

Elite Persuasion and Religious Extremism:

A Study Among Sunni and Shia Muslims in Northern India

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ABSTRACT

Elite Persuasion and Religious Extremism: A Study Among Sunni and Shia Muslims in Northern India

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In my dissertation, I explore four inter-related research areas that advance the study of elite influence, identity, and conflict. How does religion interact with changing political conditions over time to affect contemporary patterns of extremism? To what extent do extremist attitudes explain variation in extremist behavior? What does the relationship between these two variables, and the similarities and differences in their correlates, imply for theories of extremism and ethnic conflict more generally? The next two themes focus on the way in which anti-violence appeals by elites shape extremism among followers. How does anti-violence religious—as opposed to economic—persuasion by an elite affect extremism, and can it overcome a counterargument to the peace message by a peer? Finally, what explains variation in the effectiveness of clerical persuasion on extremist behaviors across religious groups?

In the opening chapter, I ask how changing political conditions shape the capacity of religious elites to mobilize extremism. In what ways might changing conditions lead to differential effects within religious groups? I study these questions based on primary field research in Lucknow and analysis of secondary historical sources. I demonstrate how the rise and fall state-sponsored religion, government regulation of religious rituals, and heightened foreign sectarian conflict structured efforts by religious elites to change norms in ways that increasingly permitted violence. For the Shia, such changing political conditions interacted with elements of their constitutive political myth in ways that strengthened perceptions of victimization. The ensuing difference in perceived group status has placed unique constraints on the persuasiveness of present-day Shia clerics who propagate pro-peace norms to their followers. Taken together, the study offers important lessons for the relationship between political conditions and the transmission of religious ideas, the durability of identities, and the effectiveness of elite persuasion in conflict settings.

Chapter 3 focuses on the relationship between extremist attitudes and behavior. Research on the factors associated with religious extremism have focused on either extremist attitudes or behavior. Yet to date, there is little empirical evidence on the relationship between extremist attitudes and behavior, including on whether they are associated with the same factors. To help inform research gaps, this study leverages a face-to-face survey of 480 Sunni and Shia Muslim youth in Lucknow's Old City that employed attitudinal and behavioral measures of extremism. The results offer some of the first evidence that extremist attitudes are significant predictors of extremist behaviors, but that the strength of the relationship is not as strongly as commonly expected. Second, the study argues that economic grievances are stronger predictors of extremist attitudes than of behavior,

and thus challenges theoretical expectations from the conflict literature. Third, the study points to a model of extremism in which religious and psychological factors, rather than grievance or social network explanations, drive both extremist attitudes and behaviors.

The fourth chapter turns attention to the causal effect of elite persuasion and bottom-up counter-messaging on religious extremism. Can pro-peace persuasion by religious or economic elites reduce religious extremism? Will such effects survive counterarguments? This study uses an audio recording experiment to examine these questions in the context of religious extremism in northern India. Sunni and Shia young adult men were randomly assigned to listen to an audio message recorded by a real in-group cleric emphasizing norms discouraging violence or a real in-group shopkeeper emphasizing material considerations discouraging violence. Another treatment—listening to a counterargument to the peace message by an in-group member—tests counter-messaging. Results indicate a surprising pattern: religious persuasion increases extremism the Shia sample and reduces extremism for the Sunni sample. Although these effects do not reach statistical significance within each sample, the difference between sects of the marginal effects of religious persuasion and the counterargument message are significant. The results support a novel logic involving group victimization consistent with experimental results and qualitative evidence.

The final chapter of the dissertation examines clerical persuasion and its impact on religious extremism. How does an anti-violence religious message by a cleric affect extremism? Do such appeals work differently across groups? I argue that exposure to such an appeal from an in-group cleric reduces extremism for members of a non-victimized group but not for members of a victimized group. The latter retain extremism to guard against anticipated threats. I present evidence from an audio recording experiment among 2,100 Sunni and Shia young adult men in Lucknow, the Indian city where sectarian violence is highest and the Shia perceive themselves as victimized. I randomly assigned subjects to listen to an anti-violence religious argument from either an in-group cleric; out-group cleric; both; or none. Results show that the in-group message significantly reduces extremist behaviors up to 8 hours later for Sunni but not Shia subjects. Additional analyses and qualitative research emphasize the plausibility of the victimization logic. Furthermore, the out-group message and the interaction do not significantly change behavior for either group. I argue that intergroup inequalities matter for understanding the effectiveness of elite persuasion and discuss policy implications.

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Chapter 1

An Introduction

Much of the political science literature on ethnic conflict tells a story in which elites influence followers to engage in conflict with the ethnic other. In many of the leading accounts, persuasion is a particularly prominent mechanism by which elites radicalize their followers. Scholars working on ethnic conflict in different contexts have more or less outlined a similar process: ethnic or religious elites strategically manipulate the normative content of in-group myths and symbols in order to encourage extremism against the outgroup. Students of comparative politics are accustomed to such an account in a range of conflicts, from riots among Hindus and Muslims in India or Christians and Muslims in northern Nigeria to civil war in the former Yugoslavia. A similar narrative regarding the impact of elite persuasion abounds in literature on terrorism, where scholars have emphasized the role of normative arguments by radicalized clerics in increasing extremist attitudes and behaviors.

To date, however, there is little direct evidence as to whether elite appeals affect extremism. Under what conditions can elite messaging reduce extremism? To what extent do such appeals affect extremist attitudes and behaviors, and by which mechanisms? To help fill these research gaps, my dissertation presents a series of related studies that examine pro-peace elite persuasion as well as the broader social and historical context in which it takes place. My main argument is that an anti-violence appeal by an in-group cleric reduces extremism for members of a non-victimized group but not members of the victimized group. Out of concern for group survival, I argue, members of a victimized group will retain extremism to defend themselves from anticipated threats.

I demonstrate this argument through a combination of experimental evidence and qualitative insights based on five months of field research in northern India conducted between 2014 and 2016. My dissertation focuses on the case of religious extremism among Sunni and Shia Muslims in Lucknow, the capital of India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh. Lucknow is described as the most important state capital in India. An otherwise stable city, it has experienced chronic Sunni-Shia riots since the early twentieth century. In recent decades, the vast majority of sectarian violence in the city is concentrated in what is locally called Old Lucknow, or the Old City. Some religious clerics from both sects are known to use religious arguments to mobilize conflict, while others are equally known for using scripture to build peace. Extremism is particularly likely to

turn violent during certain holy periods in the Islamic calendar, and the scale of that risk draws extensive attention from local police and state-level law and order officials.

In the chapters that follow, I analyze four questions that inform and contextualize my main argument on elite persuasion. In the opening chapter, I qualitatively explore how the historical development of Sunni-Shia relations in Lucknow shapes modern patterns of extremism there. My analysis combines secondary historical sources with nearly seventy interviews that I conducted with religious clerics, youth, police officers, politicians, academics, and journalists in Lucknow. The following chapter progresses to the empirical study of religious extremism in present-day Lucknow, and in particular, the Old City neighborhood. Drawing on an original survey of 480 Sunni and Shia youth, the study examines the under-studied yet important question of whether extremist attitudes and behaviors are related and to what extent.

The final two chapters apply experimental methods to study the relationship between elite persuasion and religious extremism. Chapter Four compares pro-peace religious and economic variants of persuasion, and examines whether such messages can overcome a counterargument to the peace message from an in-group youth. One of the main findings is that in contrast to economic persuasion, pro-peace religious persuasion works differently across the Sunni and Shia samples. In particular, exposure to a pro-peace religious message from an in-group cleric works less effectively for Shia subjects as compared to Sunni subjects. The study combines an analysis of the experimental results with follow-up interviews with subjects to propose a theoretical logic in which perceived group victimization inhibits willingness to comply with a pro-peace call by an influential in-group elite.

The final chapter aims to further test and refine the theoretical argument proposed in the fourth chapter. In light of the earlier finding that economic persuasion does not reduce extremism for Sunni and Shia subjects and does not work differently between sects, the study focuses on the role of pro-peace religious persuasion. The chapter uses an audio recording experiment with 2,100 Sunni and Shia young adult men to examine how exposure to anti-violence appeals by an in-group or out-group religious cleric shape extremist behaviors. The results further substantiate the role of victimization in inhibiting clerical persuasion to peace. These findings offer an important set of lessons for the ethnic conflict literature as well as to policymakers studying ways to reduce violent extremism.

1.1 The Case

The focus on conflict within India's Muslim community marks an major departure from the bulk of political science research on conflict in South Asia, which has focused on Hindi-Muslim riots. In contrast, I focus on the case of Sunni-Shia extremism.

I do so for three reasons. First, Lucknow is a good laboratory in which to probe relationships between religious elites and publics. Studies of Hindu-Muslim violence in India emphasize that a combination of marginalization and violence push the Muslim community to the fringes of society, where they mostly interact with one another. Such settings qualitatively affect relations between pious Muslims and their clerics, known as *maulanas*, bringing them into more frequent interaction and increasing exposure to normative messaging on a range of issues. If elite persuasion actually truly affects extremist attitudes and behavior as often claimed, then one should expect it is at work in such environs, where it is common and salient. The Old City of Lucknow, which is one such setting in which conflict is also salient, thus stands as a good case.

A second reason to study this case is that it allows the researcher to take a broader view of what conflict between ethnic majorities and minorities means in India. Most studies have pursued the more visible framing of this question by looking at Hindu-Muslim conflict. Yet this approach has perhaps gone too far in leaving the impression that Indian Muslims and their religion of Islam constitute a monolithic community. India, by many estimates, is in fact home to the second-largest number of Shia Muslims in the world after Iran. An infusion of Shia and Persian influences have richly colored India's languages, art and architecture, inward migration, and broader cultural relations. The Shia of India, however, have always been and remain a minority within a minority, with estimates suggesting that they have never constituted more than five to ten percent of the country's Muslim population. These features invite the question of whether common assumptions about elite persuasion and extremism in majority-minority conflicts travel to the Sunni-Shia case.

The final reason to study the case is that it matters for politics in the world largest democracy. With Lucknow as the capital of Uttar Pradesh (U.P.), extremism among Sunni and Shia Muslims has, both historically and to the present day, affected and been affected by the mobilization strategies of political parties and decisions of the state government. In their efforts to win at state and national polls in U.P. districts, political parties routinely attempt to win votes along sectarian lines by playing on constructed hatreds or security concerns between the Sunni and Shia. Beyond the polls, extremism in the Old City matters because its effects are felt far beyond Lucknow, particularly as the city is a leading center of Islamic scholarship and Muslim political activism. The Sunni and Shia *maulanas* of Lucknow rank among India's most influential. They have shown a formidable nuisance factor by organizing protests that strain the city's law and order forces and often turn violent, and, in one recent episode, organizing a long-term volunteer that aimed to claimed to have recruited half a million Indian Shia Muslims to travel to Iraq to fight the Islamic State group. Learning how elites affect extremism, and in particular the conditions under which elite persuasion can reduce extremism, thus has practical import in the case at hand as well as more generally.

1.2 The Approach

The first half of the dissertation aim to contextualize and make sense of the experimental designs and results. Chapter 2 analyzes the political conditions that structure efforts by religious elites to propagate more or less extremist norms to their followers. It combines historical analysis, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation to explain how changing political conditions interacted with religious differences to give rise to a perception of group victimization among the Shia. The chapter also helps the reader to conceptualize religious identity, arguing that similarities in the contemporary and historic conflicts between Sunni and Shia in Lucknow point to an enduring core of religious identity that has more or less remained unchanged. It unpacks what these debates are about, how they were affected by changing political conditions, and elucidates the degree to which they are operative in the material setting in which the later experimental work takes place.

Chapter 3 turns the attention to religious extremism, and embarks on an empirical inquiry of the relationship between extremist attitudes and behavior. It seeks to help fill a gap in existing research that either focuses on the factors that predict attitudes or behavior or treat both outcomes as one. The chapter presents from a large-scale survey of Sunni and Shia young adult men in the Old City that leverages innovative attitudinal and behavioral measures of extremism. The results offer some of the first evidence that extremist attitudes are significant predictors of extremist behaviors, but that the strength of the relationship is not as strongly as commonly expected. Second, the study argues that economic grievances are stronger predictors of extremist attitudes than of behavior, and thus challenges theoretical expectations from the conflict literature. Third, the study points to a model of extremism in which religious and psychological factors, rather than grievance or social network explanations, drive both extremist attitudes and behaviors.

The second half of the dissertation is devoted to the experimental study of persuasion and religious extremism. Chapter 4 asks if pro-peace persuasion by religious or economic elites reduce religious extremism, and whether such effects will survive bottom-up counterarguments from radicalized youth. It uses an audio recording experiment in which subjects were randomly assigned to listen to an audio message recorded by [1] a real in-group cleric emphasizing norms discouraging violence against the outgroup or [2] a real in-group shopkeeper emphasizing material considerations discouraging such violence. Another treatment—listening to a counterargument to the peace message by an in-group member—tests countermessaging. To measure extremism, the experiment draws upon both attitudinal and behavioral measures.

The results show a surprising pattern: religious persuasion increases extremism the Shia sample and reduces extremism for the Sunni sample. Although these effects do not reach statistical significance within each sample, the difference between sects of the marginal effects of religious persuasion and the counterargument message are significant. The chapter analyzes the meaning of

these results using follow-up interviews with a subset of experimental subjects in combination with insights from qualitative field research. It concludes by presenting a novel theoretical argument—the logic of substitution—which argues that group victimization matters for understanding the effectiveness of normative persuasion by an in-group elite. Per the logic, members of victimized groups who hear their in-group cleric advocate peace interpret such a message as evidence that he is “substituting-out” of extremism, leading the individual to “substitute-in” by retaining extremism in order to defend fellow in-group members against the other group. Such a logic, by contrast, is not operative for members of the victimized group.

The fifth chapter takes the logic of substitution as a starting point and uses findings from a second, larger-scale experiment to develop it into a more comprehensive theoretical argument. Drawing inspiration from a classic argument about in-group policing and interethnic peace, the chapter seeks to experimentally investigate whether pro-peace elite messaging can bring about buy-in to a cooperative in-group policing equilibrium in a conflict setting featuring a victimized group. It presents an original logic in which pro-peace elite messaging can increase peaceful behavior among non-victimized group members but not among the victimized group. For non-victimized group members, such change comes about only after exposure to an in-group elite, and not an out-group elite, via directly increasing tolerance rather than changing expectations about outgroup behavior. The theory was developed by a combination of *ex ante* expectations based on the results in Chapter 3 as well as *ex post* insights derived from the second audio recording experiment.

In that experiment, a sample of 2,100 Sunni and Shia young adult men were randomly assigned to hear an audio recording from a real in-group cleric, out-group cleric, or both, and in which the speaker(s) used normative arguments to order followers from their sect to not engage in extremism against the other group. To obtain an unobtrusive behavioral measure of extremism, enumerators not only recorded if subjects purchased and wore a pro-peace wristband that they were offered, but also checked if the subjects were still wearing the wristband at a follow-up survey about eight hours later. A third behavioral measure captured violent speech. The results show that in-group religious persuasion reduced extremism for Sunni but not Shia subjects. Furthermore, extremism reduction among Sunni subjects functioned by increasing tolerance and strengthening norms, neither of which occurred for the Shia. Broader lessons arise for the study of in-group policing, group inequalities, and the role of religious leaders in conflict.

1.3 Moving Forward

The phenomenon of religious extremism is particularly complex, and particular empirical patterns may vary across time and space as well as across different types of groups. The present study makes several important contributions toward understanding general questions related to extremism in the

particular context of Sunni and Shia young adult men in Lucknow. The evidence and theoretical arguments presented have important implications for scholars and practitioners alike.

Yet in understanding and applying the findings in this study, it is important to emphasize that the patterns and claims made about the groups studied here should not be taken as the final word on the subject. The Sunni and Shia communities of Lucknow's Old City are diverse and large in number. Although this dissertation makes an important contribution to understanding these communities and their relations with one another, additional research is essential to obtaining even greater confidence about the specific arguments.

A similar point relates to the question of the extent to which particular arguments developed in the Lucknow case apply to cases elsewhere in South Asia or beyond the region. Several features of the context in the present research are broadly applicable to the Sunni and Shia communities of other countries with conflict between these groups, such as Pakistan, Lebanon, and Syria. First, the Shia perception of victimization is salient in these cases as well, and for reasons that involve a similar mix of local political repression and the increasing salience of religious principles supporting revenge and martyrdom. Second, the Shia constitute a minority relative to the Sunni population in each of these country cases.

Third, the normative conflicts in Sunni and Shia theology exploited by extremists, as well as the normative arguments for intergroup peace, are highly similar across the different country contexts. Sunni and Shia Islam are internally diverse and are often practiced and understood with important modifications among different local populations. Yet the points of difference—and friction—in the doctrines or practice of these faiths, including differences over historical events, are highly similar in different contexts. From the same logic, it is also true that religious arguments for intergroup peace are highly similar across different country contexts.

These features suggest why it the argument advanced here about Shia victimization may travel to other cases. They also emphasize that the the anti-violence religious appeals in the interventions (Chapters 4 and 5) are themselves salient and applicable in other country contexts.

Moving forward, scholars can help probe the generalizeability of the arguments advanced here by conducting additional experimental research in other cases that include and extend far beyond the Sunni-Shia case. As Chapter 5 discusses in its conclusion, it may be the case that the lack of neutrality by a local government toward local conflict between groups may alter the effectiveness of pro-peace persuasion between victimized and non-victimized groups. Additional inquiry can help test the predictions laid at the end of that chapter. A separate avenue for future research is to examine how elite persuasion affects extremism in cases of ethnic conflict that do not involve religious groups. To what extent do the results in this dissertation change when examining extremism among racial or tribal groups, for instance? How might these arguments generalize beyond ethnic groups to describe the responsiveness of more or less powered groups—such as police officers and

marginalized minorities or migrant groups—to calls to abandon the use of force?

Each of these questions is complicated and intricate in its own right, with potentially different patterns in different contexts, just as in the case of the present study. Transparency and replication are crucial to guide future research that endeavors to explain these phenomena.

Chapter 2

The Role of Political Conditions and Religious Doctrine in Shaping Extremism in Northern India

2.1 Introduction

How do changing political conditions affect the ability of elites to propagate extremism within their religious communities? In what ways might exposure to such changing conditions lead to different effects on extremism within the local groups?

I investigate these questions in the case of Lucknow, the capital of India's largest state, Uttar Pradesh. To do so, I combine an analysis of secondary historical sources with my five months of field research in Lucknow and Delhi. Field research entailed about 70 semi-structured interviews with religious clerics, youth, and elders from the Sunni and Shia sects; local politicians; police officers; journalists; and academics. Qualitative field work also included participant observation, including the author's attendance at religious ceremonies, and analysis of local media reports.

In this chapter, I advance three arguments. First, I demonstrate that prescriptive religious norms regarding extremism were significantly affected by macro-level political conditions facing elites and the masses. Such circumstances, ranging from state patronage of religion to colonial rule and democratic governance, shaped clerical decisions to persuade followers via more or less extremist norms. Second, I argue that religious ideas exerted an effect on extremism and conflict among Sunni and Shia in ways independent from economic or political factors. Although religious identities in Lucknow have been transformed by modernization and social change, lines of conflict have largely tracked a common set of doctrinal disputes that are central to each sect's myth-symbol complex. Prescriptive norms framed in terms of myth-symbol complexes continue to characterize appeals by Sunni and Shia clerics in the present-day. Lastly, I argue that historical factors, including a 'reversal of fortune', and contemporary factors, including local and foreign threats, have interacted to strengthen perceptions of victimization among the Shia. Unlike in the Sunni community, such perceptions uniquely constrain efforts by Shia clerics to propagate pro-peace norms among their followers.

Together, this chapter yields two broad contributions to the political science literature on identity and conflict. First, it fills an important gap as to the historical processes that make ethnic or

religious identity resonate with elites and masses, explaining how such identities can be shifted to form lines of conflict rather than simply difference. The analysis highlights a historical pattern linking political conditions, elite persuasion, and extremism that tells a different story about ethnic conflict than prominent accounts focusing on contemporary factors like electoral competitiveness (Wilkinson 2006), civic associational ties (Varshney 2003), or institutionalized riot systems (Brass 1997*b*). It explains, for instance, how the collapse of an institution of state-sponsored religion and the experience of defeat by a colonial power increases inter-group conflict and religious extremism. The argument falls in line with historical and sociological research on South Asia (Jones 2011; Jaffrelot 2009) that illustrate how political institutions set the conditions for the transmission of religious ideas.

Second, this chapter helps unpack how differences in religious identity affect the manner and extent to which elites from each group are able to persuade their followers toward or away from extremism. In existing accounts, social scientists have largely sought to explain elite mobilization of conflict in terms of a group's relative size (Posner 2004) and relatedly, vote-bank power (Wilkinson 2006), or in terms of relative economic differences between groups (Mitra and Ray 2014; Horowitz 1985). This study argues that changing political conditions have interacted with elements of the Shia constitutive political myth to strengthen perceptions of victimization among present-day Shia. In consequence, Shia youth appear to be less persuadable by normative pro-peace appeals made by Shia clerics. This element of religious identity is not present in the Sunni identity and thus does not constrain the appeals of their clerics, thus yielding assymmetric expectations for the effectiveness of religious clerical persuasion across the two sects. More broadly, the study challenges conventional approaches that mostly focus on demographic or material differences between groups and instead supports recent calls for a 'thicker' study of religious identity (Philpott 2007) to understand conflict.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. Section Two provides a framework that illustrates the theoretical approach and defines important concepts employed throughout the discussion. Section Three focuses on historical analysis, tracing the impact of macro-political events on the development of prescriptive religious norms. These events are the formation of the Shia kingdom of Awadh; its collapse and replacement by British colonial institutions following the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857; and the onset of local elections corresponding with Indian independence. Section Four turns to the contemporary social context of Sunni-Shia relations in Lucknow. It draws on semi-structured interviews and participant observation conducted by the author to show how historical and contemporary factors have strengthened perceptions of victimization among the Shia. The chapter rounds out with Section 5, which discusses the broader implications of the analysis for the study of identity and conflict.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The approach taken in this study describes the effect of political conditions on religious extremism via the role of elites and the institutions they create and manage. On one level, political conditions shape the material setting in which elite persuasion takes place. They function in ways similar to the “circumstances of reflection” introduced in Philpott (2001, 53) that “help ideas to develop” and exert an “autonomous” effect on political outcomes. As demonstrated throughout the ensuing discussion, political conditions structure the ways in which elites adapt doctrine and ritual to remain relevant to their followers. Salvation religions, as (Smith 1986, 119-125) has argued, survive by actively engaging in efforts to reinvent and replenish religion to keep the masses conscious of their faith attachments. Political conditions shape how religious elites construct prescriptive religious norms to persuade their followers.

The discussion focuses on four main political conditions that shaped elite persuasion. The term ‘condition’, rather than ‘phase’, is used to indicate that its presence, as opposed to its absence, yielded an effect on the setting in which elite persuasion took place.

The first political condition is state-sponsored religion, which refers to the rule by Shia kings of Awadh (1722-1856), which had Lucknow as its primary capital. The Shia state formulated a partnership with religious elites that witnessed the incorporation of a priesthood structure and a more public Shia faith replete with sprawling mosques and shrines. Such conditions brought about a formal Shia clerical establishment that propagated a faith centered at the nawabi dynasty and internationalized to the holy sites in Iraq and Iran. The second political condition is the collapse of state-sponsored religion and the linked expansion of colonial power. The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 and the associated collapse of Awadh challenged the Muslim communities of the United Provinces in northern India. Such conditions spawned an awakening among Sunni religious elites, whose sect constituted some 95 percent of all Indian Muslims. The late nineteenth century saw the rise of ethnicisim within three Sunni revivalist movements—the Deobandi, Barelvi, and Ahl-e-Hadis—that prescribed various conservative religious norms that encouraged refutation and conflict with the Shia.¹ Soon after, elite-led mobilization sparked the first major Sunni-Shia riot in Lucknow’s history.

The third political condition is government regulation of religious ritual. This condition varied over three phases. The first phase involves the British colonial state’s restrictions between 1907 and 1939 of the Shia *azadari* processions, which in India, are central to the faith’s practices in

¹Similar effects resonated with the Hindu community. Most notably, the colonial victory gave rise to the Hindu revivalist movement known as the *Arya Samaaj*, or Noble Society, which today constitutes an important sect in the Hindu faith.

the Muslim month of Muharram, and the Sunni *madh-e-sahaba* procession, practiced by Deobandi and Ahl-i-Hadis members. Such conditions increased the salience of different rituals among members of the Sunni and Shia sects, and thus incentivized religious entrepreneurs to prescribe norms that permitted the use of violence toward members of the other sect as a means of securing their respective faiths. Following Indian independence, a second phase of government regulation of ritual took place between 1977 and 1997. During this period, the government of Uttar Pradesh imposed and enforced a complete ban on all religious processions by either sect. The ban was effective in preventing riots, but had the unintended effect of empowering extremist religious elites in both communities. In a third phase beginning in 1997, the ban was lifted and replaced with an agreement signed by clerics from both sects that restricted Shia processions to a small number of days and the Sunni *madh-e-sahaba* procession to a single day. As demonstrated in the discussion, extremist Shia clerics manipulated the restrictions in the new agreement to construct a narrative of victimization brought about by the Sunni community and its foreign backers in Saudi Arabia. Extremist Sunni clerics manipulated the Shia emphasis on *azadari* as tantamount to apostasy. Both sets of elites, in turn, propagated religious norms emphasizing the importance of fighting, with particular Shia clerics framing violence as necessary for self-defense while their Sunni counterparts framed violence as necessary for combatting doctrinal aberrations from the true Muslim faith, in which only God, rather than saints, should be worshipped.

The fourth and final political condition is heightened violence between Sunni and Shia Muslims outside India. This condition was brought about by the onset of the Syrian civil war and the rise of the Islamic State group, events that resonated heavily in the Sunni and Shia communities of Lucknow and across India. The analysis describes these resonances and the ways in which incentivized extremist clerics from both sects to propagate norms permitting violence through public acts such as volunteer drives to send fighters to Iraq, protests, religious gatherings (*majlis*), and *fatwas*. As with the local dispute over religious rituals, heightened foreign conflict between Sunni and Shia operated via elite persuasion to strengthen perceptions of victimization among many Shia. Among the Sunni, the analysis shows that such conflict placed greater constraints on pro-peace Sunni clerics, effectively reducing the perceived public gap between them and their extremist co-religionists.

The ways in which political conditions structured elite propagation of religious norms and ultimately shaped extremism raise the important issue of the nature and durability of religious identity. In contrast to primordialist approaches (Shils 1957) that describe ethnic and religious identity attachments as fixed at birth and relatively immutable over time, the approach here more closely tracks a conceptualization of identity in which ‘myth-symbol complexes’ remain relatively constant over time but that their salience varies with changing circumstances. This perspective has been well-articulated by Smith (1986, 160-161), who argued that ethnic and religious identities are

not continuous but are affected by macro-developments. In this reading, the “special character” of such identities is in their myths, memories, symbols, and values and the associated *mythomoteur*, or constitutive political myth of the group, which remain relatively constant (Smith 1986, 15). Religious mythomoteurs, those “suffused with sacred elements” and “religious fervour and imagery” are particularly persistent (Smith 1986, 67). Central to this reading, however, is that the salience and application of the *mythomoteur* is not automatic, but rather requires the active involvement of religious elites, who play the role of persuading followers to perceive power and meaning in the myth-symbol complex (Smith 2000, 21).

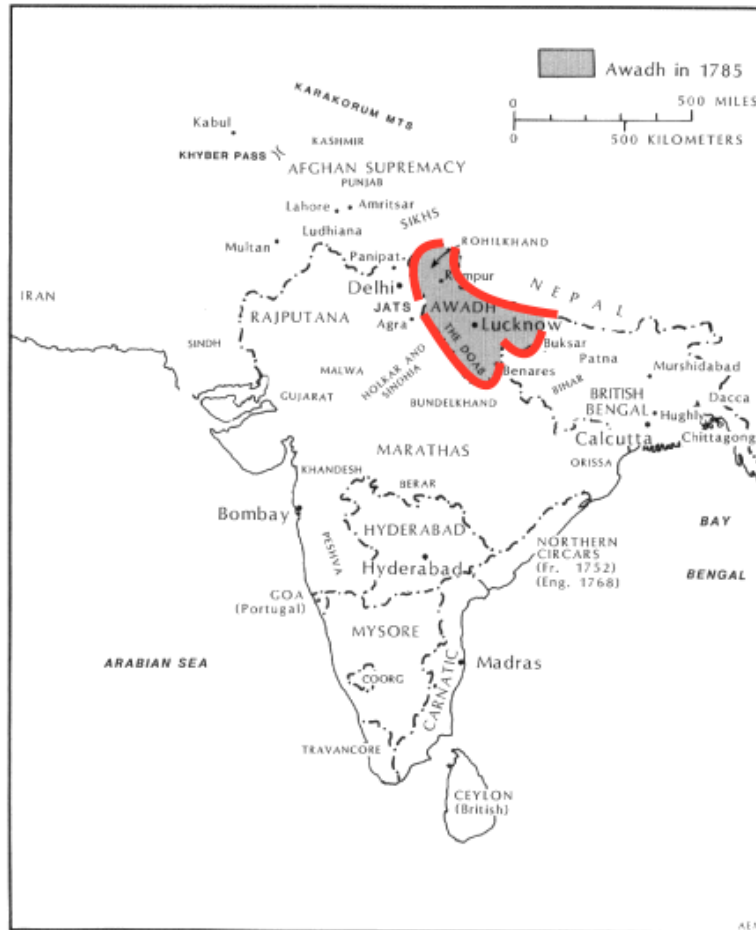
In this chapter, I track this conceptualization of identity by pointing to the ways in which particular political conditions structure the process of norm emergence and dissemination to the masses. By tracing variation across time in doctrinal interpretation, prescriptive norms, and conflict, the discussion breaks with a primordialist viewpoint in which doctrinal differences in and of themselves trigger conflict. At the same time, this chapter also shows when changing political circumstances led to extremism, clerical justifications for extremist norms maintained a focus on pre-existing doctrinal differences between Sunni and Shia Islam. In particular, extremist elites in Lucknow continue to ignite conflicts over pre-existing differences regarding the successorship of the Prophet, whether Muharram rituals conflicted with the Islamic tenet of the oneness of God (*tawhid*), and prayer style. Taken together, this approach thus mirrors other approaches to ways in which durable identities constrain the types of appeals made by religious elites in South Asia (Robinson 1979) and abroad (Smith 1986).

2.3 State-Sponsored Religion

Building Awadh

In the early 18th century, rising political instability in Iran’s Safavid dynasty led to a flow of Iranian notables to India. Hailing from the northeastern Iranian city of Nishapur, near the holy Shia city of Mashad, Mir Muhammad Amin Nishapuri arrived in Delhi in 1708 at the court of the Mughal empire. Although the Mughals were followers of the Sunni tradition, their recent entry into a period of decline incentivized them to partner with Iranian pilgrims like Nishapuri to manage restive parts of their empire. The death of the Mughal emperor Aurangzaib, infamous as a conservative Sunni who persecuted Hindus and Muslim minorities, had also helped to diminish intolerance toward the Shia in the court at New Delhi (Cole 1988, 40). In 1722, Nishapuri, who came to be known by his title *Burhanul-Mulk* (Urdu from Arabic, meaning “proof of the nation”), was rewarded the provincial governate of Awadh, located in present-day Uttar Pradesh. He established a Shia dynasty that would last until 1857. For most of its existence, Awadh had Lucknow

Figure 2.1: The Kindgom of Awadh (Oudh) in 1785



has its capital. Figure 1 below shows a map of Awadh—spelled as *Oudh* in British colonial-era texts—in 1785.²

In subtle ways, the process of state formation that ensued—including under his next two successors Safdar Jang and Shuja-ad-Daula—empowered the Shia minority and upset the power of local Sunnis, paving the path for future tensions. This process came about due to a combination of economic grievances and the politicization of religious differences.

Upon assuming power, Burhanul-Mulk first took advantage of his control over the tax-free land grants that local Sunni religious institutions and elites had long received from the Mughal court. By ending their tax-free status and seizing generous stipends meant for these entities, Burhanul Mulk had taken policies that financially undermined a wide range of Sunni religious seminaries (Cole

²Modification of original figure from Cole (1988, 39).

1988, 42-43). Despite these actions, Barhunul-Mulk and his successor, Safdar Jang, were initially able to maintain cordial relations with major Sunni seminaries in Lucknow. The Farangi Mahal seminary, famous in the Islamic world for developing the *dars-i-nizami* madrasa curriculum that would become standard in South Asia and parts of the Middle East, was able to survive as it received its funding directly from Delhi. Farangi Mahal, which literally means the “foreigners’ palace”, which was, interestingly, constructed by Dutch financiers, was granted to a local notable Sunni family with relations to the Mughal emperor Aurangzaib. It has since served as a premier center of learning for South Asia’s Sunni Muslim community.

Relations with Farangi Mahal, and by extension, the larger Sunni clerical community, soon became strained. Soon after Farangi Mahal’s top cleric died in 1748, his son, who attained responsibility for the seminary, sought the financial support of a local Sunni elite due to suspicions of the nawab’s intentions. After two Sunni-Shia clashes around 1766 that left a few dead, the decision of the nawab Shuja-ud-Daulah to side with the Shia—his community—left significant concern in the Sunni clerical quarters of Farangi Mahal. Such local tensions took place amidst a broader backdrop of Sunni Mughal decline propelled by military encounters with foreign and Indian rivals. Emboldened, Nawab Shuja-ad-Daulah went so far as to order that Friday prayer sermons be conducted without referencing the Mughal emperor, and even minted coins in his name and not that of the emperor (Cole 1988, 50).

Norm Change among the Shia

The emerging power struggle between the Shia state and traditional Sunni landowners soon acquired a more decidedly religious component. Under the reign of Asaf-ud-Daulah (1775-1797), Shia notables increasingly offered grants to attract Shia clerics from outside the kingdom who could establish a formal system of Shia education. This void had for the time being been filled by secular members of the Shia professional class that could conduct basic religious rituals but lacked formal clerical training. The newly-arrived Shia scholars, mostly from Iran, brought with them an a strong antipathy toward the Sunni faith. As Cole (1988, 57) aptly puts it, “The foreign-born ulama were more communalist and militant than the Indian intellectuals. With the rapid decline of Mughal power and the ascendancy of the Shi’i nawab, such militancy became an increasingly viable option for members of the Awadh ruling class...”.

During the reign of Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula, the state moved to transform Lucknow’s architecture and religious institutions to reflect a public Shia identity. It was arguably in the last two decades of the eighteenth century that the doctrinal differences between the two sects had implications for local inter-group relations. To make sense of the changes in Lucknow in the late eighteenth century, it is crucial to understand the origins of Shia belief and practices.

The Shia faith is established on opposition to the legitimacy of the first three caliphs that succeeded the Prophet Muhammad. The Shia believe that on the Prophet's final *hajj* to Mecca, he announced to his followers at a place called Ghaddir Kum that Ali would be his successor. According to a prominent version of the story, the Prophet had asked each of his followers to bow before Ali to show their obedience to the future caliph. After the Prophet's death, however, his companions instead elected the powerful tribal chief Abu Bakr to the position of caliph. Several supporters of Ali strongly rejected Abu Bakr, who was the father of the Prophet's wife Fatima. Ali, however, came to accept Abu Bakr's rule. After the reign of the next two caliphs, Omar and Osman, Ali became the fourth caliph.

In the Shia faith, importantly, he is also regarded as the first *Imam*, indicating his status as the first legitimate ruler of the Muslim community from the Shia perspective. The Shia, who often refer to themselves as *ahl-ul-bayt*, which means "people of the house" of the Prophet, trace their lineage through Ali back to the Prophet Muhammad and believe that a legitimate caliph must belong to the Prophet's own bloodline. Shia belief thus regards Abu Bakr, Omar, and Osman, the first three caliphs, are thus regarded as illegitimate.

A series of events beginning with Ali's denial, and later, his death by murder as caliph, infused the Shia faith with a sense of violent injustice at the hands of the Sunni community. The episode that most stands out in the collective Shia memory is the Battle of Karbala (680 C.E.), in which Ali's son Hussain and his 72 companions were massacred by the army of the reigning Sunni caliph Yazid. Ali had hoped to start a rebellion against Yazid, who was widely regarded as tyrannical, corrupt, and an alcoholic. Hussain's murder was immortalized in the Shia consciousness as the death of a hero who stood up for a protection of the Prophet's creed. Husain was the third *Imam* recognized by the Shia, and his murder was the beginning of a series of assassinations of nearly each one of the subsequent *Imams* until the twelfth imam went into hiding in the ninth century (Dabashi 2011, 62-3).

Due to such events, Dabashi (2011, 80) writes that Shiism, in contrast to the Sunni faith, is defined by the concepts of *shahadat* (or martyrdom) and *mazlumiyyat*, which literally means innocence but in context refers to the "condition of being in that tyrannized state, having been subjected to it". Quoting Dabashi,

A social psychology of defeat awaiting revenge is thus at the very heart of Shiism. Shiism, as a religion of protest, is founded on a perceived political injustice, a wrong that can never be righted, but it must—that Ali was not allowed to succeed Prophet Muhammad as the ruler of the nascent Muslim community, that Hossein failed to achieve what was right his and his father's. [...] The problem is not simply a matter of the personal preference of Ali over Abu Bakr or any other companion of the Prophet. In the increasingly complicated Shii theology, the whole veracity of Islam as a faith depended on the nature and function of the Prophet's successor. The choice of Ali thus graduate emerges as a matter secondary to the more theological principle of who had to succeed the Prophet and how was the succession to be

justified? [...]. That “election” (clarification mine: of Abu Bakr by the Prophet’s companions), Shiis later argued, was contrary to the very spirit of the Islamic revelation. (Dabashi 2011, 81)

These beliefs manifest themselves in public rituals. During the Islamic month of Muharram, which is the period when Hussein was killed at Karbala, pious Shia take part in a series of processions to mourn Hussein and the earlier death of his father, Imam Ali. The most important of these processions occurs on Ashura, the tenth day of Muharram, widely believed to be the exact day when Hussein was killed. Ashura processions involve marches for several hours, with participants re-enacting a burial ceremony for Hussein and his companions by sharing the burden of carrying massive, ornate replicas of coffins. Across the Islamic world, such Muharram processions involve highly emotional recitals of elegies called *marsiyah*. But in many communities, they also involve the practice of *zanjir matam*, which involves self-flagellation often by a spiked chain, while invoking the names of Ali and Hussain as a means of expressing empathy with their fallen hero.

In northern India, centuries of Sunni Mughal rule stalled the development of a public Shia faith with its rituals and formal clerical establishment. Nawab Asaf-ud-Daulah’s reign marked an important change toward a new Shia polity. Newly-arrived Shia religious scholars, chief among them the Iraq-trained Sayyid Dildar Ali Nasirabadi, were followers of the Usuli school of Shia thought that bestowed a special status for Shia clerics in local life. Usuli clerics’ call for a type of priesthood stood in sharp contrast to the existing Akhbari Shia, whose tenets pledged strict imitation of the first twelve Imams and did not recognize the authority of Shia clerics to render independent rulings (Cole 1988, 124). With the nawab’s granting of the title of leading jurist (*mujtahid al-asr*) to Sayyid Dildar Ali, the court in Lucknow had favored the Usuli perspective and paved the way for a formal Shia clerical class.

Architectural projects were in some ways in the most visible signs of the new, Persian-origin Shia identity. The Asafiya Mosque, dedicated in the nawab’s name, was completed in 1795. Situated just east of the magnificent Rumi Gate that is named of the famous Persian poet, the Asafiya mosque is adjacent to another new Shia place of worship, the Great Imambarah (Urdu: *bara imambarah*). In northern India, an *imambara* was the name given to a place of worship specifically for the Imams—primarily Ali, Hussein, and Hassan—rather than God, who was worshiped in a mosque.

³ Imambaras had usually only existed in a room within the houses of Shia notables (Rizvi 2014, 19). But with the erection of the Great Imambarah, a new public space made it possible for Shia to engage in a particularly Shia ritual, including mourning for the Imams and praying for benedictions. To top off the the booming public Shiism, a new Grand Mosque specifically for Shia worshipers was constructed on Victoria Street, providing a magnificent and massive mosque for

³In Iran, such places are known as *husainiyyahs* as they are chiefly associated with the third Shia Imam Hussain.

large-scale services just as the Grand Mosque in Delhi had done for the Sunni community since the sixteenth century.⁴

As the state expanded the Shia faith locally, increasing numbers of Hindu and Sunni Muslims converted to Shiism as a means of currying favor with the Shia elite. By the late nineteenth century, it was typical for Sunni Lucknavi craftsmen to convert to Shiism, for they benefited from the employment opportunities for artisans generated by the heavily ornate, and well-funded, Muharram processions. Even young, impoverished Hindu women who were courtesans decided to adopt the Shia faith because they benefited from Shia law, which allowed them to engage in temporary marriage with the local *zamindars* (Urdu: landowners) and thus engage in prostitution while being shielded from legal liabilities (Cole 1988, 87-88).

As Lucknow underwent transformation, Sayyid Dildar Ali and his collaborators promoted the Usuli brand of Shiism. Appointed as the imam of the Asafiya mosque, Sayyid Dildar Ali wrote a treatise advocating for the start of Shia Friday prayers, a practice that successfully began in 1786. The existing Akhbari Shia in Lucknow strongly opposed a Friday prayer sermon for the Shia, viewing such prayers as a service that only the twelfth imam could perform upon his return from occultation. Relying on training from his highly reputable mentors in Najaf, Iraq, Sayyid Dildar Ali made a theological case that permitted Shia *ulama* (or scholars with formal religious training) to use reasoning to derive law and precepts beyond the strict texts of the Qur'an or *hadith* (sayings of the Prophet) (Rizvi 2014, 21). It is on this basis that he successfully made the case for the Shia obligation to take part in Friday prayer services. The establishment of a Shia Friday prayer service, however, was met with opposition by several Sunni *ulama* who were worried about rising Shia power.

Effects on Extremism

Religious debates between Sunni and Shia clerics soon emerged, and were chiefly played out in competing texts. Sayyid Dildar Ali, who formed a dynasty of Shia *ulama* known as the *khandan-e-ijtihad* (Urdu: family of reasoners) that are highly respected to the present day, penned several texts aimed at refuting Sufi thought as well as Sunni criticisms of the Shia faith. In his treatise “The Lightning Strike”, Sayyid Dildar Ali forcefully argued that Sufism was created by the first three caliphs as a “conspiracy to destroy Shiism” and dismissed a key precept—that all animate and inanimate objects were united in one and together formed God—as heretical (Rizvi 2014, 24-5).

⁴The Grand Mosque or *Jama Masjid* in Delhi was built by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan. Its sister mosque, the Badshahi Mosque in Lahore (now Pakistan) was constructed by Emperor Aurangzeb, the son of Shah Jahan, and is the fourth-largest mosque in the world.

