

Research Statement

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My research draws on and contributes to the subfields of transitional justice, human rights, and democratization. I am especially interested in how countries deal with the aftermath of human rights abuses. While some governments consistently support the aims of transitional justice by prosecuting perpetrators, uncovering the truth of the past, and improving victims' lives, other governments gloss over atrocities committed by or in the name of the state. In my work, I endeavor to identify the causal mechanisms that motivate such different responses to human rights abuses by exploring the relationships among victims, governments, and societies in post-conflict and post-authoritarian contexts. I explain why some countries promise and pay reparations and why others do not. I also uncover why some countries promise reparations but never actually pay them. I focus on reparations promises and payments in Europe and Latin America, with a particular emphasis on Germany, but these questions are globally relevant. Governments have been implementing domestic reparations programs since the end of WWII, and new programs are being developed worldwide in response to state-sanctioned human rights abuses. However, the literature offers no theory explaining the wide variation in whether and how governments promise and pay reparations to victims of these abuses. Reparations are becoming more of an international norm, and so it is imperative for us to understand the drivers, dynamics, and effects of this widely utilized transitional justice mechanism. My research moves us forward by asking: What motivates governments to promise and to pay reparations to their own citizens in the wake of human rights abuses for which the state bears some responsibility?

My dissertation, *Pressures, Promises, and Payments: Explaining Governments' Reparations Decisions after Domestic Human Rights Abuses*, which I am now adapting into a book, uses quantitative and qualitative methods to answer this question. I theorize that governments promise and pay reparations in order to satisfy victims and their allies. Thus, reparations are the product of bottom-up social movements. I argue that when victims' groups organize to demand reparations, they attract allies to their cause who, in turn, help them pressure the government to promise reparations. Then, if that pressure is sustained, these same forces induce the government to pay reparations. I test this theory using both a quantitative analysis of an original dataset on reparations and three qualitative case studies. The quantitative analysis examines different factors that could influence governments' reparations decisions using original reparations data that I collected on 180 post-conflict and post-authoritarian cases between 1939 and 2006 in Europe, Latin America, and Central Asia. I also contribute to the discipline by distinguishing between reparations promises and payments and by including the full universe of cases, namely where reparations for human rights abuses were promised but not paid, promised and paid, and neither promised nor paid. The dissertation finishes with three qualitative case studies that use process tracing to identify the causal mechanisms that drive reparations promises and payments.

My dissertation—and, in the next two to three years, my book—makes several contributions to the study of comparative politics, specifically in the areas of transitional justice, human rights, and social movements. I apply social movement theory to transitional justice in order to offer the first generalizable theory as to why governments promise and pay reparations to their own citizens. This sheds light on a transitional justice mechanism that has been used for over seventy years but whose causes and effects remain largely unknown. I use my original dataset on reparations to identify previously unseen reparations trends, such as finding that although more democracies than autocracies promise and pay reparations, once autocracies promise reparations, they are more likely to fulfill that promise. This result indicates a more complicated relationship

between reparations and regime type than the literature would suggest. Given the frequency of new reparations programs and a growing global emphasis on human rights, my research makes an important contribution to debates on how transitional justice, human rights, and democracy function and develop in post-authoritarian and post-conflict contexts. It also speaks to fundamental debates in political science on regime change, conflict, and authoritarianism.

The first substantive chapter of my dissertation tests my theory on quantitative reparations data from my original dataset. This chapter, which I am currently revising into a journal article, tests my theory about why governments promise and pay reparations. As this field grows, my theory offers testable assumptions for future work to examine. My dataset is the first to record reparations promises in addition to reparations payments. It also makes it possible to analyze the variation in how governments treat different victim groups in the same country by coding them separately. Unlike many other transitional justice datasets, it includes negative cases, in which governments bear responsibility for domestic human rights abuses committed during internal conflicts or dictatorships but have yet to promise or pay reparations. Including both negative and positive cases reduces bias and permits a more complete understanding of reparations.

I use a Cox proportional hazard model to test my hypotheses about governments' reparations promises and I find support for my hypothesis that victims' organizations drive governments' reparations promise and payments decisions. Even when accounting for the performance of the economy and for regime type, organized victims' groups increase the likelihood of both reparations promises and payments in statistically and substantively meaningful ways.

The rest of my dissertation consists of three in-depth qualitative case studies: the West German government's reparations to Jewish German Holocaust victims, the West German government's reparations to Romani German victims of the Nazis, and the Peruvian government's reparations to victims of Peru's 1980-2000 internal armed conflict. These case studies help me identify the causal mechanisms behind governments' reparations policies and rely on data that I collected in over sixty interviews with scholars, politicians, victims' organizations, and bureaucrats in Germany, Peru, Croatia, and the United States from 2014 to 2017. My two German case studies also draw on archival work that I conducted in Germany from 2015 to 2016. Despite the geographic, temporal, and contextual differences across my case studies, a common theme emerged: Reparations outcomes hinge on victims' efforts.

The breadth and detail of my dissertation make it suited for publication as a book, and I am currently revising my dissertation for publication at a major university press. It will constitute a major step forward in the study of reparations and will be of interest not only to transitional justice scholars, but also to scholars who study social movements and people interested in social justice. I have also adapted two chapters of my dissertation into standalone journal articles; one of these is a case study of Romani Germans' reparations experiences and is now under review, and the other is my quantitative analysis chapter, which I am currently preparing for submission.

Related Research

My research also explores other aspects of reparations. In addition to the statistical chapter of my dissertation that I am revising, I have four other single-authored papers in progress that use my original reparations data to study who receives reparations and for what. I have presented these

papers at conferences and workshops in the last two years and, now that my dissertation is complete, I am revising these papers to submit to journals by August 2020.

