

Liberia has had two general elections since the end of the civil war in 2003, the first in 2005 and again in 2011. In 2005, Liberia held internationally-supervised democratic elections, and the people chose Africa's first female president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. In 2011, Johnson Sirleaf was reelected to a second term in a largely peaceful process, run this time by the Liberian National Elections Commission with support from the international community. An UNMIL force of 9,000 civic and military personnel continued to help provide security and assisted with issues such as the transportation of election materials. Both the 2005 and 2011 elections are generally gauged to have been free and fair (The Carter Center Final Report on National Elections in Liberia 2005;

2011), although there were isolated instances of electoral violence. The two elections are discussed in greater detail at the end of this chapter.

Liberian Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development Progress

Liberia deals with many of the same issues as other countries in the region and on the continent of Africa, including high levels of poverty, low levels of educational opportunity and income, and low levels of economic and social development. But these conditions have been exacerbated in Liberia by a prolonged civil war that led to total state collapse, and as a result Liberia ranked as the sixth least developed nation in the world in 2011 (Human Development Index 2011). Liberia struggles with insufficient infrastructure, including an insufficient electrical grid and road system, as well as lack of access to basic services such as water, sanitation and health services.

A Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) document describes the macroeconomic, structural and social policies and programs in place in a country that are intended to promote growth and reduce poverty. A PRS is prepared by a country's government through a participatory process involving civil society and development partners, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and outlines the associated external financing needs and major sources of financing for proposed policies and programs (The World Bank Group 2013). A PRS is required by the IMF and the World Bank in order for a country to qualify for external aid and to be eligible for debt relief through the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. *Lift Liberia* 2008-2011 is the country's first Poverty Reduction Strategy strategy, outlining the country's

policies designed to increase economic growth, reduce poverty, and increase sustainable development. About two-thirds of what was outlined in Liberia's first PRS was executed, with much of the work consisting of "preparatory measures" such as developing plans, building capacity, passing laws, building or rebuilding parts of institutional and physical systems, and rehabilitating or repairing infrastructure. Overall, the results of Liberia's PRS were mixed. Although not all desired outcomes were achieved, there were positive developments such as sustained peace, continued economic growth, a decline in poverty, expansion of health and education services, and improvements in some areas of governance (Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper Annual Progress Report 2012). In a few areas, outcomes were unsatisfactory: goals relating to electricity access, justice delivery, and decentralization were not met. This indicates the need for more attention and perhaps a revised strategy in the next development plan. We can look to the results of the PRS to provide some context for an institutional analysis. For example, the PRS results offer evidence that decentralization efforts are inadequate, and access to infrastructure and delivery of basic services (goals associated with democratic local government) are lacking.

As far as access to basic services, the 2011 Stakeholder (SH) Survey conducted by the government of Liberia reported significant growth in the number of households that use the main grid and generators to access electricity, mostly in the urban capital of Monrovia (Liberia Stakeholder Survey 2011). Overall, however, less than 10% of the population in Monrovia and less than 2% of Liberia's rural population currently have access to electricity (Winrock International 2013). There was progress in road

construction and repair, as evidenced by the 60% of SH Survey respondents who felt the government had improved roads in their communities. Even though only 31% of the water and sanitation deliverables outlined in PSR were completed, there were some positive outcomes. According to the Ministry of Health, the share of households with access to clean water increased from 67% to 75% from 2007 to 2009, but wide disparities remain between urban and rural households. Access to sanitary toilet facilities rose from 39% to 50% nationwide, with improvement in rural as well as urban areas (Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper Annual Progress Report 2012, 24-28).

The *Lift Liberia* Poverty Reduction Strategy document set a goal of raising the primary school net enrollment rate to 44.8%, and raising the ratio of girls to boys to .98 in primary schools and to .83 in secondary schools (Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper Annual Progress Report 2012, 112). Between 2007 and 2010, some indicators showed improvement. The gross enrollment rates for female primary school enrollment and for male and female secondary school enrollment rose, and female youth literacy rates increased by five to 10 percentage points. But net enrollment rates also show that most primary school-aged children are still not in school, and the primary net enrollment rates declined from 2007 to 2010. The percentage of adults who have completed secondary school remained at only 11%. SH Survey results indicate respondents do see improvements in the education sector in terms of better trained teachers, improved supply of educational materials, and improvement to educational infrastructure (Liberia Stakeholder Survey 2011).

In the health sector, the PRS listed goals such as having at least 70% of health facilities in each county providing a basic package of health services, reducing child mortality by 10% to 15%, and reducing maternal mortality by 5% to 10% (Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper Annual Progress Report 2012, 109). About two thirds of the actions outlined in the PRS strategy were executed, mostly in core planning activities and also in establishing health facilities units. This provides a foundation for future growth of the health program. Public perceptions indicated respondents did see improved access to basic health care services, as well as increased affordability, in both urban and rural areas.

While the evidence above shows Liberia is making limited progress in reaching its PRS goals, field observations on the ground in Liberia provide a counterpoint to the published data.²² For example, field observations revealed those locations that did have access to electricity, mostly businesses and government buildings, were often not on continuous 24-hour service. Outages were common. Informal, anonymous “citizen-on-the-street” interviews pegged increased access to quality health care and improved quality of education as top concerns. A visit to Monrovia’s only hospital in October 2011 made it evident health care was only available to those who could afford to pay for it. The quality of schools was low, and access to textbooks, technology, and other learning materials were in short supply at every level. The following discussion of local

²² Due to the generosity of the Forum on Contemporary Issues in Society (FOCIS) and the Eugene Applebaum Chair in Community Engagement at Wayne State University, I conducted field work in Liberia from October 5 – October 17, 2011. This field work provided access to public officials, citizens, and international agencies, as well as to data and documents unavailable outside the country. In addition, it allowed me to see and experience the conditions in the country, specifically relative to my institutions of interest.

governance in Liberia will reveal part of the reason why local service delivery remains so challenging: Liberia has virtually no local government capacity, and has not initiated implementation of its proposed decentralization plan.

Local Governance in Liberia

Liberia has virtually no institutions of local government. The scant local governance that does exist is heavily centralized, controlled by central ministries and agencies located in the capital of Monrovia (Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia 2013). Local government is funded through the budget of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, with additional allocations from the budgets of various ministries tied to specific policy areas such as education and health. In an effort to promote allocation of fiscal resources to local government, the central government has established the county development fund (CDF) program that allows funds to be directly allocated to counties. Because of weak administrative control and lack of monitoring and oversight, however, the CDF is mired in accusations of misappropriation of funds (Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia 2013). In fact in February 2013, the newspaper Front Page Africa revealed a scandal involving members of the legislature who withdrew CDF funds for 300 student scholarships. The scholarship funds went to a vocational institute in Montserrado County that is not even functional, and the scholarships cannot be tied back to individual student identification numbers for auditing purposes (Front Page Africa News, February 27, 2013).

The Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia (CENTAL), a civil society organization that serves as a corruption watchdog agency, finds the limited local governance that does exist in Liberia to be weak and corrupt. According to CENTAL, these weak institutions do not allow citizens access to public information, leading to lack of accountability and transparency at the sub-national level. Because local officials are appointed by the central government versus elected by citizens, they feel accountable to national officials rather than local citizens (Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia 2013).

Decentralization and Development of Local Governance in Liberia

As illustrated in the preceding section, local communities in Liberia continue to be dominated by the central state, despite complex and ambitious decentralization reforms currently in place today. The idea of reform is not completely new: there is some history in Liberia of institutional reforms designed to achieve decentralization that first developed after Tubman's death in 1971. Efforts were focused on increasing local participation in county-level development programs. County-level positions were created to facilitate this effort (Sawyer 2005, 92). But as demonstrated in Chapter 3, decentralization does not automatically create opportunities for citizens to participate in running their own affairs. And even if participation does occur, it must result in accountability, giving authority and decision-making power to local citizens (Sawyer 2005, 95). The early decentralization reforms in Liberia lacked allocation of fiscal resources and did not give decision-making authority to local government; control

remained with centralized ministries. The early efforts did succeed, however, in increasing citizens' interest in being involved in decision-making for community development projects involving rural roads, market sheds, and health clinics.

Dr. Amos Sawyer is a noted academic and was president of the Interim Government of National Unity in Liberia from 1990 to 1994. As of 2013, he serves as the chairman of the Governance Commission of Liberia, which in part oversees decentralization efforts in the country. Dr. Sawyer has written extensively on decentralization and local governance in Liberia and advocates for the development of a more sophisticated system of subnational governance. In Liberia, county officials are the intermediaries through which people articulate and transmit their concerns to the central government. But county-level governmental institutions need to be transformed into "jurisdictions of shared sovereignty" if democratic self-governance is to be established (Sawyer 2005, 164). Sawyer calls for the elimination of paramount chieftancies and their accompanying districts, and argues county governance should be reorganized to include a mix of cooperative institutions at both the county and township governance level, with the county remaining at the top of the hierarchy. He advocates for county councils or assembly structures, county commissions, a county-level judicial system, and county auditing procedures. The county would have the power to levy taxes and provide adequate levels of service provision. Township jurisdictions would be the structure below the county level, and include institutions such as township councils, local courts, and local development associations (Sawyer 2005, 161-167).

Proposed Organization and Structure of Local Governance in Liberia

Liberia does have a comprehensive plan in place designed to reinvent the system and structures of local governance through a process of decentralization reform. This plan, the Liberian National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance, was approved in January 2010. This policy seeks to achieve greater participation of the Liberian people in their own development, decentralizing government to the county level while maintaining Liberia's overall unitary system. The document calls for "devolution of certain political, fiscal and administrative powers and institutions from the national government to county governments" (Liberian National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance 2010, 1). It spells out policy spheres to be reserved for the national government, including traditional realms such as international affairs and the military, but also national health, education, and water policy.

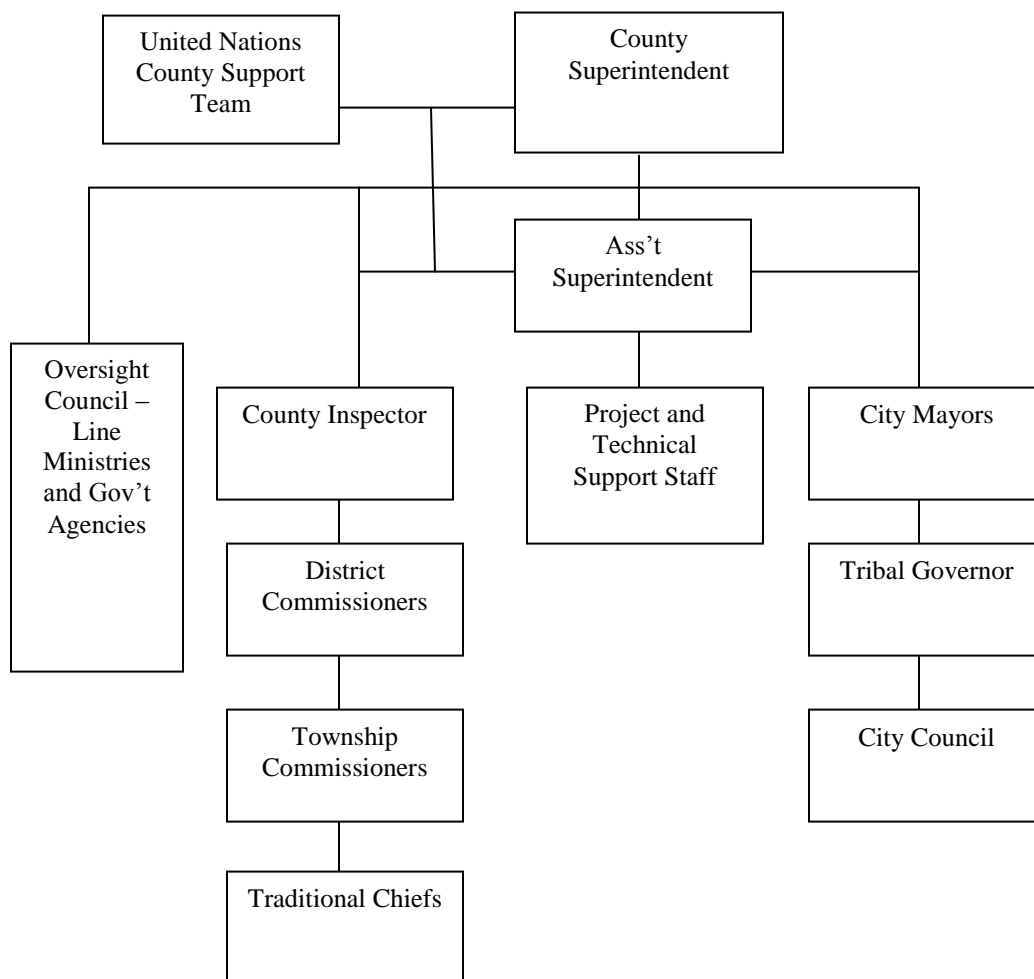
The Liberian National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance also spells out the preferred organization and structure of government at the county level. For example, it calls for a local county government to be established in each of Liberia's 15 counties, to be composed of a county executive branch and a county legislative branch. The county executive branch would include a County Legislative Assembly (CLA), made up of one representative elected by the citizens of each county administrative district as well as the paramount chief of each chiefdom within the county. To ensure gender equity, two members-at-large positions in the CLA are to be reserved for women (Liberian National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance 2010). The county executive branch includes top public officials, such as the county chief executive officer (county

superintendent) and the principal deputy to the county superintendent (referred to as the assistant superintendent), who are appointed by the president. The ministries oversee heads of county administrative departments, and county district commissioners. Each county district would have its own district administrative office staffed with technical specialists in areas such as health, education, planning, and agriculture. This technical staff would be appointed by the central government and managed by the district commissioner. Local officials such as city mayors and local chiefs (clan and paramount, and town) complete the structure of local government.

Local government organizational plans are further illustrated in a County Development Agenda (CDA) document for each county. This document outlines the current environment and organizational structure in each county, and articulates a development plan for each of Liberia's 15 counties. The organizational chart presented in Figure 5.1 is adapted from the CDA. It is more complex and specific than the structure proposed in the Liberian National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance. While a large number of public officials make up the organization of county government, most officials are appointed by the president and are under central government control, including county superintendents, assistant superintendents, heads of county administrative departments, and county district commissioners. Oversight is provided by the United Nations, as well as by various government ministries and agencies. The city mayors and local chiefs are supposed to be elected using popular elections, but the CDAs indicate "due to the conflict and installation of transitional administration, current mayors

and local clan chiefs have remained in power without going through the normal procedure of election” (Montserrado County Development Agenda 2008).

Figure 5.1: Structure of Local Government in Liberia²³



²³ Adapted from County Development Agenda documents, 2008-2012, Ministry of Planning & Economic Affairs, Government of the Republic of Liberia.

The National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance in Liberia (2010) is intended to give county governments and their citizens the power to operate as “autonomous political sub-national units of the country,” with the power to make local economic development and administrative decisions that conform to national laws and regulations. The citizens of each county should have the power to elect the political and executive officers of the county, including election of the superintendent, district commissioners, members of the County Legislative Assembly, paramount and clan chiefs (the two basic types of traditional rulers in Liberia), mayors of communities granted city charters, and members of city councils or assemblies of communities granted city charters (Liberian National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance 2010). The document states all elected officials of local county government will serve for a period of four years, and they are eligible for re-election for one additional four-year term. Yet local elections have not yet taken place in Liberia since the end of the civil war.

The national government, through the legislative process, is supposed to transfer fiscal resources, functions, powers and responsibilities from the central government to county governments. Counties will have the ability to raise their own revenues from local property taxes, licenses, and fees. The national government is also supposed to establish and pass into law a Code of Administrative Regulations to govern the structure, organization, administrative powers, and reporting relationships of all elected and appointed officers of county government as outlined in the National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance (2010). The national policy document seems to seek devolutionary decentralization, which includes the real transfer of public authority,

resources, and personnel from the national level to sub-national jurisdictions (Crook and Manor 1998), as the type of decentralization planned for Liberia. But planning and implementation are two distinct activities. Next I discuss and assess the implementation of decentralization policy in Liberia.