Sunni scholars countered at the rising Shia influence. As Rizvi (2014, 30-1) explains, perhaps the strongest anti-Shia text at the time was written in 1790 by the Sunni cleric Shah Abd al Aziz. Wrote Al-Aziz,

In the place and time in which we live, the popularity and prevalence of Shiism has attained such a magnitude that there is hardly a house in which we do not find one or two men who have not embraced the Shia faith or are not inclined to it. But most of them are ignorant and illiterate; nor are they acquainted with their ancestral faith....It was under these circumstances that this book was written with the view that at the time of disputation, the Sunnis should not deviate from the right path, and should not reject the principles of their faith (Rizvi 2014, 31).

Al-Aziz's text was a systematic attempt to discredit the Shia faith. It put forth a range of accusations, including the Shia had Jewish roots; that the sayings attributed by the Shia to the Prophet Muhammad were likely invalid; and that Shia practices such as cursing the first three Caliphs served as proof that the sect was full of non-believers (Rizvi 2014, 32). Such texts drew responses from Sayyid Dildar Ali, and after his death, from successors.

By the early nineteenth century, the Usuli Shia clergy not only helped to justify the rule of the nawabs, but encouraged the kings to fund Shia causes from Awadh to Iraq. In 1839, several Lucknavi Shia ulama wrote to the Shia scholars of Najaf in Iraq for the repair of the city's major canal that had gone dry and threatened the livelihood of Najafi residents (Cole 1988, 195). The sitting nawab, Muhammad Ali Shah, provided a total of 300,000 Indian rupees to Najaf and Karbala in order to repair the canal and support the resting places of the six Imams in those two cities, known in Arabic as *atabat-i-aliyat* or "the doorsteps of the exalted". Rebuilt, the canal was renamed the Hindiyya canal to pay tribute to its financial backers in Lucknow. Back at home, the Madrasa-i-Shahi, was founded in 1843 the first Shia seminary in Lucknow. The intention was to build an Indian-trained Shia clergy that could help ensure that the kings adhered to Shia law.

2.4 Colonial Victory and the End of State-Sponsored Religion

The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 involved a large-scale, violent rebellion carried out by ethnic Indian soldiers in the British Army as well as Hindu and Muslim civilians. The violence was motivated by a range of concerns, including "the removal of Indian leaders, to attempt to reform indigenous customs, to the proselytization of Christianity, to economic policies, and to British contempt for their Indian subjects" (Metcalf 2014, 80-81). As the prominent British historian Hardy (1972) noted, British colonial officers thought that Muslim rebels were motivated by political grievances in contrast to Hindu rebels, for whom economic marginalization was thought to have played a

greater role. Following the Mutiny, British colonial administrators seized the various kingdoms across northern India, including Awadh, and installed the Residency system to manage local political and social affairs. Wajid Ali Shah, the nawab at the time of the Mutiny, was exiled to the east in Calcutta in Bengal where he would spend the remainder of his life. He remains remembered, in the words of Llewellyn-Jones (2014), the “last king in India”.

British victory over the Indian rebels, coupled with the installation of the Residency system in the place of the Shia dynasty, significantly transformed the Sunni and Shia communities and by extension, relations between the two sects. During the rebellion, Sunni maulanās were to some extent divided on whether the rebellion was justified. The *ulama* accepted the defeat of the rebels, but were transformed by the experience. As Metcalf (2014, 87) explains, “They were sobered by the terrible events that they had seen, and persuaded that the British were invincible.”

Perceptions of British invincibility were fueled by broader political crises facing the *ummah*, or global Muslim community. At home, the Mughal empire had effectively collapsed. Afar, in Istanbul, the throne of the caliphate occupied by the Ottoman sultan, the ruling political and clerical class were struggling to stay relevant. Senior Sunni and Shia *ulama* in India began a deep soul-searching process to ask what had gone wrong. This section focuses on how the immediate byproducts of that process—new movements in the Sunni community and a more formal reification of the Shia—facilitated conflict and extremism within each sect.

Norm Change among the Sunni

Just months after the Mutiny, senior Sunni *ulama* founded a seminary based at a mosque in the city of Deoband, Uttar Pradesh, some several hundred kilometers west of Lucknow. The Deobandi clerics believed that in order for Sunni Muslim power to be restored to its rightful place, Indian Muslims would need to return to the original beliefs and practices of the Islamic faith. God had punished Muslims, the Deobandis held, because of their participation in rituals like worshipping at the shrines of Muslim saints, a practice seen as influenced by Hinduism; morally deviant behaviors; and a general lack of rigorous Islamic education. The Deobandi school of thought, as it came to be known, would later spread throughout South Asia to become the most influential reform movement in Sunni Islam, operating over 8,000 madrassas in India by 1967.

The Deobandi curriculum built on the standard *dars-i-nizami* syllabus developed at Farangi Mahal in Lucknow. In particular, Deobandi clerics emphasized the importance of the *hadiths*, or the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Mohammad. Students were required to study all six canons of the hadiths in one year (Robinson 2013, 6). The founders were also keen to build an efficient administrative apparatus, and almost as a testament to their desire to learn from the success of their

British masters, adopted a system that included a rector, chancellor, and a hierarchical faculty.⁵ Their faculty hierarchy reflected their affinity to the Arab world and distaste toward its Persian counterpart, with the highest title and pay given to Arabic-speaking faculty.

In the same period, a movement known as the *Ahl-i-Hadis*, which means “people of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet”, was founded. In contrast to the Deobandis, the Ahl-i-Hadis endorsed a more puritan approach to Islamic law by rejecting the legitimacy of the four Sunni schools of law that had been the basis of Islamic law since the ninth century. Indian Sunni Muslims, including the Deobandis, adhered to one of those four schools of law, the Hanafi school.⁶

By contrast, the Ahl-i-Hadis argued that the true path of Islam could only be found by following the text of the Qur’an and the literal text of the hadith (Metcalf 2014, 265). They broke with the Deobandi view that Muslims should follow the teachings of a single religious scholar’s interpretation of scripture. Such *alims* were unnecessary and likely misleading, according to the Ahl-i-Hadis, as Muslims could faithfully follow their religion by reading the Qur’an and the text of the hadith themselves.⁷ Precisely due to the burden that the group placed on individual Muslim responsibility, the Ahl-i-Hadith was primarily a movement of and for the Muslim elite, the only social stratum with sufficient education and time to live within the movement’s bounds (Metcalf 2014, 268-270).

A third movement formed in response to the Deobandi and Ahl-i-Hadis movements. The Barelvi movement—named after Bareilly, the Uttar Pradesh city that gave the movement its founder—sought to practice and preserve Islam “as it had evolved to the present” (Metcalf 2014, 296). Whereas Deobandi and Ahl-i-Hadith thinking only emphasized the omnipotence of God, Barelvi thought also emphasized the importance of the Prophet Muhammad. The movement’s primary founder, as it were, Sayyid Ahmad Riza Khan Barelvi, embraced the Sufi doctrine that the Prophet had “his own light” (Urdu from Arabic: *nur-i muhammadi*) that gave him a special status of human form in which he was omnipotent and insisted that he had unique spiritual knowledge, including of the unknown (Metcalf 2014, 300-302). Sayyid Khan thus stressed the significance of celebrating the Prophet’s birthday; gave privileges during religious ceremonies to the *sayyids*, or Muslims who could trace their lineage to the Prophet; and put into effect several rhetorical innovations embraced

⁵For a detailed discussion of the Deobandi curriculum and the foundation of the seminary, see Metcalf (1978).

⁶The Hanafi school of law, named after Abu Hanifa, placed significant emphasis on the Quran and only admitted those *hadiths* that were most reliably sourced to the Prophet or his companions. For more on the Hanafi school, see (Brown 2014, 88).

⁷Outside India, the group’s tenets were similar to those of the Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia. In contemporary India, Ahl-i-Hadis are often referred to as Wahhabis, a title that many of them disapprove of as it suggests political loyalty to Riyadh.

by his followers that signaled their love of the Prophet. Barelvis viewed the holy Muslim *pirs* (saints) as intermediaries linking the faithful to God. They preserved the widespread, traditional practice of saint worship. This position earned them significant conflict with Deobandis and Ahl-i-Hadis, who viewed saint worship as tantamount to apostasy on the grounds that it questioned the ‘oneness’ (Arabic: *tawhid*) of God.

Norm Change among the Shia

As the Sunni community experienced division, the Shia underwent a different type of transformation that unified their senior clerical leadership and coalesced their beliefs and practices. Intra-Shia clerical disputes, it will be recalled, took place prior to the Mutiny and resulted in the Usuli approach overtaking the local Akhbari tradition. The Usuli clergy, having lost the state patronage they enjoyed under the nawabs, eventually forged a unified front by the 1880s and 1890s. Under the banner of a new organization, the *Anjuman-e-Sadr-e-Sadoor*, they aspired to rebuild the social and political clout they had enjoyed under nawabi rule. With the closing of the Madarasa-i-Shahi in 1856, two new major Shia seminaries were opened in 1889 (Madrassa Nazimiya) and 1894 (Sultan-ul-Madaris) that still operate to this day. As Jones (2011, 36-7) explains, these two seminaries would significantly shape Lucknow, with its students taking the ranks of the most prominent clerical positions at mosques and Muharram services for decades to come. Importantly, these schools established a comprehensive syllabus of instruction for the Shia clerical community. And with the newly-built Madrasa’t-ul-Wa’izin in 1919, there was an institution that offered higher-level religious certification—the title of *wa’iz* or “preacher”—that cultivated a locally-trained senior Shia clergy who no longer needed to study in Iran or Iraq.⁸ Amidst such changes, the leading Shia *maulana* Hamid Husain authored the first major Indian treatise in the post-1856 period to comprehensively detail Shia beliefs and practices.

Effects on Extremism

Within each sect, the norms around religious beliefs and practices began to change. The new norms reflected the emergence of deep, negative sentiment among leaders and followers of each sect. Two anecdotes relating to the formation of Muslim major educational institutions help illustrate this point.

In 1875, the founder of the Barelvi movement, Sayyid Ahmad Khan, established the Anglo-

⁸It is important to note that students could not obtain the highest possible title of ayatollah in Ja’afari Shiism at the Madrasa’t-ul-Wa’izin. This title could only be obtained by studying at certain seminaries in Iraq or Iran

Mohammadan Oriental College at Aligarh (now known as Aligarh Muslim University) in Uttar Pradesh. It was the first of its kind in India: a college devoted to the education and production of an Indian Muslim intellectual and professional class. But the school's curriculum and some of the principles of its founder ultimately caused sectarian strife. *Shia* scholars held grievances regarding Barelvi principles that criticized the legitimacy of the Shia faith, and took aim at the college's science curriculum, which in their view was intended to discredit the Shia belief that the final Imam was still alive and in a state of occultation (Jones 2011, 154-155). These voices came together at a major north-Indian Shia conference in 1904 that ultimately marked the Shia rejection of the College (Jones 2011, 156).

Sectarian tensions once again erupted in the aftermath of the 1891 foundation of Nadwat-ul-Ulema in Lucknow. Nadwa was originally founded to serve as a university that united different *ulama* to promote Islamic teachings and represent Muslim interests to the government. But the soon came under criticism for duplicating functions of the College at Aligarh and the seminary at Deoband. Barelvis, pointing to the school's instruction in the English language, accused it of "irreligion" (Metcalf 2014, 343). As Metcalf (2014, 344) explains, "...the ulama associated with the Nadwah rapidly abandoned their claims to all-inclusiveness and identified themselves as Hanafi" and "ultimately concentrated on the dissemination of reformist religious teachings, barely indistinguishable from those of Deoband". Not long after Nadwa's founding, Shia clerics and patrons withdrew their support and involvement with the college.

2.5 Government Regulation of Religious Ritual

The First Phase (1907-1939) and Effects on Extremism

During the month of Muharram in 1906, an extremist Sunni cleric encouraged his followers in Lucknow to shout an offensive chant at a Shia procession making its way through the Old City (Sinha 1978, 1841). These verses, together known as *madh-e-sahaba*, were intended by the Sunni participants to openly praise the first three caliphs, an act that brazenly offended the Shia, who viewed these caliphs as illegitimate. Enraged, the Shia processioners retaliated with *tabarra* or slanders that disassociated them from the first three caliphs. A major riot ensued, leading British authorities to arrest hundreds of participants (Ahmad 1983, 340) Immediately following the incident, a group Sunni clerics declared Muharram observances to be heretic and forbade Sunnis from

engaging in them.⁹

Disturbed by the rare outbreak of violence and the extremist rhetoric surrounding it, the British government appointed a committee to make recommendations aimed at reducing tensions. In its 1909 ruling, the committee criminalized the (Sunni) *madhe-sahaba* verses and the (Shia) *tabarra* chants. Together, these events transformed Muharram in Lucknow from a procession of communal solidarity into a more exclusively Shia event. Muharram processions thereby turning the processions into a driver of sectarian violence.

Events in Aligarh further worked to widen the sectarian divide. As historical research by Jones (2011, 159-160) explains, the All-India Shia Conference accused the College of ‘Sunni-fying’ their institution. They pointed to financial and administrative discrimination against the Shia as well as restricted religious freedom for Shia students during Muharram (Jones 2011, 159). Such a track record, lamented a major Shia newspaper, put Aligarh on course to become the next Nadwa, where Sunni-Shia relations had taken a downward turn. The poem¹⁰ below summarizes the spread of antipathy between the Sunni and Shia:

People used to say that Aligarh is a place of unity
Everyone fights in his own place for unity
Every atom composes a picture of unity
From all sides you hear the cry of unity
The management of the College themselves demolished the foundation of unity
Such great holes appear in [unity] that walls became doorways
Such hatred was unveiled and carried outside.

Opposed to both Aligarh and Nadwa, the All-India Shia Conference established the Shia College in Lucknow in 1917. Run by Shia staff and meant for the Shia community, the Shia College attracted financial support from Shia supporters of the College at Aligarh and facilitated a public dispute between leaders of both sects. Students at the Shia College dismissed Aligarh as a bastion of Sunni Islam.

Rising influence among the Sunni clerical class, who built mass followings during the Khilafat Movement (1919-20) to restore the Ottoman caliph after the First World War, intensified extremism in Lucknow. One Deobandi cleric, Abd ul Shakoor Farooqi, whose sons are today two of Lucknow’s most extremist Sunni clerics, began a concerted effort to disparage the Shia faith

⁹Sunnis had in fact traditionally engaged in Muharram processions mourning Hussain and still do in many Indian towns to this day.

¹⁰Originally from Mushir Kazim Lucknawi entitled *Shor-e-Mashehr* and published in Jones (2011, 160).

(Hardy 1972, 243-246). He seized on the resentment within the Sunni community over the 1909 ban on the use of the *madh-e-sahaba* verses. Upon forged coalitions with other Sunni activist groups, Shakoor led a major lobbying campaign to lift the ban. His associates forbade Sunnis from joining Shia marchers in the carrying of the *taziya*, or mock grave of Imam Hussein, during Muharram processions (Jones 2011, 191).

The Sunni clerics behind the *madh-e-sahaba* campaign began to demand permission to hold *madh-e-sahaba* rallies to honor the first three caliphs. They forged links with other prominent Sunni clerics, elevating the movement to a national level. In Lucknow, Sunni activists courted arrest while making the chants at the prominent Tila mosque (Jones 2011, 193). Shia retaliation with *tabarra* chants led to spiraling tensions, with major sectarian violence in 1937 and 1938, when tensions increased. That year, a new Congress-party led government had been granted control over Uttar Pradesh by the British. The government ruled to authorize the Sunni community to stage a *madh-e-sahaba* rally on the birthday of the Prophet. On that day and in the following four months, nearly 14,000 Shia were jailed (Jones 2011, 195) after courting arrest while reciting *tabarra* from the Asafi mosque while Sunnis prayed at another mosque nearby. The *Tabarra* Agitations of 1939, as they would be known, attracted widespread participation by elite and ordinary Shia alike who hailed from towns across Uttar Pradesh.

In the lead-up to Indian independence, rising extremism and violence among Sunni and Shia obtained a clearly political dimension. As Ahmad (1983) has observed, the British government's restriction of the *tabarra* and *madh-e-sahaba* chants initiated a precedent for the political regulation of religious rituals. As Jones (2011, 196-8) suggests, the Congress Party's authorization of the Sunni *madh-e-sahaba* procession could have been part of a strategy to shore up its Muslim vote bank by catering to the demands of Sunni elites (Jones 2011, 196-8). And as Lucknow rose in political and economic clout, its sectarian conflict received national political attention from leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru in ways that further politicized inter-group tensions.

After a lull in the 1950s, sectarian violence in the form of riots continued throughout the 1960s and 1970s in Lucknow. In post-independence Lucknow, the major Sunni-Shia riot of 1967 marked the beginning of the contemporary and violent politicization of sectarian differences. In that year's state assembly elections, the assembly seat for the Muslim-majority district of Lucknow West, which roughly coincides with the Old City neighborhood, was carried by a candidate from the right-wing Hindu nationalist Janata Party. Astonished, the mostly Sunni supporters of the Congress Party incumbent blamed the electoral defeat on Shia residents. Local Sunni leaders claimed that the Shia had voted for the Janata Party as a means of reducing Sunni influence. The ensuing riot was the most fatal since those of the 1930s (Ahmad 1983, 346).

Two years later another major riot took place on May 26, 1969, when a group of Sunni youth

attacked a Shia procession. According to Professor Nadeem Hasnain of Lucknow University¹¹, the riot led the Shia to boycott Sunni businesses for nearly six months. Yet economic dependence on the Sunni, who constitute the majority and dominated most local industries, meant that the Shia were ultimately forced to abandon their boycott. Among the elderly in Lucknow today, this particular episode is remembered as evidence that sectarian violence is economically counterproductive, as both sects rely on one another for commercial exchange.¹²

The Second Phase (1977-1997) and Effects on Extremism

Mounting conflict between the Sunni and Shia communities posed a significant political problem for the local authorities. Violence perpetrated by members of the two sects, particularly during Muharram religious processions, undermined local political stability in the city's western district. In a 1977 decision reminiscent of one by British colonial officers taken decades earlier, the U.P. government imposed a ban on all religious processions by Sunni and Shia Muslims in Lucknow. The ban lasted for twenty-one years until 1997, when it was lifted and replaced by fewer restrictions under an agreement struck by religious clerics and Kalyan Singh, then the U.P. chief minister.

The implications of the ban were significant, and disproportionately affected the Shia community. For the Sunni, who constituted about two-thirds of the city's Muslim population, the ban made little difference. Nearly all Sunni Muslims in Lucknow, and in India generally, did not take part in religious processions. The only exception to this general pattern was the practice by a small fraction of Sunni Muslims in the city who took part in a procession to honor the Prophet Muhammad's birth (and death) anniversary (Urdu: *bara-wafat*; Arabic: *Mawlid*).

The effect was far different for the Shia. According to the Shia religious calendar, worshippers were supposed to carry out more than 900 processions out each year to mourn the faith's martyrs, with many of the marches scheduled for Muharram. Under the ban, not one Shia religious procession would be able to take place. The Shia community became significantly restricted from carrying out what they believed were obligatory public practices that flowed from their religious norms. Without organized rituals that allowed the faithful to mourn, march, and bleed for their martyrs, Lucknavi Shia would not be able to live their faith as it had historically been practiced in the city that was until recently the throne of a major Shia kingdom. Under such limitations, it was hard for Indian Shia to consider themselves as equal members and defenders of a faith like their

¹¹Interview with Professor Nadeem Hasnain, Department of Anthropology, Lucknow University, Lucknow, July 2014

¹²Interview with Mr. Ram Dutt Tripathi, former BBC Correspondent for Uttar Pradesh, Hazratganj, Lucknow, July 2014.

Shia counterparts in faraway Lebanon, Syria, Iran, and Iraq.

Rising discontent in the Shia community placed increasing pressure on successive U.P. governments. Shia clerical figures and politicians began to politicize the concept of victimization. By the early 1990s, a group of activist Shia known as the Husaini Tigers had formed. Led by Shamil Shamsi, a cousin of the increasingly powerful Shia cleric Maulana Kalbe Jawwad, the group boasted membership of several hundred Shia youth and took part in major political protests with the express purpose of removing the ban on religious processions and physically guarding leaders and Shia places of worship from what they perceived to be extremist Sunni groups in the Old City.

The Third Phase (1997 to Present) and Effects on Extremism

Faced with such opposition, the sitting chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, Kalyan Singh of the Bharata Janata Party (BJP), entered into negotiations with senior religious clerics from both sects with the aim of replacing the existing ban with a new agreement in 1998. The new agreement lifted the complete ban on all religious processions, but also introduced new restrictions. The Shia community was permitted to carry out processions on just eight specific days corresponding to the most important Shia holy days. Sunni Muslims won the right to carry out a procession on the Prophet's birth anniversary. From the Shia perspective, the new arrangement was an improvement over the earlier ban yet still fell far short of protecting Shia religio-political rights. They perceived that the Sunni community had won the right to carry out a procession on one day, but that represented one hundred percent of their demand, and relatively few Sunni had participated in that procession anyway. The Shia, by contrast, only won the right to carry out a far lower percentage of their total requested processions. Due to the spiritual and material import of such processions to the local Shia community, the acceptance of any restrictions on religious rights was unacceptable to many Shia. To better understand Shia perceptions regarding the institutional arrangement governing religious processions, the author conducted multiple semi-structured interviews with Shia religious clerics and politicians in Lucknow.

Maulana Kalbe Jawwad, who is today one of India's most politically influential Shia clerics, was deeply involved in the negotiations that led to the 1997 agreement. The interview with Maulana Jawwad took place in the cleric's large conference room near his residence on Victoria Street in the Old City.¹³ Looming large over the cleric's seat at the head of the conference room were two portraits of Iran's first Supreme Leaders of the Islamic Revolution-Ayatollah Ruhollah

¹³Interview conducted by the author at Kalbe Abid Plaza, Victoria Street, Old City, Lucknow, July 2015.

Khomeini—and another of his successor, Ayatollah Ali Khamanei, Iran’s current Supreme Leader. Moments after the completion of the afternoon, *asr* and *zohr* prayers, Maulana Jawwad entered the room flanked by his state-sponsored protection—two Indian police officers shouldering assault rifles—and a group of some ten other Shia clerics who had prayed with him. The interview began with a discussion of Maulana Jawwad’s main priorities as a leader of the Shia community. He commenced his answer with the issue of religious processions, emphasizing how his leadership helped bring about the 1997 agreement that allowed the city’s faithful Shia to openly engage in religious processions during Muharram. “But this was not enough, we need more,” the cleric continued. “Our calendar calls for more than 900 processions each year, and the government should permit this. We cannot be equal members of the community until it does.” Upon the author’s probing of why the cleric believed such permission had not been granted, Maulana Jawwad and his associates smiled, and he continued

“The Wahhabis in this city—they are the reason for this. They have too much influence over the government. They will never allow us to practice our faith properly, because they do not accept us as true Muslims.”

Maulana Jawwad angrily pointed to the stone pelting that hit Shia procession participants on the limited occasions on which they could take out processions. Without greater security, he explained, members of his community could not reasonably feel safe from the Sunni majority.

A second interview was conducted with Sheikh Hamid-ul Hassan, a senior Shia cleric who served as the head of Jamia Nazmia, a historic Shia seminary in the Old City. Sheikh Hassan, now in his mid-80s, was one of the handful of Shia clerics, along with Maulana Jawwad, who participated in the 1997 negotiations.¹⁴ The author interviewed Sheikh Hassan in the sitting room of his private residence on Victoria Street. Sheikh Hassan was accompanied by one of his eldest sons, also a cleric. During the interview, he also emphasized a need for a new institutional arrangement that granted the Shia full authority to take out processions in line with their religious calendar. Pinning blame for opposition on particular extremist Sunni leaders, the elderly clerics Ali and Wali Farooqi, Sheikh Hassan argued that the time was ripe for leading Shia clerics to enter into new talks with the U.P. government and Sunni leaders to lift all restrictions on Shia processions. Shia rituals, he explained, were central to the Shia faith and poorly understood by the Sunni community. In his words:

¹⁴Interview conducted by the author in the private residence of Sheikh Hamidul Hassan, Old City, Lucknow, January 2016.

“At an early age, Shia children are exposed to the *taziya jaloos* and build an emotional connection with the religion. When a young Shia child sees his mother, or his grandmother, crying at an *imambarah* or at a *jaloos*, he asks, “*Ma* (the Hindi-Urdu word for mother), why are you crying?” And when he learns the story of Karbala, and the continuing subjugation of the Shia people, he develops a strong desire and eagerness to take part in these processions. Such children, when they grow older, are filled with anger when they learn that they can’t fully follow their faith, that when they do, they are hit with stones.”

In Sheikh Hassan’s view, religious processions were misunderstood and rejected the Lucknavi Sunni community because of their particular mode of upbringing. He criticized Sunni elders for positioning their children to engage in “rote memorization of the Quran” and daily prayers while gaining little emotional appreciation for religion. This type of upbringing, Sheikh Hassan insisted, was what fueled the ignorance and resentment that empowered extremist Sunni clerics and led to stone pelting by Sunni youth against their Shia peers. In his judgment, Sunni derision of the Shia faith in the city had been rising in recent decades. The problem had worsened in large part, the sheikh firmly believed, due to funding from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab states that incentivized curricula and clerical exhortations aimed at undermining Shiism.

These conversations highlighted an important division that exists in Lucknow’s Sunni community. The Deobandi, Ahl-e-Hadis, and Barelvi sects of Sunni Islam that were formed in late-nineteenth century British India continue to describe divisions that exist in present-day Lucknow and across South Asia. In their commentaries, Maulana Jawwad and Sheikh Hassan had repeatedly been focusing on extremism that they linked to the Deobandi and Ahl-e-Hadis clerics and their followers in the Old City. According to multiple interviews, clerics and institutions associated with these movements represent a small fraction of the Sunni community yet possess influence disproportionate to their size. Members of these Sunni groups not only rejected the legitimacy of the Shia, but perceived themselves as more genuine Muslims relative to other mainstream, pious Sunnis. In an interview, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, the Sunni imam of the historic *Tile Wali* Mosque that marks an entry point to the Old City, explained that Deobandi and Ahl-e-Hadis followers aim to show their religious credentials by maintaining longer than average beards, attending services only at mosques affiliated with their sect, and admonishing others who attend their mosques to lengthen their beards should they intend on reappearing frequently at their prayer services.¹⁵

¹⁵Interview conducted by the author with Maulana Fazlur Rehman at Tile Wali Masjid, Old City, Lucknow, July 2014

2.6 Heightened Foreign Conflict

The onset of the Syrian civil war in 2011 and the exacerbation of the civil war in adjoining Iraq further exacerbated relations between Sunni and Shia in Lucknow. Two international features of these conflicts led to their resonance in northern India. First, both conflicts witnessed overt diplomatic, financial, and military involvement by Saudi Arabia and Iran, thereby feeding into pre-existing narratives fed by extremists in both sects that pitted a major Sunni power against a major Shia power. Second, the involvement of the Islamic State and its campaign of sectarian killings and widely circulated propaganda increased the political salience of the Sunni and Shia identities in Lucknow. This section traces how the political condition of heightened foreign conflicts between Sunni and Shia shaped efforts by extremist *maulanas* in Lucknow to prescribe religious norms that undermined peace. Broadly, this condition had the effect of reducing the perceived gap between moderate and extremist Sunni clerics and strengthening perceptions of victimization among the Shia.

Norm Change among the Sunni

The small band of Ahl-e-Hadis and Deobandi clerics in Lucknow, though perceived as increasingly important, do not command the greatest influence in the city's Sunni community. For the past several years, that status has fallen upon the shoulders of Maulana Khalid Rashid, a Sunni cleric who hails from the prominent Farangi Mahalli family discussed in the previous section. Khalid Rashid *sahib*, as he is commonly called, holds the prestigious position of Friday sermon leader at Aishbagh Eidgah, the largest Sunni place of worship in the Old City. The Eidgah is a spacious, green property of several dozen acres surrounded by low-hanging walls. In 2015, the office premises of Maulana Rashid were extended to include the new All India Muslim Centre, an umbrella organization led by the cleric that included several Sunni clerics across northern India. A closer analysis of Khalid Rashid and his viewpoints offers a more complete understanding of Sunni clerical positions regarding Shia allegations of victimization. Several interviews were conducted by the author with Maulana Rashid, other clerics, politicians, and local NGO workers. Together, these interviews suggest a portrait of a Sunni figure who has himself been shifted to adopt more extreme positions in response to domestic pressures from hardline Sunni clerics and foreign political events.

Just several years ago, Maulana Rashid had taken part in joint prayers with Maulana Kalbe Sadiq, one of India's most senior Shia clerics. The joint *namaz*, which took place during Eid in 2012, was remarkable in recent memory. Hundreds of Sunni and Shia worshippers looked on as Maulana Rashid led a prayer service with a senior Shia cleric standing silently behind him. The visual differences—with the Shia holding their hands open as they prayed and the Sunnis clasping their hands over their waists—remained. Yet they were seemingly forgotten, at least for

the moment, in a historic and public sign by two respected clerics willing to put sectarian politics aside to promote a united Muslim identity. Both clerics ended their ceremony with a pledge to continue such services in the coming years. Publicly, they spoke of the importance of unity to a vibrant Indian Muslim community.

Nearly five years have passed, and the joint namaz has not been repeated. The reason is not due to a lack of opportunity. Both clerics who took part in the original joint prayer are alive, in good health, and even cordially interact at particular community events. Why, then, the apparent change in course? The answer, according to those with direct knowledge, begins with Maulana Rashid. According to Maulana Kalbe Sadiq, the Shia cleric who joined in the 2012 unity prayer, Khalid Rashid *sahib* has declined to take part in joint prayers despite repeated invitations by Maulana Sadiq and other Shia clerics.¹⁶ When the author approached Maulana Rashid about this topic, he simply replied that he had been too busy, but that he'd be happy to take part.¹⁷ His reply did not seem plausible. Several interviewees with direct knowledge instead pointed to the rising foreign conflict between Sunni and Shia, explaining that Saudi funding for the All-India Centre and local Sunni extremist clerics worked to silence what had been very public promotions of peace by Maulana Rashid¹⁸ To achieve his aspirations to command influence among all Sunni factions in Lucknow, Maulana Rashid had learned that he could not afford to alienate the Farooqi brothers and regularly visiting Saudi religious delegations with irritants like joint Eid prayers with the Shia. In multiple interviews with the author, he somewhat indifferently acknowledged the importance of pursuing peace, but stated how his status made it difficult for him or his center to personally get involved in public peace promotion efforts.

Norm Change among the Shia

For many Shia leaders, the silence shown by Sunni clerics on the subject of condemning extremism is evidence of deliberate victimization. Mr. Abid Husain is a Lucknow-based Shia politician from the Congress Party. A bespectacled man in his late 60s, Mr. Husain is known in the city as a type of political entrepreneur who has been a vocal defender of the Shia faith who frequently lashes out

¹⁶Interview conducted by the author with Maulana Syed Dr. Kalbe Sadiq, Unity School, Old City, Lucknow, July 2015.

¹⁷Interview conducted at Aishbagh Eidgah, Office of Imam-e-Juma, Old City, Lucknow, July 2015.

¹⁸Multiple interviews with a senior police officer, Old City, Lucknow (July 2015) and local journalists, Hazratganj, Lucknow (January 2016).

against the Sunni clerical establishment. In a one hour interview with the author at his residence¹⁹, Mr. Husain provided a powerful, historical narrative that portrayed the Shia as targets of physical violence and political propaganda that threatened their very existence. His comments began, to put it bluntly, with the beginning—or at least his perception of it.

AH: “Do you know when Shiism began?”

Author: “Yes. When Ali was denied the position of caliph after the Prophet’s death, Ali’s supporters became known as the Shia.”

AH: “No. It began at that moment in Maydan-e-Ghadeer when the Prophet picked up young Ali in front of the *sahaba* (his companions) and named him as his successor. He then went one by one, asking his companions to pledge loyalty to Ali.”

He detailed an argument that from the very beginning, the Shia had been rejected and mistreated by the Prophet’s successor, Abu Bakr, and throughout the world, have historically been subjugated by the Sunni. In his view, Sunni clerics in Lucknow had said or done little to combat anti-Shia speech and action, proceeding to name and blame several leading clerics for their lack of action. “What have they done? When stones are thrown at our *jaloos*? What have they said about the Sunni squads killing Shia in Pakistan? Or what the Islamic State is doing to our brothers today in Iraq, and in Syria?” he pointedly asked. There was a conspiracy, Mr. Husain said simply, by Wahhabi elements in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Arab states to completely “wipe out—erase—Shiism from the books, through fake propaganda, through millions of books and publications that say we are not real Muslims.” Sunni leaders such as Maulana Rashid had done nothing to stop or refute such lies, he continued.

“We are enraged. We are the *ahl-ul-bayt* (people of the house of the Prophet). Do you know, for the Sunni, it is not obligatory to keep a beard. But for the Shia, we say it is *wajib* (a duty, obligatory) to keep a beard. Because the Prophet kept a beard. And they say we are not Muslims? How dare they.

Amid his tirade, young children—his grandchildren, it turned out—had just entered the room. Mr. Husain quickly returned to normalcy, expressing his affection and offering sweets to celebrate the end of Ramadan. We could discuss more later, he said, if of interest.

To gain more insights on the role of foreign conflict in shaping normative appeals by extremist Shia clerics, the author attended a *majlis* (religious gathering) held by Maulana Yasoob Abbas.

¹⁹Interview conducted by the author in Lucknow, July 2014.

Maulana Abbas is a Lucknavi Shia cleric who has built his reputation on stoking anti-Sunni sentiment in the name of defending the Shia faith. The majlis took place at the Shahnajafi Imambarah in Lucknow between the 18th and 21st days of Ramadan, a period observed each year by pious Shia to commemorate the murder of Imam Ali. In a majlis, Shia clerics typically engage in highly emotive speech invoking the theme of martyrdom that moves the listeners and speaker alike to weeping and mourning. In many ways, the fora are known to attract followers of the particular clerical speaker who engage in a type of collective remembrance to publicly express their future resolve.

Cloaked in a black shawl and matching turban, Maulana Abbas made his entrance to the imambarah with a small entourage of associates. Some twenty men, mostly aged in their 20s and 30s but also several older, had been waiting for him. But the maulana only made brief gestures and instead immediately proceeded inside the imambarah; the others followed. Silently, he approached one by one the decorated *taziya* ornaments from prior Muharram processions that lined the walls. These ornaments, some of which were centuries-old, represented the coffins of Imam Hussain and his associates who were killed by a Sunni caliph at the Battle of Karbala in 680 C.E., the second most formative event in the Shia collective memory after the murder of Imam Ali. Maulana Abbas quietly muttered prayers at each installation; each majlis attendee mirrored his approach. Several minutes later, he took a place on the floor of the patio on which he would soon speak. Maulana Abbas, who had been expecting the author, began his interview with the author by signaling his dismal prospects for a sectarian peace.

“There can be no unity between Sunni and Shia. Unity will only happen, peace will only happen, when either all Sunni believe what the Shia believe, or all Shia believe what the Sunni believe. This will never happen. There can be no peace.”

Like Abid Husain, Maulana Abbas detailed in his view the usurpation of power by Abu Bakr despite the Prophet’s earlier command to his followers to accept Ali as his successor. After additional comments, Maulana Abbas was introduced by an associate and took his place atop a seat to address his followers. The theme of his majlis was terrorism in the contemporary world, with particular emphasis on the Islamic State group. “We as Shia know the evil face of terrorism, because we have experienced it from the beginning. The murder of our beloved Imam Ali, peace be upon him, and at Karbala, of Imam Hussain.”

For the next forty-five minutes, Maulana Abbas described, step-by-step, the treacherous scene in which Imam Ali was arrested by a band of Sunnis in the presence of his young children Hussain and Hassan, and later executed. In the style that characterizes similar majlis speeches, he broke into tears and loud sobbing just minutes into his oration. The audience mirrored his behavior, with young and old men alike, and many of their children not more than ten years of age, loudly

weeping with their faces in their hands at a story that was central to their faith. They were familiar with this story, and many others. Yet together, on the three-day period of commemoration of Imam Ali's murder, they appeared to make clear that they had not and could not forget such cruelty. In between his words, the maulana sobbed so loudly that he had to remove his glasses to prevent them from soaking in tears. The the Islamic State, he concluded, with its vicious attacks on Iraqi and Syrian Shia, was the contemporary face of a long pattern of violent victimization against the Shia. The audience members, who were calm and cordial before the sermon had started, were shaking their heads in agreement, and in what seemed to be bitter disgust at extremism from the Sunni sect.

Such politicized majlis gatherings, as explained by a *Times of India* journalist in Lucknow who is himself a Shia, are routinely held by two or three Shia clerics in Lucknow seeking to ingrain the victimization narrative among Shia youth and the elderly alike.²⁰ Maulana Agha Roohi, a Shia cleric in his late 70s with a bad heart condition, is notorious in the city for openly endorsing violence to his followers as a means to guard against oppression by the Sunni. Many of his sermons appear on YouTube and are circulated by the city's Shia youth via phone messaging services and social media. Agha Roohi gained even more fame within extremist Shia circles when his son—another cleric who had been studying in the holy Shia city of Najaf in Iraq—returned in 2015 and boasted that he had fought on the frontlines with a Shia militia against the Islamic State group in that country.

This particular case is telling of the larger impact that the rise of ISIS has had on fueling narratives of victimization among the Shia. When the group took the Iraqi city of Mosul in early June 2014, it soon announced its intention to decimate Najaf and Karbala, which contained the resting places of Imam Ali, Imam Husain, and other Shia saints. Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, the spokesman of ISIS, issued a letter to the Iraqi prime minister in which he threatened the groups' imminent destruction of "Karbala, the filth-ridden city, and Najaf, the city of polytheists" (NYT 2014).

Back in Lucknow, Maulana Jawwad and his associates immediately announced an all-India volunteer drive (*Razakar*) to enlist Indian Shia men for the purpose of traveling to Iraq and fighting against ISIS or defending the *atabat-e-aliyat* (Arabic: "doorsteps of the exalted"), the Shia shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala. Large posters with the face of Maulana Jawwad calling for volunteers were plastered across buildings throughout the Old City.²¹ By late June, Jawwad's partner organization in Delhi, the Anjuman-e-Haideri, informed the Indian press that 25,000 Indian Shia had signed its pledge and that another 100,000 men had expressed interest (Telegraph 2014).

²⁰Interview with Times of India journalist, Dainik Jagran Chowk, Lucknow, July 2015.

²¹Author's personal observations in Lucknow, July 2014 and July 2015

Figure 2.2: Advertisement for Shia Volunteers (2014)



Effects on Inter-Group Relations

Sectarian tensions in Lucknow rose sharply in early July 2014. During that time, the senior Sunni cleric Maulana Salman Nadwi, head of the faculty of Islamic sciences at Lucknow’s esteemed Nadwat-ul-Ulema, issued a *fatwa* calling on all Muslims to pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the self-appointed caliph of the Islamic State. Two weeks later, the national Indian press had reported that Maulana Nadwi signed an open letter to the Saudi government urging it to fund an army of ‘5 lakh (or 500,000) Indian Sunni youth’ to fight Shia militias in Iraq (ToI 2014a).

Maulana Nadwi’s edict and open letter caused an uproar within the Shia community, with leading Shia clerics condemning the letter and others pointing to the *fatwa* as evidence that extremism hailed even in the most esteemed Sunni seminary. Several interviewees expressed to the author their surprise at the refusal of other Sunni clerics to condemn Maulana Nadwi’s edict. Some suggested that even powerful Sunni clerics like Khalid Rashid were so dependent on Nadwa and its Saudi sponsors that they could not publicly condemn Maulana Nadwi.²² Nor could Nadwi be jailed, as a senior police officer explained, because he was “just too powerful”.²³

Shia religious institutions moved to fill the void where the government had not. The All-

²²Interview with Shamil S., Qaiserbagh, July 2015; Ali R., Hazratganj, July 2015.

²³Interview with Rahul S., Uttar Pradesh Police Service, Hazratganj, July 2014.

India Husseini Fund, a Shia organization formed in the 1970s, announced a bounty of 50 million Indian rupees for the severed head of ISIS chief al-Baghdadi. As the group's secretary-general said, "Even if every Shia in the country donates 10 rupees, we would have a huge amount" (DNA 2014). In December, Maulana Jawwad and several associates attempted to board a flight to Iraq for the purpose of facilitating the travel and assignment of future Indian volunteers. In one highly publicized episode, the Indian Foreign Ministry revoked the cleric's passport at the last minute and prevented his travel (ToI 2014*b*). Jawwad vehemently contested the basis for the action, and continued his recruitment campaign in Lucknow. By summer 2015, the cleric said publicly that some 500,000 Indian Shia had signed the pledge.²⁴

Such disputes increased the salience of the global dimension of the victimization frame among Lucknavi Shia. In the Old City, ISIS issue was widely framed as part of a broader history of Saudi-led plots to crush Shiism. The political entrepreneurs within the Shia clerical establishment, including Maulana Jawwad, Agha Roohi, and Maulana Yasoob Abbas, welcomed Iranian military involvement in defense of Iraqi Shia and the holy sites. Widely-circulated press accounts of Indian Sunni citizens who traveled to Iraq to join ISIS further buttressed the narrative.

Foreign political events continued to seep into Lucknow. In January 2016, the Saudi government publicly executed a widely-known Saudi Shia cleric, Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr. Nimr had been praised by Shia leaders across the Muslim world for his vocal criticism of the Saudi government's repression of Shia communities at home and abroad. His execution was widely covered in the international media. Instantly, Maulana Jawwad and several other Shia clerics throughout India organized major protests in Lucknow. In New Delhi, Shia youth organized with posters of Sheikh Nimr in front of the Saudi embassy on January 4, 2016. Maulana Jawwad was incendiary, telling reporters that the execution was "not only un-Islamic but will also have serious consequences and eventually bring about the end of the Saudi kingdom" (ToI 2016*a*). Maulana Abbas, in his capacity as spokesperson of the All India Shia Personal Law Board, directly played to the victimization narrative, saying that Sheikh Nimr's killing showed the "intolerance of the Saudi monarchy, which has been funding and supporting terror outfits across the world, towards Shias and political reform" (ToI 2016*a*).

As such events unfolded, Sunni clerics in northern India took different stances. Whereas some leaders like Maulana Khalid Rashid chose to remain largely silent in response to ISIS actions and the execution of Sheikh Nimr, others took steps to distance themselves. In January 2016, Mufti Mohammed Saleem Noori, the top cleric at the major Sunni Barelvi seminary in the U.P. town of Bareilly, issued a fatwa condemning the reading of ISIS leaflets, which had reportedly been

²⁴Interview by the author with Shamil Shamsi, Lucknow, July 2015.

distributed by sympathizers in several Indian cities. The cleric slammed ISIS as “agents of anti-Islamic forces” and added that his seminary did not support their ideology (ToI 2016b).

Even as some Sunni clerics condemned ISIS, others preferred to pursue their anti-Shia narrative without necessarily invoking ISIS. Around the same time that the Barelvi clerics issued their fatwa, the author conducted an interview with an aged Sunni cleric, Maulana Abdullah, in the Old City. Maulana Abdullah explained that he was a follower of Ali Farooqi, the previously-mentioned Lucknow cleric known to embrace anti-Shia extremism. Maulana Farooqi was known as the chief organizer of the Sunni *madh-e-sahaba* procession taken out on *Barawafat*, the birth (and death) anniversary of the Prophet Muhammad. Atop the cold stones of his private office late one evening, Maulana Abdullah detailed several points that in his view refuted the legitimacy of the Shia as true Muslims. He argued that the Shia did not fully accept the Quran as the basis of Islamic law; that their Muharram processions were tantamount to polytheism; and that their prayer style—with open hands—flatly fell out of line with the Quranic edict to pray as the Prophet had done, with his hands bound to his side. Such differences could not allow him to faithfully accept the Shia as Muslims, and would prevent him ever from advocating acceptance or peace toward the Shia.

