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What Motivates Young African Leaders for Public Engagement? Lessons from Ghana, Tanzania, and Uganda

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Abstract
Young people constitute a disproportionate share of the population in most African countries, and as such, make up a key political demographic. The discourse on youth political participation tends to focus narrowly on disengaged, apathetic and troublesome youth. Yet, many African youth have taken on leadership positions across the continent, engaging in politics, civil society, and activism. This article seeks an understanding of what drives their public engagement. Drawing on a qualitative study of 33 leaders across Ghana, Tanzania, and Uganda, we argue that a range of individual, relational, and societal factors entwine and build on each other to foster youth leadership. Drawing on the socialization literature, we explore individual-level determinants of engagement, including family, educational experiences, purposive incentives, and identity. We go further than earlier research to explore the unique ways that these, along with the complex relational ties that undergird neopatrimonialism, as well as political opportunities, can work together to build young leaders in the public sphere.

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Introduction

Participation in the political process is regarded as one of the cornerstones of democratic governance. Three decades of political and economic liberalization on the African continent have provided significant opportunities for political participation, yet African youth—defined here as those people aged 18 to 35 years old—continue to be less likely to participate in politics than their elders (Asante 2013; Nkomo and Plooy 2015; Lekalake and Gyimah-Boadi 2016). This trend persists despite the demographic dominance of young people. It is estimated that about 65% of the total population of Africa falls within the youth age category (Mpungose and Monyae 2018).

The discourse on youth political participation tends to focus narrowly on disengaged, apathetic, and troublesome youth (Asante 2006; Honwana 2012). This narrative, however, is incomplete. Young African leaders play key roles in governance, political reform, and community activism. We define leaders as not merely managers or individuals who head an organization or hold a political position. Instead, leaders are individuals who work toward social, economic, or political change at the local, national, and/or global levels, using a variety of skills and styles (from consensus-building to authoritarian) (Rotberg 2012). Their influence is heightened in contexts with weak political and economic institutions such as those in many African states (Rotberg 2007, p. 120). Although we recognize that leaders have multiple goals, including personal advancement, the 33 leaders we interviewed in Ghana, Tanzania, and Uganda sought to address local problems, influence policy, change their communities, and/or improve national governance. Putting aside the question of leadership effectiveness (see Perera et al. 2018), this article asks: What specific factors motivate young African leaders to be engaged in the public realm? The work contributes to knowledge about how young leaders shape the socio-political arena, particularly in low-capacity states (see Leftwich 2009, p. 7).

We rely on qualitative data collected in three varied political contexts to test the utility of prominent explanations for public engagement from the socialization and social movement literatures. Our findings support prior work that indicates how the family, educational experiences, purposive incentives, and shared identity may drive participation. Indeed, we find that family and purposive incentives are among the most common and foundational factors which lead to engagement. However, we deepen and contextualize these findings with the discovery that political opportunities, such as those that emerge from political and personal connections can influence youth engagement. These political opportunities are especially key for shuttling young people into political and civil society leadership, and we find that they often build on or intertwine with other factors such as family and education. This research is significant because it extends the socialization literature to the African context—challenging the notion that African politics are "exceptional" (Englebert & Dunn 2013)—and it can inform youth-oriented policies and donor programs.

The article proceeds in six sections. First, we highlight the literature on socialization, mobilization, and neopatrimonialism (or what we define as governance through personal ties and relationships) in order to elucidate potential drivers of African youth engagement. We then explain our choice of country cases and the research methodology. The third section shows how variables from the socialization literature like family and

education matter for public engagement, while the fourth section illustrates the role of political opportunities and relational ties. The sixth section summarizes variation in drivers of engagement, with a specific focus on leader types. The conclusion raises policy implications and questions for future research.

African Youth, Socialization, and Mobilization in a Neopatrimonial Context

This section first defines the African youth category and explores how the social science literature has portrayed these youth. It then proposes several potential reasons for youth engagement, drawing from the broader scholarship on political socialization and social movements. Finally, it questions how debates over neopatrimonial governance in Africa may affect youth mobilization among our respondents.

Defining African Youth and Their Public Engagement

The African youth category is defined broadly, in contrast to the Western European and US contexts, where youth are often understood to be people in their mid to late teens. The African Youth Charter (2009, p. 3) defines youth and young people as individuals who are 15 to 35 years old. The Charter, however, delineates individuals aged 15 to 17 as "minors," recognizing that they do not have full legal rights. Because we have a specific interest in public engagement and because voting is possible only at age 18, we adopt the age range of 18 to 35 years. This broad age span also recognizes that African youth may face a longer period of economic and social instability than youth in high-income countries and that these challenges may preclude their achieving some or all of the "adult" milestones of employment, marriage, parenthood, property ownership, stability, and status in the community (see Honwana 2012; Sommers 2015; Quaynor 2015, p. 122).

Several studies portray African youth to be prone to political violence, easily manipulated by elders and elites, and disengaged from formal politics (Bob-Milliar 2014; Honwana 2012; Resnick and Thurlow 2015; Sommers 2015). African youth political participation has declined over time, and youth are less likely than their elders to engage in community meetings or to vote (Lekalake and Gyimah-Boadi 2016). Party leaders mobilize youth through food parcels or stipends (forms of patronage), nationalist rhetoric, and the hope of future positions in order to control youth labor, promote youth discipline, and foster state building (Van Gyampo 2015; Hodgkinson and Melchiorre 2019; Burgess 1999). Situated in a neoliberal context where increases in GDP have been accompanied by sluggish growth in labor-intensive sectors, rising income inequalities, and the privatization of education, youth have little access to the material resources that would give them political influence. Even when youth are brought into decision-making arenas, their participation may be mere tokenism (USAID 2011; Campbell et al. 2009).

Yet the situation is not quite so grim. Even as youth have become more skeptical of politics and disconnected from political parties, they have turned to other forms of political participation, such as protests, boycotts, campaigning, volunteering, and leading civil society groups (Sloam 2011; Prince and Brown 2016). They often resist violence and energetically discuss politics (Sommers 2015, p. xii; Lekalake and Gyimah-Boadi 2016), and they are only marginally more involved in protests than older Africans (Resnick and

Thurlow 2015, p. 173). Indeed, African youth perform better than their peers in other parts of the world regarding participation in formal politics (Resnick and Thurlow 2015, p. 10). A few examples illustrate the following: The Y'en a Marre movement mobilized against constitutional manipulation in Senegal in 2011 and the #FeesMustFall student movement called for equitable resources and a de-colonized curriculum in South African higher education in 2016 (Mueller 2018; Nyamnjoh 2016). Highly innovative, these youth used social media, hip-hop music, and theater to mobilize their peers (Lodge 2013; Mueller 2018; Branch and Mamphilly 2015; Lambert 2016). Through efforts like the "Not Too Young to Run" movement in Nigeria, youth have been recruited for party positions, and politicians like Bobi Wine in Uganda, Julius Malema in South Africa, Diane Rwigara in Rwanda, and Nelson Chamisa in Zimbabwe show how youth challenge the status quo as opposition party candidates.

