

Retribution or Reconciliation? Attitudes Toward Rebel Collaborators in Iraq

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Abstract

Rebel groups require the cooperation of many civilians who are commonly perceived as “collaborators” after conflict ends. The limited empirical work in this area focuses on fighters, ignoring the need for more nuanced understandings of proportional justice for civilian collaborators. Through a survey experiment in an Iraqi city that experienced governance by the Islamic State, we find that social identity—expected to trigger in-group favoritism—is a weak determinant of preferences for punishment and forgiveness compared to the type of collaboration itself. Our results also fail to provide support for the hypothesis that exposure to violence drives a desire for revenge. Instead, the perceived volition behind an act is important, although its effect varies depending on the type of collaboration. Our research offers uniquely fine-grained data and insights into the factors that shape perceptions of individual rebel culpability, with important policy implications for balancing accountability with the need for reconciliation.

1 Introduction

When rebellions fail, there is often a widespread assumption among those on the winning side of the conflict that everyone who lived under rebel rule was a willing collaborator¹ and therefore complicit in crimes perpetrated by the group. In reality, the same person can be both a victim and a perpetrator or lie somewhere on a continuum between the two. Many residents of rebel-controlled territory are victims of the group's violence and only comply with its policies in order to stay alive. Although civilian collaborators perform a variety of non-military functions, including cooking and driving, variation in types of collaboration is understudied.

Our research finds that many of those ruled by rebels perceive variation in the culpability of different types of collaborators. For instance, fieldwork in Iraq revealed that many employees of the department of municipal services under the Islamic State (hereafter “IS” but also known by its Arabic acronym, “Daesh”) are still working without fear of prosecution or reprisals by victims of IS who are now seeking revenge. As one employee (“Zyad”) explained, “No one blames us for keeping our jobs when IS arrived because we needed to feed our families, and we continued doing the same work we had done before, just with new bosses. Besides, quitting was not an option because it would have been an act of rebellion, which would have put me and my family at risk for severe punishment.”² Yet, Iraqis affiliated with IS in other ways are not being forgiven so easily. Widows of IS members reported

¹“Collaboration” is a widely used term in conflict research, but one that is highly subjective and not well defined. In this article, we use “collaborator” to mean a person who participates in behaviors that support an enemy, whether voluntarily or under coercion.

²Author interview with “Zyad” (35, municipal services) in Mosul (April 2017). To ensure their anonymity, all IS-affiliated interviewees are identified only by pseudonyms.

that they would rather remain indefinitely in a camp for internally displaced persons because they fear for their safety and that of their children in their former hometown. One widow of an IS fighter, “Laila,” whose brother’s house was attacked with grenades as a result of his family’s ties to IS, said, “I am afraid that if I return, my neighbors would kill me in my sleep.”³ What explains the stark difference between the cases of these two collaborators? One (“Zyad”) is perceived as innocent, while the other (“Laila”) is facing death threats.

In this article, we argue that some rebel collaborators are perceived to be criminals while others are seen as victims with meaningful implications for the design of post-conflict transitional justice policies. This reality has been overlooked in empirical research on conflict. Previous surveys conducted in conflict areas examine attitudes toward insurgent groups (e.g., Blair, Imai and Lyall, 2014). Our work is unique because we examine attitudes toward different types of individual rebel collaborators, as opposed to more generalized attitudes toward the rebel group as a whole. By widening our analytical lens to consider a more realistically broad spectrum of rebel collaboration, we avoid affirming a false dichotomy between victims and perpetrators found in much of the existing research in this area (Tabak, 2011). Our research provides uniquely fine-grained data and theoretical insights into the factors that shape perceptions of individual rebel culpability, which have not been systematically tested or theorized by scholars thus far. We hope that this study will inspire more research on public opinion concerning punishment and forgiveness of perceived collaborators in other contexts.

The recent collapse of IS, a Sunni jihadist group that captured 40% of Iraq’s territory at its height (Schwartzstein, 2017), provides a unique opportunity to collect data on a population recently governed by a rebel group whose attitudes and experiences have been, for the most

³Author interview with “Laila” (40) in Hajj Ali IDP Camp (December 2017).

part, a black box to the outside world.⁴ Like many other armed groups that engage in rebel governance, IS provided public goods and services financed by its taxation of civilians and exploitation of natural resources (Revkin, 2020). Given IS's control of territory, capture of local economies, and harsh treatment of dissidents, it is unsurprising that many residents of its territories cooperated with the group—whether voluntarily or involuntarily. The sample for this study comes from Mosul and is intentionally limited to only Sunni Arabs, who made up more than 99% of the city's population at the time of the survey.⁵ As such, it includes supporters of the rebellion, reluctant collaborators, and victims—categories that are not mutually exclusive. This sample is therefore representative of populations living in areas that have experienced rebel control and governance. Surveying people who actually experienced rebel governance in the place where rebel governance occurred lends important insights into which transitional justice policies are likely to be most effective in areas confronting the challenge of reintegrating former collaborators and are feared to be highly prone to conflict recurrence. Of course, the sample is not representative of Iraq as a whole.

We argue that perceptions of culpability are driven by two primary factors: (1) the characteristics of rebel collaborators including their social identity traits and the nature of their collaboration and (2) the personal characteristics of the person judging the collaborator including past exposure to violence and perceptions of volition behind acts of collaboration. To assess variation in attitudes towards the punishment and forgiveness of rebel collaborators

⁴Most previous research on residents of formerly IS-controlled territory is based on interviews or surveys with those who fled (e.g., Fabbe and Sinmazdemir, 2018) and therefore had only limited personal exposure to the group.

⁵Finding large enough samples of non-Sunni Arab populations who were living in Mosul (e.g., Shias, Kurds, Christians) would have required prohibitively costly surveys in numerous locations given that most fled or were killed by IS.

we employ an experiment embedded in an original survey of 1,458 Sunni Arab residents of Mosul (Moslawis). Conjoint analysis allowed us to test numerous hypotheses in an efficient way and to make causal inferences concerning aspects of collaborators. Experimentally, we evaluate the effect of randomly varied identity attributes of hypothetical collaborators and types of collaboration on two outcomes: (1) understandings of justice as indicated by preferences for different types of punishment and (2) willingness to forgive, an indicator of the prospects for post-conflict reconciliation. Observationally, we test potential mechanisms that previous literature on conflict and forgiveness suggests may explain our results including exposure to violence and the perceived voluntariness of collaboration.

Our study offers important policy implications and theoretical insights that are relevant for Iraq and other war-torn societies. The findings confirm some outcomes we expected from the literature, but contradict others. Contrary to findings that social identities shape attitudes towards violent actors (Lyall, Blair and Imai, 2013; Samii, 2013; Dyrstad and Binningsbø, 2019) as well as willingness to forgive transgressors (Scott et al., 2006; Honey, 2017), we find that the *type* of rebel collaboration matters much more than rebel *social identity* characteristics in determining respondents' preferences for punishment and forgiveness. Surprisingly, interactional analyses run between rebel identity characteristics and their acts do not yield significant effects of identity in moderating the effect of rebel acts on preferences for punishment and forgiveness.

Our research also contributes to an active scholarly debate as to whether grievances against a rebel group (death or injury of a family member) leads to either an increased desire for revenge and retribution (e.g., Hall et al., 2018; Hirsch-Hoefler et al., 2016) or pro-sociality and reconciliation through a post-traumatic growth mechanism (e.g., Blattman, 2009; Bateson, 2012). Our study provides support for neither of these competing theories. Instead, attitudes regarding these outcomes are strongly driven by the type of collaboration and its perceived voluntariness. This latter aspect—voluntariness—is overlooked in the

existing literature.⁶ In sum, our work shows that some collaborators are perceived to be criminals, while others are seen as victims.

