Identifiability, State Repression, and the Onset of Ethnic Conflict*

Christine S. Mele† David A. Siegel‡

Abstract

When do persecuted ethnic minority groups choose to assimilate into the dominant majority group, rather than differentiate from it, and how do states respond? We argue that any answer to these questions must consider the joint effects of identity on state repression and the possibility of ethnic conflict. We posit two mechanisms through which identity acts: (i) mobilization and (ii) operational capacity, defined as the ability of the group to contest state repression successfully. We show that minority groups may choose assimilation even when differentiation would *aid* them in mobilization against the state, for a *tactical* reason: the benefits from improved mobilization may be outweighed by costly reductions in operational capacity. Efforts to assimilate emerge when the state cannot be indiscriminate in countering dissent, or when members of the minority group can more easily pass as members of the majority. Repressive states, in anticipation, will hinder assimilation by accentuating fundamental differences between groups.

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†Technical Delivery Lead and Data Scientist at Waggl, Inc; E-mail: Christine.mele@gmail.com

‡Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Duke University; E-mail: david.siegel@duke.edu.

1 Introduction

The decisions of persecuted ethnic minority groups to assimilate into or differentiate from the dominant majority group can affect both the repression minority group members face and their chances to contest that repression successfully. Identity thus is linked inextricably to state repression and ethnic conflict, yet rarely are identity decisions considered in such a joint context. We offer a theory that makes these connections in order to answer the questions: When will groups assimilate, when will they differentiate, how will repressive states manage that choice, and how does the presence of repression and the possibility of conflict affect identity decisions?[1]

Our theory highlights two key mechanisms through which identity acts: mobilization and operational capacity. The degree to which the minority group is identifiably different from the majority alters the minority group's ability to *mobilize* for conflict, as it affects both the minority group's ability to solve its collective action problem and the efficacy of state repression in inhibiting resource acquisition by the minority group. Identifiability also affects the *operational capacity* of mobilized groups, as the state generally is better able to target more identifiable groups' anti-state operations, reducing their operational capacity. A reduction in operational capacity reduces the ability of the group to effect change via anti-state operations.

To explore the above mechanisms formally in order to better understand their strategic implications for identity choice, we take as a starting point the model in Mele and Siegel

[1]Sambanis and Shayo (2013) allow for the endogeneity of conflict and identification choices but do not incorporate the role of state repression. Identity choice in our model also is more instrumental than in theirs. Caselli and Coleman (2013) and Eguia (2013) allow for the endogeneity of repression and identification, but not the decision of the minority group to engage in operations against the state. Mele and Siegel (2017) incorporate endogenous identity choice, repression, and ethnic conflict, but consider only strong states under which mobilization is disadvantaged and do not consider the state's decision to hinder or facilitate the group's choice of identifiability. In a two-period model in which the group that controls the state is determined endogenously, Bhattacharya, Deb and Kundu (2015) endogenize identity, repression (through expropriation), and conflict. In their model, members of the out-group may switch to the in-group following the first period's conflict decision; switching has an exogenous cost, increases present economic gains, and reduces the chance of coming successfully to power next period. Dasgupta (2017) considers identity choice in the context of social conflict over public space, conflict that can be influenced by political contributions.

(2017) (henceforth M&S) and expand upon it in four significant ways. First, we add an initial action to M&S in which a repressive state can either facilitate or hinder the identity choice of the minority group. That extension is important for three reasons. One, it expands the repertoire of repressive actions under consideration to the manipulation of identity choice, joining a small but growing literature addressing extended repertoires of repression (Fariss and Schnakenberg, 2014; DeMeritt, 2016; Liu, 2018). Our addition to the repertoire better gets at the manner in which the strategic interaction between a repressive state and a minority group influences the evolution of minority group identity. Two, the significance of the extent to which it proves beneficial for the state to hinder assimilation in some contexts highlights further the importance of previously underexplored tactical choices in the evolution of identity. Three, the addition enables us to expand the results in M&S to show when the state actually wants to facilitate the minority group's desired identity change.

Whereas the intent of M&S was to analyze identity choice under conditions in which ethnic differentiation detracts from mobilization, we instead consider the context in which mobilization is *advantaged* by differentiation. In order to do this, we extend the one-dimensional conceptualization of identifiability in M&S to a two-dimensional one that considers identifiability from perspectives both internal and external to the minority group. Fourth, we link our model's assumptions, and hence its conclusions, directly to tactical, substantive considerations of discrimination in counter-dissent and ease of passing as a majority-group member.

We present our model briefly in the next section. We then elaborate on the key concepts of identity and identifiability, mobilization, and operational capacity that underpin the model. Subsequently, we present and discuss our model's comparative statics in an intuitive manner; a full formal analysis can be found in the appendix. We derive three main results. One, minority groups may choose assimilation not just when differentiation would harm their ability to mobilize, as in Mele and Siegel (2017), but also when differentiation would *aid* them in mobilization against the state. The reason we find is *tactical*: the group may choose

to forgo the benefits of additional mobilization if differentiation would reduce its operational capacity too severely. That can occur when the state has both the need and the capacity to avoid indiscriminate counter-dissent efforts, or when members of the minority group can more easily pass as members of the majority. Two, when mobilization is advantaged by differentiation, repressive states will attempt to hinder *both* assimilation and differentiation whenever either would be chosen by the minority group. Given these two results, we suggest that states needing to avoid indiscriminate counter-dissent, but facing a minority group capable of mobilizing in response to repression, will seek to make assimilation harder by accentuating fundamental differences between majority and minority groups, even though doing so will increase mobilization. In contrast, states in the same situation but lacking the need for discrimination will seek to make differentiation harder by minimizing fundamental differences between the groups. They will seek to tarnish the appeal of group membership and identity by denigrating and criminalizing the behavior of individual members of the minority group. Three, extending M&S, when mobilization is disadvantaged by differentiation, the state may in some cases facilitate the group's choice to differentiate. That is not a pleasant scenario, and might entail, for example, the creation of ghettos.

2 The model

The model we employ expands upon M&S, in that it incorporates the same three linked decisions of two unitary actors, while adding a fourth decision at the start of the game. The first actor is a repressive government (G) under the control of a majority group, while the second is a persecuted minority group (R). The minority group's primary motivation is to reduce the level of repression under which it suffers. Such repression captures the hold the majority group has over the minority, which can translate into anything from government policies differentially beneficial to the majority group to direct theft of minority group resources. Because that control is beneficial for the majority group, we assume that

the government desires to increase its repression of the minority group, all else equal. Thus, the two actors have opposing preferences.[2]

