

# INSTITUTIONAL PERSUASION TO SUPPORT MINORITY RIGHTS IN RUSSIA

DEBRA JAVELINE

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

VANESSA A. BAIRD

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO-Boulder

**Abstract:** Public support for minority rights plays an important role in minorities actually securing and protecting those rights. In countries where public support for minority rights is low, how can attitudes be changed? Using data from two surveys of more than 6,000 Russians each, we show that institutions have the potential to persuade about a quarter of otherwise intolerant Russians to move toward supporting rights. We seek to explain this important shift among this subpopulation. Paradoxically, we find that a usually unpalatable characteristic, deference to authority, among the intolerant is significantly related to their potential to be persuaded to support rights.

Can authorities persuade the public to support minority rights? Do certain characteristics make some individuals more amenable to persuasion than others? These questions are particularly important in countries such as Russia, where the public has traditionally not been especially supportive of minority rights, so there is currently little public pressure for compliance with court decisions that grant rights or public support for political candidates who promote minority rights. Instead, the illiberal

attitudes of the Russian public presumably enable the illiberalness of the Russian state, which has become something of an “elected monarchy”<sup>1</sup> or “autocracy endorsed by the people.”<sup>2</sup> President Vladimir Putin can violate rights in the name of preserving order and still be wildly popular.

We seek to understand whether and how this situation could change and the public come to support minority rights. We hypothesize that one key to the puzzle may be found in an individual characteristic usually considered undesirable for rights protections, deference to authority. Deference to authority has often been cited as reason for pessimism about the prospects for democracy in Russia, so it may seem paradoxical to suggest the reverse. However, we suspect that, to the extent that Russian courts and other institutions are perceived as authorities and to the extent that they choose to use their authority to protect minority rights, deference to authority may be harnessed in the service of cultivating the desirable characteristics, tolerance and support for minority rights.

Below we describe the pessimistic outlook about persuading Russians to be tolerant, given that the known correlates of both tolerance and persuasion in the country are low. We then explore whether persuasion to support minority rights depends on a characteristic in greater abundance among Russians, deference to authority. We test this hypothesis using data from two surveys of more than 6,000 Russians each. We find that Russians who initially denied rights to minorities but who could be persuaded by institutions to grant rights are also those most deferential to authority.

## Becoming Supportive of Minority Rights

Studies since the collapse of the Soviet Union consistently reveal high levels of intolerance among the Russian public.<sup>3</sup> Even staunch supporters of democracy in Russia would deprive some minorities of rights.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lilia Shevtsova. 2002. “Power and Leadership in Putin’s Russia.” In Andrew C. Kuchins, ed., *Russia After the Fall*. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: 62-78.

<sup>2</sup> Vladimir Petukhov and Andrei Ryabov. 2004. “Public Attitudes About Democracy.” In Michael McFaul, Nikolai Petrov, and Andrei Ryabov, eds., *Between Dictatorship and Democracy: Russian Post-Communist Political Reform*. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: 268-291.

<sup>3</sup> James L. Gibson and Raymond N. Duch. 1993. “Political Intolerance in the USSR: The Distribution and Etiology of Mass Opinion.” *Comparative Political Studies* 26: 3: 286-329.; Donna Bahry, Cynthia Boaz, and Stacy Burnett Gordon. 1997. “Tolerance, Transition, and Support for Civil Liberties in Russia.” *Comparative Political Studies* 30 (August): 484-510.; James L. Gibson. 1998. “Putting Up with Fellow Russians: An Analysis of Political Tolerance in the Fledgling Russian Democracy.” *Political Research Quarterly* 51 (March): 37-68.; James L. Gibson. 1998. “A Sober Second Thought: An Experiment in Persuading Russians to Tolerate.” *American Journal of Political Science* 42: 3: 819-50.; Vanessa A. Baird and Debra Javeline. 2007. “The Persuasive Power of Russian Courts.” *Political Research Quarterly*. 60: 3 (September): 429-442.

<sup>4</sup> Bahry, Boaz, and Burnett Gordon. “Tolerance, Transition, and Support for Civil Liberties in Russia.”; Gibson. “Putting Up with Fellow Russians.”