Youth Socialization and Mobilization

With a disproportionate focus on the Western European and US contexts, the socialization literature has been underutilized to explain African political behavior. The few existing socialization studies set in Africa focus on schools as arenas for learning democratic citizenship, with many concentrating on post-apartheid South Africa (see Mattes et al. 2012; Hunt 2011; Esau and Roman 2015; on Malian schools, see Bleck 2015). Other Africa-based studies investigate community organizations as mobilizing agents, but they do not examine socialization at the individual level (see Thompson and Tapscott 2010; Waghid and Davids 2018). With an individual-level focus, this article responds to scholarly calls for cross-national examinations and country case studies of socialization, particularly from low- and middle-income countries (see Sapiro 2004).

The socialization literature has emphasized the family and educational experiences. As an early and constant influence, parents socialize their children into their partisan identification and political attitudes, and they model participation (Jennings and Niemi 1974; Quintelier 2013; Andolina et al. 2003). In families where political issues are regularly discussed, youth are more likely to vote, to volunteer, and to talk about politics with peers. The children of parents who protest and volunteer are more likely to engage in such activities (Cicognani et al. 2012; Klatch 1999). Educational experiences also can socialize youth, with a young person's engagement in high-school clubs, hobby groups, and school government influencing their long-term political engagement (Beck and Jennings 1982). Such activities help youth learn to debate political issues and forge networks (Sander and Putnam 2010; Yarrow 2011).

Beyond the family and educational settings, purposive incentives and shared identities may promote engagement. Purposive incentives include a shared ideology, values, or "belief in the cause" (Oberschall 1993; Irons 1998). Although some scholars say that these factors rarely sustain mobilization or that they must be combined with material incentives like salaries or gifts (Olson 1965; McAdam 1986), others assert that they are crucial in contexts with few resources (Press 2009). Purposive incentives may intertwine with shared identities—or a sense of "we"—to motivate young leaders (Melucci 1996). Identities rooted in interpersonal ties among group members may promote the dependence, friendship, and reciprocity that are needed to foster continued participation, particularly in activities that are "high risk" like protests (McAdam 1986). Identity-based mobilization may help people to define shared grievances such as political or economic injustices and to act on those grievances (Piven and Cloward 1991). Yet because identities are mutable and because they can be used to

exclude rather than mobilize (Gamson 1995; Fenio 2011), they do not always drive participation.

Finally, political opportunities create openings that make mobilization possible. Political opportunities are defined as the "consistent but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national signals to social or political actors which either encourage or discourage them to use their internal resources to form social movements" (Tarrow 1996, p. 54). Examples in the African context include the transitions from authoritarian rule to democracy in the 1990s, the continent's economic growth and urbanization since the 2010s, increased donor resources for poverty and development in the new millennium, and the post-cold war rise of African community-based organizations (CBOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that work on diverse social and political topics (Hershey 2019, p. 6). Some of these opportunities have generated material incentives such as salaries, per diems, and other perks that may motivate participation (Watkins and Swidler 2013).

Youth Engagement and the Complex Landscape of Relational Ties

There is significant debate among scholars of African politics about the extent and effects of neopatrimonial governance on the continent, and our research indicates the nuanced ways such relationships may or may not affect youth engagement. Bratton and van de Walle (1994, p. 458) describe neopatrimonialism as a system of decision-making and resource allocation in which "relations of loyalty and dependence pervade a formal political and administrative system" and "the distinction between public and private interests is purposely blurred." Although neopatrimonialism includes patron-client relations, it is a broad concept that describes a system rooted in more than just one-time or sporadic reciprocal actions between pairs of individuals. It includes systematic patterns in which powerful patrons—such as state officials, party bosses, and even civil society leaders—use public resources to provide for their clients. These personal leaders (or "big men") capitalize on charisma, cultural symbols, and networks of dependents to gain legitimacy and power. In contexts with weak institutional checks (such as Africa's partial democracies), they centralize authority and rule in somewhat arbitrary ways (Schatzberg 2001; Jackson & Rosberg 1982). Clients may depend on the patron for resources, a job, an NGO project, or help negotiating the state bureaucracy. In return, clients give their loyalty, labor, votes, and at times, resources to the patron (Bach and Gazibo 2012; Englebert and Dunn 2013). In this hierarchical system, "dominated [clients] understand, participate in, and even celebrate their domination," because it provides some material security and sense of belonging (Pitcher et al. 2009, p. 126; Ferguson 2006). This view argues that neopatrimonialism results in rule through ethnic ties, cronyism, nepotism, the erosion of state capacity, stagnant economic and democratic development, and the creation of a "moral economy of corruption" (Mkandawire 2015, p. 271; see also, van de Walle 2001; Eggertsson 2005; Clapham 1996).

The neopatrimonial portrayal of African states has been criticized as one-dimensional, deterministic, fatalistic, and dismissive of Africans' agency (Mkandawire 2015). Significant variation in neopatrimonial governance exists across Africa and even across various bureaucratic agencies within a particular country (deGrassi 2008). Robust forms of informal relations indicate the coexistence of neopatrimonialism and democracy in countries like Botswana and Ghana (Pitcher et al. 2009; MacLean 2014), and the more informal system of patronage has aided African countries in allowing "diverse populations to coexist within broader national boundaries" and served as "a bulwark against threats of insecurity or severe lack of basic

welfare needs" (McCauley 2013, p. 6). Recent scholarship on neopatrimonialism also cautions against the assumption that neopatrimonialism is unique to the global South or the African continent, and it pushes back against the assumption that informal relations and neopatrimonial systems cannot coexist with democracy and development (Cammack and Kelsall 2011; Bach and Gazibo 2012; Mkandawire 2015).

One of this paper's most significant findings is that neopatrimonialism—relational ties, specifically—affects youth leadership in a range of expected and unexpected ways. Because many African youth face significant challenges in accessing resources and positions, personal ties and loyalties can provide opportunities for youth engagement. The economic uncertainty and poverty many youth face may augment the importance of such ties. Yet, these relational ties do not erode youth participation or promote corruption (see Jordan Smith 2008). And while relational ties may provide opportunities to some leaders, they do not affect all our participants; even for the individuals they affect, relational ties are not the sole driving factor for engagement. We also recognize that relational ties often intertwine with the factors of education and family to drive mobilization. By showing the complexity of relational ties—and their lack of uniformity—this research both extends the social movement literature to recognize the context-dependent nature of resources, and it challenges the prevailing view that neopatrimonial governance is "ubiquitous throughout Africa" (Brown 2013, p. 9).

