It is the most tragic paradox of our time that amidst the almost unlimited human potential of the
dawning century, our world is one of profound human suffering. More people suffer more intensely
today than at any time in the history of the human race, while simultaneously others benefit greatly from
today’s unprecedented prosperity, educational opportunities, and democratic freedoms. I personally
benefit immensely from the positive effects of today’s global political-economy, yet I cannot shield my
eyes from the misery engulfing much of the human population. Consequently, I feel an acute
responsibility to contribute to the cumulative knowledge of our great discipline--a discipline which
promises to alleviate some small measure of that suffering.

In 1990, when I returned from two years in Europe and began studying political science,
mozambique had just been declared the world’s poorest nation with a GDP per capita of less than one
hundred dollars per year. I had met many African immigrants while living in Europe and heard of the
political oppression and absolute poverty they were fleeing. My heart went out to this blighted
continent, and I therefore dedicated my undergraduate efforts studying the African political-economy
within the larger academic context of a double degree in political science and international relations. I
studied U.S. foreign policy, international organizations, economics, and political conflict, but not until I
began to closely study ethnic relations did I find a task to which I could dedicate my graduate studies.

Ethnic conflict accounted for a considerable share of Africa’s suffering, and it seemed to me the
most tragic of Africa’s afflictions. To get a better grasp on this deadly phenomena, I broadened my
studies to explore ethnic relations world-wide and discovered that no corner of the globe was immune
from its alarming effects. I wrote several papers on quantitative analyses of the permissive and
immediate conditions of violent ethnic conflict. I compared in detailed case studies successful and failed
attempts to resolve ethnic conflict. I discovered statistical patterns regarding ethnic relations in Europe,
and compiled historical accounts of South American and African cases.

I strayed from this dominant theme to pursue a tangential conference presentation on human
rights and a coauthored Political Behavior study quantifying the effects of presidential debates, but I
always returned to study the issues closest to my heart. I presented research at an APSA conference
analyzing the early findings from my Nigerian surveys and at two International Studies Association
conferences addressing first, ethnic relations in Brazil and Angola and second, exploring some key
elements of my Nigerian cases. Currently, all of my energies are consumed by my dissertation wherein
I explore the effects of the U.S. policy of democratic enlargement on Nigeria’s ethnic relations.
Therein, I present the results of surveys and interviews which I conducted in Nigeria to track the effects
of democratization on Nigerians’ inter-ethnic relations across the first year of democratic rule. I also
track the magnitude of communal violence over the past four years, and focus on a few specific cases
of communal conflict to clarify the links tying Nigeria’s international political context to its domestic
ethnic and religious violence.
As part of my long-term research agenda, I plan to track the Nigerian case as it continues to unfold for good or ill. I have learned a great deal about Nigeria and have made many substantial contacts there which provide abundant material for many future papers. I would, for example, like to continue a series of surveys that began with my dissertation which track changes in Nigerians’ international, national, and subnational identities. The data I collect is compatible with certain cross-national indicators tracked in the well established Minorities at Risk and World Values Survey data sets and will provide substantial material for future research. I would also like to return to Nigeria and apply my ethnographic skills in continued participant observation and in more detailed interviewing. At the 1999 APSA conference, I learned from the Fulbright representative that the Nigerian positions remained open long after the deadline had passed due to lack of interest. I have the interest, and would like to spend a year there teaching and engaging in this research.

I do not plan, however, to confine my research over the long run to just the Nigerian case or even to the African continent. I have never described myself as an Africanist, but view myself instead as an international relations and comparative theorist who has found great value in African applications. I have sought and found in Africa’s experiences many lessons that can be applied throughout the underdeveloped and developed worlds. Democratic enlargement has become the central foreign policy agenda of the past decade and will likely remain so into the foreseeable future. Democratization, whether ebbing or flowing will continue to hold a prominent position in academic and policy discourse. Ethnic conflict is unlikely to wane, and will continue to dominate the 21st century’s security agenda.

Consequently, as the crowning achievement of my long-term research agenda I hope to draw from my Nigerian and African cases lessons that will enhance our discipline’s understanding of ethnic relations and refine U.S. foreign policies regarding communal unrest world-wide. To reach this goal, I plan to use my knowledge, my disciplined love of learning, my ethnographic and quantitative research skills, and my global and academic contacts to extend the knowledge of our great discipline—a discipline entrusted to reduce our world’s profound suffering.