How might the Russian public move from point A to point B, illiberal to liberal, intolerant to tolerant? Research suggests that this move is unlikely because Russia, like many other postcommunist countries, ranks low on variables shown to correlate significantly with tolerance development. Russia has a dominant ethnic tradition and culture institutionalized in its laws and norms. Russia lacks a stable democracy that has endured over time, and although formally federalist, Russia is increasingly characterized by power centralization, offering few opportunities for citizens to engage in pluralistic conflicts that encourage appreciation of minority rights.<sup>5</sup> Russia boasts few examples of elite cooperation and compromise that would serve as concrete evidence that the system can endure potentially threatening groups and that tolerance will not backfire.<sup>6</sup> Russia's educational system does not emphasize minority rights and the importance of tolerance, so education does not serve as a vehicle for encouraging tolerance.<sup>7</sup>

Although individual demographic characteristics like youth, urban residency, and male gender have been associated with greater tolerance,<sup>8</sup> demographic characteristics are difficult – if not impossible – to manipulate and so offer little guidance for tolerance development. Similarly, other well-known correlates of tolerance, such as personality and cultural

<sup>5</sup> Mark Peffley, and Robert Rohrschneider. 2003. "Democratization and Political Tolerance in Seventeen Countries: A Multi-level Model of Democratic Learning." *Political Research Quarterly* 56: 3 (September): 243-257.; Steven A. Weldon. 2006. "The Institutional Context of Tolerance for Ethnic Minorities: A Comparative, Multilevel Analysis of Western Europe." *American Journal of Political Science* 50: 2 (April): 331-349.

<sup>6</sup> Bahry, Boaz, and Burnett Gordon. "Tolerance, Transition, and Support for Civil Liberties in Russia."

<sup>7</sup> Samuel C. Stouffer. 1955. *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties*. NY: Doubleday.; Clyde Z. Nunn, Harry J. Crockett, Jr., and J. Allen Williams Jr. 1978. *Tolerance for Nonconformity*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.; John L. Sullivan, James Piereson, and George E. Marcus. 1982. *Political Tolerance and American Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.; Frederick D. Weil. 1985. "The Variable Effects of Education on Liberal Attitudes: A Comparative-Historical Analysis of Anti-Semitism Using Public Opinion Survey Data," *American Sociological Review* 50, 4 (August):458-474.; James L. Gibson and Raymond N. Duch. 1993. "Political Intolerance in the USSR: The Distribution and Etiology of Mass Opinion." *Comparative Political Studies* 26: 3: 286-329.; Marcel Coenders and Peer Scheepers. 2003. "The Effect of Education on Nationalism and Ethnic Exclusionism: An International Comparison," *Political Psychology*, 24, 2: 313-343; Jan Germen Janmaat and Nelli Piattoeva. 2007. "Citizenship Education in Ukraine and Russia: Reconciling Nation-Building and Active Citizenship," *Comparative Education*, 43, 4 (November):527-552; cf. Lawrence Bobo and Frederick C. Licari. 1989. "Education and Political Tolerance: Testing the Effects of Cognitive Sophistication and Target Group Affect," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 53, 3 (Autumn):285-308.

<sup>8</sup> Stouffer. *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties*.; Nunn, Crockett, and Williams. *Tolerance for Nonconformity*; Frederick Weil. 1991. "Structural Determinants of Political Tolerance: Regime Change and the Party System in West Germany Since WW II." *Research in Political Sociology* 5:299-332.

characteristics like interpersonal trust and open-mindedness versus dogmatism<sup>9</sup>, represent reasonable yet difficult and almost tautological paths toward tolerance development, for if we knew how to increase interpersonal trust and open-mindedness, presumably we would also have some insights into how to increase tolerance. Another well-known correlate of tolerance, the reduced actual or perceived threat of adversaries<sup>10</sup>, can apparently be achieved via a minority public official<sup>11</sup>, especially one who proves to be unharmed to the majority ethnic group<sup>12</sup>, but the reduced threat perception requires first having a minority leader in elected office to demonstrate the absence of harm, which is often an unrealistic scenario. Perceived threat may also be reduced by the perceived ability of the state to control minority behavior and by reversing perceptions of harm brought by the minorities<sup>13</sup>, but it is unclear how to know that these other perceptions are causally prior to threat perceptions and therefore to intolerance or, even if they are, how these perceptions could be reversed.

Perhaps the key to increasing support for minority rights lies not in the correlates of tolerance but in the correlates of persuadability. Among intolerant Russians, whose attitudes in a general sense are most subject to change? If institutions or elites are doing the persuading, trust in those institutions or elites should matter<sup>14</sup>, but notwithstanding the high popularity of Putin, trust in Russian institutions has been sorely lacking<sup>15</sup>, and

<sup>9</sup> Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus. *Political Tolerance and American Democracy*; Gibson and Duch. "Political Intolerance in the USSR: The Distribution and Etiology of Mass Opinion."; Robert A. Hinckley. 2010. "Personality and Political Tolerance: The Limits of Democratic Learning in Postcommunist Europe." *Comparative Political Studies* 43 (February): 188-207.

