

Historical Narratives and Post-Conflict Reconciliation: An Experiment in Azerbaijan

Scott Radnitz
University of Washington
srad@uw.edu

Forthcoming from *Conflict Management and Peace Science*

Abstract

How malleable are the attitudes of people in a post-conflict society toward their former adversaries? I conduct a laboratory experiment in Azerbaijan, which fought a war against its neighbor Armenia in the 1990s, to investigate whether reconsideration of the roots of the conflict can influence interethnic attitudes. Subjects are assigned differing interpretations of the conflict and asked to think about or discuss their reactions. The results indicate that the most effective interventions work through, rather than against, existing beliefs. Discussion also plays a critical role in provoking the introspection that is necessary to challenge longstanding prejudices. The analysis provides insight into the social psychological processes of prejudice reduction and offers caveats to conventional policy interventions to encourage reconciliation.

In many post-conflict societies reconciliation is hindered by the memories and lasting psychological effects of violence. Such barriers to reconciliation can endure for years, if not generations, visible in the stickiness of identities and the rigidity of attitudes toward rival groups. Nationalist elites perpetuate polarization by propagating one-sided narratives about the conflict (Snyder and Ballentine 1996). In turn, mass opinion can constrain leaders who seek to ease tensions. This kind of vicious circle can be found in a number of societies that have suffered through a civil war or are engaged in an ongoing conflict (Somer 2001). Where both sides of a conflict are subjected to narratives of victimization and nationalist rhetoric, former adversaries are unlikely to reconcile (Bar-Tal 2007, 2013; Coleman 2003).

Political and social psychologists have studied how hostile attitudes, once established, can be mitigated in order to enable reconciliation. Some argue that, just as nationalistic discourses discourage reconciliation, the dissemination of conciliatory ideas can increase tolerance and make identities more inclusive over time (Kelman 2004; Ross 1995). This can occur through official efforts to build common identities and downplay guilt, or truth commissions that seek to establish a semblance of justice for the victims (Gibson 2004). However, such efforts to change attitudes may face stiff resistance in post-conflict societies due to psychological processes that hinder the adoption of ideas contrary to people's existing beliefs (Nyhan and Reifler 2010; Gaines et al. 2007; Taber and Lodge 2006). The question of how to break through social and psychological barriers to bring about reconciliation among former adversaries is of critical importance given the damaging long-term economic and social consequences of unresolved violent conflict (Collier 2003).

This paper investigates whether deliberation on narratives about a conflict can influence interethnic attitudes. It analyzes the results of a laboratory experiment conducted in Azerbaijan,

which fought a brutal, fratricidal war against its neighbor, Armenia, in the 1990s. The study involves the random assignment of three narratives that frame the conflict in different ways and correspond to social-psychological theories of intergroup attitudes. Advancing on previous experimental studies of this type, the research design incorporates group deliberation, which has been shown to activate social processes that can influence how attitudes are formed.

To preview the findings, only the narratives that 1) identified a target for subjects to blame, when 2) discussed in a group setting, produced more conciliatory attitudes than the control group. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, the narrative that emphasized intergroup commonality did not result in more conciliatory attitudes. Neither did any narrative when assigned in written form for silent, individual deliberation. The findings show that interethnic attitudes are malleable even in a traumatized and hostile post-war society, but an intervention must work through, rather than against, existing beliefs and take social context into account.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, I introduce the problem of rigid identities in post-conflict societies and evaluate theories about how intergroup attitudes can be changed. Next, I provide a background of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and describe the study design and procedures. I then report the results of the experiment and descriptive findings from content analysis of discussion groups. I conclude with theoretical and practical implications of the findings.

Reducing Hostility in “Intractable” Conflicts

Scholars have long recognized that violent conflict engenders political and psychological processes that prevent reconciliation between groups. The parties to a conflict tend to develop

conflicting narratives that emphasize their own group's victimization and blame the other side exclusively. Elites selectively emphasize or ignore events from history and recombine them into meaningful stories—or narratives—to form a coherent but tendentious retelling of the past. When institutionalized by states through official symbols, textbooks, and the media, and then disseminated and shared by the public, these narratives assume a taken-for-granted quality and cannot be easily challenged (Schwartz 1981; Bar-Tal 2007).

At the social and individual level, positive social identities in post-conflict societies are premised on the denigration of a group's rivals, resulting in perceptions of incompatible interests, negative stereotyping, and hostility (Sherif 1966; Sullivan et al. 1993; Taylor and Moghaddam 1994; Abrams and Hogg 1999). When conflicting groups internalize narratives that reinforce group distinctiveness, “deep-seated threats to identity and security fears serve as powerful barriers which prevent groups from addressing the competing substantive interests which divide them” (Ross 1995). Individuals who perceive rival groups as a threat are prone to dehumanize those groups and to support aggressive and vengeful policies (Canetti-Nisim et al. 2008; Maoz and Macauley 2008).

Given the presumed psychological foundations of intergroup hostility, psychological remedies have been developed to reduce it. One approach, the Common Ingroup Identity Model, exploits the positive evaluations people assign to their ingroup by evoking a superordinate identity shared by both groups. As a result, “the cognitive and motivational processes that initially produced ingroup favoritism can be harnessed to reduce intergroup bias and prejudice toward former outgroup members...” (Gaertner and Dovidio 2008: 79. See also Gaertner and Dovidio 2000; Riek et al. 2010). Interventions typically involve exercises that prime people to think in superordinate categories, in order to change the scale of identification. In the case at

hand, an intervention along these lines would prime people to focus on common attributes shared by Armenians and Azeris that transcend animosities stemming from the conflict. The potential for a common identity shared by these groups is not far-fetched; members of the two nationalities subscribed to a cosmopolitan “Soviet” identity that was inculcated throughout the twentieth century. Additionally, Armenians and Azeris living in Azerbaijan had high rates of social interaction and intermarriage prior to the conflict (de Waal 2003: 51, 125).

Other research casts doubt on the effectiveness of such interventions in the case of intense intergroup animosity. One reason is that messages designed to counter prejudice run up against cognitive processes that bias the receipt of information that threatens existing identities. Studies of attitude change and persuasion have revealed ways that people reject, reinterpret, or avoid information discrepant to their political identity (Klayman 1995; Bartels 2002; Taber and Lodge 2006; Gaines et al. 2007; Nyhan and Reifler 2010). When cognitive bias is combined with intractable conflict, new information that does not accord with existing perceptions of the “enemy” can threaten core aspects of a group’s identity, and will be rejected (Paluck 2010; Bargh et al. 1996).

Given the tendency of individuals in post-conflict societies to resist discrepant information, it is more likely that messages that can be reconciled with people’s interpretations of the world will have a chance to break through their psychological defenses. For the conflict’s losers, the primary barrier to reconciliation is a sense of powerlessness and low self-esteem, which can be remedied by recognition of injustice and reaffirmation of the perpetrators’ guilt (Scobie and Scobie 1998; Shnabel and Nadler 2008). A starting point for intervention would be to affirm existing beliefs about victimhood and guilt as a salve for people’s emotional needs, enabling them to engage in introspection and assimilate incongruent information (Redlawsk

2002; Taber and Lodge 2006). In the case at hand, this would be a message that reaffirms the conventional wisdom in Azerbaijan, blaming the Armenian side for the conflict.