2 Why Work on Public Perceptions of Former Rebel “Collaborators” is Needed

When conflicts end, national and international elites determine transitional justice policies, often paying little attention to the demands and grievances of local populations (Jones, Parmentier and Weitekamp, 2012). The majority of scholars studying post-conflict public opinion follow suit taking a top-down approach, focusing on perceptions of different domestic or internationally imposed justice mechanisms including trials, lustration laws, or truth commissions (Pham, Weinstein and Longman, 2004; Aguilar, Balcells and Cebolla-Boado, 2011; Fabbe, Hazlett and Simmazdemir, 2019; Sonis et al., 2009; Hall et al., 2018). Others analyze associations between respondent characteristics and their attitudes toward peace processes (Vinck et al., 2007; Hirsch-Hoefler et al., 2016; Tellez, 2019; Bratton, 2011). Although these studies have advanced our knowledge of attitudes toward national or international-level transitional justice policies, the micro-level determinants of post-conflict reconciliation with and reintegration of individual rebel collaborator remain poorly understood. There is increasing concern that top-down transitional justice policies do not adequately address the concerns and needs of victims, whose support for and belief in the legitimacy of transitional justice mechanisms is necessary for forgiveness and reintegration of individual perpetrators into their local communities (e.g., Shaw, Waldorf and Hazan, 2010; Millar, 2011). In contrast with most previous work, our research takes a bottom-up victim-centered approach, zeroing

⁶One notable exception is a study by Gibson and Gouws (1999) that we discuss further below.

in on the attitudes of civilians who experienced a prolonged period of rebel governance just eight months after the end of the conflict.

Despite the overwhelming tendency to focus on politics at the national level, a handful of important studies on attitudes toward punishment and forgiveness of rebels use micro-level data. Studies find that respondents from certain ethnic groups or political parties are more likely to forgive the crimes of former combatants (e.g., Samii, 2013; Bratton, 2011). However, these studies do not consider how different types of collaboration or social identity traits of former combatants affect forgiveness. Other work asks respondents about forgiveness of “people of other nationalities for the violence they have committed in the last fifteen years,” finding that personal experience with violence and its effects, not ethnic hostility towards out-group members, correlates with less willingness to forgive (Bakke, O’Loughlin and Ward, 2009: 1017). Yet, this research design does not allow us to distinguish whether it is the mention of violence, the various events that have taken place within the last fifteen years, the many different out-groups invoked by the prompt, or combinations of some or all of these factors that drive differences in willingness to forgive. For instance, the mere mention of violence has been shown to harden attitudes towards aggressors (Kupatadze and Zeitzoff, 2019). Since violence is held constant in this vignette, we cannot isolate the independent effect of violence on forgiveness from these other variables. Our empirical strategy contributes methodological innovation to previous studies by experimentally manipulating the identities and actions of hypothetical rebel collaborators in order to make causal, rather than associative, inferences about the conditions under which they can be forgiven, if at all.

Our work engages most closely with that of others who examine the differential effects of rebel characteristics on aspects of reconciliation. Dyrstad and Binningsbø (2019) consider actors from different sides of the conflicts in Nepal, Guatemala, and Northern Ireland, finding that victimization is associated with preferences for punishment only for the spe-

cific perpetrators of that violence.⁷ In Croatia, David (2014) randomizes whether a soldier was the respondent's in-group or out-group member (Croatian or Serbian), tried in international or state courts, and received a jail sentence or not, holding constant the soldier's level of responsibility (rank), gender (male), severity of his crime (the murder of a single civilian), and guilt. He finds that social identity matters for popular perceptions of justice, with out-group members receiving harsher scrutiny (David, 2014: 489). In an experiment in post-Apartheid South Africa, Gibson and Gouws (1999) randomize whether ex-combatants are leaders or subordinates, members of the opposition or the government, motivated by ideology or hatred, and cause the death of innocents versus other combatants. They conclude that leaders are more likely to be blamed for their actions than subordinates as well as those who were pro-Apartheid, but these findings are also mediated by respondent ethnic identity. A common thread tying these studies together is the evidence they provide that individual identity characteristics of rebel collaborators shape attitudes towards them. Yet, in line with most other work on attitudes towards rebels (e.g., Humphreys and Weinstein, 2007; Lyall, Blair and Imai, 2013; Grossman, Manekin and Miodownik, 2015; Daly, 2018), these studies focus exclusively on attitudes toward the most egregious acts of rebel collaboration—acts of violence committed by combatants—and do not examine social or economic collaboration by civilians. In doing so, the existing literature fails to explore more nuanced understandings of guilt and commensurate justice for individuals engaged in lesser crimes.

Our study therefore addresses an open question in the literature on which of three in-

⁷Dyrstad and Binningsbø (2019) also consider associations between reported participation in the fighting on one side or another and preferences for punishment and find no significant variation. They admit though that their study likely suffers from heavy under-reporting of past involvement in such activities, justifying our reasoning for not attempting to run such analyses in the present study.

dependent variables—the identity of the collaborator, the severity of collaborator action, or the characteristics of the person doing the judging—is a more important determinant of preferences for punishment and provides evidence for the latter two of these. Our findings contradict other experimental work in political psychology finding that individual characteristics of criminals (e.g., in-group versus out-group identity or profession) drive preferences for punishment more than the perceived seriousness of the crime they perpetrated (Petersen et al., 2012).⁸ To the best of our knowledge, our study is the first to pit these insights derived from the fields of social psychology and criminology against theories developed in the context of civil conflict, namely that personal grievances against a rebel group drive preferences for punishment or reconciliation (e.g., Biro et al., 2004; Pham, Weinstein and Longman, 2004; Vinck et al., 2007; Grossman, Manekin and Miodownik, 2015; Hirsch-Hoefler et al., 2016; Hall et al., 2018). It is also one of the first to examine perceptions toward women collaborators as well as the role of volition in shaping attitudes toward post-transitional justice.

In addition to its theoretical contributions, our work has important substantive implications. Although public opinion should never be the sole basis for the design of transitional justice policies because of the risk of “mob justice” (Daly, 2001: 383), research suggests that it should be taken into consideration by policymakers to facilitate reconciliation and durable peace after conflict. Social psychologists find that sensitivity to popular concerns about the fairness of legal institutions is necessary to ensure trust in the police and courts, warning that failure to consider public opinion may increase the likelihood of noncompliance with laws and state authorities (e.g., Tyler, 2003). Work in criminology bolsters these findings, demonstrating that justice processes are more likely to lead to reconciliation between adversarial groups and a reduction of criminal recidivism when they take into account

⁸Petersen et al. (2012) do not randomize severity of crime and rely on individual differences in perceptions of seriousness of a single crime to test their outcomes.

the voices of victims (Latimer, Dowden and Muise, 2005). For instance, in communities where victims of violence blame civilian collaborators for aiding the enemy, demands for justice take many forms including “wild justice” and extrajudicial revenge killings (Jacoby, 1984; Human Rights Watch, 2017). This is not a new phenomenon. After the defeat of the Nazis, some Jews formed “hit squads” to kill those who had attempted to exterminate them, circumventing legal institutions that they did not trust to deliver justice (Davidson, 2015: 22).

Understanding the drivers of preferences concerning punishment and willingness to forgive in post-conflict societies is a necessary first step toward encouraging reconciliation and building trust in state institutions. Our experimental design offers a model for doing this, with the potential to offer new policy-relevant information for decision-makers who are debating how best to balance demands for accountability with the need for reconciliation. In building upon work from diverse areas of research including criminology, social psychology, and conflict—which are not often in dialogue with one another—our study offers new insights that can contribute to the design of evidence-based policies for transitional justice and peace-building.

