Dignified Public Expression:

A New Logic of Political Accountability

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How do citizens hold their representatives accountable in African democracies? What are the mechanisms through which accountability "works"? These questions are surprisingly under examined in the African politics literature. Most studies suggest that citizens hold their leaders accountable at the ballot box through retrospective voting.[1] For elections to serve as sanctioning mechanisms, citizens must be able to attribute performance to political action,[2] have sufficient information about government performance,[3] and turn out to vote.[4] There is some evidence that information campaigns can improve politicians' performance, especially in competitive districts,[5] but elections have also been shown to contribute to political clientelism.[6] Part of the reason for this is that representatives face pressures that undermine accountability and promote clientelism due to the informal norms and duties attached to their leadership.[7]

This article suggests that much of the existing literature ignores how citizens actually hold their representatives accountable outside of the electoral context.[8] By doing so, it overlooks the meanings that leaders and followers attach to the political process, the expectations citizens have of their leaders, and the incentives that representatives face in the struggle for political power. However, the political practices that extend beyond the ballot box necessitate a central place in theories of political accountability. This is because the daily practices between representatives and their constituents serve as important mechanisms through which accountability often works in practice. This article's approach follows in the tradition of comparative politics research that details how everyday life structures democratic development.[9]

Scholars have documented numerous strategies used by citizens to hold their leaders accountable that extend beyond elections and the formal rule of law. In Chinese villages, for instance, community solidary groups hold politicians accountable through informal rules and norms that require leaders to demonstrate a high moral standing in the community.[10] In Senegal, urban residents use a discourse of moral piety in order to get their municipal governments to collect trash and pay sanitation workers decent

wages.[11] In India, residents rely on a variety of formal and informal institutions and leaders, including NGOs, village councils, and political brokers, to serve as intermediaries and pressure the state for social services.[12] In Argentina, residents of shantytowns form personal problem-solving networks with brokers and community leaders and use festivals and social events to demand public services.[13] In Botswana, citizens join traditional public assemblies called *kgotlas* to legitimate the authority of their leaders and get their voices heard.[14]

A major contribution of these studies is to show that citizens can appeal to a leader's reputation, invoking shame or honor to get a politician to do their job. These insights are starting to be incorporated into theories of electoral accountability. For example, Eric Kramon finds that Kenyan politicians provide constituency service through vote buying, which can build credibility with voters,[15] but his approach narrows in on the instrumental exchange of goods for votes without considering the social and cultural meaning of constituency service.

This article suggests that these social practices are especially important in African democracies because they often provide the only means to pressure representatives to do their jobs and account for their actions. They underlie the processes through which respect and admiration between constituents and representatives are achieved. Importantly, these daily practices often have an underlying logic of respect, morality, and obligation between citizens and their representatives.[16] Despite new scholarship that finds reputational effects to be a key feature of political accountability, the mechanisms under which they work outside the context of electoral campaigns remain under-theorized and unincorporated into broader theories of democracy. This article tries to fill this gap by theorizing the logic through which social status and reputation can become central features of democratic accountability. To do so, I introduce a set of necessary conditions under which the logic of respect can help make accountability "work." I suggest that this logic of respect provides an alternative to electoral sanctioning and popular control that dominate conventional models of political accountability.

Collectively, I label the set of conditions "dignified public expression." First, a dynamic process of talking and listening emerges between constituents and representatives. Second, bonds of respect develop between leaders and their followers. Third, citizens come together to set the policymaking agenda at spheres of democratic expression, and these ideas are taken into account by policymakers. Therefore, accountability is operationalized as a process of political decision-making where citizens generate ideas that are then taken into account by their representatives, and these interests are acted on or turned into law.[17] By shifting the focus of accountability from removal to respect, this article provides an explanation for how citizens might make accountability work, situating the process in the social and cultural context of daily life.

Research Design

I draw on evidence from urban Ghana to substantiate my theory. Conducting research in urban Ghana provides a good opportunity to assess the different ways that citizens

pressure representatives to do their jobs in a young democracy. Ghana has had a vibrant two-party system dating to the early 1950s and varying successes with elections and multi-party politics. The emergence of a relatively robust electoral democracy, however, has coincided with weak rule of law and poor transparency, providing a puzzling case for the examination of accountability. By focusing on a single case, I attempt to generate theory and hypotheses to inform future research.[18]

My primary research method is ethnography, or "immersion in the lives of the people under study."[19] I visited at least one of three communities every day over the course of twelve months, regularly interacting with community leaders to gain crucial insights into their motivations and incentives. In addition, I conducted twenty-six focus groups with 102 citizens and leaders in order to collect data through group interaction.[20] Focus groups have been used to study public opinion in American politics,[21] as well as in studies of local African politics.[22] The groups focused particularly on politics and attempted to uncover the meaning of political accountability in the daily lives of urban Ghanaian residents.[23]

I analyzed the content of these focus groups using an inductive, pre-coding strategy that identified a set of frames as well as the symbols and argument structures that illustrate them. Frames are different ways of organizing or perceiving reality.[24] I use discourse analysis to examine how "the socially produced ideas and objects that populate the world were created and are held in place."[25] In contrast to content analysis that takes concepts as fixed and attempts to code them for quantitative analysis, I place the concepts in their social context in order to uncover the meanings by which individuals make sense of their daily realities. Therefore, the number of times an individual says a particular word is not as important as the frames through which individuals make sense of their political realities. I then put these social practices and meanings in dialogue with Western political thought to inductively generate a logic of democratic accountability based on respect, and that can be generalized beyond the context of urban Ghana.

While the empirical material discussed in this article focuses on local leaders like assemblypersons and traditional authorities, as well as social practices that take place in the daily settings of Ghanaian neighborhoods, there is preliminary evidence that this logic of accountability can extend across Africa. This is because the cultural practices that underlie democratic politics in Africa (e.g., the language and imagery of family and parenthood that Michael Schatzberg calls the moral matrix of legitimate governance) extend across "middle Africa."[26] These cultural expectations are evident across levels of government.

Secondly, *Afrobarometer* data suggest that Africans engage in the daily political practices that I observe. For example, ordinary Africans contact leaders "about some important problem or to give them your views" at high rates.[27] While respondents indicate contacting their local representatives more than MPs, they emphasize the desire to contact leaders in higher positions of government if it were possible. Finally, citizens express a willingness to join others in demanding accountability from their government representatives.[28] This evidence suggests that the scope conditions for dignified public expression extend at least as wide as middle Africa, and perhaps much further across the continent.

Rethinking the Logic of Accountability as Dignified Public Expression

There are two major theoretical frameworks for the study of political accountability: electoral accountability and popular control. Both rely on the logic of removal, that is, the threat that constituents can remove the representative from political office if they fail to account for their actions. Studies of electoral accountability draw from Hanna Pitkin's early critique of the authorization view of representation—that a representative has been authorized to act on behalf of the represented.[29] The problem with this view, according to Pitkin, is that it sets up the representative relationship as a transaction that happens before the actual representing begins, but there are no formal institutional mechanisms in place to ensure that representatives adhere to the promises they made during their campaigns.[30]

Scholars responded to this criticism and advanced a model by which elections serve to hold politicians accountable. It is called retrospective voting: politicians must satisfy some criteria—they must perform—or they will be voted out of office.[31] This model suggests that there must be a mechanism in place for holding the representative accountable for their decisions and, if necessary, for imposing sanctions, ultimately by removing the representative from power. The electoral accountability theory privileges retrospective control of authorized representatives through the threat of withdrawal of support during elections. Citizens have control over their representatives because they can sanction them by voting them out of office.[32]

The element of institutional sanctioning appears to be the determining characteristic of accountability,[33] distinguishing it from other concepts like responsiveness.[34] Existing theories of electoral systems attempt to uncover the degree of control that voters have over their representatives, suggesting that this plays an important factor in the amount of accountability.[35] Nonetheless, accountability as control models attempts to simplify a variety of complicated relationships and give divisible power to either the principal or the agent.

