Elections in Africa: Opposition Parties, Electoral Integrity, and Women's Representation

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Incumbent parties have been re-elected in 80% of multi-party elections in sub-Saharan Africa. My dissertation research investigates how opposition parties manage to win elections in semi-democratic regimes, where the ruling party impedes competition from political opponents. Specifically, with what motives are opposition parties founded? After founding, how are citizens recruited to join and run as candidates? Lastly, what tactics can opposition candidates use to effectively court voters during election time, given that ruling parties can punish rivals?

Building on research I conducted in 2010 and 2011 with voters in mainland Tanzania and the Zanzibar archipelago, I set out to prepare for my final stage of dissertation research. In this stage, I will undertake a first-of-its-kind survey of winning and losing candidates of the three major parties in Tanzania and to conduct elite interviews with opposition party founders and leaders. During the 2011-2012 academic year, I presented this research plan at the Midwest Political Science Association and CAPERS, an African political economy working group formed between New York University and Columbia University. I have received a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad grant to support this research and will be in the field carrying out the survey during 2012-13.

During the past year, I also have progressed on a number of co-authored projects central to topics of democratization and representation in Africa. One of these (with Eric J. Kramon, UCLA/Stanford) looks towards factors that damage electoral integrity—violence, fraud, and vote-buying. We aim to find ways to better ask individuals about these topics, given reasons they have to be dishonest about them in public opinion surveys. Utilizing a survey technique called the list experiment, we have found in Kenya and Tanzania that using visual aids (cartoons) encourages respondents to be more honest about these topics. Our paper has been presented in multiple venues throughout the year.

In a second project, Michael H. Bernhard (UF) and I provide insight on the current state of party system institutionalization in Africa. We develop an empirical model of what explains the level of party system volatility in Africa that accommodates both Africa specific

explanations of party system patterns and more conventional drivers found in other regions of the world. Our paper offers the most comprehensive dataset on African party system volatility to date and finds that many patterns of worldwide party system institutionalization hold true for Africa as well. We presented this paper at the International Studies Association in Spring 2012.

In a final project with Kristin G. Michelitch (Notre Dame), we tackle the drivers of low demand for female political leaders in sub-Saharan Africa, relative to other regions in the world. In one phase of this project, we conducted a survey experiment in Tanzania and found positive information about women's performance in parliament increases willingness to vote for female MP candidates. Positive messages about women's performance also had a strong impact on views towards expanding women's public and household rights.

Each of these projects has benefitted tremendously from support from the Center for African Studies. The strong relationships between the Center and the University of Dar es Salaam, invaluable faculty support throughout my projects, and the environment of intellectual exchange fostered amongst Africanist graduate students at UF have been critical to my research. Many of the working projects benefitted directly from funding by the Center of African Studies and financial support from the CAS has allowed me to present the research widely at conferences.