Country Cases and Methodology

Our project relies on the comparison of key case studies as we search for common factors that have led to youth engagement across three different African countries. Tanzania, Uganda, and Ghana have a number of commonalities: they each experienced British colonialism, they have been relatively peaceful since the return to multi-party politics, they have stable political parties, and—in Uganda and Tanzania—the ruling party has won every election since the return to multiparty elections. Yet they vary in other ways, including in their economic development, social characteristics, and—most importantly—political freedoms. By 2017, Ghana had attained lower-middle income status with a GNI/capita of $1880, compared to low-income status Uganda ($600/capita) and Tanzania ($920/capita). Despite this income difference, poverty rates are comparable among the three: 29% of Tanzanians, 23% of Ghanaians, and 21% of Ugandans live below the poverty line (World Bank 2018). In addition, each depends on multilateral and bilateral donors for development funding. Each has rich ethnic and religious diversity, although more Ugandans (84%) and Ghanaians (75%) than Tanzanians (61%) identify as Christians (Pew Forum 2015).

These countries differ most dramatically in their political freedoms and democratic institutions. According to Freedom House (2018), Ghana is a "free" country, Tanzania, a "partly free" country, and Uganda, a "not free" country. Ghana has experienced multiparty democracy since 1992, with three elections in which the ruling party was ousted. An active civil society and private media outlets enjoy political freedoms, regularly holding the government accountable for policy promises (Cheeseman et al. 2017; Gyimah-Boadi 2009). Tanzania has been a multiparty democracy since 1990, although the ruling party Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM) (formerly the Tanganyika African National Union, or TANU) has won every election since then. Citizens have freedom of association, although in recent years, the political space has shrunk (Rosen 2019). In Uganda, President Yoweri Museveni has been president since 1986, when the country emerged from a destructive civil war rooted in ethnic and regional divisions.

The ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) has increasingly limited freedoms of association, speech, and the press and centralized power in the presidency. In 2017, the parliament voted to remove the age limit for president, paving the way for Museveni to run again in 2021 (Mwenda 2007; Biryabarema 2017).

A commonality among all three countries is an extremely young population: an estimated 50% of Ugandans are under 15 years old; 57% of Ghanaians are under 24; and 46% of Tanzanians are under 15 (
Uganda Bureau of Statistics and ICF 2016, p. 2; Index Mundi 2018; Ministry of Health, Community development, gender, elderly and children [Tanzania Mainland], Ministry of Health [Zanzibar], National Bureau of Statistics, Office of the Chief Government Statistician,, and ICF 2016, p. 2). In addition, urban youth in each country face significant economic challenges: for example, they comprise 80% of Uganda's unemployed people (USAID 2011, p. ix). University graduates are often unable to secure meaningful jobs, with some joining the informal sector as a survival strategy. Poverty, drug use, teenage pregnancy, disillusionment, and HIV/AIDS are challenges that many youth face (Honwana 2012; Hoetu 2011). Despite national youth policy documents in each country that depict youth as a major human resource for social and political development, youth remain marginalized economically and politically (Ministry of Youth and Sports 2010; Van Gyampo 2015). By choosing countries with political and economic differences but similar youth situations, we are able to ascertain major drivers of youth engagement across our cases.

We conducted fieldwork in Accra (June–July 2018), Dar es Salaam (March–April 2018), and Kampala (May–June 2018). If we had studied youth in rural areas, we may have found different motivating factors for public engagement. But we focus on urban areas because of the concentration of youth facing economic obstacles and because of the presence of opportunities for youth engagement in politics, business, activism, and civil society groups. Cities host information, communication and technology hubs, media houses, NGO offices, and political party headquarters, all places for youth engagement. Each city has a sizeable population, with significant ethnic, class, and religious diversity due to internal migration. Kampala has over 1.5 million inhabitants; Accra, 2.2 million people; and the former Tanzanian capital and major commercial center of Dar es Salaam, 5.5 million people (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2016; National Bureau of Statistics 2017; World Population Review 2019). In each city, youth have historically engaged in elections, protests, and sometimes, political violence (see Asante 2006; Van Gyampo 2015; USAID 2011, p. 38). In Dar es Salaam, the revolutionary values of Tanzanian leaders and the country's support for African liberation movements also fostered youth activism with transnational ties.

In each country, a local research assistant helped to identify study respondents from media reports, lists of NGOs, and through snowball sampling. Each country research team (composed of a North American and an African scholar) conducted interviews with young leaders. We defined engagement broadly, recognizing that the political space in each country would condition the forms that engagement might take. We interviewed 33 individuals working in local or national-level politics, political parties, civil society organizations like indigenous NGOs and CBOs, and protest organizations. These included 12 individuals in Kampala, 11 in Accra, and ten in Dar es Salaam. We interviewed 11 party leaders, four parliamentarians, one youth in local government, eight officers at local NGOs, five CBO leaders, two leaders of movements engaged in contentious politics, and two student government leaders. Our respondents participated in a range of implicitly and explicitly political activities, from establishing a

CBO for single mothers to leading the youth wing of a political party, to holding public office, and to organizing protests against government policies. We did not interview individuals who were entrepreneurs, although some of the NGOs and CBOs engaged in community-level income-generation activities. Participation in the study was voluntary, and based on informed consent. All participants were assured of anonymity in written documents; we do not refer to respondents by name and in many cases omit their specific job title to protect their anonymity.

Interview questions focused on the individual's upbringing, their opportunities for participation, their views on citizenship, and potential religious influences on citizenship. A complete list of interview questions is provided in the Appendix. We encouraged respondents to tell their stories, allowing them to gradually reveal the key factors that led them to their work. Interviews lasted roughly one hour and nearly all were conducted in English. Most interviews were audio recorded; if the setting did not allow for recording, two researchers took written notes. Interviews were transcribed, and then all six researchers compared and documented trends and patterns across the respondents.

Echoing Prior Lessons: Family, Education, Purposive Incentives, and Identity

Young African leaders illustrated a range of individual-level determinants of their public engagement, including the family, educational experiences, purposive incentives, and identity. As we analyze below, not all factors drove the actions of all leaders; however, many respondents echoed themes from the socialization and social movement literatures and we find that family and purposive incentives are among the most common and important factors cited. In this and the following section, we also provide examples of how these factors often entwine with, and build on, one another. This is especially the case as relational ties build on family and educational experiences.

The Family and Educational Experiences

All but six respondents mentioned family members as crucial determinants of participation, and over half stressed that by simply providing a stable home and education, families were formative in the young leaders' trajectories toward public engagement. We also discovered that except in the case of three respondents (one in Uganda and two in Ghana), it was the nuclear family that mattered. This finding may reflect the fact that we conducted research in urban areas, where family ties are changing (see Mazuri 1991- on African extended families). More broadly, though, our results echo the scholarship on the importance of kinship for determining inheritance, crafting identity, assigning roles and status, and providing a safety net (Khapoya 2010, p. 25; Kopytoff 1987; Chazan 1978). However, we also discovered fluidity and variation in the role that kinship could play among our respondents, from passing down party identification to teaching skills needed in the public realm (see Geschiere 2003). Not all of these efforts had the intended effects, and not all were positive.