Assessment of Decentralization Policy in Liberia: Policy Formulation Versus Implementation

I argue that higher levels of decentralization will be associated with increased citizen satisfaction, leading to higher levels of local political participation. Lower level of decentralization efforts will be associated with decreased citizen satisfaction with local government, resulting in lower levels of citizen participation at the local level. An assessment of the state of decentralization reform in Liberia will allow me to draw conclusions about the ability of decentralization to impact local political participation.

The 2010 Liberian National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance discussed in the preceding section lays out an ambitious plan to develop local governance institutions. We can look to two governmental reports, the 2008 - 2011 *Lift Liberia* Poverty Reduction Strategy referred to previously in this chapter, as well as the 2010 Liberia Decentralization and Local Development (LDLD) Report, in order to gauge the implementation progress of local governance and decentralization reform in Liberia. In addition, personal interviews with various government officials and international aid agency representatives conducted during field work in October 2011 lend perspective from on the ground.

The decentralization agenda reflected in *Lift Liberia's Poverty Reduction Strategy* is aimed at giving citizens more say about local service delivery priorities, as well as input on methods for improving the efficiency of local services (Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper Annual Progress Report 2012). It is important to note, however, that decentralization in Liberia does *not* tend to be true devolutionary decentralization as discussed in Chapter 3, with authority and resources allocated to local government. There is not much devolution of decision-making authority to locally elected officials, although there is some deconcentration of functions from central agencies, sometimes with a mandate to address local concerns (Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper Annual Progress Report 2012). For example, the Liberian County Development Agendas (CDAs) for each of the 15 counties, developed in consultation with local leaders in each county, are supposed to address local needs. These agendas draw from the national PRS and adapt priorities to local circumstances and needs. Yet as we see from the previous section, many of the proposed plans have not been implemented. Local officials are still appointed versus elected. Transfer of authority and resources has not occurred. While 80% of the decentralization deliverables outlined in the PRS were completed, including a) the development of a national decentralization policy, and b) the development of an implementation plan, the majority of these activities were planning activities. Very limited capacity-building in local institutions took place. This means deconcentration remains the model in Liberia, giving decision-making power to officials appointed by the central government and stationed at the county level.

The 2010 Liberia Decentralization and Local Development (LDLD) Report highlights the progress of the Liberia Decentralization and Local Development (LDLD) Project in the dissemination and implementation of decentralization policy, capacity-building of county government, and community development using the County Development Fund. The LDLD Project is implemented by the Governance Commission (GC) of Liberia, a government body that promotes “good governance, and designs policies and institutional arrangements for the achievement of good governance” (Liberia Governance Commission 2013). The next two paragraphs discuss the findings of the 2010 LDLD Report.

The Governance Commission has taken a lead role in the dissemination of decentralization policy to citizens through civic education initiatives. Brochures were distributed, radio segments were broadcast and short dramas were enacted to help citizens understand the concept of decentralization, the role citizens play in a decentralized environment, and the rights and duties of citizens under this system. The GC completed the first phase of this county civic education and engagement program in April 2010 with citizen workshops in Grand Bassa, Sinoe and River Cess counties. More than 100 participated, including women, youth, district authorities, District Development Committee members, traditional authorities, and representatives from media and civil society. In May 2010 workshops were held in Grand Gedeh, River Gee, Maryland, and Grand Kru counties, with a total of 238 total participants. During this same period, training of county procurement and finance staff also took place. Financial and procurement manuals were distributed, bidding documents were drafted, job descriptions

were clarified, and basic financial management procedures were established in five counties: Bong, Nimba, Gbarnga Bassa, Lofa and Rivercess.

The LDLD Report notes that participants in the county civic education and engagement program expressed “overwhelming support” for the National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance. However, some participants did express doubts as to whether decentralization will really be implemented as outlined in the policy (Liberia Decentralization and Local Development Report 2010). It is clear the concern of these citizens has merit, as most progress towards decentralization reform in Liberia has been in the realm of policy formulation, and implementation of decentralization policy has yet to achieve any real momentum. Most international aid agency representatives interviewed in Monrovia in October of 2011 agreed, stating that lack of political will and lack of institutional capacity had so far stifled attempts at implementation of decentralization reform.²⁴ Commissioners at the GC agreed the success of decentralization reform depends largely on political will.²⁵ But international aid agency representatives cite the desire of central government to retain control as an impediment to implementing devolutionary decentralization, as well as lack of demand from citizens for decentralization reform. If decentralization can be successfully implemented by the Liberia Decentralization and Local Development (LDLD) Project, it is an institution that can contribute to increased opportunities for local political participation. But the lack of

²⁴ Anonymous personal interviews conducted by K. Krawczyk with country representatives from the European Commission Delegation, USAID, The United Nations, and The World Bank, October 2011, Monrovia, Liberia.

²⁵ Personal interview conducted by K. Krawczyk with Yarsou Weh-Dorlaie, Decentralization Commissioner, Republic of Liberia Governance Commission, Monrovia, Liberia, October 11, 2011.

implementation of meaningful decentralization reform in Liberia leads me to conclude decentralization cannot yet contribute to increased local political participation.

Enhanced Participatory Mechanisms in Liberia

As discussed in Chapter 3, increasing the amount of authentic local participation requires well-designed, high-performing local participatory mechanisms that move beyond voting and embrace mechanisms that encompass a broad range of direct citizen-governmental interactions. The development of citizenship capabilities is important for increased participation because the extent to which institutional arrangements work to sustain democratic governance in Liberia depends on the role of citizens in the process of governance (Sawyer 2005, 183). But presently, participatory opportunities for citizens in Liberia do not extend much beyond periodic voting for central leaders (Sawyer 2005, 85).

Participatory democracy is in the early stages in Liberia, and political activism and engagement is a relatively new phenomenon. Only 37.4% of citizens reported being politically active, defined in the CIVICUS CSI Population Survey as signing petitions, joining boycotts and attending peaceful demonstrations, although these types of activities are on the rise (CIVICUS Civil Society Index Analytical Report for Liberia 2010). Membership in Liberian political organizations is very low, with only 19.0% of survey respondents belonging to these organizations. People prefer membership in religious organizations rather than in political parties or organizations that conduct political advocacy. This could in part be because political organizations are generally considered to be centered around charismatic leaders who “bankroll the party and dictate the

direction and values of the party,” and who are often viewed as liars and thieves. Despite these negative views, political volunteering is relatively higher, at 38.5% (CIVICUS Civil Society Index Analytical Report for Liberia 2010).

Moving beyond opportunities for electoral-based participation, there is limited experimentation with enhanced participatory mechanisms in Liberia. The Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia, referenced in the *Local Governance in Liberia* section of this chapter, has taken a lead role in implementing a few of these pilot programs in collaboration with international partners. For example, a 2008 pilot program in participatory budgeting aimed to strengthen citizens’ understanding of and participation in the budget process. The program, called “Strengthening Citizen Participation and Oversight in the Budget Process,” was funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and implemented in partnership with local religious leaders in Liberia.²⁶ Details about the results of this NED program – outputs and outcomes – were not available. And additional programs that develop and implement enhanced participatory mechanisms at the local level are scarce. Those that do exist tend to provide assessments of outputs (e.g., number of participants) versus outcomes (e.g., changes in participatory behaviors). It is also difficult to assess which counties in Liberia are utilizing any of these mechanisms- whether they are being implemented on a pilot basis in select counties, or country-wide in all 15 counties. The overall lack of access to the results of any enhanced participatory programs in Liberia means it is difficult to test

²⁶ Pilot program information provided via email to author by Mr. George Ebba, Assistant Director, Media Relations, CENTAL, Monrovia, Liberia.

the hypothesis that enhanced participatory mechanisms are positively associated with local political participation.

Civil Society Organizations in Liberia

My hypothesis from Chapter 3 proposes subnational environments in areas with a higher density of civil society organizations will have higher levels of local political participation. Where civil society is less dense, there will be lower levels of local political participation. Berry, Portney and Thomson (1993) argue that civil society is another factor that helps explain why citizens participate. This section assesses civil society in Liberia in an attempt to judge its ability to impact local political participation.

Civil society organizations have a history in Liberia dating all the way back to the founding of the nation in 1847. In fact, Liberia itself was created through the initiative of a civil society organization, the American Colonization Society. Traditional associations have operated throughout Liberia since that time, including social clubs, economic clubs called 'susu', and community service and work groups. Faith-based organizations also emerged early on in Liberia and contributed to socioeconomic development, specifically in the areas of education and health.

Contemporary civil society organizations (CSOs) emerged in Liberia in the 1970s and 1980s, with a focus on capacity-building, human rights, advocacy and development issues. These non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and specifically international NGOs, became the main instruments of development. The presence of international NGOs stimulated the growth of more local NGOs, leading to partnerships for the delivery

of relief services during the civil war, and later to post-war development initiatives (National Policy on Non-Governmental Organizations in Liberia 2008).

NGOs have been prolific in Liberia since the 1990s, seen as the product of a struggle to widen the country's civic space (Sawyer 2005). The dominant form of associational life in urban areas of Liberia is community-based organizations (CBOs). These CBOs are based on common social history; ethnic background; and communal, spatial and geographic location. This type of "non-state institutional arrangement, rooted in the initiatives of local people, functioned as a source of resilience to violence during Liberia's prolonged civil war" (Sawyer 2005, 68). CBOs have also taken on local development initiatives, including road and sanitation projects, schools, wells, clinics, and market stalls. Religious associations provided trauma counseling, advocacy for human rights, and educational and health care services, especially in post-conflict Liberia (Sawyer 2005, 70-71).

NGO Governance in Liberia

Liberian NGOs are currently governed under a document called the 2008 National Policy on Non-Governmental Organizations in Liberia. This document defines an NGO and outlines eligibility and accreditation requirements. It also requires the work of an NGO to be guided by "national development priorities" (National Policy on Non-Governmental Organizations in Liberia 2008, 10).

The National Policy on Non-Governmental Organizations in Liberia (2008) requires that an NGO have its own office space with a name sign, three full time staff

members, and a board of directors in order to receive accreditation. A copy of the NGO's articles of incorporation and by-laws, a mission statement, and a list of full-time staff with position descriptions are among the documentation that must be submitted with the application for NGO accreditation. Annual activity reports, including financial reports, are required for reaccreditation. The NGO Policy document also indicates governmental monitoring and evaluation of NGOs will take place, including review of documentation, field visits, and evaluation reports.

The National Policy on Non-Governmental Organizations in Liberia (2008) states NGO governing bodies will be established, including an NGO Council and a Standing Independent Appeal Board. As of 2013, there is no evidence these two institutions have been established. However, Liberia has established one pseudo-governance body for NGOs called the Liberia Philanthropy Secretariat. Since multilateral aid has failed to successfully achieve development objectives, the Liberia Philanthropy Secretariat seeks to encourage participation of the private sector (which is considered to be both not-for-profit and for-profit) in its development agenda, in order to take advantage of opportunities offered by the international business community. The Liberia Philanthropy Secretariat was founded in 2008 to “improve the communication and coordination between the Liberian government and international foundations” (The Liberia Philanthropy Secretariat 2013). The Philanthropy Secretariat, housed in the office of the president, works in conjunction with international foundations and positions itself as a “new model for donor-government collaboration in transitional countries seeking to increase effectiveness of philanthropist-supported activities” (The Liberia Philanthropy

Secretariat 2013). It is intended to function as the primary link between foundations, NGOs, and government in Liberia, and “seeks to improve the quantity and quality of information about NGOs in Liberia” (The Liberia Philanthropy Secretariat 2013). To this end, a database is available on the Philanthropy Secretariat website that lists all registered NGOs operating in Liberia by county and focus area. I utilized this database in order to construct a measure of NGO density used in my empirical analyses, which I discuss further in Chapter 6. The Ministry of Planning is also supposed to maintain and publish this information, but it is not currently available on Liberia’s government web portal.

Current Assessment of Civil Society in Liberia

Two extensive reports assess the current state of civil society in Liberia. The first is the 2010 CIVICUS Civil Society Index Analytical Report for Liberia, and the second is the 2011 USAID CSO Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan Africa. The CIVICUS Civil Society Index Analytical Report utilizes surveys, focus groups, literature review and a national workshop in order to assess multiple dimensions of civil society in Liberia. The 2011 USAID CSO Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan Africa is a tool for assessing sustainability of civil society organizations on seven different dimensions, including the legal environment, organizational capacity, financial viability, advocacy, service provision, infrastructure, and public image. The index relies on standard indicators and yearly data collection, tracking developments over time and providing cross-country comparisons. These two reports, the 2010 CIVICUS Civil Society Index Analytical Report for Liberia and the 2011 USAID CSO Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan

Africa, are used below to provide a comprehensive portrait of civil society in Liberia.

CSOs in Liberia deliver a diverse range of services, including health care, education, agriculture, food security, human rights, and peace building. Service delivery is heavily influenced by donor funding, and CSO services are now shifting from relief work to development initiatives. CIVICUS categorizes CSOs in Liberia into three main types: interests and values groups, service and humanity groups, and policy and advocacy groups (CIVICUS Civil Society Index Analytical Report for Liberia 2010).

In general, CSOs operate freely and without harassment in Liberia, although there are isolated cases of violence and occasional appearance of inappropriate activity. Nonprofits in Liberia are certified by the NGO Coordination Unit in the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs (MOPEA). In 2011, 232 new organizations were accredited, bringing the total number of accredited organizations to 838. Currently, there are far fewer registered CSOs in Liberia (838) than in Ghana (5,232). Liberia's civil society sector is much smaller and less developed. No estimate is available for the number of unaccredited CSOs operating in Liberia (CSO Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan Africa 2011).

In the preceding section, I outlined the requirements for CSO registration and accreditation according to the National Policy on Non-Governmental Organizations in Liberia. A CSO can lose accreditation or be dissolved if it fails to meet reporting requirements or does not operate according to work plans approved by the Liberia Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs. The NGO Policy has not yet been enacted into law, and this proposed piece of legislation has several weaknesses. It does not

specify that only one body, the NGO Coordination Unit, is the only unit responsible for CSO accreditation. Currently multiple government agencies are involved in the accreditation process for CSOs, which results in confusion, poor coordination, and even duplication of fees. This undermines the authority of the NGO Coordination Unit (CSO Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan Africa 2011). Additionally, CSOs cannot register outside the capital city of Monrovia, making it difficult for CSOs operating in rural areas to gain accreditation. Steep registration costs of \$400 to \$500 annually also make it difficult for CSOs to become accredited (CSO Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan Africa 2011). Finally, the stringent requirements for CSO accreditation outlined in the 2008 National Policy on Non-Governmental Organizations are in stark contrast to the realities of the capacity of the civil society sector discussed below. CSOs in Liberia suffer from such a severe lack of resources that it would seem impossible for them to meet the requirements for office space, staffing and boards.

Overall, the 2010 CIVICUS Civil Society Index Analytical Report for Liberia finds that CSOs suffer from severe lack of human, technological and financial resources, reducing the capacity for sustainable work in the sector. In fact, 28.3% of civil society sector respondents have felt “panic-stricken” due to poor salary levels, lack of adequate training, demanding working conditions and low funding (CIVICUS Civil Society Analytical Report for Liberia 2010). Financial and technological resources are also scarce. Organizations often struggle to survive on a project-to-project basis, because donors and partners fail to provide long-term development funds.