The rise of the importance of accountability in our understanding of democracy has led to a strange paradox. On the one hand, accountability is now understood as a core element of democracy.[36] This has mostly focused on strengthening elections,[37] although there is a small literature developing on the role of watchdog agencies.[38] On the other hand, there is significant "electoral skepticism"—empirical and theoretical research that shows that elections might not deliver accountability.[39] Democratic elections are "highly imperfect" and possess "incomplete ability to discipline and select incumbents."[40]

It is for these reasons that scholars advance the second major approach to political accountability: deepening popular control over representatives.[41] This approach argues that elections are embedded in a broader environment of agreement and disagreement, where the degree of electoral accountability depends on underlying norms, namely, whether voters view elections as a mechanism of accountability in the first place.[42] As a result, accountability ceases to be limited to the moment of an election, but instead is found to be a characteristic of an ongoing relationship between representatives and constituents. Accountability and representation are not easily distinguishable by a

particular moment or decision, and instead involve repetition and ongoing political practice and participation between elections.[43] While these critiques go a long way toward an understanding of the limitations of elections as a mechanism of the principal-agent model of accountability, they still rely on a clear logic of removal that fails to capture the complexity and variety of relations among constituents and representatives.

This article presents a third framework for the study of democratic accountability that rests on respect, rather than electoral sanctioning and removal. A theory of dignified public expression extends Josiah Ober's concept of democracy's dignity.[44] In his conceptualization of dignity, defined as equal high standing characterized by nonhumiliation (having respect as a moral equal) and noninfantilization (having recognition as a choice-making adult), it is democracy's third core value, in addition to liberty and equality. Dignity requires that every person be treated in a manner on par with the highest worth of humanity.[45] It expresses the highest and equal status of all human beings.[46] Citizens require dignity if they are to successfully govern themselves,[47] but this requires basic capabilities of human development.[48] Citizens cannot exercise their political liberty or improve institutions over time if they are operating in a context in which their human dignity is denied.[49]

Democratic dignity also requires that "relevant information is made public."[50] In particular, it joins in existing attempts to reconcile theories of deliberation with those of representation.[51] Central to these theories is a form of reciprocity, or fair terms of cooperation among equals.[52] This involves a public sphere where individuals from diverse social standings discuss problems together,[53] which requires political equality, or the ability to express one's views on equal standing with others in a polity.[54] It also requires participatory parity, where all individuals have the political space to participate in discussions about justice.[55] In the space of public deliberation, representatives and their constituents are on equal standing, and both engage in expression that involves "talking and listening." It goes one step further than Waldron's demand that constituents "owe an account"[56] by requiring that leaders "give reasons that can be accepted by all those who are bound by laws and policies they justify."[57]

Dignified public expression contains three components. First, a crucial aspect of dignity in a democracy is that the other—another person, government, politician—listens. Dignified public expression exists only when there is speaking and listening. It is this active form of talking and listening, similar to what Nadia Urbinati terms advocacy representation that residents demand in their daily lives.[58] Talking and listening ensures that those who are affected by decision-making are included and present in the public sphere: their presence is embodied.[59]

These modes of interactive communication foster the second necessary component of dignified public expression: bonds of respect between representatives and constituents.[60] Respect is more than an economic transaction and involves the deep admiration of another person. It involves political loyalty, or a deeply affective tie to a social group or individual.[61] Bonds of respect require social recognition.[62] The social and political claims that ordinary people make stem from anger and feelings of disrespect.[63] The manner in which these claims are expressed and enforced through

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respectful modes of interactive communication provide the fabric for this logic of accountability. By incorporating the importance of social recognition, as well as the public sphere in political accountability, I move closer to the way that many individuals understand the concept. For many citizens, accountability means more than the possibility of removing a representative from office; it means daily interactions and deliberation with their leaders.

Third, citizens must come together to set the policymaking agenda across various spheres of democratic expression. These "sites for the performance of citizenship," as Wedeen calls them, generate the necessary information that can make political accountability possible.[64] Citizens must be able to set the agenda for what they want legislated, ensuring that they are part of the process of local decision-making, not just public opinion formation.[65] Information and transparency play critical roles in accountability by inviting the public to join the sphere of public expression. The information that brings people together, or that which instills the belief that other community members will join in and effect change, is the crucial ingredient.[66] This information allows people to make claims to representation and accountability as part of a collective endeavor.[67]

The existence of multiple sites of public expression strengthens collective efficacy, or a group's belief that they have the power to achieve goals through collective action.[68] Because mutual trust develops in these sites, representatives might be more willing to intervene for the public good—they provide the context for collective efficacy.[69] While informal or formal rules and norms might not entirely change, new practices become "thinkable" as behavioral practices in their "cultural toolkit."[70] Sites of public expression provide the opportunity to strengthen bonds of respect between leaders and their followers, as well as to overcome the barriers of transforming accumulated information into citizen accountability.[71] Through these daily practices, citizens hold the potential to set their own decision-making agenda.

Once citizens have expressed their ideas to policymakers, leaders owe an account of what they do with these ideas once in office. Representatives owe an account of what they are doing directly to the people.[72] The decision-making process requires information and transparency to be central tenets of dignified public expression,[73] but information and transparency on their own are insufficient: they must contribute to collective action. Dignified public expression fosters individuals' beliefs that collective action will make a difference, providing an important mechanism to translate information into action. In these ways, dignified public expression warrants a central place in a theory of political accountability, as well as democratic theory more generally. Accountability is achieved when citizens' ideas are directly taken into account by decision-makers, and representatives put these interests into action or law.[74]

Talking and Listening

I will now demonstrate how dignified public expression based on respect can underlie accountability in urban Ghana. In this case, the conditions of dignified public expression

resonate with the social and cultural norms that govern Ghanaian society. In urban Ghana, residents substantiate Ober's claim that freedom and equality are not sufficient elements of democracy: they must also be able to express themselves publicly, and this requires making claims to human dignity. This element is central to many Ghanaians' understanding of democracy and can be extended to accountability. As one respondent says: "[Democracy is] a simple way to express yourself. To express the grief that you have within you....We have to voice out."[75] In fact, the word "Democracy" in Akan-Twi, Ghana's most widely spoken indigenous language, is "Ka-bi-ma-menka-bi." This translates to: I speak and then you speak. Many Ghanaians understand democracy as the process of free political expression, which reinforces understandings of mutual respect and dignity.