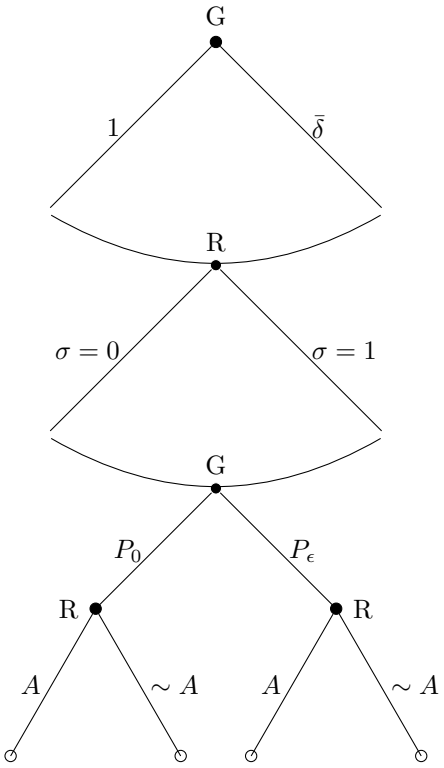

Figure 1: Game tree

Figure 1 captures the four strategic decisions. The government acts first, taking actions that effectively alter, by a multiplicative factor $\delta \in [1, \bar{\delta}]$, the marginal cost that the minority group must pay in order to adjust its identifiability. We discuss that setup further below. Setting a factor greater than 1 imposes a cost on the government $h(\delta)$, where h is a convex function of δ such that $h(1) = 0$.[3]

The minority group acts second, choosing its level of *identifiability*, denoted σ. Identifiability has numerous effects in the model, on which we elaborate in the next section. It affects the degree to which the minority group is able to achieve significant levels of *mobilization*

[2]The assumption serves as a scope condition for the model and keeps the focus on instrumental identity choice, rather than merely on identity choice arising from aligned preferences.

[3]A straightforward extension of the model would assign different values of δ to assimilation and differentiation, but that would not alter any results for reasons discussed in the appendix.

against the state, and the *operational capacity* a given level of mobilization entails. Both affect the chance that any conflict initiated by the minority group will result in a reduction in the repression it faces. We assume that the minority group begins with an exogenous level of identifiability, σ_0, and that adjusting that level in either direction imposes a cost $d(|\sigma - \sigma_0|, \delta)$ that is increasing in the extent of adjustment, at an increasing rate as δ increases. We refer to the decision to increase identifiability as differentiation, and the decision to reduce it, blending in with the majority group, as assimilation.

The government acts third, choosing either to increase the *repression* it exerts on the minority group by increment ϵ (P_ϵ) or to maintain repression at its initial level ϕ_0 (P_0). The interim level of repression subsequent to that decision is ϕ_i, which affects both mobilization and operational capacity, as discussed in the next section. Increasing repression entails cost, κ. Both actors have common prior beliefs on the distribution of that cost, but its exact value is realized only by the government just before it acts.

The minority group acts fourth, choosing whether (A) or not ($\sim A$) to engage in operations against the state. Engaging in operations has cost c; both actors have common prior beliefs on the distribution of that cost, but its exact value is realized by the minority group only before its final choice. Thus, no signaling takes place in the model. Anti-state operations are successful with a probability p that captures the operational capacity of the group, which depends on both the identifiability of the group and the level of mobilization the group has achieved, m. If successful, anti-state operations reduce repression on the minority group by an amount e. The final level of repression is denoted ϕ_f, which takes the value $\phi_i - e$ with probability p and the value ϕ_i with probability $1-p$, depending on whether or not R's operations were successful. Both actors are assumed to be risk-neutral expected utility maximizers.[4]

[4]We chose relatively simple utility functions to keep our focus on the success function, p, and related key concepts described further in the next section. However, an interesting extension of the model would relax our assumptions on utility to allow nonlinear or even endogenous valuations of repression on the part of both G and R (see, e.g., Dasgupta and Neogi 2018). For example, G's marginal utility of repression might decline as R assimilates.

The actors' payoffs are:

- G's utility: $v = \begin{cases} \phi_f - h(\delta) - \kappa & \text{if } P_\epsilon \\ \phi_f - h(\delta) & \text{if } P_0 \end{cases}$.
- R's utility: $u = \begin{cases} (1-\phi_f) - d(|\sigma - \sigma_0|, \delta) - c & \text{if } A \\ (1-\phi_f) - d(|\sigma - \sigma_0|, \delta) & \text{if } \sim A \end{cases}$.

2.1 Key concepts

Our model rests on three key concepts on which we elaborate in this section: identifiability, mobilization, and operational capacity.

2.1.1 Identifiability

To define identifiability, one must first define identity. We consider identity broadly as any set of attributes, descent-based and non-descent-based, viewed as salient in assessing membership of individuals within a specified group (Lee and Turan, 2004; Chandra, 2012). Identity serves an important role in everything from deriving meaning to structuring interactions within and between groups of people (Akerlof and Kranton, 2010; Gellner, 1983; Horowitz, 1985; Tajfel and Turner, 1979). We focus on a particular aspect of identity: its instrumental effect on the decisions of relevant actors (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000; Dickson and Scheve, 2006), in the particular context of inter-group conflict.

Given our focus, we consider not the characteristics of identity itself, but rather outward manifestations of identity. After all, it is on those outward manifestations that others base their behaviors. We define *identifiability* as the property of being identifiable as a member of a particular group, in this case as a member of the minority group. Two components of identifiability are of interest to us: internal identifiability, which is the ability of members of the minority group to identify other members of their own group; and external identifiability, which is the ability of members of the majority group to identify members of the minority

group. Internal and external identifiability may differ, potentially substantially. For example, differing skin color might be highly identifiable both internally and externally, while differing languages might be highly identifiable only internally, and ideology not at all. Prior formal models using the concept of identifiability (e.g., Caselli and Coleman 2013; Mele and Siegel 2017) were able to elide the distinction because they assume that increases in identifiability generally have a negative direct effect on the minority group in all channels in which they operate. That is not the case in our model: internal and external identifiability affect mobilization and operational capacity through different causal mechanisms, and increasing both may produce effects in different directions. Thus, a disaggregation step is essential here, as it was not in previous work.

We make four direct assumptions about identifiability. The first is that it is partially malleable, albeit at a cost (Caselli and Coleman, 2013). In that reasoning we follow a growing literature that treats identity as a social and political construct (Nagel, 1995; Chandra, 2001; Smedley, 2001; Leeson, 2005; Posner, 2005; Bernhard and Fischbacher, 2006; Dickson and Scheve, 2006; Goette and Meier, 2006; Chandra and Wilkinson, 2008; Leeson, 2008; Penn, 2008; Chandra, 2012; Gubler and Selway, 2012). The logic carries over to identifiability as well: the experimental literature on placing and passing (Habyarimana et al., 2007; Harris and Findley, 2014) illustrates that individuals deliberately and successfully can signal membership in different identity groups.[5] Doing so requires activating attributes that signal membership in a particular identity group. Assimilation (differentiation) in our model is the deliberate activation of attributes necessary for signaling membership in the majority (minority) group.

The cost of altering identifiability depends on what attributes must be activated, as well as on state action. Such attributes include those that are more malleable, such as behavior, dress, and language, as well as those that are less malleable, such as skin color. Our model's

[5]Harris and Findley (2014) contains more on identifiability and its connection to social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

cost function, $d(|\sigma - \sigma_0|, \delta)$, captures those differences. The shape of the function describes differences in cost arising from the need to adopt or hide different attributes specific to a context; the first argument of the function captures the increasing difficulty of taking more substantial actions to shift one's identity.[6] For example, minor changes in behavior may cost little while substantial changes cost more; however, both may be less costly than even a minor change in everyday language. Such costs include psychological, physical, and opportunity costs. Costs are assumed to outweigh any direct benefits gained by altering identifiability not captured in changes to mobilization or operational capacity, enabling us to focus on those two mechanisms. Exogenous benefits of raising (lowering) identifiability would increase (decrease) equilibrium identifiability without changing other comparative statics of the model.