<sup>10</sup> Stouffer. *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties*; Herbert Blumer. 1958. "Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position." *The Pacific Sociological Review*, 1: 1 (Spring): 3-7.; George E. Marcus, John L. Sullivan, and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse. 1995. *With Malice Toward Some: How People Make Civil Liberties Judgments*. New York: Cambridge University Press.; Stanley Feldman and Karen Stenner. 1997. "Perceived Threat and Authoritarianism." *Political Psychology* 18: 4 (December): 741-770.; Stanley Feldman. 2003. "Enforcing Social Conformity: A Theory of Authoritarianism." *Political Psychology*. 24: 1 (March): 41-74.

<sup>11</sup> Donald L. Horowitz. 1985. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 25.

<sup>12</sup> Zoltan Hajnal. 2001. "White Residents, Black Incumbents, and a Declining Racial Divide." *American Political Science Review* 95: 3 (September): 603-617.

<sup>13</sup> Mikhail A. Alexseev. 2006. *Immigration Phobia and the Security Dilemma: Russia, Europe, and the United States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>14</sup> John R. Hibbing and John R. Alford. 2004. "Accepting Authoritative Decisions: Humans as Wary Cooperators." *American Journal of Political Science* 48 (January): 62-76.; David Darmofal. 2005. "Elite Cues and Citizen Disagreement with Expert Opinion." *Political Research Quarterly* 58 (September): 381-395.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Rose. 1994. "Postcommunism and the Problem of Trust." *Journal of Democracy* 5: 3: 18-30.; James L. Gibson, Gregory A. Caldeira, and Vanessa A. Baird. 1998. "On the Legitimacy of National High Courts." *American Political Science Review* 92: 2 (June): 343-358.; William Mishler and Richard Rose. 2001. "What are the Origins of Political Trust? Testing Institutional and Cultural Theories in Post-Communist Societies." *Comparative Political*

although attitudes may be changing<sup>16</sup>, the future of support for minority rights might still look bleak if they depended exclusively on continued attitudinal changes ultimately resulting in widespread trust of Russian institutions.

A more optimistic finding from the persuasion literature is that people often respond to elite cues.<sup>17</sup> People may respond to elite cues because they trust the elites, but they also may respond for entirely different reasons, such as that the cues face no competition when all elites agree<sup>18</sup> and/or that the source cue is credible.<sup>19</sup> Elite cues may be credible if they come from an authoritative, even if distrusted, source. This proposition may seem unpalatable – and indeed even antidemocratic and pro-authoritarian – but perhaps it need not be. If a public is already inclined to defer to authority because of the authority's superior knowledge, status as an authority, or some other reason, then perhaps a realistic path toward persuading them to hold tolerant views is to capitalize on this usually unpalatable but abundant characteristic. In the hands of elites who themselves support minority rights (and only in those hands), deference to authority may actually come to serve liberal democratic ends.

---

*Studies* 34: 1 (February): 30-62.; Andrew Stickley, Sara Ferlander, Tanya Jukkala, Per Carlsson, Olga Kislitsyna and Ilkka Henrik Mäkinen. 2009. "Institutional Trust in Contemporary Moscow." *Europe-Asia Studies* 61: 6 (July): 779-796.

<sup>16</sup> Peter H. Solomon and Todd S. Foglesong. 2000. *Courts and Transition in Russia: The Challenge of Judicial Reform*. Boulder: Westview.; Stefan Machura. 2003. "Fairness, Justice, and Legitimacy: Experiences of People's Judges in South Russia." *Law & Policy* 25, 2 (April):123-150.; Maria Popova. 2006. "Watchdogs or Attack Dogs? The Role of the Russian Courts and the Central Election Commission in the Resolution of Electoral Disputes." *Europe-Asia Studies* 58 (May): 391-414.; Debra Javeline and Vanessa A. Baird. 2007. "Who Sues Government? Evidence from the Moscow Theater Hostage Case." *Comparative Political Studies* 40: 7 (July): 858-885.