Speaking and listening are required conditions. In one focus group, a respondent suggests that democracy is working: "I will say democracy is working in this community because everyone enjoys freedom, because if you are doing something that is wrong somebody will call you and talk to you, saying what you are doing is not good, so stop it. And we are also listening."[76] The respondent mentions that "everyone enjoys freedom" because they have the ability to talk and express themselves. Perhaps more importantly, the respondent says "we are also listening." There is a collective willingness and capacity to change "wrong" behavior; there is a sense of collective responsibility, manifesting itself in the practice of public expression that can move the community forward. It is this process of public expression that leads to the collective learning that residents value.[77]

Focus group data confirm that residents understand political accountability to be an active behavioral relationship between leaders and followers, a relationship of stewardship by which leaders "owe an account" of their actions, and a public phenomenon. For example, one respondent emphasizes this active and deliberative process:

> Because democracy is people's power, we must know the essence of the power so we can demand for accountability. It is a way of getting back to the people to let them know what you are using the power they have given you.... When the problems are being tackled, our leader has to come back to tell the people the progress of action being taken.... Meet the people and put into action whatever we have said.[78]

The duty to engage in respectful modes of interactive communication and maintain social relations is emphasized as a way to account for the actions being taken. While there is a transfer of power—from the citizens to the representative, as the respondent indicates—this power is not given without expectation of physically (and personally) hearing back from the leader.[79] As Waldron emphasizes, the leader owes an account.[80] Another respondent says:

> The [leader] needs to tell the people what he is doing with the power. ... Doing work according to your master's order and if you do not do it well, it will bring about low productivity—so you have to deliberate on it so you can find solution to them. ... Once we

> have the [leader] given power to the people, at the end of the month the people will have to give account to the [leader].[81]

The leader "needs to tell the people what he is doing with the power." The leader has the responsibility to come back and account for their actions, or "when the problems are being tackled, he has to come back to tell the people the progress of action being taken," as the quote above suggests. But the process is reciprocal. Constituents must also "give account to the president," suggesting that accountability is collective and involves responsibilities and obligations by both parties.

Political accountability is also a relationship of stewardship. Leaders are not just given a mandate to represent their constituents; they are stewards over the resources of the entire country, or community for local positions. The political unit is now "a trust under his care," as a respondent suggests:

> Asking someone to account for a trust under his care. Do you think it is good "accountability" if someone likes you and gives you a job? After he returns you should give him account of what transpired in his absence in order for respect to be between us. So that in the future he can put his business into your care without any tears.[82]

Another respondent makes a similar claim: "You have been entrusted with a job; you need to render a report on the progress of the job—the shortfalls and the success. . . . Leaders who have been given a job to do giving account of work done. . . . Telling the people what you are using our natural resources for."[83] Here, leaders have been entrusted to use "our natural resources," with "our" meaning the constituents who voted the leader into power. This act of stewardship is the act of being "entrusted with a job." How the leader acts has important implications for not only the leader, but the followers or constituents as well. The actions of the leader will even affect future decision-making, the above respondent suggests that "the future he can put his business into your care without any tears." In this way, political accountability extends far beyond the mandate view and the formal accountability model. It is not simply about sanctioning the leader out of office. Political accountability also entails overall admiration in leadership and the future ability to get things done. The bonds of respect between the leaders and their followers must be strong for the effective future management of resources.

Finally, political accountability must be a public phenomenon. Respondents mention that leaders should "meet the people" and residents should be able to physically "see the details of your [leader's] activities." One respondent suggests that the process of making actions known is a public process that must be done in front of the constituents: "Accountability means people should be made aware of how a common resource is being managed. It means people should be able to see the details of your activities."[84] This gets at the heart of the respondent's claim above that "democracy is people's power," that the people must "know the essence of the power" so that they can hold their leaders accountable. The way citizens "know the essence of the power" is by the public announcement of the governing activities of their leaders. The public

spectacle of talking and listening enforces the collective nature of decision-making, a key element of the practice of accountability.

Bonds of Respect

In 2012, a Ghanaian neighborhood held a governance forum to discuss security and other public service projects. Traditional leaders, local government representatives, journalists, and police officers attended the event. Early in the discussion, a community organizer who served as the moderator introduced a leader of the area and called him forward to address his constituents. The organizer looked the leader directly in the eye and said, "You must tell us something today. Why are you not engaging the community?" Put on the spot, and demanded to account for his actions, the leader responded to the allegation that the residents don't see him around. He explained his record and emphasized what he has done for the community. He ended his response by saying that if people felt the way the organizer felt, "Then I am sorry. But I beg to differ."

After the event, the leader went up to the organizer and said, "I never liked you before. But I like you now." Prior to the forum, the leader greatly distrusted the organizer, but the forum demonstrated that the organizer simply wanted to hold the leader accountable for his actions. More importantly, he gave the leader the chance to defend his actions publicly and explain how he does his job. The forum provided the necessary space for the leader to educate his constituents about the role of governing, the organizer to seek answers from his leader, and the public to build bonds of respect with their leaders.

It is very difficult to disaggregate the concepts of trust, accountability, and transparency. For example, one focus group participant explains, "The behavior of some of the leaders of the community gives us reasons not to trust them. We don't trust them because they are not transparent."[85] Many Ghanaians trust their leaders if the leaders can account for their actions, the provision of resources is transparent, and the leaders can explain to them the decision-making process. It is this third component of trust that is often overlooked in conventional models of trust: residents must publicly share in the experience of the process in order for them to gain trust in their leaders. In other words, leaders can do their jobs and act in a transparent manner, but if residents are not publicly engaged in this process, respect will not be generated. One respondent describes this sentiment:

> The reason we trust our leaders is that when we meet and give them money, they take it to the bank and come and show us the pay in slip, so we are sure our money is in the bank, and whatever we tell them to they follow. . . they explain everything to us well.[86]

The respondent highlights that the leaders are open and transparent, but perhaps just as importantly, "they explain everything to us well." Failure to explain the process leads community members to believe that their leaders think they are better than them, have

"forgotten them," or are no longer part of the community—the bonds of respect are not strong. Trust is generated by leaders' ability to bring residents into the decision-making process and collectively moving forward together, contributing to mutual respect that drives cooperative behavior.

In contrast to conventional models that emphasize logics of removal, the practice of accountability in urban Ghana rests on a relational norm of respect. As one respondent explains: "If you don't respect them [the leaders], how can you expect them to help you?"[87] Another: "Because you selected him to be your leader so you have to support him to do the work, and respect is a way of supporting them."[88] A third: "Yes, respect is very good. Even if the leader is a small person we need to respect him."[89] Ordinary residents and citizens are obligated to respect their leaders; otherwise, they will not be able to demand accountability. In other words, leaders are not expected to perform their duties in office unless they are respected. In contrast to authorization views of representation, leaders are not given a mandate to perform solely by being voted into office—once in their position the populace must also respect them.

Michael Schatzberg argues that this norm of respect is based on a particular type of power unique to middle Africa, where leaders are expected to act like parents and "feed" their followers, literally and metaphorically.[90] Consumption demonstrates status and prestige.[91] Jean and John L. Comaroff locate the roots of this norm of respect in pre-colonial, traditional leadership forms, like chieftaincy institutions.[92] Here, they explain: "Chiefs were expected to rule 'with' the people. . . .What this meant, in practice, is that sovereigns were expected to surround themselves with advisors to guide the everyday life of the polity . . . delivering improvements, in turn, hinged on the public cooperation that a ruler could command." The daily behavior of chiefs was crucial to governance, and rested on this norm of respect.