We assume that the state has some ability to increase the cost of altering identifiability, as captured in its choice variable δ, which is the second argument in $d(\cdot)$. For example, a state can make assimilation harder by accentuating fundamental differences between majority and minority groups. Long-term repression within such a system would focus on openly demonizing the entire minority group rather than its individual members. Policies supporting such repression might mandate constant, visible minority group possession of indicators of their "otherness". They can take various forms, from specified clothing rules (e.g., yellow stars), to caste systems, to household registration rules, to citizenship documents that must be presented on demand. By the same token, a state can make differentiation harder by minimizing fundamental inter-group differences in favor of more circumstantial ones. Long-term repression within such a system would focus on the choices specific "bad actors" within the group supposedly made and seek to tarnish group membership by association with the behavior of those individuals. Policies supporting such repression might use the frame of "law and order", intended to hide deliberate repression of the minority group under a veil

[6]Ours is a one-shot model, and does not capture temporal variation in the difficulty of taking a given action in order to assimilate.

of failure to adhere to (the repressive state's) laws.

The second assumption we make is that we can treat the minority group as a unitary actor in making identifiability decisions, even though such decisions are made at the individual level. Underlying that assumption is the influence of minority group leaders and entrepreneurs (Posner, 2004; Chandra and Wilkinson, 2008). Assimilation (differentiation) occurs when group leaders spur group members toward lower (higher) levels of identifiability. The degree to which group members respond to that spur may be heterogeneous; however, as long as they shift their levels of identifiability in the direction desired by the group's leaders our unitary actor assumption will hold.[7]

The third assumption is that any change intended to affect either external or internal identifiability also shifts the other type of identifiability in the same direction, at least to some degree. In other words, any attempt to strengthen (weaken) either internal or external identifiability should also strengthen (weaken) the other, though perhaps only slightly.

We believe the third to be a weak assumption. Identifiability shifts as particular attributes are made more or less salient. If membership within a group is signaled by particular dress or custom or language, the attributes can be adopted. Even ethnicity can be, in some cases, masked or mimicked. If such signals enhance the degree to which other members of the same identity group can identify each other and so take advantage of the benefits of common group membership, we say that the group has increased its internal identifiability. Those actions, however, imply increases in external identifiability as well, even if such increases are small. In some cases, the correspondence is obvious: different appearances or apparel can be spotted, and different languages can be overheard. But even supposedly secret behaviors can

[7]We can weaken that conclusion slightly and maintain our assumption as long as the net effect of all identifiability shifts among minority group members in terms of mobilization and operational capacity is in the direction spurred by group leaders. That will occur when the leader successfully spurs those members most important for mobilization and operations. Although we adopt the unitary actor assumption in order to focus on the interplay of identity choice, repression, and conflict, our analysis is consistent with reasonable assumptions about individual preferences or information access, as in Sambanis and Shayo (2013) and Bueno De Mesquita (2010). It also helps identify the conditions under which an activated (nominal) group may become deactivated (activated) (Chandra and Wilkinson, 2008).

be spied upon by members of the majority group, or by minority group defectors looking to garner majority group favor. Conversely, attempts by the minority group to reduce external identifiability will limit the degree to which its members engaging in that behavior also can take part in overt displays of minority group membership, thus reducing internal identifiability as well.

The fact that external and internal identifiability move together implies a common factor between them. Changes in that common factor lead to non-zero changes in external and internal identifiability in the same direction, although those changes may be small and may differ between types of identifiability. For simplicity, we call the common factor *identifiability*. Our model allows the minority group to adjust that factor, which then has consequences for both internal and external identifiability.[8]

The fourth assumption is that identifiability acts solely through the channels of mobilization and operational capacity.[9] In turn, mobilization and operational capacity affect the minority group's ability to induce a reduction in repression, and, therefore, its choice to engage in conflict against the state. Identifiability choices are made instrumentally by the minority group in order potentially to reduce repression. Decisions to raise the costs of identifiability changes are made instrumentally by the state in order potentially to increase repression.

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[8]A common factor produced by factor analysis is an empirical analogue to identifiability here. Note that we are *not* saying that that factor encompasses all aspects of identifiability. Rather, we are saying that it encompasses parts of identifiability common to external and internal identifiability. Also note that, though we assume formally that the state hinders changes in the common factor of identifiability directly when it so chooses, our logic underlying state action is consistent with the third assumption. Attempts to hinder assimilation may focus, as in our examples, on increasing external identifiability. But such attempts also deliberately make it more difficult for members of the minority group to keep salient other aspects of their identity, likely increasing internal identifiability as well. Similarly, attempts to hinder differentiation, as in our examples, may focus on reducing internal identifiability. But such attempts also deliberately make it more difficult, or at least less beneficial, for members of the minority group to exploit open signals of group membership, likely reducing external identifiability as well.

[9]Note that identifiability does not serve as a signal in our model, as it does in Austen-Smith and Fryer Jr (2005).

2.1.2 Mobilization

Mobilization comprises the aggregate resources that the minority group can bring to bear against the repressive state (Tilly, 1978). Aggregate resources include both material resources and the engagement decisions of individuals within the group (Petersen, 2001; Sambanis and Shayo, 2013). Mobilization is undertaken in response to long-term state repression (Gates, 2002; Gurr and Moore, 1997). *Repression* comprises any combination of hatred, restrictions, exclusions, and inequality that has produced historical grievance while limiting minority group resources, assembly, and power (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004). Grievance, and so repression, acts to increase mobilization due to an induced desire to alleviate hardship and retaliate for committed wrongs; the limitations accompanying repression further spur mobilization by constraining outside options available to minority groups (Berman and Laitin, 2008). At the same time, long-term repression also inhibits achievable mobilization via many of the same channels that produced grievance: limitations on assembly and resource acquisition by the minority group (Moore, 1995; Mason, 1996; Steele, 2009).

Mobilization additionally is a function of identifiability. Increased external identifiability aids the repressive state in limiting minority group assembly and acquisition of resources (Kaufmann, 1996; Caselli and Coleman, 2013), and makes it easier for members of the majority group to paint members of the minority group as the "other". Such state repression tends to limit mobilization. In contrast, increased internal identifiability of a minority group improves the ability of group members to identify, and so engage in preferential contact with, other members of the minority group. Increased contact leads to enhanced mobilization networks that aid the group in solving its collective action problem (Gurr and Moore, 1997; Tilly, 1978; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Fearon and Laitin, 1996), as well as to greater efficacy of identity-based calls for action by ethnic leaders and entrepreneurs (Glaeser, 2005; Smith, 1996; Horowitz, 1985; Stewart, 1999; Gubler and Selway, 2012). Those effects tend to improve

mobilization.[10]

At times, the mobilization-increasing aspects of repression and internal identifiability will dominate; at other times the mobilizing-decreasing aspects of repression and external identifiability will. When the state can effectively project long-term repressive force, controlling assembly and resource acquisition, we expect mobilization to fall as repression and identifiability strengthen. This case is what Mele and Siegel (2017) analyze; they call it the case of a *strong repressive state*.[11]

When the state cannot effectively project long-term repressive force, we expect mobilization to rise as repression and identifiability increase. We call this the case of the *weak repressive state*, and focus on it here in all but our final proposition. Many contextual factors could place us in the case of a weak repressive state, including external conflicts and alliance entanglements, geographic features such as proximity or mountainous terrain, weak state capacity, or exogenous limitations on the application of repression (Buhaug and Gates, 2002; Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Matuszeski and Schneider, 2008; Buhaug, Cederman and Rød, 2008; Cederman, Buhaug and Rød, 2009). Some of those relate to minority group characteristics; we refer to a weak *state* only for simplicity, not to imply that the group is irrelevant.