Among our respondents, parents often urged young people toward public service. One respondent who was a student leader with the New Patriotic Party (NPP) at the University of Ghana said, "My mother is a strong, staunch member of the NPP. I was born into an NPP family. My mom, she attended meetings in the village. She brought home souvenirs, the t-shirts, the placards. I loved it. Though my mom is not well-known within the party, I took my

inspiration from her" (Student Leader, Personal Interview, Ghana, June 21, 2018). A similar story occurred in Tanzania: A young politician said that family played a key role in her becoming a CCM Member of Parliament. "My dad influenced me," she said, "He used to call us [children] in [to the house] and show us his TANU [party membership] card. He would say, 'The way you believe in [the] Roman Catholic [Church] you have to believe in CCM'" (CCM MP, Personal Interview, Tanzania, March 29, 2018). For both of these individuals, party loyalty and participation were crucial components of their identity. This finding echoes the substantial number of political science studies on the role of parental socialization in promoting party identification (see, for example, Achen 2002; Jennings and Niemi 1974; Kroh and Selb 2009; Franklin 1984). It also echoes one South African study that showed that when children observe their parents' political engagement (e.g., campaigning, voting), they are more likely as youth to engage politically (Esau and Roman 2015).

For a few of our respondents, even though their parents had urged their children to affiliate with a particular party, they had joined the opposition. A respondent who was active with the National Democratic Congress (NDC) as a University of Ghana student said, "Interestingly my parents belong to…the NPP. I grew up with a lot of hatred for the founder of the NDC from my family. And naturally, I'm the stubborn one. I came to love what they hated. I'm the only NDC in my family. I realized, when I was young, that my family had some sentimental reasons for why they don't like the founder of the NDC, but I thought the man [Rawlings] represents an ideal I would rather share in which is for the common people" (NGO Consultant, Personal Interview, Ghana, July 2, 2018). Similarly, a Tanzanian in the opposition party Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA) noted straight away that his father—who was an ideology secretary for the CCM—influenced him to join politics. On the day he was born his father had been counting votes in the polling station for a general election, "so, I was given the name, 'Mbunge' [Parliamentarian] by a local politician. … If you go to that area today, everyone will just know me as 'Mbunge' and not [my first name]…so I was born a politician!" (CHADEMA Leader, Personal Interview, Tanzania, April 10, 2018). In these examples, the respondents learned the importance of public engagement from their families but forged their own party identities during political transitions with increased party competition. Again, political science studies support these findings by showing that young people are particularly impressionable between the ages of 18 to 25 years, with political events such as elections, war, and/or economic stagnation having a formative influence on their political identity and participation (Jennings and Niemi 1981; Erikson et al. 2002).

Some of the interview respondents told us that their parents had sometimes encouraged their public engagement inadvertently and in less traditional ways, such as by trying to build good character. A Ugandan said that his father's efforts to teach him the value of hard work led him to become a socialist and to engage in contentious politics. The father, who had strong NRM connections, regularly took his siblings and him to visit low-income neighborhoods. He explained, "My father would say, 'You guys are refusing to eat or to do your homework, but do you see? (And my father pointed to the poor housing, the open sewers.) ... You will not get a big job if you don't work.'" This leader then started to ask himself, "Why should some people live like that and why should there be so much for so few people?" He continued: "So I felt I had the obligation to fight in defense of those who do not have" (Activist, Personal Interview, Uganda, May 27, 2018). Thus, the father's desire to inculcate individual-level responsibility so that the man could have a good financial situation—the "big job"—led the man to develop a sense of collective responsibility.

In addition, a few respondents illustrated how parents could provide opportunities to learn skills needed in the public realm. One MP in Uganda explained:

> I loved politics since I was little… and thanks to my father, who identified my passion, he always pushed me … to listen to radio programs, read political articles, and he empowered me in public speaking. He would say, 'As a politician you have to learn to talk.' So he would send me to churches, to school meetings… He would write the speech, and I would read it…And when I was in school, he would ask me, 'Did you contest for a position?' If I said 'no', then he would cane me. [laughs] So I learned to be a politician because of my father (MP, Personal Interview, Uganda, May 29, 2018).

While the respondent joked about her father's approach, she also illustrated how her father recognized that she needed skills and experiences to play the game of politics. And even though the father was not directly involved in politics, he had enough political clout to provide her opportunities to refine those skills, illustrating how connections and family ties can smooth one's entry into politics. Here we see how family and relational ties as two factors intertwine. This young woman also illustrated that fathers do not necessarily shun the political socialization of their daughters. This socialization pattern was found in traditional society when families had no male descendants (Amadiume 1987). But this young woman stressed that her father supported her, not because he lacked a male heir, but because of her unique talents.

One of our most interesting findings from the fieldwork is that while many respondents found a great deal of support from their families and pointed to their parents as inspiring figures, four were activated by a difficult, or even abusive, family situation. Leaders of two Ugandan CBOs described absent, violent fathers who provided no material or emotional support. One discussed how the death of his mother, who was his "lawyer" (advocate) against an abusive father, was devastating (CBO Leader, Personal Interview, Uganda, May 24, 2018). According to these respondents, it was these experiences of abandonment that inspired them to establish CBOs that support single mothers.

Across the three countries, mothers and fathers seemed to play distinct roles, although our small sample size makes it impossible to say this pattern is broadly generalizable. In Ghana, it was mainly mothers who urged their children to engage in party politics, perhaps an outcome of the Akan matrilineal system that has urged women's public engagement (though not necessarily facilitated their election to public office) (see Steegstra 2009; Bauer 2019). In contrast, for the two Ugandan MPs, it was fathers who encouraged their political engagement, perhaps indicating Aili Tripp's point that despite Uganda's 35% female representation in parliament, there is still a male-dominated vision of politics (Tripp 2000, p. xvii; Inter-Parliamentary Union 2019). In Tanzania, respondents generally pointed to fathers as key influencers, although for one CCM leader, politics was a family business: his father was an MP and his mother a regional party "chairman." From our small sample, mothers in Uganda and Tanzania tended to play a more traditional role, encouraging their children and providing emotional support when they faced challenges. Two Ugandan NGO leaders said their mothers had supported their efforts to mobilize on AIDS and mental health, because they had personally witnessed how their children had faced stigma and suffered. In Tanzania, young leaders spoke of their mothers as "worriers." The mothers of the CHADEMA members, for example, pushed back against their children's activism out of fear for their safety. One young man said, "My mom told me, 'Return your [party] card, [or] you will be killed!' That is how

worried she is because of the political situation" (CHADEMA Leader, Personal Interview, Tanzania, April 10, 2018). Here mothers seemed to play a "nurturing" role.