A subtler approach to changing attitudes would affirm existing identities but change the emphasis people attach to different historical memories. One way of doing so is to shift the focus of blame from one target to another. Although the notion of culpability appears straightforward, in reality there is often more than one candidate on which to which blame can be assigned (Javeline 2003; Malhotra and Kuo 2008). Scholars have found that even in the case of mutually antagonistic groups, the projection of blame toward a third party—especially one seen as a common adversary—can satisfy the need to see the world in terms of in- and outgroups and help construct a new, larger ingroup by deflecting blame *from* an actor that would otherwise be viewed as one's sole adversary (Kessler and Mummendey 2001; Borgeson and Valeri 2007). In the present case, Russia is a clear alternative to Armenia as an external actor onto which blame can be projected. As described below, Russia played an ambiguous role in the conflict, but is widely seen by Azeris as having supported the Armenian side. These three mechanisms can be operationalized as interventions to change the way people perceive other groups.

Group Discussion and Attitude Formation

Scholars of political communication have identified group discussion as an important moderator of attitudes. According to theories of democratic deliberation, discussion is a critical means of engagement in the public sphere, allowing people with disparate views to better understand one another and bridge differences toward achieving common goals (Habermas 1991; Rawls 1996). Discussions expose people to viewpoints they had not previously considered and to

delve into nuances of beliefs that would otherwise go unchallenged (Mutz 2002; Walsh 2003). Recently, scholars have incorporated discussion into experimental studies of political beliefs and persuasion (Druckman and Nelson 2003; Karpowitz et al. 2012). Yet discussion groups have rarely been used in studies of prejudice and tolerance, despite the importance of peer influence in determining intergroup attitudes (Paluck & Green 2009a: 354). Research on prejudice has demonstrated the critical role that conformity plays in shaping negative attitudes toward outgroups (Allport 1954; Blanchard et al. 1991). When people believe that stereotypes are socially shared among members of their group, they are more likely to adopt those stereotypes themselves, thereby spreading prejudice (Stangor et al. 2001). Thus discussion is paradoxically posited to both increase opportunities for sharing and refining diverse views, and bring about conformity in prejudicial attitudes toward outgroups.

This contradiction can be reconciled by considering how discussion participants regard the message. If a pro-tolerance message is objectionable on its face (to everyone involved, or to the most vocal or influential speakers), then further exposure to the message through discussion may have no effect on attitudes or even backfire and entrench existing biases (Druckman 2004). But if the new information meets a threshold of acceptability, then group dynamics can actually increase tolerance. Where people are put in a setting in which their interlocutors are assumed to share their interests, there will be less need to adopt extreme positions to prove group membership, and they may be free to express more tolerant views (Kerr and Kaufman-Gilliland 1994; Crandall and Stangor 2005). Peer influence can then push discussion group members toward consensus, producing more conciliatory attitudes than for people who are exposed to the message individually (Mendelberg 2002: 159; Crandall and Stangor 2005).

Setting

The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan represents an archetypal case of intergroup animosity. Amidst the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Caucasian republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan engaged in armed conflict over control of the Azerbaijani autonomous region of Nagorno-Karabakh (NK). Attributing blame for the conflict is difficult because it arose from the interplay of nationalism, state policy, and institutional breakdown, and its roots can be traced to several historical junctures. Since the middle ages, the province of Karabakh was fought over by rival empires before being absorbed into Imperial Russia in 1813. Armenians and Turkic-speaking Shias (who later became identified as Azeris) were intermingled in cities and towns in the South Caucasus for centuries, and ethnic differences became politically salient only in the late nineteenth century. After nationalism infiltrated the region, violent clashes between Armenians and Azeris broke out during political upheaval in Russia, particularly in 1905 and 1918, and left bitter memories on both sides (Suny 1996). Under Soviet rule NK was designated an autonomous republic of the Azeri Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) in 1923, to the displeasure of the Armenian SSR (Zürcher 2007).

With the advent of Gorbachev's reforms in the late 1980s, an emergent movement of Armenians in NK launched demonstrations and petitioned Moscow to formally transfer the territory to Armenia, leading to counter-mobilization by Azeris. Small outbreaks of violence between the two groups escalated, leading to the mass expulsion of Armenians and Azeris from the republic where they were living as a minority. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the intercommunal conflict became an international war (Zürcher 2007). Armenia acquired weapons

from a Soviet-cum-Russian army base on its territory and gained the upper hand.¹ By 1994, when a cease fire was reached, Armenia controlled all of NK and occupied 14% of Azerbaijan's territory, while Azerbaijan maintained a blockade strangling Armenia's economy (de Waal 2003: 285-86). In all, fighting left 17,000 dead and produced over one million refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) (de Waal 2003: 327).

Today, Azeris are disillusioned with the status quo and impatient with the slow pace of internationally brokered negotiations over the status of NK (Gurbanov 2012). Surveys from Azerbaijan show large numbers in favor of using military force to recover NK from Armenia (International Crisis Group 2007: 15). The state-controlled press inflames public opinion by broadcasting anti-Armenian propaganda and using belligerent nationalist rhetoric. The government works to keep anti-Armenian animosity on the front-burner.² As the erstwhile losers from the status quo, Azerbaijanis tend to fixate on recovering their lost territories and view the problem as a barrier to national consolidation and progress (International Crisis Group 2007).

Experimental Design

To test theories of prejudice reduction in post-conflict societies, I conducted a laboratory experiment in Baku, Azerbaijan. Subjects consisted of 308 ethnic Azeri adults, who were recruited through a combination of convenience and snowball sampling. They were first administered a questionnaire with demographic and socioeconomic questions, which are used as controls in the analysis. Then, in the treatment phase, subjects were randomly assigned one of

¹ The extent of Russia's role in the conflict is disputed. According to De Waal (2003: 202-05), elements of the Russia military probably aided the Armenian side, but they acted without central coordination from Moscow and did not provide enough assistance to change the balance of forces.

² For instance, in 2010 it prohibited Azeris from giving their children Armenian names (Lomsadze 2010).

three narratives, and a mode of deliberation (written/individual or group discussion), yielding a 3x2 fully crossed factorial design.³ The instructions accompanying the written narrative requested the reader to “think for a moment” about the prompt. Those who were assigned to a discussion were led to a separate room in groups of 3 to 5 people, handed copies of one of the narratives (each participant in a group was given the same narrative), and instructed to briefly state their opinion in turn and then engage in general discussion. Discussions lasted 7-9 minutes, depending on group size, and were recorded, transcribed, and translated for later analysis. Following the treatments, all subjects answered questions on attitudes toward Armenians and the NK conflict, from which I derive the dependent variables. A control group was not assigned any narrative, and answered the post-treatment questions immediately after finishing the first questionnaire. The experiment lasted 30-50 minutes on average and subjects were debriefed and paid the equivalent of US \$5 at the end.

The narratives correspond to theories discussed in the previous section.⁴ Narrative 1 (*Blame*)⁵ replicates the dominant perception about Armenia’s role in the NK conflict: “Many

³ Treatments were assigned according to a random protocol, but there were deviations from random assignment in the implementation, in two ways. First, subjects were assigned to a discussion group based on when they completed the first part of the questionnaire and when there were open slots in a discussion group. This was necessary because subjects did not always appear at the appointed time and there was no way of knowing in advance who would be available when it was necessary to populate groups. Second, there were deviations from the assignment protocol resulting in a disproportionate number of *Blame* and *Common ID* discussion groups being carried out early in the experiment, requiring a higher proportion of *Deflect* discussions to be held later. Although these deviations mean that the protocol as implemented does not strictly meet the criteria of random assignment, they do not necessarily threaten the integrity of the experiment. Neither source of deviation resulted in major systematic bias that would contradict the assumption of “no major interaction between the treatment effect and intrinsic features of the experimental units,” the sine qua non of experimental design (Cox and Reid 2000: 36). Additionally, I conducted tests for balance across experimental conditions to ensure that assignment does not correlate with background variables, and I include covariates in the regressions below in order to adjust for possible biases in treatment assignments (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995: 172; Bowers 2011: 465). Information on sampling, assignment, balance among experimental conditions, and the experimental protocol can be found in Appendix I.