[10]Our assumption on internal identifiability is common; see Sambanis and Shayo (2013) for a discussion and (Esteban and Ray, 1994, 1999) for the empirical relationship of this concept to measures of polarization. Research on social identity (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) generally supports increased attention to in-group members and separation from out-group "others"; see also Hale (2008) and Harris and Findley (2014). Mobilization strategies taking advantage of increased attention to in-group members and separation from out-group "others" are also common: Steve Biko's black consciousness movement in South Africa during apartheid is but one example. Note that the existence of a benefit to greater internal identifiability does not preclude fragmentation within ethnic groups, which can occur due to unmodeled factors such as the distribution of power among co-ethnic factions, their organizational makeup (Bakke et al, 2013), or competition between them (McLauchlin and Pearlman, 2012; Lawrence, 2010; Cunningham, 2011, 2013; Cunningham, Bakke and Seymour, 2012). Though our model does speak to variation across ethnic group factions related to different levels of identifiability or ease of mobilization, we do not consider differential repression across factions.

[11]Mele and Siegel (2017) find that minority groups have strong incentives to assimilate under these conditions and typically do so. However, given sufficient pressure from further repression they may instead differentiate in order to be less of a threat to the state, and so induce less additional repression. Neither incentive operates in our analysis.

In a weak repressive state, minority groups can translate strengthened repression and identifiability into enhanced group cohesion and grievance. We formalize this by specifying the mobilization function in our model as $m(\phi_i, \sigma)$, and assuming that $\frac{\partial m}{\partial \phi_i} > 0$ and $\frac{\partial m}{\partial \sigma} > 0$. The latter is shorthand for $\frac{\partial m}{\partial \sigma} = \frac{\partial m}{\partial \sigma_e}\frac{\partial \sigma_e}{\partial \sigma} + \frac{\partial m}{\partial \sigma_i}\frac{\partial \sigma_i}{\partial \sigma} > 0$, where σ_e and σ_i are, respectively, external and internal identifiability.

2.1.3 Operational capacity

Mobilization does not itself generate a reduction in repression: to accomplish this goal it must be translated into effective anti-state operations. We define the minority group's *operational capacity* as its ability to engage in successful anti-state efforts; those efforts are successful if they lead to a reduction in the level of repression the group suffers. Operational capacity thus is a tactical concept.

Mobilization feeds into operational capacity in a straightforward fashion: the more mobilized is the group, the more resources it brings to bear against the state, and so the greater operational capacity it has. Identifiability, in contrast, has a more complex effect on operational capacity. Its most substantial effect is negative. Increased external identifiability improves the ability of the government to target anti-state operations. It also increases the chance that a minority group member contributing to operations will be caught and punished for her actions, providing disincentives to take part in more risky operations. Together, those effects enhance counter-dissent and reduces operational capacity, for any level of mobilization achieved. That reduction in operational capacity could manifest as more failed individual attacks in an anti-state campaign, or in the choice of less well-defended, and so likely less important, government targets.

However, greater internal identifiability also enables more effective in-group sanctioning, limiting group defections and improving group cohesion (Fearon and Laitin, 1996; Berman, 2003; Berman and Laitin, 2008). That effect of identifiability increases operational capacity. We typically expect the positive effect to be outweighed by the negative effect of external

identifiability.

We capture the foregoing insights formally in assumptions about the probability of successful operations, $p(m(\phi_i, \sigma), \sigma)$. Larger values of p imply greater operational capacity. With respect to mobilization, we assume that $\frac{\partial p}{\partial m} > 0$, which implies that $\frac{dp}{d\phi_i} > 0$. With respect to identifiability, its direct effect is given by $\frac{\partial p}{\partial \sigma} = \frac{\partial p}{\partial \sigma_e}\frac{\partial \sigma_e}{\partial \sigma} + \frac{\partial p}{\partial \sigma_i}\frac{\partial \sigma_i}{\partial \sigma}$, which typically is negative.

We need not just the direct effect of identifiability, though: we also need its total effect on operational capacity, since identifiability also acts indirectly through mobilization. Formally, the total effect is given by $\frac{dp}{d\sigma} = \frac{\partial p}{\partial \sigma} + \frac{\partial p}{\partial m}\frac{\partial m}{\partial \sigma}$. The second term always is positive; the first term typically is negative.[12] Thus, the total effect may be positive or negative depending on the relative size of each term.

The parameter space separates into two cases along the foregoing lines. In case A, $\frac{dp}{d\sigma} < 0$; in case B, $\frac{dp}{d\sigma} > 0$. Thus, case A occurs when operations are the dominant consideration in identity choice, whereas case B occurs when mobilization is. For that reason we will sometimes call case A *operations dominant* and case B *mobilization dominant*.

Although many contextual factors might distinguish the two cases, we focus on two *tactical* considerations that relate to the magnitude of the derivative $\frac{\partial p}{\partial \sigma}$.[13] A more negative value of that derivative is more likely to place the context in case A, with operations dominant; a less negative value is more likely to place the context in case B, with mobilization dominant.

The first consideration is the degree to which the state needs, and is capable of, discrimination in counter-dissent. *Discrimination* is needed in counter-dissent when related collat-

[12]If the positive direct effect of internal identifiability dominates instead, then $\frac{\partial p}{\partial \sigma} > 0$ and $\frac{dp}{d\sigma} > 0$ is always true. In that case, greater identifiability always leads to greater operational capacity. That result is subsumed under case B.

[13]We also might have focused on a different tactical consideration highlighted by our model: minority group reliance on mobilization in anti-state operations, which is related to the $\frac{\partial p}{\partial m}$ term. Groups more rely on mobilization when they have access to supportive populations, the state chooses not to or is not able to prohibit those populations from acting, and the state is responsive to mobilization. While an equally valid tactical concern, we keep our focus tighter out of a desire for clarity.

eral damage would injure majority-group interests.[14] Governments needing discrimination, and capable of achieving discrimination, benefit greatly from stronger identifiability: it aids counter-dissent in reducing operational capacity, while avoiding damage to majority-group interests, suggesting a more negative value of $\frac{\partial p}{\partial \sigma}$. In contrast, indiscriminate governments achieve less gain to counter-dissent from enhanced identifiability, suggesting a less negative value of $\frac{\partial p}{\partial \sigma}$.

The second consideration is the ability of minority group members to "pass" as belonging to the majority group, and so relates to the nature of the identity cleavage between groups. If the salient identity cleavage is such that external identifiability is initially low and relatively malleable, passing—assimilating with the intent of reducing external identifiability—is an option likely to yield benefits to operational capacity, whereas differentiation is likely to produce detrimental increases in external identifiability. Thus, we expect a more negative value of $\frac{\partial p}{\partial \sigma}$ in that case. In contrast, if the salient identity cleavage is such that external identifiability is initially high and relatively unmalleable, we expect a less negative value of $\frac{\partial p}{\partial \sigma}$, since differentiation largely will increase only internal identifiability, which produces positive effects on operational capacity.