<sup>17</sup> William J. McGuire. 1969. "The Nature of Attitudes and Attitude Change." In Gardner Lindzey and Elliot Aronson, eds., *Handbook of Social Psychology*. MA: Addison-Wesley.; John R. Zaller. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge University Press.; Arthur Lupia and Matthew D. McCubbins. 1998. *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>18</sup> Paul M. Sniderman, Joseph F. Fletcher, Peter H. Russell, Philip E. Tetlock, Brian J. Gaines. 1991. "The Fallacy of Democratic Elitism: Elite Competition and Commitment to Civil Liberties," *British Journal of Political Science* 21, 3 (July):349-370. ; Zaller, *The Nature and Origins...* ; Lupia and McCubbins, *The Democratic Dilemma...*

<sup>19</sup> Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo. 1983. "Central and Peripheral Routes to Persuasion: Application to Advertising." In L. Percy and A. Woodside, eds., *Advertising and Consumer Psychology*. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 3-23.; Shanto Iyengar and Donald R. Kinder. 1987. *News That Matters: Television and American Opinion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.; Edward G. Carmines, and James H. Kuklinski. 1990. "Incentives, Opportunities, and the Logic of Public Opinion in American Political Representation." In J. A. Ferejohn and J. H. Kuklinski, eds., *Information and Democratic Processes*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.; Jeffrey J. Mondak. 1990. "Perceived Legitimacy of Supreme Court Decisions: Three Functions of Source Credibility." *Political Behavior* 12 (December): 363-384.; Paul M. Sniderman, Richard A. Brody, and Philip E. Tetlock. 1991. *Reasoning and Choice: Explorations in Political Psychology*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

## Deference to Authority

Our concept of deference to authority shares some characteristics with the traditional concept of the authoritarian personality<sup>20</sup>, but we define deference to authority more narrowly. Deference to authority is a disposition to yield to the will of powerful leaders, and especially to consider the will of leaders as more worthy of respect than the will of the person himself or herself and the public. Deference to authority should not be taken to mean a preference for authoritarian government. Rather, it is submissiveness to leadership, whether authoritarian or democratic.

Deference to authority is not a disposition usually associated with a democratic political culture, so it may seem counterintuitive that deference to authority could be harnessed in service to liberal democratic ends like support for minority rights. Democrats, after all, should have a responsible and watchful attitude toward authority, not a submissive one.<sup>21</sup> Democrats should value their rights and dignity, which would imply a questioning rather than yielding relationship with authority.

Beyond being simply antidemocratic, deference to authority can be downright insidious, leading to crimes of obedience like the Holocaust and the My Lai massacre.<sup>22</sup> Given these potentially pernicious effects, supporters of minority rights may worry that deference to authoritative leaders could jeopardize rights if the leaders themselves are unsupportive of rights. This worry would have foundation, since elites may at times hold less tolerant attitudes than the mass public.<sup>23</sup>

In Russia, deference to authority is usually seen as the Achilles heel for liberal democracy. Although Russians favor many aspects of a democratic political system, and most do not want an authoritarian government, they consistently express preferences for strong leadership that seem to push the limits of what democracy allows.<sup>24</sup> As long as the public retains

<sup>20</sup> T.W. Adorno, E. Frenkel-Brunswik, D.J. Levinson, and R.N. Sanford. 1950. *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York: Harper.

<sup>21</sup> Larry Diamond. 1999. *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press: 167-8

<sup>22</sup> Herbert C. Kelman, and V. Lee Hamilton. 1989. *Crimes of Obedience: Toward a Social Psychology of Authority and Responsibility*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.; see also Stanley Milgram. 1963. "Behavioral Study of Obedience." *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67: 4 (October): 371-378.; Stanley Milgram. 1974. *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View*. NY: Harper & Row.

<sup>23</sup> James L. Gibson and Raymond N. Duch. 1991. "Elitist Theory and Political Tolerance in Western Europe." *Political Behavior* 13 (September): 191-212, here 206.

<sup>24</sup> Tibor Szamuely. 1974. *The Russian Tradition*. New York: McGraw-Hill.; Stephen White. 1979. *Political Culture and Soviet Politics*. New York: St. Martin's.;30; Archie Brown. 1989. "Ideology and Political Culture." in Seweryn Bialer, ed., *Politics, Society, and Nationality Inside Gorbachev's Russia*. Boulder, CO: Westview: 18; Russell Bova. 1998. "Political Culture, Authority Patterns, and the Architecture of the New Russian Democracy." in Harry Eckstein, Frederic J. Fleron, Jr., Erik P. Hoffmann, and William M. Reisinger, eds., *Can Democracy*

the power to throw out the government, many Russians see little need for public consultation in policymaking<sup>25</sup> and are happy to defer to authority.

We propose that this deference to authority might be an asset as well as a liability. There is a long tradition dating back to Almond and Verba<sup>26</sup> that recognizes the need for some deference in a democracy. Authorities often possess greater knowledge and even intelligence than the public who themselves prefer to rely on expert judgment.<sup>27</sup> Dispositions toward authority should be balanced, so that the participant role of citizens in a democracy is mixed with the political subject role (acceptance of political authority) and parochial role (ties to traditional, nonpolitical groups). In this way, authority should be questioned and challenged, but also supported.<sup>28</sup> Deference to authority can lead to support for dominating elite-led conventions, whatever they may be<sup>29</sup>, so when authorities favor minority rights or at least become less hostile toward rights, deferential citizens may also begin to favor or become less hostile to rights.