In general, the civil society sector also suffers from extremely poor infrastructure and lack of capacity. Most CSOs do not have permanent paid staff, and they hire on a project-only basis. In addition, hiring is not merit-based. Opportunities are given to family or friends regardless of whether or not they possess the necessary qualifications. Few organizations do strategic planning or networking and most have no experience or knowledge about local fundraising. Most CSOs do not understand the value of planning and are not capable of developing or implementing medium or long-term goals or plans. Most CSOs do not have permanent office space or equipment, operating out of Internet cafes and using commercial businesses for services such as faxing (CSO Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan Africa 2011).

There are no known partnerships between CSOs and the private sector. Because of the intense competition for few available resources, civil society has been unable to collaborate effectively either within the sector or externally with government and private businesses. Most Liberian CSOs are heavily dependent on international donor support due to the current program of state reconstruction, resulting in a donor-driven agenda and a life span completely dependent on external funding (CSO Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan Africa 2011; Sawyer 2005). In fact, many CSOs would shut down without this external support as there is very little local funding available. Donor interests and local needs do not always match, however, and this contributes to a situation where NGOs compete for funding instead of working collaboratively. Many CSOs are insular and hesitant to share strategies or information with other CSOs due to the competitive nature

of the funding process. In addition, this large international presence impedes sustainable development and the capacity for local solutions (Sawyer 2005, 77-78).

Despite the heavy presence of international donor organizations in Liberia, and the reliance of local CSOs on these organizations for funding, there is a severe lack of international linkages and connections for civil society, especially for those organizations based outside the capital of Monrovia. According to the 2010 CIVICUS CSO Survey, international linkages are reported to be a staggeringly low 2.7%. This refers to membership in international networks and participation in global events (CIVICUS Civil Society Analytical Report for Liberia 2010).

Liberian CSOs also have weak internal governance structures that provide little or no oversight and are usually set up simply to meet donor requirements. Board operation in Liberian CSOs is either nonexistent or weak. Organizations that do have boards often have little distinction between the role of the board and that of management, and there is no distinction between a policy advisory role and day-to-day operations (CSO Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan Africa 2011). Board structures have multiple problems, rarely appointing members based on merit and qualifications, seldom using elections to appoint and/or replace board members, and often dealing with interference of board members in the daily management of the organization, especially in the area of donor funding (CIVICUS Civil Society Analytical Report for Liberia 2010).

According to the 2010 CIVICUS CSO Survey, 51.3% of the organizations surveyed claimed to have a code of conduct and financial reports that are publicly available (CIVICUS Civil Society Analytical Report for Liberia 2010) . But the 2011 CSO

Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan Africa points to poor financial management practices for Liberian CSOs. CSOs are required to submit financial reports, including statements on sources and uses of funds, but most CSOs fail to submit this required documentation (CSO Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan Africa 2011). Liberia's Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs NGO Coordination Unit reports that in November 2009, only 114 of 411 registered local NGOs reported their activities to the Ministry, for a compliance rate of 28%. Registered international NGOs had a compliance rate of 68%.

In addition to lack of human, technological, and financial resources, as well as governance challenges, Liberian CSOs face great difficulty accessing basic public services. For example, electricity is not widespread or readily available throughout Liberia. In fact, 98% of the CSOs operating in central Monrovia are powered by generators, and do not run off national electricity (CIVICUS Civil Society Analytical Report for Liberia 2010). There is also limited access to the Internet. Since the postal system collapsed during the war and has not been fully restored, most organizations do not even have mail delivery. Outside of Monrovia, conditions are worse and most rural areas lack Internet access, fax facilities, public telephones, running water, postal services and any access to electricity (CIVICUS Civil Society Analytical Report for Liberia 2010).

The National Civil Society Advisory Committee is the most prominent umbrella network in Liberia for local CSOs. It has a strong influence over the sector, although it has not won the confidence of all civil society stakeholders. The percentage of Liberian CSOs belonging to umbrella coalitions is 53.8%, including several coalitions that support

members in the form of training, information sharing, joint funding, and resource mobilization. Yet joint funding and resource mobilization remain the weakest areas of CSO support (CIVICUS Civil Society Analytical Report for Liberia 2010).

CSOs in Liberia tirelessly advocate for a culture of non-violence, transparency, democracy and trustworthiness. Nevertheless, there is a widespread perception among citizens that NGOs, particularly those involved in service delivery, are themselves corrupt (CIVICUS Civil Society Analytical Report for Liberia 2010). This results in a generally negative perception of CSOs overall, but local CSOs tend to be viewed more favorably because communities seek to reap the benefits community-based CSOs can offer. There is also a public perception that CSOs have a lot of money but use it ineffectively. Government also holds this view and this has caused some government-CSO partnerships to break down. There is, however, increasing communication and cooperation between CSOs and government in the policy-making arena. CSOs conduct some advocacy, specifically in the areas of education, HIV/AIDS, and natural resources, but they do not pursue government contracts (CSO Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan Africa 2011).

The 2010 CIVICUS Civil Society Index Analytical Report for Liberia summarizes some of the core weaknesses of the civil society sector in Liberia. Civil society is not actively involved in policy-making, is transient and lacks permanence in issues, has poor human and financial resources management, does not engage in shared decision making, lacks international linkages, and has little ability to mobilize resources.

Despite the many challenges facing civil society in Liberia, the CIVICUS Civil Society Index Analytical Report for Liberia (2010) does find some strengths in the sector. Civil society in Liberia is adept at working with limited resources in an innovative manner, exhibits ethnic diversity, is able to adapt to a changing environment, is independent from government, does not resort to violence, has strong conflict management abilities, and is not overly bureaucratic.

A culture of volunteerism is still a fairly new concept in Liberia, but it is beginning to grow. The figure for socially-based volunteerism is 70.4%, indicating that Liberians are very involved in social activities, especially in volunteering. Of those who are members of civil society organizations, only 37.7% are members of more than one CSO (CIVICUS Civil Society Analytical Report for Liberia 2010) . This may be because CSOs fail to actively engage or attract citizens highly interested in social activities, and when they do, they are cost prohibitive for the majority of Liberians.

Based on the evidence presented above, we can conclude civil society in Liberia is still in the early stages of post-war redevelopment. The sector is faced with severe challenges that threaten long-term capacity-building and independent development. Given these challenges, it seems unlikely that civil society in Liberia can act as a “laboratory of citizenship” (Denhardt and Denhardt 2007) that encourages citizens to engage with one another as well as with the larger political system. It also seems doubtful that Liberian civil society currently has the capacity to build stronger ties between government and citizens, increase legitimacy and trust, and educate citizens (Woolum 2000). Therefore, I predict civil society organizations in Liberia do not yet have the

capacity to act as a “civic intermediaries” that can increase local political participation. There are far fewer CSOs in Liberia than in Ghana, meaning the density measure will be lower. Although my empirical model is limited to testing a density measure of CSOs, and is not able to test a quality measure, qualitative analyses indicates the quality of civil society organizations is also weak in Liberia. This also supports the argument that CSOs do not have the capacity to work to increase local political participation.

Post-Civil War Democratic Elections in Liberia

The fourth institutional factor I propose affects local political participation is electoral cleanliness. I hypothesize that higher levels of electoral fraud will result in lower levels of local political participation, while lower levels of electoral fraud will result in increased local civic engagement. Next I will discuss the state of democratic elections in Liberia since the end of the civil war and the signing of the Accra Peace Agreement in 2003. It is important to note there are only two experiences in Liberia with democratic elections since 2003, and this presents some limitations for evaluation.

The 2005 Election

General elections were held in Liberia in October 2005, marking the end of the political transition period following Liberia’s civil war. The 2005 election was the first held since the 1997 election of Charles Taylor, which was widely considered to be not completely free and fair. Some feared the post-conflict environment in Liberia in 2005 was still not conducive to holding elections. Nevertheless, 21 political parties and one

independent candidate met the certification requirements of the elections commission and participated in the election. Despite enormous challenges, multiple parties registered and were able to contest elections, proof Liberia had become a multi-party political system (Sawyer 2008).

The presidency and all seats in the House of Representatives and Senate were up for election in 2005. The two candidates receiving the most presidential votes were former Liberian Finance Minister and World Bank employee Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of the Unity Party (UP), and former football star George Weah of the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC). Voter turnout in the 2005 general election was over 75% of the 1.3 million people registered to vote. But Liberia's constitution requires the winner of the presidency to obtain a majority, and the first election did not produce one. Since neither candidate received a majority of the votes, a runoff election was held in November. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf won the runoff election and became the first democratically elected female African head of state in January 2006.

The Carter Center monitored all phases of the electoral process during Liberia's 2005 elections, including voter registration, candidate nomination, the campaign, the first and second rounds of voting, the complaints procedure, and the announcement of the results on election day. Observation teams observed the voting and counting process in approximately 140 voting precincts, or approximately 10% of precincts across the country. There were issues before and during the election: isolated outbreaks of violence, room for improvement in the area of civic education, the need for excessive voter assistance due to lack of knowledge of voting procedures, and issues with political parties

and unequal access to the media (Carter Center Final Report on International Observation Delegations 2005). Weah's political party, the Congress for Democratic Change, made accusations of voting fraud. After several weeks of hearings and investigation into the CDC's complaints, the National Election Commission (NEC) of Liberia concluded there was insufficient evidence of widespread fraud to call the results of the election into question. The CDC decided not to pursue its claim through the courts.

The National Democratic Institute and Carter Center staff in Liberia continued to monitor the electoral process and were the only observers to monitor the process throughout the runoff election. Voter turnout during the 2005 runoff was lower than for the first election, but election observer presence remained high. There were 230 international observers from places such as the Carter Center, the European Union, and the National Democratic Institute plus approximately 4,000 domestic election observers. UN military peacekeepers were on high alert, and although Weah again alleged fraud and vote tampering, no evidence of this was found.

The Carter Center called the 2005 national elections a "watershed moment in Liberia's history, and Liberians deserve credit for the high level of citizen participation, and the peaceful conduct and administration of the elections, which all bode well for the country's nascent democracy" (Carter Center Final Report on International Observation Delegations 2005).

At the legislative level, Amos Sawyer, in his work "*Emerging Patterns in Liberia's Post-Conflict Politics: Observations from the 2005 Elections*," noted that candidates for senate races in many parts of the country were selected using long-

standing formulas among local people for sharing representation among local regions or among ethnic or sub-ethnic communities within the county. The endorsement of local institutions, especially clan-based organizations and the *poro*, was critical to the success of some candidates. Votes were cast as rewards for service, to ensure continued peace and security, and in response to direct financial incentives offered to voters (Sawyer 2008). This could call into question claims about Liberia's electoral process, or alternatively, this could simply echo the reality of elections throughout the world.

2011 Elections in Liberia

Four years after the historic 2005 elections, Liberians voted again during the general election in October 2011 and in a presidential runoff election in November 2011. These were the first elections independently organized and administered by Liberians since the end of civil war in 2003, and they were an important test for Liberia's transition from civil war to a democratic, constitutional government. Both rounds of the election were peaceful, transparent and free of major irregularities according to both domestic and international observer groups (The Carter Center Final Report on National Elections in Liberia 2011). However, the opposition party, Congress for Democratic Change, once again claimed fraud and vote tampering, and boycotted the runoff election. Isolated violence occurred the evening before the runoff and a CDC supporter was killed at a rally, undermining the credibility of the elections. As a result of the runoff, incumbent president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was reelected for a second six-year term with 90% of the vote. Low turnout and the boycott of the runoff election indicate that while the country

continues to progress, on-going efforts toward reconciliation and unification are still needed to preserve Liberia's peace (The Carter Center Final Report on National Elections in Liberia 2011).

The Carter Center and the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) deployed a mission of 55 observers from 25 countries who visited 282 polling places in 15 counties to assess the voting and counting processes during the October general elections. Despite considerable challenges, Carter Center observers reported that the voting process was peaceful, orderly, and transparent (The Carter Center Final Report on National Elections in Liberia 2011).

The Carter Center and EISA deployed a mission of 52 observers from 20 countries for the runoff. The Carter Center noted the runoff election was conducted in general accordance with Liberia's legal framework. The election was well-administered, and polling staff performed their duties well. The process was transparent, and domestic and international observers had access to all stages of the electoral process. However, the runoff election was marred by an opposition boycott, election eve violence, and low voter turnout, illustrating challenges remain for Liberia's democratic consolidation. The Liberian National Police used deadly force in an action against the headquarters of the Congress for Democratic Change the day before the election, and three media outlets were closed, eroding public confidence and creating an atmosphere of fear, especially in the capital of Monrovia. The opposition's decision to boycott the runoff was based on their assertion that the election process was significantly flawed, although these claims were not substantiated.

The Carter Center remained in Liberia to monitor the vote tallying process and reported in November 2011 that the process was “carried out smoothly throughout the country, with greater adherence to procedures and fewer irregularities than in the first round of the elections” (The Carter Center Final Report on National Elections in Liberia 2011). In general, the international community views the 2005 and 2011 elections in Liberia as free, fair, and absent of electoral fraud or vote tampering. However, as in Ghana, accusations of fraud by local politicians, their political parties, and even citizens are rampant. Perceptions of electoral cleanliness (as measured by individual survey responses in the Round 4 Afrobarometer data) are lower in Liberia than in Ghana. And the percentage of spoiled ballots per county (used as a measure of electoral cleanliness) is slightly higher in Liberia (ranging from 2.4% to 6.2%) than in Ghana (ranging from 1.2% to 5.6% per region). This raises interesting questions about the effects of electoral cleanliness, both perceived and actual, on local political participation in Liberia. In a country with less experience with democratic elections, and higher levels of spoiled ballots, does this have a greater impact on citizens’ propensity to participate in local politics? If negative experiences with the political system contribute to a lower likelihood of interacting in that system, we would expect the relationship of electoral fraud to participation to be negative in Liberia. Chapter 6 offers detailed empirical analyses that help to answer questions about electoral cleanliness, as well as answer other questions posed throughout this research.

Chapter 6 CITIZENS AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT: ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INSTITUTIONS ON LOCAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN WEST AFRICA

In this chapter I examine individual-level factors that affect local political participation in Ghana and Liberia. I also consider the subnational institutional environment in these two countries and how it affects local political participation using contextual-level analyses.²⁷ I use a twofold strategy. First, I conduct analyses on individual-level factors in West Africa that may affect local political participation by including those factors that have been found to affect political participation in other areas of the world, including the United States, Latin America, and Africa. I include measures of urban/rural geographic location, gender, age, education, interest in public affairs, local efficacy, voluntary association membership, electoral cleanliness, and party attachment. I also include three additional individual-level factors that I hypothesize affect local political participation: an individual's recent experience with corruption, his or her perception of quality of local service delivery, and his or her perception of local governmental transparency. Second, I seek to analyze the effects of the institutional environment on local political participation by testing the effects of local institutions I believe matter in the West African context. I test three contextual variables that are proxies for level of decentralization, nonprofit density, and electoral cleanliness in Ghana

²⁷ In Chapter 2 I define my use of the term "institution" as having a broader, more informal meaning. This allows me to include subnational bureaucratic structures and also structures sometimes viewed as being distinct from the state, such as civil society organizations, within my definition of "institutions."

and Liberia, and in a two-country pooled model. In Ghana, I am able to test a fourth contextual variable, breath of enhanced participatory mechanisms.

I use both individual- and subnational-level contextual data in my analyses. Individual data are required because I am interested in the effects of traditional socioeconomic and attitudinal measures on an individuals' local-level political behavior; using subnational aggregate data offers a way to operationalize the effects of local institutions on an individual's local political participation. Using both data together provides insight about the relationships between individuals and the local institutions of government in which they live.