The two just-mentioned considerations represent different substantive distinctions, but operate through identical mechanisms in the model. Thus, we first present our results in the next section in terms of the more general cases A and B, and then in the following section interpret them in terms of the two considerations.

Before doing so, though, we must make two more assumptions. First, we assume decreasing returns to repression, so that $\frac{\partial^2 p}{\partial \phi_i^2} < 0$. Although in a weak state repression does enhance mobilization and operational capacity, a point of diminishing benefits likely will

[14]We assume that the government is interested primarily in reducing such harm, rather than harm to members of the minority group who we assume will not be government supporters in any case. One likewise might consider a lack of discrimination with respect to different factions of the minority group, as does the literature on repression. Such indifference might lead to stronger grievances and higher levels of mobilization. However, because that consideration is unrelated to identity differences between the majority and minority groups, it is outside the scope of our model.

be encountered as repression becomes more onerous. Second, we assume that $\frac{\partial^2 p}{\partial \sigma \partial \phi_i} < 0$ in case A and $\frac{\partial^2 p}{\partial \sigma \partial \phi_i} > 0$ in case B. In case A, strengthening identifiability reduces the positive effect of repression on operational capacity, as mobilized resources now may be more easily targeted. Conversely, increasing repression increases the negative effect of identifiability on operational capacity, as more room simply now is available for operational capacity to fall. In case B, in contrast, increases in both identifiability and repression improve operational capacity in a complementary fashion: they improve mobilization in a manner not overcome by their direct effects on operational capacity. As these assumptions on second derivatives do not follow directly from our more basic ones, however, we discuss the consequences of their potential violation in the appendix.

3 The role of tactics

Two cases must be considered in our analysis: case A, when operations are the dominant consideration in identity choice, associated with a state exhibiting discrimination in counter-dissent, relative ease of minority group "passing", or both; and case B, when mobilization is the dominant consideration in identity choice, associated with a state using indiscriminate counter-dissent, relative difficulty of "passing", or both. In the next section we elaborate on those substantive associations; here we present our results in terms of the general cases A and B. The analysis of our extensive form game of incomplete information yields different results across the two cases. As the subgame perfect equilibrium analysis of the game is, for the most part, less illuminating than the game's comparative statics, we turn immediately to them, working backward from the end of the game as is the norm. The appendix contains the full equilibrium analysis, as well as the proofs of all propositions.

Propositions 1 and 2 detail comparative statics relating to decisions to repress and to initiate anti-state operations, with respect to our four exogenous parameters: ϕ_0, σ_0, e, and ϵ. They also aid in understanding the decision of the minority group to assimilate or differ-

entiate, which Proposition 3 details. We state both propositions in terms of the effects of the model's parameters on the likelihoods of governmental and minority group actions. As costs for repression and operations are realized only right before, respectively, government and minority group act, changes in those likelihoods are the natural frame of analysis, both for the actors in the model and the analyst using the model to inform policy.

3.1 Anti-state operations

We start with the fourth decision made in the model: the minority group's decision whether or not to engage in anti-state operations. Proposition 1 summarizes the effects of the four exogenous parameters on that decision in each case.

Proposition 1: Under a weak state, the probability that the minority group engages in anti-state operations is increasing in e, ϵ, and ϕ_0. In case A, when operations are the dominant consideration in identity choice, this probability is decreasing in σ_0. In case B, when mobilization is the dominant consideration in identity choice, it is increasing in σ_0.

The effect of e, the benefit the minority group gets from successful operations, is intuitive. Since increasing e has no effect on anything other than the potential gain from anti-state operations, increasing it leads to more attempted operations. The key to understanding the effects of the other parameters, in contrast, lies in focusing on operational capacity. Since operational capacity is increasing in repression under a weak state, increasing either initial repression, ϕ_0, or the increment to repression, ϵ, leads anti-state operations to become more likely. When initial identifiability, σ_0, also leads to greater operational capacity in this way, it too increases the likelihood of anti-state operations. If the opposite is true, however, anti-state operations are less likely, owing to tactical disincentives.

Proposition 1 calls into question the traditional ethnic conflict logic that heterogeneous societies will fight more. Greater identifiability, a hallmark of ethnically heterogeneous societies, may produce a reduction in conflict, at least when differentiation leads to a costly

diminution in operational capacity.[15]

3.2 Increasing repression

Consider next the government's decision to increase repression. Proposition 2 summarizes the effects of the four exogenous parameters on that decision.

Proposition 2: Under a weak state, the probability that the government increases repression is decreasing in e and uncertain in ϵ and ϕ_0. In case A, when operations are the dominant consideration in identity choice, the probability is increasing in σ_0. In case B, when mobilization is the dominant consideration in identity choice, it is decreasing in σ_0. The signs of ϵ and ϕ_0 depend on specific trade-offs, specified in the appendix and on which we elaborate below.

The government's decision is more complex than the decision that follows it owing to the multiple effects of repression in the model. The effect of one parameter in both cases is clear: as e increases, the government reduces the probability of repressing the minority group. Since increasing e has no positive effect on government, the equilibrium government response to the greater cost of successful operations and the resulting greater likelihood of operations (from Proposition 1) is to increase repression less frequently and so spur less mobilization.

The effects of two other parameters, ϵ and ϕ_0, are indeterminate in both cases. The direction of the effect of ϵ depends on the trade-off between the direct utility gain from elevating repression and the greater risk of utility loss stemming from more successful operations. Larger increases in repression, ϵ, foster additional repression when: e is small, so that the likelihood of anti-state operations and the penalty for successful campaigns arising from greater operational capacity both are low; p is small, so that operations are unlikely to

[15]The result also indicates that some other models of identifiability, e.g., Caselli and Coleman (2013), might overestimate the likelihood of conflict by not taking operational capacity into account.

succeed; and p varies slowly with increases in repression near the point $\phi_0 + \epsilon$, so that more repression has little effect on operational success.

The direction of the effect of ϕ_0 depends on the rate of decreasing returns to operational capacity from additional repression. The faster the benefit of repression drops off with more of it, the less costly it will be for government to raise repression further, and so the more likely it is that increasing initial repression, ϕ_0, will generate more repression.[16]

The effect of increasing σ_0 varies by case. In case A, increasing identifiability reduces operational success and renders more repression less effective in increasing operational success. In that case, then, greater initial identifiability effectively reduces the marginal cost to government of becoming more repressive, and so it does so more often in equilibrium. In contrast, in case B, operational capacity increases in identifiability and renders additional repression more effective in raising the likelihood of operational success. In that case, greater initial identifiability effectively increases the marginal cost to government of raising repression, and so it does so less often in equilibrium. Thus, increased identifiability need not yield increased repression.[17]

3.3 Choosing identifiability

With the analysis of the last two decisions in hand, we now turn to the second decision in the game: the minority group's choice of identifiability. While the choice is continuous in the model, we are interested less in its value and more in the equilibrium direction in which the minority group moves it from its initial value. We can appeal to two main reasons. One, the value of identifiability is of less substantive interest than that of internal and external identifiability, but does not yield either of those two values without further

[16]If the minority group were instead to experience increasing returns to repression, then increasing initial repression would always reduce the chances that the government would increase repression further in equilibrium, though that response would affect no other results.