### **Other Factors Influencing Institutional Persuasion to Support Rights**

Factors besides deference to authority should help explain institutional persuasion to support minority rights. For example, among those who initially oppose minority rights, supporters of legal procedures should be more willing to accept a decision contrary to their initial preferences and be persuaded to support minority rights precisely because they favor the procedures that brought about the distasteful law.<sup>30</sup> Those who trust in the

---

*Take Root in Post-Soviet Russia?* Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield:182.; Diamond, *Developing Democracy...*, 184-6.; Richard Rose, and Neil Munro. 2002. *Elections without Order: Russia's Challenge to Vladimir Putin*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 79, 234; Sarah E. Mendelson and Theodore P. Gerber. 2005. "Soviet Nostalgia: An Impediment to Russian Democratization." *The Washington Quarterly* 29: 1 (winter): 83-96.; Sarah E. Mendelson and Theodore P. Gerber. 2006. "Failing the Stalin Test: Russians and Their Dictator." *Foreign Affairs* 85: 1 (January-February): 2-8.

<sup>25</sup> William M. Reisinger. 1998. "Survey Research and Authority Patterns in Contemporary Russia." In Eckstein, Frederic J. Fleron, Jr., Erik P. Hoffmann, and William M. Reisinger, eds., *Can Democracy Take Root in Post-Soviet Russia?* Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield: 170.

<sup>26</sup> Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba. 1963. *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

<sup>27</sup> John R. Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse. 2002. *Stealth Democracy: American's Beliefs about How Government Should Work*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>28</sup> Diamond, *Developing Democracy...*, 168.

<sup>29</sup> Sam G. McFarland, Vladimir S. Ageyev and Marina A. Abalakina-Paap. 1992. "Authoritarianism in the Former Soviet Union." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 63 (December): 1004-1010.

<sup>30</sup> Tom R. Tyler, Robert J. Boeckmann, Heather J. Smith, and Yuen J. Huo. 1997. *Social Justice in a Diverse Society*. Boulder: Westview Press.; John R. Hibbing and John R. Alford. 2004. "Accepting Authoritative Decisions: Humans as Wary Cooperators." *American Journal*

specific government institutions making decisions to support rights should be more persuadable because they more readily grant legitimacy and credibility to the source cue, which can then serve as a heuristic or shortcut<sup>31</sup>, and because they may perceive that the government is willing and able to offer protection from the potentially threatening rights-protected groups.<sup>32</sup>

The perception that one's intolerant views are shared by a majority of others should act as a counterweight to an institutional decision opposing this majority view, a counterweight unavailable to intolerant individuals who believe they are in the attitudinal minority.<sup>33</sup> Intolerant individuals who hold liberal democratic or pro-rights attitudes on other issues may find these views in conflict and, when presented with a pro-rights court or legislative decision, be more open to persuasion. Intolerant individuals who are less passionately anti-rights at the outset should also be more open to persuasion, as should be individuals who are generally unopinionated about many issues.<sup>34</sup> Intolerant and generally hostile individuals may be more cynical about the ramifications of the exercise of rights by the disliked group and cautious about altering the playing field in favor of other individuals generally and disliked groups in particular. Self-efficacy, or the perceived ability to cope and control outcomes in daily life, could make the intolerant individual less fearful of the ramifications of granting rights to disliked groups, or self-efficacy could suggest a confidence in

*of Political Science* 48 (January): 62-76.

<sup>31</sup> Jeffrey J. Mondak. 1990. "Perceived Legitimacy of Supreme Court Decisions: Three Functions of Source Credibility." *Political Behavior* 12 (December): 363-384.; Gibson, Caldeira, and Baird. "On the Legitimacy of National High Courts."

<sup>32</sup> Bahry, Boaz, and Burnett Gordon. "Tolerance, Transition, and Support for Civil Liberties in Russia.": 491.

<sup>33</sup> James L. Gibson. "Putting Up with Fellow Russians.": Penny S. Visser and Robert R Mirabile. 2004. "Attitudes in the Social Context: The Impact of Social Network Composition on Individual-Level Attitude Strength." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 87: 6 (December): 779-795.; John V. Petrocelli, Zakary L. Tormala, L., and Derek D. Rucker. 2007. "Attitude Clarity and Attitude Correctness." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 92: 1 (January): 30-41.