2.7 Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter, I demonstrated how changing political conditions affected the propagation of extremist religious norms by Sunni and Shia elites in Lucknow. First, I showed how state-sponsored religion during the Shia kingdom of Awadh economically and spiritually empowered a new Shia clerical establishment. The growth in power of the Shia clergy was reflected in an increase in conversion to Shiism and the propagation of norms that increased the salience of Shia rituals, including *azadari* processions and a new Friday prayer service. Clerics from both sects began propagating extremist norms, with the Shia taking on traditional Sunni Sufi thought and the Sunni taking aim at the illegitimacy of the Shia faith.

A new set of political conditions was brought about by the end of state-sponsored religion and the onset of British colonial rule in Lucknow. Three major Sunni revivalist movements formed that each competed to return the faithful to the supposedly true meaning of Islam, while the Shia clergy unified their faith in ways that hardened the doctrinal and ritualistic components of their faith. Rising extremism in both sects led to more public inter-group conflict, including the first major Sunni-Shia riot, that involved both elites and their followers. Third, government regulation of religious ritual created political conditions that encouraged extremist clerics in both sects to politicize religious differences.

By tracing three phases over which these conditions varied, the study explains how colonial and, later, Indian government restrictions on rituals had the unintended effect of encouraging ex-

tremist norms by Sunni and Shia *maulanas*. Lastly, the study illustrates how heightened foreign conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims shaped religious extremism in Lucknow. Targeted attacks on the Shia in Syria and Iraq, particularly by the Islamic State, empowered extremist Shia clerics who linked a narrative of victimization with the Shia *mythomoteur* to permit violence as a means of communal self-defense. These conditions placed constraints on pro-peace efforts by moderate Sunni clerics that decreased the perceived public gap between them and extremist Sunni clerics.

These findings render three broader implications for the study of identity and conflict. First, the chapter helps fill a gap in models of ethnic conflict by demonstrating why and how religious appeals by elites resonate with the masses. As (Fearon and Laitin 2000) explains, constructivist theories of ethnic violence place the blame for extremism and violence on the machinations of elites but say far less about why followers heed the calls of their elites. This chapter places an important caveat to “top-down” models of violence by showing that elite persuasion is sensitive to the opportunities presented by political conditions. Certain conditions, such as state-sponsored religion, offer financial and political opportunities that facilitate elite persuasion. Others, including government restriction of ritual and heightened foreign conflict involving co-religionists, can constrain the persuasive power of elites seeking to promote inter-group peace while strengthening persuasion by extremists. The analysis shows that religious norms can resonate with the masses, but suggests the importance of political conditions in shaping the transmission of religious ideas.

A second contribution relates to the nature and durability of ethnic and religious identities. The analysis breaks with primordialist conceptions of identity (Shils 1957) by demonstrating variation across time in the propagation and compliance with extremist religious norms. Even still, the analysis here shows how Sunni and Shia clerics have managed to construct extremist norms on the same core features of their respective *mythomoteuers* since the late nineteenth century. Present-day normative arguments justifying violence have maintained a focus on issues such as the legitimacy of the first three caliphs to follow the Prophet Muhammad, the acceptability of Shia rituals, and differences in prayer style. Political changes and modernization have changed the form and circumstance in which such issues are manipulated by elites, yet a familiar content has endured. The enduring features of the constitutive political myths of Sunni and Shia in Lucknow support a conceptualization of identity articulated by Smith (1986), who argued that the endurance of religious myth-symbol complexes constrain the extent to which elites can manipulate identity. The findings here thus modify the prominent constructivist claim that “Friendships are as “ancient” as hatreds. The face we see depends on what human agents cause us to see” (Rudolph and Rudolph 1993, 25). Rather, this chapter shows that human agents—here, religious elites—are constrained in the extent to which they can manipulate relatively fixed symbolic material.

The third main contribution relates to the manner in which differences in perceived group

status affect elite persuasion in conflict. In his seminal study, Horowitz (1985, 175) argued that ‘backward’ ethnic groups view conciliatory moves by their elites as ‘excessively generous’ acts that do little to address concerns about domination by ‘advanced’ groups. This logic has received little direct attention by political scientists. The present study offers three relevant insights. First, it provides qualitative evidence of a similar logic: perceived victimization among contemporary Shia in Lucknow distinguishes them from the Sunni and thus constitutes a unique constraint to the effectiveness of pro-peace messaging by Shia clerics. Second, the chapter helps fill a puzzle left by Horowitz (1985) as to what accounts for differences in perceived group status. The analysis here explains contemporary victimization among the Shia as a result of the the interaction of [1] material circumstances, including the ‘reversal of fortune’ following the downfall of Awadh, government regulation of ritual, heightened foreign political conflict, and [2] the Shia *mythomoteur* emphasizing revenge in a fight against perceived injustice and oppression. Third, whereas Horowitz (1985) only points to constraints facing elites in what here is the ‘victimized’ group, this study shows how elites in the non-victimized group (i.e. the Sunni) are also constrained by potential sanctioning from co-sectarian extremists and foreign funding. Yet because Shia elites also face comparable constraints from Shia extremist clerics, they face an additional constraint in victimization perceptions among their followers. The third and fourth chapters of this dissertation test these expectations experimentally.

A concluding comment relates to the generalizability of the findings here to other settings. This chapter suggests to a process of extremism in which religion and its associated myths and ideas play a role in motivating violent behavior against outgroup members. This account does not fall in line, for instance, with scholarly and journalistic commentaries about the way radicalization works among immigrant communities in the developed world. In those accounts, radicalization primarily comes about due to marginalization and ruptured social experiences and latter cloaks itself in religion as a means of finding meaning. One way to reconcile these two observed differences in how religion affects extremism is with reference to the differences in the contextual setting. In contrast to frustrated and marginalized immigrant communities in Europe or the United States, the Sunni and Shia youth in Lucknow’s Old City are not immigrants, live in a large Muslim population, and frequently interact with religious clerics. A reasonable derivation, then, is that the expected levels of religious knowledge, piety, and attention to clerical messaging vary significantly between the immigrant communities of the developed world and the youth of Lucknow’s Old City. Such differences help make sense of why religion might matter more to the formation of intolerance and extremism in Lucknow. Qualitative and observational research within and between such settings can help measure the merit of these claims.

Understanding The Relationship Between Extremist Attitudes and Behaviors: Evidence from Northern India

3.1 Introduction

Around the world, religious extremists shape politics and social relations through the expression of violent behaviors as well as attitudes. Although political scientists have investigated the determinants of either one of these phenomena, there has been little direct focus on the relationship between extremist attitudes and behavior. The terrorism studies literature in particular has focused on the factors responsible for participation in terrorist activities without investigating whether similar or different factors might shape extremist attitudes (Della Porta 2006; Sageman 2004; Krueger and Malečková 2003). By contrast, a separate but related literature investigates the broader phenomenon of radicalization and employs research designs to explain variation in attitudinal support for terrorist groups or political violence (Rink and Sharma 2016; Mitts 2016; Blair and Shapiro 2013; Mousseau 2011).

The different operationalizations of extremism in these studies results in two important research gaps that have broader relevance to the study of conflict. First, to what extent does an individual's attitudinal support for political violence serve as a significant predictor of his or her willingness to engage in extremist behaviors? Second, are extremist attitudes and behaviors predicted by different individual-level characteristics? These two questions are the focus of the present research.

Beyond their scholarly relevance, these questions are also important to questions facing policymakers. First, law enforcement agencies in the developed and developing world often assume that individual expressions of extremist attitudes are an indicator of a higher probability of engaging in extremist behaviors. This assumption motivates initiatives to provide enhanced monitoring of individuals who express or are believed to have expressed support for violence toward a government or particular outgroup. Second, Western governments and their allies in government in Asia and Africa are increasingly investing in development programs that use communication in an attempt to change extremist attitudes and ultimately behaviors. Such programs assume that extremist attitudes and behaviors are linked, and that changing the former can help attenuate the latter.

In this study, I examine the relationship between extremist attitudes and behaviors in the case

of extremism among Sunni and Shia Muslims in Lucknow. With more than three million residents, Lucknow is the capital of Uttar Pradesh, India's largest state. It is also home to the highest levels of Sunni-Shia violence in India. Violence mostly takes the form of riots, which have largely been concentrated in the Old City neighborhood since their beginning in 1905. Today, a range of extremist religious leaders and political figures sustain patterns of intergroup violence and discrimination that tend to peak in the Islamic month of Muharram, a holy period whose rituals have been manipulated to stoke sectarian tensions.

The study employs a large-scale, in-person survey of 480 Sunni and Shia young adult men in the violence-prone Old City neighborhood. Subjects were sampled by a single co-sectarian enumerator, who administered the survey on small side streets and thus outside of a laboratory setting. The survey questions were designed to examine four families of prominent hypotheses in the literature on terrorism and radicalization: (1) grievance-related explanations; (2) religious identity-related explanations; (3) social network logics; and (4) psychological factors. The enumerator then administered questions to measure attitudinal support for violence toward the outgroup as well as three behavioral proxies to gauge opposition to intergroup peace. To obtain measures that were salient in the local context, the attitudinal questions gauged support for typical types of local violence described in four hypothetical vignettes. Behavioral tasks were crafted on consultation with local experts and aimed to provide relatively costly expressions of extremism, albeit not violent extremism.

Three main contributions result for political science and policy. First, the study presents evidence in favor of a model of extremism in which attitudes and behavior are linked but not as strongly as some might expect. Although extremist attitudes are a significantly significant predictor of extremist behaviors, the analysis emphasizes that factors other than attitudes are needed to explain most of the observed variation in extremist behaviors. Furthermore, only two of the ten independent variables tested here as determinants of extremism—troubled social relations and prayer attendance—are significant predictors of both attitudes and behavior. These results support a more nuanced conceptualization of extremism than those expressed by existing accounts that either argue that attitudinal and behavioral extremism are (1) empirically unrelated (Horgan 2011; Borum 2011) or (2) strongly related (Neumann 2013).

Second, the chapter demonstrates that economic and political grievances are significant predictors of support for violence but not of engaging in extremist behaviors. This result questions models of ethnic conflict that imply that economic marginalization is a predictor of extremist behavior but not extremist attitudes. Esteban and Ray (2011), for instance, present a model in which poverty is associated with participation in violence but not ideological support for violence, which is supplied by economically empowered members of society. The present research argues the opposite: economic grievances are stronger predictors—in a statistically distinguishable way—of

extremist attitudes but not behavior. Society's poor, this result suggests, may support violence but are not necessarily the same individuals who contribute their labor to conflict as implied in Esteban and Ray (2011). For policymakers, this result suggests that programs or policies that increase political or economic inclusion of marginalized individuals may possibly change attitudes toward violence without changing extremist behaviors.

A third contribution of the study relates to the role of religion in conflict. The results show that a commonly tested type of religiosity—higher prayer attendance—is a statistically significant predictor of less extremist attitudes and less extremist behaviors. This finding departs from other studies that either find the opposite pattern (Ginges, Hansen and Norenzayan 2009) or no significant relationship between prayer and extremism (Fair and Shepherd 2006). Beyond prayer attendance, the results for the pooled sample of Sunni and Shia subjects show that other factors related to religious identity—including participation in contentious religious rituals, years of religious education, or sectarian identification—are not significant predictors of extremism. When analyzing the results by sect, however, the analysis shows that participation in contentious rituals works more effectively in reducing extremism among Shia subjects as opposed to Sunni subjects. Together, these findings join other research (Clingsmith N.d.) showing how public religious practices may play an important role in reducing rather than increasing extremism.

The chapter is structured as follows. Section 2 examines background of the Sunni-Shia conflict in Lucknow. The next section discusses how religious extremism is conceptualized in this study. Section 4 presents the theoretical framework. Section 5 reviews the sampling approach and survey design. Main results are presented in the sixth section. The study rounds out with a discussion of the findings and their broader implications for political science and policy.

3.2 Background

Violence between members of the Sunni and Shi'i sects of Islam is a salient feature of the politics of many countries around the world. In India, the world's largest democracy that often showcases itself as a model for secular governance and intergroup peace, Sunni-Shia violence continues to define the central political conflict in Lucknow, the capital city of India's largest state. Religious violence perpetrated by marginalized male youth of both two sects undermines the security environment of what is arguably India's most important political center after New Delhi.

Over the past century, Lucknow has been home to more Sunni-Shia violence than any other Indian city. Interestingly in the Indian context, the city has never experienced a major act of Hindu-Muslim violence for at least the past century (Sinha 1978, 1841). The city's Sunni-Shia violence is a relatively recent phenomenon: the first riot took place in 1905 (Ahmad 1983: 340). Ever since, sectarian violence has almost exclusively coincided with particular Muslim holy periods when

Sunni and Shia public rituals direct attention toward contentious religious symbols traditions. Most sectarian violence in Lucknow occurs during Muharram, the first month in the Islamic calendar that lasts for either 68 or 69 days in South Asia. As in many parts of the Muslim world, Muharram heightens the political salience of Sunni-Shia divisions in Lucknow due to the month's historical significance to the Shia faith and the way in which its rituals are violently exploited by some Sunni and Shi'i locals for political purposes.

During Muharram, sectarian violence tends to occur when extremist Sunni and Shia groups engage in highly contentious rituals that are considered explicitly offensive by one another. In field interviews with riot police officers and religious clerics, respondents emphasized the role of religious clerics in fomenting extremist attitudes and behavior. Sunni clerics in Lucknow organize rituals (called *Urdu: madh-e-sahaba* processions) to provocatively praise the first three caliphs of Islam but not the fourth, Ali. Youth explained that *madh-e-sahaba* rituals can take place on the street in response to a Shia Muharram procession or at a Sunni mosque, and draw ire from many local Shia. For their part, extremist Shia clerics in Lucknow organize rituals (called *Urdu: tabarra*, which literally means 'disassociation') to emphasize their rejection of the first three caliphs, often using phrases that many Sunni find offensive. Ever since Lucknow's first Sunni-Shia riot in 1906, the Sunni practice of reciting *madh-e-sahaba* and the Shia response of retaliating with *tabarra* has served as a substantive aspect of Muharram processions that is also a proximate cause of violence between the two sides (Hasan 1998: 351-353).

For about five months, the author conducted field research in Lucknow regarding the city's Sunni-Shia conflict and extremism among members of both sects. As part of that research, the author administered Hindi- and Urdu- language semi-structured interviews with over 70 subjects, including Sunni and Shia *maulanas*; riot police officers; local politicians; violent young adults; NGO officers; and academics. Three points provide more clarity on the present conflict dynamics in Lucknow. First, virtually all Sunni-Shia violence in the city takes place in the Old City, the city's most impoverished district that includes some 1 million inhabitants living in dilapidated housing on streets that are often no wider than 15 feet. In general, the violence continues to take the form of riots involving several hundred participants that tend to occur during Shia (and to a far lesser extent, Sunni) religious processions. Smaller skirmishes targeting members of one of the two sects also take place. Second, while the overall number of riots and skirmishes is far lower than those in active war zones, politicians and NGO officers emphasized that the level of support for violence targeting members of the other sect is relatively high. Third, youth activists and police emphasized that extremist actions were perceived to include not only violence but actions opposing peace between both groups. Examples provided included the distribution of leaflets condemning pro-peace clerics and refusing to participate in joint peace initiatives organized by activists in both sects.

Why this case? First, the decision to focus on a single high-risk area—Lucknow’s Old City—facilitates the analysis of individual-level hypotheses while keeping constant the macro-level environment, including economic development, and historical factors. Moreover, the focus on a single setting allows for a more fine-grained observational study among a relatively comparable sample of young adult men, thereby increasing the clarity of the sample about which the empirical claims are being made.

Second, the particular selection of Lucknow stems from its status as a city of four million inhabitants that has the highest level of Sunni-Shia violence in all of India. Although the city has experienced less than 10 unique violent incidents related to Sunni-Shia violence per year over the past 15 years, this information alone provides a limited understanding of the degree of extremism in the city. Field research emphasized that the fear of extremism has led to sect-wise residential segregation in the crowded Old City. Polarizing and often pro-violent sectarian political speech is an everyday reality in Lucknow, often directly invoking external events in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon to justify violent tit-for-tat responses in Lucknow. Furthermore, local politicians and religious clerics emphasized that political parties frequently exploit sectarian differences as part of their campaigns for electoral gains. Third, the city’s Old City neighborhood appealed from the perspective of implementing a sensitive, face-to-face survey including behavioral proxies. Through a range of steps were taken to protect enumerator and subject safety, security conditions in Lucknow’s Old City have not deteriorated to the point where the research project could not be realized.

3.3 Defining Religious Extremism

This study focuses on two dependent variables: religious extremist attitudes and religious extremist behavior. Although extremism itself often may refer to the end result of a process (Crossett and Spitaletta 2010), the primary inquiry in the present research is to identify the factors that explain variation in subjects’ levels of extremist attitudes and behaviors at a particular point in time.

The term “religious extremism” is hotly debated and defined in different ways by scholars, practitioners, and governments around the world (Schmid 2013; Veldhuis and Staun 2009). Equally as important as the disagreement over definitions are the many studies that have critiqued the entire concept of “religious extremism” or “religious radicalization”. Critics have rightly pointed out that these terms have been used by policy advisers to highlight individual-level “red flags” in ways that may significantly distract from the importance of macro-level factors that motivate violence, including foreign policy and structural grievances within society (Kundnani 2012). Others have also pointed out that examining whether or not individuals hold extremist attitudes may be problematic insofar as attitudes themselves may not correlate with or cause individuals to engage in actual violent behavior (Borum 2011).

These concerns are addressed as follows. First, the study seeks to examine a wide range of hypotheses that involve grievances, religion-related factors, network-related factors, and psychological factors. The focus on multiple variables helps to obtain a more accurate understanding of the relative importance of each one in explaining extremism. In doing so, the study seeks to provide a more fine-grained understanding of extremism at the individual-level while acknowledging that other research designs may assist in identifying country-level factors involved in extremism. The second critique, which argues that the study of extremist attitudes might not provide insights relevant to behavior, is in many ways the claim that the present study seeks to investigate.

In the present research, religious extremist attitudes are defined as the extent of support or for the use of violence targeted against outgroup members on the basis of their religious affiliation to achieve a religio-political objective. This definition follows prominent approaches in political science, most notably Gurr (1990). Moreover, the definition is similar to other prominent conceptualizations.¹ Second, the present study defines religious extremist behavior as the extent to engage in actions in that oppose peaceful coexistence between two or more religious groups. According to such a conceptualization, the decision to refuse to sign a pro-peace petition is defined as an extremist behavior even though the act does not involve violence. The inclusion of such non-violent actions as extremist allows for a more comprehensive capture of the phenomenon of extremist behavior, particularly as acts of extremist social media posts or threats of violence are increasing in importance (Klausen 2015). The measurements of extremist attitudes and extremist behavior are best understood as measurements at a particular point in time for a particular individual.

3.4 Theoretical Framework

This section presents the theoretical framework for the study. The first hypothesis focuses on attitude-behavior consistency. The remainder of the hypotheses focus on explaining variation in extremist attitudes and behavior, and namely, to determine if different factors explain attitudes as compared to behavior.

¹The U.S. Army Asymmetric Warfare Group defines radicalization as process whereby an individual goes from legal political participation to “the use or support of violence for political purposes ” (Crossett and Spitaletta 2010, 3). Psychologists have McCauley and Moskaleiko (2008, 415) define radicalization as “increasing extremity of beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in directions that increasingly justify intergroup violence and demand sacrifice in defense of the ingroup”. Similarly, social scientists Wilner and Dubouloz (2010, 418), in their definition of the phenomenon, emphasize that radicalization represents a process “where the attainment of particular goals justifies the use of violence”.

The Relationship Between Attitudes and Behavior

In recent years, scholars of religious extremism have examined the relationship between an individual's extremist attitudes and extremist behavior. While one aspect of this question relates to the causal effect of attitudes on behavior (Crenshaw 2011, 107-8), the focus here is to first establish whether attitudes are a valid predictor of behavior with regard to religious extremism.

Social scientists examining attitude-behavior relationships have focused on two different types of inconsistencies (Schuman and Johnson 1976). One type of inconsistency exists when a participant states an attitude describing his or her hypothetical behavior in a situation and then fails to engage in that behavioral option in an actual scenario. As described by Ajzen and Fishbein (2005, 178), a second type of inconsistency refers to "a failure of general attitudes to predict a given behavior with respect to the object of the attitude." This second type of inconsistency, in which broad attitudes fail to predict specific behaviors, is a focus in the present study.

To date, the literature on extremism and radicalization have differed on the extent to which extremist attitudes are related to extremist behavior. In their seminal model, Esteban and Ray (2011) present a formal model of conflict in which individuals vary with respect to the level of radicalism in their attitudes but that radicalized attitudes in themselves do not cause extremist behavior. Within each ethnic group, the "rich" supply the financial contribution to fund extremist behavior while the "poor and unemployed engage in violent acts....because the opportunity cost is low" (Esteban and Ray 2011, 516). The implication is that higher economic marginalization, and not simply radicalized attitudes, drives extremist behavior.

Other accounts suggest a different relationship in which underlying ideological beliefs lead to a more aligned relationship between extremist attitudes and behavior. (Neumann 2013, 880), for instance, uses the example of the Irish Republican Army and the al-Qaeda group to argue that extremist beliefs lead to extremist attitudes in support of violence that in turn motivate extremist behavior. A third line of argument suggests that extremist attitudes and behavior are altogether different phenomena Horgan (2011); Borum (2011). These accounts argue that extremist attitudes are neither necessary nor sufficient for extremist behaviors.

Qualitative insights from field research carried out by the author in Lucknow throughout 2014-16 provide mixed clues as to whether extremist attitudes predict behavior. One senior police officer in Lucknow West, which contains the Old City neighborhood where most Sunni-Shia violence occurs, emphasized that many individuals convicted of extremist actions including threats and violence held strong support for violence against the outgroup.² In interviews conducted in June 2015, several Sunni and Shia youth in the riot-prone Chowk and Bajaza neighborhoods

²Interview conducted with Superintendent of Police for Lucknow West, Qaiserbagh, Lucknow, July 22, 2014

appeared to agree with this premise. Multiple youth respondents insisted that the individuals who expressed hatred toward the outgroup were more likely to engage in stone-throwing or street fights during Muharram processions. Other interlocutors disagreed. In July 2015 interviews conducted with local Congress Party and Samajwadi politicians, as well as with local NGO officers, several respondents pointed out that attitudes did not necessarily explain the role of financial or social payoffs to engaging in extremist behaviors.

To analyze this important debate in the literature, the study tests the following hypothesis:

- H_1 : At the individual-level, extremist attitudes predict extremist behavior.

The Predictors of Extremism

This section lays out ten hypotheses on the predictors of extremism. In order to arrive at these hypotheses, an extensive review of the extant literature was conducted that resulted in a range of hypotheses on extremism from a range of disciplines, namely, political science and social psychology. Following this initial review, findings from interviews in field work in Lucknow helped to distill the list into a set of ten competing explanations that were especially salient in the Old City context. Due to the scholarly accounts suggestion that such factors explain extremism in general, without distinction between attitudes and behavior, the hypotheses are presented as general explanations for extremism in general.

Grievance-Based Explanations

First, studies on the effect of economic marginalization on extremism offer mixed findings. Crenshaw (1990) and Burgoon (2006) argue that diminished economic prospects can work through a range of channels, including inequality, to increase extremism. Gurr (2006) explains that economic grievances can increase rage that ultimately results in violent attitudes or behaviors. Empirical evidence from several cross-country studies have found support for the economic marginalization effect. Chiozza (2009) shows that poverty increases extremism in some but not all of the sample's 14 Muslim-majority countries. In another study on the same sample, Mousseau (2011) finds that the urban poor exhibit the highest extremism.

Yet other analyses have reached different conclusions. In an empirical study of terrorist incidents in ninety-six countries between 1986 and 2003, Piazza (2006) finds no evidence for the argument that economic marginalization predicts higher levels of terrorism. Micro-level empirical studies from East Africa (Rink and Sharma 2016) and South Asia (Blair and Shapiro 2013) have also found no evidence that higher economic marginalization increases extremism. The present study tests the version of the relationship that is most prominent in mainstream accounts.

- H_2 : Higher levels of economic marginalization will increase religious extremism.

The next hypothesis concerns political marginalization and extremism. Several scholars argue that extremism becomes more likely when individuals feel diminished representation by political representatives (Hegghammer 2006; Pargeter 2009). Such conditions, according to Hossain (2005), can incentivize individuals to drift toward extremism as a means of seeking security from non-state extremist groups. Similarly, a lack of perceived political representation can encourage individuals to turn to extremist groups due to lack of trust for the state (Lombardi and Chin 2014) or to obtain essential services not provided by the state (Sadowski 2006, 226).

In Lucknow's Old City, semi-structured interviews with politicians and Sunni and Shia youth groups emphasized widespread perceptions of a lack of representation by government officials in the state of Uttar Pradesh. One respondent related that the dilapidated Old City was deliberately neglected by local political parties, with greatest government attention given to a small set of religious clerics claiming to represent locals.³ Local Shia and Sunni politicians privately explained that the government's focus on religious clerics rather than ordinary Old City residents had the effect of pushing several youth toward extremist clerics who touted their political connections as a means of airing supporters' political requests.⁴ In light of these claims, the following hypothesis is presented:

- H_3 : Higher levels of political marginalization will increase religious extremism.

Religious Identity-Related Hypotheses

This section discusses a group of hypotheses that relate to an individual's religious identity. The vast majority of studies examining religious identity in the context of religious extremism focus on prayer attendance. Yet empirical focus on this one variable has received little attention. A broader approach is taken in this section: prayer attendance is noted as one of many religion-related factors that may shape extremism. To attain a more complete understanding, three additional hypotheses are tested relating to individuals' participation in extremist religious rituals; years of religious education; and priority of their sectarian identity. In doing so, the present study offers a more rigorous treatment of religious identity than existing studies focusing on prayer attendance.⁵

³Interview conducted in Chowk, Old City, Lucknow January 2, 2016

⁴Multiple interviews in Kashmiri Mohalla and Hazratganj, Lucknow, June 2015.

⁵One important exception is Fair, Malhotra and Shapiro (2012), which also examines religious doctrine but does not consider the other factors mentioned here.

Public Religious Practices. The question of whether increased religious observance, and particularly prayer attendance, has attracted significant attention from scholars. In one study of 6,000 Pakistani men, (Fair, Malhotra and Shapiro 2012, 712) find that higher religious prayer attendance is unrelated to extremism. In a related vein, Clingingsmith (N.d.) exploit Pakistan's lottery system of awarding tickets to participate in the Islamic *hajj* pilgrimage and find evidence that *hajj*-goers exemplify less extremism than a comparable group of individuals who did not participate. And beyond the South Asian context, an observational study among Muslims in five Arab countries concludes that prayer attendance does not predict support for violence toward Israel (Tessler and Nachtwey 1998). In contrast, other research by (Ginges, Hansen and Norenzayan 2009) finds that higher prayer attendance predicts greater extremism among Palestinian Muslims but not Indonesian Muslims.

In the Lucknavi context, field work resulted in two relevant insights regarding the relationship between religious observance and extremism. First, religious observance at local mosques appeared to be commonplace among interviewed Sunni and Shia. In interviews, several Sunni and Shia male youth in the Old City expressed their decision to attend mosque services as a regular form of social activity with peers and a means of inserting discipline in daily schedules.⁶ Second, several pro-peace youth explained that, in their view, attending prayer services at most local mosques helped to instill sentiments of brotherhood rather than extremism.⁷

I test the version of the hypothesis as it is commonly articulated in mainstream accounts:

- H_4 : Higher levels of prayer attendance will increase religious extremism.

Contentious Religious Ritual Participation. The next hypothesis examined involves individual participation in contentious religious rituals. Writing on Northern Ireland, Blake (2016) defines a contentious religious ritual as a “symbolic action that makes contested political claims”. Such rituals are a salient form of public religious practice, including Protestant and Catholic parades in northern Ireland and certain sacred Hindu processions in India (Brass 1997b).

Several scholars have highlighted ways in which participation in contentious religious rituals can increase extremist attitudes and behavior. In the Indian context, (Jaffrelot 2009) explains how participation in the nation-wide *Ekmata Yatra* marches that were contentious for their symbolization of a single—and decidedly—Hindu nation motivated several individuals to take part in the violent demolition of the Babri Masjid, a Muslim holy site. Among participants, contentious

⁶Multiple interviews conducted with youth in Old City, Lucknow, June-July 2014

⁷Multiple interviews Old City, Lucknow, June-July 2014

religious “blurs” differences in social status and leads to a “particular fervour that recalls the radicalism...with regard to the Crusades and the Jihad...” (Jaffrelot 2009, 17).

In the Islamic world, qualitative accounts suggest that one way in which contentious religious rituals might increase extremism involves the divisive content of certain processions. In Lucknow, for instance, the previously-described Sunni ritual of *madh-e-sahaba* involves explicitly praising the first three Islamic caliphs following the Prophet Muhammad’s death but ignoring the fourth—Ali—the most revered by the Shia, who believe he was denied his right to immediately succeed the Prophet. Lucknavi Shia contentious rituals—namely the *tabarra* recitation that is perceived by Sunnis to be an insult to the first three caliphs—also feature divisive chants that can affect the participants’ inclinations toward extremism.

Extant research offers few insights as to how participation in contentious religious rituals might affect extremism at the individual level. Blake (2016) analyzes the correlates of participation in such rituals, rather than the effects. To formulate a deeper understanding of how contentious ritual participation might affect extremism, the author conducted several semi-structured interviews with Sunni and Shia youth in Lucknow’s Old City.

Several Sunni respondents who had participated in *madh-e-sahaba* explained that they became more emboldened in their willingness to support or use violence toward the Shia because the rituals’ incendiary content led them to devalue the outgroup’s worth. Other Sunni respondents contested this view, arguing that *madh-e-sahaba* participants were typically extremist to begin with. Similarly mixed findings obtained from the Shia community. Some Shia respondents, including some supporters of the city’s most extremist Shia clerics, insisted that the *tabarra* chants were a ritual used defensively to respond to provocation by the Sunni, and did not in themselves increase extremism. In one exchange, two Shia clerics presented contrasting views as to whether *tabarra* participation should cause extremism. One respondent pointed out that *tabarra* simply means “disassociation” from the three caliphs not accepted by the Shia, and as such did not contain extremism-inducing content. The second cleric pointed out that the ritual typically involves a series of insults and curses toward the caliphs, perhaps making the participant more likely to harm outgroup members. These insights give rise to the fifth hypothesis:

- H_5 : Higher rates of participation in contentious rituals will increase extremism.

Religious Education A third explanation relates to participation in religious education. Regarding the Islamic world, a common argument made by experts and journalists in media circles is that religious education is a driver of extremism. Journalistic accounts have sought to make the case that Saudi influence of religious institutions and educational curricula have increased extremism in contexts ranging from the developed (*The Saudi Connection: Wahhabism and Global Jihad* 2013) to the developing world (Gall 2016). Some analysts have gone further. In a *Wall Street Jour-*

nal commentary, one expert argues that the problem is deeper than a specific subset of mosques, writing that extremism "is occurring in mainstream and leading mosques worldwide, including at one of the most important religious institutions in Islam, the Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem" (Stalinsky 2016). Logics used in these accounts claim that Islamic religious education increases narrow-mindedness and increases susceptibility to extremism or directly transmits extremist arguments to students. Such is the emphasis on religious education that right-wing parties have called for the closure of mosques believed to be facilitating religious extremism.

In Lucknow, as in multiple contexts across the Muslim world, Sunni and Shia Muslims often enroll in religious education courses throughout their youth. Anecdotal accounts from the author's interviews with religious leaders and NGO officers in Lucknow suggested that Sunni Muslims in Lucknow's Old City are far more likely to enroll in religious education courses, chiefly to learn and memorize the Qur'an. The present research tests the hypothesis for both groups as it is articulated in many mainstream accounts. The variable was coded by asking all subjects to report the approximate number of years that they attended Quran lessons in their life.

- H_6 : Additional years of religious education will increase religious extremism.

Sectarian Identification. Group identification can be defined as the psychological tie between an individual and any group to which he or she belongs Leach et al. (2008). The study of group identification has mostly focused on the level of importance that the individual assigns to the group, but can also include the level of commitment that the individual has to the group (Mackie, Devos and Smith 2000, 283). The present study focuses on the former understanding of group identification. Since the Sunni and Shia group identities are the salient group identities in the study context, the particular type of group identification studied here is sectarian religious group identification.

While there is little direct empirical study as to how sectarian identification might affect extremism, the broader research program on group identification exhibits mixed findings. Ysseldyk, Matheson and Anisman (2010, 60) explains that prioritizing one's religious identity can both promote positive individual development but also cause violence.

One set of research findings emphasize ways in which identifying with one's sectarian group might increase extremist attitudes and behavior toward the outgroup. Smith, Seger and Mackie (2007) found that stronger group identification increase anger directed against the outgroup. In another study among immigrants from Suriname in the Netherlands, Pennekamp et al. (2007) show that Dutch-Surinamese who identified primarily as Surinamese identity were more likely to exhibit anger toward outgroup, whereas identifying primarily as Dutch were less likely to do so. Stronger group identification might also affect anger by increasing an individual's perceived level of threats directed toward his or her in-group (Stephan et al. 2002). Empirical evidence from Lebanon and

the United Kingdom shows that strong identification with one's religious denomination correlated with higher support for terrorism Sidanius et al. (2004); Cinnirella et al. (2010). In the setting of Sunni and Shia Muslims in Lucknow, such findings would seem to suggest that rating one's sectarian identity as their primary identity would suggest higher anger towards the outgroup that would increase extremism.

Yet this direction would be contested by other studies. Brewer (1999) argues that group identification may increase in-group favoritism but not necessarily lead to out-group aggression. In a related vein, lab experimental evidence from Germany showed that German Muslims who identified primarily with their religious group were not more likely to support hypothetical terrorist attacks by Muslims, but those who ranked their German identity as primary were significantly less likely to support such attacks (Fischer, Greitemeyer and Kastenmüller 2007).

- H_7 : Identifying primarily with one's sectarian identity will increase extremism.

Social Network Hypotheses

In this section, I analyze two hypotheses related to social networks and religious extremism.

Outgroup Peers. In social psychology, the prominent intergroup contact hypothesis (?) suggests that under certain conditions, higher contact with outgroup members can reduce anti-outgroup attitudes and behavior. A meta-analysis of 515 studies on the contact hypothesis found robust evidence for the proposition that intergroup contact reduces anti-outgroup sentiment (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). There is little evidence, however, as to whether or not lower outgroup contact is associated with higher extremist attitudes and behavior toward the outgroup.

In Lucknow, the author's field work found that most Sunni and Shia inhabitants reside in neighborhoods that are dominated by their co-sectarians. Even still, multiple venues exist that facilitate positive contact between Sunni and Shia youth. Young adult men from both sects cordially interact in the Old City's small cafes, restaurants, and shops. Several youth interviewees proudly pointed to their outgroup friends as evidence that they were different from the "extremists" in their sects.⁸ But interviews also underscored the point that even pronounced outgroup contact may not be sufficient to reduce extremism. Several Sunni and Shia youth, for instance, explained that they had several outgroup friends even as they detailed their support for violence toward outgroup members who instigated attacks.⁹

To explore if outgroup contact reduces extremism, the following hypothesis is proposed:

⁸Multiple interviews in Dargah, Kashmiri Mohalla, and Patanala, Old City, Lucknow, January 2016

⁹Multiple interviews in Maulviganj and Muftiganj, Old City, Lucknow, January 2016

- H_8 : Religious extremism is decreasing in sustained outgroup relations.

Violent Peers. A second aspect of an individual’s social network that might affect extremist attitudes and behavior involves connections to extremist in-group peers. Multiple studies have found that individuals are more likely to engage in problematic behaviors when their peers engage in such behaviors (Veenstra and Dijkstra 2011). Psychologists have argued that peer groups can lead to criminal behaviors through “deviancy training” (Dishion et al. 1996), and find that one’s peers reinforce communication about deviant behaviors through various gestures (Granic and Dishion 2003). In the context of peer influence and extremism, Sageman (2004) provided one of the earliest studies of convicted members of al-Qaeda that used court records—among other data—to understand how network links to violent individuals affected an individual’s level of extremism. The analysis finds that 90 percent of individuals became extremists due to friendship and kinship networks. A shortcoming of the study, however, is that the sample is limited to convicted or known terrorists and lacked a comparable control group, thereby complicating the question of whether such ties were more likely to cause extremism. Other qualitative studies on right-wing militant groups in Israel and Europe find support for the violent peers argument but also lack comparison groups (Dahl and Zalk 2014; Munson 2008).

In the Lucknavi context, anecdotal evidence from conversations with youth respondents emphasized a plausible effect of having more violent peers on one’s own extremism. Sunni respondents in the Patanala neighborhood described how older siblings’ friends who had engaged in past riots against Shia Muslims played an important negative role in shaping their attitudes and actions toward Shia that they encountered.¹⁰ Similarly, Sunni youth who described connections to friends who were followers of pro-peace clerics at the Farangi Mahal, and Shia youth whose friends spent time in the schools of moderate Shia clerics like Maulana Kalbe Sadiq, noted how the relations they built with pro-peace peers shaped their decision to refrain from participating in tit-for-tat violence against the outgroup.¹¹

Such anecdotal accounts, however, made it difficult to understand whether connections to violent in-group members bore a systematic relationship to individual attitudes and behavior toward the outgroup. This study thus tests the following hypothesis:

- H_9 : Subjects who have more violent in-group peers will exhibit higher extremism.

¹⁰Multiple interviews in Patanala, August 2014

¹¹Interviews conducted on Victoria Street and Farangi Mahal area, Old City, Lucknow, August 2015

Psychological Explanations

The final family of hypothesis examined in this study concerns psychological explanations of extremism.

Negative Catalyst Events. Within the psychology literature, one of the most prominent hypotheses concerns the effect of experiencing negative life events that may catalyze the extremism process. Such “negative catalyst events” are typically rare and traumatic events that rupture part of an individual’s social, political, economic, or spiritual well-being. Examples include experiences involving death of family members or peers or the loss of a job.

In the psychological literature, several scholars have argued that such personal crises can themselves increase extremist attitudes. McCauley and Moskaleiko (2008) explain that crises can cause a “cognitive opening” that motivates susceptibility to extremist groups. Pedahzur (2005, 139) references examples of a failed suicide bomber who turned to violence as a means of escaping the stigma carried by her recent divorce. According to one theory that views extremism as a quest for significance, Kruglanski et al. (2009) argue that personal crises cause individuals to experience a “significance loss” that in turn may make extremism more appealing as a way to actualize “significance restoration.” Such accounts find a parallel in earlier political science research suggesting that extremism is often viewed as a preferable alternative to “an otherwise insignificant or disappointing life” (Crenshaw 2007, 153).

Several studies provide empirical support for these arguments. Among an analysis of Chechen suicide bombers, researchers found a common trait that nearly half had experienced the death of one or more family members (Speckhard and Akhmedova 2005). In the Palestinian territories, the death of an individual’s father has been described as a common motivation for decisions to engage in extremism (Silke 2003, 99). Although qualitative accounts emphasize a plausible link as to why experiencing such crises may increase extremism, the extant literature offers little insight as to whether such events explain variation in levels of extremism among subjects. To analyze the effect of negative life events, the present study tests the version of the hypothesis as it articulated in most existing studies:

- H_{10} : Higher levels of negative life events increase extremism.

Troubled Social Relations. Another prominent psychological factor believed to affect extremism is the extent to which an individual harbors negative relations with family and friends. Borum (2004) explain mechanisms by which distressed relations with one’s parents or peers may weaken one’s self-concept, thereby providing an opening for such individuals to project their weakness on an outside enemy.

In a study of three groups of jailed Palestinians who varied with respect to whether they had attempted suicide bombings, Merari et al. (2009) found that attempted-bombers showed significantly lower levels of personal emotional resources due to troubled social relations with friends and family members. In an older study from Germany, Claessens and Baeyer-Katte (1982) analyzed a sample of 227 left-wing extremists from the 2 June Movement and found that the vast majority had hostile relationships with their fathers and highly conflictual relations with their families.

Existing research, however, complicates the question of whether troubled relations systematically affect extremist attitudes, behavior, or both. Furthermore, there are few insights as to whether such relations affect extremism even after accounting for other relevant factors. This study thus examines the following hypothesis:

- H_{11} : Individuals with historically troubled social relations will exhibit more extremism.

3.5 Empirics

Survey and Sampling

The survey was conducted in early 2016 in Lucknow's Old City. For cultural sensitivity and security reasons, and on the advice of other local experts, Sunni and Shia enumerators were instructed to only survey individuals who shared their sectarian affiliation. In concert with enumerators and local experts who knew the neighborhoods of the Old City, enumerators were instructed to visit neighborhoods that varied in their level of sectarian balance (mostly Sunni residents, mostly Shia residents, or mixed) and level of prior sectarian violence. Enumerators were further instructed to only sample young adult men, i.e. those in the 18 to 35 year old range.

Uniform sampling by random walk was used to recruit subjects. Each day, enumerators began each day's surveys from a randomly-selected location in the Old City and then proceeded to walk down the street and attempt to survey every third young adult man that they passed on their right-hand side. To protect enumerators and subjects, surveys were conducted in small side streets or shops. All subjects were told that their individual identity and specific responses would never be made public, and were only used for research purposes. Using this approach, a random sample was obtained of 480 young adult men living in the Old City such that 240 subjects were Sunni and 240 were Shia.

Extremism Measures

To measure a subject's level of extremist attitudes, subjects were asked the extent to which they supported violence against the out-group in four hypothetical scenarios that were constructed to

reflect realistic situations encountered by Lucknavi youth. Upon administering the questions to measure the independent variables of interest, enumerators primed subjects on sectarian tensions by telling them to “imagine that it is *Muharram* and an (out-group) cleric has just insulted the (in-group).” Subjects were then asked to imagine that an in-group member was considering responding to the provocation with one of four violent actions toward outgroup members. After being told each hypothetical violent reaction, subjects were asked to rate their level of support on a 7-point Likert scale for their hypothetical co-sectarian’s action. Each point-value on the scale was given a brief description ranging from *strongly oppose* to *strongly support*.¹²

To maintain consistency in the outcome measure for both Sunni and Shia subjects, the same hypothetical provocative scenario and four hypothetical violent reactions were read to Sunni and Shia subjects. The four questions asked subjects to rate their support for the following hypothetical actions by the in-group member:

- 1 using a street megaphone to call the out-group *kafir* (non-Muslims)
- 2 throwing a stone at an out-group religious procession;
- 3 attacking an out-group friend for an anti-ingroup Facebook post;
- 4 attacking an out-group store.

For each subject, the responses to these four questions were averaged then standardized to facilitate interpretation. Higher values on this scale thus indicated higher extremism.