[17]As we show in the appendix, while it is possible to flip the comparative statics for σ_0 in both cases, violating the assumption on $\frac{\partial^2 p}{\partial \sigma \partial \phi_i}$ is on its own insufficient to do so.

assumptions. Two, the equilibrium value of identifiability depends in a complex manner on the cost term, $d(|\sigma - \sigma_0|, \delta)$, which has unspecified functional form beyond being increasing in both directions away from σ_0, with the marginal effect of the difference $|\sigma - \sigma_0|$ increasing in δ. For those reasons we do not offer an implicit definition of the equilibrium value of σ, although one could easily be derived from the analysis in the appendix. Instead we focus on the conditions under which the minority group assimilates, decreasing identifiability, or differentiates, increasing identifiability.

Proposition 3: The minority group attempts to assimilate in case A, when operations are the dominant consideration in identity choice, and to differentiate in case B, when mobilization is the dominant consideration in identity choice.

The intuition behind that result follows from the expected equilibrium behavior of each actor subsequent to the identifiability decision. In case A, decreasing identifiability both reduces the likelihood that the state will become more repressive (Proposition 2) and increases the minority group's operational capacity, so that strategy dominates. In case B, increasing identifiability serves the same two purposes, so the strategy of increasing identifiability dominates instead.[18]

The result in case B is intuitive: minority groups that bear few costs and capture many benefits from differentiating have little incentive not to do so. However, the result in case A is less intuitive, absent the logic of this model. Minority groups in weak states may use greater identifiability as a mobilization tool successfully, enhancing the resources they can mobilize against the repressive state. Assimilation in that context cedes the resource-enhancing effect; without some accompanying benefit, it is difficult to understand why a minority group would make such a choice. Proposition 3 offers a mechanism driven by *tactical* considerations: the

[18] As discussed in the appendix, conditions exist under which the conclusion of Proposition 3 would reverse. First, repression would need to rise (fall) in identifiability in case A (B), as discussed in footnote 17. Second, managing the state's choice of repression must be the dominant incentive underlying the minority group's action. In other words, differentiation (assimilation) in case A (B) would occur if: (i) Proposition 2 failed to hold and (ii) seeking out (avoiding) the resulting fall (rise) in the likelihood of repression was a more important driver of identifiability choice than the decline in operational capacity that choice would cause.

minority group foregoes the mobilization benefit that differentiation would bring in order to avoid lesser operational capacity, which would limit its chances of reducing repression by mounting anti-state operations. That channel differs from the assimilation one observes under a strong repressive state, in which differentiation typically is avoided because it carries no benefits at all in most cases (Mele and Siegel, 2017). Instead, under a weak state, minority groups strategically trade off benefits and costs, and choose assimilation not out of a need to surrender to the state, but rather tactically, in the hope of keeping open the option of engaging in potentially successful operations against it.

3.4 Constraining identifiability

Finally, we conclude our analysis with the game's first decision: the government's choice to potentially hinder changes in the minority group's level of identifiability. As was true for the group's choice of identifiability, the government's choice is continuous in the model, but, owing to the unspecified functional form of $h(\delta)$, uninteresting beyond whether or not the government chooses to bear the cost of elevating δ beyond its baseline 1. Thus, we focus on that possibility, even though the analysis in the appendix could be used to derive a specific equilibrium value for δ.

Proposition 4: The government attempts to discourage assimilation in case A, when operations are the dominant consideration in identity choice, and to discourage differentiation in case B, when mobilization is the dominant consideration in identity choice.

Proposition 4 highlights the importance of the inclusion of identity choice in understanding the repression-dissent dynamic: assimilation (in case A) and differentiation (in case B) are sufficiently powerful tools for the minority group that the government is willing in both cases to pay a cost to make them more difficult to achieve.

At first glance, the intuition behind the result seems straightforward given Proposition 3. Since the minority group alters its identifiability instrumentally in order to reduce expected

repression, and since reductions in repression reduce the government's utility, whenever the minority group would seek to change its identifiability, the government should act to discourage the change by raising the marginal cost of doing so. While that is for the most part true, our case definitions hide some nuances. Both the minority group and the government make their identifiability decisions contingent on expected costs as well as benefits, and those considerations differ for each actor. The minority group alters identifiability both to increase its chance of anti-state action directly and to reduce expected repression; however, such action induces more anti-state actions, which raises the group's expected costs. The government hinders identifiability change both to reduce the chance of anti-state action and to raise expected repression; however, such action makes further increases in repression more likely, which raises its expected costs. In general, those choices need not lead to opposing preferences on identifiability; they do so here only because of the alignment of Propositions 1 and 2. In particular, should Proposition 2's claim on the effect of identifiability on the chance of increasing repression fail to hold, it is possible to find conditions under which the government desires not to hinder the minority group's identifiability choice.[19]

The foregoing completes the analysis of our model under a weak repressive state, but we can go a bit further and extend the analysis of a strong repressive state in M&S to the initial move by the state to hinder or facilitate identity change. Doing so produces the following result.

Proposition 5: Under a strong repressive state, the government always will attempt to discourage assimilation when the minority group makes that choice. However, when the minority group instead chooses to differentiate, the government may either encourage or discourage it. It is more likely to encourage differentiation when the minority group is close to indifferent between assimilation and differentiation.

[19]We identify these conditions in the appendix. They arise because the conditions under which the conclusion of Proposition 3 reverses, discussed in footnote 18, are similar but not identical to those in which the conclusion of Proposition 4 reverses.

Proposition 5 generally is consistent with Proposition 4's result under a weak repressive state, highlighting once again the importance of identity choice in understanding repression and dissent. However, unlike our earlier result, it offers the possibility that the government will facilitate the minority group's identity choice rather than hinder it. What makes this possible is that, while the two actors in our model have opposing preferences over the final level of repression, they have different assessments of the costs and benefits of actions taken to get there. As such, when differentiation is not an obviously superior outcome, it may be the case that the minority group will seek to reduce the likelihood of further repression by deliberately reducing its own threat to the government and *also* that the government will encourage that choice in order to reduce the threat. Substantively, that action might entail the creation of minority ghettos that would facilitate differentiation of the minority group. Unlike in all other cases, though, those ghettos would be comparatively easy for the state to maintain, since the minority group would desire to remain within them in order to limit further repression.

4 Tactical considerations

Having presented our results in terms of different behavior within two general cases, A, in which operations are the dominant consideration in identity choice, and B, in which mobilization is the dominant consideration in identity choice, we now turn now to two tactical, substantive considerations that are likely to place a context within one case or the other.

4.1 Discrimination in counter-dissent

The first consideration we address is government's discrimination in counter-dissent. We focus on the government's need for discrimination in counter-dissent, as well as its ability to satisfy its need. The state's ability to avoid indiscriminate counter-dissent is relatively easy

to assess. If a government lacks the capability to make use of information that would allow it to repress minority group members selectively, then a greater improved ability to distinguish majority and minority group members that greater identifiability brings will be of little help in reducing operational success. Such circumstances might arise when military or police forces lack precision arms or training, are constrained by external watchdog organizations, or face dissent tactics such as hiding in or targeting civilian areas. In contrast, states not experiencing such conditions may make much better use of greater identifiability.