Our findings comport only somewhat with the literature on the gendered roles of African parents in socialization. On one hand, the pattern we found aligns with scholarship about traditional African societies that illustrates distinct roles for mothers and fathers: mothers engaged in household chores and child nurturing, while fathers engaged in hunting, construction, and public decision making (Khapoya 2010, p. 46). Even in present-day Africa, expectations for male and female roles remain quite distinct (Englebert and Dunn 2013, p. 114). On the other hand, parental roles are fluid, particularly because more African households are headed by single women and more fathers are absent from children's socialization processes. Poverty, unemployment, and migration require mothers and fathers to take on different tasks (see Richter et al. 2010; Mokomane 2012). Indeed, single motherhood is common in all three countries. According to official government statistics, which may not capture the true nature of this phenomenon, women head one-third of Ghanaian households, 31% of Ugandan households, and 25% of Tanzanian households (Uganda Bereau Of Statistics & ICF 2016, p. 2; Ghana Statistical Service, Ghana Health Service, and ICF 2018, p. 2; Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children et al. 2016, p. 2). In our fieldwork, we did not explore the numerous contextual factors—from migration to democratic transitions—that may influence the socialization roles that mothers and fathers play. Future research should tackle this question.

Our findings in terms of education showed that all of the leaders we interviewed had been educated through the secondary school level. As the following examples show, respondents illustrated that education fosters skills and provides experiences that can propel public engagement across all leadership types. Education also provided relational ties that could advance a career, particularly in politics (see below). A student government leader in Dar es Salaam developed his leadership skills throughout his school days and now holds a high-level role in university government, the sort of position that frequently leads to a party or government position in Tanzania (UDSM Student Leader, Personal Interview, Tanzania, April 17, 2018). A consultant to NGOs that focus on youth participation and civic engagement in Ghana described a "leadership awakening experience" during his high school years. After serving as the Vice President of the Student Representative Council in high school, he held several leadership positions at the University of Ghana, first as president of the Business Society, then as representative in the University of Ghana legislative session, and finally, as a youth organizer for the NDC. In his words, it was his high school experience that "gave me more confidence and led me to believe I could be a leader in other arenas" (NGO Consultant, Personal Interview, Ghana, July 2, 2018). Similarly, two Ugandan MPs described contesting elections in secondary school and at university. One animatedly recalled beating her opponent in a hotly contested election for prefect, after she gave a rousing campaign speech (MP, Personal Interview, Uganda, May 29, 2018). Her successful bid paved the way for subsequent political opportunities, and it also enabled her to build relationships with future political leaders. While small in number, these responses support the socialization literature's claim that schools teach skills, such as public speaking, mobilizing others, coalition building, and fundraising (Jennings and Niemi 1974), and that civic education alone is insufficient to foster youth public engagement (Finkel 2002). They also add nuance to research that shows that even though the most highly educated Africans are less likely to vote than those with some education, education does urge other forms of participation (Bleck and van de Walle 2019, p. 238; Mueller 2018; Resnick and Casale 2011).

Purposive Incentives and Identity

Almost every respondent told us that they found inspiration in deeply held values, a commitment to justice, and/or an ideology. Our interviewees may have been painting themselves in an altruistic light; however, the social movement literature suggests ideals offer strong motivational potential. We heard the latter in our interviews. One Ugandan who worked at a health NGO in low-income communities said that as a child she had, "developed a passion" for helping those in need (NGO Leader, Personal Interview, Uganda, May 27, 2018). A Ghanaian who founded an NGO that serves street children talked about playing football with his peers at the University of Ghana and observing the children who watched his team play. These children had nowhere to go after school, little food, and no opportunities, so he founded an NGO to help them. He said, "I got passionate about these kids. There's so much potential in them. If they are given a push, they will reach their goals" (CBO Leader, Personal Interview, Ghana, July 2, 2018). A CHADEMA leader emphasized ideology as a driver, saying that he grew up in an apolitical household, but when he was in his twenties, "I began to be drawn to politics." But it was not until he had to write an article in a university course that he realized the depth of his commitment to the opposition party. "The first thing I thought of was of criticizing the government." He has been an active member of the CHADEMA student organization since then (CHADEMA Leader, Personal Interview, Tanzania, April 10, 2018). As two of these respondents illustrated, though, purposive incentives also intertwined with other variables to drive mobilization. For the Ugandan NGO worker, it was her father who had stressed an obligation to care for the poor, and for the CHADEMA leader, it was the university environment that nurtured his ideology.

Although every type of respondent articulated purposive incentives, it was the vast majority of NGO, CBO, and activist leaders who stressed how some aspect of their identity motivated action. Here we acknowledge that these individuals were also affected by the educational opportunities and their family upbringing, but they downplayed those variables to stress experiences of social or political marginalization rooted in identity—being HIV positive, suffering mental illness, being an impoverished student, living in a slum. For these respondents, there was often a clear, logical link between their identity (living positively with HIV, for example) and their corresponding work (as an HIV-rights advocate). A young woman who had suffered depression then decided to "make it her mission to work on mental health issues" (NGO Leader, Personal Interview, Uganda, June 12, 2018). A University of Dar es Salaam student served as a leader because he both understood student problems, and he liked "helping [students] to fix problems, since there are a lot of problems at those schools" (Student Government Leader, Personal Interview, Tanzania, April 17, 2018). For these leaders, public engagement also had an affective element; they mentioned sadness, joy, love, appreciation, loneliness, grief, and anger as drivers of their action (see Gould 2009 on emotion and mobilization). The founder of a Ugandan CBO in his own low-income neighborhood said, "I love this community; I love my people…I will come when they call" (CBO Leader, Personal Interview, Uganda, May 25, 2018). A shared identity resulted in webs of dependence, support, friendship, and reciprocity that, in turn, reinforced public engagement. These webs were particularly important for the two leaders engaged in high risk, protest activities; indeed, one of these people said that he made plans for a friend to care for his family if an upcoming protest should lead to his imprisonment (Protest Leader, Personal Interview, Uganda, May 28, 2018).

For this subset of leaders, identity also led to recognition of common grievances that motivated action. These included poverty, joblessness, corruption, and increasing income inequality (see Mueller 2018). One Ghanaian who had grown up in poverty was motivated by his experiences to establish a social enterprise organization that converted plastics into artwork, thereby providing jobs for young Ghanaians *and* improving the environment (CBO Leader, Personal Interview, Ghana, July 2, 2018). An AIDS advocate said that the social exclusion she experienced led her to mobilize other people living with HIV for psychosocial support and advocacy (Activist, Personal Interview, Uganda, June 12, 2018). However, as the social movement literature emphasizes (Tilly 1978; Piven and Cloward 1991), grievances are rarely sufficient for action. We now turn to the ways that political opportunities and relational ties can provide the space and resources for mobilization.