⁴ The narratives were derived from common discourses and the author’s informal conversations with Azeris. They were tested in a pilot survey and revised several times prior to implementation. All materials were translated into Russian and Azeri and back-translated for validity. .

⁵ In order to minimize confusion, the names of treatments are written in italics throughout this article.

people say the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was caused by Armenian aggression and territorial claims for Azerbaijan. Armenia militarily occupied 20% of territory of Azerbaijan.”

Narrative 2 (*Common ID*) eschews attribution of blame and emphasizes commonalities between the two sides, consistent with the Common Ingroup Identity Model: “The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is very complex and can be seen from many angles. Some people believe the conflict was a consequence of the breakdown of the Soviet system. Armenians and Azeris have much more in common than there is to divide them. Both nations lived together peacefully throughout the Soviet era and suffered as a result of the conflict.”

Narrative 3 (*Deflect*) deflects blame from the primary object of subjects’ animosity—Armenia—and onto a credibly culpable third party: Russia: “Many people believe Russia played a major role in provoking the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to serve its own interests. Because Russia is a superpower, it can exploit small countries like the ones in the Caucasus to its own advantage.”

The discussion mode of treatment assignment simulates social interactions that often contribute to attitude formation, especially in societies where people obtain information through informal networks, as in Azerbaijan (Aliyev 2014). The fact that Azeris are likely to engage in similar discussions outside the lab—and in this author’s experience, often bring up the topic of NK spontaneously—give the setup a strong claim to both experimental⁶ and mundane realism.⁷

Variables

⁶ “Do subjects believe the situation, problem, or issue they confront? Does it engage and interest them? Does it capture their attention?” McDermott (2002: 333).

⁷ “Whether the experimental situation resembles situations encountered in the real world.” Mutz (2011: 141).

Three dependent variables were used to measure attitudes: two on beliefs about Armenians, and one on policies relating to reconciliation. The first, Common Interests, tests whether the narratives can shape non-zero-sum perceptions, considered by many a precondition for reconciliation (Kelman 1999). It was operationalized by a four-item question asking respondents to “assess how much you agree or disagree that Azeris and Armenians (a) have a common desire to live in peace, (b) share common economic interests, (c) want to be independent of outside forces, and (d) seek to restore personal ties.”

The second variable addressing a psychological barrier to reconciliation is stereotypes: representation of outgroup members in terms of prototypical group characteristics rather than as individuals possessing distinct personalities (Tajfel 1981; Mummendey and Wenzel 1999). To determine whether treatments influence views of Armenians as embodying negative stereotypes, a four-item question asked respondents to “give your opinions on different national groups based on opposing characteristics.” Scales of 1-7 were listed with the following traits placed on each side: hardworking/lazy, trustworthy/deceitful, generous/stingy, and peaceful/aggressive.

The third dependent variable is Reconciliation. The survey included two four-item questions on possible concessions toward Armenians. The first read, “Under current conditions, how you would react if: (a) Armenians could travel freely (without a visa) to Azerbaijan; (b) you had Armenian neighbors; (c) you had Armenian co-workers; and (d) your child (close relative) were to marry an Armenian?” The second question included the same four items but substituted “under current conditions” with the preface, “If an agreement were reached with Armenia, in which Nagorno-Karabakh and the occupied territories were returned to Azerbaijan and Azeri IDPs were allowed to return home, how would you feel about the following?” Factor analysis showed that the eight items loaded onto two factors, which did not quite correspond to the two

questions: Item d (marriage) of question 2 loaded strongly onto the four items of the first factor, while the remaining items of question 2 loaded onto the second factor. I therefore created a 5-item variable of question 1 plus part d of question 2.⁸

Additional variables were included in regression models as controls. Whether a subject is a refugee or internally displaced person IDP; and whether (s)he knows someone who was personally affected by the conflict can affect propensity to reconcile.⁹ People who were born in the capital Baku were more likely to have been exposed to Armenians or Armenian culture and were distant from the front lines of the war. Religiosity has been associated with intolerance in general (Powell and Clarke 2013). Finally, standard indicators of education, age, sex, and income are also included. Figure 1 graphically depicts the experimental design, showing the treatments, numbers assigned to each condition, and dependent variables.

Figure 1 here

Data

Descriptive statistics, shown in Table 1, reveal that the sample is representative of Azerbaijan's population on some indicators, more representative of Baku than of Azerbaijan on other characteristics, and not representative of either on other indicators. The sample approximates the overall Azerbaijani population in terms of age (30.1, versus the median age in Azerbaijan of 28.2), but is better educated than the general population: two-thirds of the sample

⁸ Results using the four items of question 1 as a dependent variable are substantively the same. Factor analysis showed that the other two questions used as dependent variables load onto distinct factors.

⁹ Because these questions risked prematurely priming attitudes toward the NK conflict, they were collected at the very end of the post-treatment questionnaire. All other questions used as covariates were asked prior to treatment.

has at least some higher education. For income, the 7% of subjects reporting the lowest level of purchasing power is slightly lower than the 10.9% of the population living in poverty in 2009, according to the World Bank (World Bank, n.d.). The majority of subjects selected Income 3 (“We can buy food and clothes and pay for utilities, but can’t buy things like a refrigerator or television”) or Income 4 (“We can buy all of the above, but not a car”), which is more typical of Baku, where much of the country’s wealth is concentrated, than of other regions (Ismayilov 2007).

Table 1 here

A high proportion of subjects (22%) reported being a refugee or IDP. According to UNHCR, as of 2009, 6.8% of the population of Azerbaijan was an IDP or refugee (UNHCR, 2009b: 24). In Baku, however, IDPs comprise a higher proportion, 8.6% (UNHCR, 2009a: 63). These discrepancies from representativeness must be taken into account in generalizing the results to the general population. A far higher proportion, 57%, indicated that they knew someone who was directly affected by the conflict. There are no precise figures on the proportion of the population to whom this would apply, but given the number of Azeris expelled from conflict zones who settled in Azerbaijan, the number of casualties, and the approximately 50,000 Azeris who participated in armed combat (Zürcher 2007: 179), along with the large size of extended families and friendship networks in Azerbaijan, this figure is likely comparable to Azerbaijan as a whole.

Before conducting the analysis, as a randomization check I specify a multinomial logistic regression model regressing assignment to the seven experimental conditions on background variables collected from the questionnaire: gender, age, education, income, religiosity, born in

Baku, refugee status, and acquaintances affected by the conflict. A likelihood ratio test of these variables compared to a model with just a set of intercepts ($X^2=70.89$, $df=72$, $p=0.51$) indicates that I cannot reject the null hypothesis that treatment assignment is jointly independent of these background variables.

Results

I run two sets of multivariate regressions, first pooling across medium (written and discussion) to create a dummy variable for each of three narratives; second, interacting narrative and mode to yield six treatments, with the control group the excluded category. The dependent variables range from 0 to 20 or 25 and behave as if continuous, so I use Ordinary Least Squares regression.¹⁰ Because the dependent variables are negatively skewed and OLS models assume the data is normally distributed, I log transform the dependent variables.¹¹ Coefficients represent the percent difference on the dependent variable for subjects assigned a given treatment in comparison with subjects in the control condition.

