My research agenda centers around national-level political leaders in low-income and non-democratic settings: why do leaders emerge and run for office? How are they chosen and held accountable for policy outputs? This topic is of paramount importance to understand the types of political leaders that emerge and the quality of public services and policies they deliver. My past, current, and future projects speak to three related themes: (1) what drives candidacy ambition, (2) why voters choose candidates, especially ones from under-represented groups and (3) political leader accountability. I also research data collection and analysis solutions to measurement challenges related to these three substantive areas.

This research agenda reflects my identity as a scholar: someone who pursues important and complex questions with a combination of social-scientific rigor and deep, contextual knowledge built from years of on-the-ground experience and language skills in the field. When choosing to pursue a research project, I am guided by three principles. First, does this research ask big questions with potential to elevate the voices of the disempowered and disenfranchised? Second, will the answers to these big questions offer insight on how policy-makers and development practitioners can improve human lives? Third, does the project employ rigorous empirical methods that are appropriate to the substantive subject matter?

Candidacy Ambition

Electoral authoritarian regimes—where a ruling party permits electoral competition without allowing its power to be truly challenged—are the second most common form of government in the world and the modal regime type in sub-Saharan Africa. My book manuscript studies why individuals run for the opposition and challenge the ruling regime in these settings. Existing research from advanced, competitive democracies on leader emergence emphasizes decision-making guided by the probability of winning and benefits of office relative to the costs of candidacy. Why run for office with opposition parties in electoral authoritarian regimes, where the risks of running are high and the chances of victory are bleak? This puzzle is important: most theories of government performance, political accountability and representation assume robust political competition between incumbents and opposition. Absent the competitive pressures of formidable challengers, incumbent governments have little incentive to perform. This poor performance underlies growing dissatisfaction with elections in sub-Saharan Africa.

My book manuscript investigates this puzzle, drawing from extensive fieldwork in Tanzania where Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) has ruled for over 50 years. The work has two major contributions with important academic and policy lessons. The first contribution of my work is demonstrating that candidacy ambitions have path dependencies originating in an individual's vocational background years before the actual decision to run for office. Unlike advanced democracies, where prior office-holding in subnational government is paramount to national-level candidacy, political capital in electoral authoritarian regimes originates from a career working for the ruling party in its political party bureaucracy—what I call "career partisanship." By contrast, the roots of ambition for opposition candidacy grow from careers in the civil society and non-governmental organization (NGO) sector. My research uses a culturally informed, innovative survey technique known as the "life history calendar" to record information about past party and career experiences and combines this with career-sequence analysis of the political careers of over 700 national-level Tanzanian politicians in testing the theory.

The second contribution of my work regards the actual decision to run for office. Previous work does not consider that the benefit of office may differ across parties or that candidates may benefit from losing elections. Political and vocational career histories, which are different for ruling party and opposition members, impact the benefits leaders desire when running for office. I show further that opposition candidates value the prestige of running for office and an ability to influence government policy and performance simply by *running for office*, benefits they can obtain *even if they lose* the election. It is also easier to win party nominations in opposition parties than the ruling party and winning a nomination is necessary to compete in the general elections. The power of the intraparty stage of electoral competition to shape who makes it onto election ballots is overlooked in previous scholarship and has important consequences for how political competition impacts accountability in electoral authoritarian settings.

I submitted my book manuscript for review with Cambridge University Press in March 2019 and received a positive response from reviewers in the editor in late July 2019, stating upon revisions the editor "would ultimately like for this book to be published by CUP." I submitted my reviewer response memo in September 2019 and will complete revisions by December 2019. The research has also been presented for policy-oriented audiences, including the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, USAID, and policy-working groups in the US, Norway, Sweden, and Tanzania. The work has important policy implications for international development practitioners, who commonly invest resources in both civil society and political party capacity-building.

My research on the impact of civil society and NGO careers on legislative candidacy has expanded to Kenya, where I am currently working with Karisa Cloward (SMU). Kenya differs from Tanzania in that it is considered a competitive democracy but has elections that feature personal and community clientelism. These characteristics give significant advantages to incumbent office-holders and aspirants from elite family dynasties, reinforcing their access to power. However, we document a new trend: the number of legislators with NGO backgrounds surpassed 25% in the last two elections, breaking into otherwise rather closed candidacy pipelines dominated by incumbents and political dynasties. In one paper, we argue that career backgrounds in NGOs—who command significant financial resources for promoting development—serve as a substitute for government and personal resources to distribute on the campaign trail. Analyzing the careers of over 500 aspirants for office in the 2017 elections, we show candidates who are from under-represented, lower-class groups enter into NGOs as a path to political office. We have presented this working paper at three conferences. A second paper looks at the consequences of NGO backgrounds. On one hand, NGO work allows outsider candidates to more effectively distribute material resources from their organizations on the campaign trail, compared to office-holders who face stricter campaign finance regulations. This reinforces clientelistic relationships between voters and candidates. At the same time, our preliminary analysis of legislator performance—derived from studying official hansards on contributions in the legislature—suggests that NGO candidates prioritize development and service delivery differently in office. They are more willing to criticize and pressure the government to deliver on education, health, and infrastructural outcomes. This second paper is in early development.