Stretching the Literature: Political Opportunities and Neopatrimonialism

As indicated, the young African leaders in our study pointed to a range of motivating factors present in the socialization and social movement literatures, yet our findings on political opportunities and relational ties also extend this literature. Political opportunities affected how many young Africans pursued leadership in different arenas and the specific initiatives they undertook. Unique forms of dependence and relational ties also shaped the modes and particularities of youth engagement among our interviewees.

Political Opportunities Through Political Change and Donor Projects

Although political opportunities manifest in a variety of ways, we focus on democratic and social transitions as moments that have provided young people the chance for public engagement. One example is Uganda's constitutional requirement that women hold 30% of seats in all representative bodies, as a female politician explained. She said: "[Party leaders] were planning the 2006 elections and there were no females to put on the ballot… (m)y brother-in-law said I should run for that position… So I was given that position when I was young; I didn't know what to do. Every time they would call a meeting, they would call me…I began learning…. So 2011 came, and I stood as a woman's councilor.… and then three years ago [2015], I competed with a man for this position [on Kampala City Council]." (Council Member, Personal Interview, Uganda, May 24, 2018). The respondent showed not only how she took advantage of the political structures but also how she used the opportunity to advance her career.

Similarly, the change in Tanzania's government after the 2015 elections created political openings for people who had not been in the old party hierarchy. A CCM Member of Parliament said that when the current Tanzanian president, John Magufuli, received the presidential nomination, she was surprised he had succeeded despite his relative lack of political connections. She then realized that she too could work her way up in the party without such ties. She said, "I felt like it was my time…I didn't bribe people…I just saw that opening and ran" (MP, Personal Interview, Tanzania, March 29, 2018). While this MP undoubtedly had friends and connections as a member of CCM, she explicitly framed her experience as outside the traditional patrimonial networks and did not see herself as obligated to a patron. She perceived Magufuli's lack of reliance on the old CCM network as evidence of a change in cronyism which, in turn, gave her the space to succeed.

In addition, the demographic changes in Africa (the "youth bulge"), as well as the African Youth Charter, have created new opportunities for public engagement, particularly as donors pay increasing attention to youth empowerment (African Union 2009). Although our small sample makes it impossible to generalize, donor-provided opportunities did seem to matter for the mobilization of many NGO leaders (see Morfit (2011) and Burchardt (2013) who find a similar situation in Malawi and South Africa, respectively). Three Ghanaian young leaders received leadership training or grants from donors in order to start NGOs that addressed the needs of street children, social violence, and environmental protection. Two Ugandan youth NGO directors had similar experiences. And one Ugandan AIDS advocate explained how she took advantage of donors' significant interest in AIDS after 2001 to get funds from the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief to establish a formal organization of youth born with HIV. Funding also provided her a salary and money to travel nationally and internationally. When asked why she started her work, she said, "Because the opportunity was there and I was there" (AIDS Advocate, Personal Interview, Uganda, June 12, 2018). Here, though, her identity—as a person living with HIV—also provided a motivating factor, making it difficult to say that it was donor opportunities or identity that mattered most for her engagement.

The Ugandan woman's story raises a larger question about how material benefits prompted—and sustained—public engagement. Although our respondents rarely mentioned material incentives like salaries or per diems, we do not deny their importance for mobilization in resource-poor areas. Indeed, the availability of resources is often highlighted as an important determinant for social mobilization and sustained public engagement (see Jenkins 1983). We found that respondents who mentioned material benefits tended to work with NGOs or opposition party members, not as elected officials or ruling party members. The latter individuals were more likely to have their own resources or access to them through personal connections (see below). One opposition party member in her twenties in Dar es Salaam recounted: "I had a struggling life…I was serving food, just doing small jobs…I came to Dar to study, but [I] didn't get any studies…I would love to be in the army, but I wasn't able to get [in]." So when she found work at the CHADEMA offices in 2015, her mother told her that this opportunity could be her chance to have a steady job and some success, even though she worried about her daughter's safety working for the opposition (CHADEMA member, Personal Interview, Tanzania, April 10, 2018). In Accra, one young man who grew up destitute now worked for a foundation that supported charitable projects across Africa. His position enabled him to travel throughout Ghana, Europe, and the USA (NGO Leader, Personal Interview, Ghana, June 27, 2018). In Uganda, one NGO leader jumped from position to position, as donor projects ended and he sought the next income-earning opportunity (NGO Leader, Personal Interview, Uganda, May 28, 2018). As an intermediary between donors and locals, he aspired to "maintain [his] status in the local community, to manage the support of myriad relatives and other dependents, to cultivate local networks, to attain the next higher educational credential" (Watkins and Swidler 2013, p. 201). As a paid NGO staff member, he represented the professionalization of youth public engagement on issues of poverty and injustice or the tendency of some advocates to "make a career out of being a movement leader" (Staggenborg 1988, p. 585). Although professionalization can dampen other motivating factors like commitment to the cause, we did not witness this outcome among our NGO leaders (Rasmussen 2014).

The Complexity of Relational Ties

Although our small sample size makes it impossible to generalize across all leader types, we did see evidence that relational ties played a role in some of our interviewees' public engagement. To be clear, not all the youth we interviewed mentioned links to powerful individuals, challenging the idea that neopatrimonialism is "ubiquitous in Africa" (see Brown 2013). However, aspects of this governance pattern were evident in some of the interviews. Some youth were embedded in patronage relations (even if they did not acknowledge them), while others mobilized against what some scholars view as the negative aspects of neopatrimonial governance, particularly corruption and inequality (see van de Walle 2001; Englebert and Dunn 2013). Some turned to relationships with donor agencies in order to avoid these perceived negative aspects of neopatrimonialism, and all discounted that ethnic ties drove mobilization. We first illustrate some anticipated outcomes on how our respondents reflected mobilization through relational ties and then we present some unanticipated nuances to the model. In the process, we show that educational opportunities and family often facilitated such relationships.

To begin, many respondents showed how an individual with more status, resources, and networks had motivated their public engagement, often by providing employment or connections. This was particularly true for youth in party organizations, as African political parties have historically provided a platform for youth activism (Diouf 2003; Heffernan 2016). Party youth wings serve as leadership incubators where youth work on behalf of party causes in anticipation of moving up the political ladder. A respondent from the CCM youth wing explained, "CCM and the government still believes [sic] that good leaders of the CCM and the government will come from [the youth league] … [which is] creating leaders of this country" (CCM Party Leader, Personal Interview, Tanzania, April 23, 2018). Another CCM employee with a high-level role in the party's youth league laid out how party leaders mentor, guide, and provide some youth with opportunities: "We are proud when we see people eager to be leaders…They feel like being leaders…sometimes they're leaders *because we want them to be leaders*." He then explained that party leaders are always on the look-out and when they see youth helping the party through volunteering, for example, they say, "By hooks and crooks he'll be a leader" (CCM, Personal Interview, Tanzania, April 23, 2018; emphasis added). The respondent perceived these well-established leaders (whom some scholars might term "patrons") as having a crucial role in determining youth opportunities, as well as the role of youth in giving their loyalty and volunteer labor to these individuals. In a point that emerged from a Ugandan MP, youth strive to climb the party hierarchy so that they too will have individuals who depend on their guidance and connections, since part of demonstrating one's status in adulthood is access to such patronage resources and networks (Burgess 1999). The Ugandan MP hoped for party resources so that she too could "give an audience" to her constituents and help them maneuver the byzantine bureaucracy of state programs (MP, Personal Interview, Uganda, May 29, 2018).