The empirical analyses presented in this chapter reflect the goals stated in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. I build on existing research by providing a deeper understanding of local political participation in West Africa at both the individual and contextual level. I move beyond simply examining individual-level political participation by applying the theoretical framework I have developed to assess how certain subnational institutions affect local political participation in the region. I focus on local-level (versus national) political participation, forms of participation other than voting, and subnational (in addition to cross-national) variation in contextual factors. My global public administration research adds to an understanding about the relationships between citizens, their institutional environment, and their political behavior in Ghana and Liberia. This is in line with the goals of Public Administration with a Global Approach (PAGP), which seeks to develop theory and to understand what works in certain settings and not

others, and compare across cultures to examine contextual factors that influence the success of institutional practices in public administration

Ghana and Liberia share striking similarities, yet also exhibit huge differences in their level of development, stage of democratic consolidation, and institutional context. Ghana has been independent since 1957, and has held free, fair, and democratic elections since 1992. Liberia is a country in the midst of postwar reconstruction and democratic consolidation, and has held only two democratic national elections since the civil war ended in 2003. Ghana's nonprofit sector is much larger and stronger than Liberia's, and Ghana has a much longer history with the process of decentralization. Yet both countries face many of the same issues; issues that are systemic in the region, including poverty, lack of educational attainment, high levels of corruption, and problems with delivery of basic governmental services. These similarities and differences lead to questions about how the subnational institutional environment in these two countries manifests itself in an individual's political life. For example, does Ghana's extended experience with decentralization reform create an environment where citizens reap the benefits of a more devolved system of local government with more opportunities for involvement, making them more likely to participate in the system? Or does the fact that local governance in Ghana still remains highly centralized and deconcentrated despite two decades of reform mean that citizens are less likely to participate in politics? And what about variations in civil society between the two countries? Does the fact that Liberia's civil society sector is much smaller, less developed and has far less capacity limit its ability to act as a locus for citizen engagement with local government? The empirical analyses in this chapter build

off the qualitative assessments provided in Chapters 4 and 5, providing quantitative analyses to answer questions relative to my hypotheses.

The remainder of this chapter is laid out as follows: first, I discuss the individual-level and contextual data I use in my analyses. Next, I outline the explanatory and response measures that operationalize the concepts of interest. Third, I discuss the modeling strategies utilized. Finally, I present models at the individual and contextual level for both Ghana and Liberia, as well as a dual-country model that includes both individual and contextual variables, and I discuss the implications of these models. I then offer additional interpretation beyond the basic Poisson models in order to further illustrate and explain my findings. The results of my empirical analyses are consistent with some hypotheses but not necessarily with others, however; all results are examined.

Individual-Level Data

For individual-level data, I use the Afrobarometer survey, which measures the social, political, and economic atmosphere in 35 countries in Africa, including Ghana and Liberia. Appendix A lists the Afrobarometer survey questions I use in my analyses. In addition to basic demographic information, the Afrobarometer collects data about individual attitudes and behaviors using survey questions about democracy, governance, livelihoods, macro-economics and markets, social capital, conflict and crime, citizen participation, and national identity (Afrobarometer 2013). Because Afrobarometer uses a standard set of questions, this allows for systematic comparison of countries, as well as for tracking trends over time. Five rounds of the Afrobarometer survey have been

conducted since 1999. Rounds 1 through 3 were carried out in 12 countries from 1999-2008. I use the Round 4 surveys, which were conducted in Ghana and Liberia in 2008. The next round of data to be released in mid-2013 will be from Round 5 surveys, which were conducted in 35 countries during 2011-2013.

The standard sample size for each Afrobarometer survey round in each country is 1200.²⁸ A randomly selected sample of 1200 cases allows inferences to national adult populations with a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 2.8% with a 95% confidence interval. The sample is designed to be a representative cross-section of all citizens of voting age in a country. This is accomplished using random selection methods at every stage of sampling, and through use of sampling with probability proportionate to population size (PPPS) when possible to ensure more populated geographic units have a proportionally greater probability of being chosen into the sample (Afrobarometer 2013).

The Afrobarometer sample design is a clustered, stratified, multi-stage, area probability sample. Afrobarometer first stratifies the sample according to the main unit of subnational government (in the case of Ghana this is the region, and in Liberia this is the county). This reduces the chance that distinctive ethnic or language groups are left out of the sample. Next, samples are then drawn in either four or five stages. In rural areas only, the first stage is to draw Secondary Sampling Units (SSUs). The next stage is random selection of Primary Sampling Units (PSU), followed by Sampling Start Points. Interviewers then randomly select households as well as randomly select an individual

²⁸ In countries where the population is extremely heterogeneous, however, the sample size is increased to 2400. In Round 5, for example, the sample size in Ghana was increased to 2400. The Round 4 data I use for Ghana and Liberia have a sample size of 1200 in each country.

respondent within each household, alternating between a male and female respondent in order to achieve gender balance in the sample.

In the past, there has been a lack of survey data available for Africa. The Afrobarometer not only fills this gap in data availability, but due to its strict survey methodology described above, it offers a consistent and reliable source for data on the African continent.

Contextual Data on Subnational Institutions

The contextual data come from a variety of sources. For Ghana, I rely heavily on data from the 2000 Population and Housing Census, along with the accompanying Population Data Analysis Reports. For Liberia, I utilize the 2011 Liberia Statistical Bulletin, which reports statistical information from a variety of sources, including the 2008 National Population and Housing Census and various government ministries. Both countries maintain an online, government-sponsored statistical service from which data can be downloaded.²⁹ I also accessed various government reports and publications online, and obtained hard copies during field work. It is important to note that due to Liberia's prolonged civil war, the Liberian 2008 National Population and Housing Census was the first census conducted and published since 1984. While the quality and quantity of statistical data available in Liberia since the end of the civil war is continuously improving, it cannot be considered as reliable as data available for Ghana. Ghana has

²⁹ Ghanaian census data was downloaded from the Ghana Statistical Service website, as well as from various government reports and publications. Liberian census data was not available online via the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services, and was gleaned from hard copies, as well as from additional government reports and publications.

been conducting a population census regularly since independence, and the data is more consistent and dependable. Overall, while methodology is not as stringent for Ghanaian and Liberian census data as it is for the individual-level Afrobarometer survey data referenced above, the census data can be deemed reliable for my analyses.

Data Set

My data set contains 1200 individual-level responses for Ghana and 1200 individual-level responses for Liberia using the Round 4 Afrobarometer country surveys. This results in a total of 2,400 respondents for both Ghana and Liberia. The data contains individual-level Afrobarometer survey data, with the subnational contextual information attached to the individual-level responses. The individual and contextual-level data are merged in order to conduct analyses. The individual and contextual explanatory measures, as well as the response measure, are analyzed separately for Ghana and for Liberia, as well as pooled into a two-country statistical model.

Individual Measures

Examining the influence of local institutional context on local citizen participation requires specifying models that control for individual-level factors. From a more general statistical perspective, it is necessary to specify and account for independent and individual factors that may influence the response variable. My analyses contain twelve individual-level explanatory measures, of which six are demographic and six are attitudinal. Appendix A lists the Afrobarometer questions that I use for all twelve

individual-level explanatory measures. The six individual-level demographic variables include *rural or urban location, gender, age, level of education, voluntary association membership, and recent experience with corruption*. The six individual-level attitudinal measures include a respondent's *interest in public life, sense of local efficacy, perceptions of electoral cleanliness, party attachment, assessment of local service delivery, and assessment of local governmental transparency*. Table 6.1 lists the various individual-level explanatory measures I use in my models and explains their coding. I include one demographic measure (*experience with corruption*) and two attitudinal measures (*local service delivery assessment and local transparency assessment*) not typically included in models of political participation. I include these individual-level measures as theoretical variables based on the evidence about the effects of institutions presented in Chapters 2 and 3. If institutional features of the local political system and direct experience with these institutions can affect citizen attitudes and explain political participation, an individual's assessment of the quality of service delivery and/or transparency of the local political system may affect his or her perception of and incentives to participate in local politics. Along this same vein, a citizens' experience with corruption may also affect his or her perception of and behavior in the local political arena.

Table 6.1: Individual-Level Explanatory Measures Used in Models		
Type	Variable Name & Description	Coding/Scale
<i>Demographic</i>	Rural/urban – whether a respondent lives in a rural or urban location	Coded 0 if respondent lives in a rural location, 1 if respondent lives in an urban location
	Gender – whether a respondent is male or female	Coded 0 if respondent is male, 1 if respondent is female
	Age – actual age of respondent in years	Ranges from 18 to 99 years old
	Education – educational level attained by respondent	Ranges from 0 to 9, where 0 is no formal schooling and 9 is post-graduate degree
	Voluntary Association Membership – whether a respondent is a member of a voluntary association and the strength of membership in an association	Four point scale, measuring strength of membership, includes not a member, inactive member, active member, and official leader
	*Experience with Corruption – how many times over the past year a respondent has actually experienced payments of bribes/gifts/favors	Nine-point index, ranges from 0 to 9, comprised of three corrupt activities, each assessed on a 4-point scale from never to often
<i>Attitudinal</i>	Interest in Public Life – how interested a respondent is in public affairs	Four-point scale, ranges from not at all interested to very interested
	Local Efficacy – how much a respondent feels he or she can do to improve how local government is run	Four-point scale, ranges from nothing to a great deal
	Electoral Cleanliness – how a respondent rates freeness and fairness of the most recent national election	Four-point scale, ranges from not free and free to completely free and fair
	Party Attachment – whether or not a respondent feels close to a political party	Coded 0 if respondent does not feel close to a party, 1 if respondent feels close to a party
	*Local Service Delivery Assessment – how well a respondent thinks local government is doing in delivery of local services	Twenty-four point index, ranges from 0 to 24, comprised of 6 local service areas, each assessed on a 4-point scale from very badly to very well
	*Local Transparency Assessment – how transparently a respondent thinks local government practices the procedures of local government	Twenty-four point index, ranges from 0 to 24, comprised of 6 local procedures, Each procedure is assessed on a 4-point scale from very badly to very well.
*Theoretical independent variables		

Early work on US-based political participation emphasizes a socio-economic approach. Individual-level socioeconomic factors such as *urban/rural location*, *gender*, *age*, and *level of education* are typically included when modeling political participation, therefore I include these SES measures in my models. Although income is also an SES measure traditionally used in models of participation, I did not include income in my models for two reasons. In the African context, income is operationalized differently than in the developed world. For example, an Afrobarometer survey question asks whether or not a respondent is employed, without asking questions about amount of compensation gained from employment. Income is also gauged using an Afrobarometer question that asks whether a respondent has gone without basic necessities such as food, water, medicine, or cash income in the past year. These survey questions do not reflect typical measures of income. Furthermore, scholars have already shown that higher levels of income does not predict political participation in Africa relative to voting, and in fact often find resource-poor groups participate at higher levels than those with more resources (Cho 2004; Kuenzi and Lambright 2011).

The civic volunteerism model of political participation finds voluntary association membership influences political participation, so I include a measure of an individual's *voluntary association membership* in my models.

I also include an individual-level theoretical variable (marked with an asterisk in Table 6.1) that measures an individual's *experience with corruption*. I hypothesize that

increased experience with corruption may encourage individuals to participate more in the local political system in order to advocate for change.

In addition to standard SES measures, attitudinal measures also influence political participation. I have included a measure of an individual's *interest in politics* and an individual's sense of *local political efficacy* in my models.

Recognizing scholars have found that traditional SES models do not do a good job of explaining political participation in developing countries, I also consider existing scholarship on political participation in the African context when selecting variables for my models. Current African scholarship suggests *electoral cleanliness* and *party attachment* matter when it comes to political participation. Therefore I have included both of these as individual-level explanatory variables in my models – as attitudinal variables that measures a respondent's perceptions of *electoral cleanliness*, as well as a dichotomous attitudinal variable that indicates presence or absence of *party attachment* in a respondent.

In addition to SES and attitudinal measures that have been found to influence political participation, I have also included two additional attitudinal theoretical independent variables that I hypothesize may influence local political participation in West Africa. Two individual-level Afrobarometer survey questions (marked with an asterisk in Table 6.1) are questions that directly relate to the environment in which the respondents live. The questions are an index of perceived *local service delivery assessment*, and an index of perceived *local government transparency*. I include these variables because they may be relevant to the local political context in which citizens

live, which may in turn influence citizens' political behavior. For instance, I hypothesize individuals who perceive the quality of local service delivery to be high, and those who perceive their local governments to be more transparent, may be more satisfied with local government, resulting in more positive attitudes that make them more likely to participate in the local political system.

My hypotheses about the three attitudinal variables that reflect citizen attitudes about the political system (*experience with corruption, local service delivery assessment, and local governmental transparency*) are influenced by the work cited in Chapter 3 that argues citizens' experiences with the political system, both positive and negative, shape their interactions with this system. However, there are limitations to this approach, specifically the possibility of reciprocal causation between the attitudinal variables I include in my models and my dependent variable, local participation. The issue of reciprocal causation cannot be addressed in this study and is a topic for additional research.

Contextual Explanatory Measures

Examining context usually requires the utilization of aggregate data, and this analysis is no exception. In fact, the aggregate data are crucial to many of the claims evaluated. In this section I discuss the contextual measures used in my analyses.

I use the region in the case of Ghana and county in the case of Liberia as the administrative unit of interest and as equivalent contextual units of aggregation. Although called by different names, a region in Ghana is a comparable unit of analysis to a county

in Liberia. These two administrative units both operate in a similar capacity, overseeing the operation of local governance at all levels below it. In both Ghana and Liberia, this administrative unit is intended to be one that administers and coordinates, while real policy-making remains under central control. Levels of authority and resources devolved to this administrative unit are intended to be similar in both countries.

I choose the region or county as the primary unit of interest for several additional reasons. First, as mentioned in Chapter 4, given that Liberia's post-war reconstruction is not complete, there exists virtually no operable unit of government below the county level at this time. In addition, existing Liberian data can be aggregated only down to the county level and no further. In Ghana, there are multiple units of local government that exist below the regional level. But in order to compare across the two countries, as well as construct a dual-country model, I need to utilize contextual data aggregated at the same level in both countries. For example, using the MMDA (district) as the aggregate unit of interest in Ghana may make substantive sense since much of the business of local government is actually conducted at this level, but there is no comparable unit of analysis in Liberia.

Table 6.2 provides a list of the contextual explanatory measures I use in my analyses. Each of the four variables operationalizes a concept from the literature, as explained in detail in Chapter 3.

Type	Variable Name/Description	Operationalization
<i>Contextual Measure</i>	<i>Nonprofit Density (per Region/County)</i>	Density measure of NGOs ranging from .037 to 3.861
	<i>Health Facility Density (per Region/County)</i>	Density measure of operable health facilities ranging from .004 to 4.281
	<i>Local Election Quality (per Region/County)</i>	% Invalid Presidential Votes in last Election by Region/County ranging from 1.2 to 6.6%, where a higher percentage indicates a election that is <i>less</i> clean
	<i>Enhanced Participatory Mechanisms (per Region; measurement available in Ghana only)</i>	Value of 1 if enhanced participatory mechanisms exist, otherwise 0

I use census data to construct a measure of total *health care facility density* in Ghana's regions and Liberia's counties which I use as a proxy for level of decentralization. I use this variable to test the claim that higher levels of decentralization are associated with higher levels of local political participation; and lower levels of decentralization are associated with lower levels of citizen participation at the local level. One of the main goals of decentralization is increased access to local services, as well as improved delivery of existing services. In particular, this includes an emphasis on local service delivery in the areas of health, education, electricity and potable water. The proxy

for level and quality of decentralization therefore measures citizens' access to healthcare services, operationalized as the total number of healthcare facilities per region (Ghana) or county (Liberia), divided by population density per region or county. Due to limitations in data availability, I am not able to test the claim that higher quality decentralization leads to higher levels of local political participation.