To assess the *need* for discrimination, consider when the cost of failing to do so, and thus potentially harming majority group members, is highest. Governments with shaky but necessary political support and those with majority groups opposed to state overreach will incur higher costs. So, too, will governments in which likely targets of minority group operations occur in geographic regions in which the workings of the normal economy place minority and majority group members in close proximity. In such regions of high demographic intermixing, counter-dissent aimed at minority group operations is more likely to result in detrimental collateral injury to the majority group and its supporters. In that circumstance discriminatory counter-dissent is preferred. Greater external identifiability of the minority group helps to make discrimination possible, strongly improving the tactical response of the government. In contrast, other governments have less need to avoid majority group harm, perhaps because they have firm political support, need none, or experience little demographic mixing and so face little chance of collateral injury to government supporters. In that circumstance the state has less need for the information conveyed by external identifiability, and so increasing it will have less impact on operational capacity.

When government both needs and has the capability to discriminate, we are more likely in case A: increased identifiability reduces operational capacity. When discrimination is not needed or the government has limited capacity to do so, we are more likely to be in case B: increased identifiability enhances operational capacity.

Proposition 1 tells us that a need for discrimination can make conflict less likely as

ethnic differences are made starker, whereas a lack of need for discrimination can make conflict more likely in the same circumstance. Balcells, Daniels, and Escribá-Folch's (2016) study of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland provides an example of the relationship. High levels of violence occurred in homogeneous wards bordering homogeneous wards of the rival group (aided by "peace walls"), an example of low demographic mixing that enabled more indiscriminate counter-dissent and, consequently, more violence.[20]

More generally, the case of Northern Ireland during the Troubles is illustrative of the sorts of trade-offs, induced by government discrimination or the lack thereof, that underlie our model. When Northern Ireland was created, the original nine counties of Ulster were reduced to six, guaranteeing a Protestant majority (Darby, 1976). Though all regions were separated geographically from the foci of British power, increasing the likelihood of successful mobilization against the British government, spatial variation in the concentration of the Catholic population captured variation in the degree of demographic mixing. Such variation was exacerbated by the British government, which established physical barriers to isolate communities. For example, Armagh, one of the most violent regions, largely was Catholic (Darby, 1976). Because of Armagh's location on the border, the British government established a "ring of steel" blocking and confining the citizens of Armagh and Crossmagalen.

At least circumstantial evidence exists that discrimination in demographically mixed regions was a concern for the British. For example, one of the first protracted battles between the IRA and British soldiers took place in "Bandit Country" from 1956 to 1962 (Hoyt, 2008; Sanders, 2011; Patterson, 2010). Patterson explains that during the time the IRA decided not to target "ordinary" Protestants but instead focused on fighting a "clean campaign" (Patterson, 2010, p. 344). That strategy allowed the government to acquire knowledge

[20]Though we frame our discussion in terms of a dichotomy focusing on discrimination in counter-dissent or the lack thereof, we do so mostly for presentational purposes. The only true dichotomy in our model relates to the value of the first derivative of operational success with respect to identifiability. Just because the British could behave more indiscriminately in homogeneous wards, for example, does not imply that discrimination was not employed there. It merely implies that the difference in the need for a particular tactical response by the state would have had strategic implications working to produce more violence in homogeneous wards as identifiability increased.

of local Republican activists, indicating that the government spent time and resources on intelligence and identification.

We have argued that regions of low demographic mixing should reduce the need for government to avoid indiscriminate counter-dissent, implying, by Proposition 3, a stronger incentive for the minority group to differentiate in such regions. That is what was observed in Northern Ireland. Crossmaglen, for instance, displayed in green, white, and orange the letters of the IRA and exhibited signs demonstrating resistance (Schneider and Susser, 2003). "Caution Sniper at Work" and the "Roll of Honor", a memorial to the men from Crossmaglen who died in conflict, were displayed proudly. In the heart of the town stood a statue of "a man rising up out of a Phoenix and standing defiantly in opposition to the British army base across the square" (Scully, 2008, p. 40).[21]

In contrast, we have argued that regions of more demographic mixing should increase the need for government discrimination in counter-dissent activities, leading to a stronger incentive for the minority group to assimilate in such regions. Some evidence exists that Catholics living in Protestant regions evinced such incentives, effectively passing as Protestant rather than identifying with poorer Catholics (Weitzer, 1995). By analyzing surveys of police satisfaction, Weitzer finds that because such Catholics lived in middle-class areas, they escaped most of the severe Royal Ulster Constabulary policing and typically referred to the police as "soft, friendly, and safe" (Weitzer, 1995, p. 140), feeling from them a low level of threat. Differentiation in such regions would have lowered those benefits, increasing repression (Proposition 2), while also reducing operational success owing to the British forces' improved ability to engage in counter-dissent. Hence, assimilation was strategically optimal here, despite diminished mobilization capacity compared to the solidly Catholic regions.

Assessing the British government's strategy with respect to hindering assimilation and

[21]Many more examples of such symbols can be found. For example, in response to the barricade, the residents of Derry proudly painted the slogan "You Are Now Entering Free Derry" on a gable wall in St. Columb's Street (Jarman, 1998). And the Belfast City Council sponsored a Community Arts scheme that provided for the production of 40 murals in working class districts between 1977 and 1981 (Sluka, 2002).

differentiation is more difficult because of the manner in which that strategy can itself alter the extent of regional demographic mixing. For instance, let's start by assuming high demographic mixing absent physical separation between the areas of Northern Ireland. In that case, the British government's strategy of isolating communities would have rendered assimilation more difficult and so been optimal by Proposition 4. However, that strategy also created regions of low demographic mixing, and we know from Proposition 4 that limiting assimilation in such regions is not optimal. Thus, the strategy's operation could change its own level of optimality over time. Despite those complications, though, our theory helps understand the conditions under which each strategy may be considered optimal at any time.

4.2 Ease of passing

The second consideration we address is the relative difficulty experienced by members of the minority group in passing as members of the majority. Although we have specified our model in terms of a common factor between internal and external identifiability, denoted simply identifiability, in practice efforts made by the minority group to differentiate or assimilate will focus on, respectively, increasing internal identifiability or reducing external identifiability. Both actions yield more favorable outcomes for the minority group, but the inability to do both simultaneously limits the degree to which the minority group can make beneficial use of identity change, inducing the trade-offs that underlie our model.[22]

We can use differences in the relative ease of changing internal and external identifiability to understand the manner in which the trade-offs in our model likely will resolve, just as we used government discrimination in counter-dissent to do so. When it is relatively easy for a member of the minority group to pass as a member of the majority group, it is likely

[22]As discussed in footnote 8, the government would face a similar difficulty if it were to attempt simultaneously to hinder undesired changes in both types of identifiability. We assume instead that it hinders changes to the common factor of identifiability, which reduces equilibrium changes in both types of identifiability in the same direction. That assumption does not lead to a trade-off for the government, nor does it obviate the trade-offs experienced by the minority group.

that external identifiability initially is low and reasonably malleable. Attempts to increase internal identifiability to enhance mobilization may be effective, but they also are likely to come with particularly detrimental increases in external identifiability. After all, with passing so easy, a state looking to quell dissent will need all the advantages it can muster to do so, suggesting that any increase in external identifiability is likely to have an especially large and negative effect on operational capacity.[23] As such, the negative aspects of increasing identifiability are likely to be large when passing is relatively easy, placing us more likely in case A: increased identifiability reduces operational capacity.