3 Theorizing Post-Conflict Justice Preferences

This article develops and tests hypotheses concerning how individuals in conflict-affected societies form preferences for punishment and forgiveness of other community members who collaborated to varying extents with an insurgency. In addition to the role of combatants, we examine a broad spectrum of non-military roles that collaborators—both men and women—may perform. Based on fieldwork, we expected attitudes toward different types of collaborators to range widely. Some are forgiven easily while others face demands for

retribution. We developed several hypotheses to explain this poorly understood variation.⁹

3.1 Variation in Types of Collaboration and Condemnability

We argue that information about the type of collaboration, which is closely linked with the perceived seriousness of the crime and condemnability of the collaborator, is an important determinant of non-collaborators' preferences for punishment. Studies in social psychology find that, in general, more severe transgressions are more difficult to forgive (e.g., Boon and Sulsky, 1997). These studies tend to focus on disputes between partners involved in romantic relationships, but we believe that many of their findings are more broadly applicable to post-conflict settings. For instance, work on conflict suggests that rebel fighters from more abusive units are less likely to be reintegrated back into society (Humphreys and Weinstein, 2007). Considerable evidence from criminology studies across a variety of contexts suggests that individuals see violent behaviors (those causing bodily harm) as the most serious offenses (Stylianou, 2003).

To explore variation in perceptions of different types of collaboration, we constructed a scale of collaborator roles that vary in their proximity to or intimacy with perpetrators of violence. We based selection of the specific roles included in the experiment on our fieldwork as well as primary sources describing common types of collaboration in other cases of rebel governance from around the world. We expected that Moslawis would prefer harsher punishments for fighters compared to those who supported or cooperated with IS in non-combatant roles. In particular, we hypothesized that fighters would be most harshly punished and least likely to be forgiven due to the violent nature of their collaboration. Additionally, we hypothesized that respondents would prefer harsher punishments for collaborators who

⁹We pre-registered these hypotheses and secondary expectations prior to data collection in a public online data repository (blinded for review).

were physically closest to rebels (those who worked as cooks for fighters) and those who were the most intimate with rebels (wives of fighters) in contrast with collaborators in civilian roles for institutions that provided services to other civilians (janitors working in IS's department of municipal services) or those who supported the insurgency at a distance (taxpayers).

In a post-experiment question, we validated our assumption that different acts of collaboration would be associated with varying levels of moral condemnation. In this question, respondents saw all five types of collaboration at once (unlike in the experiment when they only saw one at a time and only a possible total of three different types) and they were asked to rank them from least to most condemnable. Respondents see being an IS fighter as the most condemnable transgression (98% of the sample), followed by civilians directly involved with them, such as cooks for fighters and women married to fighters. Those not directly involved with fighters such as janitors at the municipality and taxpayers are ranked as least condemnable. (See Appendix Table A5).

3.2 Social Identity Traits

We posit that the individual identity characteristics of collaborators can have either direct or moderating effects on attitudes towards punishment and forgiveness. Some identities are seen as less agentic and therefore less culpable than others. Social identity characteristics may trigger empathy among those who share identities with the offender. Furthermore, perceptions of how others should be treated are shaped by social context.

Based on previous research on criminal culpability and our knowledge of the Iraqi context, we expected respondents to prefer more lenient punishments for and be more forgiving of younger transgressors than for older ones. Juveniles are generally assumed to be less agentic than adults because they are easily influenced by those around them, particularly authority figures, and they may not be able to distinguish between right and wrong (Slobogin, Fondacaro and Woolard, 1999; Scott et al., 2006). Similar to most penal codes around the world,

Iraqi law requires reduced punishments for children, taking into consideration their age and the stage of their mental development at the time of the offense.¹⁰

We also expected respondents to prefer more lenient punishments for women than for men. Previous studies have found that women in other contexts are perceived as being less responsible when they cause harm compared to men and they receive lighter punishments *ceteris paribus* (Honey, 2017; Ahola, Christianson and Hellström, 2009). Given that Iraq is a patriarchal society with strong Islamic and tribal traditions, which tend to regard women as the weaker sex (Hudson, Bowen and Nielsen, 2015), women are likely to be seen as having less agency than men. Interviews in Iraq support this expectation. “Fadila” explained that when her husband decided to join IS and she expressed misgivings, he replied, “You can leave and I will keep the kids.”¹¹ Anecdotal evidence suggests that female collaborators should be perceived as less culpable than men, because, as Fadila put it, “We did not have a choice.”

Research on in-group favoritism and social identity theory demonstrates that members of the same group tend to favor one another (Turner, Brown and Tajfel, 1979; Brewer, 1999). In conflict settings in particular, Hewstone, Rubin and Willis (2002) finds that in-group biases become more pronounced. Other studies argue that ethno-racial identities play a role in attributions of blame and assessments of what constitutes proportionate punishment (Gibson and Gouws, 1999; Samii, 2013; Dyrstad and Binningsbø, 2019). Inter-group bias has been shown to shape attitudes towards the culpability of combatants. In one study, harm inflicted by out-group members was punished harshly whereas harmful actions by in-group members were perceived as “justified by appeal to extenuating circumstances that forced the in-groups hand” (Lyall, Blair and Imai, 2013).¹²

¹⁰Iraq’s Penal Code (Act No. 111 of 1969), Articles 67–78.

¹¹Author interview with “Fadila” (35, wife of an IS fighter) in Ninewa (December 2017).

¹²See also David (2014).

In the context of Iraq, social identity theory suggests that members of the same tribe should be more benevolent toward one another than for members of other tribes. Since an important aspect of tribal identity in Iraq and elsewhere is the principle of defending one's kinsmen against outsiders (Hudson, Bowen and Nielsen, 2015; Carroll, 2011), we hypothesized that shared tribal identity would encourage empathy with transgressors and therefore more lenient punishments. McCullough, Fincham and Tsang (2003) also suggest that shared social identity encourages empathy with and increased benevolence towards a transgressor, citing previous research linking empathy with forgiveness (e.g., Worthington Jr, 2006). Operating as moderating factors, we expected that independent interactions between being a juvenile, a female, or a co-tribal member with the type of act committed would lead to lighter punishment and higher propensity to forgive, particularly for the acts not associated with violence.

3.3 Victimization and Grievances

Preferences for punishment of rebel collaborators may be affected by whether or not—and to what extent—an individual was victimized by the rebel group. As noted above, many studies have examined the relationship between grievances such as exposure to violence on preferences for transitional justice and peace. These studies present heterogeneous findings pointing in two different directions. Many find that exposure to conflict or violence increases pro-social and cooperative behavior (e.g., Blattman, 2009; Bateson, 2012; Tellez, 2019), but several studies have found that victimization decreases willingness to forgive, reconcile, and cooperate with out-groups and transgressors (e.g., Berrebi and Klor, 2008; Bakke, O'Loughlin and Ward, 2009; Grossman, Manekin and Miodownik, 2015; Hirsch-Hoefler et al., 2016; Canetti et al., 2017; Voors et al., 2012). Based on this previous research, we expected that individuals who have been victimized by a rebel group—as measured by the death or injury of family members—would prefer harsher punishments for rebel collaborators than those

who did not experience such a personal loss.