In order to test the claim that variations in the density of civil society organizations can have an effect on citizen engagement, I obtained nonprofit classification data from the West African Civil Society Initiative (WACSI) CSO database for Ghana, and from the Philanthropy Secretariat for Liberia. This data is used, along with the census data referenced above, to construct a measure of *nonprofit density* at the regional/county level in each of the two countries. I operationalize this variable as the number of registered CSOs per region (Ghana) or county (Liberia), divided by the population density per county. Data limitations prevent me from testing the claim that more effective civil society organizations can lead to increased local political participation.

Data on electoral cleanliness comes from results published by the Electoral Commission (EC) of Ghana and the Liberia National Elections Commission (NEC). I use regional election results in Ghana and county-level election results in Liberia to compute the percentage of invalid presidential votes by region/county. A higher percentage of invalid ballots indicates an election that is less clean, since a spoiled ballot can be a sign of ballot tampering. I use this as a proxy for *quality of local elections*.

The aggregate measure of *enhanced participatory mechanisms* in Ghana is a dichotomous variable I construct using data from a regional-level pilot citizen participation project conducted and funded by multi-lateral aid agency IBIS West Africa. In 2002, Phase I of the Public Participation in Local Governance (PPLG) program was implemented as a pilot program in three regions in Ghana (Upper East, Northern, and Greater Accra). Due to lack of published outcomes for this pilot program, it is not possible to assess and rank the depth of the program. Therefore, only the dichotomous variable indicating presence or absence (breadth) of the enhanced participatory mechanism is used. A value of '1' is assigned to individual survey responses in regions where this pilot program was implemented. This indicates the presence of enhanced participatory mechanisms. This is admittedly a rough approximation, but the best available at this time. Respondents in all other regions were assigned a value of '0' to indicate the absence of enhanced participatory mechanisms. This variable is used to test claims that enhanced local participatory mechanisms can contribute to positive citizen attitudes, leading to higher levels of citizen engagement with the local political system. I construct and test this variable only in Ghana since there is no data available that allows me to operationalize this contextual variable at the county level in Liberia.

Response Variable

The six acts of political participation included in my response variable are specific to the local environment, and tap into traditional acts of participation in categories of communing and contacting. The six acts include discussing a problem with others in the

community; joining with others to address a problem; discussing problems with community, traditional, or religious leaders; writing a letter or calling a radio show; making a complaint to local officials in person or via letter; and making a complaint to other government officials in person or via letter. Table 6.3 provides a list of the six local acts of political participation that comprise the count for the response variable *local participation*.

Table 6.3: Response Measure Used in Models		
Response Measure	Question Wording	Coding/Scale
<i>Local Participation</i>	<p>“If you yourself have seen problems in how local government is run in the past year, how often, if any, did you do any of the following:</p> <p>Discuss problem(s) with other people in the community;</p> <p>Join with others to address the problem;</p> <p>Discuss problem(s) with community, traditional, or religious leaders;</p> <p>Write a letter to a newspaper or call a radio show;</p> <p>Make a complaint to local officials in person or via letter;</p> <p>Make a complaint to other government officials in person or via letter</p>	Count variable ranging from 0 (participated in no activities) to 6 acts of local participation

Voting is the most obvious act of political participation, however; I exclude voting from my response variables for several reasons. First, there is scholarship that suggests voting is fundamentally different from other acts of political participation. It is the most common political activity and has the least cost, and is most representative of the citizenry. The mix of resources and motivations for voting is unique from that of other political acts. It is therefore a mistake to generalize voting knowledge to all forms

of participation. In fact, elections are blunt instruments and the most important political activities may be those that are outside the sphere of regular elections (Bratton, Mattes et al. 2005). Second, I conducted a factor analysis that included the six components of my response variable, as well as voting. Voting loads on a separate dimension, suggesting it is not a similar activity to the other six local participatory acts. In fact, Afrobarometer survey questions about voting ask about national elections, not local ones.

It should be mentioned at this point that while the Round 4 Afrobarometer survey question that asks about acts of local participation is worded identically in the Ghanaian and Liberian surveys, the way in which fieldworker asked the question of survey respondents was not the same in the two countries. In Liberia, the question contains two parts. Respondents are first asked whether they have seen any problems with how local government was run in the past year. If the survey respondent answers “yes,” and *only* if the survey respondent answers yes, he or she was then asked the second part of the question which was, “How often did you do any of the following: 1) discuss a problem with others in the community, 2) join with others in the community to address a problem, 3) discuss the problem with community, traditional, or religious leaders, 4) write a newspaper or call a radio show, 5) make a complaint to local officials or 6) make a complaint to other government officials?” Effectively, this meant that only 559 respondents were asked about local participatory acts in Liberia. In Ghana, field interviewers asked the question differently. It was not asked as a two-part question. The question was worded, “If you yourself have seen problems with how local government is run over the past year, how often, if at all, did you do any of the following?” at which

point all six acts of local participation were read to the respondents. In order to treat responses the same in both countries, I made a theoretical choice to recode respondents in Liberia who were not asked about local acts of participation to “zero,” indicating they engaged in zero participatory acts, versus treating them as missing cases. This increased the number of respondents to 872 in Liberia.

Table 6.4 contains the descriptive statistics for all variables used in the Ghanaian, Liberian and pooled two-country models. There are some interesting differences between the respondents in the two countries. At the individual level the mean strength of voluntary association membership is higher in Liberia than in Ghana. This is surprising, since it is Ghana that has a larger and more developed civil society. Elections are perceived to be more free and fair in Ghana than in Liberia. This makes sense, given Ghana’s longer experience with democratic elections. While corruption is known to be a problem in both countries, the mean of the experience with corruption index is higher in Liberia than in Ghana. Ghanaians are more satisfied with local service delivery, which makes sense when we consider that in Liberia, government is often not delivering even the most basic of services to its citizens. At the aggregate level, the mean of the density measurements that are proxies for nonprofit density and decentralization are much lower in Liberia than in Ghana, which is expected given Liberia’s less developed civil society and lack of experience with decentralization. The mean percentage of spoiled ballots is higher in Liberia.

Table 6.4: Descriptive Statistics for Model Variables			
Variables	Ghana Model: Mean	Liberia Model: Mean	Two-Country Model: Mean
Individual-Level Variables			
Urban/Rural	.453	.473	.463
Gender	.500	.501	.500
Age	38.957	35.800	37.364
Education	2.862	3.023	2.943
Interest in Public Affairs	1.924	1.460	1.692
Local Efficacy	2.558	2.628	2.594
Voluntary Association Membership	.855	1.137	.997
Electoral Cleanliness	3.462	2.923	3.191
Party Attachment	.639	.452	.544
Experience with Corruption	.572	.875	.731
Local Quality of Service Delivery Index	15.854	12.995	14.335
Local Government Transparency Index	13.375	12.044	12.658
Regional-level Variables			
Health Facility Density	2.176	.457	1.317
Nonprofit Density	1.312	.171	.742
Local Election Quality	2.237	3.869	3.053
Enhanced Participatory Mechanisms	.293		
Response Variable			
Local Participation Count	1.708	1.522	1.613

Modeling Strategy

I provide results for individual-level models of local political participation for Ghana and Liberia, as well as a pooled two-country individual-level model that combines both Ghana and Liberia. These models help explain local political participation using individual-level analyses. However, I also include contextual models for all three data sets (Ghana, Liberia, and the pooled two-country model) that analyze the effects of local institutions. The rationale for my use of contextual models that look at the effects of institutions is that the introduction of aggregate variables into a statistical model provides greater explanatory power than one that focuses exclusively on the individual. This is the basic idea of contextual analysis. One of my main goals is to see if introducing these contextual measures does in fact help with explanation. If it does, it suggests that local institutions have an impact; if the measures do not add anything, then perhaps the local institutional context does not matter.

I operationalize my response variable as a count outcome, therefore, I use a model specifically designed for count outcomes. My dependent variable indicates the number of times an event has occurred – it is the number of local acts of participation a respondent has engaged in during the span of one year. I use Poisson regression for my analyses, which is the most basic method suitable for nonlinear regression models with count outcomes (Long and Freese 2001). With a Poisson regression model, the probability of a count is determined by a Poisson distribution, where the mean of the distribution is a function of the independent variables (Long 1997, 218).

While linear regression is the most commonly used statistical method in social science, it assumes the dependent variable is continuous and has been measured for all cases in the sample (Long 1997). But many outcomes of interest are not continuous or observed for all outcomes. And using a linear regression model for a count outcome likely results in inefficient, inconsistent, and biased estimates (Long 1997, 217). This can lead us to be more likely to reject the null hypothesis in a multivariate regression model than when using other, more suitable statistical methods.

The Results

The models discussed in this section examine the relationship between the response variable and its predictors. I present individual-level and contextual-level models for Ghana. Next, I present individual and contextual models for Liberia. Finally, I present individual and contextual models for the two countries combined. For both the individual-level and contextual-level models, I examine how the theories hold up under empirical scrutiny. I structure these analyses by discussing both significance as well as the direction of the relationship between the response variable and the explanatory variables. Next, I offer interpretation of the models using analysis of the percentage change in expected count in local acts of participation for a unit change in δ , or incidence rate, for each explanatory variable in the contextual model, holding all other variables constant.

Ghanaian Models

Correlations were examined for all variables in the Ghanaian models in order to check for multicollinearity. A correlation matrix for the contextual variables used in the Ghanaian models is included in Table 6.5, and suggests multicollinearity is not a problem in the model.

	Health Facility Density	Nonprofit Density	Quality of Local Elections	Enhanced Participatory Mechanisms
Health Facility Density	1.0000			
Nonprofit Density	.4933	1.000		
Local Election Quality	.1334	.7423	1.000	
Enhanced Participatory Mechanisms	-.4003	.0892	.1353	1.000

Table 6.6 provides results for three Ghanaian models- Model G1: Individual-Level, Model G2: Contextual Model, and Model G3: Contextual Model with Enhanced Participatory Mechanism Variable.

Table 6.6: Local Political Participation in Ghana

	Model G1 Individual-Level	Model G2 Contextual Level	Model G3 Contextual Level Additional Variable
Individual-Level Variables			
Constant	-.174 (.204)	-.090 (.218)	-.091 (.224)
Urban/Rural	-.237*** (.064)	-.22 *** (.064)	-.220*** (.065)
Gender	-.222*** (.064)	-.235*** (.065)	-.235*** (.065)
Age	.005** (.009)	.006*** (.002)	.006*** (.002)
Education	.042* (.064)	.043* (.017)	.043* (.017)
Interest in Public Affairs	.042* (.030)	.084** (.030)	.084** (.030)
Local Efficacy	.067* (.028)	.054 (.028)	.054 (.028)
Voluntary Association Membership	.215*** (.028)	.202*** (.028)	.202*** (.029)
Electoral Cleanliness	-.048 (.033)	-.045 (.033)	-.045 (.033)
Party Attachment	.161* (.069)	.140* (.070)	.140* (.070)
Experience with Corruption	.080*** (.016)	.071*** (.016)	.071*** (.016)
Local Quality of Service Delivery Index	-.009 (.008)	-.005 (.008)	-.005 (.008)
Local Government Transparency Index	.021*** (.006)	.015* (.006)	.015* (.006)
Contextual Variables			
Health Facility Density		-.123*** (.035)	-.123** (.040)
Nonprofit Density		.082 (.058)	.082 (.059)
Local Election Quality		.040 (.042)	.040 (.042)
Enhanced Participatory Mechanisms			.001 (.078)
n (observations)	568	568	568
Pseudo R-squared	0.1098	0.1204	0.1204
Log likelihood	-1006.799	-994.9105	-994.91037
LR chi2 (12)	248.47	272.25	272.25
Prob> chi2	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
*Indicates p<.05 **Indicates p<.01 ***Indicates p<.001			

Model G1: Individual-Level

Model G1, Individual-Level analyses, contains only individual measures and does a somewhat adequate job of explaining local political participation in Ghana. All of the individual-level explanatory variables have z-scores greater than two except for electoral cleanliness and the quality of local service delivery index. The pseudo r-squared for this model is .1098. We can use Table 6.6 to look at the significance of the relationship between individual-level explanatory variables and the response variable, as well as explore the direction of the relationship. Many of the results are in line with previous scholarship. For example, consistent with African scholarship, a respondent who lives in a rural environment is more likely to participate in local politics than one who lives in an urban environment. This is attributed to the large amount of community-based activity in rural locations. Gender inequity exists; women are less likely to participate than men. Consistent with both US-based and African scholarship on political participation, those respondents who are older and have higher levels of educational attainment are more likely to participate. In addition, those with higher levels of interest in politics, and higher amounts of local efficacy, are also more likely to participate in the local political system. Voluntary association membership also increases the propensity of respondents to participate in local politics.

As mentioned previously, I include three individual-level explanatory variables that I hypothesize will make a difference in a person's propensity to participate in local politics. In Ghana, I find an individual's experience with corruption does in fact help explain local participation. Those respondents who have more experience with corruption

are more likely to participate in the local political system. Perhaps those who have experienced higher levels of corruption are more likely to participate in the local political system in order to advocate for change. They use local political participation to elicit accountability, as we would hope. Perceptions about the transparency of local government also matters. Those respondents who view local government as more transparent are more likely to participate in the local political sphere. This is likely because these citizens have had better experiences with the local political system, resulting in more positive attitudes and consequently leading to increased levels of participation. A respondent's perceptions about the quality of local service delivery is not significantly related to local participation.

Model G2: Contextual Model

Model G2, a contextual model of local political participation in Ghana, is also presented in Table 6.6. The addition of contextual variables adds some explanatory purchase to the model, although not a huge amount. Adding in the contextual variables alters the coefficients and z-scores of the individual-level variables only slightly, and the signs on the individual-level variables all remain the same, suggesting the individual-level variables included in the model are good choices. The pseudo r-squared in this contextual model increases to .1204.

The proxy for decentralization, *health facility density*, is statistically significant. Contrary to my hypothesized direction, however, a higher health facility density score (which approximates a higher level of decentralization) results in a *decreased* propensity

for a respondent to participate in local politics. Respondents living in areas with higher levels of decentralization may perceive their level and quality of service delivery to be higher – one of the goals and expected benefits of effective decentralization. Thus, their increased level of satisfaction with local service delivery means they do not feel compelled to participate in the local political system in order to express dissatisfaction and advocate for change. Neither the *nonprofit density* or the *quality of local elections* contextual explanatory variables reach statistical significance in the Ghanaian model.

Model G3: Contextual Model Including Enhanced Participatory Mechanisms

Recall from Chapter 3, as well as from discussion earlier in this chapter, that my fourth proposed contextual explanatory variable is the presence or absence of enhanced participatory mechanisms. Due to the fact that enhanced participatory mechanisms are rare in Liberia, and data is virtually nonexistent, I was able to test this variable using only data from Ghanaian respondents. Table 6.6 also includes the results of Model G3, a contextual model of political participation that includes a fourth contextual variable, *enhanced participatory mechanisms*. Model G3 illustrates that adding the *enhanced participatory mechanisms* contextual variable does not increase the explanatory power of the contextual model at all. This suggests the mere presence of enhanced participatory mechanisms is not enough to positively impact local political participation, and this finding is important considering the level of resources and attention devoted to promoting the use of these mechanisms as a way to encourage political participation. Perhaps quality of the enhanced participatory mechanism matters as well, as I hypothesize in Chapter 3.

This model was not able to test the quality of the enhanced participatory mechanism in Ghana, only the presence or absence of it, so further research that can assess quality will be valuable.

Additional Interpretation of Results for Ghana Models

I utilize the basic results from a Poisson regression for the three models I present for Ghana – the individual-level model, the contextual model, and a second contextual model containing an additional aggregate-level explanatory variable for enhanced participatory mechanisms. However, these coefficients are not directly interpretable as they are expressed as part of a functional form that is exponential. Therefore, they are used in the first three Ghanaian models I presented simply to show the significance and direction of the relationships between the explanatory variables and the response variable.