Following the attitudinal measures of extremism, enumerators administered three behavioral tests to measure extremist behavior. Behavioral measures were designed based on qualitative interviews with local NGO workers and youth. For ethical and safety reasons, the focus was on devising tasks seeking to elicit non-extremist behavior but in a manner such that refusal to do so could reasonably be interpreted as consistent with extremist behavior. In the first task, subjects were presented with a Hindi-language paper petition that stated “I condemn those who create violence between Sunni and Shia Muslims in Lucknow.” Subjects were asked to sign the petition if they agreed with its contents and not sign if they disagreed. In the second task, enumerators asked if the subject would be willing to purchase a wristband stating “Sunni-Shia Unity” in the Urdu-language for 5 Indian rupees and wear it. Subjects were told that proceeds would go to a local

¹²The full descriptions were: 1 (“I strongly oppose this action”); 2 (“I oppose this action, but only a little bit.”); 3 (“I oppose this action.”); 4 (“Neutral”); 5 (“I support this action, but only a little bit.”); 6 (“I support this action.”); and 7 (“I strongly support this action”).

inter-group peace group. Wristbands were sold at this nominal fee in order to offer a costly measure of opposition to extremism. Local NGO officers suggested that the low fee made it unlikely that it would not be purchased due to financial constraints but rather due to a refusal to endorse the wristband's anti-extremism sentiment. Enumerators recorded whether or not subjects bought and put on the wristband. In the final task, subjects were asked whether or not they would be willing to provide an in-group friend's phone number to receive an SMS invite to a future pro-peace meeting. This measure, too, was measured as a binary variable. As with the attitudinal questions, responses to these three questions were averaged and then standardized into a *Extremist Behavior Index*. Higher values thus indicated higher extremism.

A final comment relates to whether these measures constitute allow for an appropriate test of extremist behavior. The literature mostly focuses on terrorist violence, but also takes a view in which extremist behaviors are more generally defined as those that "increasingly justify intergroup violence and demand sacrifice in defense of the ingroup" (McCauley and Moskaleiko 2011). As mentioned above, consultation with local experts and local youth support the view that refusing to engage in one of the above actions, particularly in semi-public interview settings, is indicative of publicly behaving in a manner opposed to inter-group peace. Moreover, the fact that the tasks were voluntary means that the measures capture the type of extremist behavior discussed in settings where individuals have agency, and not in settings where such behavior is forced or achieved via conscription.

Empirical Strategy

To test the study's hypotheses, the *Extremist Attitudes Index* and *Extremist Behavior Index* are regressed on the operationalization of the ten hypotheses, which are discussed below. The sample is split into Sunni and Shia and a third column estimates effects for the pooled sample. For ease of interpretation, the attitudinal and behavioral indexes are each standardized.

3.6 Results

Consistency Between Attitudes-Behavior

The first hypothesis suggests that extremist attitudes give rise to extremist behavior and thus the former predicts and leads to the latter. To test this hypothesis, Model 1 regresses the *Extremist Behavior Index* on the *Extremist Attitudes Index* and enumerator fixed effects. To probe the sensitivity of the results, Models 2 adds the full set of covariates as additional regressors and Models 3 and 4 include two different subsets of the covariates. All models are estimated using Ordinary

Least Squares (OLS) regression.

Table 3.1: Extremist Attitudes and Extremist Behavior

	<i>DV: Extremist Behavior Index (standardized)</i>			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Extremist Attitudes Index</i>	0.284*** (0.051)	0.212*** (0.060)	0.240*** (0.056)	0.247*** (0.057)
All Covariates?	<i>N</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>
Some Covariates?	<i>N</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>Y</i>
Enum FE?	<i>Y</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>Y</i>
Constant	-0.073 (0.084)	0.159 (0.389)	0.139 (0.343)	0.214 (0.345)
Observations	409	381	405	391
Adjusted R ²	0.066	0.069	0.055	0.073

Note:

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

The results show that extremist attitudes are significantly correlated with extremist behavior with $p < 0.001$. The significance of relationship between the two variables obtains in the absence of the inclusion of covariates (Model 1). It remains regardless of whether the full set of covariates are included as regressors (Model 2) or when one of two distinct sub-groups of covariates are included (Models 3 and 4).

Comparing the Predictors of Extremist Attitudes and Extremist Behavior

Having established the relationship between extremist attitudes and behavior, this section analyzes the extent to which both variables are associated with the same factors. Table 3.2 presents the correlates of extremist attitudes and behaviors for the pooled sample. Table 3.3 investigates if the correlates vary by subgroup (i.e., Sunni and Shia).

A separate analysis is undertaken to compare if a family of variables more strongly affects *Extremist Attitudes Index* or *Extremist Behavior Index*. Table 3.4 reports the results of *F*-tests that provide the ratio of the variances of the attitudes model to variance of the the behavior model when both models include standard controls and a particular family of independent variables. In this study, there are four such families of variables: [1] grievance-related factors (economic and political marginalization); [2] religion-related factors (prayer attendance, participation in contentious rituals, years of religious education, and sectarian identification); [3] social-network variables (the

number of outgroup friends and number of violent in-group peers); and [4] psychological variables (negative life events and troubled social relations). To perform the F -test, the sample was restricted to only those subjects who reported both attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. Table 3.4 also reports the degrees of freedom in the models and the p -value of the F -statistic. In this study, an F -statistic is less than 1 that reaches statistical significance indicates that the variance of the attitudes model—when including a particular family of variables— is significantly lower than the variance of the behavior model that includes that same family of independent variables.

Grievance-Related Explanations

Economic Marginalization. The second hypothesis expects a positive effect of economic marginalization on extremist attitudes and behavior. The results in Table 3.2 show some support for this hypothesis. For the pooled sample, an increase of one point in the 5-point economic marginalization variable significantly increases the *Extremist Attitudes Index* by 0.077 standard deviations ($p < 0.01$) but does not significantly increase the *Extremist Behavior Index*. Furthermore, the effect of economic marginalization does not vary across sect (Table 3.3).

Table 3.2: Correlates of Extremist Attitudes and Behavior: Pooled Sample

	Attitudes (1)	Behaviors (2)
Grievance-Related		
Economic Marginalization	0.077*** (0.026)	0.042 (0.031)
Political Marginalization	0.074*** (0.024)	0.042 (0.030)
Religious Identity-Related		
Prayer Attendance	-0.034*** (0.007)	-0.026*** (0.008)
Contentious Religious Rituals	-0.0003 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.002)
Yrs. Religious Education	-0.020 (0.016)	-0.021 (0.021)
Sectarian Identification	0.121 (0.115)	-0.005 (0.148)
Social Network-Related		
Number of Outgroup Friends	-0.018*** (0.006)	0.009 (0.007)
Number of Violent Peers	-0.008 (0.007)	0.003 (0.009)
Psychology-Related		
Negative Life Events	0.003 (0.017)	-0.0001 (0.021)
Troubled Social Relations	0.238*** (0.058)	0.143** (0.070)
Constant	-0.035 (0.285)	0.093 (0.350)
Observations	410	385
Adjusted R ²	0.334	0.036
F Stat.	11.248***	1.722**

Note 1:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note 2:

The *Extremist Attitudes Index* and *Extremist Behavior Index* are each standardized.

Note 3:

All models contain enumerator fixed effects.

Table 3.3: Correlates of Extremist Attitudes and Behavior by Sect

	Attitudes (1)	Behavior (2)
Grievance-Related		
Econ. Marg. \times <i>SHIA</i>	-0.059 (0.056)	0.021 (0.073)
Pol. Marg. \times <i>SHIA</i>	0.065 (0.047)	-0.061 (0.063)
Religious Identity-Related		
Prayer Attend. \times <i>SHIA</i>	-0.017 (0.015)	0.025 (0.020)
Cont. Rel. Rituals \times <i>SHIA</i>	-0.067*** (0.015)	-0.046** (0.019)
Yrs. Rel. Educ. \times <i>SHIA</i>	-0.005 (0.032)	0.135*** (0.043)
Sect. Iden. \times <i>SHIA</i>	0.478* (0.248)	0.501 (0.321)
Social Network-Related		
Num. Outgroup Friends \times <i>SHIA</i>	0.040 (0.027)	-0.001 (0.034)
Num. Viol. Peers \times <i>SHIA</i>	0.049 (0.031)	0.081** (0.039)
Psychology-Related		
Neg. Life Events \times <i>SHIA</i>	-0.002 (0.034)	0.044 (0.045)
Troub. Soc. Rel. \times <i>SHIA</i>	0.118 (0.208)	0.418 (0.264)
Constant	-0.165 (0.299)	0.056 (0.388)
Observations	410	385
Adjusted R ²	0.408	0.070
F Stat.	8.623***	1.781***

Note 1:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note 2:

The *Extremist Attitudes Index* and *Extremist Behavior Index* are each standardized.

Note 3:

All models include enumerator fixed effects.

Note 4:

All models include all covariates not interacted with *SHIA* as regressors.

Table 3.4: Comparing the Effect of Each Family of Variables on Extremist Attitudes and Behavior

	<i>F</i> -stat	DF	<i>p</i> -value
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Grievance-Related	0.816	368	0.051
Religious Identity-Related	0.875	366	0.202
Social Network-Related	0.838	368	0.092
Psychology-Related	0.832	368	0.079

Political Marginalization. The third hypothesis anticipated a direct relationship between political marginalization and extremist attitudes or behavior. For the pooled sample, the results show that political marginalization exerts a statistically significant effect ($p < 0.001$) on extremist attitudes but not extremist behavior. A one-point increase in political marginalization increases the *Extremist Attitudes Index* by 0.074 standard deviations. Table 3.3 shows that political marginalization does not work in a statistically distinguishable manner for the Sunni and Shia subsamples.

Finally, Table 3.4 offers insights on whether the family of grievance-related variables is a significantly stronger predictor of extremist attitudes or behaviors. An *F*-test reports the ratio of the variances of the regression models in which either attitudes or behaviors are the dependent variables, and the independent variables include standard controls and only the two grievance-related variables. The result shows that grievance-related variables are significantly stronger predictors of extremist attitudes as opposed to behaviors. The *p*-value of the *F*-statistic is 0.051, which nearly reaches conventional significance levels.

Religious Identity-Related Explanations

The next set of explanations focus on the four religious-identity related factors suggested to cause extremism.

Prayer Attendance. The fourth hypothesis expected a positive effect of attending more prayers at local mosques on extremism. Interestingly, the results show that the opposite pattern holds: higher prayer attendance is significantly correlated with lower levels of attitudinal and behavioral extremism. Regarding the *Extremist Attitudes Index*, attending one additional weekly prayer at a local mosque reduces the index by 0.034 standard deviations for the pooled sample ($p < 0.01$). Regarding the *Extremist Behavior Index*, attending one additional weekly prayer at a local mosque reduces the index by 0.026 standard deviations for the pooled sample ($p < 0.01$). The results in

Table 3.3 show that prayer attendance does not affect extremist attitudes or behaviors differently for Shia as opposed to Sunni subjects. Consequently, the results provide evidence that higher prayer attendance is a common factor that significantly affects and reduces attitudinal and behavioral extremism.

Contentious Religious Rituals. The fifth hypothesis is that higher participation rates in contentious religious rituals will increase extremism. The variable *Contentious Ritual Participation* was operationalized by asking subjects to state the approximate number of times that they had participated in either a *madhe-sahaba* ritual (for Sunni subjects) or Muharram *tabarra* (for Shia subjects) throughout the course of their life.

Table 3.2 shows that higher ritual participation was not associated with higher extremist attitudes or behaviors for the pooled sample. A different pattern emerges in Table 3.3, which shows that participation in contentious religious rituals works differently across sects. Higher participation in such rituals reduced the *Extremist Attitudes Index* for Shia subjects by 0.067 standard deviations ($p < 0.01$) as compared to Sunni subjects. Furthermore, higher ritual participation reduced the *Extremist Behavior Index* for Shia subjects by 0.046 standard deviations ($p < 0.05$) as compared to Sunni subjects.

Years of Religious Education. Hypothesis six states that additional years of religious education will increase extremism. This variable was measured by asking subjects to state the number of years to date that they had attended religious lessons at a religious school. Table 3.2 shows that we do not fail to reject the null hypothesis of no effect of religious education on extremism, that is to say, we do not find evidence for hypothesis six for the pooled sample. Further insight is provided by Table 3.3, which shows that more religious education is associated with more extremist behaviors for Shia but not Sunni subjects. An additional year of religious education increases the likelihood of engaging in extremist behaviors by 0.135 standard deviations for Shia as compared to Sunni subjects.

Sectarian Identification. The seventh hypothesis expected a positive, extremism-inducing effect of rating one's sectarian identity as the most important over four salient alternative identity categories. As noted by Ysseldyk, Matheson and Anisman (2010, 66), a careful measurement approach of religious (or here, sectarian) identification should take into account that "any number of social groups may shape the self-concept." Sectarian identification was measured as 1 if the subject most identified with his sectarian group over a list of salient alternative identity categories. Based on qualitative work in the local setting, subjects were asked to choose the identity group that best-described them: their sect (Sunni or Shia); Muslim (religious group); a citizen of India (nationality); youth group (age group); and working-class member (economic class identity).

Table 3.2 shows that sectarian identification did not significantly increase the *Extremist Attitudes Index* or the *Extremist Behavior Index* for the pooled sample. Table 3.3 shows that sectarian

identification affected extremist attitudes in a manner that differed across the two sects, but that this difference was statistically fragile ($\hat{\beta} = 0.478, p < 0.10$).

The results from Table 3.4 show that the family of religion-related variables are not significantly stronger correlates of extremist attitudes as opposed to behaviors. Although the variance of the attitudes model is lower than that of the behavior model, the difference is not statistically significant ($p = 0.202$).

Social Network Explanations

This section discusses the two network-related factors believed to cause extremism.

Outgroup Friends. The eighth hypothesis expects a negative, extremism-reducing effect of having more outgroup friends. Outgroup contact was operationalized by asking subjects to state the approximate number of outgroup members that they considered as friends. The decision to measure outgroup friends rather than the frequency of outgroup contact was made on the basis of the local context, where simple outgroup contact may be frequent but not necessarily indicative of the type of sustained outgroup contact referenced in the intergroup contact hypothesis.

The results offer some support for this hypothesis. Table 3.2 shows that having more outgroup friends significantly reduces extremist attitudes by 0.018 standard deviations ($p < 0.01$). By contrast, there is not a strong relationship between this variable and extremist behaviors. Table 3.3 shows that *Outgroup Friends* does not work differently among Sunni and Shia subjects.

Violent Peers. Hypothesis nine states that higher numbers of violent in-group peers will increase a subject's own level of extremism. *Violent Peers* was measured by asking subjects to approximate the number—without stating the names—of their in-group peers who had previously participated in Sunni-Shia violence.¹³

Table 3.2 shows that having additional numbers of violent, in-group peers is not associated with higher extremist attitudes or behaviors for the pooled sample. However, Table 3.3 reveals that the variable yields a differential effect by sect. An additional violent, in-group peer increases the *Extremist Behaviors Index* by 0.081 standard deviations ($p < 0.05$) for Shia as opposed to Sunni subjects.

Lastly, the results in Table 3.4 show that the family of social network variables is a slightly stronger predictor of extremist attitudes than behaviors. The p -value on the F -statistic is 0.092. While this does not reach conventional levels of significance ($p < 0.05$), it is suggestive evidence that this particular family of variables appears to be more important for understanding variation in

¹³Admittedly, this approach is limited in its reliance on self-reported data on violent peers.

extremist attitudes than behaviors.

Psychological Explanations

The final section of hypotheses considers two psychological factors believed to affect extremism.

Negative Life Events. Hypothesis ten expected that extremism is increasing in the number of negative life events experienced by the subject. The variable *Negative Life Events* was operationalized by asking subjects to state how many of the following events they had experienced in the past year: [1] losing a job; [2] being arrested; [3] stopped speaking with their parents; [4] the person they loved stopped speaking with them; [5] a close friend left their town; or [6] the death of a close family member or friend. Although these experiences do not exhaust the full set of possible negative catalyst events, qualitative research in the Old City suggested that they account for a relatively broad range of realistic negative events encountered by local youth.

The analysis finds no evidence for this hypothesis. For the pooled samples and Sunni and Shia subsamples, higher levels of negative catalyst events had no significant effect on either extremist attitudes or behavior.

Troubled Social Relations. The final hypothesis expected a positive effect of troubled social relations on extremism. *Troubled Social Relations* was measured by asking subjects the extent to which they were pleased with the level of respect that they received from friends and family. The variable was scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1: "very pleased"; 5: "very displeased").

Table 3.2 demonstrates support for this hypothesis. An increase in one point in the 5-point *Troubled Social Relations* scale is associated with an increase of 0.238 standard deviations ($p < 0.05$) in the *Extremist Attitudes Index* and 0.143 standard deviations ($p < 0.05$) in the *Extremist Behaviors Index*. An analysis of the effect across sects in Table 3.3 shows that the effect of troubled social relations did not work differently across the Sunni and Shia samples.

Table 3.4 shows that the family of psychological variables is a slightly stronger predictor of extremist attitudes than behaviors ($p = 0.079$). As in the case of the social network family of variables, the F -statistic suggests that the psychological variable family is a stronger predictor of extremist attitudes than behaviors.

3.7 Discussion and Conclusion

Using micro-level survey data from northern India, this chapter provides a rare empirical investigation of the factors associated with extremist attitudes and behaviors. It provides some of the first evidence from a conflict environment showing that extremist attitudes predict extremist behaviors, but that they are not as strongly linked as might have been expected (Neumann 2013). The

results do, however, highlight the importance of two factors—lower attendance at religious prayer services and higher levels of troubled social relations—in increasing both extremist attitudes and behaviors. Second, the study argues that economic and political grievances are stronger predictors of extremist attitudes and behaviors, an important distinction that breaks with prominent arguments in the conflict literature. Third, the study distills the religion-related variables—namely, prayer attendance—that are significant predictors of extremism as compared to other types of religiosity, such as religious education, sectarian identification, or participation in contentious religious rituals.

First, the results offer important insights for the role of grievances in shaping conflict-related attitudes and behaviors. In particular, the results challenge the formal model of conflict in Esteban and Ray (2011), which argues that economic marginalization should explain conflict behaviors but not attitudinal or ideological support for violence. The results in the present study show that the opposite is true: economic grievances significantly increase extremist attitudes but do not affect extremist behaviors, and the pattern works similarly for Sunni and Shia subjects. This point is further bolstered by the additional analyses (Table 3.4) showing that family of grievance-related variables is a statistically stronger predictor of extremist attitudes as opposed to behaviors. Furthermore, the findings show that extremist behaviors are predicted by extremist attitudes, which also goes against the theoretical predictions in Esteban and Ray (2011). According to that model, extremist behaviors should not be correlated with extremist attitudes, but should rather be correlated with the interaction of extremist attitudes—a proxy for ideology in their model—and economic marginalization—a proxy for poverty in their model.

What do the patterns relating to grievances mean for the broader literature on extremism and radicalization? First, the finding that economic marginalization significantly predicts extremist attitudes breaks with other research finding no such relationship in Pakistan (Blair and Shapiro 2013), Nigeria (Jo 2012), and the Levantine region (Chiozza 2009). Even still, the patterns in Lucknow should not be understood as an anomaly. Indeed, Mousseau (2011) finds evidence linking urban poverty to extremist attitudes in a survey of fourteen Muslim-majority countries, which is the same relationship detected here.

Second, the study argues that political marginalization matters for understanding extremist attitudes but not extremist behaviors. This result adds new micro-level evidence that complements similar findings from quantitative studies at the village-level (Pargeter 2009) and qualitative accounts at the tribe-level (Hegghammer 2006). In doing so, it breaks with recent observational research in Kenya. In their study, Rink and Sharma (2016) find no evidence that political marginalization explains extremist attitudes among Christian and Muslim youth in Nairobi's Eastleigh district. One way to reconcile these findings relates to differences in the local study contexts: there may be more variation in political marginalization among the Sunni and Shia youth of Lucknow's Old City as compared to the corresponding levels among Christian and Muslim youth in Eastleigh,

which is notorious for poor governance and political exclusion.

The question of how to reconcile different empirical findings on grievances and extremist attitudes is a fruitful one for future research. Scholars may consider using research designs that include actual participation in violence in addition to attitudinal support for violence in order to more specifically test the propositions in Esteban and Ray (2011). Survey-based studies can also employ a richer set of measures of economic marginalization in order to unpack which particular types may be more associated with extremism. By conducting further studies in environments that vary in the intensity of conflict, scholars can help build theory on the conditions under which economic marginalization—or grievances in general—be a stronger predictor of extremist attitudes or behaviors.

Third, the study offers important insights as to which elements of religion—if any—matter for understanding extremist attitudes and behaviors. A clear pattern to emerge is that higher prayer attendance is a strong predictor of lower levels of extremist attitudes and behaviors. This finding challenges other studies that either find the opposite pattern—such as Ginges, Hansen and Norenzayan (2009) in the Palestinian and Indonesian contexts—or that find that no association exists between prayer and extremism (Fair, Malhotra and Shapiro 2012; Tessler and Nachtwey 1998). The strength of this effect is particularly notable since the regressors in the model include a wide range of other independent variables believed to shape extremism, which is rare in the literature.¹⁴

The finding on prayer attendance differs sharply with the lack of significant effects of the three other religion-related variables examined here. For the pooled sample, neither contentious ritual participation, years of religious education, nor identifying primarily with one's religious sect is a significant predictor of extremist attitudes or behavior. These results challenge, respectively, studies arguing that contentious rituals increase extremism (Brass 1997*b*; Jaffrelot 2009), accounts suggesting that religious education drives violent attitudes and behaviors (Gall 2016), and social psychology research showing that ethnic identification increases hostility toward the outgroup (Smith, Seger and Mackie 2007; Pennekamp et al. 2007; Stephan et al. 2002).

Regarding ritual participation, the results by sect show a more nuanced picture at work. For Shia subjects, higher participation in contentious rituals significantly reduces extremist attitudes and behaviors. Why might this be the case? One answer might be the different contextual meaning of participation in a Shia contentious ritual as compared to a Sunni one. As explained in the theoretical framework section, my field research emphasized that many Shia perceive participation in the *tabarra* ritual—the one coded here as a type of contentious ritual—as defensive in nature. This

¹⁴One possible exception is Fair, Malhotra and Shapiro (2012), which examines the effect of prayer attendance and religious doctrine but not religious identification or ritual participation.

stands in contrast to the offense-oriented meaning that many of my Sunni interlocutors attached to the ritual they were asked about in the survey. Future research can play an important role in testing the proposition that individual perceptions of rituals as either offensive or defensive may matter for understanding the effect of participation in the ritual on extremism.

A fourth lesson to emerge relates to the role of social networks in shaping extremism. It shows that having more outgroup friends significantly reduces extremist attitudes, but not behaviors, for the pooled sample. In doing so, it offers evidence from a conflict environment that joins similar findings regarding the prejudice-reducing effects of intergroup contact (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). The finding that more outgroup friends significantly reduces extremism buttresses a line of social psychology research that promotes exposure to ingroup members who have outgroup friends as a means to attenuate outgroup hostility Turner et al. (2008); Wright et al. (1997).

Separately, the study adds a caveat to a prominent argument in the literature on radicalization: that having more connections to extremists increases one's own likelihood of engaging in extremist behaviors (Scacco 2010; Della Porta 2006; Sageman 2004). For the pooled sample, this study finds that there is no significant relationship between having additional violent in-group peers and expressing extremist behaviors or attitudes. Yet the results do show that the expected relationship does obtain for the Shia sample, where additional violent peers increased the likelihood of engaging in extremist behaviors. The current research design does not permit a deeper analysis as to why this relationship may hold for the Shia but not the Sunni sample. One plausible explanation might relate to the Shia perception of their group as a victimized group, which may exacerbate exposure to violent in-group peers who are bent on reversing the group's perceived 'second-class' status. To investigate this possibility and others, scholars should conduct broader quantitative studies coupled with in-depth interviews to probe how violent in-group peers may exert different effects in different groups.

Finally, the chapter underscores the importance of psychological variables, particularly troubled social relations, in increasing extremist attitudes and behavior. This result mirrors a similar pattern among Kenyan Christian and Muslim young adult men and women (Rink and Sharma 2016) as well as anecdotal and qualitative insights from other settings (Borum 2004; Merari et al. 2009). The importance of troubled social relations is particularly notable as it also appears to explain variation in extremist behavior. In addition, the study departs from other research (Al-Lami 2009; Kushner 1996) in its finding that experiencing more negative catalyst events does not affect extremist attitudes or behavior. Although negative catalyst events were salient in the sample, it may be the case that such events only cause extremism in active war zones like Chechnya and Iraq, the respective studies sites of studies that find evidence for that variable Al-Lami (2009); Speckhard (2008).

Taken together, the study gives rise to a unified model of extremism in which there is a strong

correlation between extremist attitudes and behavior. The model is “unified” in a particular sense: among the four families of hypotheses examined here, three families do not perform significantly better in predicting extremist attitudes or behaviors. Grievance-related variables are the exception (see Table 3.4), and explain variation in extremist attitudes more effectively than variation in extremist behaviors. The second manner in which the results support a “unified model” of extremism is that only two of the ten variables examined are significant predicts of both extremist attitudes and behaviors. These two variables—prayer attendance and troubled social relations—suggest that that a combination of religion-related and psychology-related factors may be a common basis for the linkage between extremist attitudes and behaviors.

What does this mean more broadly for the conflict and radicalization literatures? The primary implication is a challenge to studies that suggest little linkage between extremist attitudes and behaviors (Esteban and Ray 2011; Horgan 2011; Borum 2011). The results here present micro-level empirical evidence that helps to buttress a different theoretical approach articulated in Neumann (2013), which qualitatively argues that extremist attitudes and behavior are interrelated. In doing so, the study helps advance a research agenda on the relationship between extremist attitudes and behaviors that expands upon existing work that focuses on either extremist behaviors (Altier, Thoroughgood and Horgan 2014; Sageman 2004; Crenshaw 1981) or attitudes (Rink and Sharma 2016; Blair and Shapiro 2013; Ginges, Hansen and Norenzayan 2009).

A final comment relates to the generalizability of the findings here to other cases. Although this study discussed the Lucknow case in relation to other studies in the developing world, it is also important to consider what the findings here might mean for patterns of extremism in the developed world. Perhaps one of the most prominent arguments in the developed world context is that religious minorities in secularizing countries experience an internal conflict of ‘dual identities’ that leads to social exclusion and in turn, extremism (Roy 2006). In this account, beliefs and practices related to religion *per se* are not the driving motivation for extremism, but instead become the external expression of a process motivated by social exclusion. A similar narrative is prevalent in journalistic accounts emphasizing a link between social marginalization and extremism among young Muslims in the West (Benali 2015).

What might the present research say about this pattern? One possibility for further inquiry might begin with the observation that this study finds that lower prayer attendance and higher troubled social relations are the only two variables that predict both extremist attitudes and behaviors. It could be the case that individuals who attend prayers less frequently and report higher levels of troubled social relations because they have experienced social exclusion. In this account, lower prayer attendance might be correlated with a type of social exclusion and thus not affect extremism through a channel related to religion. Future research can play an important role in dissecting whether prayer attendance shapes extremist attitudes and behaviors more strongly through

a mechanism of social interaction and positive friendships or rather by exposure to pro-peace religious norms in sermons. Such research can help investigate whether patterns of extremism are more or less similar in developing and developed countries.

3.8 Appendix

Seemingly Unrelated Regression of Extremist Attitudes and Behaviors Models

This table reports the point estimates from a Seemingly Unrelated Regression (SUR) of the model for each of the two dependent variables in which the independent variables are not interacted with *SHIA*. The third column reports the results of *t*-tests of the point estimates for each model to test the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the point estimate of each model for a particular independent variable.

Table 3.5: Seemingly Unrelated Regression (SUR) of Both Models and Test of Difference Across Estimates: Covariates Not Interacted with Sect

	Model 1 (<i>DV</i> ₁ : Attitudes)	Model 2 (<i>DV</i> ₂ : Behavior)	Difference (<i>t</i> -test)
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Econ. Marg.	0.091*** (0.026)	0.041 (0.030)	0.049 (0.037)
Pol. Marg.	0.075*** (0.024)	0.042 (0.030)	0.033 (0.035)
Prayer Attend.	-0.029*** (0.007)	-0.025*** (0.008)	-0.003 (0.010)
Cont. Rel. Rituals	0.000 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)
Yrs. Rel. Educ.	-0.019 (0.016)	-0.020 (0.021)	0.001 (0.024)
Sect. Iden.	0.117 (0.118)	-0.009 (0.148)	0.126 (0.174)
Num. Outgroup Friends	-0.021*** (0.006)	0.007 (0.007)	-0.028*** (0.009)
Num. Viol. Peers	-0.008 (0.007)	0.002 (0.008)	0.010 (0.023)
Neg Life Events	0.003 (0.017)	-0.004 (0.021)	-0.011 (0.010)
Troub. Soc. Rel.	0.283*** (0.058)	0.144** (0.068)	0.139* (0.082)
Constant	-0.506 (0.321)	0.177 (0.387)	
Observations	410	385	
Adj R-sq	0.311	0.036	

Note: Column 3 follows Model 1 - Model 2.

*How Pro-Peace Elite Messaging and Bottom-Up Counterarguments
Affect Extremism: Experimental Evidence from India*

4.1 Introduction

To what extent can a pro-peace message from an in-group elite reduce religious extremist attitudes and behavior? Does religious persuasion differ in its effectiveness from economic persuasion? And if elite persuasion reduces extremism, can it sustain in the face of a counterargument to the peace message?

This chapter investigates these questions using an audio recording experiment in the context of religious extremism among Sunni and Shia Muslims in northern India. The study was conducted in Lucknow, a city of four million people that is the capital of Uttar Pradesh, India's largest state, and arguably the country's second most important political center after New Delhi. In Lucknow, the Sunni-Shia conflict constitutes the city's primary ethno-political conflict, a characteristic that stands in contrast to the prevalence of Hindu-Muslim violence in other Indian cities.

The scholarly motivation for the examination of elite persuasion comes from the ethnic conflict literature, where elites play a prominent role in inciting or preventing ethnic extremism. Constructivist theories of ethnic conflict rest on the assumption that elites can successfully persuade their followers to adopt extremist attitudes and behavior toward an outgroup (Fearon and Laitin 2000, 855). Scholarly accounts claim that elites use persuasion to cause extremism and violence across several conflict types, from Sinhalese-Tamil conflict in Sri Lanka (Tambiah 1992) and Hindu-Muslim riots in India (Wilkinson 2006) to civil war in Balkans (Woodward 1995). Elite persuasion is described as a necessary and preliminary step to facilitate the propagation of extremist attitudes and behavior.

Yet little is known about whether elite persuasion actually shifts followers attitudes and behaviors toward—or away from—extremism. This research gap stands in contrast to the extensive literature on persuasion in American politics, where studies have focused on policy contexts unre-

lated to violence.¹ For scholars of ethnic conflict and the study of religious extremism, the claim that elite persuasion is effective among followers bears scientific and practical importance.

The present study examines elite persuasion in the context of religious extremism using an audio recording experiment embedded in a survey. Religious extremism is defined as the extent of attitudinal or behavioral opposition to peaceful relations with members of another religious group.²

Based on five months of field research by the author persuasion and religious extremism in Lucknow, an experiment was designed to mimic in reverse the process by which elites radicalize non-elites. The manipulations test two types of elite persuasive appeals: an in-group religious elite detailing religious norms that prohibit extremism and an in-group economic elite presenting material considerations that undermine extremism. Original audio content was recorded with real, local religious and economic elites that was similar in content and duration for both Sunni and Shia subjects. Local actors recorded counterarguments to the peace message that provocatively emphasized sectarian differences.

To examine persuasion among the population of interest, the experiment was conducted in Lucknow's Old City, where most of the city's sectarian violence occurs. Enumerators randomly sampled 480 Sunni and Shia subjects on small side streets and shops and delivered the intervention via headphones, with audio content pre-loaded on their cell phones. Subjects were randomly assigned to listen to at most one pro-peace message and one counterargument. Causal effects were estimated on an index of religious extremism that contained both attitudinal and behavioral measures.

The findings contributes to political science research in three ways. First, in examining the cause-and-effect relationship of elite persuasion on attitudes and behavior regarding religious extremism, the study directly assesses to the plausibility of "top-down" models of persuasion to violence that are quite prominent in the literature (Brass 1991; Kaufman 2001; Fearon and Laitin 2000). It also unpacks the difference between two prominent types of persuasion in the literature: elite persuasion by an in-group religious elite emphasizing religious norms discouraging violence or by an in-group economic elite emphasizing material considerations discouraging violence. In doing so, it seeks to advance the study of the conditions under which followers 'follow', an important but understudied question (Fearon and Laitin 2000, 853-4).

¹For example, existing studies focus on U.S. domestic policy issues such as government spending (Sniderman and Theriault 2004), U.S. prison reform (Lupia and McCubbins 1998), campaign finance reform (Druckman and Nelson 2003; Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock 1991), and women's rights (Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach and Grube 1984).

²My definition follows prominent approaches in political science, most notably Gurr (1990). Moreover, the definition is similar to other prominent conceptualizations, including by the U.S. military, (Crossett and Spitaletta 2010, 3) and psychologists (McCauley and Moskalenko 2008, 415).

Second, the study helps fill an important research gap regarding the role of religion in shaping extremism. An emerging literature on Middle East politics has examined the effect of religious primes and light frames on reducing discrimination (Masoud, Jamal and Nugent 2016; Lazarev and Sharma 2015). Yet to date, political scientists have not investigated whether religious (here: Islamic) norms, sometimes blamed as a cause of religious extremism, can be used to reduce extremist attitudes and behavior. The present study helps to fill this gap. By exposing subjects to 5 or 8 minute-long audio messages, the experiment goes beyond lighter priming interventions prominent in the persuasion literature to examine elite persuasion and counter-messaging. In finding that the difference in effects between sects of religious persuasion is significant, the study suggests conditions under which “hardened” ethnic identities (Kaufmann 1996) can be softened. It thus offers some of the first causal evidence on reducing violent extremism (Atran 2010; Fink, Romaniuk and Barakat 2013).

A third contribution is to analyze the relative strength of elite persuasion. Existing studies on ethnic conflict have not considered how counterarguments by other political actors may alter the effect of elite persuasion. This study analyzes if “top-down” pro-peace persuasion can sustain in the face of “bottom-up” persuasion in the form of a counterargument to the peace message. By exposing subjects to pro-peace elite persuasion as well as providing a counterargument, the design approximates a situation of competing frames (Druckman 2004). It shows that the effects of pro-peace persuasion by an in-group elite are eliminated by exposure to a counterargument message from an in-group youth. The finding challenges constructivist models of ethnic violence (Wilkinson 2006; Brass 1997a), suggesting that elite persuasion is more sensitive than previously understood.

The chapter proceeds as follows. Section 2 examines elite persuasion in the ethnic conflict literature. The following section introduces the case of Lucknow and includes insights from qualitative field research on elite persuasion in Lucknow. Section 4 explains the experimental design and experimental ethics. The fifth section presents the main experimental results. Section 6 presents an explanation of the core result—differential effects of religious persuasion between sects—and offers supporting qualitative evidence. Section 7 concludes.

4.2 Persuasion: Theoretical Motivation

In the second chapter of *The Deadly Ethnic Riot*, Donald Horowitz argues that constructivist accounts might overstate elite influence over interethnic sentiments ?, Horowitz (2001) argues that the “emotive power” of ethnic identity may constrain elites from shaping extremism among followers. The determinants of variation in “antipathies” and “affinities” among ethnic followers, he concludes, remains an open question (Horowitz 2001, 52). Motivated by this puzzle, this section

draws on theoretical insights to illustrate how elites attempt to persuade their followers with regard to violence toward the outgroup. This section outlines the conceptual motivation for examining two types of elite persuasion that are particularly prominent in the ethnic conflict literature³

Persuasion by Religious Norms

This section argues that elite persuasion by norms plays a central role in constructivist models of ethnic violence. There are two types of social norms (Paluck et al. 2010). A prescriptive social norm identifies the desired attitudes and behaviors that group members ought to display. A descriptive social norm identifies the status quo attitudes and behavior of ingroup members. Here, the primary focus is on elites' use of prescriptive religious norms to signal desired attitudes and behavior toward the outgroup. Norms are described as "religious" because they are justified on the basis of explicit references to religious beliefs or practices and are propagated by members of the clergy.

Political scientists have largely studied norms in the international relations context. As Fearon (1999) explain, norms matter in the international arena because of the moral character that they take on, with norm compliance generating praise and norm violation generating some type of sanction. In his reading, a social norm requires that "a shared moral assessment is attached to its observance or non-observance" Fearon (1999, 27). In their prominent study of norm propagation on by state actors, Finnemore and Sikkink (1998, 895-6) outline a "life cycle" of norms that takes place in three stages: norm emergence; norm cascade; and internalization, when norms acquire a taken-for-granted standing in a social system. The authors describe norm emergence as the process by "norm entrepreneurs" seek to convince "norm leaders"—nation-states, in their case—to accept new norms. In the norm cascade stage that follows, norm leaders "attempt to socialize other states to become norm followers" (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 895). Within states, norm cascades strongly resemble the manner in which ethnic elites seek to persuade in-group members to adopt particular attitudes and behavior regarding extremism toward the outgroup. Political scientists studying conflict have explicitly or implicitly argued that notions of duty account drive compliance with elite normative appeals, echoing the line of reasoning in Finnemore and Sikkink (1998, 912-3) regarding state compliance with norms.

Writing on Hindu-Muslim conflict in India, Brass (1997*b*, 25-6) highlighted persuasion as one of two ways in which Hindu elites cause in-group members to "believe that their problems are due to "the other" and will be solved by the other's humiliation, repression or elimination".

³This study is focuses on real-world persuasion where there is often a symmetry between the speaker's perceived expertise and the content of the persuasive message. It is not concerned with speaker-versus-content issues.

Hindu elites propagated religious norms prescribing compliance with an exclusivist Hindu-first society “in which all must take part if they want to be true citizens”(Brass 1997b, 283). Wilkinson (2006, 23-4) argued that Hindu elites emphasized “ethnic wedge issues” to push co-ethnics toward extremism, often using religious “symbols and speech” in events to provoke a sense of threat from Muslims. A detailed case study of one such attempt by Hindu elites is provided by ?, 6-13, who showed how the nation-wide *Ekmata Yatra* procession in 1990 sought to shift religious norms toward extremism using symbols with “strong emotional potential”. Such messaging, in that account, led to raids and the ultimate demolition by Hindu youth of the famous Babri Mosque in Uttar Pradesh.

Normative persuasion in conflict extends beyond South Asia. In reference to the Yugoslav civil war, Kaufman (2001) demonstrates how ethnic elites fueled ethnic violence by propagating extremist norms. Kaufman (2001, 199-200) explains how Slobodan Milosevic employed communication using symbols like martyrdom and betrayal to socialize Serbs into extremist norms that included punishment of Albanian. Separately, focusing on Christian-Muslim conflict in northern Nigeria, Hackett (2011, 128) explains how clerics use radio messaging as a means of encouraging or discouraging in-group members to adopt extremism toward the other.

Persuasion by Material Considerations

A primary feature embedded in several accounts of ethnic violence is that the decision to support or participate in violence has an economic component. In particular, scholars have documented cases in which individuals are driven to violence either by a desire to receive economic gains or to systematically exclude others from enjoying such gains. Importantly, such logic represents an important departure from accounts examining the relationship between poverty *per se* and political violence (Scacco 2010; Krueger and Malečková 2003; Blair and Shapiro 2013; Mousseau 2011; Fair and Shepherd 2006).

Scholarly accounts of the role of material considerations in motivating violence are numerous and cover several conflict settings. In the Indian context, Horowitz (2001, 210-211) sheds light on the role of business rivalries in fomenting violence between Hindus and Muslims who were gaining market share in particular industries. Horowitz (2001, 2011) cites accounts from Indian scholars documenting such cases, including the 1991 attacks in Banaras on Muslim merchants selling the *sari* (a traditional garment worn by Indian women) allegedly motivated by Hindu sari merchants fearful of losing their dominant position in the *sari* trade. Analyzing violence between indigenous Assamese Hindus and Bengali Muslims in the northeastern Indian state of Assam, (Horowitz 2001, 209) explains that an attack on a major oil refinery run by a Bengali was organized by Assamese who were enraged that Bengalis received far higher employment rates at the refinery. Writing on

Hindu-Muslim riots in India, Wilkinson (2006, 30) observes that Muslim businesses were often targeted by Hindu rioters in overall patterns that dealt disproportionate blows to Muslim economic welfare as opposed to the costs sustained by Hindu merchants. While neither Horowitz (2001) nor Wilkinson (2006) emphasize business rivalries as a primary cause of violence, their detailed accounts and those of the scholars whom they cite strongly suggest the worthiness of investigating whether expected economic gain motivates ethnic violence.

Other scholars have made a more direct argument that economic considerations drive religious violence. Mitra and Ray (2013) extend the Varshney-Wilkinson dataset on Hindu-Muslim riots in India to consider the period from 1950 to 2000 in which a total of 7,000 deaths were classified as related to such violence. The authors present an economic theory of conflict in which expected economic gains to the in-group or economic costs to the out-group motivate intergroup violence. Mitra and Ray (2013, 721) find robust evidence that “an increase in the average incomes of the groupcontrolling for changes in inequality must raise violence perpetrated against that group. In contrast, the effect on violence perpetrated by that group on members of the other group is generally negative.” In their setting, the result means that increases in Muslim per capita expenditures significantly increases religious violence against Muslims whereas no such effect obtains when Hindu per capita expenditures increase.

4.3 Case Study: Lucknow

Background

Violence between members of the Sunni and Shia sects of Islam is a salient feature of the politics of many countries around the world. In India, the world’s largest democracy that often showcases itself as a model for secular governance and intergroup peace, Sunni-Shia violence continues to define the central political conflict in Lucknow, the capital city of India’s largest state.⁴ Religious violence, which has mostly been carried out by young adult men from both sects, continues to undermine the quality of the core democratic value of political tolerance in what is arguably India’s most important political center after New Delhi.

The genesis of the Sunni-Shia rift can be traced back to the first Islamic caliphate under the Prophet Muhammad. Upon the Prophet’s death, one faction of his followers (Arabic: *as-sahaba*) argued that the Prophet had wanted be succeeded by members of his bloodline beginning with Ali, his cousin and son-in-law. This faction became known as the Shia. Another more powerful faction,

⁴Interestingly in the Indian context, the city has never experienced a major act of Hindu-Muslim violence for at least the past century (Sinha 1978, 1841).

who came to be known as the Sunni, succeeded in installing a different successor to the Prophet. The disagreement over the Prophet's successor, coupled with the later murder of Ali and his two sons, gave rise to differences in clerical structures and religious jurisprudence that today serve as the contextual basis for sectarian strife across the Islamic world. The Shia faith is defined by the concepts of martyrdom and victimization that attain public light in the Muslim holy month of Muharram, which lasts for 68 or 69 days in South Asia. Muharram rituals in Lucknow have come to exclusively be practiced by the Shia, with major processions featuring mock-coffins, chest-beating with spiked chains (Urdu: *zanjir matam*), and powerful elegies (*marsiyah*). In Lucknow as across the Islamic world, conservative Sunni Muslims view the Shia Muharram rituals and their emphasis on Ali and Hussein as tantamount to "idol-worship" and apostasy by undermining the Islamic tenet of a single united God (?).