<sup>34</sup> Jeffrey J. Mondak. 1990. "Perceived Legitimacy of Supreme Court Decisions: Three Functions of Source Credibility." *Political Behavior* 12 (December): 363-384.; Jeffrey J. Mondak. 1992. "Institutional Legitimacy, Policy Legitimacy, and the Supreme Court." *American Politics Quarterly* 20: 457-477.; Valerie J. Hoekstra and Jeffrey A. Segal. 1996. "The Shepherding of Local Public Opinion: The Supreme Court and Lamb's Chapel." *The Journal of Politics* 58: 4 (Nov.): 1079-1102.; Julia R. Zuwerink, and Patricia G. Devine. 1996. "Attitude Importance and Resistance to Persuasion: It's Not Just the Thought that Counts." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 70: 5 (May): 931-944.; Valerie J. Hoekstra. 2003. *Public Reactions to Supreme Court Decisions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.; Rob W. Holland, Bas Verplanken, and Ad van Knippenberg. 2003. "From Repetition to Conviction: Attitude Accessibility as a Determinant of Attitude Certainty." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 39 (November): 594-601.; John V. Petrocelli, Zakary L. Tormala, L., and Derek D. Rucker. 2007. "Attitude Clarity and Attitude Correctness." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 92: 1 (January): 30-41.

one's own opinions and abilities and make the intolerant individual less open to persuasion, so our expectation is mixed. Among the initially intolerant, younger, less religious, and poorer Russians should be more likely to be persuaded to support minority rights, presumably because they have greater tendencies toward uncertainty and open-mindedness rather than dogmatism.<sup>35</sup> Female and less educated Russians have been hypothesized elsewhere to be less tolerant, although the statistical evidence suggests only indirect effects on tolerance through variables like dogmatism and illiberalism that are themselves correlated with tolerance.<sup>36</sup>

### Data and Method

To test our hypotheses, we analyze data from surveys we conducted in 2004 and 2005 in twelve Russian cities with populations greater than 350,000, with the goal of generalizing to urban Russia, where most Russians live. The surveys were designed by us, commissioned by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and conducted by a Moscow-based survey research firm, the Institute for Comparative Social Research (CESSI). Response rates were extremely high (69 and 67 percent), and the resulting sample sizes were 6,043 and 6,044 in 2004 and 2005, respectively. (See Appendix for further details.)

We measure baseline attitudes toward a widely disliked group in Russia, Jehovah's Witnesses, and then measure acceptance of contrary decisions by two different institutional source cues: the Russian Supreme Court and the lower house of the Russian legislature, the Duma. Jehovah's Witnesses are a useful reference group for three reasons. First, although not much discussed in Western literature, harsh discrimination against Jehovah's Witnesses is longstanding (since 1887) and ongoing, given their recent fast growth and visible proselytizing.<sup>37</sup> Second, unlike discrimination against Jews, Chechens, and other disliked groups in Russia, discrimination against Jehovah's Witnesses is not complicated by a multitude of racial, ethnic, or territorial issues that make it difficult to generalize from these groups to others. While the religious minority of course has its unique circumstances, a study of the willingness to grant rights to Jehovah's Witnesses still has relatively little "noise," much like

---

<sup>35</sup> James L. Gibson. 1998. "A Sober Second Thought: An Experiment in Persuading Russians to Tolerate." *American Journal of Political Science* 42: 3: 819-50.

<sup>36</sup> James L. Gibson and Raymond N. Duch. 1993. "Political Intolerance in the USSR: The Distribution and Etiology of Mass Opinion." *Comparative Political Studies* 26: 3: 286-329.

<sup>37</sup> Sergei Ivanenko. 1997. "Should We Be Afraid of Jehovah's Witnesses?" *Moscow News*, February 20; Bob Edwards. 2004. "Analysis: Moscow Court Orders Ban on Jehovah's Witnesses in the Russian Capital." Morning Edition, *NPR*, April 23.; U.S. Department of State. 2005. *Russia: International Religious Freedom Report 2005*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State.

tolerance studies that focus on fascists, communists, and other political minorities.<sup>38</sup> Third, since the collapse of communism, Russian courts have sometimes granted rights to Jehovah's Witnesses and sometimes denied them, suggesting that the Jehovah's Witnesses' situation is a useful case study of the potential for institutional persuasion.<sup>39</sup>

Here we attempt to understand the minority of Russians who initially preferred to deny rights to Jehovah's Witnesses but who could be persuaded by a court or legislative decision to support rights. Our dependent variable is persuasion to support rights, defined as *a change of opinion in the direction of a pro-rights court or legislative decision*. Our definition is informed by the repeated findings of prior research that tolerance development is an extraordinarily difficult task, opinion reversal overnight is rare and unrealistic, and incremental moves in a pro-rights direction are meaningful and perhaps the best that can be accomplished. The initial question reads:

Some people think Jehovah's Witnesses are a religious cult that presents a danger to Russian society and should be forbidden from distributing literature on the street. Other people think that, regardless of whether they present a danger to Russian society, Jehovah's Witnesses should have the right to distribute literature on the street. Which view is closer to your own? Do you feel this way strongly or only somewhat?