3.4 Voluntariness of Collaboration

We expected the perceived voluntariness behind the acts of collaboration to be associated with preferences for punishment of collaboration.¹³ Assessing perceived levels of volition behind acts of transgression, while difficult, is a key component of most psychological models of blame and responsibility (Alicke, 2000: 57). Experimental research by psychologists finds that beliefs about intention to harm are a major driver of preferences for punishment of criminals (Aharoni and Fridlund, 2011) and that more intentional transgressions among partners in romantic relationships are more difficult to forgive (e.g., Boon and Sulsky, 1997; Girard and Mullet, 1997). We test whether these findings generalize to the post-conflict setting of Mosul by hypothesizing that when acts of transgression are perceived as more intentional, transgressors receive harsher punishments and are less likely to be forgiven.

Voluntariness is a particularly important factor in contexts where the collaborator may be acting under considerable economic or physical duress, as is the case in civil war environments where rebel groups exercise coercive control over territory and people. IS required all residents of its territory—except for the extremely poor—to pay taxes including service fees for water and electricity and a mandatory charitable contribution known as *zakāt* that is the functional equivalent of an income tax. Refusal to pay was considered an act of apostasy and punishable by death (Revkin, 2020). However, despite this harsh penalty for non-compliance, some supporters of IS may have voluntarily paid taxes, seeing their payment as an appropriate exchange for the services the group was providing. There was also considerable variation

¹³We considered randomizing this aspect of the collaborator profile but decided that even if we had attempted to do so, people would bring their own perceptions of volition to mind regardless of what they were told. This aspect of the design merits further study.

in the voluntariness of marriage to IS fighters. Some women were already married when IS captured Mosul and their husbands decided to join IS—with or without their agreement. Other women married IS fighters after 2014 for the purpose of gaining social status. As one interviewee explained, “In poor neighborhoods, some women believed that they could become princesses by marrying IS emirs.”¹⁴ Still others were coerced into marrying IS fighters either by social pressure, economic duress, or physical threats. We use post-treatment questions to assess whether Moslawis associate different types of collaboration with varying levels of volition and to explore our hypotheses.

3.5 Punishment Versus Forgiveness

We measure two interrelated outcomes: punishment and forgiveness. Once culpability for a transgression is assessed, the primary reaction is determination of the appropriate punishment, if any (Darley and Huff, 1990). Although the relationship between justice and forgiveness is understudied (Exline et al., 2003), Enright (1991: 128) argues that benevolence toward transgressors is conditional upon the belief that justice has been served. In this study, we ask respondents if—after selecting the punishment that they feel is appropriate for a given hypothetical collaborator—they would be willing to forgive this person. Although we cannot establish causality between punishments and forgiveness, this second dependent variable nonetheless enables us to examine correlations between punishment and the potential for reconciliation.

¹⁴Author interview with “Salem” in Mosul (April 2017). “Emir” is the Arabic word for “prince,” which IS used to refer to high-ranking officials.

4 Conducting Multi-Method Research in Mosul, Iraq

In addition to the quantitative data set, this article also draws on qualitative evidence from fieldwork in Mosul and other areas of northern Iraq in 2017 (Appendix D). This fieldwork enabled us to test the survey questions to ensure their appropriateness for the context and to validate the realism of the experimental design. It included visits to public institutions that were previously administered by IS, as well as observations of trials of alleged IS members (Appendix D.2) We conducted interviews with 61 individuals from areas previously controlled by IS, as well as 17 lawyers, judges and experts involved in prosecuting and defending suspected IS collaborators (Appendix Tables A10-A11). In this section we argue that Mosul, Iraq, provides a case for which understanding popular perceptions of former rebels is both theoretically and substantively important, and we further elaborate on the details of our data collection process and ethical issues associated with research in post-conflict settings.

4.1 Case Selection

We chose Mosul, Iraq's second largest city and IS's de facto capital during its three-year rule because it is a case that recently experienced rebel governance and is therefore home to a population for whom the question of punishment and forgiveness of rebel collaborators is extremely salient. IS claimed to be building a new caliphate and not only recruited fighters but also operated a variety of institutions that provided protection, public goods, and basic services. These institutions necessitated a civilian bureaucracy staffed by employees who generally did not carry weapons or otherwise perform military functions. Thus, Moslawis witnessed a broad spectrum of collaboration, including: (1) compliance with policies such as paying taxes and follow a strict dress code, (2) social integration with the group through marriage to its members and the enrollment of children in IS-controlled schools, (3) employment in IS's civilian workforce (e.g., as teachers, doctors, or cooks), and, finally, (4) recruitment

as fighters. In addition to variation in *types* of collaboration, there was also variation in the *voluntariness* of collaboration. Some of IS's civilian employees were volunteers, but others cooperated with the group because opposition was punishable by death (Revkin, 2018: 3). Since Moslawis confronted these different types of collaboration on a daily basis, they can recognize and imagine the scenarios described in our experiments. Moreover, since collaboration was widespread in formerly IS-controlled territories, residents of these areas are now grappling with the question of what to do with former collaborators and under what conditions they might be forgiven for their transgressions. Thus, Mosul is a particularly relevant setting in which to collect data on attitudes toward former rebel collaborators.

We were also motivated by the important and immediate policy implications that such a study in Mosul could have for post-transitional justice. At the height of its expansion in 2014, IS governed more than five million people (Robinson et al., 2017). When IS retreated in 2017, it left behind a population that Iraqi authorities now regard as complicit in terrorism. The government is currently facing the challenge of reintegrating this population back into their local communities, but in doing so, authorities have taken a heavy-handed approach that fails to differentiate between voluntary and involuntary collaboration, and between more serious crimes and lesser offenses. Iraq's Anti-Terrorism Law criminalizes membership in any terrorist group without requiring proof of a specific criminal act, meaning that anyone with a plausible connection to the group—including unarmed civilian employees and family members—can easily be sentenced to life in prison, the minimum punishment allowed by the law.¹⁵ As a result of this one-punishment-fits-all approach, more than 8,000 accused IS collaborators have been convicted in trials that are often decided in under 30 minutes,

¹⁵Law No. 13 (2005) requires the death penalty for terrorist acts. The penalty for aiding terrorists is life in prison, which Iraqi judges generally interpret as 15 or 20 years.

with a conviction rate of around 98%¹⁶ and more than 3,000 have been sentenced to death (Abdul-Zahra and George, 2018).

Judges and prosecutors interviewed for this study expressed an unwillingness to differentiate between different types of collaboration—some of which may have been involuntary—and between more serious crimes and lesser offenses. One prosecutor said that pressure to be perceived as “tough on terrorism”¹⁷—combined with legislation that allows very little flexibility in sentencing—results in severe punishments that are often disproportionate to the crime committed. A judge in Mosul justified the harsh punishment of civilian IS collaborators as follows: “IS’s ideology is so dangerous that we cannot afford to show any leniency, even for those who were only believers and did not commit specific crimes.”¹⁸

This approach, which is widely perceived as collective punishment of Sunnis, appears to be generating new grievances that could fuel the emergence of an “IS 2.0” (Revkin, 2018). A correlation between repression and radicalization has been documented in many contexts (Davenport and Inman, 2012), including Iraq. It has been argued that the rise of IS—which emerged from the remnants of Al Qaeda in Iraq after the 2003 U.S. invasion—was fueled by resentment over the collective punishment of Sunnis through de-Baathification and incarceration after the 2003 U.S. invasion (Sly, 2015). Mosul is therefore a particularly important setting in which to collect data to inform evidence-based policies for transitional justice and reconciliation.

While the work we present here has direct and immediate implications for the case of Iraq, it also speaks to a broader set of ongoing as well as future cases of post-conflict transitional

¹⁶Author observations of trials of alleged IS members in Tel Kaif (December 2017). See also Coker and Hassan (2018).

¹⁷Author interview with “Dara” (prosecutor) in Tel Kaif (December 2017).