The first Sunni-Shia riot in Lucknow broke out in 1906 in response to a Sunni procession praising the first three successors of the Prophet Muhammad but not the fourth, Ali, venerated by the Shia. From that day until the present, extremist rituals This procession, known as the *madh-e-sahaba jaloos*, has become the primary religious act by conservative Sunni Muslims in Lucknow to contest the legitimacy of the Shia faith (Hasan 1998). Ever since the act was first performed, some Shia Muslims have frequently responded via a type of public chant (*tabarra*, which literally means 'disassociation') to emphasize their rejection of the first three caliphs, often using phrases that many Sunni find offensive. Such extremist provocations by members of both the Sunni and Shia sects tend to occur and exert maximum effect during religious processions carried out by members of both sects. Historically, nearly all Sunni-Shia violence in Lucknow has taken place in the Old City, the city's most impoverished district that includes some 1 million inhabitants.

Sectarian violence continues to paralyze Lucknow in Muharram and extremism among the Sunni and Shia presents a primary challenge for elected officials in the city and state of Uttar Pradesh. Although less than ten major violent incidents, including riots, targeted attacks, and skirmishes, have occurred in recent years, extremist violence commands major attention by the Lucknow government. As the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), the top police official in the city, explained to the author, each year the government specifically convenes a peace committee tasked with minimizing the risk of Muharram violence. The committee is assembled of leading religious clerics from both sects, community organizers, and police officers, and manages tasks ranging from encouraging clerics to instruct their followers to remain peaceful to finalizing routes for religious processions. Peace committees are supplemented by riot control police officers stationed during Muharram, as well as Special Police Officers (Hindi: *Vishesh Police Adhikari*), who are un-armed local community members trained to diffuse tensions and report incidents to armed officers. In 2014, government began operating drones in the Old City during Muharram. Extremism is thus a priority for the Lucknow government.

Case Justification

The decision to examine persuasion and extremism among the Sunni and Shia of Lucknow was based on three main reasons. First, persuasion by religious and economic elites is a salient feature of local conflict in the Old City neighborhood. As the examples in the next section make clear, religious clerics from both sects frequently make normative appeals encouraging or discouraging extremism while small businessmen and shopkeepers tend to concentrate on material arguments against extremism. The presence of both types of messages means that Lucknow's persuasion dynamics resemble those in many other conflict settings studied by political scientists.

The second reason for the selection of this case is that offers insights into the broader phenomenon of elite construction of conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims throughout the Islamic world. Extremism among Sunni and Shia youth characterizes relations between many Sunni and Shia youth not only in India but in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Bahrain. Although local causes of conflict vary in these different settings, the general problem of support or participation in targeted violence on the basis of sectarian affiliation obtains in all cases. The present study seeks to add insights on these issues as a means of complementing an emerging line of political science research on sectarian politics (Weidmann and Salehyan 2013; Corstange 2012*a,b*).

The final reason for case selection relates to the feasibility of implementing a sensitive experiment. In contrast to other settings of ethnic and religious conflict, the Old City of Lucknow serves as a relatively accessible conflict setting to administer an audio recording experiment. In contrast to other urban settings where militiamen or criminals would pose a substantial threat to enumerators and subjects, Lucknow is largely a stable city where there is a low risk of threats like kidnapping or violence to research staff or experimental participants. These features help establish the Old City as a relatively safe, real-life laboratory in which social scientists can study the general relationship between persuasion and extremism.

A final comment concerns scope conditions. The local government in Lucknow and the federal government in New Delhi are plausibly neutral actors with respect to conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims throughout India. The local government is furthermore relatively strong. Qualitative research conducted by the author in 2014-16 emphasized that the local government uses its law and order powers to prevent and resolve conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims. This sets an important scope condition on the generalizability of the experimental findings in this study.

Qualitative Methods Used

This section describes the means by which qualitative work was conducted. Field research was implemented by the author for about five months. Semi-structured interviews were the primary

method employed in addition to participant observation. A total of 70 unique interviews were completed with politicians, religious clerics, shopkeepers, police officers, journalists, NGO officers, and academics. Interviews primarily occurred in the Hindi and Urdu languages and at times Persian.

Access to subjects was made possible through a “deep hanging out” approach (Geertz 1998). Significant time was invested to develop a network of contacts in New Delhi and Lucknow. Initial interviews with academics and journalists led to a list of target interviewees in the Old City neighborhood of Lucknow, the specific setting of the present study. Due to the sensitivity of the interview content, the author often repeatedly met with certain religious clerics and police officials to build trust and offer transparency prior to substantive interviews. Repeated interaction with religious clerics, in particular, played a crucial role in obtaining more fine-grained comments from interviewees.

An important aspect of the qualitative research involved subject confidentiality. Formal interviews started with an establishment of mutually agreed-upon ground rules. Religious clerics often gave permission for their full names to be used in resulting research products. Other subjects insisted on reference to their first name or to their general position in society in exchange for offering sensitive information or provocative opinions.

Summary of Insights on Persuasion in Lucknow

This section presents a summary of findings from my qualitative research on elite persuasion in Lucknow. These insights motivated theoretical expectations as well as experimental design.

The first main lesson emphasized that although some Sunni and Shia clerics publicly disseminate pro-peace messages referencing in-group religious norms, Old City youth appeared to be rarely familiar with the details of message arguments. In separate interviews, leading Shia *maulanas* such as Maulana Syed Kalbe Sadiq and Sunni *maulanas* like Maulana Khaled Rashid Farangi Mahalli explained how they deploy normative messages to peace in lectures at local schools, mosques, and in personal conversations with youth. Both clerics noted, however, that messages contrary to peace were often made more frequently and with greater resonance by more extremist clerics. The author’s interviews with Sunni and Shia young adult men appeared to fall in line with this viewpoint. In both sects, several youth acknowledged to the author their awareness of pro-peace messages by various clerics. Yet upon further questioning, most respondents struggled to offer examples of such arguments with reference to theology. These insights suggested that pro-peace norms have not yet reached the stage of “internalization” in the norm production process (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998) among Old City youth.

Second, qualitative evidence highlighted the important economic costs of extremism to both

sects, but suggested that many Old City youth often perceive such costs as acceptable by-products of a necessary political struggle. Existing ethnographic research on violence among Sunni and Shia Muslims in Lucknow supports the view that expectations of economic gain can drive violence. 8 explains how the booming real estate industry in Lucknow has fueled violence in many cases by local Sunni strongmen concerned about losing their market share to developers from the minority Shia community. In the author's interviews with riot-control police officers and small businessmen from both sects, a consistent line of commentary focused on how extremism led to physical damage and side-effects like government-imposed curfews that temporarily hobble economic life.⁵ A senior Central Bureau of Investigation official explained that locals "stock-up" on food and other staples during Muharram in anticipation of economic disruption. The Small Business Association, which includes shopkeepers from both sects, frequently protest at the Akbari Gate thoroughfare in the Old City in an effort to dissuade extremists from engaging in violence. Even still, most Sunni and Shia youth respondents held the view that extremism toward the other group did not hurt the economic interests of one's own group. Upon further conversation, many respondents admitted that they perhaps lacked complete information on the impact of their actions on their own group's economic life. Such insights informed the experimental design in manipulating exposure to an in-group shopkeeper emphasizing material considerations discouraging violence.

The third main insight is that religious messaging by clerics appeared to be more influential than economic messaging by shopkeepers in shaping youth extremism. Youth respondents frequently emphasized the importance of religious clerics in setting acceptable standards of behavior toward the outgroup. Several noted that clerical injunctions carried normative weight that served as an important potential sanction for noncompliance, noting the costs for instance of not participating in an extremist ritual if asked to do so. In Lucknow, as in many conflict settings, clerical influence has historical roots. One Sunni respondent, Nihal, for instance, drew attention to Lucknow's status as a center of Sunni learning, with its famed *Nadwatul Ulema* seminar, as an explanation for the power of the Sunni clergy. Shia respondents, too, emphasized the Shia clergy's influence in leading Shia seminaries established during Lucknow's status as the capital of a Shia kingdom until 1857. Unlike economic elites, youth respondents pointed out, even moderately-influential religious clerics could use normative appeal to achieve political goals. Shia respondents referenced their clerics' involvement in bringing the sect together as part of year-long campaign protesting the Islamic State group. Sunni respondents highlighted how their clerics similarly vouched for Muslim political rights at home and served as social guardians who maintained important religious

⁵Shopkeepers lamented that curfews only took an economic toll in the Old City, the locus of sectarian violence in Lucknow, as they were never implemented in the other parts of the city.

customs.

In contrast, economic elites in Lucknow who advocate for peace appeared to be less influential. Although groups such as the inter-group Lucknow Small Business Association periodically hold rallies to protest the economic costs of extremism, the author's qualitative research found that such events are scant and tend to resonate little beyond the immediate group of economic elites. Mohammed, a Sunni man who runs a hardware store in the Old City, was abhorred the economic costs he experienced due to riot-related curfews. Yet he expressed frustration at the lack of resonance of the economic message among Sunni youth. A similar sense of powerlessness was echoed by Najmi Sahib, a Shia small businessman in the Old City's Kashmir Mohalla enclave. He protested that businessmen like him could do little to affect violent youth in ways that Shia clerics could. Several other small businessmen held the view that if their arguments were heard by their own youth, it could lead to a reduction in extremism.

Lastly, qualitative research emphasized the prevalence of counter-arguments to peace messaging as a means of reinforcing extremism. In one Shia religious gathering (known as a *majlis*) attended by the author, an extremist Shia cleric moved an audience of some sixty men and children to tears by describing Imam Ali's murder as a terrorist attack akin to ISIS attacks on the Shia in Iraq. Participants later insisted that the sectarian gulf "could not" be bridged by interfaith dialogue. In a separate interview, a Shia youth who proudly described himself as "the first to throw a stone in any riot" argued that he and many others like him could "undo" broad calls to peace by clerics. In a separate interview in the riot-prone Patanala neighborhood of Lucknow, Sunni youth emphasized how those who might be temporarily moved by a clerical call to unity still return and live in neighborhoods where even a few extremist clerics or their followers dominate local chatter to reinforce hatred. Youth in Belojpura and Chowk districts explained how extremists take to loudspeakers to blast extremist rhetoric in the evenings so as to reverse any effects of calls to peace by clerics earlier in the day.

This study proceeds with the following expectations. First, pro-peace persuasion is expected to reduce religious extremism for both Sunni and Shia subjects. Second, pro-peace persuasion is expected not to reduce religious extremism in the presence of a counterargument to the peace message. Third, pro-peace normative persuasion by an in-group cleric will more effectively reduce extremism than economic persuasion by an in-group shopkeeper.

4.4 The Experiment: Sampling and Design

Sampling

I conducted an original survey with an embedded experiment on a random, representative sample of 480 young adult males (240 Sunni and 240 Shia) in Lucknow's Old City. Within the Old City, I sampled the Sunni and Shia subjects from 21 pre-selected neighborhoods (Urdu: *mohalleh*). Neighborhoods were selected with the consultation of local enumerators and local experts in order to obtain variation on pre-existing levels of religious extremism as well as variation in inter-sect demographics population, including both homogenous and heterogenous areas.

Experimental subjects were selected via uniform sampling by a male enumerator who shared the subject's sectarian identity. Following this process, enumerators were instructed to survey every third male adult starting from a random point on streets in each neighborhood. Subjects were approached in small shops, cafes, and side streets. The decision to use co-sectarian enumerators was made on the basis of my field research in Lucknow that underscored that Sunni and Shia young men generally feel more comfortable expressing sensitive attitudes to members of their own sect.

Each potential respondent was immediately told that their responses to the study questionnaire would be kept confidential and that their identity would never be publicly tied to their individual responses. Respondents were further told that they would receive a chocolate at the conclusion of the survey as compensation for their time.⁶ This approach led to a relatively high response rate of 80 percent among the Shia sample and 75 percent among the Sunni sample. Descriptive statistics of the sample are presented in the appendix (A2).

Randomized assignment to treatment was conducted before the implementation of the survey experiment. Blocking on each enumerator, a list of subject ID numbers was randomly assigned to one of the five experimental groups described below. Enumerators then delivered the appropriate audio recording—or none in the case of the control group—by following their specific pre-made treatment schedule.

Survey Structure

The survey began with a series of background questions on the respondent's socioeconomic status, years of religious education, in-group peers, out-group peers, religious observance, and identity preferences. These particular questions were included because they capture variables that have

⁶Respondents were not financially compensated for their time on the advice of local community members and NGO officers. The concern was that even small financial payments might fuel local suspicions regarding the motives of the survey team, including suspicion of connections to external actors like Iran or Saudi Arabia.

been found to predict religious extremism. To obtain a measure of an individual's violent peers, subjects were asked to state the number of their co-sectarian peers who had participated in sectarian violence in the past. To obtain a measure of prior outgroup contact, subjects were also asked to state the number of outgroup members that they consider to be their friends. The questionnaire also included questions on religious observance, specifically, the number of times per week that the subject visits a local mosque to conduct prayers. Other studies have found significant but conflicting relationships between prayer attendance and extremism (Ginges et al. 2009; Fair et al. 2012; Tessler & Nachtwey 1998). Finally, the question asked respondents about their identity preferences: respondents were asked to choose the identity category that best described them from a list of 5 categories age group, economic group, sectarian group, religious group, and nationality. Previous studies have found religious identification (here: sectarian identification) to be predictive of support for violence toward the outgroup (Sidanius et al. 2004; Fischer, Greitemeyer and Kastenmüller 2007).

Experimental Design

After administering the background questions, enumerators administered the intervention to the treatment groups. The intervention was a single audio recording that was pre-loaded on the enumerators' cell phones and administered to subjects using a set of sterile headphones. The design features five distinct experimental conditions. Subjects were assigned to listen to at most one pro-peace message (religious or economic) and among the subjects who heard a peace message, some subjects heard a counter-argument to the peace message.⁷

In the pure control condition, subjects received no audio recording and proceeded directly to the outcome measures. In the *Cleric* condition, subjects were assigned to listen to a 5 minute audio recording from a real, local, in-group religious cleric (Urdu: *maulana*) who detailed religious norms discouraging extremism toward the outgroup. In the *Cleric and Counterargument* condition, subjects were assigned to listen to a 8-minute audio recording that contained the 5-minute cleric audio recording and a 3-minute recording from an in-group young adult male who made a counterargument to peace message. In the *Shopkeeper* condition, subjects were assigned to hear a 5-minute audio recording from a local in-group shopkeeper who detailed material considerations discouraging extremism toward the outgroup. In the *Shopkeeper and Counterargument* condition, subjects were assigned to hear an 8-minute recording that featured the 5-minute shopkeeper recording and the same 3-minute counterargument audio used in the *Cleric and Counterargument*

⁷For subjects who heard a peace message and the counterargument, the order of the messages was randomized in order to address "recency and primacy" effects.

condition. As mentioned earlier, different audio recordings were created for the Sunni and Shia samples.

Table 1 shows the experimental setup by for the pooled sample. The setup for each religious sect sample is the same as for the pooled sample, with the exception of the number of subjects in each condition. In each of the Sunni and Shia samples, the total N was 240 and the number of subjects assigned to each condition was precisely half of the number of subjects assigned to each condition in the pooled sample.

Table 4.1: Basic Experimental Setup: Pooled Sample

	Cleric Shopkeeper None		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
(A) Without CA	60	120	
(B) With CA	60	120	
(C) Control			120

N = 480

Overall, this design takes the form of a $(2 * 2 + 1) * 2$ design.

Outcome Measures

In all five experimental conditions, the intervention was followed by three sets of questions: [1] four questions on hypothetical extremist behavior measured using 7-point Likert scales; [2] seven social distance questions measured as binary variables; and [3] three behavioral tasks designed to measure public, tolerant behavior toward the outgroup that were measured as binary variables. An individual-level *Composite Index* of religious extremism was made by averaging the values of each of the three standardized indexes and re-standardizing the new index in order to allay multiple comparisons concerns.⁸

First, the four attitudinal measures comprised a single *Extremist Attitudes Index* that was standardized. The same questions were used for Sunni and Shia respondents with the only change being that the words “Sunni” and “Shia” were used appropriately for each respective sample’s survey. Enumerators preceded the administration of the *Hypothetical Behavior Index* questions by reading subjects a one-sentence scenario that respondents were told to imagine as a hypothetical scenario: “*Imagine that it is Muharram and a Sunni man in Lucknow heard that a Shia Maulana has insulted Sunnis.*”

Respondents were then asked how much they would support an in-group member who responded to this hypothetical provocation by one of the following violent extremist behaviors: [1] throwing a stone at a Shia religious procession; [2] attacking a Shia friend for issuing an anti-Sunni Facebook post; [3] using a street loudspeaker to call the Shia non-Muslims; and [4] attack a Shia store. The hypothetical scenario and associated vignettes were crafted to correspond to real life scenarios uncovered by qualitative field research. Subjects were asked to state their support for a violent action taken by an ingroup member⁹ using a 7-point Likert scale, with higher values indicating higher extremism.¹⁰ To maintain consistency in the outcome measure for both Sunni and Shia subjects, I used the same exact hypothetical provocative scenario and four hypothetical violent reactions for the Sunni and Shia subjects.

Second, respondents were asked a battery of seven questions to gauge social distance to the outgroup. These questions employed binary measures of seven items from the standard BOGARDUS

⁸The basis for also including attitudinal measures stems from Neumann (2013), who argues that “cognitive” and “behavioral” extremism are inter-related and that the study of one enhances the understanding of the other as well as the full process of radicalization.

⁹For ethical and security reasons, respondents were asked about their support for an in-group member’s extremist response rather than their personal inclination.

¹⁰The scale is: 1 (“I strongly oppose this action”); 2 (“I oppose this action, but only a little bit.”); 3 (“I oppose this action.”); 4 (“Neutral”); 5 (“I support this action, but only a little bit.”); 6 (“I support this action.”); and 7 (“I strongly support this action”).

social distance scale. The survey concluded with three behavioral tasks to measure a respondent's willingness to conduct real-world behaviors that supported non-violence toward the out-group. Pro-peace measures were employed due to the ethical problem of asking subjects to engage in extremist behaviors. The decision to not complete a behavioral task in a pro-peace direction is thus interpreted as extremist behavior. The first item measured if the subject signed a Hindi-language petition presented to the subject that condemns those who create sectarian violence in Lucknow.¹¹ The second measure recorded if the respondent purchased a 5-rupee (about 5 U.S. cents) wristband stating "Sunni-Shia Unity" in Urdu and pledged to wear it.¹² Purchasing and wearing the wristband thus included a small but not insignificant financial cost as well as the expected cost of being seen wearing the wristband by extremists. The third measure asked respondents to provide the phone number of an in-group peer to receive an SMS invite to a pro-peace meeting. Each behavioral measure was scored as a binary variable, with a value of 1 indicating the refusal to endorse non-violence toward the outgroup, i.e., extremist behavior. For analysis purposes, the *Hypothetical Behavior Index*, *Social Distance Index*, and *True Behavior Index* were each standardized.

Designing the Intervention

The author worked with message speakers to design audio content. Following message design, the message speakers recorded their audio messages. Each speaker provided their consent for their recording to be disseminated for study purposes among local youth. Each cleric and shopkeeper stated his full name and clerical status, and the counterargument speakers used pseudonyms that signaled their respective sects. Section A1 in the Appendix contains the English-language transcripts of each message. Appendix A3 provides a full discussion of the steps taken to address ethical considerations in the experiment.

First, the Sunni and Shia clerical messages were crafted to contain similar content. Both messages emphasized the Quran as the primary source of unity between the sects; religious prohibitions against violence; and the examples of the Prophet Muhammad and Imam Ali in showing restraint and compassion even in the face of provocation or conspiracy. In order to maintain realistic differences in messaging styles, the Sunni and Shia clerics at times made references to in-group religious norms to build their case. Both speakers employed comparable tones and styles in their message delivery, with a total duration of 5 minutes for each message.

Second, a similar approach was taken for the shopkeeper messages. The Sunni and Shia shop-

¹¹Subjects were told that their responses would not be made public.

¹²Respondents were told that proceeds wristband sales would be donated to a local inter-group peace NGO.

keepers briefly described their industry and then detailed examples of how riots had hurt their business by disrupting supply chains, affecting employee attendance, and temporarily suspending store hours. Both speakers made references to the in-group economic costs of the 2013 riots. Finally, each message explicitly called listeners to strongly consider the economic costs to the in-group of engaging in violence against the outgroup. Practicing peace, speakers argued, would lead to greater economic opportunities for in-group members. Each message was 5 minutes in duration.

Lastly, a counterargument to the peace message was recorded with a local actor from each sect. Counterarguments were designed for dissemination to in-group members, and in other words, functioned as a type of reminder of the presence of in-group extremists seeking to oppose unity. For ethical reasons, message content featured provocative but commonly repeated criticisms of the out-group. Both messages focused on well-known disagreements over prayer style; the validity of the first three (Sunni) caliphs after the Prophet Muhammad; and the false rumor that the Shia use a different Quran than the Sunni. Stylistically, these differences were exaggerated and presented as roadblocks to peace in the manner done by extremist entrepreneurs in the Old City. For ethical reasons, all subjects exposed to a counterargument in the intervention were debriefed at the end of the experiment's second endline and told that the message was made by a local, pro-tolerant individual who was acting for the purpose of the academic study.

4.5 Experimental Results

The main objective is to analyze the average treatment effects of the interventions on the dependent variable, the *Composite Index* of religious extremism, which is a standardized index. The inclusion of these three sub-indexes into the *Composite Index* is supported by the sufficiently high Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the full sample ($\alpha = 0.6989$).

Descriptive statistics for the sample are presented in the Appendix in Table A1. Section 5.1 presents experimental results within the Sunni and Shia samples without covariate adjustment. Section 5.2 presents experimental results between the two samples and as well as results with covariate adjustment.

Average Treatment Effects By Sample

Table 2 presents a factorial analysis of average treatment effects for the pooled sample, the Sunni sample, and the Shia sample using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression. Specifications in Table 2 do not include covariate adjustment or *Sampling Area* fixed effects. Missingness in the dependent variable resulted in the construction of *Composite Index* of religious extremism for 219 Sunni subjects and 179 Shia subjects.

To help facilitate the interpretation of average treatment effects, I created three treatment dummy variables that were demeaned. Point estimates are thus interpreted as the marginal effect of a particular treatment dummy averaged over the effects of the other treatments. Higher values in the dependent variable indicate higher religious extremism. Negative point estimates thus indicate a reduction of extremism.

Table 4.2: Average Treatment Effects: Pooled Sample and By Sect

	<i>DV: Composite Index, Standardized</i>		
	Overall	Sunni Sample	Shia Sample
Cleric	0.050 (0.123)	-0.048 (0.151)	0.187 (0.164)
Someargument (SA)	0.083 (0.172)	0.052 (0.207)	0.220 (0.237)
Counterargument(CA)	-0.188 (0.125)	-0.002 (0.154)	-0.344** (0.168)
Cleric×CA	0.139 (0.246)	0.316 (0.302)	-0.043 (0.329)
Constant	-0.012 (0.053)	0.357*** (0.064)	-0.464*** (0.071)
Observations	398	219	179
Adjusted R ²	-0.003	-0.013	0.011
F Statistic	0.713	0.291	1.498

1. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
2. Standard errors in parentheses.

The treatment dummy *Cleric* is a dichotomous variable scored as 1 if the subject was assigned to an audio recording that contained the cleric as speaker rather than a shopkeeper. Two types of subjects received a score of 1 for *Cleric*: those who were assigned to hear only the pro-peace cleric message and those who were assigned to hear the pro-peace cleric message and the counterargument. Subjects assigned to hear a shopkeeper or to control were scored as 0. The treatment dummy *Some argument* (SA) is a dichotomous variable scored as 1 if the subject was assigned to hear *some* argument, i.e., not assigned to the pure control condition. The treatment dummy *Counterargument* (CA) is a dichotomous variable scored as 1 for subjects who were assigned to hear a counterargument regardless of whether or not the pro-peace speaker was a cleric or shopkeeper. Lastly, the variable *Cleric*×*CA* is the product of the demeaned *Cleric* and *Counterargument* variables. As such, a value of 0.5 for *Cleric*×*CA* indicates that a subject heard a pro-peace argument from an

in-group cleric as well as a counterargument to peace.

Three primary findings obtain. First, for the pooled and Sunni sample, there were no significant average treatment effects. Second, for the Shia sample, *Counterargument* significantly reduced ($p < 0.05$) religious extremism by 0.344 standard deviations. This result was contrary to expectations as the counterargument was expected to increase religious extremism. Third, the results show that there were differential effects of pro-peace persuasion and the counterargument message among religious sects. Whereas religious persuasion had a tendency to reduce extremism among the Sunni sample, it increased religious extremism among the Shia sample. Moreover, the counterargument message had an estimated null effect for the Sunni sample whereas it had a strong and negative effect on religious extremism for the Shia sample.

Tables 3 and 4 provide a closer look at the average treatment effects within the Sunni and Shia samples, respectively. Relative to Table 2, these tables reveal greater detail regarding the marginal effect of pro-peace religious persuasion versus economic persuasion as well as well as the differences in treatment effects in the presence or absence of a counterargument. For clarity, rows are tagged as A-F and columns are tagged as 1-4. For example, cell 1A refers to the Sunni sample group mean of the Composite Index for subjects assigned to the “Cleric only” experimental group. Cell 3C refers to the mean value of the Composite Index for Sunni subjects assigned to the “Pure Control” condition.

Effects within the “Cleric Only” or “Cleric and Counterargument” condition are presented in column 1, while column 2 presents such results for the “Shopkeeper Only” condition. Lastly, the bottom section of the table. For ease of interpretation of the marginal effect of the religious norms persuasion condition (“Cleric”) versus the material considerations persuasion condition (“Shopkeeper”), column 4 shows the marginal average treatment effects of “Cleric” versus “Shopkeeper”.

There are three main conclusions. First, I find no support for the first hypothesis: in the absence of a counterargument, neither persuasion by religious norms nor persuasion by material considerations caused a significant effect on the *Composite Index*, as shown in cells 1D and 2D. Next, the counterargument exerted an effect in the opposite direction of both pro-peace messages such that the *Composite Index* approaches zero, especially when paired with the religious norms message (cell 1E). The marginal effect of the counterargument is not statistically differentiable in the religious norms condition as compared to the material considerations condition. This provides support for the second hypothesis on the competing frames effect. Lastly, I find no support for the third hypothesis that religious persuasion is more effective in reducing religious extremism than economic persuasion (cell 4D). Importantly, however, there is a tendency for religious persuasion to be marginally more effective in reducing extremism (cell 4D) that may be significant in a study with a larger sample.

Table 4 presents the main results for the Shia sample. Regarding the first hypothesis, the

Table 4.3: **Sunni Sample:** Group Means, ATEs, and Marginal ATE of *Cleric*

	<i>Sunni Sample: Effects on Composite Index</i>			
	Cleric (1)	Shopkeeper (2)	None (3)	Marginal ATE of Cleric vs. Shopkeeper (4)
(A) Without CA	0.242 (0.176)	0.447 (0.122)		-0.205 (0.223)
(B) With CA	0.437 (0.118)	0.327 (0.132)		0.110 (0.189)
(C) Control			0.395 (0.110)	
(D) ATE with No CA	-0.153 (0.208)	0.052 (0.165)		-0.205 (0.223)
(E) ATE with CA	0.041 (0.162)	-0.068 (0.172)		0.110 (0.189)
(F) ATE of CA	0.195 (0.228)	-0.120 (0.186)		0.316 (0.294)

1. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
2. Standard errors in parentheses.

results in cells 1D and 2D suggest a pattern opposite to the one expected: both pro-peace messages increased the *Composite Index* of religious extremism, albeit not significantly. As the outcome variable in both samples is the same and standardized in both cases, it is important to observe that the size of the point estimates in cells 1D and 2D in Table 4 are also about four times larger than the point estimates in the same cells in Table 3.

Regarding the second hypothesis, the counterargument exerted a substantively large effect in the direction opposite the pro-peace message (cells 1F and 2F). However, the direction of the counterargument was opposite the one expected: the inclusion of a counterargument reduced the *Composite Index* regardless of whether the pro-peace message was religious or economic. Although these results support the second hypothesis on the existing of a competing frames effect, it is notable that they do so with effects from each treatment arm occurring in the directions opposite those expected.

Lastly, I find some support for the third hypothesis but in the direction opposite the one expected. Relative to economic persuasion, religious persuasion has a tendency to be more effective in *increasing* religious extremism (cell 4D). Although this result does not reach statistical significance, it supports the proposition inherent in the third hypothesis that religious elites emphasizing religious norms will be more influential than economic elites emphasizing material considerations.

Table 4.4: **Shia Sample:** Group Means, ATEs, and Marginal ATE of *Cleric*

	<i>Shia Sample (N=240): Effects on Composite Index</i>			
	Cleric (1)	Shopkeeper (2)	None (3)	Marginal ATE of Cleric vs. Shopkeeper (4)
(A) Without CA	-0.106 (0.181)	-0.315 (0.170)		0.208 (0.249)
(B) With CA	-0.477 (0.119)	-0.643 (0.110)		0.165 (0.162)
(C) Control			-0.535 (0.107)	
(D) ATE with No CA	0.429 (0.211)	0.220 (0.202)		0.208 (0.249)
(E) ATE with CA	0.057 (0.160)	-0.107 (0.154)		0.165 (0.162)
(F) ATE of CA	-0.371 (0.217)	-0.327 (0.203)		-0.043 (0.297)

1. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
2. Standard errors in parentheses.

The reasons why this may be the case are discussed in Section 7.

Differences in Effects Between Religious Sects

Table 5 presents the difference in group means and treatment effects of persuasion between the Shia and Sunni sects for the *Composite Index*. Differences were calculated as *Shia - Sunni*. Once again, higher values in the dependent variable indicate higher religious extremism. Negative point estimates thus indicate a reduction of extremism.

From a descriptive standpoint, cells 1A, 1B, 2A, and 2B contain the difference in sect means of the *Composite Index*. The data indicate that Shia subjects exposed to the religious norms persuasion and the counterargument had significantly lower values of religious extremism than the same subjects in the Sunni sample (cell 1B). The same pattern holds for Shia subjects exposed solely to the material considerations persuasion relative to their Sunni counterparts (cell 2A); Shia subjects exposed to both the material considerations persuasion and the counterargument (cell 2B); and for Shia subjects in the pure control condition compared to their Sunni counterparts (cell 3C).

Next, the results in row E of Table 5 provide further evidence of a competing frames effect that supports the second hypothesis. In particular, the overall between-sample effect of listening to a

Table 4.5: Difference in Group Means and Treatment Effects Between Sects

	Cleric (1)	Shopkeeper (2)	None (3)	Marginal ATE of Cleric Between Samples (4)
(A) Diff. in Sect Means, Without CA	-0.348 (0.253)	-0.763** (0.210)		0.414 (0.372)
(B) Diff. in Sect Means, With CA	-0.915** (0.168)	-0.970** (0.172)		0.055 (0.240)
(C) Diff in Sect Means, Control			-0.931** (0.154)	
(D) Diff. in Effects, Without CA	0.582** (0.296)	0.168 (0.261)		0.414 (0.372)
(E) Diff. in Effects, With CA	0.016 (0.002)	-0.038 (0.231)		0.055 (0.240)
(F) Diff. in Effects of CA	-0.566** (0.228)	-0.207 (0.271)		-0.359 (0.355)

1. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
2. Standard errors in parentheses.

pro-peace message and a counterargument approaches a point estimate of zero.

Finally, the results indicate that difference in effects of religious persuasion between samples was about 0.414 standard deviations greater than the difference in effects of economic persuasion between samples (cell 4D). Although this marginal effect does not reach statistical significance, it suggests the effect of religious persuasion, in contrast to that of economic persuasion, is especially stark between samples.

Table 6 assists with analyzing the marginal effect of religious persuasion (relative to economic persuasion) between the Sunni and Shia groups. The table contains four models that vary the inclusion of *Sampling Area* fixed effects, *Covariates*, and the interaction of covariates with the *Shia* fixed effect. The *Sampling Area* fixed effects were included to account for the fact that the survey experiment took place in a wide range of neighborhoods within Lucknow's Old City that vary in their existing level of religious extremism. There were 21 sampling areas in total. In models where covariates are included (Models 3 and 4), the covariates are: *Employed*, *Weekly Mosque Prayer Attendance*, *Number of In-Group Violent Peers*, *Sectarian Group Identification*, *Years of Religious Education*, and *Number of Outgroup Friends*. All covariates were measured

pre-treatment.¹³

Table 4.6: Marginal ATE of Religious Persuasion versus Economic Persuasion Between Sects

	<i>DV: Composite Index of Religious Extremism, Standardized</i>			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(A) Diff. in Effects, Without CA	0.414 (0.329)	0.727* (0.401)	0.958** (0.399)	0.849** (0.389)
(B) Diff. in Effects, With CA	0.055 (0.240)	-0.067 (0.260)	0.048 (0.263)	-0.032 (0.264)
(C) Diff. in Effects of CA	-0.359 (0.355)	-0.746* (0.450)	-0.670 (0.444)	-0.696 (0.438)
Shia FE?	Y	Y	Y	Y
Area FE?	N	Y	Y	Y
Cov?	N	N	Y	Y
Cov × Shia?	N	N	N	Y

Note: **p<0.05

Model 1 presents the results of a difference-in-differences analysis in the absence of *Sampling Area* fixed effects and the *Covariates*. The results in Model 1 are thus the same as the results in column 4 of Table 5, which show that the difference in the marginal effect of religious norms persuasion between sects was not significant. The value in cell 1A also shows that there was a tendency for such persuasion to have a more pro-extremism effect for the Shia sample as compared to the Sunni sample.

Moving from Models 2 to 4, however, the marginal effect of religious norms persuasion reaches statistical significance. Model 2 includes *Sampling Area* fixed effects but does not include the *Covariates*. In the absence of a counterargument, the difference in the marginal effect of religious persuasion between sects is significant ($p = 0.098$). Moreover, the difference in marginal effects of the counterargument is significant and negative, showing that the counterargument significantly reduced extremism for the Shia.

Model 3 includes *Sampling Area* fixed effects and the *Covariates* but does not interact the covariates with the *Shia* fixed effect. The difference in the marginal effect of religious persuasion

¹³I do not impute for missingness in covariates, which was relatively low.

between sects strengthens, with $p < 0.05$. The size of the difference is relatively large, with a point estimate of 0.958 standard deviations in the *Composite Index* of religious extremism. As in the previous two models, the pro-extremism effect of religious persuasion for the Shia sample nearly disappears when a counterargument is included (cell 3B). The result in cell 3C indicates that the counterargument did in fact exert a more negative effect on religious extremism for the Shia sample than the Sunni sample, although the result does not reach $p < 0.01$ in this specification.

Model 4 includes both *Sampling Area* fixed effects, the *Covariates*, and an interaction between the *Shia* fixed effect and the covariates. In Model 4, the religious norms persuasion also exerts a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) effect on the Shia sample that increases extremism (cell 4A). Similar patterns regarding the difference in marginal effects of the counterargument between sects also obtain.

These results demonstrate that the difference in the marginal effect of religious persuasion (as opposed to economic persuasion) between the Sunni and Shia samples was statistically significant. The result increases in statistical significance when using covariate adjustment. It indicates that pro-peace religious persuasion, in particular, caused a more pro-extremism effect for the Shia sample that was distinguishable from the anti-extremism effect for the Sunni sample.

4.6 Explaining the Puzzle of Differential Effects by Sect

What might explain the differential effect among the Sunni and Shia samples of listening to pro-peace message by an in-group cleric emphasizing religious norms that prohibit violence? In this section, I suggest that the most plausible explanation for this result involves a logic of substitution that governs members of a victimized group in conflict settings. Support for this explanation comes from qualitative and historical evidence from Lucknow.

The Logic of Substitution

The logic argues that in ethnic conflict settings where one ethnic group perceives itself as victimized by the other, the effectiveness of peace messages from in-group elites among the victimized group will be governed by a substitution effect. On average, members of the victimized group who hear a call to peace by an in-group elite will perceive that call as a signal that the elite is standing down from the role of defending the group against an external threat. After hearing that the in-group elite is “substituting-out” of violence, the message recipient will “substitute-in” to extremism by retaining or increasing prior levels of extremism defend his co-ethnics from the perceived real threat from the other ethnic group. The message recipient is expected to “substitute-out” of extremism when learning that a fellow in-group member will substitute-in to extremism. Lastly,

the extent to which the victimized ingroup member substitutes-in to extremism will increase in the perceived influence of the message speaker among ingroup members.

By contrast, the substitution effect not expected to hold for members the non-victimized group. Since these individuals hold far fewer security concerns with respect to the outgroup, they are not expected to perceive compliance with an in-group peace call as a threat to in-group security. Pro-peace persuasion by in-group elite is thus expected to yield a higher rate of compliance for members of non-victimized groups relative to members of victimized groups. The strength of the pro-peace effect for members of non-victimized groups is expected to increase in the perceived influence of the message speaker among in-group members. By this logic, the main expectation is a differential average rate of compliance to a pro-peace call by an in-group elite among victimized and non-victimized group members.

In order for the logic of substitution to hold, one requirement is that the collective action can be solved by a subgroup of players and does not need to be solved by the participation of all. In the present setting, it is a requirement that a the in-group can still be defended even with the participation of some of the group members—i.e., those who substitute-in—and not the participation of all, i.e., those who substitute-out of extremism, such as the elite. This requirement appears to be satisfied in Lucknow and a wide range of conflict settings. Individuals often join extremist organizations—such as terrorist groups, gangs, or militias—and believe that they are defending their broader group even if most of their co-ethnics are not participating in the group.

First, the logic of substitution matches the core experimental result. To begin, consider the positive (and significant) effect of the religious norms persuasion and the positive (though not significant) effect of material considerations persuasion on the religious extremism for the Shia sample (Table 5, cells 1D and 2D). The results reveal the tendency for Shia (but not Sunni) subjects to increase their extremism upon hearing either the pro-peace norms message by the Shia cleric or the pro-peace materials consideration message by the Shia shopkeeper. This tendency is consistent with the notion that when Shia subjects heard an in-group elite “substituting-out” of extremism, they responded by “substituting-in”.

Next, according to the substitution logic, the size of the substitution-in to extremism among the Shia should increase in the perceived influence of the message speaker. To examine how the demographic in the experiment perceives in-group religious elites versus in-group economic elites, a separate survey of Sunni and Shia youth in the Old City was conducted following the experiment. Subjects listened to one of the two pro-peace messages used in the experiment. Results showed that subjects in each sect rated the perceived influence of the in-group cleric significantly higher

than that of the shopkeeper ($p < 0.01$).¹⁴ Since clerics are perceived as more influential than the shopkeeper, one should expect that Shia subjects exposed to the pro-peace clerical message will increase their extremism more significantly than when exposed to pro-peace material considerations persuasion. We begin to see such a pattern in Table 5 (cell 1D), where the difference in effects of religious persuasion was significant ($p < 0.05$) and positive for the Shia sample. This is contrast to the difference in effects between sects of material considerations persuasion, which was positive but not significant. When adjusting for *Sampling Area* fixed effects as well as covariates, the difference in the marginal effect of religious persuasion between sects is significant in the absence of a counterargument (Table 6, Models 2-4). The results indicate that, relative to material considerations persuasion, religious norms persuasion increases extremism for the Shia and reduces extremism for the Sunni. The experimental design does not make it possible to unpack the important question as to whether the differential effect of the cleric versus shopkeeper is due to a perceived speaker attribute (such perceived influence) or message content (such as normative or material).

Lastly, the results support the logic of substitution by showing that the message recipient not only substitutes-in to extremism when the in-group cleric substitutes-out, but substitutes-out of extremism when another in-group member substitutes-in. Table 5 (cell 1F) shows that among Sunni and Shia subjects exposed to religious norms persuasion, the difference in effects between sects of the counterargument to the peace message is significant ($p < 0.05$). The negative point estimate indicates that the counterargument exerted a more anti-extremism effect for the Shia and a more pro-extremism effect for the Sunni. A similar pattern is evident in Table 6 (row C), where the difference in effects of the counterargument is negative and substantively large. The difference in effects of the counterargument is significant in Model 2 ($p < 0.10$) and approaches significance in the other specifications. By contrast, when comparing Sunni and Shia subjects exposed to pro-peace persuasion by material considerations, the difference in effects of the counterargument among sects is not significant (Table 5, cell 2F). Lastly, Table 6 (row B) demonstrates that the inclusion of a counterargument nearly eliminates the marginal pro-extremism effect caused by the religious norms persuasion for Shia subjects as compared to Sunni subjects. In other words, and interestingly, the antidote to extremism for Shia subjects was not the pro-peace call they heard from an in-group cleric, which yielded a statistically significant increase in extremism, but rather was driven by the counterargument message.

¹⁴For Sunni subjects, the difference was 0.733 points and for Shia subjects, the difference was 0.600 points on 3-point scale

Qualitative Evidence

Field notes from the experiment was completed help begin to understand why this pattern may have occurred. Shia enumerators reported that multiple subjects, upon having been debriefed in the second endline about the fictitious nature of the counterargument, relayed that the message conjured images of a “stone-throwing” and “*firqavarana*” (or sectarian) Shia who would “keep us safe”. As was intended in the audio recording preparation process, that the counterargument succeeded in generating an imaginary proxy of a violent Shia extremist countering the pro-peace Shia cleric. The qualitative insights of subjects’ reactions to the audios thus yield a story consistent with a process whereby Shia subjects, upon learning that their in-group leader was “substituting-out” of violence but that their community would be defended by a fellow peer “substituting-in” to violence, reduced their extremism. On the grounds that “someone else has the situation under control”, the Shia subjects reduced their pro-violent attitudes and intolerant behavior.

To obtain more rigorous insights, the author organized follow-up interviews by the Shia enumerators with a random subset of 30 original Shia experimental subjects who were treated. Enumerators succeeded in administering the follow-up survey with 24 of these subjects. Subjects were asked to re-listen to the original message to which they were assigned in order to refresh their memories. Afterwards, Shia enumerators administered a structured questionnaire aimed at understanding their perceptions of these different audio recordings.

First, the religious norms message appeared to have a more pro-extremism effect than the material considerations message. Ashu, who heard the same religious norms message, took the view the cleric’s call to peace was naive: “it’s easier said than done. You cannot protect yourself against such people by just asking them to sit and talk. They invade people’s homes and burn and destroy them just for fun. You cannot use non-violence against them”. Fahad, a Shia subject originally assigned to the religious norms message, stated that while he thought the religious cleric was entitled to his own opinion, “there is a limit to everything”, and that “Sunnis are a global threat to the Shia”. Another original experimental subject, Munnu, described how “in the street wars between Sunni and Shia [in Lucknow], there are uncountable threats Shias face from Sunnis”, and that this religious cleric was likely “corrupt” for stating otherwise. A follow-up interview with Mubarak found that this Shia subject believed that “being peaceful does not mean that we have to lose our defense. We should always be prepared for the worst”, a reply that he did not reject the call to peace *per se* but that there were overriding considerations.