In contrast, when it is relatively difficult for a member of the minority group to pass as a member of the majority group, it is likely that external identifiability initially is high and reasonably unmalleable. Attempts to increase internal identifiability are unlikely to produce particularly detrimental increases in external identifiability, since the group already is identifiable to government and has little way around that fact. It is unlikely in that case for further increases in external identifiability to produce negative consequences that outweigh the benefits from increased internal identifiability. Thus, when passing is relatively difficult, we are more likely in case B: increased identifiability enhances operational capacity.[24]

Together with Proposition 3, the foregoing insight suggests differences in differentiation choices—and so differences in the use of explicit identity calls—based on the type of identity distinction that separates the majority from the minority group. Religious or cultural distinctions of the type that split Northern Ireland often enable substantial changes in external identifiability, as overt expressions of such identity differences often require active

[23]This effect plausibly interacts with the level of government discrimination. A government that has no need to discriminate may not take advantage of increases in external identifiability, minimizing the cost of differentiation to a group that may easily pass. A government that needs to discriminate but lacks the capacity might find its capacity enhanced by increased identifiability to the point that discrimination becomes an option, leading differentiation to be even more costly for the group. We keep the two considerations separate in our analysis only out of a desire for clarity.

[24]More generally, when internal and external identifiability are not substantially correlated and the former is more malleable than the latter, we expect to be in case B. When the latter is more malleable than the former, we expect to be in case A.

choices in behavior or apparel. While choosing to highlight that kind of common identity can strengthen community ties,[25] doing so makes more apparent an identity difference that could otherwise have been hidden. As we have shown, this tactical cost can drive the decision to assimilate.

However, when the identity divide is along ethnic or racial lines, external identifiability is already typically high. Focusing on common identity across disparate members of a minority group can enhance internal identifiability without appreciably altering external identifiability. Under such conditions there are fewer tactical incentives that would push for assimilation. Identity choice in this case comes down to the ability to mobilize, which is in part dependent on the strength of the state.[26]

South Africa during apartheid provides repeated examples of the argument above.[27] The Afrikaner Nationalists' apartheid regime engaged in a severe form of race-based repression of the black population by regulating "residence, employment, eduction, public amenities, and politics" (Meredith, 2005, p. 117). Repression was applied universally to non-whites; for example, the "Extension of University Education Act (No. 45) of 1959 – prohibited black students from attending white universities, with few exceptions, and established separate, inferior universities for black, colored and Indian students" (Durrheim, 2011, p. 5). With the salient identity distinction yielding high initial levels of external identifiability, little tactical incentive existed not to make use of explicit identity appeals.

We see such incentives in the growth of the black consciousness movement, formed in the 1970s and headed by Steve Biko. That movement promoted separation from the white majority and hoped to alleviate repression through self-definition, believing that the black

[25](Schneider and Susser, 2003, p. 256), for example, note that the murals to which we referred above are "more about talking to their own community; indeed most wall murals are not painted at the boundary edges but within housing estates".

[26]Note that even given clear racial or ethnic divides between majority and minority group, changes in external identifiability are still possible and still correlate with internal identifiability. For example, one could adopt overt mannerisms to appear as a government sympathizer, which would reduce both forms of identifiability.

[27]Although the majority group actually was a numerical minority there, the argument still holds.

population had to be first "liberated from fear"(Worden, 2012). Meredith summarizes Biko's philosophy as follows: "Black oppression was first and foremost a psychological problem. It could be countered by promoting black awareness, black pride, black capabilities and black achievement" (Meredith, 2005, p. 418). In short, explicit differentiation became the strategy, as it enabled gains to collective action and mobilization without a tactical cost.

What about the government's strategy with respect to hindering changes in identifiability? Here the situation is clearer than it was in Northern Ireland. With differentiation the optimal strategy, Proposition 4 indicates that a strategic state trying to stay in power should maximize its utility by attempting to hinder such differentiation.

That was, of course, not the strategy chosen by the South African government under apartheid, which strongly encouraged differentiation. The strategy led to mobilization even in the face of brutal repression, triggering mass condemnation, international pressure, and the regime's eventual fall. Whatever the true reasons for that strategic failure,[28] our theory helps understand the mechanisms leading to it. It also suggests comparisons to the apparently longer-lasting strategy of criminalization of dissent which, as noted above, reduces identity-based mobilization by tarnishing group membership.

5 Conclusion

By explicitly incorporating identifiability into the decisions of both a minority group and a government, we have been able to illustrate the strategic incentives to assimilate possessed even by groups that may effectively use identity-based strategies to mobilize opposition. Tactical considerations account for that logic. By assimilating, the minority group is less able to mobilize. That, in turn, leads to a reduction in operational capacity, which is the likelihood

[28]Many possible reasons can be found: e.g., corrosive racism or bounded rationality. Or, the regime could have believed it was strong in the sense of Mele and Siegel (2017), in which case it might have expected assimilation and behaved optimally given that expectation. Assimilation might have entailed reducing the salience of racial identity differences, while increasing the salience of a common nationalist identity.

of engaging in successful operations against the state that produce a reduction in state repression. However, assimilation may also diminish the state's efficacy in countering the minority group's operations, which would enhance the minority group's operational capacity. When that second effect dominates, minority groups will assimilate strategically despite the reduction in mobilization that action entails. Repressive governments, foreseeing the group's decision, will try to hinder its assimilation attempt by accentuating fundamental differences between majority and minority groups.

We have argued that attempts to assimilate, and state attempts to limit assimilation, are more likely when: (i) the government has both the need to avoid indiscriminate counter-dissent practices and the ability to do so and (ii) passing as majority group members is relatively easy for the minority group's members. Whether there is a need for discrimination is determined by political considerations. It is exacerbated in regions of high demographic intermixing, in which the economy's normal operations place members of the majority and minority groups in close contact. Such mixing makes collateral injury costly even to a repressive state. Whether a state has the capability of avoiding indiscriminate counter-dissent is determined by technical considerations, arising from training and technology. It relates to the degree to which government is able to make use of information encoded in identifiability. Ease of passing captures the nature of the salient identity cleavage between minority and majority group. It occurs when members of the majority group cannot easily distinguish members of the minority from themselves along that cleavage. Thus, we have shown that *tactical* considerations can be essential not just to the prosecution of a strategy of repression or anti-state action, but also to the very identity choices of individuals.

We have focused narrowly on the identity choice of the minority group, but our model also speaks to a broad literature on the impact of repression on minority group behavior (Davenport and Inman, 2012; Davenport, 2007; Earl, 2011; Ritter and Conrad, 2016). Specifically, if identity is a mediating factor on the likelihoods of both repression and the onset of conflict, and if the effect of identity varies by context and tactical considerations, we would expect

repression and dissent to interact differently along those dimensions as well, suggesting that more empirical attention to tactical considerations might be useful in untangling the often indeterminate connections between repression and dissent.

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