More than half of urban Russians surveyed (55.6% and 59.9% in 2004 and 2005, respectively) replied that Jehovah's Witnesses should be forbidden from distributing literature, with the vast majority feeling this way very strongly. Their follow-up question reads:

Suppose the [Supreme Court/Duma] rules that Jehovah's Witnesses have the right to distribute literature on the street. To what extent would you agree with the [Court's/Duma's] decision? strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree

A random half of the respondents were asked about the Supreme

---

<sup>38</sup> James L. Gibson and Raymond N. Duch. 1991. "Elitist Theory and Political Tolerance in Western Europe." *Political Behavior* 13 (September): 191-212.; James L. Gibson. 1992. "Alternative Measures of Political Tolerance: Must Tolerance be 'Least-Liked'?" *American Journal of Political Science* 36: 2 (May): 560-577.

<sup>39</sup> Vanessa A. Baird and Debra Javeline. 2007. "The Persuasive Power of Russian Courts." *Political Research Quarterly*, 60: 3 (September): 429-442.

Court in each year, while the other half were asked about the Duma.<sup>40</sup> Since we found no statistically significant differences in persuasive potential between the Court and the legislature (despite the difference in trust for these institutions), we present findings in aggregate form, rather than differentiating based on the source cues and repeating the same findings two times. (Similarly, since there are no statistically significant differences between the close years of study, we present the aggregate rather than individual findings for 2004 and 2005.) When we include the source cue in our multivariate analysis below, it never emerges as statistically significant, suggesting that several government institutions are perceived as authoritative and have the potential to persuade.

We intentionally did not provide information on the arguments the institution used when making its hypothetical decision, only the fact that the decision was made. Our method thus more closely resembles a test of the effects of source credibility<sup>41</sup> than the effects of exposure to opposing arguments.<sup>42</sup> We are testing which intolerant Russians can be persuaded to support minority rights simply because institutions are said to hold countervailing ideas.

Although such scenarios are hypothetical, they are not unrealistic. For example, there have been instances of Russian courts ruling in favor of Jehovah's Witnesses<sup>43</sup>, and those decisions usually face little competition from other messages. (Although negative sentiment toward Jehovah's Witnesses is widespread and strong, active organized opposition is not.) Across countries and throughout history, there are numerous examples of illiberal institutions behaving more liberally over time and granting rights where rights were once denied. In such cases, it would have been helpful to understand the sources of potential pro-rights persuadability among the public, as we have the opportunity to do in Russia.

Both the initial baseline question on policy preferences toward Jehovah's Witnesses and the follow-up question that stated an institutional decision counter to the respondent's initial policy preference were measured with five-point scales (strongly anti-rights to strongly pro-rights for the former and strongly agree to strongly disagree for the latter, with moderate opinions and "don't know" falling in between). Following the convention in the literature to measure persuasion by movements from initial survey responses to responses to a similarly scaled second

---

<sup>40</sup> Baird and Javeline. "The Persuasive Power of Russian Courts."

<sup>41</sup> Jeffrey J. Mondak. 1990. "Perceived Legitimacy of Supreme Court Decisions: Three Functions of Source Credibility." *Political Behavior* 12 (December): 363-384.

<sup>42</sup> Gibson. "A Sober Second Thought."

<sup>43</sup> U.S. Department of State. 2005. *Russia: International Religious Freedom Report 2005*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State.

question<sup>44</sup>, we measure persuasion by the difference between the above two survey questions (-2 = strengthened initial anti-rights position two steps, -1 = strengthened one step, 0 = no change, 1 = persuaded one step in the direction of the pro-rights decision, 2 = persuaded two steps, 3 = persuaded three steps, and 4 = persuaded four steps).

**Table 1. Degree of Persuasion from Forbidding Rights to Allowing (%)\***

	Persuasion to agree to support rights		Approval of compliance with pro-rights decision	
	2004	2005	2004	2005
Strengthened initial position two steps	1.4	.3	1.4	.8
Strengthened initial position one step	6.4	8.6	5.9	8.4
No change	67.9	68.8	51.6	54.1
Persuaded one step in direction of institutional decision	16.3	15.8	23.2	22.1
Persuaded two steps in direction of institutional decision	5.1	3.1	9.2	7.6
Persuaded three steps in direction of institutional decision	1.7	1.9	6.4	4.4
Persuaded four steps in direction of institutional decision	1.3	1.5	2.4	2.6
<i>N</i>	4185	4379	4148	4380

\* Sampling and weighting described in Appendix.