Why Voters Choose Candidates

Studying political leaders shows why candidates emerge, but does not address how they win elections. Why do voters support candidates from opposition parties and from under-represented backgrounds? The answer informs the circumstances under which voters hold poor-performing

politicians accountable and make governments more representative.

I have published two papers on voting behavior in other democratic settings in sub-Saharan Africa. Both co-authored with Staffan I. Lindberg (Gothenburg), we focus on Ghana's 2008 elections where a former ruling party turned opposition party returned to government. The first paper (published in *Democratization*) draws on surveys collected before and after the elections in order to research what wins over voters for opposition parties. In contrast with a literature citing identity and clientelism as sole drivers of vote choice, we find that voters are responsive to government (under)performance in delivering development. My second paper with Staffan I. Lindberg (published in *American Journal of Political Science*) asks what drives "swing voting" in sub-Saharan Africa. Our paper contributes to the voting behavior literature substantively and methodologically. We identify the short-comings of conventional measures of "swing" versus "core" voters and propose a more complete operationalization that considers multiple observable indicators of propensity to swing vote. This measure further distinguishes policy-driven motivations from clientelistic reasons for swing voting. We find that clientelism can "swing" voters, but that development performance influences voting decisions too.

I also study voter decision-making from a macro perspective, with research on political party systems in Africa. Conventional scholarship holds that political parties in Africa are "uniquely dysfunctional." Michael Bernhard (Florida) and I argue that political parties in Africa are more similar to established democracies and less defective than the literature suggests. Our paper (published in *Comparative Political Studies*) documents a steady rise in "healthy" competition between established parties and that voters reward candidates of parties that reduce basic needs inequality like food security and deliver economic growth. "Unhealthy" political competition occurring when established political parties become extinct is actually declining in Africa, while it is growing in Latin America and Eastern Europe.

A final study in this research area relates to support for female political leaders, who are dramatically under-represented across the globe. A popular narrative attributes women's low levels of representation in Muslim-majority countries to religious conservatism. In a paper with Kristin Michelitch (Vanderbilt), we study the relationship between religion and attitudes towards female political leaders. Improving on cross-national studies of Muslim- vs. Christian-majority countries, we employ matching to directly compare similar Muslims and Christians within 15 mixed Muslim-Christian countries in Africa. We find that Muslim-Christian gaps are small, often confounded by socioeconomic disparities between Muslims and Christians and highly variable cross-nationally. The results are consistent with theories that religion is fluid and locally-interpreted, in contrast to conventional thought that Islam represents a fixed conservative influence on its followers. The gap in support for female leaders is substantially larger across gender versus religious lines, which has critical policy implementations. Advocates for improving women's rights and representation are better served by pursuing solutions that transform attitudes of men, not Muslims. The paper is currently under review and was previously published as *Kellogg Working Paper Series* #418.

Closing Accountability Gaps

My research shows that voters are motivated to punish poor performers and opposition candidates offer alternatives, in spite of the risks they face in doing so. And yet, I also find that clientelism and poor development persist. What accounts for this mixed performance record across Africa? My third research area speaks to holes in the accountability gap—voters often lack credible information regarding government performance and are thus constrained in their ability to

actually "throw the bums out." This research domain reflects my engagement in academic-policy collaborations.

In one ongoing project, Kristin Michelitch (Vanderbilt) and I are collaborating with USAID's Democracy, Rights, and Governance program in an effort to improve the media sector in Tanzania. The media environment centers around men—old men dominate newsrooms and, unsurprisingly, these men report on issues that matter to male citizens, marginalizing women and youth in political reporting. Our initiative strives to diversify the media sector and media reporting through a University-based vocational training of journalism students. The program aims to improve the quality of reporting on political issues related to women and youth leadership and empowerment ahead of the 2020 national elections. We piloted the training in 2018 and are currently engaged in a full-scale randomized control trial in 2019. Initial feedback from our University partners confirms something I learned first-hand teaching at the University of Dar es Salaam a number of years ago—students benefit greatly from hands-on, practical training that is commonly lacking from curriculums in academic programs at Tanzanian universities.