I next offer additional results that provide further interpretation of the three Ghanaian models. Table 6.7 provides analyses of the percentage change in expected count in local acts of participation for a unit change in δ , or incidence rate, for each explanatory variable in the contextual model, holding all other variables constant. Since it is difficult to directly interpret the coefficients in a Poisson model, examining this percentage change in expected count offers a more easily interpretable way to look at the results. Table 6.7 also provides interpretation using the percentage change in expected count in acts of local political participation for a standard deviation increase in each explanatory variable.

Table 6.7: Local Political Participation in Ghana Contextual Model Percentage Change in Expected Count					
Variable	b	Z-Score	%	%StdX	SDofX
Individual-Level Variables					
Urban/Rural	-.220	-3.381	-19.8	-10.4	.500
Gender	-.235	-3.593	-20.9	-11.0	.498
Age	.006	3.385	.6	10.9	16.435
Education	.043	2.539	4.4	8.6	1.940
Interest in Public Affairs	.084	2.770	8.8	9.7	1.103
Local Efficacy	.054	1.890	5.5	6.1	1.110
Voluntary Association Membership	.202	7.088	22.4	23.7	1.052
Electoral Cleanliness	-.045	-1.336	-4.4	-3.8	.868
Party Attachment	.140	2.001	15.0	6.9	.479
Experience with Corruption	.071	4.335	7.4	11.1	1.488
Local Quality of Service Delivery Index	-.005	-0.701	-0.5	-2.4	4.445
Local Government Transparency Index	.015	2.360	1.5	8.6	5.597
Contextual Variables					
Health Facility Density	-.123	-3.065	-11.6	-14.0	1.226
Nonprofit Density	.082	1.397	8.6	7.8	.911
Local Election Quality	.040	0.968	4.1	4.3	1.047
Enhanced Participatory Mechanisms	.001	0.016	0.1	0.1	.450
<p>b = raw coefficient % = percent change in expected count for unit increase in x %StdX = percent change in expected count for SD increase in x SDofX = standard deviation of x</p>					

A respondent who lives in an urban location experiences a 19.8% decrease in the expected number of local political acts, holding all other variables constant. Being a female respondent decreases the expected number of political acts by 20.9%. A respondent's interest in local politics and sense of local efficacy have moderate effects (an increase in expected number of political acts of 8.8% and 5.5%, respectively, for a one-unit increase in the independent variable). Strength of voluntary association membership has a larger effect on local participation, with a one-unit change in this independent variable increasing the expected number of political acts for a respondent by 23.7%, holding all other variables constant. While a one-unit increase in experience with corruption leads to a 7.4% change in expected number of local political acts, a one-unit increase in level of local government transparency results in a 1.5% change in expected number of local acts of participation, holding all other variables constant.

In the next section, I focus on analyses of Liberia. This offers an interesting contrast to Ghana. The two countries have some similarities, yet also exhibit significant differences in their level of development, stage of democratic consolidation, and institutional context.

Liberia Models

I use correlations to check all variables in the Liberian models for multicollinearity. Table 6.8 is a correlation matrix for the contextual variables included in the Liberian models.

Table 6.8: Correlation Matrix for Contextual Variables Used in Liberian Models			
	Health Facility Density	Nonprofit Density	Electoral Cleanliness
Health Facility Density	1.0000		
Nonprofit Density	.7929	1.000	
Local Election Quality	-.0164	.0381	1.000

Table 6.9 provides results for two Liberian models- Model L1: Individual-Level, and Model L2: Contextual Model.

Table 6.9: Local Political Participation in Liberia		
	Model L1: Individual Level	Model L2: Contextual Level
Individual-Level Variables		
Constant	.436** (.159)	.848*** (.183)
Urban/Rural	.075 (.062)	.116 (.065)
Gender	.114 (.059)	.131* (.059)
Age	-.000 (.002)	.000 (.002)
Education	-.016 (.014)	-.010 (.014)
Interest in Public Affairs	-.109*** (.024)	-.106*** (.024)
Local Efficacy	.023 (.026)	.013 (.026)
Voluntary Association Membership	.007 (.027)	.007 (.027)
Electoral Cleanliness	-.030 (.026)	-.035 (.026)
Party Attachment	-.025 (.057)	-.007 (.057)
Experience with Corruption	.050*** (.015)	.054*** (.015)
Local Quality of Service Delivery Index	-.012 (.008)	-.012 (.008)
Local Government Transparency Index	.019** (.007)	.017* (.007)
Contextual Variables		
Health Facility Density		-.085 (.085)
Nonprofit Density		-.360 (.322)
Local Election Quality		-.095*** (.025)
n (observations)	872	872
Pseudo R-squared	0.0147	0.0232
Log likelihood	-1758.7398	-1743.4013
LR chi2 (12)	52.32	83.00
Prob> chi2	0.0000	0.0000
*Indicates p<.05 **Indicates p<.01 ***Indicates p<.001		

Model L1: Individual-Level Model

A model containing only individual measures does not do a very adequate job of explaining local political participation in Liberia. Overall, as demonstrated in Table 6.9, the model is a poor fit for the data. The pseudo- R^2 is very low; even as a rough measure it suggests that very little of the variation is accounted for by the explanatory measures.

In fact, only three individual-level explanatory variables have z-scores greater than 2 – *interest in public affairs*, *experience with corruption* and the *local government transparency index*. Contrary to my hypothesized direction, respondents with greater experience with corruption are more likely to engage in local politics. Respondents who perceive local government to be more accountable are more likely to engage in the local political system, which supports my hypothesis. The negative relationship between interest in public affairs and local political participation is surprising, and is the opposite of what the literature predicts.

Model L2: Contextual Model

Model L2: Contextual Model adds limited explanatory purchase to the model. The relationships for *interest in public affairs*, *experience with corruption*, and *local government transparency*, all individual-level explanatory variables, remain significant and the direction of the relationships remains the same as in the individual-level model. Only one contextual variable, *quality of local elections*, is statistically significant in the Liberian model. The relationship is negative, meaning as electoral quality decreases, respondents are less likely to engage in the local political system.

Additional Interpretation of Results for Liberian Models

Since the Poisson coefficients are not directly interpretable in terms of unit changes in x , it is useful to provide additional interpretation of Poisson regression results. Table 6.10 offers an analysis of the percentage change in expected count in local acts of participation for a unit change in δ , or incidence rate, for each explanatory variable in the contextual model, holding all other variables constant.

Table 6.10: Local Political Participation in Liberia Contextual Model Percentage Change in Expected Count					
Variable	b	Z-Score	%	%StdX	SDofX
Individual-Level Variables					
Urban/Rural	.116	1.798	12.3	6.0	0.500
Gender	.131	2.236	14.1	6.8	0.500
Age	.000	.188	0.0	0.6	12.72
Education	-.010	-.729	-1.0	-2.3	2.238
Interest in Public Affairs	-.106	-4.501	-10.1	-12.1	1.221
Local Efficacy	.013	.484	1.3	1.4	1.110
Voluntary Association Membership	.007	.254	0.7	0.8	1.118
Electoral Cleanliness	-.035	-1.315	-3.4	-3.6	1.055
Party Attachment	-.007	-.129	-0.7	-0.4	.500
Experience with Corruption	.054	3.636	5.5	10.1	1.781
Local Quality of Service Delivery Index	-.012	-1.543	-1.2	-5.2	4.600
Local Government Transparency Index	.017	2.530	1.7	8.9	4.935
Contextual Variables					
Health Facility Density	-.085	-1.000	-8.1	-5.2	.637
Nonprofit Density	-.400	-1.119	-30.2	-5.4	.155
Local Election Quality	.095	-3.868	-9.1	-11.0	1.226
b = raw coefficient %=percent change in expected count for unit increase in x %StdX = percent change in expected count for SD increase in x SDofX = standard deviation of x					

A one-unit increase in the experience with corruption variable increases the expected number of local acts of participation by 5.5%, holding other variables constant. The percentage expected changes in number of political acts for this explanatory variables is lower than in the Ghanaian models. A one-unit increase in the health facility density contextual variable leads to an 8.1% decrease in the expected number of local participatory acts, holding other variables constant.

Two-Country Models

Since one of the main goals of this dissertation is to build and apply a theoretical framework for local political participation in West Africa, I include dual-country models with pooled Ghanaian and Liberian data and apply models of local political participation at both the individual and contextual level.

Model T1: Two-Country Individual Level Model

Table 6.11 contains the results of the pooled, two country individual-level model of local political participation. The pseudo R-squared for this model is .0223. Age has a significant and positive relationship with local participation, meaning those respondents who have attained higher levels of educational achievement are more likely to engage in the local political system. Respondents who are more active members of voluntary associations are more likely to participate in the local political system. Respondents with higher level of party attachment are less likely to participate in this model.

In this two-country model, respondents who have had more experience with corruption are more likely to engage in acts of local political participation, and those respondents who perceive local government as more transparent are also more likely to participate in local politics.

Table 6.11: Two-Country Pooled Model of Local Political Participation		
	Model T1 Individual-Level	Model T2 Contextual Level
Individual-Level Variables		
Constant	-.013 (.119)	.488*** (.135)
Urban/Rural	-.082 (.044)	-.049 (.044)
Gender	-.043 (.043)	-.038 (.043)
Age	.004** (.001)	.005** (.001)
Education	.002 (.010)	.006 (.011)
Interest in Public Affairs	-.006 (.017)	-.022 (.018)
Local Efficacy	.028 (.019)	.024 (.019)
Voluntary Association Membership	.080*** (.019)	.089*** (.019)
Electoral Cleanliness	-.018 (.020)	-.033 (.020)
Party Attachment	.121** (.042)	.094* (.043)
Experience with Corruption	.060*** (.011)	.065*** (.011)
Local Quality of Service Delivery Index	-.003 (.005)	-.005 (.005)
Local Government Transparency Index	.020*** (.005)	.015** (.005)
Contextual Variables		
Health Facility Density		-.152*** (.027)
Nonprofit Density		.274*** (.036)
Local Election Quality		-.115*** (.017)
n (observations)	1440	1440
Pseudo R-squared	0.0223	0.0368
Log likelihood	-2880.5491	-2837.8578
LR chi2 (12)	131.68	217.06
Prob> chi2	0.0000	0.0000
*Indicates p<.05 **Indicates p<.01 ***Indicates p<.001		

Model T2: Two-Country Contextual Model

The two-country contextual model results are also presented using Table 6.11. This model does add some explanatory purchase, although not a huge amount. Adding in the contextual variables alters the coefficients and z-scores of the individual-level variables only slightly, and the signs on the individual-level variables all remain the same. The pseudo r-squared in the contextual model increases to .0368.

All three contextual variables are significant in this two-country model. As in the Ghanaian contextual model, increased health facility density, a proxy for level of decentralization, is associated with less local political participation. A higher nonprofit density measure is associated with increased local political participation. A higher percentage of spoiled ballots, a proxy for lower local quality election, is related to decreased local participation.

Correlations were run on all variables used in the pooled, two-country models in order to check for multicollinearity. Table 6.12 is a correlation matrix for the contextual variables used in the two-country model.

Table 6.12: Correlation Matrix for Contextual Variables Used in Two-Country Models			
	Health Facility Density	Nonprofit Density	Electoral Cleanliness
Health Facility Density	1.0000		
Nonprofit Density	.7032	1.000	
Local Election Quality	-.3383	-.0600	1.000

Additional Interpretation for Two-Country Contextual Model

As with the models for Ghana and Liberia, utilizing the expected change in percentage count of local acts of participation offers an additional way to interpret the Poisson regression results. Table 6.13 illustrates this additional interpretation.

Table 6.13: Two-Country Pooled Model of Local Political Participation Contextual Model Percentage Change in Expected Count					
Variable	b	Z-Score	%	%StdX	SDofX
Individual-Level Variables					
Urban/Rural	-.049	-1.125	-4.8	-2.4	.500
Gender	-.038	-0.885	-3.7	-1.9	.499
Age	.005	3.271	.5	6.9	14.352
Education	.006	0.539	0.6	1.2	2.125
Interest in Public Affairs	-0.022	-1.244	-2.2	-2.6	1.206
Local Efficacy	.024	1.282	2.5	2.7	1.110
Voluntary Association Membership	0.088	4.579	9.2	10.1	1.100
Electoral Cleanliness	-.034	-1.644	-3.3	-3.3	1.102
Party Attachment	.094	2.208	9.8	4.8	.498
Experience with Corruption	.065	5.953	6.7	11.5	1.677
Local Quality of Service Delivery Index	-.005	-0.913	-0.5	-2.3	4.741
Local Government Transparency Index	.015	3.258	1.5	8.1	5.261
Contextual Variables					
Health Facility Density	-.152	-5.556	-14.1	-17.3	1.2517
Nonprofit Density	.0274	7.658	31.5	24.6	0.803
Local Election Quality	-0.115	-6.763	-10.8	-14.7	1.383
b = raw coefficient %=percent change in expected count for unit increase in x %StdX = percent change in expected count for SD increase in x SDofX = standard deviation of x					

A one-unit increase in age (one year) results in a .5% increase the expected number of local political acts, holding other variables constant. A unit increase in voluntary association membership increases the expected number of local acts of participation by 9.2%, holding other variables constant. A one-unit change in the experience with corruption index increases the expected number of local acts of political participation by 6.7%, and a one-unit increase in the perceived local governmental transparency index leads to a 1.5% increase in the expected number of acts of local participation.

A unit change in the contextual variable health facility density (a proxy for level of decentralization) decreases the expected number of participatory acts by 14.1% in the two-country model, while a one-unit change in the quality of local elections measure leads to a 10.8% decrease in the number of expected acts. Nonprofit density has a positive relationship with local political participation, and a one-unit increase in the nonprofit density measure leads to a 31.5% increase in the number of expected acts of participation, holding other variables constant.

Next, I use two-way probability graphs to provide further interpretation of the results of the two-country pooled models. These graphs show the probability of zero, three, and six local acts of local political participation, as the theoretical variable of interest varies, and all other variables are held at their means. Figures 6.14 and 6.15 add additional interpretation for the two individual-level theoretical variables that are significant in the two-country pooled model (*experience with corruption* and *local*

government transparency index). Figures 6.16, 6.17, and 6.18 offer additional interpretation for the three contextual variables of interest in the two-country pooled model (*health facility density*, *nonprofit density*, and *quality of local elections*).