On some occasions, the role of relational ties was perhaps so embedded in politics that youth leaders did not recognize it. As Nicolas van de Walle (2001) indicates, merit qualifications and legal-rational means of decision-making can coexist with neopatrimonial systems, an underlying point that one Ghanaian civil servant may have illustrated when she described how she got her position with the Minister of Aviation. As a long-time supporter of the NPP, she helped organize significant protests over the country's electricity shortages in 2015. When the NPP started gearing up for national elections in 2016, campaign staff who had noticed this

young woman's protests on social media and television asked her to join the NPP's national presidential campaign. When the NPP won the election, she received a position in Ghana's civil service. Relational ties seemed to matter; otherwise, she would have received the position through a merit-based application process. However, it seems that the minister did want to employ a highly qualified person. The respondent said that the minister "wanted a good person, not necessarily someone she knew…Someone who knew how active I had been in the campaign recommended me to her" (Civil Servant, Personal Interview, Ghana, July 4, 2018). Merit—the young woman's energy, competence, and communication skills—were important in obtaining the position, but her campaign work, a recommendation from "someone who knew," and her long-time support of the NPP also illustrate the role of relationships.

Some of the youth we interviewed indicated that relationships of dependence with government officials, not just party leaders, also mattered. A Ghanaian CBO director who had been orphaned as a child said,

> When my dad was alive, he worked with the Ministry of Health as a driver and my dad's boss was the director of health for the Volta region. When my dad died, [this man] took the responsibility to be my father and my mentor. He made me spend time with his family. I had to discuss my personal challenges, my grades, my goals, my aspirations with him all the time. And any time there's a program that can open opportunities for me, he allows me to attend, to this day (CBO Director, Personal Interview, Ghana, July 2, 2018).

In this case, the mentor provided not only material assistance but also interest, guidance, and connections that helped the respondent advance his career. Here an adoptive family relationship fostered opportunities, illustrating how relationships and family may overlap.

Some respondents, perhaps because they had no connections to state or ruling party leaders, turned to private citizens, who themselves may have been linked to state officials and/or resources (see Englebert and Dunn 2013; Ferguson 2006). These mentors taught the young leaders how to apply for grants, introduced them to donors, helped them navigate state bureaucracies, or gave them seed money to establish an organization. Sometimes, these mentors emerged in the educational setting, either through on-campus political party wings or through personal ties between professors and students, a fact that indicated overlap between some of drivers of engagement. For example, a University of Ghana student said he started a student group to address social extremism, because "my head of department called me and told me there was this global challenge organized by Facebook and the U.S. State Department. They were funding young people to start campaigns to counter violent extremism." Later, he turned the student organization into an NGO, because "(M)y patron, he preferred that I become the director…because I had the experience in terms of campaign development and research…It was only right that I took the position of director" (NGO Leader, Personal Interview, Ghana, June 28, 2018). The individual exhibited loyalty to his mentor—whom he referred to as "patron"—by willingly following his advice, and the mentor then helped the young man to navigate the donor world. The young man then interpreted his reward—becoming the NGO's director—as payback for loyalty. These themes also emerged in interviews with Ugandan NGO leaders (NGO Leaders, Personal Interviews, Kampala, May 23, 2018, May 25, 2018, and May 27, 2018). From our interviews, it was impossible to discern if these mentors had expectations—a key aspect of patron-client relations—for these young leaders.

We also discovered nuances in the role that relational ties can (and cannot) play in mobilization. First, for some individuals, these ties were an obstacle for mobilization. Ugandan and Ghanaian respondents explained that the lack of such ties made it hard for even highly motivated youth to break into the system and for some, the reason they lacked such ties was because of their family upbringing or the fact that they had attended poor schools, showing how a combination of negative factors may deter engagement). One Ugandan complained that politics was an exclusive club and that young politicians of all parties "face obstacles in a system like ours which is riddled by so much patronage and corruption and commercialized politics" (MP, Personal Interview, Uganda, May 28, 2018). But it was not just that cronyism provided no space for youth in politics: it also enabled some youth to benefit, while others were excluded. The director of an NGO who had been a student leader at the University of Ghana said, "One of the issues in Ghana is students or youth being used in partisan politics. They are motivated by politicians because they get some monies from them…We are supposed to get a fair share of the cake, but some youth have more share of the national cake because they help some politicians" (NGO Leader, Personal Interview, Ghana, June 27, 2018). Cronyism may explain why many young people turn to NGO or CBO work: they feel they have no other option (NGO Leader, Personal Interview, Uganda, May 24, 2018). NGO work also may give young people experience and personal connections that will benefit them in future political campaigns, a point two Ugandan politicians made (MP & local government official, Personal Interviews, Uganda, May 24, 2018 and May 29, 2018).

Second, a few respondents stated that they were explicitly motivated to engage publicly because they wanted to tackle the corruption and inequality that they perceived to emerge from rule through these personal relationships. In Uganda, some worked with good governance organizations to combat cronyism and patronage politics (NGO Leader and Protest Leaders, Personal Interviews, Uganda, May 24, 2018, May 26, 2018, and May 27, 2018). In Ghana, one young leader said that he became engaged in politics because he believed that his role model—former president General Jerry John Rawlings—had challenged the arbitrariness of "big man" politics (Student Leader, Personal Interview, Ghana, June 22, 2018).

Third, we found that a few individuals, particularly those at NGOs, viewed relationships with international donors as a way to gain resources for training, travel, publicity, and salaries. These relational ties seemed to differ from the traditional neopatrimonial model in which the patron expects loyalty, indebtedness, and reciprocity. Perhaps this was because donor projects had relatively short time frames, donor staff often had impersonal relations with local people, and donor-local relations were formalized in written grant agreements (Keating and Thrandardottir 2017). Instead, they are examples of professional relationships built on changes within the political or civil society landscape. As one example: an AIDS advocate in Uganda was mobilized when she attended a youth camp that the Elizabeth Glaser AIDS Foundation supported. She then became connected to multiple AIDS NGOs in Uganda. However, she did worry that when (or if) donors no longer cared about AIDS, the connections and material resources they brought would end (AIDS Advocate, Personal Interview, Uganda, June 12, 2018).