It is important to emphasize, however, that respect is not given or earned in a single transaction—or by winning an election. Admiration must be earned. For leaders to earn the respect of their constituents, they must also respect them. My data substantiate these claims, as one resident explains: "When the leader does not respect people, he would also not be respected. Leaders who are performing their duties are respected; if you don't perform, people will not care about you."[93] Another describes how the names that citizens attach to their representatives invoke respect: "Yes, we call them Honourables. But if they do not respect us, we will also not respect them."[94] The bonds of respect between leaders and their followers are broken when citizens' ideas are not taken into account and law is not enacted based on their desires.[95]

There is a historical precedent of popular control over chiefs in African societies—groups can always depose their chief and sanction him out of office. The cultural and traditional norm of sanctioning the chief out of power has been used as an argument that democracy can build off this precedent of popular rule.[96] While paying close attention to the cultural underpinnings of Ghanaian society, the logic of dignified public expression does not require communitarian ideals, and even rejects them in many cases. While the one-shot sanctioning by the populace in cases of deposing chiefs is consistent with the logic of removal, it is not delivering what many Ghanaians

understand to be accountability. The representative is not giving account of his actions, the populace has not been able to set the agenda, and it is not demanding the representative do his job. The bonds of respect between the leader and followers are broken.

Reducing respect to a sanctioning mechanism undermines the emotional attachment between leaders and followers that is so important to self-fulfillment.[97] One respondent explains this in the Ghanaian context:

> They [our leaders] are not honest, their biggest problem is power, they don't want to give recognition to others because those people are "nobodies," that is the problem with them. "He is nobody" is their biggest problem, and in leadership if you don't give due recognition to your people, they will not also give you any recognition.[98]

Here, the respondent clearly suggests that the problem of leadership in his community is that the leaders do not treat them as persons—they are "nobodies." By undermining a person's humanity—by not recognizing them as a person—the leader damages the relationship of respect. This act of disrespect makes it impossible to pursue developmental priorities for the community: there is no norm of respect on which to cooperate publicly. A lack of respect filters down to the community, creating a deadlock for community cooperation.

The lack of respect has serious implications for development and community cohesion. As one respondent explains, "Old man, honestly, the leaders do not respect us—they do not respect anyone. They are only concerned about what they will eat. . . . Nobody wants to take up the responsibility."[99] Here, the respondent touches on a lack of legitimacy: the leader lacks legitimacy because he does not care for his followers.[100] The respondent's statement also demonstrates how electoral accountability is nonexistent. In some cases, this leads to a cycle of disrespect: "One man among us I can call my father he respects me and I can do the same with him."[101] In these cases, a deficit of respect hinders community cooperation, undermining the development prospects of a constituency.

Spheres of Democratic Expression

In places where formal institutions are weak, citizens need alternative methods for influencing their leaders. Political accountability often requires physical spaces where people can come together to engage in collective decision-making.[102] In this context, accountability becomes a give-and-take process whereby residents publicly express their concerns and leaders actively listen to the claims made. Then they come to an agreement together. In my focus groups, I asked a series of questions about the provision of contracts for public service projects. In this question, I asked the group what they would do if they heard that one of their political party leaders was given a contract but was not getting the work done. One man responded:

> We will allow him to express his view. He will tell me why the work is not done. I will go to him and find out from him whether it is true that he was given a contract, then if he confirms, then I will ask him why it was not done, then from his explanation, I will know the next step to take. If he does not come to the community how do I ask him?[103]

A number of points are notable in this exchange. First, the respondent mentions that he will "go to him and find out from him whether it is true." He is clear that he will "allow him to express his view." In this way, the leader must be accessible so that residents can go talk to them. The respondent expects to be able to have a conversation with his leader so that he can express his concerns about the community. The participant explains that "from his explanation, I will know the next step to take." This was an extremely common response throughout the interviews: respondents suggest that they can tell if a leader is truthful and genuine after some process of public expression. Second, the resident emphasizes the importance of public accessibility—leaders must be visible in their community so that residents can begin the process of accountability. The final step is the process of public exposure.

Accountability is a political process, and, like representation, the "effects of a practice" that is reiterated in the behaviors of daily life.[104] Without formal accountability mechanisms in place, residents find creative ways to hold their leaders accountable. Rather than attempting to sanction or remove their leaders, constituents attempt to strengthen mutual bonds of respect through the threat of public shame and the prospect of public honor. As one respondent explains in response to a question about the ethnic chauvinism of a leader:

> I will tell him what he is doing is not right and demand that he does the right thing. We will call him and tell him that by doing that it tarnishes the image of Dagombas [an ethnic group in Ghana], so he should stop. We can also call for executive meeting to sit him down and talk to him because that can also affect the party's popularity.[105]

Here, the respondent mentions that the appropriate way to fight tribalism—a threat to democratic accountability—is to make it public. By doing so, he "tarnishes the image of the Dagombas," a serious and shameful offense. In another interview, the respondent emphasizes the importance of public expression, making eye contact with the leader, and frequent visits:

> If there is something to be done, I go to them to find out how they are planning to do it, and the answers they give me tells me they do the work we give them. If you give a position to somebody and you go to sleep, if he fails you, you share the blame. What I think we can do is, they come to us for advice, to see our condition, they ask us what the problem is if we don't go to work, also they come and sit down and get time to chat.[106]

The respondent mentions a sense of collective responsibility—"if he fails you, you share the blame." Another respondent mentions that he will do all that he can do disgrace the leader—he will shame him into action by his public actions: "I will ask him, when I do it may lead to a quarrel so everybody will hear it. We will make some noise for people to hear of it."[107] By "making noise," residents hope that others will join

in the process and they can get something done: "Because there is no trust, I will tackle him or her alone. I will make noise for people to join me to collect the money."[108] The activity of public shame is not simply to remove the leader, but rather to invite others into the process as a collective endeavor. The moral disrespect and collective sense of injustice can be used positively as a source of power to shame leaders into action. The challenge is to translate feelings of collective subordination into the public transcript,[109] and this is often done in spheres of democratic expression.

The importance of respect and the expectations that representatives publicly account for their actions in front of constituents is apparent in Ghanaians' assessment of good and bad leadership. Democratic accountability requires that the leaders owe the people an account of what they have been doing.[110] Residents expect their leaders to do more than deliver the goods; they also expect them to listen to their ideas and hear their voices. Accountability is about more than serving the original mandate or the representative's ability to perform in government to avoid sanctioning. Rather, leaders are expected to have a personal connection with their constituents—a connection that strengthens the bonds of respect. The failure of leaders to engage their constituents in the public sphere engenders deep resentment and disrespect.

Consider the following assessments of good leadership:

> A good [leader] is one that listens to the people when they call on him, one that calls the people to meetings to discuss ways to improve . . . one who listens to your plight anytime you call on him even at night, one that will come to your community and when you call him, take your concerns and present them at the assembly, so as to make sure all your problems are solved.[111]

Another respondent mentions the importance of intervening in community affairs: "We have good leaders whom when they intervene in a dispute, there is peace due to their wisdom."[112] Another resident stresses that the leaders are accessible: "I think there are good leaders, if you bring a complaint, they work on it so they are good leaders."[113] Leaders are also expected to reflect the community sensibility, as one resident makes clear about what he sees as good leadership: "One that shares the cry of the community and the joy of the community. One that understands the problems of the community. A good [leader] is one who stays in the community and makes sure the community is clean."[114]

The final respondent emphasizes creating a public space for citizen-leader engagement, or a place for the leader to learn about the problems facing the community members: "He should be able to sit with us and know our problems. He should be able to settle people's problems when they approach him. He should work on our complaints."[115] All of these responses indicate that leaders must take the ideas of their constituents into account. The leader's failure to engage in the respectful modes of interactive communication renders him less able to address important material needs. The failure to address material needs is compounded by the implication that he was not listening. The respondent emphasizes a direct link between the complaints of the

residents and the ability of the leader "to take these ideas into account" and work on them.