By contrast, subjects originally assigned to the material considerations message appeared to express far less extremist reactions. Most subjects in these conditions who were reached by enumerators for the follow-up survey stated that the recordings reminded them of the personal economic toll of sectarian violence that they had personally witnessed. Ali, a Shia subject from the

violence-prone Nakhas neighborhood in Lucknow's Old City, expressed his agreement with the Shia shopkeeper's view, explaining that "even we have a shop in Nakhas market and we know the suffering." Wahdat, another Shia subject, also agreed, explaining that riots cause his family's "savings to go down to nill" and that "we are the ones who suffer most". Asghar, who had a slightly more extreme reaction to the recording, told the enumerator that "worst-case conditions make people change their view" and that looting and murder in riot contexts lead him to feel that "one can surely fight for himself or for his family".

Whether assigned to religious norms or economic considerations, the Shia subjects recontacted for the follow-up survey frequently described themselves as the targets, rather than the initiators of violence. Asghar, who originally was exposed to the material considerations persuasion, explained that "Shias do not follow violence in Muharram. We are the ones who are victim of the riots happening here in Lucknow". Aman, who was originally exposed to the religious norms and counterargument condition, explained that "the riots usually start from the Sunni side" due to their "extremist nature" and that the cleric's message "was good but does not apply to a common man's life." Ali, who was assigned to hear the religious norms message, explained that if other Shia were to hear the Shia cleric's call to peace in the tense month of Muharram, that "they will feel unsafe against Sunnis". Such reactions lay bare the perception of asymmetrical threat held by Shia Muslims in Lucknow's Old City. As described in the next section, such accounts are highly salient and widespread in the Lucknavi Shia community, and have been for decades.

The follow-up survey also helped to clarify about the apparent role of the counterargument in *reducing* extremism among Shia subjects. Follow-surveys provided anecdotal supporting evidence that Shia subjects perceived the counterargument to be indicative of a violent Shia peer, a perception that would need to be at play for the logic of substitution to be a plausible explanation. One Shia subject, Asghar, for instance, described the counterargument as a "man who sounds like a supporter of Maulana Agha Roohi", who is widely known to be the most virulent anti-Sunni religious cleric in Lucknow's Shia establishment. Ali stated that the "Shia man was right in this context", particularly for noting that the Shia style of prayer was legitimate and began "in the time of Hazrat Ali", the first Imam in the Shia faith. Ali conveyed that he felt reassured by the voice of the Shia man as he would stand up for Shia principles "at any cost", suggesting that the counterargument may have functioned via substitution. Aman explained that he thought the religious cleric's call to peace was out of touch, that he "does not know what happens to common people", but that he felt less incensed when hearing the counterargument, describing its contents as "strong". Yet not every Shia subject reacted to the counterargument in these ways. Abbas heard the counterargument and stated that "people should be positive, they shouldn't invoke violence", indicating that he did not sympathize with the Shia man making the counterargument and in fact openly disagreed with its provocative suggestions.

Taken together, the follow-up survey yields evidence that, on average, the religious norms persuasion apparently elicited more negative, anti-Sunni sentiments than the material considerations message among the original experimental subjects recontacted. Furthermore, these qualitative accounts also indicate a strong sense of victimization within the Shia community.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study sought to investigate the relationship between elite persuasion discouraging extremism and attitudes and behavior among youth. Focusing on extremism between Sunni and Shia youth in Lucknow, the study employed an audio recording experiment used messages recorded with real clerics and shopkeepers among subjects living in the riot-prone Old City neighborhood. Three primary results obtained. First, pro-peace persuasion by an in-group cleric emphasizing religious norms discouraging extremism worked differently for Sunni and Shia subjects. Within each sample, the results show suggestive evidence that this manipulation reduced extremism for Sunni subjects but increased extremism for Shia subjects. Although the within-sample sects do not reach statistical significance, the difference in effects of religious persuasion between sects is significant. Second, the study presents suggestive evidence that listening to a counter-argument to the peace message by an in-group peer increased extremism for Sunni subjects, as expected, but reduced extremism for Shia subjects. Among all subjects exposed to a pro-peace clerical message, the difference in effects of the counterargument was statistically significant. Third, the results did not yield conclusive evidence on whether religious persuasion was more effective in shifting extremism than economic persuasion. They do suggest, however, that religious persuasion exerted larger effects on extremism than economic persuasion. Although statistical power limitations obtained due to the small sample size, these findings offer important implications for future research.

These findings offer three broader lessons for the study of elite persuasion and ethnic conflict. First, the study uses experimental results and qualitative evidence in support of a novel and general theoretical argument on why elite persuasion to peace is expected to function differently for members of victimized as opposed to non-victimized groups. The logic of substitution argues that victimized group members are, on average, expected to substitute-in to extremism by retaining prior extremism levels upon learning that an influential in-group elite is substituting-out of extremism. The motivation to retain extremism relates to the goal of protecting in-group security from the outgroup due to victimization. In doing so, the study lends support for a broader linkage between research on group victimization and extremist attitudes and behaviors. A wide range of ethnic groups have perceived themselves to be victimized at particular periods, from Armenians in Azerbaijan in the 1980s (Kaufman 2001, 60-70) to Palestinians in the West Bank and south Sudanese tribes. Anecdotally, political scientists have argued that victimization can generate threat

perceptions causing groups to “at the very least prepare for violent conflict, and may even go so far as to engage in a preemptive strike” (Keller 1998, 277). Qualitative research has found support for this claim in settings as diverse as victimized groups in the Caucasus (Derluguian 2005) and China (Gries 2004). This study shows that victimization also has important implications for the effect of in-group elite persuasion to peace. Its specific finding on this pattern among the Shia of Lucknow falls in line with other historical research arguing that victimization defines the Shia identity in South Asia (Jones 2011) and abroad (Dabashi 2011).

A second lesson offered by the study relates to the effectiveness of elite persuasion. The study found that religious persuasion exerts a significant effect on extremism between sects. While the present study examines persuasion away from rather than toward extremism, it offers important insights on the general relationship between elite persuasion and extremism. This finding contributes some of the first experimental evidence in support of the constructivist claim that elites affect extremist attitudes and behavior of co-ethnics (Jaffrelot 2009; Wilkinson 2006; Kaufman 2006*b*; Brass 1997*b*). At the same time, the study also presents evidence for an important caveat to this claim. In finding that exposure to a counterargument to the peace message by an in-group peer removed the effect of pro-peace elite persuasion, the study showed that the “competitive framing effect” (Druckman 2004) also obtains in conflict settings. One implication is that “top-down” models of conflict might overstate the role of elites in shaping extremism among youth. To further interrogate this possibility, future studies should examine the survivability of elite persuasion effects in the face of counter-arguments by different elites, youth, or other socially relevant actors.

A third main contribution relates to the literature on religion and extremism. Political scientists have made important contributions as to the determinants of religious extremism among the clergy (Nielsen 2017) and among non-elites.¹⁵ However, far less attention has been given to the question of how to reduce religious extremism. The present study is one of the first to provide direct experimental tests in this regard. It supports a line of thought and practice that employs religious normative persuasion to reduce extremism, while noting why such persuasion may not succeed for victimized group members. By contrast, persuasion by an in-group shopkeeper emphasizing material considerations does not suggest shifts in extremism either within- or between- religious sects.

Two final remarks concern generalizeability and limitations of the present study. First, the study focuses on the general phenomenon of elite persuasion via norms or material considerations with respect to extremism. As such, both the conceptual motivation and theoretical argument

¹⁵See, for instance, on grievances (Blair and Shapiro 2013; Krueger and Malečková 2003), psychology-related variables (Altier, Thoroughgood and Horgan 2014; Borum 2004; Akhtar 1999), religiosity (Fair, Malhotra and Shapiro 2012; Ginges, Hansen and Norenzayan 2009), social network effects (Della Porta 2006; Sageman 2004).

are not constrained to the conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims in Lucknow nor to intra-Islamic conflict more generally. Even still, in the study setting, the local government and police force plays a plausibly neutral role with respect to Sunni-Shia conflict, using its law and order powers to prevent or mitigate conflict. The presence of a neutral government differs from other conflict settings, where the government may be partial to one side (Wilkinson 2006). This places an important scope condition on the experimental findings here. In future research, scholars can investigate whether similar effects obtain when the government tacitly or directly supports either the victimized or non-victimized group against the other. If extrapolated, the substitution logic would expect that as a government's support to the non-victimized group increases, victimized group members are expected to be more likely to retain or increase extremism when exposed to a pro-peace call by an influential in-group elite. Additional experimental research would be fruitful in examining this expectation.

The last comment relates to the limitations of the present study. Owing to limited sample size, statistical power limitations are a plausible explanation for why average treatment effects within-sect did not reach statistical significance. However, the results offer important evidence of the substitution effect due to the the average treatment effects within sects—which were in opposite directions—and the differences between sects of in-group religious norms persuasion and the counterargument to the peace message—which were statistically significant. In a follow-up experiment conducted by the author in the same setting with 2,100 Sunni and Shia subjects, the results found that in-group clerical persuasion significantly reduced extremism among the Sunni but did not do so among the Shia. This finding gives greater confidence to the pattern found in the present study. Further scientific inquiry can help establish whether the logic of substitution holds in other conflict settings.

4.7 Appendix

Audio Recording Transcripts in English

Sunni Audio Recordings

1. Elite Persuasion By Sunni Cleric Emphasizing Religious Norms Prohibiting Violence (5 minutes in duration)

In the name of Allah, the most beneficent and the most merciful. All praises for Allah and prayers for the Prophet Muhammad and his progeny. I, Maulana Muhammad Sufyan Nizami, from Lucknow is speaking to you.

These days, around the world, we have been facing such conditions where followers of one religion are having doubts about the belief systems and other things related to the other religions. In such a situation, it is a very commendable effort through which we can try to understand each others' religion and the similarities that Sunnis and Shias share amongst themselves, so that we can take them up in order to move forward in our lives. These efforts will also help remove the disagreements between different religion which are often manifested in the form of violence across the world.

All the Muslims, regardless of whatever sect they belong to, believe in the holy book of Islam called the Quran. Every Muslim believes that this holy book was revealed on the last prophet of God, Hazrat Muhammad (Peace be upon him). The purpose of this revelation was to eliminate the prejudices and differences that people had regarding each others religions and beliefs. Instead it encouraged the spirit of humanity in the society.

It is said that the Caliph of Islam, Hazrat Ali (May God be pleased with him) was once in a war where he over powered an infidel/disbeliever of Islam. Hazrat Ali (R.A.) wanted to kill him and the conditions were very favorable whereby he could easily put the disbeliever to death. Meanwhile, the disbeliever spat on the face of Hazrat Ali and Hazrat Alis ego dictated him to let that disbeliever go free. People inquired him about this incident curiously as to why he did that. Hazrat Ali (R.A.) replied that if he did anything to the disbeliever after he spat on him, it would have been a personal revenge and Islam does not allow for such kinds of personal revenge. In Islam, only the battles/wars fought in the name of Allah and His Prophet are appreciated. If anyone starts taking revenge for his own being, belongings and ego and starts using the name of the religion Islam politically, such situations generate violence of whose greatest example is in front of the world these days.

For the same reason, the brotherhood that the Prophet Muhammad preached to his companions has been quoted by several followers and companions. At one instance, during a war, an injured companion of the Prophet was asking for water in his feeble voice, someone brought him water and

before he could drink it, another injured companion also asked for water and the cup, untouched by the first companion, was instead forwarded to the second companion. Before the second companion could drink it, a third injured companion asked for water and the second companion passed the water onto the third one without drinking. Eventually, all the three injured companions embraced martyrdom. We have gotten a lesson of such amazing brotherhood, sacrifice and humanity from the companions and followers of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him).

Even the life of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is replete with such instances of humanity. One day, when the lady that used to throw trash on the Prophet everyday while he passed through her street was not there and he heard that she was ill, he went to inquire for her health. In another instance, when the Prophet of the God was circumnavigating the Kaaba in Mecca, Allah sent him a revelation that a man named Fuzala was carrying a spear under his arm to harm him. The Prophet went on to him and confronted. He admitted his crime and the Prophet forgave him. Such instances from the religion of Islam presents a lesson to all of us that we should never take revenges for the sake of ourselves. These examples teach us that it is our responsibility to take up all the similarities that the different sects of Islam represent with each other, follow those, be sympathetic to each other and create an environment of brotherhood in the society. If we happen to come across specific deeds pertaining to any particular sect of religion that we think might create tensions between two or more sects of Islam, we must take it up with our elders and scholars and seek their guidance on this matter. Whatever they suggest, should be followed instead of taking any step by ourselves individually.

2. Elite Persuasion By Sunni Shopkeeper Emphasizing Material Considerations Disincentivizing Violence (5 minutes in duration)

My name is Ubaid and I am from old Lucknow. I deal in cloth business. Today, we will discuss about the conflicts between Shias and Sunnis; their implications on businesses, masses, the entire city and the consequent economic impacts of it on common people.

Whenever there are conflicts happening between Shias and Sunnis, shopkeepers and cloth merchants like myself are affected very much as most of my artisans are from areas around Lucknow like Sitapur, Barabanki and Kanpur. In the month of Muharram, when there are Shia and Sunni conflicts going on, my workers are very reluctant to show up at the business place due to the tense conditions prevailing in the city. This affects my production negatively and it automatically gets reflected in the lower sales of our products. Therefore, these Shia Sunni conflicts impact us to a great extent.

It is not just me. Most of the businessmen get affected in the old Lucknow areas like Nakhas, Chowk area, Khala Bazaar, Taalkatora where there are processions etc happening in Muharram. Women do not go out for shopping easily, which impacts shopkeepers sales. We should devise ways as to how we can live peacefully together which will help increase our mutual understanding

and love for each other. This will help eliminate the conflicts that arise due to a small faction of people. Such anarchist people exist within the Sunnis as well as the Shias who try to make the situation unfavorable for the rest. They do not have anything better to do in their lives and therefore they deliberately try and create such conflict like situations which impact a lot of people.

About 2 or 3 years ago, in 2013, there happened a huge conflict between the Shias and Sunnis seven or eight days before the Eid. Several properties were burnt down and a lot of destruction was caused. As a result, a curfew was imposed in the Nakhas area and Khala Bazaar due to which all the shops were closed down and businesses were severely impacted. A lot of these merchants/shopkeepers are the ones who live hand to mouth every day. Their families and children suffered to a great degree and we cannot even imagine these poor families who were not able to enjoy their Eid celebrations because of this incident. Rich businessmen can have back up options but merchants who live hand to mouth on daily income suffer the most. Events like these happen in Lucknow only. If you go to Mumbai or Delhi, you will see no conflicts of this sort between Shias and Sunnis and the month of Muharram is observed with peace. These cities are also more developed than Lucknow. More investment comes into the projects within these cities because the companies do not have to think a lot about the situation of the city they are investing in. However, investors are usually reluctant to invest in Lucknow owing to the situation of the city and would rather invest in NCR or in cities like Mumbai, Delhi and Gurgaon etc which would be more profitable for them. Such unfavorable conditions exist only in old Lucknow; new Lucknow is totally different where even during the month of Muharram, shops keep open and sales are happening.

We should not trigger anything in such situations. Whatever anyone else is doing, we should keep our calm and live together with love and brotherhood which will help both the sects. On the other hand, if we keep on fighting with each other, we will be affected economically. If we live together with peace, it will be financially beneficial, people will speak highly of us and investment will be attracted to increase employment opportunities for the benefit of the people of Lucknow. But we never think about this. Instead, we keep ourselves involved in the Shia-Sunni conflict.

I would say this to any Sunni brother who plans on picking a fight/conflict with Shias that he should consider the fact how adversely such a situation affects other Sunni Muslims. Several Sunnis happen to be financially weak, living hand to mouth on daily earnings so they and their families have to struggle a lot in the conflict situations. Therefore, I would say that as Sunnis we should consider this and stay away from the conflicts to avoid problems.

3. Counter-Argument By Sunni Young Adult Man (3 minutes in duration)

Greetings, peace be unto you. My name is Abdullah and I am from old Lucknow. Today, through this audio, we will explore what disagreements exist between Shias and Sunnis. Some people say that there are no disagreements and everyone follows the same path. However, I do not agree with this point of view. For example, I would like to highlight a few things for you. It

is said that Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) once exclaimed that people should follow the way as he used to offer his prayers (Namaz). Bukhari and Muslim, the two books that we, as Muslims, consider very authentic after the Quran, both at multiple places, mention that the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) used to rest his hands one upon another or on his chest while offering his prayers. However, some Shia Muslims disagree with that and say that he didn't fold/rest his hands on his chest during prayers then how can we accept this? So someone who recognizes the importance of these books after Quran would ever be able to agree to this belief that Prophet Muhammad used to offer prayers without resting his hands on his chest?

Another point worth mentioning is that the four caliphs of Islam, Hazrat Abu Bakar Siddique (R.A.), Hazrat Umar (R.A.), Hazrat Usman (R.A.) and Hazrat Ali (R.A.) are considered very pious by us. About Hazrat Umar (R.A.), even the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) said that if there was going to be another prophet after himself, it would have been Umar. Hadith is full of instances of good conduct by these caliphs and how they helped spread Islam. It is said that Allah, Himself, wanted Umar to embrace Islam so a Muslim with a true belief can never tolerate if someone dishonors him, his life or for that matter let's say Abu Bakar's life. I understand that some people would not like this but the true belief of a Muslim will never allow anyone to misbehave or say anything foul about any of these caliphs. Same reaction would be observed even if this happens with regards to Hazrat Ali (R.A.). In short, we should admit, that differences definitely exist.

Transcripts for Shia Audio Recordings

1. Elite Persuasion By Shia Cleric Emphasizing Religious Norms Disincentivizing Violence (5 minutes in duration)

In the name of Allah, the most beneficent and the most merciful. All praise for God Almighty who is the creator of all the universes. My name is Maulana Syed Raza Hussain and I am from Lucknow. It is commendable that an important topic regarding unity is being highlighted today. First of all, I would like to say that Quran has stressed its importance as well in the following words: ... “And hold fast by the rope of Allah (divine injunctions) all together and be not disunited.” This is one of the basic teachings of the Quran and an instruction from God that all of us, as Muslims, should follow whole heartedly. We should focus on the fact that this is what Quran is teaching us. If there is no unity within a nation, it is seen as a divided (weak) one. Therefore, Quran in its teachings and the other actions like congregation during prayers teach us to stay united. We do not have any differences between Shias and our Sunni brothers on this point i.e. offering prayers. It is obligatory for all the Muslims to offer prayers and this in itself is a lesson of unity especially when offered in congregation.

The very basis of the Shia sect of religion is against any violence in fact, it is rather entirely opposite to violence. Violence is considered forbidden in our sect. Shias are usually those people who after the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) consider Hazrat Ali (May God be pleased with him) a Caliph of his, Khalifa bil fazal, and his true successor. The sayings of Hazrat Ali (R.A.) can be seen in the compilation of Nahj-ul-Balaagha. It can also be observed that he always condemned violence during his life and remained a preacher of love and cooperation to the humanity. It can also be observed that a lot of sects stood against him when he was in power but he never used any form of violence. Instead he tried to tell them with love in order to bring them towards unity. For example, you can see that Hazrat Ali (R.A.) himself, the successor of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him), was targeted, terrorized and hurt. After the injury, he was brought home. You can hardly find any instance around the world where any international leader was a victim of violence and he/she did not take any revenge. However, Hazrat Ali (R.A) set a contrary example in his lifetime in this regard. Even when Ibne Muljim al Muradi, the accused, was brought to him, Hazrat Ali (R.A.) ordered to untie the ropes around his hands and asked his companions to offer him some milk to drink. Hence, through Hazrat Alis life we can learn that violence does not have to be reciprocated by violence and instead we should practice patience in such circumstances as has been taught by Maula Ali (R.A.).

Another instance of violence was observed at the funeral of Hazrat Ali’s son, Hazrat Imam Hassan, when Bani Hashim wanted to bury his body inside the premises of the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). Arrow shootings were used as a form of violence and it could

have potentially led to a fight between the two groups. However, Hazrat Ali and Hazrat Imam Hussain from Bani Hashim did not retaliate with violence. Hazrat Imam Hassan, in fact, once said that if he was not allowed to be buried near his grand father, the Prophet of Islam, he should be taken to Jannat ul Bakee and buried near his mother instead. Therefore, it can be seen that no violence was triggered, no one was hurt, injured or killed by Bani Hashim in such a situation and Hazrat Imam Hassan was taken to be buried in Jannat ul Bakee.

You can see that Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A.) used to ask until his last moments of life that why the enemies were planning on killing him and whether if, at any point, he misinterpreted the things which were allowed or not allowed in Islam. Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A.) sacrificed his own life and preached the entire world that violence is never a preferred way of conduct and in order to avoid violence, it is okay to sacrifice one's own life to achieve the greater aims as a society. The important aim and mission that Hazrat Imam Hussain was following in his life was to tell the people that terrorism is wrong and has to be discouraged and humanity has to flourish forever.

Blessings be unto you.

2. Elite Persuasion by Shia Shopkeeper Emphasizing Material Considerations Disincen- tivizing Violence (5 minutes in duration)

Blessings unto you. My name is Amaan Zaidi and I am from old Lucknow. We have a small shop near our house where we sell different gift items. Today I want to talk to you about the conflicts between Shias and Sunnis and what implications they have on the businesses and as a society at large. Whenever there occurs a conflict between Shias and Sunnis and tension is building up between the two groups, I feel that the people affected the most belong to the smaller businesses or are the ones who depend on daily income and have to support several other people besides their own selves. For example, although our shop is a small one yet a supplier who brings in items everyday and two other boys working here support their household through the income earned at our gift shop only. Whenever there is a conflict happening between the Sunnis and the Shias, the supplier does not show up and neither do the other two boys feel safe to come to work. Our shop has been around for only about 5 to 7 years but we have seen that whenever a conflict has happened in the area, we have suffered a lot in our business.

In addition to our area, the neighborhoods like Nakhas, Aaka Chowk, Kashmiri Mohalla, Taalkatora, Khala Bazaar also face a similar situation during the conflicts and their businesses remain closed. It usually happens in the months of either Muharram or Ramzan that whenever a group is taking out any procession, the other sect would start misbehaving. Sometimes they would throw stones at the procession and at other times they would chant slogans against each other.

A few years ago, in 2013, a huge conflict happened here between the Shias and the Sunnis just a few days before the Eid. I feel myself lucky that we at least have a shop and consequently some savings to support ourselves in case of such a situation when the businesses have to close down.

It does not affect us as adversely for a day or two as it affects the people who set up their stalls and carts every day in areas like Nakhaas and their families entirely depend on the daily earnings from these. Such people live hand to mouth every day. Due to the curfew imposed as a result of the huge conflict, the entire Eid celebration was ruined for these poor people who could not set up their carts and stalls in these severe conditions.

As you all know that companies are resistant to come and invest in such conflict areas. We can clearly see the difference between the new Lucknow and the old Lucknow. Businesses usually keep open in New Lucknow whereas in Old Lucknow, everything shuts down even if there is a small conflict happening between the two sects. Therefore, no one is willing to bring in investment or other businesses in our area. You would definitely know the popularity of the online businesses but even these companies do not deliver in our area when conflicts are happening.

I would say that all of us should try not to add fuel to the fire. If we know anyone who is encouraging others to pick up a fight and sees some sort of a solution during or after a conflict, we should stop them. We need to tell them that if conflict happens and shops are burnt down, it would not only impact the people belonging to the other sect but we, ourselves would also be negatively impacted. We can never truly assess the damage and loss incurred to the other side but we should be able to see the damage caused to our own Shia brothers and sisters, the followers of Hazrat Imam Hussain. We should never assume that if we pursue any conflict, it would only impact the other side. Even though situations like these seem to be very local in nature, their impacts are far reaching and long lasting. If ever you plan on throwing a stone to disrupt the procession led by the other sect or something of a similar sort, you should keep in mind that it would impact our own brothers and sisters as well.

3. Counterargument by Shia Young Adult Man (3 minutes in duration)

Blessings upon each one of you. My name is Suleman Hussain Rizvi and I am from the old Lucknow. Today we will talk about the conflicts that we have with the Sunni brothers. There is a verse in the Quran which says and means that “This day, I have perfected your religion for you.” Probably all of us are not aware of the basis on which the religion was considered perfect. Suleman e Kandoozi e Hanfi Naqshbandi, Janaab e ul Muwaddat, a Sunni Muslim, in his famous book writes that on the day of Ghadeer, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was heard saying “Whoever wishes to follow me (as a Master), should also follow Ali (as a Master).” And the Quranic verse regarding the perfection of the religion was revealed. Therefore, it is questionable as to how even after such an announcement in the grounds of Ghadeer, Abu Bakar, Umar and Usman were made the caliphs after the life of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). So you see, there will always remain a conflict at this point.

Secondly, Sunnis believe that Shias follow a Quran with 40 chapters 10 of which were revealed on the Imam of the time. It is baseless. One can visit our homes and see for ones self that we have

the same Quran as others, consisting of 30 chapters and we follow that. In fact, the Imam of the time is always a practical role model of the same Quran which makes it pointless for him to bring another 10 chapters along. This matter is a rumor and a propaganda spread by the Sunni leaders themselves.

The third most important thing to be considered here is the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) which tells us to follow the same way of offering prayers as he used to in his life. After the three caliphs, when the rule of Hazrat Ali (R.A.) started as a Caliph and he led the prayers after a few days, something noticeable happened. Sahi Bukhaari documents this event and Jaabir bin Abdullah Ibne Ansari, a very respectable companion of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) said that “Today I have offered the prayers the same way as I used to behind the Prophet Muhammad.” Therefore, it is evident that during the 25 years in which Ali was not granted the powers as a caliph after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, the way of offering prayers, one of the most important things in Islam, got modified by the people. The true spirit of Islam can only be learnt from the life of Hazrat Ali bin Abi Taalib and his descendants.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 4.7: Full Sample: Descriptive Statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Employed	479	0.670	0.471	0	1
Yrs. Religious Education	476	3.017	2.971	0	20
Numb. Outgroup Friends	477	5.864	8.063	0	50
Violent Ingroup Peers	458	3.461	6.493	0	50
Mosque Prayer Freq.	475	5.472	5.919	0	35
Sectarian Identification	480	0.250	0.433	0	1

Table 4.8: Sunni Sample: Descriptive Statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Employed	240	0.788	0.410	0	1
Yrs. Quran Lessons	240	2.442	2.079	0	9
Numb. Outgroup Friends	240	1.163	2.327	0	15
Violent Ingroup Peers	240	1.300	1.839	0	8
Mosque Prayer Freq.	237	5.135	7.146	0	35
Sectarian Identification	240	0.075	0.264	0	1

Table 4.9: Shia Sample: Descriptive Statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Employed	239	0.552	0.498	0	1
Yrs. Religious Education	236	3.602	3.572	0	20
Numb. Outgroup Friends	237	10.624	8.966	0	50
Violent Ingroup Peers	218	5.839	8.614	0	50
Mosque Prayer Freq.	238	5.807	4.357	0	21
Sectarian Identification	240	0.425	0.495	0	1

Ethics

One issue concerned the inclusion of a counterargument to the peace message as an experimental manipulation. The experiment was designed such that a counterargument only appeared in conditions where a pro-peace theological or economic message also appeared. One could imagine

an experimental setup in which some subjects heard only a peace message or a counterargument, which could have facilitated a more direct estimate of the effects of the counterargument. I decided against this approach. A counterargument-only condition could be understood as working against a socially desirable outcome. Moreover, a counterargument-only condition might have increased the risk to enumerators: subjects might assume that the enumerator was working on behalf of an extremist organization and might have responded aggressively.

To carefully design the Sunni and Shia counterargument messages, interviews were conducted with members of local NGOs as well as with street youth. A final decision was made to craft each counterargument such that the speaker emphasized religious differences between his sect and the outgroup. The messages were delivered in a provocative tone to signal the speaker's apparent attempt to criticize the outgroup. Residents in Old Lucknow are frequently exposed to such commentary, and local experts who listened to the recordings before the experiment confirmed that such messages were highly unlikely to pose threats to either enumerators or subjects. At the end of the study, enumerators debriefed all Sunni and Shia experimental subjects who heard a counterargument were told that it was recorded by a local, pro-peace individual who was acting out the part of an extremist to facilitate the study. Enumerators confirmed that subjects understood and appreciated this information.

A second issue concerns the steps taken to protect subjects' privacy, including data protection measures. First, enumerators approached subjects at small shops, tea stands, and small side streets and ensured that all subjects were surveyed privately in the absence of bystanders. Second, enumerators informed subjects that their individual responses would never be publicly tied to their identity. To support this approach, enumerators recorded data on two paper survey sheets. On the first sheet, they recorded the subject's respondent ID number and first name; last names were not collected in order to further minimize the potential cost of data theft and alleviate subject concerns. This sheet was then stored in a pouch by the enumerator. The second survey sheet only contained respondent ID numbers and columns numbered by question number, with responses entered as numerical quantities. This approach was meant to assure subjects that even in the rare case of data theft or forced disclosure by local authorities, it would be impossible for a third party to trace responses to particular individuals using only the second sheet. On a nightly basis, enumerators stored each day's paper data in a lock box. At the end of the study, I obtained the paper spreadsheets and personally entered all paper data into a password-protected computer file. Enumerators retained no copies of the data.

A third issue involves the decision to disclose the full names of speakers in the Sunni and Shia pro-peace religious and economic messages. Prior to the experiment launch, I discussed the implications of including speaker names with NGO officers, local clerics and shopkeepers, and street youth. My interlocutors agreed that there would be little reprisal against the speaker of a pro-

peace message in Lucknow by extremist elements for two reasons. First, there are many pro-peace activists, including religious leaders and a small business association, that protest against Sunni-Shia violence in Lucknow and even publicly condemn individual community members accused of inciting such violence. For this reason, the pro-peace audio recordings would be very unlikely of posing a risk to pro-peace speakers even by extremist subjects. Second, my interlocutors suggested that the decision to administer the audio recordings in a private manner—using a cell phone and headphones—would substantially reduce the likelihood of a significant response by extremist community members. They explained that enumerator control of the audio messages meant that such messages could not be transmitted by subjects and attract high publicity.

I conveyed such logic to a set of potential speakers, some of whom declined to participate. I obtained the consent of the final speakers in the study's pro-peace messages to use their names on the audios. The speakers themselves stated their full first and last name in the beginning of the audio.

Lastly, several measures were put in place to ensure the safety of enumerators and experimental subjects. First, I obtained permission from a Lucknow-based Indian intergroup peace NGO, the Shoulder to Shoulder Foundation, to equip my enumerators with personalized photo ID cards that bore the official logo of the NGO. The purpose of the ID cards was to reduce suspicions on the part of subjects regarding the organization or motives behind the study. Such permission was particularly appreciated since the enumerators had no prior affiliation with the NGO and the NGO was not taking part in the study. During the experiment, enumerators stated that the NGO ID cards substantially assisted their endeavor: several subjects asked to see the ID cards and became relaxed upon learning that the enumerators were affiliated with an official local NGO and not working on behalf of a nefarious or unauthorized entity. All subjects were told that the study was conducted by a Columbia University researcher. Second, I decided to use enumerators who shared the same gender (male) and sectarian identity (Sunni or Shia) as respondents. Prior extensive field research in Lucknow's Old City, as well as conversations with organizations that conduct surveys and field studies in Lucknow advised that it was far more likely that subjects would be willing to offer their honest opinions on questions of violent attitudes and behavior to members of their own sect. Third, I assembled the enumerator team with young adult Sunni and Shia men who were from the Old City. Such enumerators felt comfortable operating in their local area due to their extensive knowledge of the Old City's layout and locations where subjects could be sampled.

*Clerical Persuasion and Religious Extremism: An Experiment
Among Sunni and Shia Muslims in Northern India*

5.1 Introduction

Religious extremists around the world use scripture to justify and mobilize violence. Pro-peace clerics counter extremism with religious arguments of their own. After the formation of the Islamic State group, for instance, the *New York Times* described the scale of anti-violence appeals by Muslim clerics as tantamount to a “theological battle” against extremists (Times 2016). In Sri Lanka, the Sarvodaya organization and related groups use Buddhist scripture to refute militant interpretations of that faith (Bond 1992, 261). And in the riot-hit city of Jos in northern Nigeria, Christian clerics promote peace to youth with reference to biblical teachings and norms (Nozell and Hayward 2014).

There is little evidence whether such religious persuasion actually works. In interviews that I conducted, officials from governments and inter-governmental organizations emphasized that effective policy and programming is hampered by a dearth of scientific evidence. Since many counter-extremism programs rely on clerics to promote peace, the demand for evidence on approaches related to religion is particularly high.¹

For political scientists, this policy gap reflects an important research question: how do ethnic elites affect extremist behavior? In addition to incentives and forced recruitment, prominent models of ethnic conflict claim that elites employ persuasion to shape their followers’ extremism as part of the production of conflict (Wilkinson 2006; Kaufman 2006*b*; Varshney 2003). Yet these accounts largely assume that elite persuasion works. The question of whether, how, and to what extent elite persuasion shapes extremist behavior receives little attention in the literature. A related gap is whether such appeals work differently within the groups in conflict.

I report the results of one of the first experimental investigations on how elite persuasion affects

¹Multiple interviews with officials at the Hedayah Institute, Abu Dhabi, UAE, December 2015; U.K. Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials, May 2015.

extremist behaviors. For ethical and security considerations, I look at persuasion away from extremism. My study examines the case of extremism among Sunni and Shia Muslims in Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh, India's largest state. Lucknow is home to higher levels of Sunni-Shia violence than any other Indian city.

I implemented an audio recording experiment among a random sample of 2,100 Sunni and Shia young adult men. The sample was recruited and treated on small side streets in the Old City district, where nearly all of the city's sectarian violence occurs. I convinced a real, local Sunni and Shia cleric to record detailed religious arguments against violence for study purposes. The experimental design mimicked a common feature in religious conflicts: individuals are exposed to pro-peace messages by in-group and out-group clerics. Therefore, I randomly assigned subjects to listen to either the in-group cleric message (5 minutes); out-group cleric message (5 minutes), both, with order randomized (10 minutes); or neither. Enumerators used headphones to deliver the recordings, which were preloaded on their mobile phones. In order to obtain a relatively hard test of pro-peace appeals, I timed the experiment to begin a few days after the end of Muharram, the first month of the Muslim calendar when sectarian violence in Lucknow—and many parts of the Muslim world—is highest.

Two face-to-face endline surveys eight hours apart measured proxies of extremist behaviors. The measures capture a relatively costly expression of extremism while posing minimal risks to subjects and research staff. The first measure was taken immediately following treatment: enumerators offered for purchase (at a small cost) a pro-peace wristband stating "Sunni-Shia" unity in Urdu. Approximately eight hours later, a different enumerator re-contacted subjects by phone to arrange a second in-person interview. The second behavioral item was measured unobtrusively: enumerators recorded if subjects wore the wristband at the follow-up interview. The third item measured violent speech using an open-ended question. Subjects were asked to speak briefly about whether they would take part in collective violence against the outgroup if their group was hypothetically insulted by an outgroup cleric. To analyze pre-specified mechanisms, the survey administered additional questions after the three behavioral measures.

The core finding of this study is that exposure to an anti-violence religious argument from an in-group cleric reduces extremism for members of a non-victimized group (here: the Sunni) but not members of a victimized group (the Shia). Since the latter seek to maintain group survival in the face of anticipated threats, they are expected to retain extremism even when discouraged to do so by one of their religious leaders. Members of a non-victimized group, for their part, do not face a comparable threat and are thus expected to comply with an anti-violence religious appeal by an in-group cleric. I developed this theoretical argument based on qualitative insights from my field research in Lucknow and a previous experimental study that I implemented there (Sharma 2017*b*).

In this study, the experimental results show that the in-group cleric message significantly re-

duces extremist behavior on all three measures of extremist behavior for Sunni but not Shia subjects. By contrast, the out-group cleric message and the interaction of both messages did not significantly reduce extremist behaviors on any measure for the Sunni or Shia samples. I suggest that the latter two findings can be explained by applying a version of the reactive devaluation hypothesis from political psychology: the out-group cleric's message may not have been effective as it may have raised suspicion or confusion about the intentions of a perceived enemy who issues a friendly gesture.

I took several steps to examine the effect of the in-group cleric message between the Sunni and Shia samples. First, I show that the in-group cleric message works significantly less effectively in reducing extremism among the Shia on each of the three outcome measures. I then explored the mechanisms by which the message changed extremist behavior for the Sunni sample. This analysis shows that the in-group message operated not only by increasing concerns of clerical sanctioning for noncompliance, but also by shifting prescriptive norms regarding the permissibility of violence, increasing confidence that the outgroup will punish its own extremists, and reducing personal willingness to punish outgroup extremists.

Lastly, I used additional analyses to examine the plausibility of the proposed victimization logic. It could be the case, for instance, that characteristics other than religious identity might explain the differential effect of the in-group message. To investigate, I regressed a standardized index of the three extremism measures on the treatments interacted with Shia identity. I show that even when including enumerator fixed effects and covariates, the ingroup cleric message works significantly less effectively in reducing extremism for Shia subjects. I then probed whether this pattern remains statistically significant even when accounting for interactions of the treatment with each other covariate. The result is that the in-group message also elicits a differential effect between unemployed and employed subjects but that the difference in effects of the message between sects remains significant ($p < 0.05$). This suggests that there is an economic component to the differential effect of the in-group message but also a religious component. No such pattern obtains for the other covariates.

This chapter offers three main contributions to political science and policy. First, whereas past work on persuasion has focused on attributes of speakers, recipients, or messages (Chong and Druckman 2007), I argue that intergroup inequalities matter for understanding the effectiveness of elite persuasion. In demonstrating this finding in the domain of conflict-related behavior, I extend a similar argument in research on vote choice and migration showing that intergroup inequalities—in the form of majority-minority cleavages—explain differential responsiveness to ethnic appeals. Chhibber and Sekhon (2014), for example, demonstrates that appeals that emphasize the co-ethnicity of political candidates work for minority but not majority groups. In their study of acceptance of migrants in Mumbai, Gaikwad and Nellis (2016) find that co-ethnicity

primes increase acceptance among members of the minority group but not the majority. This study contributes a logic involving victimization that complements approaches highlighting minority status.

Second, the study illuminates the conditions under which appeals by religious elites shape conflict-related behaviors. Much of the literature to date has instead focused on the role of religious identity and scriptural references in the formation of political preferences and political participation (Masoud, Jamal and Nugent 2016; McClendon and Riedl 2015; McCauley 2014).² This study expands these investigations to the context of extremism. In doing so, I demonstrate a counterintuitive result: even some highly religious publics do not simply move in the direction of a leader's appeal. Religious leaders promoting peace, in other words, can be far less influential in their own groups than expected.³ For scholars of Muslim societies, the finding that Shia subjects do not on average comply with a pro-peace order from a Shia cleric is particularly striking. Scholars frequently describe the Shia as particularly obedient to their clerics due to the special importance of clerical authority in Shia theology (Walbridge 2001). More generally, the findings caveat constructivist models suggesting that symbolic persuasion might work similarly for all ethnic groups (Jaffrelot 2009; Toft 2007; Atran 1990; Tambiah 1992). Instead, the results speak to the plausibility of an earlier proposition that members of 'backward groups' in conflict settings are more resistant to calls for conciliatory behavior by their own elites (Horowitz 1985, 175).

Third, the chapter expands the literature on extremism to an important yet underexplored question: how to reduce religious extremism? Empirical research on of extremism mostly analyzes the correlates of extremist attitudes (Mitts 2016; Rink and Sharma 2016; Blair and Shapiro 2013; Fair, Malhotra and Shapiro 2012; Silke 2008; Krueger and Malečková 2003) or behavior (Sharma 2017c). This study broadens this scope by showing the power and limitations of religious persuasion to reduce extremism in the short-run. Since the treatments are lighter versions of the types of clerical persuasion that commonly take place, the results offer important insights on which larger-scale interventions will be most effective in reducing extremism. In particular, the evidence highlights the efficacy of pro-peace persuasion by an in-group cleric rather than by an outgroup cleric or both. This finding casts doubt on qualitative accounts of conflict resolution recommending exposure to elites from both groups (Rouhana and Kelman 1994).

²A recent exception is Condra, Isaqzadeh and Linardi (2017), who experimentally test the effect of clerical influence on charitable giving in Afghanistan.

³The use of relatively lengthy, detailed messages meets demand for a "thicker" study of religion (Philpott 2009).

5.2 Case Study: Lucknow

Background

Violence between members of the Sunni and Shia sects of Islam is salient in countries across the Muslim world. In India, the highest levels of Sunni-Shia violence occurs in Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh, India's largest state.⁴ This feature erodes the democratic value of political tolerance in what is arguably India's most important political center after New Delhi.

The genesis of the Sunni-Shia rift can be traced back to the first Islamic caliphate under the Prophet Muhammad. Upon the Prophet's death, one faction of his followers (Arabic: *as-sahaba*) argued that the Prophet had asked to be succeeded by members of his bloodline beginning with Ali, his cousin and son-in-law. This faction became known as the Shia. Another more powerful faction, who came to be known as the Sunni, succeeded in installing a different successor to the Prophet. The disagreement over the Prophet's successor, coupled with the later murder of Ali and his two sons, gave rise to different patterns of authority and jurisprudence among the Sunni and Shia. The politicization of such differences defines the spells of sectarian violence across the Islamic world.

Shiism is defined by the concepts of martyrdom and victimization that become publicized through seminal rituals in the Muslim holy month of Muharram, which lasts for 68 or 69 days in South Asia.⁵ In Lucknow as elsewhere in the Islamic world, the Shia practice of *azadari* rituals, as they are known, draws the ire of conservative Sunni Muslims. For Sunni extremists, these rituals constitute apostasy due to their reverence for Ali and Hussein rather than God, and thus render Shia participants as punishable by death (Jones 2011).

The first Sunni-Shia riot in Lucknow broke out during Muharram in 1906. A radical Sunni cleric mobilized a crowd that stood in front of a Shia mosque and loudly praised the first three successors of Prophet Muhammad but not the fourth, Ali, who is venerated by the Shia. When the Shia replied with a chant to insult the first three caliphs, a major riot broke out. Ever since, sectarian violence in Lucknow has immediately followed the exchange of two contentious rituals, the *jaloos-e-madh-e-sahaba* by Sunni extremists⁶, and *tabarra* by Shia extremists⁷. Such provocations

⁴Interestingly in the Indian context, the city has never experienced a major act of Hindu-Muslim violence for at least the past century (Sinha 1978, 1841).

⁵In recent decades, Muharram rituals in Lucknow have exclusively been practiced by the Shia, with major processions featuring mock-coffins, chest-beating with spiked chains (Urdu: *zanjir matam*), and powerful elegies (*marsiyah*).

⁶The *madh-e-sahaba* procession is a chief mechanism for Sunni extremists to contest Shiism itself (Hasan 1998).

⁷*Tabarra* means 'disassociation', but is colloquially understood as an anti-Sunni slander.

typically take place during holy periods.⁸ Nearly all of the Sunni and Shia processions, provocations, and violence take place in the Old City, Lucknow's most historic yet most impoverished district, and home to almost 1 million.