As shown in Table 2, when the treatments are pooled across mode (written and discussion), they do not achieve significance in most cases. *Blame* is significantly associated only with Common Interests; subjects assigned *Blame* scored 27% higher than the control group. *Deflect* is only marginally significant ($b=.45$; $p<.10$) for Stereotype. The *Common ID* treatment is statistically indistinguishable from the control group in all three regressions, and the coefficient is negative in two of them. This set of findings is striking in what it does *not* show:

¹⁰ Because assignment to discussion groups can lead to unobservable group effects that might result in improper model specification, I use robust standard errors. Subjects were clustered by discussion group, with non-discussion subjects each placed in an individual group.

¹¹ Because the lower range of the dependent variables is 0, I add 1 to the scores prior to log transformation.

Blame does not lead to more rejectionist sentiments, and *Common ID* does not result in more conciliatory attitudes. Only the coefficients for *Deflect* have the expected signs, but the lack of significance means no causal inferences can be made.

Table 2 here

Pooling the treatments by narrative may mask important differences stemming from the mode of delivery. I therefore disaggregate treatments by mode (which can be understood as interacting narrative x mode) to test for differential effects. Table 3 reveals that mode in fact makes a critical difference: when narratives were discussed, they had a significantly greater impact on attitudes than when deliberated on individually. The coefficients on *Blame* x discussion and *Deflect* x discussion are significant (and positive) in all six instances, whereas *Blame* x written and *Deflect* x written attain significance only twice. *Blame* x discussion is associated with a 26% higher score than the control group on Common Interests, 34% on Stereotype, and 28% on Reconciliation. *Deflect* x discussion is likewise associated with an 18% higher score on Common Interests, 49% on Stereotype ($p < .01$), and 32% on Reconciliation ($p < .05$). These results indicate that when treatments were regressed without disaggregating by mode of delivery, the weak effect of written narratives obscured the stronger effect of the same narratives in the discussion condition. *Common ID*, surprisingly, carries negative signs in most instances but does not have a significant effect in any of the regressions, whether in written or discussion form.

Table 3 here

Few of the covariates contribute substantially to the models. Although sex and age achieve significance in only a few models, their signs suggest that men and subjects over thirty tend to be slightly more conciliatory than women and younger subjects. The signs on being born in Baku are positive but the variable does not achieve significance. Surprisingly, whether the subject is a refugee or knows people affected by the conflict have no discernable effect on attitudes. This finding goes against research showing that victims of trauma tend to hold more extreme and unforgiving attitudes (Canetti-Nisim et al. 2009). In the case of Azerbaijan, however, because the population is so small and the media so saturated with rejectionist messages about Karabakh, the differences between people with personal experience and those without may have attenuated over 15 years.

The only covariate that shows consistent effects is religiosity, which is positive and significant for most dependent variables in both models. While religiosity—especially in Islam—is often associated with intolerance, some have argued that post-Soviet Islam, having been cut off from reforming and radicalizing trends of the Middle East, is less politicized and more ecumenical than in other parts of the world (Khalid 2007). In this instance, it may be working at cross purposes to ethnic nationalism, even though Armenians are Christians.

As a further test of importance of mode of delivery, I check whether discussion has an independent effect on attitudes when compared with the same narrative in written form. I perform a linear hypothesis test for each set of predictor variables on each dependent measure. The null hypothesis is that discussion and written treatments are the same ($\beta_{\text{WRITTEN}} - \beta_{\text{DISCUSSION}} = 0$). Table 4 shows the results of an F-test comparing an unconstrained model to a model in which the parameters for the written and discussion conditions of the treatment in

question are constrained to be equal to each other, controlling for all other variables in the model. The corresponding p-values are in parentheses.

Table 4 here

The results show that discussion has a significant effect on attitudes for two of the three measures for *Blame* and *Deflect*. P-values are below .05 for Stereotype and Reconciliation when the treatment is *Blame*, and below .10 for Common Interests and .01 for Reconciliation in the *Deflect* treatment. As before, there is no difference by mode when *Common ID* is the narrative. Although it did not show significant effects for all three dependent measures, this stronger test of interactions, by testing against a baseline of written treatment rather than no treatment, offers additional support for the importance of discussion.

The results as a whole suggest that treatments both had a causal effect on attitudes and were the strongest predictors among the many variables included in the regression models. The effect was evident despite the short duration of the treatment and relatively small sample size. Yet contrary to common expectations, it was not the most “tolerant” message that produced the most conciliatory attitudes; rather, it was the narratives that identified a concrete source of blame for the conflict. Additionally, it was the medium as much as the message that determined whether the impact of a given treatment was significant. In most cases, individual deliberation on the written narratives produced weak and non-significant effects, obscuring the overall impact of the treatment when the mode of delivery was not taken into account. Only disaggregation of the treatment by message and mode made it clear that discussion had an independent effect on attitudes beyond the content of the narrative. Thus, the mechanisms of social interaction and peer

influence mediated how the narratives were received, consistent with arguments that group deliberation can lead people to internalize ideas that they perceive reflect common beliefs (Crandall and Stangor 2005). Critically, however, the consensus generated did not necessarily accord with the content of the narrative, as evidenced by the attitudes of subjects who were assigned *Blame* and *Common ID*.

Inferring Deliberative Processes in Discussion Groups

Because many of the findings rest on the claim that deliberative processes had the desired effect—stimulating discussion on the assigned narrative—as a check on internal validity of the experiment, I ascertain whether subjects in fact complied with the experimental protocol by “accepting” the treatments. Did subjects understand the prompt, formulate opinions about it, and actually discuss it? This is critical to establish internal validity, as a failure to engage would indicate that the manipulations were ineffective on their face and that results are spurious. While there is no way to know the thought processes of people assigned to the written conditions, transcripts of discussion groups offer a window into people’s deliberative processes upon receiving the treatment. cursory review of the transcripts—all available on the author’s website—reveals that all 160 subjects who were assigned to one of the discussion treatments engaged with the narrative they were assigned and discussed the conflict with Armenia for the duration of the session. They evinced strong opinions about culpability, but also expressed sadness and anger, referred to historical events, discussed politics, recounted personal anecdotes, and engaged in self-reflection.

Another check of the effectiveness of the manipulations is whether the discussions' content conformed to the assigned treatment. To what extent did subjects acquiesce in accepting the premise of the narrative? To answer this, I check for differences across treatments for the mention of specific topics using quantitative content analysis.¹² I identified thought units, or sequences of words conveying a single thought (Weldon et al. 1991). I first coded for expressions of disagreement with the narrative. If some subjects disagree with the premise, this indicates engagement (McDermott 2002), in that they are likely expressing their true opinion rather than acquiescing to the researcher's agenda in a manner akin to a Hawthorne Effect. Based on the experimental results, I expect a higher level of agreement with *Blame* and *Deflect* than with *Common ID*.

A second check on compliance is references that denigrate Armenians. Conflict research has shown that perceived victims tend to view the outgroup's behavior in terms of dispositional traits, which leads toward dehumanization and impedes reconciliation (Pettigrew 1979; Maoz and Macauley 2008). I coded for denigrating mentions of Armenian behavior by attribute (references to negative essential aspects of Armenian character) and by action (ad hominem statements about the actions of Armenians that exaggerate negative traits).¹³ Based on the above results, I expect denigration to be most frequent among subjects receiving the *Common ID* treatment. Third, because Russia was explicitly mentioned in the *Deflect* narrative, I code for mention of the involvement of Russia in the conflict.

