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Research Statement

I study different aspects of Political Economy and Public Economics. In particular, I am interested in understanding marginalized populations and integration. I thoroughly enjoy studying the impact of public policy with the tools of applied microeconomics. Currently, my existing research focuses on two areas: immigrant behaviors and ideology in education. Overall, I am committed to engaging in research that will help us understand our society better and lead to designing effective public policy.

In my Job Market Paper, "Immigrant Enfranchisement and Integration: Evidence from Italy," my coauthor and I study the consequences of immigrant enfranchisement by exploiting Romania's accession to the EU in 2007, which (automatically) extended voting rights in local elections to Romanian immigrants, the largest foreign-born community in Italy. We conduct an event study analysis at the municipality-by-year level to reach four findings. First, we find that enfranchisement of Romanian immigrants leads to an increase in the likelihood of electing a Romanian-born councilor. This likelihood is even higher for municipalities that were expecting a competitive election. Using an instrumented difference-in-differences approach, we find that the increase in representation is driven by enfranchisement of the preexisting Romanian population, and not by new arrivalsafter the accession. Second, we find that social capital increases among Romanian immigrants after 2007, indicating that the effect of enfranchisement extends beyond political representation to integration. Third, despite the increase in representation and social capital, the likelihood of the right-leaning party winning increases with the presence of an immigrant community, independently of their voting eligibility. This suggests that the natives' backlash against presence of immigrants plays a bigger role in determining the winning party than the existence of a newly enfranchised immigrant community. Finally, in accordance with the ideology of the winning party, municipalities with more immigrants increase spending on public security and decrease spending on social programs.

I also examine immigrant behavior outside of the political realm. In "Information from Origin Country and Immigrant Behavior: Evidence from the COVID-19 Pandemic in the U.S.," I study the social distancing behavior of the 20 largest immigrant groups in the United States. I exploit the timing of COVID-19 outbreaks across immigrants' origin countries to examine their behavioral responses to new developments in their origin countries. I find that an increase in the percentage of population infected with COVID-19 in the origin country leads to an increase in the average level of social distancing for the relevant immigrant group in the U.S. Further, I find that immigrants whose origin countries faced an outbreak before the U.S. increase their level of social distancing immediately after the declaration of national emergency in the U.S. That is the circumstances in the country of residence plays an interactive role in inducing a behavioral change among the immigrants. Using Facebook's Social Connectedness Index and Google search trends, I find that real-time transmission of information through the internet is a likely driving force of this effect. By examining how immigrants' ties to their origin countries influence their behaviors, my findings provide unique insights into the motivation of a substantial subset of the population.

Learning the behavioral trends of immigrants is integral to both policymakers and scholars focusing on immigration and ethnic studies, as seen now in helping to predict reactions to COVID-19 but will also be increasingly important as the foreign-born population grows.

My last paper switches focus from the immigrant population to political preferences of a domestic population. The paper "Ideology Backlash: Anticommunist Education and Ideology in South Korea" examines the impact of anticommunist education in South Korea on individuals' political preferences. I find that anticommunist education from 1954-1987 affected South Koreans' views on North Korea and their economic values. Based on the individual's year of birth, I exploit the variation in years of exposure to anticommunist education. I find that more years of anticommunist education result in individuals identifying themselves with ideas and values that oppose anticommunism. This pattern suggests that the anticommunist education in South Korea backfired in the long run, possibly due to the transition from authoritarian regime to democracy. This paper is the first to find a backlash to education embedded with political ideology over an extended period.

In the future, I will continue to examine immigrant integration in different aspects. My broad interest includes identity transition, language barrier, and cultural amalgamation. I am also interested in the identity of minorities and what causes the identity to become more salient. I am excited to explore these topics as I advance into my research career.