¹⁸Author interview with “Farouk” (judge) in Mosul (December 2017).

justice processes. It is not unusual for rebel groups to establish governance institutions and rule territories for multiple years (Stewart, 2018), or to demand that populations conform to strict rules Arjona (2016), as IS did. In all cases of failed rebellion, states face the challenge of walking a fine line between under- and over-punishment of former rebel collaborators. When punishment of a perpetrator falls short of what the victims believe is commensurate to the crime committed, the resulting perception of an injustice gap increases the likelihood of victims being dissatisfied with the decisions of state institutions (Worthington Jr, 2006). Excessive punishment may be perceived as “victors’ justice” and delegitimize transitional justice efforts (de Greiff, 2014: 18).

4.2 Survey Administration and Sampling Strategy

We ran an original survey of 1,458 Mosul residents from March to April, 2018, using an experienced Iraqi research firm.¹⁹ A team of Iraqi enumerators recruited from Mosul conducted the face-to-face survey with tablets. The sample is intentionally restricted to Sunni Arab Iraqis living in Mosul in June 2014—when IS arrived—and therefore had some exposure to IS. Given massive out-migration from Mosul by non-Sunnis and non-Arabs due to their persecution by IS, the numbers of respondents belonging to these groups would have been too small to draw any statistically significant inferences about the larger populations to which they belong. Therefore, a scope condition of this work is its limitation to Sunni Arabs. We do not expect that our findings will generalize to other religious or ethnic groups in Iraq. However, we do expect that some of the findings may generalize to other Sunni-majority cities governed by IS in Iraq and Syria and to other post-conflict settings. Some of the scenarios evaluated in this experiment (such as a taxpayers) are applicable only to rebel groups that attempt to govern civilians, whereas others (fighters) apply to all rebel groups.

¹⁹The Independent Institute for Administration and Civil Society Studies.

4.3 Research Ethics

Research in conflict areas raises unique ethical challenges (Wood, 2006), as well as security concerns for researchers and their subjects (Sluka, Nordstrom and Robben, 1995). Presenting respondents with scenarios describing hypothetical IS collaborators runs the risk of re-traumatizing those who were victimized by the group. However, fieldwork in Mosul and other areas of Iraq revealed that discussions about collaborators and the extent of their culpability are commonplace. Many interviewees expressed concerns about the presence of collaborators in their communities and are actively debating both formal and informal justice mechanisms. One resident of Mosul complained, “Family members of IS fighters, who were beneficiaries of IS and its crimes, are living among us, and no one is holding them accountable.”²⁰

Given the extent to which collaboration is already being publicly debated by Iraqis, as well as an informed-consent procedure that allowed all respondents to opt out of the survey, we do not believe that the survey exposed respondents to significant risk.²¹ The appendix discusses other potential risks to survey respondents and the steps taken to minimize those risks.²²

²⁰Author interview with “Walid” (33, store clerk) in Mosul (April 2017).

²¹To address the concern that social desirability bias may be affecting our results, we designed a list experiment to assess whether a higher percentage of respondents might answer “yes” to sensitive questions about support for IS if asked indirectly (Appendix B.4). The difference between these two samples was not statistically significant. Only six respondents declined to answer or did not know when asked a direct question on support for IS, suggesting that social-desirability bias did not significantly affect our results.

²²Appendix D. [Redacted for blinding] Institutional Review Board approved the survey

5 Experimental Design

To evaluate respondents' beliefs about the type of justice deserved by former collaborators as measured by preferences for punishment, we implement a rating-based conjoint experiment. Conjoint experiments are useful for research that seeks to test multiple competing hypotheses against one another because they are efficient. The design significantly reduces the number of participants needed while maintaining sufficient power to test hypotheses by randomizing each potential driver of outcomes independently of others. The researcher can then analyze the independent effect of each variable across the averages of randomized appearances of the other factors. In the experiment, each respondent sees and evaluates a single hypothetical collaborator. The experimental design includes a follow-up question on willingness to forgive after punishment, which we use to assess prospects for reconciliation.

The experimental design randomizes rebel collaborators' identities and the nature of their collaboration with IS. We included gender,²³ age, and whether or not the collaborator is a member of the respondent's tribe to serve as identity markers.²⁴ We also randomize acts of collaboration. The five collaboration roles specified in the experiment are: (1) fighting for IS, (2) working as a cook for IS fighters, (3) being married to an IS fighter, (4) working as a

instrument including the experimental design (Protocol 2000022022), observations of trials of IS members (Protocol 2000021840), and interviews with Iraqis from IS-controlled areas (Protocol 1506016040).

²³Though the majority of IS fighters were men, IS did have a small number of female combatants including police officers and suicide bombers.

²⁴Although sectarian and ethnic identities are important in Iraq, we did not vary these identities because IS was a Sunni Arab organization and therefore collaborators are widely assumed to be Sunni Arabs. Almost all Moslawis identify with a tribe.

janitor for the IS municipality, and (5) paying taxes to IS. These collaboration scenarios are based on interviews with actual IS collaborators (Appendix D).

Table 1 specifies the types of collaboration and identity characteristics randomized in this experiment. Every respondent evaluated a series of three separate profiles that were generated by randomizing the attributes listed in Table 1. The total sample of evaluated profiles was 4,275. Before the enumerator reads the descriptions of the hypothetical collaborators, the respondent is told: “I am going to read you some hypothetical scenarios about people from Mosul who are being prosecuted for their past cooperation with Daesh [IS]. These people now want to move back into your neighborhood. I would like you to choose the type of punishment that you view as appropriate for this person. The person is a [insert profile].”²⁵

Table 1: Randomized Rebel Attributes

Dimension	Attributes
Gender	Man Woman
Age	15 35
Tribal Member	Respondent’s tribal group Other Tribe
Type of Collaboration	A Daesh fighter* A cook for Daesh fighters Married to a Daesh fighter (limited to female candidates) A janitor at the municipality employed by Daesh’s government A resident of Mosul who paid taxes to Daesh

After the respondent is read a collaborator profile, she is told: “A thorough investigation concluded that this is the only act of collaboration that the person committed. I have ordered the following punishments from least harsh to most harsh. I would like you to choose the type of punishment you deem as appropriate for this former Daesh collaborator,

²⁵For examples of candidate profiles, see Appendix B.1.

who now wants to move back into your neighborhood.” The responses to this question make up our dependent variables and include the following options: no punishment necessary (least harsh), mandatory community service (e.g., picking up trash, rebuilding homes) for six months, imprisonment for three years, imprisonment for 15 years, and capital punishment (most harsh).

This additional prompt serves two purposes. The first is to help address the concern that respondents might impute other types of collaboration to the profile by specifying that the stated act is the only one committed. Second, it encourages respondents to view the five punishment types as an ordered scale from least to most harsh. To validate our ranked scale, we first ran a pilot study in which we asked 100 Moslawis to rank the punishments from least harsh to most harsh. We also ran a post-experiment validation check of this same question. Over 90% of those asked agreed with our ranking; the 10% that do not simply add noise to our findings. Moreover, only 4% of the sample said they would have preferred a different type of punishment (Appendix C.1), suggesting that the scale of punishment we offered to respondents was well-aligned with actual preferences.