Subjects' initial reactions varied systematically by assigned narrative and were consistent with their post-treatment scores. Subjects were more likely to express disagreement with

¹² This method has previously been used to analyze discussion groups in order to discern trends in the frequency of topics, show variation in the tone or frequency of themes by experimental treatment, assess the frequency of participation by various types of speakers. See Karpowitz et al. (2012). For details on content analysis, see Appendix III.

¹³ The number of positive references to Armenians is very small and not shown here.

Common ID than with *Blame* or *Deflect*; whereas 1.9% (1 out of 53) of subjects voiced disagreement in *Blame* and none disagreed in *Deflect*, 62% of subjects disagreed with the *Common ID* narrative.¹⁴

Denigrations followed along the same lines. Discussants of *Common ID* tended to focus on negative characteristics of Armenians: 52.2% of subjects made denigrating comments about Armenian actions and 28% about attributes, as compared with 20% and 16.3% for *Blame* and 11% and 3.6% for *Deflect*.

Based on the content of the narratives, one would expect *Deflect* to contain the most references to Russian culpability, whereas the other two would focus primarily on Armenia. In fact people in the *Blame* condition cited Russia nearly as often as *Deflect*, despite there being no mention of Russia in the prompt. For *Blame*, Russian culpability was mentioned in 92.8% of discussions covering 14.8% of the text. The focus on Russia may have come at the expense of (denigration of) Armenians. For *Deflect*, the figures are 92.8% of discussions and 20.1% of text. *Common ID* recipients mentioned Russia less frequently (53.8% of discussions and 3.5% of text), seemingly in inverse proportion to their denigration of Armenians. Figure 2 shows the relative frequency of the codes corresponding to each treatment, measured in three ways: by the proportion of (1) discussions in which the code appears (2) unique subjects who mentioned that code at least once, and (3) total words assigned to that code.

Taken together, content analysis suggests that the treatments succeeded in stimulating discussions focused on the narrative—that is, compliance was successful—but subjects did not necessarily react in ways consistent with the substance of the narratives. This shows that they did not simply acquiesce but expressed opinions that sometimes conflicted with the experimenter's

¹⁴ A typical comment from *Common ID*: “We have never been “brothers”—whatever is written in the text provided is complete nonsense. Reconciliation between us, the two nations, is impossible.”

notional agenda. In particular, *Common ID* generated disagreement and denigrations of Armenians, while *Blame* elicited much agreement, but relatively little denigration and substantial blame of Russia. *Deflect* produced universal agreement along with mentions of Russian culpability.

Figure 2 here

Discussion and Conclusion

The legacies of violent conflict pervade post-conflict societies, affecting their political and social institutions, and producing psychological barriers to reconciliation. The willingness to reconcile with one's adversary is an arduous process that involves transformations of intergroup perceptions and a group's self-image (Bar-tal 2000). Conflict mediators have sought to facilitate this process by strategically intervening to shape attitudes through education, therapy, intergroup interaction, and trust-building (Kelman 2004). Yet the theoretical and practical barriers to reconciliation remain daunting.

This article involved a socio-psychological intervention intended to alter dominant narratives about the NK conflict and encourage subjects to revisit their hostility toward Armenians. The results show that even in a protracted conflict situation, attitudes are susceptible to intervention, but only under two conditions: the narrative provides a source of blame that subjects can identify with; and they deliberate on this narrative in the course of discussion. It was the appropriate combination of message and medium that led subjects to venture beyond officially sanctioned narratives, but not in ways consistent with the conventional wisdom from

conflict zones. The narrative intended to evoke sentiments of common identity with Armenians provoked rejection, while information that conformed to preexisting beliefs about the conflict were more likely to lead to introspection and elaboration, resulting in more conciliatory attitudes. The microfoundations for these seemingly counterintuitive findings can be found in the literature on (political) psychology and trauma.

For the narrative to generate a conversation that leads to greater conciliation, the message had to meet a threshold of acceptability—which *Blame* and *Deflect* evidently did. This result is consistent with research on motivated reasoning, in which subjects prefer and seek out information congruent with their beliefs and reject contrary information (Gerber and Green 1999; Redlawsk 2002; Taber and Lodge 2006). Yet not only did people prefer to hear congruent information; receiving it provided validation that enabled them to entertain—and as a group, come to agreement on—ideas that would be anathema in a context where their identities were threatened (Lavine et al. 2005; Thórisdóttir and Jost 2011). This finding supports a Needs-Based approach to reconciliation, which argues that victims suffer from a feeling of powerlessness and require empowerment in order to accept conciliation (Shnabel and Nadler 2008; see also Scobie and Scobie 1998). Here, affirmation came not from acceptance of responsibility by the “perpetrators,” but rather from the supportive attitudes of other group members (and perceived victims), which amplified the thrust of the narrative. By contrast, *Common ID*, a blatantly conciliatory appeal, struck a note of discord. It foreclosed the kind of introspection necessary to problematize existing beliefs, and made it difficult for any discussion participant to “stick their neck out.” Recent work in political psychology has highlighted a backfire effect, in which information that clashes with preexisting biases causes subjects to become even more entrenched in their beliefs (Nyhan and Reifler 2010).

The process of discussion, as other studies have shown, forces people to articulate their beliefs and exposes them to the opinions of others in an intimate setting (Habermas 1991; Mendelberg 2002). As applied to post-conflict attitudes, the fact that all participants, including the facilitator, were ethnic Azeris may have given rise to the presumption that subjects' interlocutors would be like-minded and mutually supportive (Habyarimana et al. 2007).¹⁵ Insofar as trust enables people to express ideas about the conflict beyond rehashing familiar tropes, it can lead to deeper and broader engagement with the issue and transcend a narrow focus on the outgroup. Discussion can then generate more conciliatory attitudes than individual deliberation on the same issue.

All of these processes serve to highlight what the written treatments did not do. Mode of delivery in practice bundled two types of variation: interpersonal interaction and duration of exposure. Individual, silent deliberation resembles the way people engage with conventional surveys. Critics note that because surveys require significant cognitive engagement, respondents often use mental shortcuts to reduce their effort and expedite the process, often referred to as satisficing. Face-to-face interviews, on the other hand, encourage greater motivation and effort. (Holbrook et al. 2003). Second, subjects spent less time with the treatment when it was written than when it was discussed, which made the intervention weaker. A final issue is cultural—Azeris typically acquire information through social networks, making the written treatments an awkward mode of information transmission, and therefore even less likely to elicit serious engagement. All of these factors may have contributed to the weak effects of individual deliberation and serve to highlight the utility of incorporating group deliberation into experiments on persuasion.

¹⁵ This mechanism would presumably be less likely in the presence of observers from a different group, which would obligate participants to defend their group's position, thus polarizing opinions (Brewer 1999).

This study also demonstrates the value of using a subject population whose experience relates directly to the theories being tested. Many laboratory experiments in social psychology suffer from problems of external validity, in that findings from Western democracies, usually performed on college students, may fail to travel to other contexts (Peterson 2001; Cardenas & Carpenter 2008). A lab-in-the-field design is one way of ensuring that theories relevant to a particular category of people (post-conflict societies) are tested on members of such a population.

The study also has several limitations. The relatively small sample size means the results should be taken as suggestive directions for future research rather than as definitive. While the design aimed for mundane realism, the intervention was brief and one-off, whereas in reality, people are exposed to repeated but also contradictory messages (Druckman & Nelson 2003). Yet according to the modest goal of ascertaining whether any intervention can induce reconciliation in a difficult case that has been subject to little empirical research, the findings should not be dismissed. Even a small-scale intervention, by demonstrating what types of treatments produce a short-term positive effect, can lay the basis for more enduring interventions. Peer effects can facilitate the scaling up of alternative conflict narratives and attitude change. As research on conformity has shown, to the extent that people perceive that other group members hold less prejudicial attitudes, “although they might initially merely ‘act the part,’ they will eventually internalize the group’s attitudes and make them their own” (Crandall & Stangor 2005: 298). Once it becomes acceptable to reconcile, this can have a cascading effect on attitudes.