In this way, the process of political accountability depends on a public sphere where the leaders interact with their followers. In these conversations, residents mention the importance of "listening to the people," "calling people to meetings," "coming to your community when you call him," "taking your concerns and presenting them at the assembly," "managing human relations," "being easily approachable," and "staying in the community and mak[ing] sure the community is clean." All of these necessary conditions of good leadership suggest the importance of creating a space for public dialogue and deliberation.

Beyond Elections and Removal

Admittedly, a logic of dignified public expression does not overlook the fact that removal and popular control are important in Ghanaian politics.[116] Respondents do go to the ballot box and vote their leaders out of office, as the theory of electoral accountability implies. One respondent explains: "We give them power through voting. . . . If we give power to someone and he does not perform, after his tenure we can vote him out."[117] Another says, "[When] we realized there was a problem, fortunately it was time for election, so we voted him out."[118] However, while urban Ghanaians clearly know the rules and understand that electoral removal is a theoretical possibility, there is far more evidence to suggest that voting serves as a selection rather than an accountability mechanism. As one respondent suggests: "We give them power through voting." Then immediately after elections, "they start showing their real attitude."[119] Most of the evidence suggests that voting simply formalizes a relationship that already exists: "We voted for them and that shows we trust them."[120]

Another possibility is that checks and balances are required to control politicians. Residents admit that representation at the local level can assist with checking powerful leaders. For example, one respondent explains how ethnic groups need representation: "If the leadership is made up of one tribe, they can be doing their own things, but if all the tribes are included they can be checking each other."[121] That said, the checks do not seem to be working, and transparency is lacking. As one resident explains the problems with local leadership: "We realized that when they receive money instead of being transparent, one person sits on the money."[122] My data suggest that rather than being a technocratic or legal endeavor, transparency is often the outcome of a collective endeavor where residents come together to publicly hold leaders accountable by shaming them, as I document in earlier sections. Ghanaians have to practice accountability in the ways outlined in this article to foster transparent leaders.

Conclusion

This article suggests that theories of political accountability that focus solely on elections or other forms of removal are limited, especially in their application to young

African democracies. These models do not take into consideration how people actually practice accountability, which rests on the logic of representatives engaging in dignified public expression with their constituents. Elections may serve as a selection mechanism, not one that delivers accountability.[123] This article demonstrates how the everyday practice of accountability, through dignified public expression between leaders and residents in face-to-face situations, better reflects how Ghanaians understand the concept of accountability as a public, relational, and action-oriented process.[124]

The article has important theoretical and empirical implications. First, theoretically, it combines principles of political representation with those of deliberative democracy. Habermas' theory of the public sphere explains how public opinion impacts governing officials, while Fraser forcefully argues for a "strong public" that includes the ability to create and make decisions.[125] Further, deliberation must translate into policy.[126] I contribute to these theories by demonstrating the importance of spheres of democratic expression in the context of daily life, thereby generating and maintaining bonds of respect between representatives and constituents. These behaviors are institutionalized in the daily practices of dignified public expression between representatives and citizens.

Second, the study provides empirical evidence to show how citizens actually hold their leaders accountable in urban Ghana. The practice of democratic accountability takes place in the context of daily life—between elections and outside of legislatures and formal assemblies. In this way, I make a methodological contribution: studies of politics and the building of democratic theory should consider the voices of ordinary people and should inform theory building, be used to generate new hypotheses, and question what the political is expected to reasonably include. Surprisingly, this article finds that the voices of ordinary Ghanaians in the poorest urban neighborhoods hold consistent attitudes with dominant ideas of Western political philosophy, particularly with elements of deliberative democracy and political representation. The article answers the call for an engaged comparative political theory, one that places the voices and opinions from non-Western sources in conversation with Western political theory.[127]

Third, the article suggests that the ways political scientists have been operationalizing elements of accountability might not be measuring the practice at all. The article highlights the need for empirical measures that extend far beyond voting behavior and access to information. The next step is to develop public opinion surveys and citizen questionnaires that capture the logic of dignified public expression. More research is also needed on what conditions enable the growth of dignified public expression, and what political forces prevent it from emerging.

Fourth, dignified public expression considers the social and cultural norms that govern society. Pre-colonial patterns of authority and traditional institutions have been found to have a significant impact on contemporary political outcomes like public goods provision in Senegal and Zambia.[128] In addition, leaders have been found to legitimate their authority by subscribing to cultural norms in rural Ghana and Nigeria.[129] In this way, I'd expect these patterns of politics to generalize to emerging African democracies.

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Fifth, face-to-face individual communication is not relevant to all contexts, due to varying scales of operations and cultural differences, but the values that face-to-face interactive modes of communication harbor are theoretically generalizable: they strengthen the bonds of respect between representative and constituent. This element of respectful modes of interactive communication can be bolstered in different ways in diverse contexts, for example by using the media to create channels of communication that would give constituents this sense of respect. While the logic of dignified public expression holds most of its explanatory power in young African democracies, the implications extend across the world. Strengthening bonds of respect bolsters accountability, providing a necessary characteristic of democratic self-government.

NOTES

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86. Focus group, Agbogbloshie, Accra, June 9, 2012. Do you trust your leaders?

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101. Focus group, Chorkor, Accra, June 22, 2012. Do you have father figures in the community?

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106. Focus group, Agbogbloshie, Accra, June 9, 2012. How do you hold your leaders accountable?

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107. Focus group, Agbogbloshie, Accra, June 9, 2012. A contract has been awarded to a branch executive with the intention of providing work for a group of twenty youth across different tribes. He gives the work to his own family members, all from the same tribe. Does this seem fair to you? Is there anything you can do to make sure he divides the work to others? What will you do?

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113. Focus group, Old Fadama, Accra, June 4, 2012. Are there good leaders in the community?

114. Focus group, Old Fadama, Accra, June 4, 2012. What makes a good assemblyman?

115. Focus group, Chorkor, Accra, June 22, 2012. Who can you call a good assemblyman?

116. For a longer discussion and evidence of alternative explanations, see the Appendix.

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118. Focus group, Tulako, Ashaiman, May 5, 2012.

119. Focus group, Ga Mashie, Accra, June 20, 2012.

120. Focus group, Nima, Accra, June 28, 2012. Do you trust your leaders? Why or why not?

121. Focus group, Old Fadama, Accra, May 27, 2012. Do you think that it is good for the leadership of the community to include all tribal groups?

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Ethnographic research
The ethnographic research is part of a larger comparative study on political accountability and public goods provision in poor African neighborhoods.[1] In the larger project, the site of political practice in daily life is the source of social inquiry. Between August 2011-August 2012, I conducted a multi-sited ethnography in three poor Ghanaian neighborhoods. I visited at least one of the case study communities on a daily basis. I ate meals with residents and leaders; observed community meetings; visited the private offices of politicians and chiefs; participated in party rallies; and attended ritual events. By interacting with community residents and leaders on a daily basis, I gained crucial insights into their motivations and incentives. I documented empirical observations in field notes. While these notes themselves might not be replicable, they can be used to confirm or draw alternative conclusions.