Present-day Lucknow is also affected by widespread extremist attitudes and behaviors. Radical clerics routinely propagate normative appeals to violence in Friday prayer services, religious gatherings, and private meetings. My field research revealed that extremist religious clerics often publicize their appeals to followers using a family member who disseminates rumors, slander, or threats to the outgroup. In an interview, one seasoned cleric explained that extremist clerics rely on formal and informal means to “keep the crowds on a constant boil so that they are full of hate when a *maulana* wants to cause violence.”⁹

The task of attenuating extremist propaganda and religious violence is a priority for the U.P. state government and Lucknow authorities.¹⁰ As Lucknow's senior-most police officer explained to me¹¹, the city annually convenes a peace committee tasked with minimizing violence. The committee includes influential Sunni and Shia clerics, community elders, and police officers. It coordinates efforts to discourage violent clerical appeals and prepare procession routes. During Muharam, the state government temporarily increases the number of riot control officers in the Old City using across-state transfers. They are joined by Special Police Officers (Hindi: *Vishesh Police Adhikari*), or unarmed local Sunni, Shia, and Hindu residents who are screened and trained by the state to diffuse tensions, report incidents, and liaise with uniformed police.

Qualitative insights from field research suggest that the government has played a plausibly neutral role with respect to both sects. Different state administrations led by the Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Congress Party, Samajwadi Party (SaPa), and Bahujan Samaaj Party (BSP) have facilitated intergroup negotiations.¹² Sunni and Shia community elders and journalists widely expressed the view that the police, while Hindu in majority, respond promptly to dispel riots and make arrests of violent extremists with scant signs of sectarian bias.¹³

⁸Especially Muharram; the Prophet's birth and death anniversary (Urdu: *Barawafat*); and 18th—21st Ramadan.

⁹Interview with Maulana J.M., Old City, Lucknow, July 2014.

¹⁰According to data that I reviewed that was provided by the Lucknow police department, about one Sunni-Shia riot has taken place every three years since the year 2000.

¹¹Interview with SSP Praveen Kumar, Lucknow Police Headquarters, Lucknow, August 2014.

¹²Interviews with deputy U.P. superintendent of police and the Superintendent of Police for Lucknow West, July 2014.

¹³Interviews with *Times of India* journalist A.R., Dainik Jagran Chowk, Lucknow, August 2014 and August 2015; and with community elders in Aishbagh, Wazirganj, and Gomti Nagar, Lucknow, August 2015 and January 2016.

Case Justification

I examine persuasion and extremism among the Sunni and Shia of Lucknow's Old City for three reasons. First, the Old City is a good laboratory to study religious persuasion. In Lucknow, as in other Indian cities, residential segregation along Hindu-Muslim lines implies that Muslims typically live amongst themselves, which facilitates extended interaction with religious clerics and higher religious observance. Appeals by clerics to discourage or encourage extremism are a salient feature of local life, particularly as the Old City houses nearly all of Lucknow's sectarian violence.

Second, the case offers a novel take on the study of ethnic minorities. Political scientists who study ethnic violence in India mostly analyze Hindu-Muslim violence as a type of majority-minority conflict. The present study goes further by acknowledging that the Muslim community is not monolithic. Whereas Indian Muslims constitute a minority relative to their Hindu counterparts, the Shia are minority within a minority, accounting for some 40 % of Lucknow's Muslim population. Since India is expected to have the world's largest Muslim population by 2030, it is important to examine intra-Islamic tensions within India. More broadly, the Lucknow case may be potentially relevant to understanding sectarian conflict beyond, from Pakistan to Lebanon. Extremist clerics in these settings contest the same set of doctrinal differences as those in Lucknow. In doing so, the case expands an emerging line of empirical research on sectarian violence (Weidmann and Salehyan 2013; Corstange 2012*a,b*).

Finally, the Old City is a relatively safe and feasible environment in which to experimentally test elite persuasion. Lucknow is a stable city with a strong government, and Sunni-Shia violence is largely confined to the Muslim month of Muharram. Beyond that period, the expected risk of physical intimidation of experimental subjects or research staff is relatively low. This made it possible to conduct my research in safe and ethical ways.

5.3 Theoretical Framework

This section presents the motivation and explanations for the study's empirical investigation. It first shows why the process of elite persuasion is important to models of ethnic conflict and demonstrates the gap regarding evidence on that process. A logic is then presented as to why perceived victimization might inhibit the efficacy of pro-peace persuasion by an in-group elite. It then proceeds to make a case for the plausibility of the victimization logic and its applicability to the Shia of Lucknow based on my prior experimental research and insights from field research.

Motivation

In this subsection, I seek to demonstrate that many constructivist theories of ethnic conflict propose that normative appeals by elites drive extremism but do not directly test this proposition. I also show that most references to elite persuasion focus on the group responsible for most of the violence. Little, by contrast, is said about the persuasion process in the group that bears the brunt of the violence.

An appropriate starting point is Fearon and Laitin (2000, 853), who write that “virtually every self-identified constructivist who has written on ethnic violence....has tended to blame elite machinations and politicking.” As the authors observe, such claims encompass a wide range of conflicts and geographic regions.¹⁴ Closer inspection helps to illustrate this point.

In a seminal study of ethnic violence, Brass (1997*b*, 24) investigates a series of violent incidents involving Hindus and Muslims. The argument is that Hindu political elites strategically frame such issues as religious in order to stir anti-Muslim fears and win Hindu votes at the polls. In particular, such elites work to ensure that in-group members are “paid or persuaded to believe that their problems are due to the “the other” and will be solved by the other’s humiliation, repression, or elimination” Brass (1997*b*, 25-6).¹⁵ A similar account is described in a detailed study of Hindu processions by Jaffreot (2009). Hindu elites, the argument goes, focus on “manipulating religious symbols that carried a strong emotional potential”. The argument links symbolic manipulation to the ensuing riots by Hindus that ultimately led to the destruction of a historic mosque believed by the rioters to have been built atop a fabled Hindu temple.¹⁶ Similar propositions appear in some of the more prominent empirical studies of conflict. In, Wilkinson (2006, 24), for instance, a key step in the production of riots is that Hindu elites use appeals to exploit “ethnic wedge issues” to incite violence and polarize the electorate.

Related arguments abound beyond the South Asian context. Writing on the former Yugoslavia, Kaufman (2001, 199-200) explains how Milosevic constructed extremist interpretations of Serbian identity to make Serbs feel “threatened” and demand “a degree of repression of the Albanians”. In northern Nigeria, Hackett (2011, 130-131) describes the role of calls to arms by religious leaders

¹⁴See, for instance, Tambiah (1996) and Kapferer (1988) on Sinhalese-Tamil violence in Sri Lanka; Brass (1997*a*) on Hindu-Muslim riots in India; Woodward (1995) on civil war in the Balkans; and Prunier (1995) on Rwanda.

¹⁵Normative appeals, such as those emphasizing an India based on a strictly Hindu identity (Brass 1997*b*, 283), are a favored method by provocateurs to bring about such belief and behavior change.

¹⁶The Babri Masjid was constructed by the Mughal Emperor Babar in the sixteenth century. According to Hindu nationalist narratives, the mosque was built on the grounds of a Hindu temple for Lord Rama that Babar’s army destroyed.

in motivating violence amongst Christians and Muslims.

Scholars also make the related, and opposite proposition: that elite persuasion is effective in attenuating conflict. Arguing that ethnic conflicts stem from emotional and symbolic roots, Kaufman (2006a) argues that building peace between groups requires ethnic elites to engage in initiatives that re-interpret myths and symbols to moderate attitudes and bring about behavior change. Others reference the anecdotal success of initiatives by Christian and Muslim leaders in Nigeria that used religion to uproot extremism (Hackett 2011, 128).

In these and many other accounts, persuasion is referenced as an important step by which conflict takes place. Yet as the studies seek to explain other outcomes of interest, little attention is paid the process of persuasion itself. This invites an important research inquiry.

Why Victimization Might Matter

A common emphasis in studies of ethnic conflict is that one group is often targeted by extremist actions and rhetoric more than the other. One way to understand this feature is with reference to perceived victimization, which refers to a widely-shared belief by members of an ethnic group that they have collectively and chronically suffered losses, usually violent, inflicted by at least one outgroup. Victimized groups can be identified across a wide range of conflicts, ranging from Armenians in the late 1980s who feared extinction by Azerbaijanis (Kaufman 2001, 60-70) and Palestinians who consider themselves victimized by Israelis in the West Bank to south Sudanese tribes who perceive themselves as victims of historical slave trade and repression managed by north Sudanese Arabs.

Political scientists have argued that victimization leads to differential conflict behavior across groups. Lake and Rothchild (1998, Chapter 1) suggest that the attitudes and actions of victimized groups are characterized by perceived threats to their physical security that they expect to emanate from their victimizers. As Keller (1998, 277) argues, members of such groups that perceive “serious threat will at the very least prepare for violent conflict, and may even go so far as to engage in a preemptive strike” (Keller 1998, 277).

Research has shown suggestive evidence that victimization might matter for extremist behavior. Describing events in the Caucasus in the late Soviet period, the sociologist Georgi Derlugian in his 2005 book explains how ethnic minorities in the Caucasus were victimized by centralizing Soviet policies that favored titular majority groups in those republics. Derlugian (2005) explains how victimized groups turned to violence to protect their material and cultural freedoms as the Soviet Union collapsed. In the Chinese context, Gries (2004) traces the development of a narrative of victimization propagated by Chinese party elites that began in the 1990s and continues to this day. Their narrative seeks to highlight the suffering of the Chinese people at the hands of Western

imperialists and the Japanese. To do so, party elites exaggerate Chinese casualty counts from events like the 1937 Nanjing Massacre by the Japanese or the First Opium War of 1837. Gries (2004) explains how the accidental U.S. bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in 1999¹⁷ further triggered party elites to emphasize Chinese suffering in ways that explicitly called for extreme warnings and even retribution against China's adversaries.

Within these arguments, the basic concept is that members of victimized groups retain support for violence in order to protect their group against an external threat.

Theoretical Expectations

How might victimization shape the effectiveness of elite normative appeals discouraging extremism across members of the two groups? I develop expectations are for settings of dyadic ethnic conflict that meet two conditions: (1) one group perceives itself to be victimized by the other; and (2) the local government plays a plausibly neutral role in the intergroup conflict.¹⁸ In such settings, elites engage in normative messaging to influence—i.e., encourage or discourage—extremist behavior mostly by young adult men. Any particular individual *j* may not only be exposed to pro-peace messaging from an in-group elite but also to such messages by out-group elites instructing outgroup members to be peaceful toward *j*'s in-group.

I begin with an *ex ante* expectation that pro-peace messaging from an in-group elite will be effective in reducing extremist behavior among non-victimized group members but not among victimized group members. I developed this argument based on an earlier experimental study that I conducted in Lucknow (Sharma 2017b). In the experiment, 480 Sunni and Shia subjects were randomly assigned to listen to audio messages in which (1) an in-group small businessman using economic arguments to discourage extremism or (2) in-group religious cleric used religious arguments to discourage extremism. The results show a surprising pattern: exposing Shia subjects to pro-peace religious persuasion from a Shia cleric increased their extremism relative to the control group; the opposite result obtained for Sunni subjects. Although these within-sect effects did not reach statistical significance, the pro-peace appeal work significantly more effectively in reducing

¹⁷After the incident, Gries explains that one soon-to-become famous essay written by an ordinary Chinese used the word *xiuru* (to humiliate) thirteen times to emphasize that the American attack was motivated by a desire to humiliate the Chinese (Gries 2004, 20-22)

¹⁸The term “neutral role” is used here to describe a situation in which official of the local government, including police and judicial authorities, do not directly or indirectly assist one group against the other, but instead seek to prosecute infractions of the law without bias to group membership.

extremism for Sunni rather than Shia subjects.¹⁹

My prior study used follow-up interviews with a subsample of experimental subjects and qualitative insights to supply a logic for this result. Victimized group members exposed to an anti-violence appeal by an in-group cleric will perceive that the cleric is substituting-out of the role of defending the in-group against anticipated threats. In expectation, their response will be to retain extremism to guard the in-group.

The victimization logic builds on research in social psychology arguing that severe mistrust and fears of betrayal by the adversary will serve as barriers to conflict resolution (Kydd 2005; Kramer and Carnevale 2001). It is also consistent with studies showing that reminding individuals of historical victimization reduces their level of guilty for violence by in-group members toward an adversary (Wohl and Branscombe 2008).²⁰

Different expectations obtain for non-victimized group members. Since such individuals do not hold similar fears of long-term survival, a pro-peace message from an in-group elite is expected to reduce extremist behavior. It may do so via one or more of several mechanisms, including changing prescriptive norms about the permissibility of using violence toward the outgroup; changing beliefs about the behavior of out-group elites; or eliciting concerns of sanctioning by an in-group elite for noncompliance with the peace order.

The second component of the theoretical logic relates to the effect of exposure to a pro-peace message from an outgroup elite in a conflict setting. I developed this logic after the analysis of the experimental results in the present study by drawing on social psychology research regarding ‘friendly enemies’. Some studies show that friendly gestures from players in competitive interactions can generate positive affect (Cialdini 2001) and greater social connections (Shapiro 1991).

Yet another stream of findings focuses on settings of conflict between groups, a scenario more relevant to the case examined here. This research argues that friendly gestures from the outgroup are not effective in scenarios featuring expectations of mistrust or enemyship between the two groups. Reactive devaluation, as introduced by researchers at the Stanford Center for International Conflict and Negotiation (Ross and Stillinger 1991), argues that individuals will reduce their perception of the worth of a conciliatory proposal simply because it is authored by a perceived enemy and thus not be affected by it. In experimental studies, scholars have shown that such messages fail because they elicit fears of exploitation or manipulation (Main, Dahl and Darke 2007; Skarlicki,

¹⁹Statistical power limitations in the prior study provide a reasonable basis to study whether such effects obtain significance in a new study with a larger sample.

²⁰Such reminders of victimization, the Wohl and Branscombe (2008, 988) argue, deflects the ingroup’s “responsibility for the harm done” and encourages “legitimization of the ingroup’s harmful actions toward a new adversary”.

Folger and Gee 2004), i.e., concerns that a proposal authored by a perceived enemy cannot possibly be in the interest of the ingroup. Devaluation of pro-peace proposals by outgroup members has also been uncovered in conflict settings, including among Israelis and Palestinians (Maoz et al. 2002).²¹

The implication is that exposure to a pro-peace message from an out-group elite will not change extremist behavior. This feature may be heightened in victimized groups, but victimization is not a precondition. Individuals will devalue an out-group peace message regardless of whether it appears they are exposed to that message alone or in tandem with a similar message from an in-group elite. Table 1 summarizes the theoretical expectations.

Table 5.1: Summary of Expected Effects on Extremist Behavior

	Non-Victimized Group (1)	Victimized Group (2)
(A) Message from Elite in Non-Victimized Group	Reduce	No Effect
(B) Message from Elite in Victimized Group	No Effect	No Effect
(C) Interaction	No Effect	No Effect

²¹For a recent review of the research on social-psychological barriers to conflict resolution, see Bar-Tal (2011).

Shia Victimization: Qualitative Insights from Field Research

Extensive historical and qualitative field research support the view that the Shia of Lucknow perceive themselves as victimized by the Sunni. An appropriate departure point comes from Gries (2004), who builds on Kaviraj (2010)'s observation that nationalists seek to build extremist identities by emphasizing and quantifying the possessions of their group. Gries adds an important point: extremists equally obsess over what their group has *lost*.

This argument introduces the relevance of the Shia collective identity, which emphasizes a historical experience of violence perpetrated by the Sunni. In *Shi'ism: A Religion of Protest*, whose title aptly hints at the dynamics of the Shia identity, Hamid Dabashi explains that the Shia identity is based on a sense of injustice committed by the Sunni, who denied Ali from succeeding his grandfather, the Prophet Muhammad, as the caliph. Shia belief holds that the Prophet Mohammad, while on his final *hajj* to Mecca, announced to his followers at a place called Ghaddir-e-Kulm that Ali would be his successor. According to the story, the Prophet's followers accepted his wish and congratulated Ali, each in turn shaking hands with the would-be next caliph. Yet Ali did not become the first caliph. When the Prophet died, his followers instead voted for Abu Bakr, a powerful tribal chief and father of the Prophet's wife, to become caliph. Ali ultimately assumed the position as the fourth caliph. In the Shia reading, the rejection of the Prophet's wish was an act of betrayal that brought in illegitimate rulers.

Ali was murdered while serving as caliph. In the Battle of Karbala (680 C.E.), Ali's son Husain and his 72 companions, including women and children, were killed for contesting the rule of the reigning Sunni caliph Yazid. This event, believed to have taken place during the Muslim month of Muharram, has long been memorialized in Shiism as the worst incidence of victimization perpetrated by the Sunni. The Karbala episode is the basis for the worldwide Shia religious processions each year during Muharram, when participants often engage in self-flagellation to experience the suffering of their ancestors at Karbala. The Shia collective memory also emphasizes the murder of the Imams, or Ali's rightful successors by bloodline. According to mainstream Shia belief, the ten Imams who succeeded Ali were each murdered by the Sunni. To escape this fate, the twelfth imam is believed to have gone into occultation.

As a result, Dabashi argues that Shiismunlike the Sunni faith and its various schools is defined by the concepts of *shahadat* (martyrdom) and *mazlumiyyat*, which literally means innocence but in context refers to the "condition of being in that tyrannized state, having been subjected to it" (Dabashi 2011, 80). I quote Dabashi for clarity:

A social psychology of defeat awaiting revenge is thus at the very heart of Shiism. Shiism, as a religion of protest, is founded on a perceived political injustice, a wrong that can never be righted, but it must — that Ali was not allowed to succeed Prophet Muhammad as the ruler of the nascent Muslim community, that Hossein failed to achieve what was right his and his father's. [...] In the increasingly complicated

Shii theology, the whole veracity of Islam as a faith depended on the nature and function of the Prophet's successor. (Dabashi 2011, 81)

Beyond distant historical memories, more recent history show a common experience of Shia victimization. Noting that Arab Shias lived under the Sunni Ottoman Empire for four of the past five centuries, the historian Juan Cole describes chronic, and often violent, victimization at the hands of Sunni rulers. (Cole 2002, 18) explains how Ottomans treated Arab Shia as heretics, at times forbidding their most sacred rituals in Ottoman-run Iraq. Many Shia were violently repressed by Ottoman officials who were suspicious that the Shia were foreign agents of their empire's top adversary, the Shia Safavid dynasty in Iran. Even in India, where a Shia dynasty ruled the kingdom of Awadh (with Lucknow as its capital) from 1722 to 1856, a similar pattern obtained. Sunni revivalist movements that arose in the late-nineteenth century rallied around the cause of debunking the legitimacy of the Shia as true Muslims. This pattern persists in present-day India, with a regular stream of anti-Shia propaganda (Jones 2011, 186-197).

My field research emphasizes that a strong perception of victimization characterizes the contemporary Shia of Lucknow. I summarize insights from field research explained in greater depth in separate work (Sharma 2017a). Maulana Syed Kalbe Jawwad, Lucknow's most influential Shia cleric, explained that the majority Sunni community exploits its vote bank power to prevent the government from authorizing permission for Shias to implement their full calendar of religious processions, rituals that are fundamental to Shia practice. The cleric's cousin and chief advisor, Mr. Shamil Shamsi, explained that he organized a still-active Shia youth group—the Hussaini Tigers—in the 1990s to defend, violently if necessary, the Shia community from Sunni extremists.

Such senses of victimization extend to local politics and daily interactions. Mr. A. H., a seasoned Shia politician from the Congress Party, devoted thirty minutes of a one-hour discussion to describe local Shia anxieties about Sunni extremism. A.H. referenced propaganda disseminated in Lucknow, New Delhi, and Kashmir believed to be funded by clerics in Saudi Arabia. Such propaganda, which is widely known throughout Lucknow, paints the Shia faith as a Western conspiracy to divide the Muslim world. In Lucknow, he explained, an influential group of extremist Sunni clerics spread extremism through sermons and social media to declare the Shia as infidels. Such exhortations are exacerbated by negative myths that affect daily interactions. In the Old City, several Sunni and Shia youth interviewees explained that Sunni parents forbid their children to enter a Shia household due to fears that their child will be magically converted to Shiism. Other Sunni youth relayed the myth that one should not accept a cup of *chai* from a Shia, as he or she would certainly have spit in it beforehand.

Importantly, group victimization is affected by events affecting members of the group in foreign countries. Horowitz (2001, 175) argues that international events become salient when one or

both ethnic groups “has a dangerous foreign connection”. While this argument was proposed in reference to linkages to a foreign government, a broader review would also acknowledge the relevance of links to external militant groups. In India and throughout the Islamic world, local Shia communities respond to perceived victimization of foreign Shia targeted by Sunni extremist groups.

Three examples from my field research demonstrate this point. The first comes from my personal observation of religious persuasion at a *majlis*, or Shia religious gathering, convened by a prominent Shia cleric known for anti-Sunni positions.²² Speaking to a group of some sixty Shia adults and children, the cleric moved the audience to tears with a familiar sermon describing the murder of Ali and his son Husain. The cleric explicitly linked these murders to anti-Shia attacks by the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria. Listeners were openly enraged by the narrative that blamed Sunnis for a historical cycle of violence. A second example comes from a publicly-reported episode in 2014. Sheikh Salman Nadwi, the head of theology at Lucknow’s revered Nadwat-ul Ulema seminary, issued a *fatwa* calling for all Muslims to pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, the self-proclaimed caliph of the Islamic State. In interviews I conducted, several Shia clerics condemned the *fatwa* and expressed shock about the silent response of local Sunni clerics. A third example comes from January 2016, when Saudi Arabia publicly executed Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, a dissident Shia cleric. In Lucknow, I witnessed mass protests organized by Shia clerics including Maulana Jawwad, who also held rallies outside the Saudi Embassy in New Delhi. Sheikh Nimr quickly became a martyr to many north Indian Shia.

5.4 Experimental Design and the Interventions

This section begins with a discussion of the sampling approach and survey structure. It then presents the experimental design, and concludes with a description of the intervention content.

Sampling and Random Assignment

I conducted a survey with an embedded experiment among a random sample of 2,100 young adult males (1,050 Sunni and 1,050 Shia) in Lucknow’s Old City. Sunni and Shia subjects from a wide range of Old City neighborhoods (Urdu: *mohallah*) with varying levels of extremism, riots, and demographic balance.

I randomly assigned subjects to treatment prior to subject recruitment. Each enumerator re-

²²Observation in July 2015, Shahnajaf Imambarah, Lucknow.

ceived a separate list of subject ID numbers and corresponding experimental group assignment. Using their list, each enumerator then began the process of recruiting subjects who belonged to his sect.²³ Since all enumerators were residents of the Old City, they were able to use their local knowledge of sectarian demographics by sampling members of their sect throughout the Old City.²⁴ Starting from an arbitrary point in each neighborhood, each enumerator approached every third male adult that he encountered. Study recruitment took place on small side streets, roadside shops, or tea stalls.

Survey Structure and Embedded Experiment

Enumerators began the survey upon obtaining informed consent. To facilitate participation, respondents were told that they would receive a chocolate at the end of the survey.²⁵ To facilitate the second endline, the questionnaire began with a questions on the subject's first name and mobile number. The ensuing questions sought to capture covariates suggested by the literature to be predictive of extremism. These questions measured the subject's [1] employment status; [2] perceived level of economic marginalization; [3] number of outgroup friendships, by asking how many of his ten closest friends were outgroup members; [4] number of violent in-group peers, by asking how many of his friends had participated in outgroup violence; [5] public religious observance, with a question on the number of times per week he attended a prayer at a mosque; [6] total years of religious education; and [5] likelihood of participating in a contentious religious ritual.

Next, each subject was asked to listen to the randomy-assigned audio messages(s). Messages were pre-loaded on each enumerator's cell phone, and the subject was provided with a set of headphones. The use of headphones permitted a private exposure to clerical persuasion while keeping the subject in real-life settings. After receiving the treatment, the enumerator administered the first outcome measure. Each subject was offered to purchase and wear a 5-rupee (less than 10 U.S. cents) rubber wristband that stated "Sunni-Shia Unity" in Urdu. The enumerator recorded the first behavioral measure, *Bought Wristband*, indicating whether or not the subject had purchased and wore the band. The subject was then that the survey was complete.

²³My field research suggested that the use of co-sectarian enumerators would make subjects feel more comfortable in expressing attitudes and behaviors on a sensitive topic.

²⁴This included neighborhoods where residents mostly belonged to one sect, as well as parts of mixed neighborhoods known to contain members of the enumerator's sect.

²⁵Respondents were not financially compensated for their time on the advice of local community members and NGO officers. The concern was that even small financial payments might fuel local suspicions regarding the motives of the survey team, including suspicion of connections to external actors like Iran or Saudi Arabia.

About eight hours later on average, a different in-group enumerator contacted the subject by phone to schedule a second in-person interview. In this round, the enumerator recontacted subjects up to five times in an eight hour period. Upon meeting the subject, the enumerator recorded if the subject was wearing the previously-offered wristband. This unobtrusive measure, *Wearing Wristband*, was obtained without asking a question. This constituted the second behavioral measure of extremism: a refusal to wear the wristband was interpreted as a choice to abstain from public expression of tolerance. The first question in the second endline invited an open-ended response to a scenario described as hypothetical. In the scenario, each subject was reminded of the sectarian violence of the recently-concluded Muharram period and told to imagine that an out-group cleric insulted the subject's sect. The subject was then asked to speak briefly about his willingness to join an in-group member to use violence against the outgroup. The enumerator then scored the response, labeled as *Extremist Speech*, on a 5-point scale to signify its level of extremism.²⁶

The survey concluded with a series of questions aimed at understanding the mechanisms responsible for behavior change. To assess whether the interventions operated by strategic mechanisms, subjects were asked about their beliefs that the out-group would punish an extremist in their own group as well as about their personal willingness to punish an extremist in the outgroup. Other questions focused on prescriptive religious norms regarding the permissibility of outgroup violence; level of concern of being punished for disobeying an in-group cleric's order to be peaceful; and warmth toward the outgroup as a whole.

Experimental Design

Table 2 shows the basic experimental setup for the pooled sample of 2,100 Sunni and Shia young adult men. The sample is balanced by sectarian identity, with 1,050 Sunni and 1,050 Shia subjects. The first experimental group is the pure control condition: a total of 420 subjects heard no message. In the second experimental group (herein *Ingroup*), subjects were randomly assigned to listen to a 5-minute message containing an anti-violence religious argument recorded by an in-group cleric. In the third group (herein *Outgroup*), subjects were randomly assigned to listen to a 5-minute message in which an out-group cleric issues an anti-violence religious appeal to out-group members. In the fourth experimental group, subjects were randomly assigned to listen to the message of the in-group cleric and the out-group cleric (10 minutes total). I randomized the order of the messages to account for "recency" and "primacy" effects: 420 subjects thus heard the ingroup cleric's mes-

²⁶The scale is as follows: 1 (Strongly opposed to using violence against the outgroup); 2 (Opposed to using violence against the outgroup); 3 (Neutral toward using violence toward the outgroup); 4 (Supports using violence against the outgroup); 5 (Strongly supports using violence toward the outgroup).

sage first and 420 subjects heard the outgroup cleric’s message first. As a result, a total of 840 subjects were assigned to the fourth experimental group. Overall, the experiment takes the form of a $(2 \times 2) \times 2$ factorial design.

Table 5.2: Basic Experimental Setup: Pooled Sample

	No Ingroup Cleric (1)	Ingroup Cleric (2)
(A) No Outgroup Cleric	420	420
(B) Outgroup Cleric	420	840

N = 2,100

The Treatments

The experiment involved two original audio messages: one from a Sunni cleric and one from a Shia cleric. In order to create detailed messages that solely focused on religious normative arguments discouraging extremism, I collaborated with the local clerics in order to design the content of each message. Clerics recorded the messages in the Hindi language, the predominant language in Lucknow. Full English transcripts of message content are available in the Appendix. Three points merit attention.

First, both messages were constructed to emphasize similar religious normative arguments discouraging extremism. In particular, both the Sunni and the Shia message emphasized the shared importance of the Quran to both sects and its invocation for Muslim unity; lessons from the Prophet Muhammad and Imam Ali that advocated for peace and restraint even in the face of provocation and insult; and the importance of resolving disputes by seeking the guidance of religious clerics rather than engaging in violence. In order to preserve the realistic differences between the sects, the messages differ in minor ways with respect to particular examples or lessons cited.

Second, the audio messages were recorded by real, local clerics who are of similar stature in Lucknow. The Sunni cleric, Maulana Sufiyan Nizami, and the Shia cleric, Maulana Raza Husain, both exercise a moderate level of influence in Lucknow. Their selection facilitates a focus on the normative content of the appeals in that neither holds unequal economic or political clout relative to the other. Both clerics consented to the dissemination of their messages within the local population. To help buttress the credibility of the audio recordings, each speaker began his messages by stating his clerical status; real name; and presence in Lucknow.

Third, the experiment was implemented to mimic in reverse the process by which radicalizers in Lucknow and elsewhere operate. Detailed, relatively lengthy audio messages rather than a single sentence or religious prime were used in order to better mimic and study clerical persuasion as it exists in the Old City. Audio messages were deployed in Old City side streets rather than in a lab environment in order to more closely approximate realistic settings. Measurement of behavioral outcomes in side streets rather than lab settings was undertaken to obtain an understanding of behavioral decisions in a real-world environment.

5.5 Results

This section reports the experimental results. Table 3 focuses on the pooled sample (Sunni and Shia subjects), and Tables 4 and 5, respectively, focus on the Sunni and Shia samples. In section 5.3, I examine the difference in average treatment effects between the Sunni and Shia samples (Table 6). The rest of the section includes analysis of the mechanisms by which the treatments may have operated (Tables 7 and 8).

Results for the Pooled Sample

Table 3 presents the results for the pooled sample. Each of the three outcome measures are coded such that lower values indicate a more extremist position. The first outcome measure is *Purchased Band at T_1* , a binary variable scored as 1 if the subject purchased and wore the pro-peace wristband at the first endline. The second measure is *Wearing Band 8 Hours Later at T_2* , also a binary variable scored as 1 if the subject was still wearing the wristband at the second endline. The third measure is *Pro-Peace Speech at T_2* , a standardized transformation of the original variable from a 5-point, Likert-type scale.

Regarding the first outcome, the results show that neither the in-group cleric message, out-group cleric message, nor the interaction significantly increases purchases of the peace band (cells C4, D3, and D4 respectively). Regarding the second outcome, the in-group cleric message significantly increases the chance that subjects wear the peace band about eight hours later by an average of 3.2 % ($p < 0.10$) (see cell G4). This effect increases to 5.4 % ($p < 0.10$) conditional on not hearing the out-group cleric message. By contrast, neither the out-group message nor the interaction of both messages significantly affects the chance of wearing the peace band at the second endline (cells H3 and H4, respectively).

Table 5.3: **Pooled Sample:** Group Means, Conditional Average Treatment Effects, and Average Treatment Effects

<i>Purchased Peace Band at T₁ (N = 2,086)</i>				
	No Ingroup Cleric	Ingroup Cleric	All	Change
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(A) No Outgroup Cleric	0.306 (0.022)	0.354 (0.023)	0.330 (0.016)	0.047 (0.032)
(B) Outgroup Cleric	0.335 (0.023)	0.336 (0.016)	0.335 (0.013)	0.002 (0.028)
(C) All	0.320 (0.016)	0.342 (0.013)	0.334 (0.010)	0.020 (0.021)
(D) Change	0.028 (0.032)	-0.017 (0.028)	0.000 (0.021)	-0.046 (0.043)
<i>Wearing Peace Band 8 Hours Later at T₂ (N = 2,071)</i>				
	No Ingroup Cleric	Ingroup Cleric	All	Change
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(E) No Outgroup Cleric	0.235 (0.020)	0.289 (0.022)	0.262 (0.015)	0.054* (0.030)
(F) Outgroup Cleric	0.238 (0.020)	0.255 (0.015)	0.250 (0.012)	0.017 (0.026)
(G) All	0.237 (0.014)	0.266 (0.012)	0.254 (0.009)	0.031 (0.019)
(H) Change	0.003 (0.029)	-0.033 (0.026)	-0.019 (0.019)	-0.036 (0.040)
<i>Pro-Peace Speech 8 Hours Later at T₂ (N = 2,074)</i>				
	No Ingroup Cleric	Ingroup Cleric	All	Change
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(I) No Outgroup Cleric	-0.058 (0.044)	-0.002 (0.047)	-0.030 (0.032)	0.055 (0.065)
(J) Outgroup Cleric	-0.035 (0.049)	0.048 (0.036)	0.020 (0.029)	0.084 (0.062)
(K) All	-0.047 (0.033)	0.031 (0.029)	0.000 (0.021)	0.072 (0.045)
(L) Change	0.022 (0.066)	0.051 (0.062)	0.039 (0.045)	0.028 (0.091)

1. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

2. Standard errors in parentheses.

3. *Pro-Peace Speech* ranges from -1.122 to 2.269.

Third, neither the in-group message, out-group message, nor the interaction significantly increase pro-peace speech on average (cells K4, L3, and L4 respectively).

Results by Subgroup

The next two tables present analyses that test the different theoretical expectations for the Sunni and Shia samples. Each table presents the average and conditional group means for each experimental group as well as average and marginal treatment effects.

Beginning with the Sunni sample in Table 4, a striking pattern emerges. The in-group cleric message significantly increases pro-peace behavior on all three outcome measures (cells C4, G4, and K4). The in-group cleric message increases the chance of purchasing the peaceband by 7.1% ($p < 0.05$) and of wearing the peace band eight hours later by 7.8% ($p < 0.05$). It also increases pro-peace speech by 0.239 standard deviations ($p < 0.01$). By contrast, neither the out-group cleric message (cells D3, H3, or L3) nor the interaction (cells D4, H4, and L4) significantly increases pro-peace behavior on any of the three outcome measures.

The table also shows that *Ingroup* leads to larger average effects on pro-peace behavior when the subject is not exposed to the outgroup cleric's message. When *Outgroup* is absent, the in-group cleric message increases the chance of purchasing the peace band by 12.6% and wearing the band 8 hours later by 12.0%, as well as increasing expressions of pro-peace speech by 0.281 standard deviations (cells A4, E4, I4). When Sunni subjects are also exposed to *Outgroup*, *Ingroup* continues to significantly increase pro-peace speech (cell J4) but does not affect the first two outcomes (B4 and F4).

Together, the results support the expectation that the in-group cleric message—and not the out-group cleric message or the interaction—reduces extremism for members of the non-victimized group, i.e., the Sunni sample.

Table 5 presents results for the Shia sample. The main result is that neither the in-group message, out-group message, nor the interaction increase pro-peace behavior on any of the three outcome measures. In fact, the table shows that the in-group cleric message led to a backfiring effect among Shia subjects who were not exposed to the outgroup cleric message: *Ingroup* reduces pro-peace speech by 0.172 standard deviations. This effect, while fragile ($p < 0.10$), is consistent with the expectation that victimized group members will retain extremism when ordered not to do so by an in-group cleric. It is notable, too, that the backfiring effect disappears when Shia subjects are also exposed to the out-group cleric's messages. This suggests that the effect of victimization may be somewhat attenuated when learning that a Sunni cleric has instructed Sunnis to be peaceful toward the Shia.

Table 5.4: **Sunni Sample:** Group Means, Conditional Average Treatment Effects, and Average Treatment Effects

	<i>Purchase Peace Band at T₁ (N=1,048)</i>			
	No Ingroup Cleric	Ingroup Cleric	All	Change
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(A) No Outgroup Cleric	0.416 (0.034)	0.542 (0.034)	0.479 (0.024)	0.126*** (0.048)
(B) Outgroup Cleric	0.471 (0.034)	0.501 (0.024)	0.491 (0.019)	0.029 (0.042)
(C) All	0.443 (0.024)	0.515 (0.019)	0.486 (0.015)	0.068** (0.031)
(D) Change	0.055 (0.048)	-0.041 (0.042)	-0.002 (0.031)	-0.096 (0.064)
	<i>Wearing Peace Band 8 Hours Later at T₂ (N=1,042)</i>			
	No Ingroup Cleric	Ingroup Cleric	All	Change
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(E) No Outgroup Cleric	0.338 (0.032)	0.458 (0.034)	0.398 (0.023)	0.120** (0.047)
(F) Outgroup Cleric	0.371 (0.033)	0.418 (0.024)	0.403 (0.019)	0.046 (0.041)
(G) All	0.354 (0.023)	0.432 (0.019)	0.401 (0.015)	0.076** (0.031)
(H) Change	0.033 (0.046)	-0.040 (0.042)	-0.010 (0.031)	-0.074 (0.063)
	<i>Pro-Peace Speech 8 Hours Later at T₂ (N=1,043)</i>			
	No Ingroup Cleric	Ingroup Cleric	All	Change
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(I) No Outgroup Cleric	-0.080 (0.052)	0.200 (0.060)	0.059 (0.040)	0.281*** (0.080)
(J) Outgroup Cleric	0.006 (0.062)	0.214 (0.046)	0.145 (0.037)	0.207*** (0.079)
(K) All	-0.036 (0.041)	0.210 (0.036)	0.111 (0.027)	0.237*** (0.057)
(L) Change	0.087 (0.082)	0.013 (0.078)	0.043 (0.057)	-0.073 (0.115)

1. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

2. Standard errors in parentheses.

3. *Pro-Peace Speech* for this sample ranges from -1.122 to 2.269.

Table 5.5: **Shia Sample:** Group Means, Conditional Average Treatment Effects, and Average Treatment Effects

<i>Purchased Peace Band at T₁ (N=1,038)</i>				
	No Ingroup Cleric	Ingroup Cleric	All	Change
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(A) No Outgroup Cleric	0.196 (0.027)	0.160 (0.025)	0.178 (0.018)	-0.035 (0.037)
(B) Outgroup Cleric	0.197 (0.027)	0.170 (0.018)	0.179 (0.015)	-0.026 (0.032)
(C) All	0.196 (0.019)	0.167 (0.014)	0.179 (0.011)	-0.030 (0.024)
(D) Change	0.001 (0.039)	0.009 (0.031)	0.005 (0.024)	0.008 (0.049)
<i>Wearing Band 8 Hours Later at T₂ (N=1,029)</i>				
	No Ingroup Cleric	Ingroup Cleric	All	Change
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(E) No Outgroup Cleric	0.131 (0.023)	0.117 (0.022)	0.124 (0.016)	-0.013 (0.032)
(F) Outgroup Cleric	0.105 (0.021)	0.090 (0.013)	0.095 (0.011)	-0.015 (0.025)
(G) All	0.118 (0.015)	0.099 (0.012)	0.106 (0.009)	-0.014 (0.019)
(H) Change	-0.025 (0.031)	-0.027 (0.025)	-0.026 (0.019)	-0.002 (0.040)
<i>Pro-Peace Speech 8 Hours Later at T₂ (N=1,031)</i>				
	No Ingroup Cleric	Ingroup Cleric	All	Change
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(I) No Outgroup Cleric	-0.035 (0.071)	-0.208 (0.070)	-0.121 (0.051)	-0.172* (0.101)
(J) Outgroup Cleric	-0.078 (0.075)	-0.120 (0.054)	-0.106 (0.044)	-0.041 (0.093)
(K) All	-0.057 (0.052)	-0.149 (0.043)	-0.112 (0.033)	-0.094 (0.069)
(L) Change	-0.043 (0.105)	0.088 (0.092)	0.035 (0.069)	0.131 (0.140)

1. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

2. Standard errors in parentheses.

3. *Pro-Peace Speech* ranges from -1.122 to 2.269.

Difference in Effects Between Sects

To probe the different patterns by sect, the Table 6 presents the results of a regression to estimate the difference in effects between sects of *Ingroup*, *Outgroup*, and *Ingroup*Outgroup* on extremism. The point estimates in rows A, B and C are retrieved from the regression:

$$Y_i = \tau_1 * InGroup_i$$

$$\times SHIA_i + \tau_2 * OutGroup_i \times SHIA_i + \tau_3 * InGroup \times OutGroup * SHIA_i + SHIA_i + \epsilon_i (5.1)$$

where τ_1 refers to the difference in the average treatment effect of *InGroup* between sects; τ_2 refers to difference in average treatment effect of *Outgroup* between sects; τ_3 is the difference in average effects of *InGroup* \times *OutGroup* between sects; *SHIA_i* is a fixed effect denoting if the *i*-th subject is Shia or Sunni; and ϵ_i is a disturbance term.

Table 5.6: **Difference of Average Treatment Effects Between Sects**

	Purchased Band at T_1	Wearing Band at T_2	Pro-Peace Speech at T_2
	(1)	(2)	(3)
(A) <i>InGroup</i> \times <i>SHIA</i>	-0.049** (0.020)	-0.045** (0.018)	-0.165*** (0.045)
(B) <i>OutGroup</i> \times <i>SHIA</i>	0.004 (0.020)	-0.008 (0.018)	-0.003 (0.045)
(C) <i>InGroup</i> \times <i>OutGroup</i> \times <i>SHIA</i>	0.052 (0.040)	0.036 (0.037)	0.102 (0.091)

1. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$
2. Standard errors in parentheses.
3. *Pro-Peace Speech* ranges from -1.122 to 2.269.

The results show that exposure to an anti-violence appeal by an in-group cleric works significantly less effectively in reducing extremism for Shia rather than Sunni subjects. This pattern is consistent across all three three dependent variables ($p < 0.05$ for *Purchased Peace Band at T_1* and *Wearing Band 8 Hours Later at T_2* ; $p < 0.01$ for *Pro-Peace Speech 8 Hours Later at T_2*). Consistent with study expectations, the results also highlight that the pattern is unique to the in-group cleric's message: *Outgroup* and *Ingroup* \times *Outgroup* are not significantly more effective for either sect. Additional robustness checks show that these patterns remain when including enumerator fixed effects and adjusting for covariates (Appendix A2).

Mechanisms of Behavior Change

By which mechanisms did the persuasive appeals affect behavior? I examine the evidence for four pre-specified mechanisms using survey questions that were administered after the main outcome measures. The first mechanism assesses whether treatments affected behavior via strategic considerations. The in-group or out-group cleric message could increase confidence among the recipient that the outgroup will punish extremists in their own group.²⁷ If this is the case, one would expect that subjects (a) reduce their personal willingness to punish an outgroup extremist and (b) increase their confidence that an outgroup elite will punish an outgroup extremist. Two questions—labeled *Out Punish* and *I Punish*—use 5-point, Likert-type scales to measure these attitude changes. For the first variable, a higher value indicates higher confidence in out-group policing and for the second variable, a higher value indicates higher willingness to personally punish an outgroup extremist.²⁸

The second mechanism is that elite persuasion might make subjects less likely to perceive outgroup violence as a desired behavior for in-group members. This mechanism can be understood as referring to a change in an individual's prescriptive religious norms.²⁹ To measure norm change, subjects were read a hypothetical vignette in which an in-group member attacks an out-group member who had insulted his sect. Subjects then indicated the extent to which Islamic norms would justify the attack. Higher values of the ensuing variable, *Norms*, indicate a stronger belief that the violence is not a desirable behavior under Islam.

The third mechanism I consider is that the treatments affected behavior by making subjects more fearful of being sanctioned by an in-group cleric for disobeying his anti-violence appeal. To examine this possibility, subjects were asked how concerned they would be if they were to disobey a personal order from an in-group cleric to refrain attacking an outgroup member even if the subject had been insulted by the latter. *Sanction* is coded so that higher values indicate greater concern of being punished by the cleric for disobeying him.