The first of these papers, “When Governments Pay Their Dues: Reparations in the Post-War Period,” introduces my original reparations dataset. It also sets my reparations data in comparison with other reparations data to show how, by improving the way we gather and code reparations data in four specific ways that I discuss, we will improve the quality, reliability, and validity of future research on reparations.

The second paper, “Limited Contrition: Explaining Systematic Variation in Reparations Payments,” identifies abuse-specific trends and offers a theory about why some crimes are more likely to garner reparations promises and payments than others. I draw on data that I have collected in my original dataset but do not use in my dissertation: which types of human rights violations were committed during an abusive dictatorship or internal conflict (I collected data for nine categories of abuses), which types of abuses received reparations promises, and which ones resulted in reparations payments. I find that visible abuses, such as property damage, death, and injury, are more likely to yield reparations promises and payments than invisible abuses, such as torture and sexual violence. I posit that this is because the burden of proof is lower for visible abuses, so survivors’ claims are more likely to be seen as trustworthy.

The third paper, “From Paper to Payment: The Uneven Application of Domestic Reparations Laws,” examines how politicians, bureaucrats, and courts interpret and enact reparations laws in ways that privilege certain victim groups over others, even when both victim groups are marginalized communities whose reparations benefits stem from the same law. It offers qualitative evidence from postwar Germany, including data from elite interviews, to show that the less organized and the less domestic and international support a victim group has, the more likely that domestic officials are to interpret and apply reparations laws in discriminatory ways.

The fourth paper, “Identity & Implementation: The Effect of Victim Ethnicity on Reparations Policy,” looks at how ethnic minority identity is linked to the likelihood that a victim group will receive a reparations promise or reparations payment, as well as how long that promise and/or payment will take to occur. While gathering the qualitative and quantitative data for my dissertation, I realized that in some cases, governments promise reparations to a large number of victim groups under the same law, but that some groups never receive reparations payments or must wait years longer than other groups for those payments. As I continued to read, it seemed that survivors from ethnic minority groups were more likely to have difficulties accessing their promised reparations payments than survivors who had been persecuted for non-ethnic reasons. In this paper, I use quantitative data to show that although ethnic minority groups receive reparations promises and payments at the same rates as groups persecuted for non-ethnic reasons, it takes several years longer for ethnic minorities to receive those promises and payments.

I have also pursued research on other aspects of transitional justice, collaborating with colleagues to explore the connections between transitional justice and related fields of research, including democratization and nationalism. Most recently, I co-authored a paper on transitional justice and electoral manipulation with Cole Harvey (University of Wisconsin-Madison) whose research focuses on elections. We examined the effects of four different transitional justice mechanisms

on illegal and technically legal types of electoral manipulation and found that lustration/vetting reduces legal manipulation, post-transition trials reduce illegal manipulation, and amnesties and truth commissions have no effect on either type of electoral manipulation. To our knowledge, this paper, titled “Trials, Lustration, and Clean Elections: The Uneven Effects of Transitional Justice Mechanisms on Electoral Manipulation,” is the first quantitative examination of the links between transitional justice and elections. It was published in *Democratization* in May 2017.

I am currently collaborating with colleagues on two other papers. I presented the first, “Lip Service or Lasting Protection: The Link Between Transitional Justice Mechanisms and Minority Rights,” with Katharine Aha (Dartmouth College) at the European Political Science Association Conference in June 2019. We show that ethnic minority rights protections laws are more likely to materialize when, after state-sponsored human rights abuses were committed against an ethnic minority, the state addresses those crimes by using transitional justice mechanisms.

The second, “Reducing Mass Atrocities through Transitional Justice,” with David Muchlinski (Georgia Institute of Technology), applies logistic regression to a new dataset on mass atrocities and data from the Transitional Justice Research Collaborative to evaluate which transitional justice mechanisms are associated with reduced recurrences of mass killings. The literature has not systematically examined if transitional justice reduces mass atrocity recurrence, and so we address this mismatch between theory, evidence, and practice by conducting the first test of the relationship between transitional justice implementation and genocide onset/recurrence. Our results provide cross-regional, cross-temporal statistical evidence and constitute an important addition to the fields of transitional justice, peace and security, and mass atrocity prevention.

Future Research

Given the relative scarcity of reparations research, there are a number of ways for me to expand my research agenda in the future, many of which draw on the original quantitative data that I have already collected. I also want to explore how governments’ reparations decisions are affected by learning effects and diffusion patterns, because in interviews, some victims’ advocates explicitly mentioned copying the strategies used by reparations movements in foreign countries, inviting delegations from countries with successful reparations campaigns to come speak and offer advice, and collaborating with victims’ groups abroad to raise awareness. Other victims’ advocates seemed puzzled when I asked them about whether they had had any outside inspiration or guidance in their reparations activities. Examining the networks between post-dictatorship and post-conflict countries could help explain why some governments quickly adopt proven best practices in reparations, whereas others innovate new ideas but also make serious and predictable missteps in drafting and implementing a reparations program.

Ultimately, my dissertation, my collaborative work, and my independent projects contribute to many different, interconnected, and fledgling debates on reparations and transitional justice in both theoretical and empirical ways. I use original data and quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate a topic that, while rarely researched, is both globally relevant and historically important. I offer the first testable, generalizable theory about why governments choose to promise and to pay reparations to citizens who have been abused by previous governments of that same state and find strong support for my argument that when victims organize to demand reparations, they have the agency and power to succeed in their claims.