The qualitative case studies compare Old Fadama, Ashaiman, and Ga Mashie; all located in the Greater Accra Region. I selected these cases based on a most-similar systems research design; they exhibit comparable demographic characteristics in terms of population size, household income, education, and health indices. They also enable me to control for the most important alternative explanations: levels of political competition and party institutionalization; state capacity and formal institutionalization; legacies of state-building; and ethnic demography and diversity. However, they display varying levels of democratic accountability. Ashaiman shows notable success in accountability, participation and cooperation; Ga Mashie has high levels of participation but little accountability; and Old Fadama struggles in all aspects of democratic accountability and governance outcomes.

The ethnic Ga, the indigenes of Accra, dominates Ga Mashie decision-making.[2] Yet migrants from the entire country have been moving in large numbers. Ashaiman and Old Fadama are ethnically heterogonous, with large numbers of Dagombas from the Northern Region and Ewes from the Volta Region. While all three neighborhoods have varying levels of ethnic group dominance, they are all ethnically diverse. I control for political party affiliation—all four neighborhoods are strongholds for the ruling party government, as are most poor neighborhoods in Greater Accra, thereby ruling out the possibility of governance challenges in opposition strongholds. By controlling for party affiliation, I am able to show

	Old Fadama	Ga Mashie	Ashaiman Zongo
Settlement Type	Squatter	Indigenous	Stranger
Party Affiliation	NDC	NDC	NDC
Pol. Competition	High	High	High
Ethnic Diversity[3]	2.1625	2.0263	1.7875
Ethnic Diversity[4]	.86	.87	.95
Indigenous Group	Ga	Ga	Dangbe
Lived Poverty[5]	.9	1.169	1.175

how an important locus of political decision-making is the party apparatus. Intra-party analysis is an important, yet overlooked, aspect of contemporary African politics.

An illustrative example[6]

On a rainy day in one of Ghana's biggest squatter settlements, a drunk driver drove his truck into an electricity pole. A blackout ensued, and the entire neighborhood went without power. As water flooded the muddy roads, a respected landlord rushed to the scene to calm tempers. A group of residents followed, arguing and deliberating about what should be done. Some of them threatened to beat up the driver. They knew that the Municipal Assembly and police officers were ineffective.

Community members had to resolve the issue themselves. Twenty residents, including the local government representative, landlords, and the owner of the vehicle piled into a store and came up with a plan. The owner of the truck was pressured to pay for most of the new pole, while residents contributed a small amount. The assemblyman then drove to the utility company to demand they fix the pole immediately. By the early evening, electricity was restored to the entire neighborhood. According to conventional theories of accountability, the outcome was surprising: democratic accountability was achieved in an ethnically heterogeneous poor neighborhood with weak formal institutions.

But this story is a typical example of the practice of political accountability in urban Ghana. While democratic elections serve as an important context for political jockeying and electoral competition—both important aspects of democratic governance—the practice of political accountability often takes place outside of these formal channels. Followers must meet their leaders face-to-face and demand accountability; otherwise, the ideas of residents will not be taken into account. This demand must also be a collective endeavor: constituents and their political leaders gathered publicly and came up with a solution. Residents were able to set the agenda, and the leaders put those interests into action. Had the government representative returned home without the electricity back on, residents would have noisily gathered at his home and shamed him. Instead, he was publicly honored because he did his job—bolstering his reputation—and the problem was solved.

But constituents also have obligations to their representatives and must reciprocate with loyalty. This pledge of allegiance is more than an economic or political relationship, as a long literature on neopatrimonialism implies.[7] Instead, it requires a deep admiration for the qualities associated with that person, which is gained through social bonds that develop over the course of interactions and deliberation. In this case, residents had already developed mutual respect with their assemblyman because they met at his compound for weekly meetings, and he regularly consulted them on the streets of the neighborhood. They participated in social practices like attending weddings and funerals together, eating meals, and joining youth clubs and community meetings. When it was time to cooperate on a joint endeavor, they contributed their own money, feeling confident that the job would get done. The amount was set during the deliberations, and residents and leaders came to agreement in the context of the daily crisis. The dynamic and deliberative process of talking and listening strengthened bonds of respect between representatives and constituents, and accountability was achieved.

Appendix 2: Focus Group Information

Sampling and logistics

To conduct the focus groups, I used a "snowball" sampling strategy to recruit participants because representative lists were not available, and I required respondents who had a basic understanding of associational and political life. Recruiters targeted community leaders in one series of groups (10 total) to ask about the political history of the neighborhood, while targeting ordinary residents (16 total) to uncover the different ways that individuals participate in politics. This paper primarily analyzes the focus groups with ordinary residents, but uses the leader groups to triangulate the findings. Recruiters selected participants who varied along gender, age, ethnicity and political party lines. Recruiters targeted working class men and women including petty traders, students, fishermen, drivers, healthcare workers, and the unemployed. The ages of the participants ranged from 18 to 72, with the mean age of 39.

The first series of focus groups were conducted in ten communities and asked local leaders how residents hold them to account, the developmental and political challenges facing the community, and how the community grew over time. Focus groups were conducted in Ashaiman-Taabo, Ashaiman-Tulako, Agbogbloshie, Chorkor, Ga Mashie, King Shona, Avenor, Abuja, ECOMOC, and Old Fadama. The interviews were conducted in Twi and Ga and translated into English. They lasted approximately two hours each. Snacks and drinks were also provided.

The second series of focus groups consisted of 16 groups in 10 different neighborhoods. Focus groups were conducted in Old Fadama (3), Agbogbloshie, Ga Mashie (2), Nima (2), Abuja, Chorkor, Ashaiman-Valco Flat, Ashaiman-Taabo, Ashaiman-Tulako (3), and King Shona. Each group consisted of 6-7 residents of each community; 102 residents participated in total. In Old Fadama and Ashaiman-Tulako, I varied ethnic composition of the groups because I inducted from ethnographic immersion that ethnic divisions play an important role in community affairs. Therefore, I conducted one focus group with all members of the Dagomba ethnic group, one with entirely non-Dagombas, and one with three Dagombas and three non-Dagombas. Similarly, in Nima and Ga Mashie I varied the composition along the lines of age: I conducted one group with youth and another group with elders. Each group lasted approximately three hours and participants were compensated 10 cedis (~$7) for their participation. Snacks and drinks were also provided. The group interviews were conducted in Twi, Ga, Hausa, and Dagomba.

Jobs of Focus Group Participants

Student	15%
Trader/Businessperson	30%
Independent/Informal worker	24%
Community worker/volunteer	11%
Fishermen	9%
Other	10%

List of referenced focus groups
May 5, 2012: Tulako-Ashaiman
May 14, 2012: Chorkor
May 18, 2012: Taabo-Ashaiman
May 19, 2012: Old Fadama
May 27, 2012: Old Fadama
May 31, 2012: Valco-Flat Ashaiman
June 3, 2012: Tulako-Ashaiman
June 4, 2012: Old Fadama
June 9, 2012: Agbogbloshie
June 14, 2012: Tulako-Ashaiman
June 12, 2012: King Shona
June 20, 2012: Ga Mashie
June 22, 2012: Chorkor
June 28, 2012: Nima

Focus group questions

Neighborhood Comparison
Is your community a slum? Why or why not?
How does your community compare to the following communities:

- Old Fadama (Sodom and Gomorrah)
- Nima
- Bukom
- Ashaiman
- Dansoman

Meanings
What does democracy mean to you?
What does accountability mean to you?
What do human rights mean to you?