Taken together, these findings suggest that an even-handed effort to establish facts and apportion blame wherever it lies may not advance the cause of reconciliation or encourage intergroup dialogue. Where beliefs are rigid, getting both sides to converge on a single version of

the historical record must come later. In the immediate term, conflict specialists should recognize the depth and durability of prejudiced attitudes by giving them voice, but then introduce other considerations that complicate familiar tropes. This can slowly lead to a reassessment of the conflict and a reconstruction of group boundaries. History is subject to constant revision; despite appearances, hostile attitudes may be malleable even in difficult case like Azerbaijan.

References

- Abrams, Dominic and Michael A. Hogg. (1999) *Social Identity and Social Cognition*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Aliyev, Huseyn. (2014) Civil society in the South Caucasus: kinship networks as obstacles to civil participation. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 14(2): 263-282.
- Allport, Gordon W. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Ansolabehere, Stephen, and Shanto Iyengar. (2010). *Going Negative*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Bargh, John A., Mark Chen, and Lara Burrows. (1996) Automaticity of social behavior: direct effects of trait construct and stereotype activation on action. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 71(2): 230–244.
- Bar-Tal, Daniel. (2000) From intractable conflict through conflict resolution to reconciliation: Psychological analysis. *Political Psychology* 21(2): 351-365.
- Bar-Tal, Daniel. (2007) Sociopsychological foundations of intractable conflicts. *American Behavioral Scientist* 50(11): 1430–1453.
- Bar-Tal, Daniel. (2013) *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-psychological Foundations and Dynamics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bartels, Larry M. (2002) Beyond the running tally: partisan bias in political perceptions. *Political Behavior* 24(2): 117–150.
- Blanchard, Fletcher A., Teri Lilly, and Leigh Ann Vaughn. (1991) Reducing the expression of racial prejudice. *Psychological Science* 2(2): 101-105.
- Borgeson, Kevin and Robin Valeri. (2007) The enemy of my enemy is my friend. *American Behavioral Scientist* 51(2): 182-195.
- Bowers, Jake. (2011) Making effects manifest in randomized experiments.” In *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*, eds. James N. Druckman, Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia, New York: Cambridge University Press, chapter 32.
- Brewer, Marilynn B. (1999) The psychology of prejudice: Ingroup love and outgroup hate? *Journal of Social Issues* 55(3): 429-444.
- Canetti-Nisim, Daphna, Gal Ariely, and Eran Halperin. (2008) Life, pocketbook, or culture: the

- role of perceived security threats in promoting exclusionist political attitudes toward minorities in Israel. *Political Research Quarterly* 61(1): 90-103.
- Canetti-Nisim, Daphna, Halperin, Eran, Sharvit, Keren, & Hobfoll, Stevan E. (2009). A new stress-based model of political extremism personal exposure to terrorism, psychological distress, and exclusionist political attitudes. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53(3), 363-389
- Cardenas, Juan Camilo and Jeffrey Carpenter. (2008) Behavioural development economics: lessons from field labs in the developing world. *The Journal of Development Studies* 44(3): 311-338.
- Coleman, Peter T. (2003) Characteristics of protracted, intractable conflict: Toward the development of a metaframework-I. *Peace and Conflict* 9(1): 1-37.
- Collier, Paul. (2003) *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy*. Washington, DC: World Bank Publications.
- Cox, David R., and Nancy Reid. (2000) *The Theory of the Design of Experiments*. Boca Raton, FL: Chapman and Hall/CRC.
- Crandall Christian S. and Charles Stangor. (2005) Conformity and prejudice. In *On the Nature of Prejudice: Fifty Years after Allport*, eds. John F. Dovidio, Peter Samuel Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- de Waal, Thomas. (2003) *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*. New York: New York University Press.
- Druckman, James N. (2004) Political preference formation: competition, deliberation, and the (ir)relevance of framing effects. *American Political Science Review* 98(4): 671-686.
- Druckman, James N. and Kjersten R. Nelson. (2003) Framing and deliberation: how citizens' conversations limit elite influence. *American Journal of Political Science* 47(4): 729-745.
- Gaertner, Samuel L. and John F. Dovidio (2000) *Reducing Intergroup Bias: The Common Ingroup Identity Model*. Philadelphia: Psychology Press.
- Gaertner, Samuel L. and John F. Dovidio (2008) Categorization, recategorization, and intergroup bias. In: John F. Dovidio, Peter Samuel Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (eds.) *On the Nature of Prejudice: Fifty Years after Allport*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Gaines, Brian J., James H. Kuklinski, Paul J. Quirk, Buddy Peyton and Jay Verkuilen. (2007) Same facts, different interpretations: partisan motivation and opinion on Iraq. *Journal of Politics* 69(4): 957-974.
- Gerber, Alan, and Donald Green. (1999) Misperceptions about perceptual bias. *Annual Review of Political Science* 2(1): 189-210.

