Research Statement
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"How do I convince my friends to attend this protest?" "Why does my Congressman never talk about equity?" In the midst of racial unrest in summer 2020, I taught a course titled *Representation, Identity, and Dissent* focused largely on my research. Students had many practical questions — including those above — the answers to which we worked out in class using policy implications of my work. As such, my research follows the "applied political scientist" approach that I teach my students. I use my expertise in both quantitative and qualitative methods to address research questions with impacts for public policy. Alongside collaborations with career political scientists, I co-create research projects with students in my classes.

I highlight the applied political scientist nature of my work through three major contributions: (1) systematically exploring how elites manipulate citizens' ethnic identities for personal and political gain, (2) showing how misaligned incentives causes ethnic representation to fail and ethnic violence to become an attractive alternative, and (3) carefully considering the importance of sound and varied methodologies to study representation, identity, and violence. Within each contribution I emphasize not only my research approach, but also how I teach students about and involve students in my work.

Representation and Identity

Political representation has the potential to provide presence, voice, and resources to traditionally excluded identity groups. Countless international organizations advocate for increasing ethnic minority representation in order to improve ethnic relations and to provide much needed resources for ethnic minority groups. I assess the effectiveness of this strategy by investigating the consequences of ethnic representation on attitudes and behaviors of both citizens and political elites. My work finds that increasing ethnic minority representation is not a particularly effective way to improve ethnic relations or to deliver benefits to minority groups.

My dissertation examines this question in three stages. First, I use newly collected data on the ethnic diversity of cabinets worldwide to argue and show that country leaders' primary motivation for increasing ethnic political representation is their expectation that ethnic groups gaining representation will lend them political support (published in *Politics, Groups, and Identities*). This means that ethnic representation only occurs in select, politically advantageous circumstances. When ethnic representation does happen, experimental work I conducted in India suggests that facilitating interethnic contact is the best way to increase elite ethnic tolerance (paper under review). Unfortunately, I also find that ethnic representation has relatively little effect on citizens' ethnic tolerance (published in *Political Studies*).

Students and I apply these research results as a part of community engaged partnerships. For example, one of my courses was tasked by a local community organization with developing educational materials for youth on how to effectively represent issues that they cared about when contacting elected officials. My work suggests that identity-based appeals are only effective in certain circumstances, meaning that we designed our educational materials to emphasize other reasons why representatives should listen to the issues that the youth raised.

Beyond engaging students with the research process, my research findings influence my approach to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the classroom. My work shows that facilitating contact between people in a supportive environment helps to develop a collective identity that promotes cooperation. Based on this finding, I encourage students to form a collective applied political scientist identity that respects each student's own background and experiences while promoting a classroom climate where students see one another as peers.

I am extending these research results in two main ways. In two working papers, I examine minority group welfare as it is reflected in citizen requests for government services and their willingness to participate in the deliberative democratic process. The former project is especially well suited for collaboration with students because data on citizen service requests is available in many country contexts and can be analyzed using a wide variety of research methods. Second, I have thus far studied ethnic representation and its effect on outgroup views and welfare in relative isolation, without considering the role that other identities play in shaping this relationship. Now that I have established theories and measures of ethnic representation, I am beginning several projects to consider how ethnicity may interact with other identity-based factors including language and gender. Both India and post-Communist cases provide ideal opportunities to implement these extensions.

Violence

Ethnic representation often fails to help ethnically diverse polities achieve long-term stability, sometimes resulting in ethnic violence. Both citizens and elites hold responsibilities for ethnic violence; in particular, I investigate how perceived personal benefits result in citizens and elites promoting or engaging in ethnic violence.

Elites make decisions to engage in or to avoid violent conflict in order to achieve potential personal or political gain. In some cases, the prospect of maximizing the financial benefits of political power is enough to prompt leaders to engage in ethnic conflict. I find in a meta-analysis of natural resources and conflict that natural resource wealth is not associated with increased conflict propensity, but that ethnic diversity is an important moderator variable (published in *Research & Politics*). At the micro-level, the location of natural resources influences leader decision-making within ethnic conflicts (published in *Journal of International Studies*).

More often, elite personal financial gain mixes with re-election prospects to make the threat of inciting ethnic violence a powerful political negotiation tool. Here, leaders of minority ethnic groups have the ability to make credible threats if their co-ethnic citizens are geographically concentrated in resource rich regions. These leaders bargain for extra political power in exchange for committing not to incite ethnic violence (published in *Caucasus Survey*). Sudden influxes of wealth can function in the same way: leaders in regions with unexpected increases in tourism spending can extract greater financial concessions from the central government (published in *Tourism Economics*).

Rhetoric is an important tool that elites use to prompt citizens to support their decisions; indeed, elites do not always respond to crises in other, more meaningful ways (published in *British Politics*). One common tactic is to portray an ethnic outgroup as unlike ethnic majority citizens. I find that central government leaders talk about de-facto separated regions as more distanced than autonomous regions, providing them with a rationale for justifying attempting to take back these regions by force (paper under review). Elite rhetoric alone is

not sufficient for radicalizing citizens, but rhetoric may be effective if it occurs in conjunction with instrumental incentives like socio-economic deprivation (published in *British Journal of Political Science*).

I engage students with these research results in two ways: data driven activities and a policy day simulation. Students studying violence often want to go beyond rhetoric and to better understand the data construction process. I have developed a series of in-class activities where I walk students through parts of my natural resources and conflict meta-analysis. These activities teach students basic data analysis skills and spreadsheet use at the same time that they illustrate how examining many research studies on a single topic provides a much more nuanced picture of the results than does a single study that elites may use as evidence to support policy positions. With these activities in mind, I ask students to work together in a legislative policymaking simulation called policy day to see how well-crafted policy proposals change as a result of elite motivations and rhetoric.

Measurement
Conceptualizing and measuring both political representation and violence involves institutional, media, and public opinion data. Past work has relied heavily on media sources whose reporting on violence is often quite similar (published in *Asian Journal of Communication*) and potentially biased (working paper). Social media posters also exhibit biases that make it difficult to precisely estimate the size of ethnic collective action without on-the-ground evidence (published in *Studies in Indian Politics*). Public opinion surveys may be a way to avoid these biases, but researchers must take steps to ensure data quality when using survey platforms like Amazon Mechanical Turk (published in *Research & Politics*).

Students are particularly interested in research questions related to media data, representation, and violence. First, I work to increase student media literacy using activities that reveal media bias. Second, media data is an excellent entry point for students interested in collaborating with me to conduct research. I have experience working with media data across a wide variety of contexts: from the United States to the Republic of Georgia to India. I have also mentored several students working on projects about media reporting on protests and violent conflict. I plan to use these experiences to establish a mentorship program for students interested in investigating questions related to identity, representation, and conflict. Students with any background will be welcome and will be able to work on a wide range of projects, from collaborating with me on studies related to media data to pursuing independent research. I see mentorship programs on identity and representation as a key way to foster equity and inclusion in my teaching. Measurement questions and media data provide a natural vehicle for mentoring and applying research results directly to contemporary American politics and public policy.

My research addresses fundamental questions spanning Comparative politics, International Relations, and American public policy. I contribute to existing work by linking citizen and elite behaviors and attitudes concerning both representation and the potential for violence. I am already engaging students in my work, and I look forward to expanding opportunities for student collaboration in the future.