Figure 6.14: Two-Way Plot for Probability of Acts of Local Political Participation, as Respondent's Experience with Corruption Varies, Using Two-Country Pooled Model Data

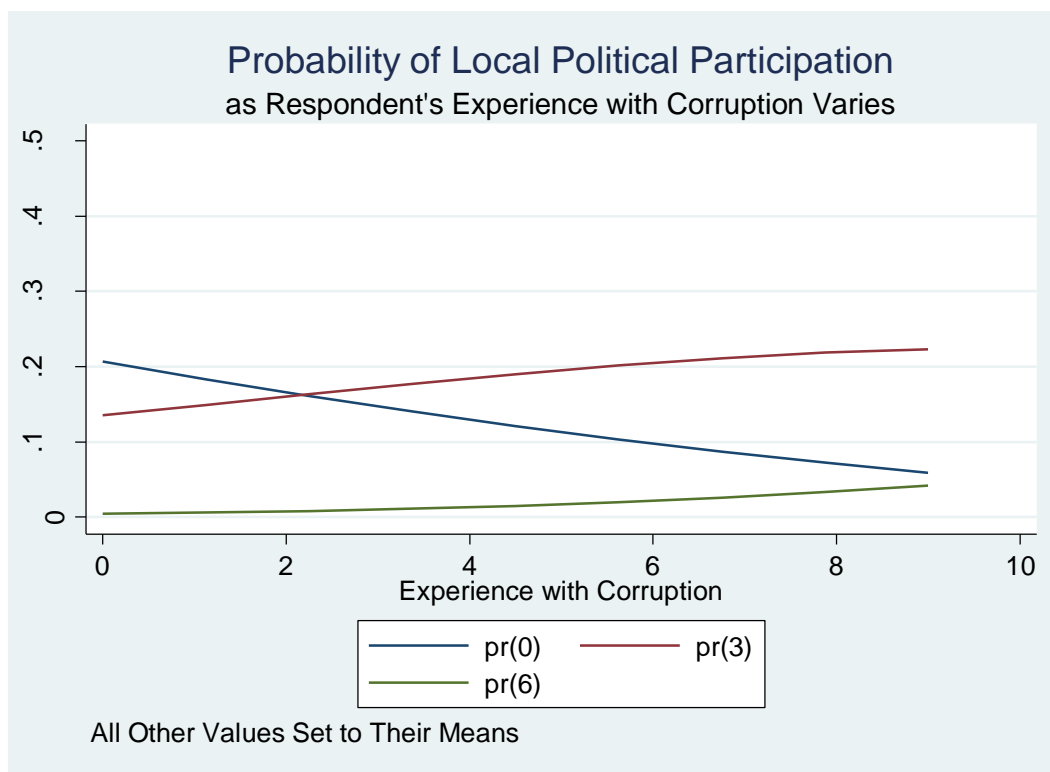
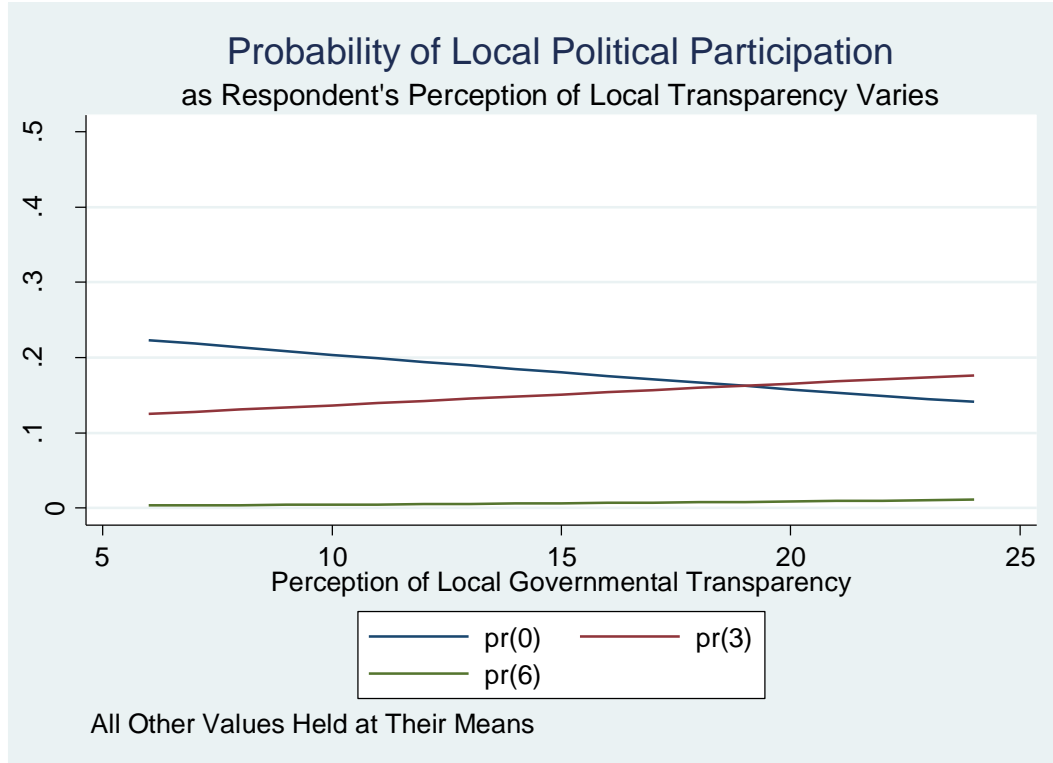


Figure 6.14 illustrates as a respondent's experience with corruption increases, the probability of not participating (of having zero acts of local political participation) decreases. Figure 6.14 also illustrates as a respondent's experience with corruption

increases, the probability participating in both three and six acts of local political participation increases.

Next, I provide additional interpretation for the individual-level theoretical variable, *local government transparency index*. Figure 6.15 illustrates that as a respondent's perception of local governmental transparency increases, the probability of not participating in the local political system (the probability of zero acts of local political participation) decreases. As a respondent's perception of local transparency increases, the probability of participating in both three acts and six acts of local political participation increases.

Figure 6.15: Two-Way Plot for Probability of Local Political Participation, as Respondent's Perception of Local Governmental Transparency Varies, Using Two-Country Pooled Model Data



The remaining graphs that follow provide additional interpretation of the contextual variables that reached significance in the two-country pooled model: *health facility density*, *nonprofit density*, and *quality of local elections*.

Figure 6.16: Two-Way Plot for Probability of Acts of Local Political Participation, as Health Facility Density Varies, Using Two-Country Pooled Model Data

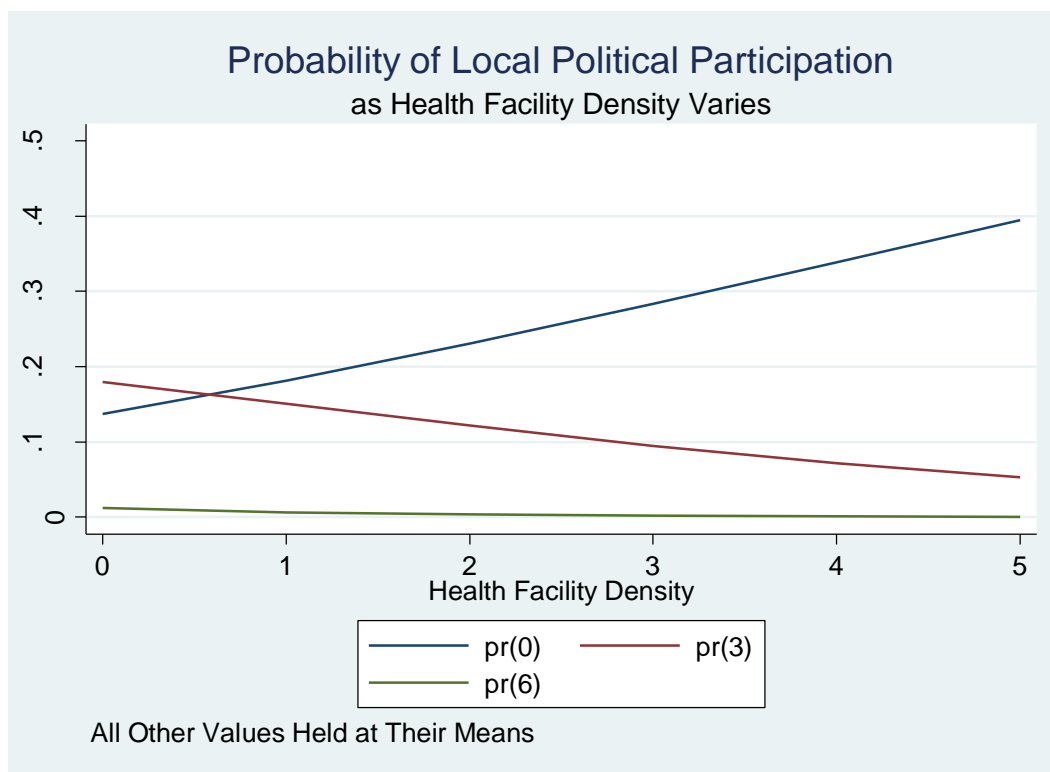
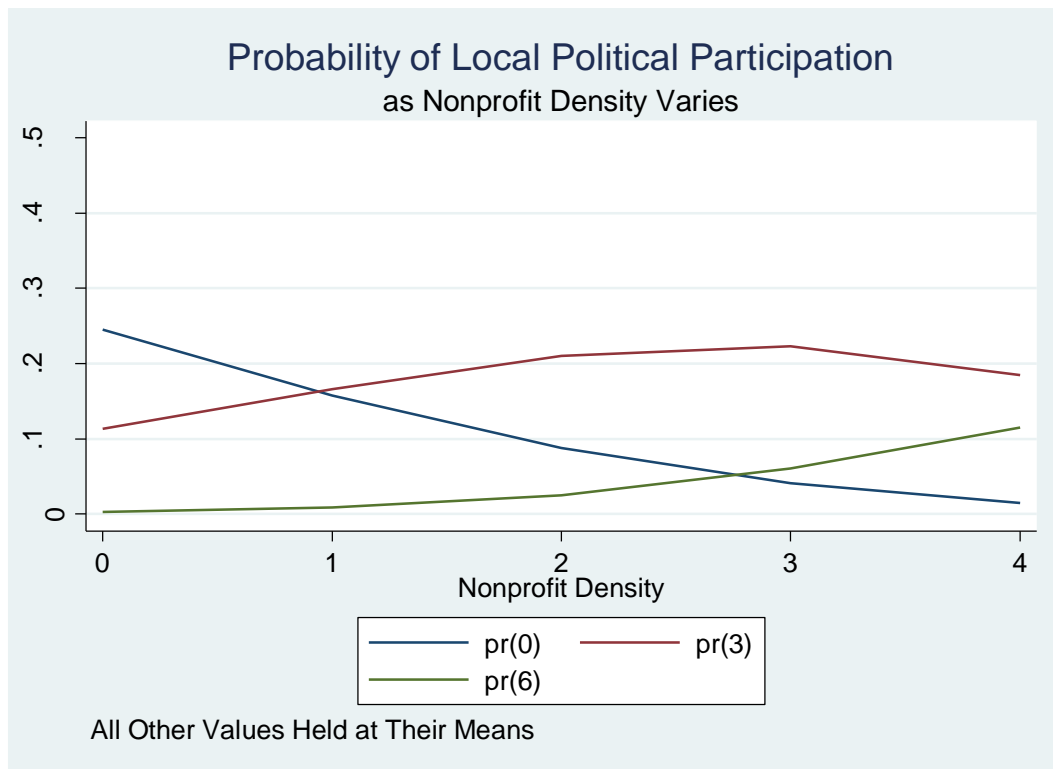


Figure 6.16 illustrates that as health facility density (a proxy for decentralization) increases, the probability of a respondent not participating in the local political system (the probability of zero acts) increases. Figure 6.16 also shows that as

health facility density increases, the probability of a respondent participating in three or six acts decreases.

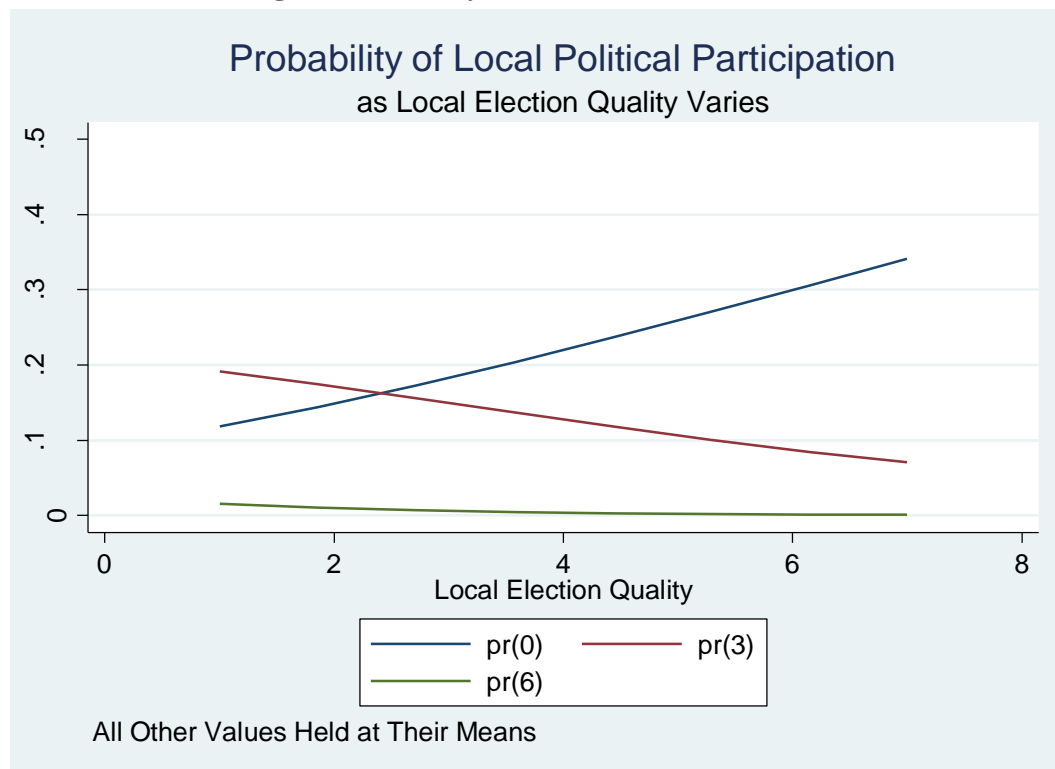
Figure 6.17 provides further interpretation of the contextual variable *nonprofit density*. As nonprofit density increases, the probability of a respondent participating in zero acts of local political participation decreases. As nonprofit density increases, the probability of a respondent participating in the maximum of six acts increases. The probability of a respondent participating in three acts of local participation also increases, although there does appear to a point at which the impact of nonprofit density peaks and then begins to drop back off.

Figure 6.17: Two-Way Plot for Probability of Acts of Local Political Participation, as Nonprofit Density Varies, Using Two-Country Pooled Model Data



Finally, Figure 6.18 offers further interpretation of the effects of *local election quality*, the third contextual variable in the two-country pooled model. As local election quality decreases (a higher value for this variable indicates more spoiled ballots, a proxy indicator for higher levels of electoral fraud), respondents are less likely to participate in local politics, and the probability of participating in zero acts increases. As local election quality decreases, the probability of a respondent participating in three acts of local participation and six acts of local participation decreases. This illustrates respondents' participation is inhibited by poorer local election quality.

Figure 6.18: Two-Way Plot for Probability of Zero Acts of Local Political Participation, as Local Election Quality Varies, Using Two-Country Pooled Model Data



While specific findings relative to hypothesized relationships have been discussed throughout this chapter, Table 6.19 provides an easily readable reference for comparison of the hypothesized relationships versus the actual findings of the factors affecting local political participation in the two-country model.

Table 6.19: Comparison of Hypotheses Versus Actual Findings In Pooled Two-Country Model: Factors Influencing Local Political Participation			
Control Variables	Hypothesized Direction	Actual Findings	Hypotheses Supported?
Urban/Rural	-	n/a	
Gender	-	n/a	
Age	+	+	Yes
Education	+	n/a	
Interest in Public Affairs	+	n/a	
Local Efficacy	+	n/a	
Voluntary Association Membership	+	+	Yes
Electoral Cleanliness	+	n/a	
Party Attachment	+	+	Yes
Individual-Level Theoretical Variables			
Experience with Corruption	-	+	No
Local Quality of Service Delivery Index	+	n/a	
Local Government Transparency Index	+	+	Yes
Contextual Variables			
Health Facility Density	+	-	No
Nonprofit Density	+	+	Yes
Local Election Quality	-	-	Yes

Table 6.19 illustrates a few key findings. As some prior African research suggests, an individual-level model that relies on traditional SES and attitudinal factors does not work well when applied in to local political participation in Ghana and Liberia. But in line with Bratton's individual-level institutional approach, my hypotheses about two individual-level institutional variables- experience with corruption and local government transparency- are supported.

A contextual model for local political participation in Ghana and Liberia indicates further support for the effects of institutions. As the actual percentage of spoiled ballots increases, a contextual-level measure, this *decreases* the propensity for local political participation. Thus, less clean elections lead to lower levels of political participation. This supports my hypothesis that higher levels of actual fraud and corruption at the local level, specifically in terms of electoral fraud, will result in lower civic engagement, while lower levels will result in more positive citizen attitudes and increased engagement in the political system.