The project is unique in that it traces longer-term vocational outcomes: we will study the careers of journalists in order to boost the voices of women and youth in media houses as well and by providing them with a digital career services platform that includes a professional website. We have another research collaboration with USAID related to this project, in which we will experimentally evaluate whether voters are more politically responsive to the higher quality, youth and women focused reporting our trainee students produce (subject to funding approval).

Finally, I collaborated with the International Law and Policy Institute (Oslo) for over six years in a number of projects.[1] I implemented *Wasemavyo Wazanzibari,* a three-year study of public service delivery that was the cornerstone of "Tanzania Towards 2015," a $2,000,000 program funded by the Norwegian and Danish governments. *Wasemavyo Wazanzibari* ("What Zanzibaris are saying") was a monthly, mobile-phone based panel survey that had 30 rounds from 2013 through 2016. Each month, our data collection focused on a particular government service— health, education, security, environment, etc.—and allowed us to track the quality of service delivery longitudinally. While there are a number of scholarly outputs in development (with Sterling Roop), I wish to highlight two important outcomes related to accountability. First, our program featured efforts to close information gaps between citizens, stake-holders and government through a "skills and information transfer" initiative. Our survey offered high-quality data regarding government performance on survey delivery, but we recognized that the data would not enhance government performance if it was not delivered to government and citizens in an accessible way. Voters received quarterly reports of government services in their community and how those services compared to other communities included in the survey. In collaboration with the State University of Zanzibar, we also trained senior civil servants from government ministries on how to collect, analyze, and present survey data collected by *Wasemavyo Wazanzibari.* These seminars served to bolster Zanzibar's government initiative for "evidence-based policy-making." Second, our survey was positioned to evaluate voter opinions during the 2015 election crisis in which the Zanzibari government unilaterally voided a Presidential election in which it appeared the opposition had won for the first time in history. Our survey data suggested that the opposition candidate had, in fact won, and these survey data were employed by political leaders in legal disputes over the election annulment.

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[1] International Law and Policy Institute closed in 2017; its activities are archived on the organization's website.

Overcoming Measurement Challenges

Studying these substantive topics presents significant measurement challenges. My expertise in survey and policy-evaluation methods enhances the ability to study these matters in three different ways: collecting and analyzing historical life-event data, improving longitudinal data collection studies, and measuring sensitive attitudes.

My research is novel in its approach to collecting past life-event data in surveys through life history calendars and analyzing the data through sequence analysis. Life history calendars (also called event history calendars) are grid-form questionnaires, where one axis shows a time interval (years, decades, etc) and the other axis a list of activities, memberships, and life events. I am the second in political science to use this data collection approach and my work in Tanzania demonstrates they produce more reliable and complete data on social and economic histories than do conventional survey formats. I also analyze life-history data and careers in a creative way infrequently used in political science: through sequence analysis. Treating a political career as a series of related states, these methods are applicable to studying career development and topics in education, like the trajectories of students and of teachers.

Challenges common to panel surveys are exacerbated in poor infrastructure settings, making panel research in sub-Saharan Africa very difficult. While Africa lacks land-based infrastructure, however, it has exceptional mobile network coverage. Taking advantage of nearly complete ($\sim$99%) network saturation in Zanzibar, the previously discussed *Wasemavyo Wazanzibari* was one of the first-ever high-frequency, mobile-based panel surveys in Africa. Our study included several attrition reduction strategies, including the use of variable participation incentives, a mobile phone and solar charger distribution program, and harnessing local social networks to ensure high participation, achieving an 80% response rate across the study. Sterling Roop and I have written a working paper on the success of these attrition reduction strategies; we plan to submit this paper for peer review in the Fall of 2019. We also contributed to the World Bank's manual on mobile-based panel survey methods for the developing world.

A final component of my methodological research efforts relates to accurate measurement of attitudes and behaviors that are sensitive or illegal. The list experiment has emerged as a promising approach to alleviate concerns over sensitivity-driven bias, but much is still to be learned about the technique. Eric Kramon (George Washington University) and I implemented eight list experiments in Kenya and Tanzania from 2010-2012 studying the properties of the list experiment and why it breaks down. We find that the list experiment is prone to failure in low-education settings, where literacy and numeracy skills vary greatly. However, modifications to the list experiment technique—including cartoon visual aids—improve the technique's performance. Preliminary findings from this research are published in *The Experimental Political Scientist.* Our article drawn from these results was published in *Public Opinion Quarterly* in 2019.

My research profile reflects success in publication, projects nearing review and publication, and a significant pipeline of research in progress that will shape my future profile as a scholar.