6 Analyses and Results

Examining the distribution of the dependent variable across all rebel acts, the two most frequently selected options were no punishment (28%) and capital punishment (33%), indicating that there is considerable variation in the preferences of Moslawis concerning justice. Six months of community service and 15 years of prison were selected around 14% of the time, while three years of prison was selected 12% of the time. In general, preferences for punishment appear to be highly dependent on the type of collaboration, as suggested by Table 2, with IS fighters and those who were most closely associated with fighters (cooks for and wives of fighters) receiving consistently harsher punishments than those less closely

associated with fighters (janitors who worked for the IS municipality and taxpayers).²⁶ More than three-quarters of the sample sought capital punishment for IS fighters, whereas a similar proportion did not think punishment was necessary for taxpayers. Surprisingly, about a third of the sample considered death to be an appropriate punishment for cooks and wives of fighters and half the sample considered these acts of collaboration to be worthy of 15 years in prison. Thus, as expected, the largest gap in perceptions of appropriate punishment lies between those who are intimately involved with the perpetration of violence in contrast to those who are more distant from it. More than two-thirds of the sample sought a restorative punishment (community service) for janitors at the IS municipality.

Table 2: Punishments Preferred for Types of Collaboration (% of Cases)

Act	No Punishment	Community Service	3 Years Prison	15 Years Prison	Capital Punishment
IS Fighter	2%	2%	5%	13%	78%
Cook	3%	14%	22%	26%	36%
Married Fighter	17%	17%	16%	18%	31%
Janitor	41%	27%	11%	6%	15%
Paid Taxes	74%	8%	5%	4%	9%
<i>Total</i>	<i>28%</i>	<i>14%</i>	<i>12%</i>	<i>14%</i>	<i>33%</i>

We employ ordinary least squares regression (OLS) to assess the average marginal component effect (AMCE) of each of the profile attributes, pooling across all respondents and tasks.²⁷ This allows us to estimate the effects of profile attributes on degree of punishment

²⁶Balance tests confirm that the randomization of collaborator acts does not significantly vary by respondent gender, age, education level, according to χ^2 tests.

²⁷The results do not change substantively with the use of ordinal logistical analysis. Following Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto (2013), we expect OLS to be a consistent estimator of the AMCE.

through the following equation:

$$Punishment_{ijk} = \theta_0 + \theta_1 Gender_{ijk} + \theta_2 Age_{ijk} + \theta_3 Tribe_{ijk} + \theta_4 Collaboration_{ijk} + \varepsilon_{ijk}$$

where i denotes the respondent, j indicates the number of alternative profiles (which in this case is 1), and k denotes which round of three rounds each respondent completes. $Punishment_{ijk}$ is the outcome on the scale of least to most severe punishment. The analysis is run with robust standard errors clustered at the level of the respondent to account for within-respondent correlation across the rounds. The point estimates from the OLS regression are displayed in Figure 1 where dots indicate effect sizes and horizontal lines illustrate 95% confidence intervals for the AMCE of each attribute on the probability that respondents chose a given level of punishment. In this figure, the IS fighter is the base category of comparison for other types of collaborators. For female collaborators, male is the base comparison. For tribal members, non-tribal members are the base comparison. Finally, for youth, the older collaborator is the base comparison. The dependent variable is the five-point scale of punishment, in which 1 is no punishment, 2 is six months of community service, 3 is three years in prison, 4 is 15 years in prison, and 5 is the death penalty.

Figure 1 shows that former IS fighters receive punishments that are higher than all other acts of collaboration to a statistically significant level. We find that, on average, taxpayers receive significantly less harsh punishments than former collaborators who worked as cooks or janitors for IS or were married to IS fighters. On average, former IS taxpayers receive punishments that are 2.97 points lower than IS fighters, accounting for approximately 59% of the entire five-point scale, with a standard error (SE) of 0.06. In other words, punishments for taxpayers were nearly three levels less harsh than for fighters, which on our five-point scale is the difference between six months of community service and capital punishment.²⁸

²⁸We repeated this analysis with ordered logistical regression, finding that taxpayers are

Figure 1: Effects of Collaborator Identity and Type of Act on Punishment



Note: Figure depicts point estimates with 95% confidence intervals. Robust standard errors clustered at the individual level. The dots on the vertical line at 0 denote the reference category for each attribute.

We also find that civilian collaborators who were directly involved with fighters (e.g., women married to fighters and cooks for fighters) receive harsher punishments than those who did not work directly with fighters (e.g., janitors working for the IS municipality). On average, cooks receive punishments that are 0.87 points ($SE = 0.05$) lower than fighters—a difference of 17% of the five-point scale. Women married to fighters and janitors receive, respectively, punishments that are on average 1.36 ($SE = 0.07$, 27% of the scale) and 2.37 ($SE = 0.07$, 47% of the scale) less harsh than former fighters.

Contrary to expectations, respondents prefer significantly harsher rather than more lenient punishments for members of their own tribe (0.09 points higher equivalent to 2% of the scale, $SE=0.04$). This finding suggests that respondents may hold members of their own tribe to a higher moral standard than members of other tribes. Such a dynamic would be consistent with a theory of “in-group policing,” predicting that members of one ethnic group

75 percentage points less likely to receive the death penalty than fighters and 69 percentage points more likely to be given no punishment.

will tend to “ignore transgressions by members of the other group, correctly expecting that the culprits will be identified and sanctioned by their own ethnic brethren” (Fearon and Laitin, 1996). It also lends support to the argument that when “individualized trauma” (Ajdukovic, 2004) is caused by a friend, neighbor, family member, or intimate partner it is accompanied by feelings of betrayal that are not associated with acts of random or indiscriminate violence. The experience of intimate betrayal in conflict settings often triggers demands for revenge and retribution (Kalyvas, 2006). However, this effect is substantively quite small.

Additionally, more lenient punishments are selected for younger collaborators (15 years old) than for older ones (35 years old) by 0.07 points (SE=0.04), although this finding is only significant at the $p < 0.10$ level and again, substantively small. We lack support for the expectation that female collaborators would receive more lenient punishments than male collaborators. This suggests that contrary to patriarchal norms, women and men are held equally responsible for their actions in this context.

Overall, these results indicate that Moslawis assign different levels of culpability to different types of collaborators in ways that have important implications for post-conflict transitional justice and accountability processes. Contrary to expectations, identity characteristics of collaborators do not seem to have a substantial effect on perceptions of culpability, not even in interaction with the different acts. These results underscore the notion that the *type* of collaboration is a more important determinant of preferences for justice than the *identity* characteristics of the collaborator.²⁹ We also did not find substantively significant differences among respondents of different ages, genders, and tribal identities.

²⁹We also estimate the AMCEs separately for each of the three rounds of the experiment. Our main finding, that acts of collaboration determine preferences for punishment, remains the same across rounds (Appendix B.3).

6.1 Forgiveness

We ask a post-treatment question for each former collaborator profile to better understand the implications of punishment for forgiveness: “Given the punishment you have selected, would you forgive this person?” This question sheds light on whether punishments selected by respondents actually encourage forgiveness and are therefore conducive to the related objectives of reconciliation and reintegration.

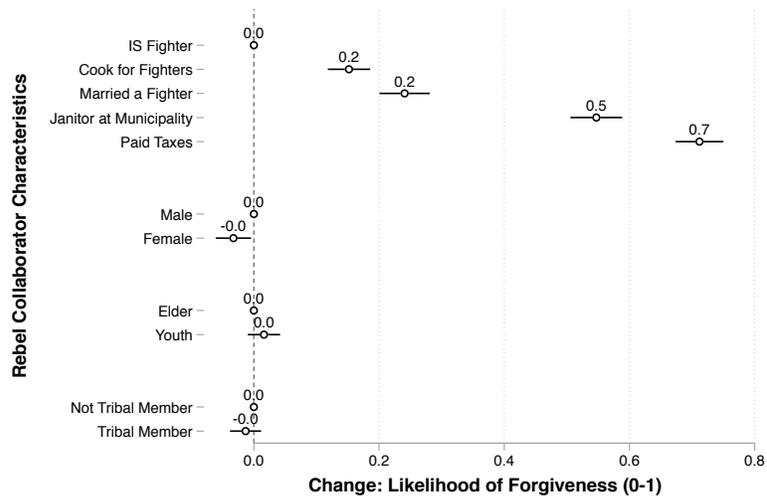
Overall, a surprisingly high proportion of respondents were willing to forgive collaboration with IS after punishment. Approximately 59% of the sample who did not choose the death penalty reported that they would forgive the collaborator (those who chose the death penalty, who make up 34% of the sample, were not asked this question). Among those who did not choose the death penalty, 29% of respondents who were presented with profiles of IS fighters were willing to forgive them, about a third of those who were presented with profiles of cooks were willing to forgive them, while 42%, 72%, and 85% of those who saw women married to fighters, janitors for the IS municipality, and taxpayers respectively were willing to forgive them. The *type* of collaboration is an important determinant of willingness to forgive a former rebel collaborator.