Leadership
Are there good leaders in the community? Who are they?
Who are the bad leaders in the community? Why are they bad?
Who do you see as the "father" of the community? Provide examples.
Do you see leaders from different families or tribes fighting for power? Do you think they are dividing the community? Explain these disputes/competition (chieftaincy disputes, longstanding feuds, etc).
From where do leaders gain their power?
Do you trust your leaders? Why or why not?
How do you hold your leaders accountable? How do you make sure they do their jobs?
What is the biggest problem with your leaders?

Ethnicity

Do you think one particular tribal group has more power than others in the community? Why or why not?

Do you think the leadership in your community is dominated by one certain tribe? Is this a problem?

Do you think that it is good for the leadership of the community to include all tribal groups? Why or why not?

Do all tribes get along? Do you think there are divisions between any groups or tribes? If you were to select a community leader, what quality matters most (after discussing, please rank them):

- Family connection
- Hometown connection
- Level of education
- Political party connection
- Wealth
- Character
- Community service
- Religion

In many communities leaders are chosen based on their tribal connections and not on their qualifications. In your opinion does this help or hurt communities?

When you or your others in your community are in need of basic goods (water, electricity, food, waste removal), is it easier to ask for help from:

- A leader from your own tribe
- A leader from a nearby political party branch
- A leader from your church or mosque
- A family member

Are there certain people who are more likely to seek help from their tribal group? Who?
Do community members trust one another? Why or why not?

Public Service Provision

Assess the state of public service provision in your community. For each, answer the following:

1. Who provides each service?
2. Are there problems with the ways they are provided? Are you cheated?
3. Are the services managed well? Why or why not?
4. What are the newest developments with these services?
5. Who do you go to if you need them fixed or improved?
6. What are the costs of the services?

   - Water
   - Sewers

- Roads
- Toilets and Baths
- Waste Collection
- Streetlights
- Electricity

Does the community ever come together to demand better services? If so, how do they do this? Provide an example. If not, why not?

Overall, how do you assess public service provision in your community?

Political Parties

Are the political parties active in the community? Which ones?

Is the community majority NDC or NPP?

Who are the important political party operatives in the community?

Who from the community secures government contracts?

Is one party more trustworthy than another party? Why or why not?

Is your community safe? Is it safe for the upcoming election? Why or why not?

Assemblymen

Who is the Assemblyman of the community?

Is he/she visible in the community? Does he/she sleep in the community?

Do you think that it is important for your assemblyman to stay and sleep in the community? Why or why not?

Do you see your Assemblyman doing anything to improve services in the community?

What makes a good Assemblyman?

What is a bad Assemblyman?

Do you expect to have better services if your Assemblyman is close to the MP? Chief Executive? Part of the ruling government? Why or why not?

MP

Is your MP from this community? What has he done for this community?

Does he visit the community outside of campaign season?

Do you expect to have better services if your MP has close connections to the President? Why or why not?

Is your Assemblyman close to the MP? The Castle?

What promises have the politicians made for your community? Have they followed through with their promises?

What do you see as the biggest problems of government?

What recommendations would you make to improve governance in your community?

Legal Recognition and Land Tenure

Who owns the land in the community?

Is the community under the threat of eviction? By whom?

Are you scared that you will be evicted from your homes?

Has the community come together to fight against the threat of eviction? How?
If your community "needed help" with providing shelter, who would you go to? Authorities? NGO?

Hypotheticals
A contract has been awarded to the NDC Constituency Chairman to build gutters. For the next year, no work is done. You hear rumors that he has sold the contract but you are not sure. Is there anything you can do to make sure that the work gets done? What will you do?
You discover that members from **your own tribal group** have been "chopping" money from a community fund. You do not know whether they will return the money. Do you report this activity to your tribal elders? Do you confront the members yourself?
You discover that members from a **different tribal group** have been "chopping" money from a community fund. You do not know whether they will return the money. Do you report this activity to other community leaders? Do you confront the members yourself?
A contract has been awarded to a branch executive with the intention of providing work for a group of 20 youth **across different tribes**. He gives the work to his own family members, all from the same tribe. Does this seem fair to you? Is there anything you can do to make sure he divides the work to others? What will you do?
A contract has been awarded to a branch executive with the intention of providing work for a group of 20 youth **across different political parties**. He gives the work to his own party members. Does this seem fair to you? Is there anything you can do to make sure he divides the work to others? What will you do?
A man approaches you and asks you to join his organization. You do not know the man but you have seen him walking around the community before—you think he owns a business here. This **Ashanti man was recently in his hometown Kumasi** raising money for the new organization—it is a civil society organization that is meant to put pressure on leaders to provide public services to the community. Would you consider joining the organization? Why or why not?
You hear a rumor that your Assemblyman has "chopped" the money that is meant to be used for tarring the roads in your community. What will you do?
The streetlight on your road is not working. Will you do anything to make sure it is fixed?
The government gives you 1000 cedis to relocate from the community and not return. The land is right outside of Kasoa. Would you move?
Have any of these scenarios happened in your community? Or any similar scenarios?

Afrobarometer
Should citizens be more active in questioning the actions of leaders? If so, why don't you question your leaders more?
Should citizens show more respect for authority? If so, why don't they?
Does your elected Assembly man/woman listen to your concerns about a matter of importance to the community? What does he then do with this information?

Does your Member of Parliament listen to your concerns about a matter of importance to the community? What does he then do with this information?

Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Ghana?

Looking at the group of elected Assembly men and women who are presently serving on your Metropolitan, Municipal or District Assembly, how qualified do you think they are to do their jobs? Are they qualified?

Discussion of the discourse analysis

After significant ethnographic research, I coded more than 200 pages of interviews (transcribed from indigenous languages into English) using the concepts in the table below. Once I began the process of reading through the transcriptions, I noticed words, phrases, and concepts that came up again and again (these became the concepts referred to below). After documenting the initial list of concepts, I used a search tool in the compiled document to sort all quotations by concept. I therefore have a document of focus groups sorted by 1) focus group, 2) question, and 3) concept. By the end of the analysis, each concept corresponds to a particular frame, and has observable implications that can be measured (in other work).

For example, concepts like "forgetting"—residents constantly mentioning that their leader has "forgotten them"—were analyzed, probed, and interpreted with research subjects in everyday settings to better understand the concept. Through numerous discussions with local speakers, as well as cross-referencing the translation of key words from the indigenous language to English, I determined how Ghanaians use the concept of "forgetting" in its political context. This interpretation of "forgetting" shows that it is part of a larger frame of respect between individuals, specifically between leader and followers. The concept "forgetting" is a key claim and symbol of the frame "bonds of respect" that I theorize later in the article. I do the same process with possible alternative frames in order to refute possible alternative hypotheses (in the supplemental information below).

Appendix 3: Ruling out alternative explanations: Elections and removal

The focus group data helps rule out possible alternative explanations, including those that emphasize inter-elite mechanisms, checks and balances, transparency, and clientelism. Admittedly, a logic of dignified public expression does not overlook the fact that sanctioning and removal are evident in Ghanaian politics. In fact, Ghanaians constantly discuss their inability to remove bad leaders and politicians. This is particularly the case within party ranks and political organizations. For example, one respondent explains, "The biggest problem of the government I see is the way he [the President] is not able to control his subordinates, yes he allows them to do bad things to dent the name of the government" (6/9/12).[8] Similarly, "He is not able to control his political party as the leader of the party" (5/19/12). Whereas electoral accountability implies control by the people, Ghanaians' constantly complain that leaders are controlled by higher ups in the party. These discussions

Frame	Concepts, symbols, claims
Talking and listening	Communicate
	Talk
	Listen
	Complain
	Demand
	Pressure
Bonds of respect	"The people"
	Honest
	Truth
	Believe
	Trust
	Respect
	Relate
	Organize
	Ignore/Forget
	Join
Spheres of democratic expression	"People together"
	Meeting
	Visit
	Welcoming
	Confront
	Contribute
	Present
	Committee
	Report

suggest the possibility that inter-elite mechanisms of accountability could exist, but also maintain that they are not functioning in a way that satisfies democratic governance.