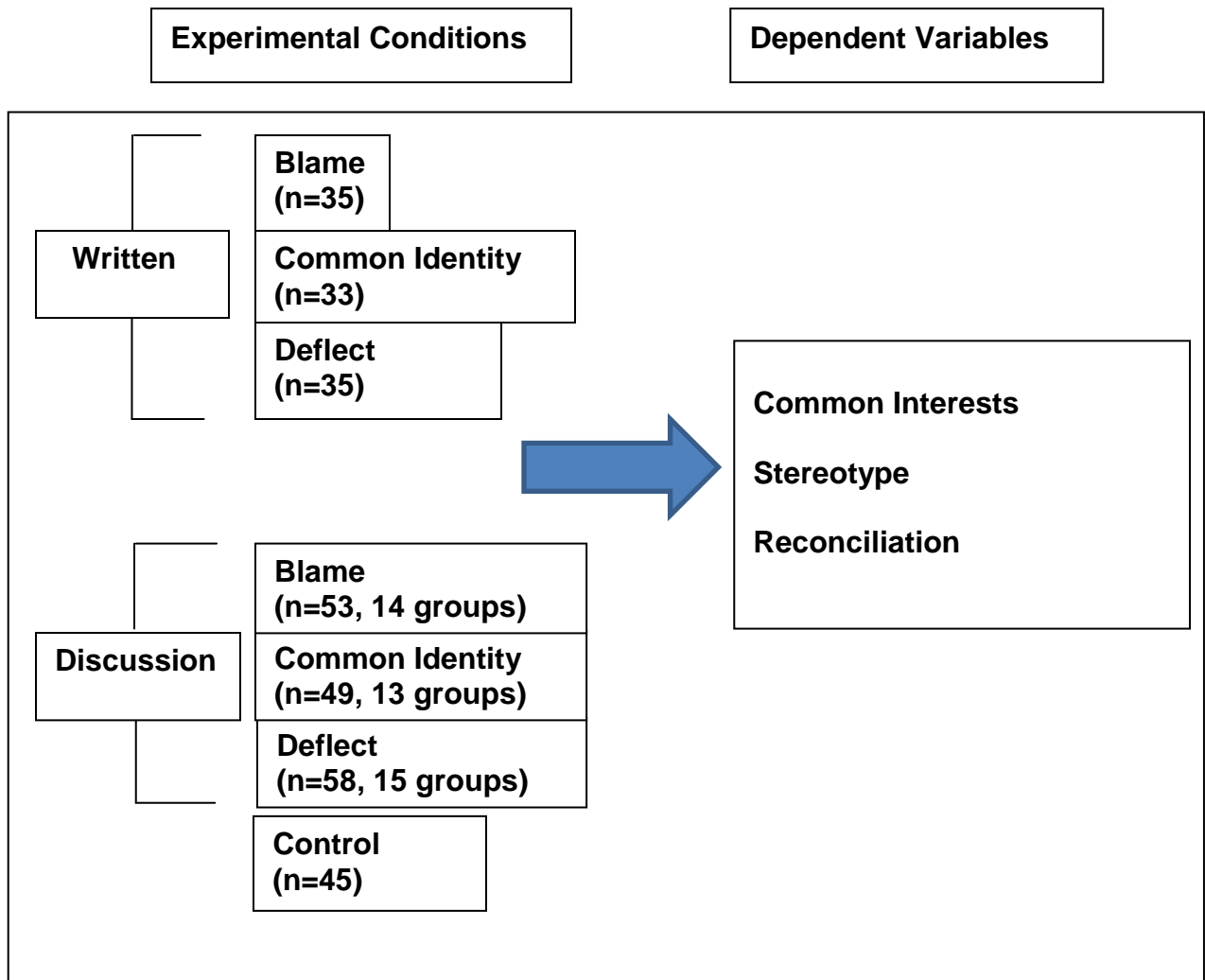
- Gibson, James L. (2004) Overcoming apartheid: can truth reconcile a divided nation? *Politikon* 31(2): 129-155.
- Gurbanov, Geysar. (2012) Is a renewal of war possible between Armenia and Azerbaijan? *South Caucasus Diary* 12 June (<http://southcaucasus.blogspot.com/2012/06/is-renewal-of-war-possible-between.html>).
- Habermas, Jürgen. (1991) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge: MIT press.
- Habyarimana, James, Macartan Humphreys, Daniel N. Posner and Jeremy M. Weinstein. (2007) Why does ethnic diversity undermine public goods provision? *American Political Science Review* 101(4): 709–725.
- Holbrook, Allyson L., Melanie C. Green, and Jon A. Krosnick. (2003) Telephone versus face-to-face interviewing of national probability samples with long questionnaires: Comparisons of respondent satisficing and social desirability response bias." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 67(1): 79-125.
- International Crisis Group. (2007) Nagorno-Karabakh: Risking War. 14 November.
- Ismayilov, Rovshan. (2007) Wealth gap: Much of Azerbaijan is left behind as Baku flourishes. *Transitions Online* 15 August.
- Javeline, Debra. (2003) *Protest and the Politics of Blame: The Russian Response to Unpaid Wages*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Karpowitz, Christopher F., Tali Mendelberg and Lee Shaker. (2012) Gender inequality in deliberative participation. *American Political Science Review* 106(3): 533-547.
- Kelman, Herbert C. (1999) The interdependence of Israeli and Palestinian national identities: the role of the other in existential conflicts. *Journal of Social Issues* 55(3): 581–600.
- Kelman, Herbert C. (2004) Reconciliation as identity change: A social-psychological perspective. In: Y. Bar-Siman-Tov (Ed.) *From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 111-124.
- Kerr, Norbert L. and Cynthia M. Kaufman-Gilliland. (1994) Communication, commitment, and cooperation in social dilemma. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 66(3): 513-529.

- Kessler, Thomas and Amélie Mummendey. (2001) Is There Any Scapegoat Around? Determinants of intergroup conflicts at different categorization levels. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 81(6): 1090-1102.
- Khalid, Adeeb. (2007). Islam after Communism. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Klayman, Joshua. (1995) Varieties of confirmation bias. *Psychology of Learning and Motivation* 32: 385–418.
- Lavine, Howard, Milton Lodge, and Kate Freitas. (2005) Threat, authoritarianism, and selective exposure to information. *Political Psychology* 26(2): 219–244.
- Lomsadze, Giorgi. (2010) Azerbaijan to ban Armenian names. *Eurasianet* 15 July (<http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61532>).
- Malhotra, Neil and Alexander G. Kuo. (2008) Attributing blame: the public's response to hurricane Katrina. *Journal of Politics* 70(1): 120–135.
- Maoz, Ifat and Clark McCauley. (2008) Threat, dehumanization, and support for retaliatory aggressive policies in asymmetric conflict. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52(1): 93-116.
- McDermott, Rose. (2002) Experimental methodology in political science. *Political Analysis* 10(4): 325-342.
- Mendelberg, Tali. (2002) The deliberative citizen: theory and evidence. In: Michael X. Delli Carpini, Leonie Huddy & Robert Y. Shapiro (eds.) *Political Decision Making, Deliberation and Participation* 6. Boston: Jai Press, 151-193.
- Mummendey, Amélie and Michael Wenzel. (1999) Social discrimination and tolerance in intergroup relations: reactions to intergroup difference. *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 3(2): 158-174.
- Mutz, Diane C. (2006) *Hearing the Other side: Deliberative vs. Participatory Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mutz, Diana C. (2011) *Population-based survey experiments*. Princeton University Press.
- Nyhan, Brendan and Jason Reifler. (2010) When corrections fail: the persistence of political misperceptions. *Political Behavior* 32(2): 303-330.
- Paluck, Elizabeth Levy. (2010) Is it better not to talk? group polarization, extended contact, and perspective taking in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 36(9): 1170 -1185.
- Paluck, Elizabeth Levy and Donald P. Green. (2009a) Prejudice reduction: what works? a

- review and assessment of research and practice. *Annual Review of Psychology* 60(1): 339-367.
- Peterson, Robert A. (2001) On the use of college students in social science research: insights from a second-order meta-analysis. *Journal of Consumer Research* 28(3): 450-61.
- Pettigrew, Thomas F. (1979) The ultimate attribution error: extending Allport's cognitive analysis of prejudice. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 5(4): 461-476.
- Powell, Russell, and Steve Clarke. (2013) Religion, tolerance and intolerance: Views from across the disciplines. In: Clarke, Steve, Russell Powell, and Julian Savulescu (eds.) *Religion, Intolerance and Conflict: A Scientific and Conceptual Investigation*, 2-36.
- Rawls, John. (1996) *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Redlawsk, David P. (2002) Hot cognition or cool consideration? Testing the effects of motivated reasoning on political decision making. *Journal of Politics* 64(4): 1021-1044.
- Riek, Blake M., Eric W. Mania, Samuel L. Gaertner, Stacy A. McDonald and Marika J. Lamoreaux. (2010) Does a common ingroup identity reduce intergroup threat? *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations* 13(4): 403 -423.
- Ross, Marc Howard. (1995) Psychocultural interpretation theory and peacemaking in ethnic conflict. *Political Psychology* 16(3): 523-544.
- Schwartz, Barry. (1981) The social context of commemoration: a study in collective memory. *Social Forces* 61(2): 374-402.
- Scobie, Edward and Geoffrey Scobie. (1998) Damaging events: the perceived need for forgiveness. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 28(4): 373-402.
- Sherif, Muzafer. (1966) *Group Conflict and Co-operation: Their Social Psychology*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.
- Shnabel, Nurit and Arie Nadler. (2008) A needs-based model of reconciliation: satisfying the differential emotional needs of victim and perpetrator as a key to promoting reconciliation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 94(1): 116-132.
- Snyder, Jack & Karen Ballentine. (1996) Nationalism and the marketplace of ideas. *International Security* 21(2): 5-40.
- Somer, Murat. (2001) Cascades of ethnic polarization: Lessons from Yugoslavia. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 573(1): 127-151.
- Stangor, Charles, Gretchen B. Sechrist and John T. Jost. (2001) Changing racial beliefs by