We employ OLS regression to analyze this outcome.³⁰ In the analysis presented here, we code those who chose the death penalty as not being willing to forgive collaborators. Compared to fighters, cooks for fighters are 15 percentage points more likely to be forgiven on a 0-1 scale (SE=0.17). Likewise, respondents are more likely to forgive women married to fighters (by 24 percentage points, SE=0.02) and janitors working for the IS municipality (by 55 percentage points, SE=0.02) than they are to forgive fighters. Taxpayers are 71 percentage points (SE=0.02) more likely to be forgiven than fighters. These results mirror those in the punishment experiment presented above, suggesting that there is a relationship between

³⁰In logit regression, the results do not change substantively.

views of punishment and forgiveness, although this may simply mean that condemnability of the act correlates with both with punitive preferences and willingness to forgive. Females are less likely to be forgiven by about 4 percentage points. Although the finding is statistically significant, the effect is relatively small in magnitude. Age and shared tribal membership are insignificant. Figure 2 highlights that the actions of former collaborators matter more than their identities for reconciliation.

Figure 2: Effects of Identity and Act on Forgiveness of Former Rebel Collaborators

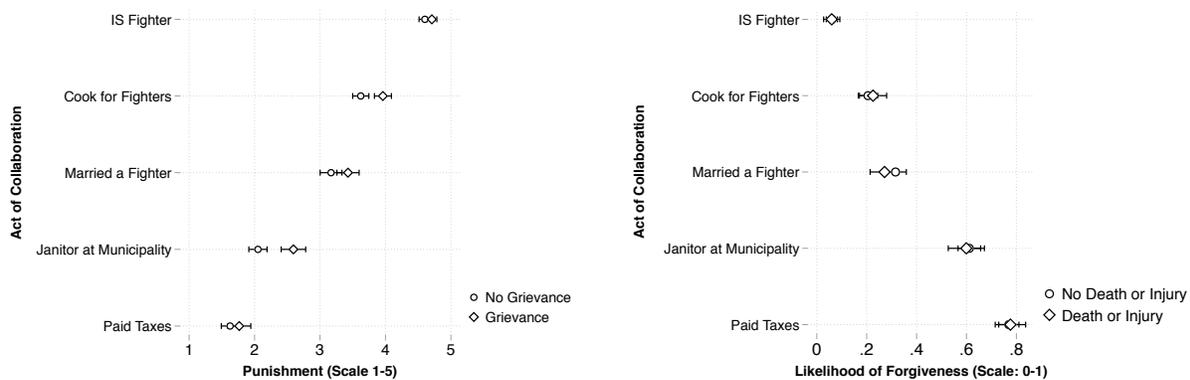


Note: Figure depicts point estimates with 95% confidence intervals. Robust standard errors clustered at the individual level. The dots on the vertical line at 0 denote the reference category for each attribute.

6.2 Respondent Grievances and the Revenge Hypothesis

To examine whether grievances against perpetrators of violence are related to our results, we asked respondents if a member of their household had been injured or killed either during IS rule or during the battle for Mosul. Over 97% of respondents who suffered such harm hold IS responsible for at least one death or injury in their immediate family. Figure 3, depicting average component interaction effects (AMCIEs) of the injury or death of a family member indicates that such grievances do not significantly affect preferences for punishment or willingness to forgive. Since Hall et al. (2018) argue that type of grievance matters for distinguishing attitudes towards justice, we also ran analyses on reports of damage or confiscation of a home and found few differences. Therefore, we do not find support for our hypothesis that Moslawis who suffered serious grievances would be more likely to prefer harsher punishments than those who did not, nor are they less likely to forgive.

Figure 3: Grievance Interacted with Rebel Act



Note: Figures depict the AMCIEs (dots) with 95% confidence intervals (horizontal lines) from OLS regression. Robust standard errors are clustered at the individual level.

6.3 Perceived Volition of Collaboration

We also explore whether there is a relationship between perceptions of different types of collaboration as voluntary or involuntary and preferences for punishment and forgiveness. On

the survey, paying taxes was overwhelmingly perceived to be an involuntary act (only 9% of respondents perceived this as voluntary) and even fewer thought that fighting was involuntary (only 3%). Table 3 demonstrates that our findings support social psychology research finding that people tend to associate more severe transgressions with more culpability (Hoffman and Hardyman, 1986).

Table 3: Perceptions of Collaboration as Voluntary (Percentage of Respondents)

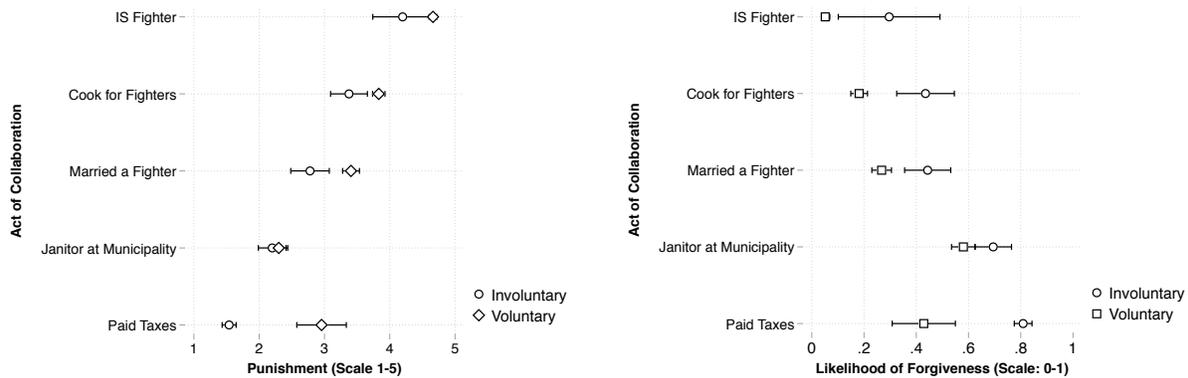
Type of Collaboration	Voluntary	Involuntary
An IS fighter	97%	3%
A cook for IS fighters	88%	12%
Married to an IS fighter	84%	16%
A janitor who worked for the IS municipality	71%	29%
A resident of Mosul who paid taxes to IS	8%	92%

Do these perceptions of culpability have varying effects on preferences for punishment and willingness to forgive rebel collaborators across types of collaboration? On average across all acts, if the act is perceived as voluntary, the respondent is 20 percentage points less likely to forgive the collaborator. To illustrate whether the perceived voluntariness of an act shapes preferences for differing justice mechanisms Figure 4 shows the AMCIEs between these two factors.