It is also possible that residents go to the ballot box and vote their leaders out of office, as the theory of electoral accountability implies. One respondent admits: "We give them power through voting...If we give power to someone and he does not perform, after his tenure we can vote him out" (6/3/12).[9] Another explained, "[When] we realized there was a problem, fortunately it was time for election, so we voted him out" (5/5/12). But while urban Ghanaians clearly know the rules, and understand that this is a theoretical possibility, there is far more evidence to suggest that voting serves as a selection rather than an accountability mechanism. It is most common that votes are needed to select candidates, and leaders who win elections use this support to further empower themselves, as one respondent suggests: "We give them power through voting." Then immediately after elections, "they start showing their real

attitude" (6/20/12). Stated very simply, "If you vote people into leadership position, they seek their own" (5/31/12).[10] Most of the evidence suggests that voting simply formalizes a relationship that already exists: "We voted for them and that shows we trust them" (6/28/12).[11]

Another possibility is that checks and balances are required to control politicians. Residents admit that representation at the local level can assist with checking powerful leaders. For example, one respondent explains how ethnic groups need representation, "If the leadership is made up of one tribe, they can be doing their own things but if all the tribes are included they can be checking each other" (5/27/12).[12] Another respondent agrees that checks and balances help hold leaders to account: "For me, I think account is more like trap set for people in leadership positions so as to make sure they do not cheat their subordinates or steal money belonging to their people, it also serve as checks on leaders so they will not do wrong things" (6/4/12).[13]

That said, the checks do not seem to be working, and transparency is lacking. As one resident explains the problems with local leadership: "We realized that when they receive money instead of being transparent, one person sits on the money" (7/9/12). This has its consequences, as one describes, "We don't trust [the leaders] because they are not transparent" (5/27/12).[14] The flip side is that "now the leaders we have are open and transparent so we trust them, they explain everything to us well" (7/9/12).[15] But the data suggest that transparency is the outcome of a collective endeavor where residents come together to publicly hold leaders to account by watching them, protesting, and shaming them. It is an outcome of collective decision-making.

For example, the respondent above suggests that the process is transparent because the leader accounts for his actions by visiting his constituents. In another instance, residents were issued an eviction notice that was not made in a transparent manner, "We came together and formed [a community organization] and came out in our numbers to protest against it and that stopped it" (5/27/12).[16] Therefore, transparency is not possible when there is no collective action, as one resident explains: "people keep quiet, saying it does not concern them. 'It does not concern us' is the only problem now. That means that there is no unity in the community" (6/4/12).[17]

Transparency is certainly a goal to be achieved, and Ghanaians do attach the word to understandings of accountability. But the focus groups show that this outcome is attached to social practices that bring representatives and constituents together, and is an outcome of public expression. Rather than being a technocratic, bureaucratic, or legal endeavor, transparency is more closely tied to practices attached to watching, protesting, and shaming that are central to practices inherent in dignified public expression. In other words, Ghanaians have to practice accountability in the ways outlined in this article to foster transparent leaders.

A final consideration is that accountability is simply part of a larger distributive game, one that might involve patron-client relationships that are inimical to democracy. A long literature in African politics suggests that politicians and parties cannot credibly commit to broad and universalistic policies, thereby undermining accountable governance.[18] But citizens might have significant power by controlling politicians

through the demands of rents.[19] There is evidence to suggest that Ghana is a competitive clientelist political environment where state goods are distributed along partisan lines: To hold leaders accountable, one must join the party of a powerful leader.[20] One resident explains that this undermines citizens' abilities to hold leaders to account: "I am not in support of the current [leader] because I did not campaign for him, so I do not know how to hold him accountable" (5/18/12).[21] The logic is that parties "get their power from us and the government supports us after they get their power." This is certainly a partial representation of formal politics and elections in Ghana, but it again characterizes a small part of the way that Ghanaians understand accountability. Ghanaians certainly use elements of clientelist accountability—supporting a politician in exchange for goods—but this is a small subset of the larger concept. In other words, clientelist accountability might explain why a young man gets paid at electoral rallies, or even a contract to clean sewers. But it does not explain how residents get their leaders to do their jobs and account for his or her broader performance.[22]

Notes

1. Jeffrey W. Paller, *Democracy in Ghana: Everyday Politics in Urban Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

2. Noah L. Nathan, *Electoral Politics and Africa's Urban Transition: Class and Ethnicity in Ghana* (Cambridge University Press, 2019).

3. Measured as the mean of the answers for the following question: "Does a person from a different group live next to you?" 0=No; 1=2-5; 2=3-5; 3=More than 5. Distribution is 1.61-2.44.

4. Measured as the mean of the answers for the following question, but constricted to a dichotomous variable: "Does a person from a different group live next to you?" 0=No; 1=1-2 or 3-5 or 5+.

5. Measured as the mean of the answers for the following question: "In the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in this household gone without medicines or medical treatment?" 0=Never; 1=Just once or twice; 2=Several times or many times or always.

6. The example is adapted from Paller 2019.

7. Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

8. What do you see is the biggest problem with government?

9. From where do leaders gain their power?

10. Are there good leaders in the community? Who are they?

11. Do you trust your leaders? Why or why not?

12. Do you think that it is good for the leadership of the community to include all tribal groups?

13. What does accountability mean to you?

14. Do you trust your leaders? Why or why not?

15. Do you trust your leaders?

16. Has the community come together to fight against the threat of eviction?

17. How do you hold your leaders accountable? How do you make sure they do their jobs?

18. Easterly, William, and Ross Levine. 1997. "Africa's growth tragedy: policies and ethnic divisions." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*: 1203-1250; Lemarchand, Rene. 1972. "Political clientelism and ethnicity in tropical Africa: Competing solidarities in nation-building." *American Political Science Review* 66 (01): 68-90; Keefer, Philip, and Razvan Vlaicu. 2008. "Democracy, credibility, and clientelism." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 24 (2): 371-406.

19. Kitschelt, Herbert, and Steven I. Wilkinson. 2007. *Patrons, clients and policies: Patterns of democratic accountability and political competition*. Cambridge University Press; Auyero, Javier. 2001. *Poor people's politics: Peronist survival networks and the legacy of Evita*. Duke University Press.

20. Lindberg, Staffan I. 2010. "What Are MPs in Africa Held Accountable For – Patronage or Policy? Evidence from Ghana." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 48 (1): 117-142.

21. How do you hold your leaders accountable? How do you make sure they do their jobs?

22. There is far less support for the key concepts and symbols that would underlie an electoral theory of accountability. Concepts like "to vote out" and "remove" are not common responses in the data. Further, concepts that make up popular control like "control," "check," and "transparency" are also underemphasized in the focus group discussions. Ghanaians note that these concepts matter, and are becoming an important feature of multi-party politics. But they are far less noted than the concepts that make up a theory of dignified public expression.