The relationship between decentralization and local political participation presents an interesting finding as well. Contrary to my hypothesis, a higher level of decentralization is actually negatively related to local political participation. This could be because even where levels of decentralization are higher, the quality of decentralization may still be poor. In fact my qualitative analyses points to this conclusion, even though I am not able to test quality of decentralization empirically. Finally, given the emerging work on nonprofits as civic intermediaries, the positive relationship between the contextual measure of nonprofit density and local political

participation is not surprising, and supports my hypothesis that higher levels of nonprofit density will lead to increased participation in the local political system. In Chapter 7, I will offer a broad discussion of conclusions and implications that can be drawn from this research, as well as outline a path for future research.

CHAPTER 7 CONCEPTUALIZING LOCAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN WEST AFRICA

What does my research on local political participation in West Africa offer for public administrators and others interested in public administration with a global perspective (PAGP)? Some of the evidence presented in this dissertation is not completely surprising- it either supports previous research, or confirms my hypotheses. Other evidence offers new insight. In this final chapter, I discuss significant findings and implications from both an individual and contextual perspective, emphasizing my use of an institutional approach. Next, I illustrate how this information is important and applicable for public administrators. Finally, I offer a broad agenda for future research.

New Insight into Individual-Level Local Political Participation

My research confirms the limited importance of traditional, individual-level SES and attitudinal factors on political participation in the context of the developing world. I build upon the work of Bratton, Mattes et al (2005) and consider how new individual-level factors affect political participation, including how an individual's experiences with local governmental institutions, their attitudes about these institutions, and the association between these attitudes and experiences affect political behavior.

Bratton finds citizens' assessments of local government are driven by their attitudes about performance of local government institutions, and also whether citizens felt elected leaders "delivered the goods" in terms of quality services, accountability, and transparency (Bratton 2010). I take this a step further by relating these experiences and attitudes about local government to actual behavior. I find the performance of local

government matters for political participation – whether or not citizens perceive their local government as transparent and accountable, whether citizens believe local government delivers high quality services and whether government is corrupt- all of these things make a difference in how citizens engage with the local political system. I confirm prior work (Krawczyk, Muhula et al. forthcoming) that finds citizens’ perceptions of local government transparency to be positively related to local political participation. I find citizens’ experience with corruption to be negatively related to political participation.

In addition to considering new individual-level explanatory factors related to citizen’s interactions with institutions of local government, I also build upon individual-level models of local political participation by looking specifically non-voting behavior. Scholarship on African political participation tends to focus on voting behavior (see Kuenzi & Lambright 2007 and 2010), despite the awareness that voting is a blunt instrument. My research lends itself to learning more about other forms of local political participation that can offer ways for citizens to gain increased accountability.

Building a Contextual Model for Political Participation in West Africa

My institutional approach utilizing contextual analyses demonstrates using the data available that subnational institutions matter for local political participation, although the effects are subtle. Scholars such as Hiskey and Bowler (2005) and Holzner (2010) argue institutional design can impact a citizen’s level of political system support, and this level of system support as well as citizens’ corresponding political behavior is not solely a function of individual attributes. My contextual-level analyses support this

idea by showing institutions matter in the West African context. Kuenzi and Lambright's recent (2007 and 2011) work is valuable as it uses contextual analyses to examine the effects of state-level institutions on voting behavior. My work goes a step beyond Kuenzi and Lambright as their work does not consider any other types of political participation beyond voting, nor does it consider the effects of subnational institutions on these forms of participation.

I apply an institutional approach to local political participation in a new context, and I test subnational institutions that are important in West Africa. I find that institutions do matter, and they show a subtle effect. Taken together with traditional models of political participation, along with qualitative data from my country case chapters, they provide a better explanatory model. Using my model results, I next highlight some of my findings.

Important Findings About Local Political Participation in West Africa

In Ghana, many of the traditional SES and attitudinal factors matter for local political participation – geographic location, gender, age, education, interest in public affairs and sense of local political efficacy. The importance of voluntary associations is also supported. At the individual level, two of my theoretical variables are associated with increased political participation – experience with corruption and local government transparency. Citizens' experiences with and attitudes about the local political system affect their level of engagement with that system. Subnational contextual institutions, in this case the proxy for decentralization, matter in Ghana as well.

My Liberian analyses do not offer as clear a picture of local political participation. What matters in many other parts of the developing world does not yet matter in Liberia. Only a citizen's interest in public affairs, recent experience with corruption, and perceived transparency of local government help explain local political participation. Perhaps this is because Liberia's democracy is still so new, and the rights and duties of citizenship are not yet fully understood by citizens. If democracy can be "learned" through civic intermediaries that provide education, advocacy, and a link between citizens and local government, then perhaps as Liberia continues on the path of democratic development, we will see the same patterns and associations of local political participation develop there that we see in other parts of West Africa.

When considering a model that contains data for both countries, there is additional evidence in this two-country model for the importance of an individual's perceptions of and experiences with the local political system relative to local political behavior- a citizen's recent experience with corruption, and perceptions about the transparency and accountability of local government all matter. The two-country contextual model also offers additional evidence for the importance of subnational institutions on local political participation, specifically related to the effects of decentralization, nonprofit density, and local electoral quality.

But when it comes to the impact of subnational institutional variables, not all relationships are as expected. What do we make of the finding that decentralization *decreases* an individual's propensity to participate in local politics? True devolutionary decentralization is supposed to not only improve local service delivery, it is supposed to

offer increased opportunities for citizens to participate in the local political system, contributing to a better decision-making process and resulting in decisions that reflect citizens' priorities. Yet my findings mean we must question the implications of decentralization on local political participation. Contrary to popularly held beliefs, does increased level of decentralization actually inhibit local political participation? Or is it that decentralization is not being executed properly at the local level? Perhaps quality of decentralization matters as well.

What Lessons Can Public Administrators Take From This Research?

Public Administration with a Global Perspective (PAGP) considers the specific ethnic, cultural, and political context in which public administration takes place, and looks for opportunities to share knowledge across the field (Hou, Ni et al. 2011). This global perspective is essential for developing administrative theory, and for improving the practice of public administration throughout the world (Heady 2001). In fact, a global public administration approach that recognizes differences in governance contexts, and specifically differences in institutions, has been the key part of many studies conducted by comparative public administration researchers (Fitzpatrick, Goggin et al. 2011). But despite this recognition of the importance of institutions, research into the institutional determinants of political participation is inadequate and fragmented. This makes my research valuable and relevant.

I use PAGP in the manner discussed above, to examine institutional context in terms of what matters and what does not for local political participation in Ghana and

Liberia. This contributes to development of public administration theory, and diffuses it across contexts. It also highlights an important point for public administrators in the developing world: the quality of local governance matters. Level of corruption, perceptions of transparency and accountability – these tenets of good governance are important to public administrators as facilitators and negotiators between citizens and government. I provide empirical evidence to add to the anecdotal evidence, and this empirical evidence supports the global emphasis on good governance, and helps increase knowledge of how the tenets of good governance are related. As Jamil Jresiat (2005) reminds us, participation, transparency and accountability, ethics, effectiveness and efficiency are inseparable components of good governance. And these components must be promoted and facilitated by public administrators. Public administrators must not only encourage citizen participation in local decision-making, but must also consider what we have learned about the structure and significance of local institutions in order to improve citizen-government interactions.

Future Research

The relationships I find in my analyses suggest more research would be productive. The results point to several questions that should be the focus of future research. First, as indicated above, important questions remain about the somewhat counterintuitive effect of decentralization on local political participation. My findings indicate higher levels of decentralization inhibit local political participation. But I was not able to test the quality of decentralization, and I hypothesize that quality of

decentralization matters for local participation as well. Ghana and Liberia have different levels of decentralization reform, yet they both have highly centralized systems that result in deconcentration versus true devolutionary decentralization. Perhaps this lower quality of decentralization also inhibits participation.

Second, it would be prudent to examine whether the institutional model I have developed works in other countries in West Africa. Additional country studies can provide more cross-national and subnational comparison. For example, how would my model perform in a West African country such as Senegal? This country has held democratic elections since 2001 and ranks 15th on the 2012 Ibrahim Index of African Governance. Yet in 2009, Freedom House downgraded Senegal's status from "free" to "partly free" due to increased centralization of government. Local government in Senegal is dominated by the center, similar to Ghana and Liberia. Does this mean applying my models of local political participation to Senegalese data would produce similar results? Nigeria would also make an interesting case. Nigeria's environment is notoriously rife with corruption. Nigeria also has a huge system of local government, with 36 states subdivided into 774 Local Government Areas. The local government system has a tumultuous history and struggles with mismanagement. How would the institutional environment in Nigeria affect local political participation? Finally, a larger multi-country study would be valuable in order to see if the same subnational contextual variables matter. A pooled model that includes more countries would allow for more statistical inference.

Third, the contextual factors I outline in this dissertation should be examined more closely using additional data. I constructed a proxy for level of decentralization and found it was negatively related to local political participation. But I hypothesize that quality of decentralization matters as well. Additional data that allows us to construct a proxy for quality of decentralization would be a valuable addition to this research. Additional data would also be useful to further examine the effects of civil society on local political participation. I used a proxy for density of civil society in this dissertation, and the results support my hypothesis that higher nonprofit density is associated with increased local political participation. But I hypothesize that the effectiveness of civil society organizations also matters for participation. Data that would allow us to construct a proxy for effectiveness of civil society would advance this research.

Fourth, variations in patterns of activity among subgroups may be present as well. It is important to look at how marginalized groups versus the resource-rich participate in local politics, and to see if the same subnational contextual institutions matter for all groups.

Finally, the contextual measures could be modified or refocused to better reflect the realities and complexities at the local level. For example, using the district assembly as a unit of subnational analyses would make sense in Ghana, since much of the business of local government is conducted at this level.

The research I undertake in this dissertation extends knowledge of local political participation in West Africa, successfully reflecting the title of this work, *Understanding Local Political Participation in West Africa*. Utilizing an institutional approach that

explores new individual-level and contextual factors provides a deeper understating of local political participation in the region. More importantly, my research helps public administrators understand which institutions matter, and in what way they affect local participation. Perhaps the current emphasis on decentralization should be reevaluated, and the question of why decentralization is not performing as expected should be examined. Facilitating relationships between citizens, civil society, and government, and focusing on increasing the quality of elections are concrete ways public administrators can elicit more meaningful citizen participation. Taken as a whole, my research helps public administrators become more effective in their role as negotiators of citizens' interests, helping them create shared values, and articulate those values through democratic citizenship.

APPENDIX A

Afrobarometer Survey Questions

Explanatory Variables:

Urban/rural area (indicated by interviewer)

Male/female (indicated by interviewer)

How old are you?

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

No formal schooling

Some primary schooling

Primary school completed

Some secondary school/high school

Secondary school/high school completed

Post-secondary qualifications other than university (e.g. diploma/degree from technical school/college)

Some university

University completed

Post-graduate

How interested would you say you are in public affairs?

Very interested

Somewhat interested

Not very interested

Not at all interested

When there are problems with how local government is run in your community, how much can an ordinary person do to improve the situation?

A great deal

Some

A small amount

Nothing

Could you tell me whether you are an official leader, active member, inactive member, or not a member of a voluntary association or group?

On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election.

Was it:

Completely free and fair

Free and fair, but with minor problems

Free and fair, with major problems

Not free and fair

Do you feel close to any particular political party?

No

Yes

In the past year, how often have you had to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favor to government officials in order to:

Get a document or permit

Get water or sanitation services

Avoid a problem with police (passing a checkpoint or avoiding arrest)

Never

Once or twice

A few times

Often

How well or badly would you say your local government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough about them to say:

Maintaining local roads

Maintaining local market places

Maintaining health standards in public restaurants and food stalls

Keeping our community clean

Collecting fees on bicycles, carts, barrows

Collecting rates on privately owned homes

Very badly

Fairly badly

Fairly well

Very well

How well or badly do you think local government is practicing the following procedures:

Making local government's program of work known to ordinary people

Providing citizens with information about the local government's budget

Allowing citizens like yourself to participate in local government decisions

Consulting others (including traditional, civic, and community leaders before making decisions

Providing effective ways to handle complaints about local government officials

Guaranteeing that local government revenues are used for public services and not for private gain

Very badly

Fairly badly

Fairly well

Very well

Response variable (Ghana):

If you yourself have seen problems with how local government in the past year, how often, if at all, did you:

Discuss the problem with other people in your community?

Join with others in your community to address the problem?

Discuss the problems with other community, religious, or traditional leaders?

Write a letter to a newspaper or call a radio show?

Make a complaint to local government officials, for example, by going in person or writing a letter?

Making a complaint to other government officials, for example, by going in person or writing a letter?

Never

Once or twice

Several times

Many times

Response variable (Liberia):

In the past year, have you yourself seen any problems with how local government is run?

Yes

No

(If respondent answered yes, ask:)

How often, if at all, did you do any of the following:

Discuss the problem with other people in your community?

Join with others in your community to address the problem?

Discuss the problems with other community, religious, or traditional leaders?

Write a letter to a newspaper or call a radio show?

Make a complaint to local government officials, for example, by going in person or writing a letter?

Making a complaint to other government officials, for example, by going in person or writing a letter?

Never

Once or twice

Several times

Many times

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ABSTRACT**UNDERSTANDING LOCAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN WEST AFRICA**

by

KELLY KRAWCZYK**August 2013****Advisor:** Dr. Sharon F. Lean**Major:** Political Science**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

A growing body of research suggests that institutional performance affects citizen participation (see Holzner 2010; Bratton, Mattes et al. 2005; Hiskey and Bowler 2005). But despite this recognition of the importance of institutions, there is relatively limited research into the institutional determinants of political participation, particularly with respect to developing countries. This dissertation fills this gap by examining local political participation in Ghana and Liberia using an institutional approach. I employ qualitative analyses based on field work and primary source documents, as well as quantitative analyses at both the individual and contextual level.

At the individual level, I find the performance of local government matters for political participation. Whether or not citizens perceive their local government as transparent and accountable, and whether government is corrupt makes a difference in how citizens engage with the local political system. The more transparent citizens perceive their local government to be, the more likely they are to participate in local

politics. Greater experience with corruption also leads to higher levels of local participation.

Analyses at the contextual level demonstrate that subnational institutions also matter for local political participation. Decentralization, the density of civil society, and the quality of local elections all affect participation. In a two-country pooled model, I show that higher levels of decentralization are associated with lower levels of local political participation, while higher density of civil society is associated with increased local political participation. Higher levels of spoiled ballots in national elections, a proxy indicator for electoral fraud, is associated with increased local political participation. Interestingly, these findings contrast with common claims that decentralization should increase participation and that poorly run elections should depress participation. They confirm expectations that an active civil society promotes participation.

My research provides an institutional model for assessing the determinants of local political participation that can be applied to cases beyond those considered here. It also holds lessons for public administrators who seek to encourage citizen participation in local decision-making. It highlights for public administrators how variations in the institutional capacity of local government can affect citizen-government interactions. Higher levels of decentralization may not be achieving the goal of greater citizen participation in local decision-making. Given the results on civil society, local government initiatives to partner with and support civil society are likely to be fruitful.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Kelly earned MPA and PhD degrees from Wayne State University from 2007-2013. She also has extensive experience in the nonprofit sector, with over 7 years of applied experience in US-based nonprofits as well as international NGOs. She has expertise in the areas of fundraising and development, volunteer management, and special events. She has work forthcoming in *Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *Local Government Studies*, and the *International Journal of Public Administration*. She will join the Department of Political Science at Auburn University in August 2013, where she will teach courses in the MPA program. Her research interests include US nonprofits and international NGOs, comparative public administration, local governance, and citizen engagement and participation.