Lastly, the treatments might change behaviors by reducing prejudice toward the outgroup as a whole. The message of the in-group cleric or out-group cleric might have increased tolerance

²⁷The logic for the outgroup message is more straightforward. The ingroup message could lead to a similar effect: upon learning that an in-group cleric is attempting to police the in-group, the subject might think that it is more likely that the out-group is behaving similarly.

²⁸In both cases, the subject was told that the hypothetical outgroup member has attacked an in-group member, thus clarifying the latter's label as an extremist.

²⁹A prescriptive social norm is defined as attitudes or behavior that are perceived as desirable for in-group members (Paluck et al. 2010).

without necessarily changing prescriptive religious norms, beliefs about outgroup behavior, or sanctioning concerns. To examine this possibility, enumerators asked subjects to rate how warm they felt toward the outgroup on a 100-point scale (*Warmth*).

The following two tables (7 and 8) illustrate the analysis of mechanisms for the Sunni and Shia samples in turn. Rows A and B show the average treatment effects of *InGroup* and *OutGroup*, both of which come from a single regression. Row C shows the average treatment effect of *IntimesOut*, which comes from a separate single regression. To facilitate a consistent interpretation of point estimates across the mechanisms, each mechanism variable is standardized. Effect sizes estimates are thus interpreted as standard deviations. in the outcome variable.

For the Sunni sample, the evidence suggests that *InGroup* reduces extremist behaviors through all four mechanisms. Regarding strategic considerations, the message significantly increases confidence that the outgroup will punish outgroup extremists ($\hat{\beta} = 0.271, p < 0.01$) and reduces personal willingness to punish such individuals ($\hat{\beta} = -0.233, p < 0.01$). These two results are logically consistent and suggest that in-group clerical persuasion worked through a strategic logic. Second, the message strengthened the belief that outgroup violence is not a desirable behavior according to Islam ($\hat{\beta} = 0.183, p < 0.01$), suggesting that persuasion worked by changing prescriptive religious norms. Third, the message increased concerns being sanctioned by an in-group cleric for disobeying his pro-peace order ($\hat{\beta} = 0.168, p < 0.01$). Lastly, the message warmed attitudes toward the outgroup as a whole ($\hat{\beta} = 0.200, p < 0.01$).

Table 7 also shows that *OutGroup* and *In×Out* did not operate via these mechanisms in a similar manner. The outgroup message leads to a strong, significant effect on warmth toward the outgroup. It slightly increased confidence that the outgroup will punish outgroup extremists, yet the effect is fragile ($p < 0.10$). The evidence shows that the message did not significantly affect personal willingness to punish outgroup extremists, prescriptive religious norms, or sanctioning concerns. Regarding the interaction of both treatments, *In×Out* significantly reduces fears of being sanctioned by an in-group cleric. The interaction also leads to statistically fragile effects ($p < 0.10$) on *Out. Will Punish* and *Warmth*, but in unanticipated directions.

Turning to the Shia sample, Table 8 shows that there is no evidence that *Ingroup* affected any of the pre-specified mechanisms. A largely similar pattern results characterizes *Outgroup* and *In×Out*. Among the Shia sample, exposure to the outgroup cleric's message significantly increases warmth toward the Sunni ($\hat{\beta} = 0.158, p < 0.05$) but does not affect other mechanisms. Lastly, the interaction of the treatments increases confidence that the outgroup will punish an outgroup extremist ($\hat{\beta} = 0.260, p < 0.05$) but does not affect other mechanisms.

Table 5.7: Analysis of Mechanisms: Sunni Sample

<i>DV: Standardized Variables</i>					
	Out Punish	I Punish	Norms	Sanction	Warmth
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<i>InGroup</i>	0.271*** (0.062)	-0.233*** (0.055)	0.183*** (0.056)	0.168*** (0.055)	0.200*** (0.047)
<i>OutGroup</i>	0.114* (0.062)	-0.049 (0.055)	0.069 (0.056)	0.076 (0.055)	0.117** (0.047)
<i>In × Out</i>	-0.219* (0.125)	0.124 (0.110)	-0.048 (0.113)	-0.235** (0.112)	-0.180* (0.095)
Constant	0.271*** (0.030)	-0.083*** (0.027)	-0.574*** (0.027)	-0.004 (0.027)	-0.452*** (0.023)
Obs	1,043	1,043	1,043	1,043	1,043
Adj.-R ²	0.026	0.019	0.011	0.015	0.029
F Stat.	***	***	***	***	***

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 5.8: Analysis of Mechanisms: Shia Sample

<i>Dep. Var.: Standardized Variables</i>					
	Out Punish	I Punish	Norms	Sanction	Warmth
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<i>InGroup</i>	0.010 (0.062)	0.023 (0.067)	0.052 (0.048)	0.005 (0.072)	-0.005 (0.065)
<i>OutGroup</i>	-0.030 (0.062)	-0.017 (0.067)	-0.011 (0.048)	-0.014 (0.072)	0.158** (0.065)
<i>In × Out</i>	0.260** (0.124)	-0.154 (0.135)	0.073 (0.098)	0.017 (0.146)	0.112 (0.131)
Constant	-0.275*** (0.030)	0.078** (0.033)	0.580*** (0.024)	0.014 (0.035)	0.461*** (0.032)
Obs	1,031	1,031	1,031	1,027	1,031
Adj.-R ²	0.002	-0.001	-0.001	-0.003	0.003
F Stat.	1.589	0.494	0.545	0.019	2.158*

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

5.6 Unpacking the Effect of Religious Identity

This section presents additional statistical analyses to analyze the plausibility of the victimization logic relative to other competing explanations. The the victimization logic is linked to religious (here, sectarian) identity. Yet one potential problem is that sectarian identity is not randomly assigned, meaning that other individual-level characteristics might be confounding. It could be the case, for instance, that there may be non-religious components to the differential treatment effect of the in-group cleric message.

To begin, I generated a general index of extremism by taking a simple average of the standardized transformations of the *Purchased Peace Band* and *Wearing Peace Band 8 Hours Later* variables combined with the *Pro-Peace Speech 8 Hours Later* variable, which was already standardized. This index was then re-standardized, generating the *Extremism Index*. As with the earlier outcome variables, *Extremist Index* is coded so that a higher value indicates a more pro-peace behavior.

Table 9 presents the results for three models in which the extremism index is regressed on treatment dummies interacted with *SHIA*, indicating if a subject is Shia or not. Model 1 presents the results in the absence of enumerator fixed effects or covariate adjustment. Model 2 includes enumerator fixed effects, and Model 3 includes covariates.³⁰

Model 1 shows that $InGroup \times SHIA$ is negative and statistically significant on the standardized index ($\hat{\beta} = -0.164$, $p < 0.01$). The same result obtains with the inclusion of enumerator fixed effects ($\hat{\beta} = -0.163$, $p < 0.01$). Model 3 shows that the difference in effects between sects of *InGroup* remains negative and statistically significant at the 1 % level, with a slightly lower point estimate ($\hat{\beta} = -0.137$). These results show that the in-group cleric's message has a differential effect by sect that is robust to the inclusion of enumerator fixed effects and covariate adjustment.

Table 10 presents additional analysis to unpack the differential effect across sect. It reports the results of interacting the treatment dummies not only with *SHIA*, but also with each of the seven covariates, labeled *Characteristics*. Columns specify the *Characteristic* that was interacted with each treatment dummy. The table permits a deeper analysis of which aspects of identity—aside from religious identity—explain part of the differential effects of the in-group cleric message. Since each of the seven characteristics are reasonably part of what it means to be Shia or Sunni, the additional analysis should be understood as unpacking which aspects of identity matter for the differential effect of the in-group cleric message.

³⁰All models use demeaned treatment dummies so that the point estimates on terms interacted with the treatment denote the effect of a particular treatment averaged over all other treatments.

Table 5.9: Robustness: Difference in Effects Between Sects on Extremism Index

	<i>Dep. Var: Extremism Index (Standardized):</i>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
<i>InGroup</i> × <i>SHIA</i>	−0.160*** (0.043)	−0.160*** (0.041)	−0.135*** (0.039)
<i>OutGroup</i> × <i>SHIA</i>	−0.005 (0.043)	−0.007 (0.041)	−0.018 (0.039)
Unemp			−0.023 (0.054)
Econ. Marg.			0.147*** (0.025)
Outgroup Friends			0.042*** (0.010)
Violent Peers			0.072*** (0.010)
Prayer Attendance			−0.010*** (0.002)
Extrem. Ritual Part.			−0.141*** (0.017)
Yrs. Relig. Educ.			0.018* (0.011)
ENUM FE?	<i>N</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>Y</i>
Constant	0.001 (0.021)	0.282*** (0.044)	0.337*** (0.106)
Obs	2,067	2,067	2,060
Adj.-R ²	0.115	0.211	0.285
F Stat	39.388***	37.846***	38.361***

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$
Standard errors in parentheses.

Results show that *InGroup*×*SHIA* remains statistically significant at $p < 0.01$ for six of the covariates and at $p < 0.05$ for one covariate: unemployment. Furthermore, there is also a differential effect of the in-group cleric for unemployment (cell C1) as well as willingness to engage in extremist religious rituals (cell C6). The latter of these two characteristics is more explicitly linked to religious identity, and is consistent with the main theoretical argument that identity matters for understanding pro-peace persuasion. The statistically significant difference in effects of *InGroup* across employed and unemployed subjects, however, shows that there is an economic component to the differential effect of the in-group cleric’s message. Even still, the result from the same model shows that *InGroup*×*SHIA* remains significant ($p < 0.05$) and emphasizes that there is an important, residual religious component that explains the differential effect of exposure to the in-group cleric message.

Table 5.10: Interactions of Treatments with Covariates

	<i>Dep. Var.: Extremism Index (Std.)</i>						
	Unemp.	Marg.	OutGroup Friends	Viol. Peers	Pray Freq.	Ritual Part.	Rel. Educ.
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
<i>In</i> × <i>SHIA</i>	-0.101* (0.052)	-0.149*** (0.050)	-0.158*** (0.052)	-0.219*** (0.056)	-0.154*** (0.044)	-0.155*** (0.042)	-0.135*** (0.049)
<i>Out</i> × <i>SHIA</i>	-0.047 (0.053)	0.005 (0.049)	-0.026 (0.052)	-0.031 (0.057)	-0.002 (0.044)	-0.020 (0.042)	-0.017 (0.049)
<i>In</i> × <i>Char.</i>	-0.214** (0.107)	-0.019 (0.048)	0.0001 (0.019)	0.020 (0.014)	-0.004 (0.004)	-0.073** (0.032)	-0.002 (0.013)
<i>Out</i> × <i>Char.</i>	0.152 (0.109)	-0.017 (0.048)	0.006 (0.019)	0.007 (0.014)	-0.001 (0.004)	-0.021 (0.032)	0.011 (0.013)
Constant	-0.001 (0.021)	0.002 (0.021)	0.001 (0.021)	0.001 (0.021)	0.002 (0.021)	-0.002 (0.021)	0.001 (0.021)
Obs	2,067	2,061	2,066	2,067	2,067	2,067	2,067
Adj.-R ²	0.116	0.113	0.133	0.121	0.116	0.156	0.146

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

5.7 Discussion

This study investigated the conditions under which extremist behaviors can be attenuated by exposure to anti-violence religious arguments by an in-group or out-group cleric. The core finding is that exposure to such an argument from an in-group cleric reduces extremism among members of the non-victimized group (here: the Sunni) but not members of the victimized group (here: the Shia). In particular, the message increased the chance of purchasing and wearing a pro-peace wristband by 7.1 % ($p < 0.05$) immediately after treatment, and eight hours later, increasing the chance of still wearing the band by 7.8 % ($p < 0.05$) and reducing expressions of violent speech by 0.226 standard deviations ($p < 0.01$). Additional statistical analyses and qualitative evidence emphasize the plausibility of the victimization logic.

A second main finding is that neither the out-group cleric message nor the interaction of both significantly reduces extremist behaviors for either sectarian sample. The study explains this result by applying the reactive devaluation hypothesis in the psychology literature, which holds that individuals devalue the worth of a friendly message from a perceived enemy due to suspicions about his or her motives (Maoz et al. 2002; Ross and Stillinger 1991).

The third main finding concerns the mechanisms by which persuasion by an in-group cleric changed behavior for the Sunni sample. The analysis of pre-specified mechanisms shows that in addition to the more anticipated mechanism of sanctioning, persuasion operated by changing prescriptive religious norms regarding the permissibility of violence, reducing personal willingness to punish outgroup extremists, and increasing confidence that out-group elites will punish extremists in their own group.

The remainder of this section discusses broader implications for political science and policy.

Elite Persuasion and Conflict

The first lesson relates to the capacity for elite persuasion to motivate extremism, a prominent claim in several accounts of ethnic conflict (Jaffrelot 2009; Wilkinson 2006; Kaufman 2001; Brass 1997a). Due to ethical considerations and safety concerns, this study focused on persuasion away from extremism. In showing that one type of such persuasion—exposure to an in-group cleric using religious norms to discourage extremism—was effective for Sunni but not Shia subjects, the study implies that a more nuanced relationship than previously known governs elite manipulation of extremism. The theoretical argument emphasizes that members of a victimized group will retain extremism even after being ordered not to do so in order to defend against anticipated threats from the non-victimized group.

While the main results do not directly test the victimization explanation, the results in this study mirror those of my earlier experiment in Lucknow with a smaller sample. Qualitative evi-

dence for the explanation comes from field research, follow-up interviews with subjects in the first study. Coupled with the additional statistical analyses in the present study (Table ??) and survey evidence on perceptions of message attributes (Appendix A4), the collective evidence points to the victimization logic as the most plausible explanation. In these ways, the present study taps into an emerging set of findings that show that the efficacy of co-ethnic appeals works differently across ethnic groups, particularly along majority-minority lines. Whereas extant studies have focused on how minority identity conditions in-group appeals on issues limited to vote choice and migrant acceptance (Gaikwad and Nellis 2016; Huber and Suryanarayan 2016; Chhibber and Sekhon 2014), this research contributes a novel argument related to victimization and focusing on extremist behavior.

Even still, caution is warranted. In particular, Table 10 shows that the differential effect of the in-group cleric message also has a material component, unemployment. The analysis shows that the difference in effects of the ingroup message across sects remains significant even after accounting for the interaction with unemployment. The implication is that the religion-related logic of victimization is a plausible explanation for the differential effects, yet not the only one.

Another possible source of caution relates to the treatments themselves. The present research cannot rule out the possibility that different results obtained between sects due to differences in the treatments. To probe this possibility, I implemented a separate survey of 60 Sunni and Shia young adult men in the Old City. The subject sample was distinct from the sample of experimental subjects. Each subject was randomly assigned to listen to the in-group cleric message used in the experiment described in this chapter. An ensuing questions gauged the perceived real-world influence of the speaker. Results are presented as bar graphs in Appendix A4. On a 3-point scale³¹, Sunni subjects perceived real-world influence of the Sunni cleric to be slightly though not substantially higher as compared to how Shia subjects perceived the Shia cleric did Shia subjects scored the Shia cleric ($\mu_{Sunni} = 2.2$, $\mu_{Shia} = 1.7$). As explained earlier, several steps were taken to ensure that the audio messages were recorded by clerics of relatively equal status and emphasized highly similar scriptural arguments. Future research can play an important role in testing whether different patterns obtain when randomly assigning subjects to different in-group clerics.

What might the victimization logic imply about the plausibility of models centered around elite persuasion promoting violence? One possibility rests on the assumption that pro-violence persuasion works the same way as pro-peace persuasion. If so, the implication is that members of non-victimized groups might also be more susceptible to pro-extremism messages by an in-group elite. Such a pattern appears to match the existing claims on elite persuasion, which have

³¹The scale is: 1: “no influence”; 2: “influence, but very little”; 3: “a lot”.

often suggested that members of the non-victimized or majority group are most prone to extremist persuasion as opposed to the victimized or minority group. Another possibility is that the salience of victimization and concerns of future threats may lead members of victimized groups to be highly responsive to pro-violence appeals. These contrasting possibilities motivate a fruitful line of inquiry for future research.

Religion and Conflict

A second set of lessons relates to the role of religion in conflict. Political scientists have, in recent years, increased calls for greater investigation of the precise ways in which religious actors and, in particular, the doctrinal content they deploy, matters for individual political behavior (Philpott 2007; Grzymala-Busse 2012). The present research helps meet this demand by showing that religious actors and the ideas they deploy do matter: even a five-minute audio recording can increase the likelihood of individuals engaging in pro-peace behaviors that are relatively costly in the local setting. The finding that the ingroup cleric's message reduced extremism among the Sunni sample by changing prescriptive norms around violence suggests that doctrinal content can change behavior even in the absence of a change in subjects' material conditions. More broadly, this result challenges models that emphasize factors unrelated to religion, such as local public goods provision (Berman 2011; Iannaccone and Berman 2006) and employment (Esteban and Ray 2011), as the main determinants of extremism.

A separate insight comes from the out-group clerical messages and the interaction of both messages. The lack of behavior change for the Sunni and Shia samples after exposure to the out-group cleric message or both messages reveals important limitations on clerical influence. At a minimum, these results question the effectiveness of conflict management approaches that incorporate elites from the different groups in conflict (Sisk 2011; Toft, Philpott and Shah 2011). Future research can play an important role in advancing this inquiry. Scholars could examine if exposure to out-group elite messages is more effective if delivered by multiple clerics or when containing admissions of responsibility for prior wrongdoing. In order to explain potential non-effects, such studies could probe the reactive devaluation hypothesis with survey items to examine if outgroup messages elicit higher suspicion of the speaker's motives.

Generalizability and Policy

Although the empirical evidence is drawn from intra-Muslim conflict in India, there are several reasons why the results may be applicable to other conflict settings. First, the intervention used here resembles the approach and content of many counter-extremism programs across the Islamic world. The treatments are akin to smaller-scale versions of messaging efforts by clerics in Asia and

Africa. Examples include pro-peace radio programs in Afghanistan and educational interventions in West and East Africa. Parallels could also be drawn to the content of the Friday prayer services across the Islamic world. Moreover, the normative content of the treatments in this study involved references to scripture and teachings that are standard in the Sunni and Shia faiths and not particular to Lucknow or South Asia. For policymakers, the findings in the present research offer relevant guidance as to the types of persuasion interventions expected to be promising if scaled-up.

Second, the study's theoretical argument regarding victimization is also generalizable to other conflict settings. Although this study focuses on the context of victimization related to a religious group, the proposed logic by which victimization inhibits in-group pro-peace messaging is not specific to religion. Furthermore, many groups across the world perceive themselves to be victimized by another group or entity, and often turn to violence to defend themselves against perceived aggressors (Derluigan 2005; Keller 1998; Horowitz 1985). Replication and extensions of the present study can help to establish whether the theoretical logic and empirical patterns in Lucknow travel are also present in other settings.

One feature of the Lucknow case that may serve as a scope condition concerns the plausibly neutral role of the state in local conflict. In Lucknow, my field research emphasized that members of the Sunni and Shia communities believe the mostly-Hindu government and police forces largely address sectarian conflict with little overt bias toward either group. In other conflicts, members of one or both ethnic groups perceive the government to be significantly biased. What would the victimization logic imply in these cases? If extrapolated, one reasonable expectation might be that (i) as the government's assistance to the non-victimized group, $G_n v$ increases, (ii) security concerns among members of the victimized group G_v increase, thereby (iii) reducing the effectiveness of pro-peace elite messaging within G_v . Another set of expectations might be that (i) as the government's assistance to members of G_v increases, (ii) security concerns among the members of that group decrease, thereby (iii) increasing the effectiveness of pro-peace messaging within the victimized group. Future experimentation in cases with varying levels of state bias will help to assess the generalizability of the victimization logic.

5.8 Appendix

A1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 5.11: Full Sample: Descriptive Statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Unemployed	2,090	0.379	0.485	0	1
Yrs. Quran Lessons	2,089	4.604	3.631	0	21
Outgroup Friends	2,088	1.964	2.756	0	10
Violent Peers	2,089	3.508	4.080	0	10
Weekly Prayer Attendance	2,089	11.685	10.341	0	35
Extr. Ritual Part.	2,089	3.493	1.332	0	5
Econ Marg	2,084	2.907	1.041	1	4
Prioritize Sect	2,100	0.601	0.490	0	1

Table 5.12: Sunni Sample: Descriptive Statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Unemployed	1,050	0.102	0.303	0	1
Yrs. Quran Lessons	1,050	2.822	1.046	0	5
Outgroup Friends	1,050	0.379	0.860	0	5
Violent Peers	1,050	0.877	1.318	0	6
Weekly Prayer Part.	1,050	9.248	7.874	0	35
Extr. Ritual Part.	1,050	3.449	1.109	0	5
Econ. Marg.	1,050	2.398	0.931	1	4
Prioritize Sect	1,050	0.582	0.493	0	1

Table 5.13: Shia Sample: Descriptive Statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Unemployed	1,040	0.659	0.474	0	1
Yrs. Quran Lessons	1,039	6.405	4.353	0	21
Outgroup Friends	1,038	3.567	3.069	0	10
Violent Peers	1,039	6.167	4.203	0	10
Weekly Prayer Part.	1,039	14.149	11.849	0	35
Extr. Ritual Part.	1,039	3.538	1.524	1	5
Econ Marg.	1,034	3.425	0.880	1	4
Prioritize Sect	1,050	0.620	0.486	0	1

A2. Robustness: Difference in Effects Between Sects

The following tables use regression via OLS to estimate the difference in the average treatment effects of an in-group cleric, out-group cleric, and their interaction between sects on the three dependent variables. In these tables, note that the treatment dummy variables, *InCler* and *OutCler*, as well as the Shia dummy, *SHIA*, are demeaned.

In the first table, the fully saturated model in column 4 is as follows:

$$Y_i = \tau_1 * IN * SHIA + \tau_2 * OUT * SHIA + B_i * X_i + IN * X_i + OUT * X_i + Enum_j + SHIA_i + \epsilon_i \quad (5.2)$$

where τ_1 refers to the difference in average effects of *IN* between sects; τ_2 refers to the difference in average effects of *OUT* between sects; X_i refer to the i covariates, $Enum_j$ are the fixed effects for the j enumerators, and ϵ_i is a disturbance term. Models in columns 1-3 are respectively modified as described in the bottom part of the table. Lastly, for each model, the observations, adjusted- R^2 , and F-statistics are provided below the outcome variable.

In the second table, the fully saturated model in column 4 is as follows:

$$Y_i = IN * SHIA + OUT * SHIA + \tau_3 * IN * OUT * SHIA + B_i * X_i + IN * OUT * X_i + Enum_j + SHIA_i + \epsilon_i \quad (5.3)$$

where τ_3 refers to the difference in the average effect of *IN*OUT*; X_i refer to the i covariates, $Enum_j$ are the fixed effects for the j enumerators, and ϵ_i is a disturbance term. Models in columns 1-3 are respectively modified as described in the bottom part of the table. Lastly, for each model, the observations, adjusted- R^2 , and F-statistics are provided below the outcome variable.

Table 5.14: Robustness: Difference in ATE of *Ingroup* and *Outgroup* Between Sects

<i>Purchase Peace Band at T₁</i> (Binary)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Incleric*SHIA</i>	-0.051** (0.020)	-0.050*** (0.019)	-0.037** (0.019)	-0.030 (0.032)
<i>Outcleric*SHIA</i>	0.003 (0.020)	0.002 (0.019)	-0.001 (0.019)	-0.010 (0.032)
Observations	2,086	2,086	2,079	2,079
Adjusted R ²	0.107	0.189	0.251	0.252
F Stat.	51.160***	38.485***	35.909***	21.552***
<i>Wearing Peace Band 8 Hours Later at T₂</i> (Binary)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Incleric*SHIA</i>	-0.047** (0.019)	0.047** (0.018)	-0.036** (0.018)	-0.054* (0.030)
<i>Outcleric*SHIA</i>	-0.009 (0.019)	-0.009 (0.018)	-0.012 (0.018)	-0.018 (0.030)
Observations	2,071	2,071	2,064	2,064
Adjusted R ²	0.116	0.150	0.203	0.205
F Stat.	55.486***	29.062***	27.294***	16.602***
<i>Pro-Peace Speech 8 Hours Later at T₂</i> (Standardized)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Incleric*SHIA</i>	-0.168*** (0.045)	-0.165*** (0.043)	-0.154*** (0.041)	-0.050 (0.070)
<i>Outcleric*SHIA</i>	-0.008 (0.045)	-0.008 (0.043)	-0.012 (0.041)	-0.123* (0.070)
Observations	2,074	2,074	2,067	2,067
Adjusted R ²	0.019	0.114	0.186	0.204
F Stat.	8.97***	26.042***	24.634***	16.596***
SHIA FE?	Y	Y	Y	Y
Enum FE?	N	Y	Y	Y
Cov?	N	N	Y	Y
Cov* <i>Incleric</i> ?	N	N	N	Y
Cov* <i>Outcleric</i> ?	N	N	N	Y

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 5.15: Robustness: Difference in ATE of *Incleric*Outcleric* Between Sects

<i>Purchase Band at T₁</i>				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>In*Out*SHIA</i>	0.052 (0.040)	0.051 (0.039)	0.017 (0.038)	0.123* (0.064)
Constant	0.334*** (0.010)	0.487*** (0.021)	0.584*** (0.051)	0.580*** (0.052)
Observations	2,086	2,086	2,079	2,079
Adj. R ²	0.108	0.190	0.251	0.255
F Stat.	36.965***	33.580***	32.715***	17.500***
<i>Wearing Peace Band 8 Hours Later at T₂</i>				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>In*Out*SHIA</i>	0.036 (0.038)	0.035 (0.037)	0.004 (0.036)	0.034 (0.062)
Constant	0.255*** (0.009)	0.356*** (0.020)	0.250*** (0.049)	0.266*** (0.050)
Observations	2,071	2,071	2,064	2,064
Adj.-R ²	0.116	0.150	0.203	0.204
F Stat.	39.910***	25.323***	24.846***	13.305***
<i>Pro-Peace Speech 8 Hours Later at T₂</i>				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>In*Out*SHIA</i>	0.102 (0.091)	0.100 (0.087)	0.055 (0.083)	-0.012 (0.142)
Constant	-0.001 (0.022)	0.107** (0.047)	0.943*** (0.113)	0.964*** (0.115)
Observations	2,074	2,074	2,067	2,067
Adj.-R ²	0.017	0.109	0.186	0.194
F Stat.	6.050***	17.908***	22.437***	12.536***
SHIA FE?	Y	Y	Y	Y
Enum FE?	N	Y	Y	Y
Cov?	N	N	Y	Y
Cov* <i>In*Outcleric</i> ?	N	N	N	Y

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

A3. Audio Recording Transcripts in English

A3.1: Sunni Cleric Message (Audio Duration: 5 min)

In the name of Allah, the most beneficent and the most merciful. All praises for Allah and prayers for the Prophet Muhammad and his progeny. I, Maulana Muhammad Sufyan Nizami, from Luckhnow am speaking to you.

These days, around the world, we have been facing such conditions where followers of one religion are having doubts about the belief systems and other things related to the other religions. In such a situation, it is a very commendable effort through which we can try to understand each others' religion and the similarities that Sunnis and Shias share amongst themselves, so that we can take them up in order to move forward in our lives. These efforts will also help remove the disagreements between different religion which are often manifested in the form of violence across the world.

All the Muslims, regardless of whatever sect they belong to, believe in the holy book of Islam called the Quran. Every Muslim believes that this holy book was revealed on the last prophet of God, Hazrat Muhammad (Peace be upon him). The purpose of this revelation was to eliminate the prejudices and differences that people had regarding each others religions and beliefs. Instead it encouraged the spirit of humanity in the society.

It is said that the Caliph of Islam, Hazrat Ali (May God be pleased with him) was once in a war where he over powered an infidel/disbeliever of Islam. Hazrat Ali (R.A.) wanted to kill him and the conditions were very favorable whereby he could easily put the disbeliever to death. Meanwhile, the disbeliever spat on the face of Hazrat Ali and Hazrat Alis ego dictated him to let that disbeliever go free. People inquired him about this incident curiously as to why he did that. Hazrat Ali (R.A.) replied that if he did anything to the disbeliever after he spat on him, it would have been a personal revenge and Islam does not allow for such kinds of personal revenge. In Islam, only the battles/wars fought in the name of Allah and His Prophet are appreciated. If anyone starts taking revenge for his own being, belongings and ego and starts using the name of the religion Islam politically, such situations generate violence of whose greatest example is in front of the world these days.

For the same reason, the brotherhood that the Prophet Muhammad preached to his companions has been quoted by several followers and companions. At one instance, during a war, an injured companion of the Prophet was asking for water in his feeble voice, someone brought him water and before he could drink it, another injured companion also asked for water and the cup, untouched by the first companion, was instead forwarded to the second companion. Before the second companion could drink it, a third injured companion asked for water and the second companion passed the water onto the third one without drinking. Eventually, all the three injured companions embraced

martyrdom. We have gotten a lesson of such amazing brotherhood, sacrifice and humanity from the companions and followers of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him).

Even the life of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is replete with such instances of humanity. One day, when the lady that used to throw trash on the Prophet everyday while he passed through her street was not there and he heard that she was ill, he went to inquire for her health. In another instance, when the Prophet of the God was circumnavigating the Kaaba in Mecca, Allah sent him a revelation that a man named Fuzala was carrying a spear under his arm to harm him. The Prophet went on to him and confronted. He admitted his crime and the Prophet forgave him. Such instances from the religion of Islam presents a lesson to all of us that we should never take revenges for the sake of ourselves. These examples teach us that it is our responsibility to take up all the similarities that the different sects of Islam represent with each other, follow those, be sympathetic to each other and create an environment of brotherhood in the society. If we happen to come across specific deeds pertaining to any particular sect of religion that we think might create tensions between two or more sects of Islam, we must take it up with our elders and scholars and seek their guidance on this matter. Whatever they suggest, should be followed instead of taking any step by ourselves individually.

A3.2: Shia Cleric Message (Audio Recording Duration: 5 min)

In the name of Allah, the most beneficent and the most merciful. All praise for God Almighty who is the creator of all the universes. My name is Maulana Syed Raza Hussain and I am from Lucknow. It is commendable that an important topic regarding unity is being highlighted today. First of all, I would like to say that Quran has stressed its importance as well in the following words: ... “And hold fast by the rope of Allah (divine injunctions) all together and be not disunited.” This is one of the basic teachings of the Quran and an instruction from God that all of us, as Muslims, should follow whole heartedly. We should focus on the fact that this is what Quran is teaching us. If there is no unity within a nation, it is seen as a divided (weak) one. Therefore, Quran in its teachings and the other actions like congregation during prayers teach us to stay united. We do not have any differences between Shias and our Sunni brothers on this point i.e. offering prayers. It is obligatory for all the Muslims to offer prayers and this in itself is a lesson of unity especially when offered in congregation.

The very basis of the Shia sect of religion is against any violence in fact, it is rather entirely opposite to violence. Violence is considered forbidden in our sect. Shias are usually those people who after the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) consider Hazrat Ali (May God be pleased with him) a Caliph of his, Khalifa bil fazal, and his true successor. The sayings of Hazrat Ali (R.A.) can be seen in the compilation of Nahj-ul-Balaagha. It can also be observed that he always

condemned violence during his life and remained a preacher of love and cooperation to the humanity. It can also be observed that a lot of sects stood against him when he was in power but he never used any form of violence. Instead he tried to tell them with love in order to bring them towards unity. For example, you can see that Hazrat Ali (R.A.) himself, the successor of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him), was targeted, terrorized and hurt. After the injury, he was brought home. You can hardly find any instance around the world where any international leader was a victim of violence and he/she did not take any revenge. However, Hazrat Ali (R.A) set a contrary example in his lifetime in this regard. Even when Ibne Muljim al Muradi, the accused, was brought to him, Hazrat Ali (R.A.) ordered to untie the ropes around his hands and asked his companions to offer him some milk to drink. Hence, through Hazrat Alis life we can learn that violence does not have to be reciprocated by violence and instead we should practice patience in such circumstances as has been taught by Maula Ali (R.A.).

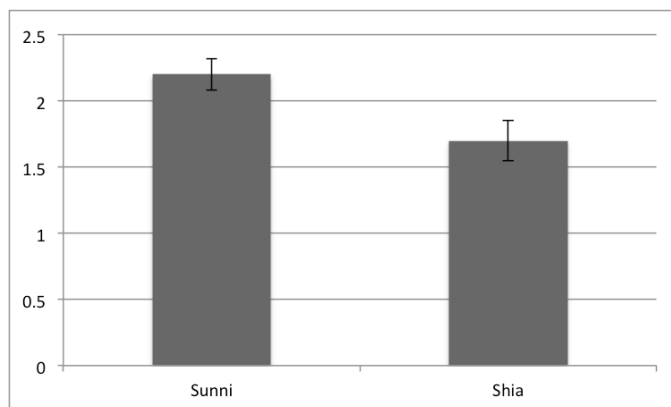
Another instance of violence was observed at the funeral of Hazrat Ali's son, Hazrat Imam Hassan, when Bani Hashim wanted to bury his body inside the premises of the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). Arrow shootings were used as a form of violence and it could have potentially led to a fight between the two groups. However, Hazrat Ali and Hazrat Imam Hussain from Bani Hashim did not retaliate with violence. Hazrat Imam Hassan, in fact, once said that if he was not allowed to be buried near his grand father, the Prophet of Islam, he should be taken to Jannat ul Bakee and buried near his mother instead. Therefore, it can be seen that no violence was triggered, no one was hurt, injured or killed by Bani Hashim in such a situation and Hazrat Imam Hassan was taken to be buried in Jannat ul Bakee.

You can see that Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A.) used to ask until his last moments of life that why the enemies were planning on killing him and whether if, at any point, he misinterpreted the things which were allowed or not allowed in Islam. Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A.) sacrificed his own life and preached the entire world that violence is never a preferred way of conduct and in order to avoid violence, it is okay to sacrifice one's own life to achieve the greater aims as a society. The important aim and mission that Hazrat Imam Hussain was following in his life was to tell the people that terrorism is wrong and has to be discouraged and humanity has to flourish forever.

Blessings be unto you.

A4. Perceptions of Speaker and Content Attributes By Sect

Figure 5.1: Perceived Influence of In-Group Cleric



A Conclusion

The pursuits in the preceding pages have sought to make important contributions to the literature on persuasion, identity, and extremism. This concluding section first recaps some of the main lessons from each chapter. It then focuses on areas for future research.

What We Learned

Chapter 2 shows how decisions by religious elites in Lucknow to propagate extremist norms were endogenous to macro-political conditions. It argues that the changing political conditions—namely, the rise and fall of the Shia kingdom of Awadh; British colonial victory in the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857; government regulation of ritual; and heightened foreign conflict—resulted in assymetric effects on the Sunni and Shia communities of Lucknow. In particular, changing political conditions impacted elite messaging in ways that interacted with religious differences and strengthened Shia perceptions of victimization. Qualitative evidence from some seventy interviews demonstrate the present-day impact of victimization on elite messaging in Lucknow. Lastly, the chapter points to a conceptualization of religious identity that recognizes an enduring core set of disputes over religious differences. In doing so, it moderates the strength of certain constructivist approaches suggesting that ethnic hatreds only originated in recent decades and others leaving the impression that identities change significantly over time.

The second chapter offers new micro-level evidence showing that extremist attitudes predict extremist behaviors but not as effectively as commonly expected. It does so by administering attitudinal measures in tandem with a novel set of behavioral measures. The results offer some of the first evidence that extremist attitudes are significant predictors of extremist behaviors, but that the strength of the relationship is not as strongly as commonly expected. Second, the study argues that economic grievances are stronger predictors of extremist attitudes than of behavior, and thus challenges theoretical expectations from the conflict literature. Third, the study points to a model of extremism in which religious and psychological factors, rather than grievance or social network explanations, drive both extremist attitudes and behaviors. A fruitful line of inquiry for future research would be to scrutinize the relationship, more generally, between psychological variables and others related to participation in religious practices. It could be the case, for instance, that

higher troubled social relations depress participation in religious prayer, or the reverse. Another possibility might be that social exclusion causes higher troubled social relations as well as lower religious observance, thus implying a model of extremism that has less to do with religious belief and more to do with marginalization on an interpersonal level. More generally, the study suggests that researchers and policy-makers should give greater attention to programming in developing countries that addresses the observed effect of psychological factors.

The third chapter investigated how pro-peace elite messaging and bottom-up counterarguments affect extremist attitudes and behavior. One lesson is that economic persuasion from an economic elite exerts little impact on extremism within or between sects, whereas the difference in effects between sects of religious persuasion is significant. A second lesson relates to the logic of substitution, which explains that the above difference in religious persuasion can be understood by thinking about the role of group victimization that characterizes Shia identity but not Sunni identity in the local setting. The third lesson relates to the fragility of elite persuasion: the results demonstrate that exposure to a counterargument to the peace message from an in-group youth removes the effect of elite persuasion. Together, these results challenge the common view that elite persuasion works in the anticipated direction and in the same way regardless of differences between groups. From a policy perspective, the findings lend support for programming aimed at countering extremism that relies on normative persuasion by clerics. The results suggest that this route appears to be more fruitful than an economic persuasion route. Even still, statistical power limitations in the study invite future researchers to interrogate the comparative effects of these two types of persuasion in conflict settings.

Chapter Four delves deeper into the inquiry regarding clerical persuasion and its impact on religious extremism. How does an anti-violence religious message by a cleric affect extremism? Do such appeals work differently across groups? I argue that exposure to such an appeal from an in-group cleric reduces extremism for members of a non-victimized group but not for members of a victimized group. The latter retain extremism to guard against anticipated threats. I present evidence from an audio recording experiment among 2,100 Sunni and Shia young adult men in Lucknow, the Indian city where sectarian violence is highest and the Shia perceive themselves as victimized. I randomly assigned subjects to listen to an anti-violence religious argument from either an in-group cleric; out-group cleric; both; or none. Results show that the in-group message significantly reduces extremist behaviors up to 8 hours later for Sunni but not Shia subjects. Additional analyses and qualitative research emphasize the plausibility of the victimization logic. Furthermore, the out-group message and the interaction do not significantly change behavior for either group.

A principal implication is that intergroup inequalities matter for understanding the effectiveness of elite persuasion, which departs from the extant focus in persuasion studies on speaker or mes-

sage attributes. For policymakers, the chapter emphasizes the plausibility of religious persuasion as being an effective means of reducing extremist behaviors. The results are particularly notable because the outcome measures are less vulnerable to demand and social desirability effects, particularly through the use of a relatively unobtrusive measure and another measure both collected about eight hours after treatment. Second, the study offers evidence that supports approaches that involve an in-group cleric—rather than an outgroup cleric or both—as the messengers of pro-peace arguments to marginalized young adult men in conflict settings. A third recommendation for policymakers and field managers is to move away from the assumption—often at work in current programs—that religious persuasion works similarly across different groups in conflict. Rather, officials and field managers should experiment with different messages—particularly for members of victimized groups—to determine which types of appeals will be most effective.

Next Steps

Where should the literature go next? Much scope exists for innovative, theoretically-motivated research on questions at the intersection of persuasion, identity, and extremism. This section spotlights three areas for future research.

One promising area would explore perceived victimization and its impact on persuadability relating to extremist attitudes and behavior. Descriptive research guided by qualitative insights can help compare measures of victimization across groups in dyadic conflict settings. With such results, a natural next step would be to replicate the basic persuasion experiments used here in other conflict settings featuring a victimized group in order to form impressions about generalizability. Researchers can start by replicating these findings in settings like Lucknow where the government is plausibly neutral in the conflict. A particularly intriguing question is whether similar results obtain not only in conflicts between religious groups, but also among racial, tribal, or linguistic groups.

Related to this area is a question that falls in the realm of political psychology: how precisely does victimization affect behavior? The arguments presented in this dissertation track a logic by which victimization decreases the discount factors of members of the victimized group and constrains its elasticity. Future empirical research inside and outside the laboratory that attempts to examine these conjectures is essential to advancing our understanding of the finer ways in which victimization affects persuadability.

A second and potentially rewarding line of research relates to the design of creative, ethical measures of extremist behavior in conflict settings. The present research made an important advancement by presenting subjects with relatively costly tasks in which the refusal to conduct the task could reasonably be interpreted as a signal of extremist behavior. Future research can help es-

tablish whether the findings presented in the current study that rely on such measures—particularly on the attitude-behavior link and the effects of persuasion—still obtain when more intensive types of extremist behavior are measured. One possible approach that can be applied from studies in development economics might involve unobtrusive observation of real-life behavior by experimental subjects. If possible to implement in an ethically and culturally sensitive way, such designs might allow researchers to see if interventions affect visitation to known radicalized locations, such as particular bodegas or places of worship, or the types of media that subjects choose to purchase or view. Creative, responsible measures can help examine whether more intensive extremist behaviors are also significantly correlated with extremist attitudes and whether they too can be reduced by pro-peace elite messaging.

Lastly, future research can help expand theory and evidence on how to reduce extremism by considering interventions that operate by means other than elite persuasion. Randomized controlled trials that examine the effect of facilitating extended inter-group contact in subjects' natural settings can help establish whether a mechanism found to reduce prejudice also translates to reducing attitudes and behavior related to violence. Building on common approaches in development research, social scientists should investigate whether interventions that alter individuals' perceived economic prospects, such as jobs training programs or cash transfers, can also dampen religious extremism.

A benefit of examining these interventions—which can be designed to be relatively intensive in their duration and the manner in which they directly affect an individual's social or material condition—is that one has a reasonable reason to expect, and thus measure, long-term attitude and behavior change. This dissertation, particularly in the second experiment in Chapter 4, makes an important first step toward studying short-term behavior change. Evidence from randomized impact evaluations of higher-intensity interventions can help policy-makers understand the size and persistence of the causal effects of counter-extremism programming. Such insights will help policy-makers better allocate limited resources in ways that more effectively reduce extremism and protect local lives in affected communities.

A Final Note

This dissertation was inspired by a set of fundamental questions about elite influence in the social science literature. It was also motivated by the socially desirable outcomes that might come about in the event that the resulting insights could better guide those in and outside government seeking to reduce religious extremism.

With that being said, I conclude with a final note that speaks to the results on the relationship between grievances and extremism and the conditions under which elite persuasion reduces ex-

tremism. As social science research, such findings and arguments are not presented as the final answer to what are very complicated questions. In Chapter 3, for instance, I find that marginalization matters for understanding variation in extremist attitudes but not behaviors. One possibility is that marginalization is distinct from grievances, and that the latter may still be important for understanding variation in behaviors. In either case, the results are not intended to argue that governments that willingly—or unwillingly—marginalize some of their citizens are not causing extremism as a result. Similarly, the evidence that elite persuasion reduces extremism for certain groups is not an invitation for practitioners to fund programs that reduce extremism—and perhaps even succeed in doing so—while doing little to address legitimate grievances that may have pushed individuals toward extremism in the first place.

Although my dissertation focused on the role of elite persuasion in shaping extremism, I believe it is crucial for future research to examine the role of other political processes as well. I welcome research that seeks to replicate or test the generalizability of the findings related to elite persuasion. At the same time, I believe that it is important for scholars to give further attention to the relationship between government policy, marginalization, and extremism.

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