For fighters, we do not find a significant relationship, although this could be due to the very high error term surrounding the point estimate for those who perceive this act to be involuntary, who number quite few (N=24). For cooks and wives of fighters who are perceived to have voluntarily collaborated with IS, punishments are significantly harsher with a 26 percentage point difference for cooks and 17 percentage point difference for wives. For janitors, perceptions of voluntariness do not seem to correlate with severity of punishment. As our anecdotal evidence in the introduction suggests, this could be because respondents see the need for a living wage as a necessary and therefore permissible form of collaboration. The most striking finding is that taxpayers receive a punishment that is 38 percentage points

more harsh when they are perceived as having voluntarily paid taxes compared to those who are seen as having done so involuntarily. Voluntary tax payment is treated as harshly as involuntary participation in acts of collaboration that directly support fighters (cooks and wives). This finding demonstrates the importance of the perceived volition of collaboration in determining preferences for punishment and forgiveness. Importantly, the effect of perceived volition on these outcomes may vary depending on the type of collaboration.

Figure 4: Perceptions of Voluntariness Interacted with Rebel Act



Note: Figures depict the AMCIEs (dots) with 95% confidence intervals (horizontal lines) from OLS regression. Robust standard errors are clustered at the individual level.

6.4 Discussion of Findings

This study makes important and original contributions to research on rebel governance, transitional justice, and the psychology of forgiveness and reconciliation by illuminating public opinion in an Iraqi city, Mosul, that experienced three years of governance by a powerful rebel group. We generate hypotheses about public opinion toward different types of collaborators and test them employing an experimental design that is of immediate relevance to researchers and policymakers who are working to identify the conditions under which former collaborators can be successfully reintegrated into post-conflict societies. We find that the actions of collaborators matter more than their social identity characteristics—age, gender, and tribal affiliation—in determining preferences for justice and forgiveness. Unexpectedly,

we did not find that the interactive effects between these two aspects of collaboration yield significant outcomes. Furthermore, we do not find that personal victimization by rebels through violence or loss of property determine our outcomes. However, perceptions of volition in committing acts of collaboration are strongly associated with punishment and levels of forgiveness.

Our study is not the first to call into question the effects of victimization on post-conflict attitudes. In contrast to work validating the revenge hypothesis, Dyrstad and Binningsbø (2019) find that conflict exposure has little effect on support for peace agreements. To reconcile these conflicting results, (Tellez, 2019: 1056) suggests that much of the research finding evidence of a relationship between victimization and “hardening” of attitudes toward out-group members is based on identitarian conflicts such as those in Israel-Palestine and Northern Ireland. The findings of such studies may not generalize to conflicts where identity is less salient. Since the population we study (Sunni Arabs) is one that was victimized by a rebel group of the same ethno-religious makeup, it is possible that shared ethno-religious identity between victims and perpetrators in this case explains the absence of a statistically significant relationship between exposure to violence and preferences for punishment/forgiveness.

Previous research finding an association between victimization and retribution have also considered different types of harm that we did not directly capture in our survey. Many studies consider Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (e.g, Pham, Weinstein and Longman, 2004; Vinck et al., 2007; Sonis et al., 2009). Others indirectly infer a population’s exposure to violence by matching survey data with event data rather than by asking direct questions about personal experiences with violence (Tellez, 2019; Kapatadze and Zeitzoff, 2019).

By design, criminal law systems assign culpability based on the extent to which an individual had the ability to control his or her behavior when committing a wrongful act (Darley and Huff, 1990). However, the volition of collaboration is under-studied in the existing lit-

erature on conflict. To our knowledge, only one quantitative study examines the effect of intent behind an act of violence on post-conflict reconciliation in the context of South Africa, finding that high-ranking commanders were much more likely than low-ranking officers to be perceived as responsible and therefore blameworthy for their own actions (Gibson and Gouws, 1999). We build upon this work by allowing perceptions of volition to vary across a more realistically broad spectrum of five common types of collaboration by both civilians and combatants, rather than a simple dichotomy between high- and low-ranking military commanders. Aharoni and Fridlund (2011) create a scenario where volition behind a criminal act is unquestionable in their vignettes. Future survey experiments could explore the causal effects of volition by randomizing this attribute.

7 Conclusion

This research has immediate and important policy implications for the current post-IS case of Iraq. The reintegration and rehabilitation of combatants is usually the highest policy priority in post-conflict peace processes, but most of the people who support and enable insurgencies are civilians, not fighters (Weinstein, 2006). By demonstrating that Moslawis differentiate between the culpability of different types of collaborators and prefer more lenient punishments for some of them, the findings of these experiments suggest that the Iraqi government's heavy-handed approach to collaborators is both inconsistent with public opinion and with important principles of transitional justice, including proportionality, prosecutorial prioritization, and truth-seeking.

More broadly, our research design provides a framework for testing the determinants of justice and willingness to forgive, as well as other important outcomes including support for peace processes and reintegration of former collaborators, in other settings. Our work also suggests several new directions for research. Since our sample of Moslawis included

many people who collaborated with IS as well as others who resisted or tried to stay neutral, this sample is likely more empathetic with and forgiving of collaborators—on average—than the Iraqi population as a whole. How might populations that did not experience rebel governance view former collaborators in ways that differ from those of victimized populations? Comparing responses among the various ethno-religious groups within Iraq (e.g., Kurds, Shias) may provide important contributions to understanding reconciliation in identity-based conflicts. Much remains to be learned about the complex interactions between in-group and out-group views of transitional justice processes.

Beyond the case of Iraq, this experimental design could be employed to make contributions to understanding the micro-dynamics of collaboration and the potential for reconciliation. Other work comes to a similar conclusion: that “local cultures, beliefs, and social factors may play a role in shaping attitudes and opinions toward peace and points to the need to consider such factors in policy making” (Vinck et al., 2007: 552).³¹ Systematic analysis of how transitional justice and forgiveness are understood across settings influenced by differing institutions (e.g., democracies versus autocracies), cultural or religious norms and legal traditions, levels of development, durations of rebel rule, or even at different points in time with respect to the end of conflict (e.g., in the immediate aftermath or years later),³² is needed. This research may also have implications not only for civil wars but for other types of conflicts where civilian collaboration is widespread—such as foreign interventions, occupations, and coups. Beyond conflict, our design could be employed to better understand attitudes towards the reintegration of criminals in non-conflict settings.

Finally, further work on the mechanisms driving our outcomes is needed. Petersen et al.

³¹See also Fletcher, Weinstein and Rowen (2009).

³²On the importance of panel data to assess how time affects transitional justice preferences and forgiveness see McCullough, Fincham and Tsang (2003) for example.

(2012) suggest that people assess the potential utility of reintegrating criminals to themselves, their family, and society when determining both the severity of punishment and whether to forgive them. Other work also shows that prospective assessments of threat or insecurity drive preferences over justice (e.g., Hirsch-Hoefler et al., 2016; Samii, 2013). Apologies from transgressors have also been shown to encourage forgiveness (e.g., McCullough, Fincham and Tsang, 2003).

Given our finding that the type of collaboration matters more than the identity of the collaborator, what policy interventions might help to reduce the stigmas associated with different collaborator-types after punishment? Systematic work on public perceptions of transitional justice is needed. Such work can help us to develop comprehensive models for understanding the likelihood of success of such processes. More work on the relationship between punishment and forgiveness is needed as well. Although scholars have argued that reconciliation is more likely when victims of a conflict feel that justice has been served, the empirical evidence for this claim is limited.

Our research suggests that punishments that are proportional to the severity of the offense committed do not necessarily increase the prospects for forgiveness and reconciliation, however, more research in other contexts is needed. This work challenges scholars and practitioners in the field of transitional justice—where policies are often designed by elites working at the macro-level—to turn their attention to the micro-level processes through which individuals affected by conflict form attitudes toward a spectrum of different types of collaborators including not only combatants but also civilians.

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