Finally, even though the literature states that ethnic ties often undergird neopatrimonialism, none of our respondents mentioned that ethnicity played a role in their engagement. We acknowledge that our respondents may have purposely dismissed ethnicity. Still, this outcome was surprising, because Ghana's two main political parties are ethnically based (Anebo 2006; Frempong 2001; Gyimah-Boadi

and Asante 2006) and because Uganda's political history is rife with ethnic tensions (Arthur 2009; Faanu and Graham 2017; Taylor 2017; Nyombi and Kaddu 2015). In one sense, this discovery seemed to affirm a neo-liberal emphasis on autonomous individuals who act outside of community-based identities, particularly in urban arenas where ethnic and family ties may have weakened. In the process, the finding aligns with research that shows that ethnic ties can motivate participation in protests, but only if individuals feel that their group has been marginalized (Mueller 2018), and ethnicity does not always determine voter participation or vote choice (Bleck and van de Walle 2019, pp. 148–159). Thus, what seemed to matter more for some of our respondents was identity as a person with a grievance (see above), not a person with a particular ethnic background. On the other hand, a few respondents' emphasis on cronyism and patronage politics may have been a way to disguise ethnicity as a driver of participation. More research is needed to explore how ethnicity may influence young leaders' public engagement.

Different Leaders, Different Reasons?

We have pointed to a variety of factors that shape public engagement among the African youth we interviewed. Within our small sample, we found that individuals specialized in certain forms of engagement often because of their interests, personality, training, and opportunities. We identify three broad types of engagement: partisan politics (party members and elected officials), contentious politics (activists), and the nonprofit world (NGO and CBO leaders). Those interested in partisan politics tended to be well-spoken and diplomatic, while those who worked with CBOs were often charismatic but also grounded in local realities. Not everyone is willing to pay the costs associated with contentious politics, and those two respondents exhibited a steadfastness rooted in religious faith although they also pointed to other factors like upbringing and education. It seemed that NGO leaders had the most cross-cutting personalities and skill sets, perhaps affirming the point that NGO work can be a stepping stone for government or private sector work (see Watkins and Swidler 2013). We also found that leadership across these various types of engagement was relatively equal between males and females, with the one exception being contentious politics where men (not women) led. This observation aligns with findings about how African young women tend to shun protest politics because of its physical dangers and social risks (Lekalake and Gyimah-Boadi 2016). Finally, contrary to what one might expect from diverse political environments, we did not see major differences across the countries in terms of the drivers of engagement it was not, for instance, that relational ties or family upbringing mattered in one country but not in the other two.)

Although we caution that our findings do not reveal a clear causal relationship between one set of factors and a corresponding leadership role, we do find some variation across leadership types. To begin, it was apparent that multiple factors often led to participation, with these frequently overlapping to create a complicated "biography of engagement" for each leader. Despite this fact, we can identify some patterns across our three categories of respondents. First, nearly all respondents involved in partisan and contentious politics had been encouraged by their immediate family. For example, Tanzanian party members and Ugandan politicians and activists mentioned family

inspiration, exhibited a strong sense of ambition, and cited an innate desire to be involved in politics. In contrast, it was often negative family experiences—neglect, absent fathers, domestic violence, poverty—that inspired CBO and NGO leaders. Second, education alone did not determine participation in a particular activity, since all respondents had schooling through the secondary level. However, for those involved in partisan politics, it was often their time in elite secondary schools and/or universities that fostered political learning and promoted political networking. Schools were a crucial avenue through which they built relational ties. Most CBO and NGO leaders did not have such experiences. Fourth, youth who chose to make a difference outside of the parties or government were most often driven by their own identities as marginalized individuals and the grievances they saw in their communities. For example, one Ghanaian woman started an organization to help the disabled because her sister with Down's syndrome had experienced significant stigma (CBO Leader, Personal Interview, Ghana, July 5, 2018). Fifth, all respondents articulated that purposive incentives motivated their action, though such "purposes" could differ and some interviewees may have overly emphasized this point. NGO and CBO workers tended to mention promoting social justice, combating poverty, and improving the community, while politicians and party members often stressed "advancing the nation," winning the election, or challenging the ruling party (Ugandan MP, Personal Interview, May 29, 2018), but some of these purposive incentives were no doubt affected by their family upbringing and educational experiences. Sixth, as one might expect, personal connections mattered the most for mobilization in party politics, while the existence of such connections—and their potentially detrimental outcomes like corruption—pushed some youth leaders to start CBOs or activist organizations. Finally, donors provided opportunities and resources that urged a number of our respondents to engage in NGO work, an avenue for advancement outside of the state.

Conclusion

Despite the significant differences in levels of economic and political development across Ghana, Tanzania, and Uganda, youth in all three countries face similar challenges such as poverty and unemployment. Yet, in the midst of these constraints some young leaders strive to influence the public sphere through traditional political parties, civil society organizations that contribute to communities, and contentious politics that demands societal and political reform.

This article provides a nuanced approach to understanding the drivers of youth public engagement. We affirm that a mixture of incentives can motivate engagement, yet in more complex ways than previously recognized. Family socialization, education, purposive incentives, and identity played key roles among our African respondents, as elsewhere. Yet we go further than earlier research by exploring the complex relational ties that can undergird neopatrimonialism and the particularities of political opportunities in Africa. While relational ties may provide opportunities for engagement to many, not all young African youth participate in such networks. Instead, some young African leaders are motivated to engage in the public realm precisely because they see governance through connections—and the potential inequalities it can foster—as a problem. We have also shown how these factors can, and often do, intertwine, acting in concert to nudge young people into engagement.

Our findings have policy and research implications. In terms of policy, our findings can improve donor and government youth programs to better target youth with engagement incentives. Such knowledge will help donors to identify and evaluate their successes in youth mobilization. With regard to future research, our focus on urban centers revealed the strong influences of the nuclear family on youth leadership, yet work in rural areas may reveal a significant role for extended family members. Researchers could also investigate potentially different roles for mothers and fathers in socialization. Finally, future research should question if ethnicity may be associated with grievances and mobilization in the three contexts. Tackling these questions will add to this article's findings on the complex ways that African youth, contrary to negative portrayals, are working to improve their countries.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

Human Subjects Approval The study received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the three North Americans' home institutions, as well as within each country. Mengo Hospital Research Ethics Committee in Kampala and the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology provided approval and clearance, as did the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania and the Ethics Committee for the Humanities at the University of Ghana.

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Appendix. Interview Questions

Interview Guide

The following is a list of questions we used to guide our in-depth and open-ended interviews with leaders:

1. Tell me a little about your position. What does your job entail?
2. How did you come to be in this position/work?
3. Who influenced you to become involved in this position/work?
4. Tell me a little about your childhood:

- Where did you grow up?
- Who were the people who influenced you growing up?
- Were you always interested in [profession/field]?

5. How do you define being a "good citizen?" How does your work in this position relate to that definition?
6. How does your gender relate to your understanding of being a "good citizen?" Or does being a "good citizen" differ for men and women?
7. What role does religion play in your life/work?

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