- providing consensus information. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 27(4): 486-496.
- Sullivan, John L., James Piereson, and George E. Marcus. (1993) *Political Tolerance and American Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Suny, Ronald Grigor. (1996) *Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Taber, Charles S. and Milton Lodge. (2006) Motivated skepticism in the evaluation of political beliefs. *American Journal of Political Science* 50(3): 755-769.
- Tajfel, Henri. (1981) *Human Groups and Social Categories*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, Donald M. and Fathali M. Moghaddam. (1994) *Theories of Intergroup Relations: International Social Psychological Perspectives*. New York: Freeman.
- Thórisdóttir, Hulda and John T. Jost. (2011) Motivated closed-mindedness mediates the effect of threat on political conservatism. *Political Psychology* 32(5): 785–811.
- UNHCR. (2009a) Azerbaijan: analysis of gaps in the protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs), October.
- UNHCR. (2009b) Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, General Assembly Official Records Sixty-fourth Session Supplement No. 12, New York: United Nations.
- Walsh, Katherine Cramer. (2003) *Talking about Politics: Informal Groups and Social Identity in American Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Weldon, Elizabeth, Karen A. Jehn, and Priti Pradhan. (1991) Processes that mediate the relationship between a group goal and improved group performance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 61(4): 555-569.
- World Bank (n.d.) World development indicators: Azerbaijan (http://data.worldbank.org/country/azerbaijan#cp_wdi)
- Zürcher, Christoph. (2007) *The Post-Soviet Wars: Rebellion, Ethnic Conflict, and Nationhood in the Caucasus*. New York: New York University Press.

Figure 1: Treatments and Dependent Variables¹⁶



¹⁶ Proportionately more subjects were assigned to discussion treatments, in order to generate more groups to compensate for anomalous effects that may be associated with individual groups.

Table 1: Descriptive Data for Subjects

	Proportion	Variance
Over 30	0.39	0.028
Education 1	0.03	0.010
Education 2	0.27	0.025
Education 3	0.71	0.026
Income 1	0.07	0.014
Income 2	0.28	0.026
Income 3	0.24	0.024
Income 4	0.34	0.027
Income 5	0.06	0.013
Male	0.58	0.028
Refugee	0.22	0.024
Know Someone Affected	0.57	0.028
Religiosity	2.38	0.805
Baku	0.41	0.028

Note: Religiosity is a 4-point scale of observance of religious requirements. The values for this variable are the mean and standard deviation

Table 2: Effects of Treatments on Attitudes, Pooling across Narrative Medium

	Common Interests	Stereotype	Reconciliation
Blame	0.27 [*] (0.09)	0.23 (0.16)	0.13 (0.13)
Common ID	-0.08 (0.10)	0.09 (0.15)	-0.05 (0.12)
Deflect	0.10 (0.09)	0.45 [†] (0.17)	0.16 (0.13)
Over 30	-0.04 (0.07)	0.23 [†] (0.12)	0.08 (0.09)
Education 2	-0.09 (0.21)	0.18 (0.47)	0.01 (0.37)
Education 3	-0.02 (0.20)	0.19 (0.46)	0.06 (0.37)
Prosperity 2	-0.16 (0.18)	-0.28 (0.25)	-0.01 (0.22)
Prosperity 3	-0.15 (0.18)	-0.16 (0.26)	-0.10 (0.23)
Prosperity 4	-0.11 (0.19)	0.04 (0.26)	0.02 (0.22)
Prosperity 5	-0.18 (0.22)	-0.34 (0.30)	-0.22 (0.25)
Sex	0.05 (0.06)	0.12 (0.10)	0.20 [*] (0.09)
Refugee	0.05 (0.10)	-0.10 (0.15)	0.01 (0.14)
Know Affected	0.06 (0.07)	0.11 (0.11)	0.03 (0.10)
Religiosity	0.08 [*] (0.04)	0.25 ^{***} (0.07)	0.10 [†] (0.06)
Baku	0.07 (0.06)	0.11 (0.12)	0.06 (0.10)
Intercept	1.86 ^{***} (0.30)	-0.40 (0.56)	-0.15 (0.49)
R ²	0.11	0.14	0.06
Adj. R ²	0.06	0.08	0.00
N	262	262	263

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05, †p < 0.1. Note: Model is OLS, using Huber-White robust standard errors clustered by discussion group. Treatments are dummy variables, with control group as the base category. Sex takes a value of 1 for men and 0 for women. Age is a dummy variable for respondents 30+ years. Education is broken down into three categories: primary school only (1), secondary school (2), and higher education (3). Income is a 5-category variable of self-assessed purchasing power. Religiosity is a 4-point scale of observance of religious requirements.

Table 3: Effects of Treatments on Attitudes, Disaggregated by Narrative and Medium

	Common Interests	Stereotype	Reconciliation
Blame x Written	0.29 [*] (0.12)	-0.02 (0.18)	-0.18 (0.12)
Common ID x Written	-0.04 (0.14)	-0.03 (0.19)	-0.05 (0.15)
Deflect x Written	-0.04 (0.11)	0.39 [†] (0.22)	-0.14 (0.11)
Blame x Discussion	0.26 [*] (0.10)	0.34 [*] (0.17)	0.28 [†] (0.14)
Common ID x Discussion	-0.10 (0.11)	0.16 (0.16)	-0.04 (0.12)
Deflect x Discussion	0.18 [†] (0.10)	0.49 ^{**} (0.19)	0.32 [*] (0.15)
Over 30	-0.04 (0.07)	0.23 [†] (0.12)	0.09 (0.09)
Education 2	-0.11 (0.21)	0.12 (0.47)	-0.07 (0.35)
Education 3	-0.03 (0.21)	0.15 (0.46)	-0.002 (0.35)
Prosperity 2	-0.17 (0.18)	-0.24 (0.25)	0.01 (0.22)
Prosperity 3	-0.16 (0.18)	-0.12 (0.26)	-0.07 (0.23)
Prosperity 4	-0.13 (0.19)	0.06 (0.25)	0.02 (0.22)
Prosperity 5	-0.19 (0.22)	-0.34 (0.30)	-0.23 (0.24)
Sex	0.04 (0.06)	0.10 (0.11)	0.17 [†] (0.09)
Refugee	0.04 (0.10)	-0.08 (0.15)	0.01 (0.14)
Know Affected	0.05 (0.07)	0.09 (0.11)	-0.004 (0.10)
Religiosity	0.08 [*] (0.04)	0.23 ^{**} (0.07)	0.08 (0.06)
Baku	0.07 (0.06)	0.12 (0.12)	0.06 (0.10)
Intercept	1.90 ^{***} (0.30)	-0.33 (0.55)	-0.02 (0.48)
R ²	0.13	0.15	0.10

Adj. R ²	0.06	0.09	0.04
N	262	262	263

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, † p < 0.1.

Table 4: Test of Discussion vs. Written Treatments

Treatment/DV	Common Interests	Stereotype	Reconciliation
Blame	0.08 (0.77)	4.55 (0.03)	5.67 (0.02)
Common ID	0.15 (0.70)	1.21 (0.27)	0.16 (0.69)
Deflect	3.13 (0.08)	0.14 (0.71)	7.06 (0.01)

Note: Listed values are F-tests. Associated p-values are in parentheses.

Figure 2: Discussion Groups: Frequency of References by Treatment as Proportion of Total...