The first two columns in Table 1 show the distribution of Russians who initially preferred to forbid Jehovah's Witnesses from distributing literature on the streets ( $N = 6,967$  across both years) or who were initially unsure whether to forbid or allow rights ( $N = 1,678$  across both years) and who were then presented with a contrary, pro-rights institutional decision.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> e.g., Gibson. "A Sober Second Thought."; James L. Gibson and Amanda Gouws. 2002. *Overcoming Intolerance in South Africa: Experiments in Democratic Persuasion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>45</sup> Of the initial 8,647 forbidders or uncertain respondents, 81 did not answer the follow-up

The most common outcome is for intolerant Russians to retain their initial anti-rights policy preference (68-69%), but a small minority of anti-rights Russians (22-24%) could be persuaded in the direction of a pro-rights institutional decision. Persuasion three or four steps in the direction of the pro-rights decision is exceedingly rare (1-2%), but persuasion one or two steps occurs for an important minority (16% and 3-5%, respectively).

Most of these people were not persuaded to abandon their intolerance entirely and switch positions, but they were at least persuaded to be less fervent about their intolerance. Each year, among Russians who initially preferred to forbid rights to Jehovah's Witnesses and then heard about a contrary institutional decision, only 7 to 8 percent were fully persuaded and changed their preferences to agree with the institution's decision to grant rights. Between 2 and 4 percent answered "don't know," suggesting they were persuaded to abandon their initial intolerant position but not to agree with the institution, and 13 percent still preferred to forbid rights but felt less strongly about it.<sup>46</sup> Although these incremental moves in a tolerant direction may seem small, they are noteworthy, given the incredible difficulties of tolerance development identified by prior research. Understanding this minority of intolerant yet persuadable Russians may hold a key to understanding tolerance development in general.

A reasonable concern is whether the responses to the above questions measure genuine persuasion. The questions appear in succession, so the mission of the questions may be quite transparent to most respondents, who could provide the socially desirable response of agreeing with an institutional decision to an interviewer yet fail to hold that attitude only a short time later. We did not track respondents' opinion change or stability after the survey and thus cannot directly address this concern with our data. However, even the short term profession of persuasion is highly critical when assessing the prospects for rights protection. Respondents who profess persuasion to support rights during the interview may not retain that opinion outside the interview setting, but they are also unlikely to punish an elected official outside the interview setting for pursuing pro-rights policies. Rather, the response to a pro-rights court decision and pro-rights legislation by intolerant but persuadable respondents would, in the real world, probably be pro-rights acquiescence. Though not as helpful as pro-rights enthusiasm, public acquiescence to rights can still represent meaningful strides for rights protection. Pro-rights acquiescence certainly

---

question, so their ability to be persuaded could not be measured.

<sup>46</sup> Respondents who initially expressed uncertainty about granting or denying rights to Jehovah's Witnesses were asked the same followup question as those who initially preferred to deny rights. Our inclusion of uncertain respondents should have made persuasion to tolerate more likely, yet it proved difficult for institutions to persuade even this diluted category of intolerant Russians.

represents more progress than the behavior of the three-quarters of respondents who failed to be persuaded to support rights despite the proximity of the survey questions and the respondents' likely ability to guess the socially desirable response.

As an additional test of our hypotheses, we asked respondents whether they would approve of official compliance with a pro-rights decision. The question reads:

Suppose Jehovah's Witnesses come to your city to exercise this right. Suppose also that the mayor of your city disagrees with the [Supreme Court's/Duma's] decision but nevertheless complies with the [Court/Duma] and allows Jehovah's Witnesses to distribute literature. To what extent would you approve of the mayor's decision to comply with the [Court/Duma] in favor of Jehovah's Witnesses? strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, strongly disapprove

As with persuasion to agree to support rights, persuasion to approve of compliance is measured by the difference between the above survey question and the initial baseline question about attitudes toward Jehovah's Witnesses, from -2 (strengthened initial anti-rights position two steps) to 4 (persuaded four steps in the direction of the pro-rights decision). Also like persuasion to agree, the most common outcome for persuasion to approve of compliance is for intolerant Russians to retain their initial anti-rights policy preference (52% in 2004 and 54% in 2005), but a sizable minority of anti-rights Russians (41% in 2004 and 37% in 2005) could be persuaded in the direction of a pro-rights institutional decision. Most of this persuasion is one or two steps in the direction of the pro-rights decision, but almost one in ten of the initially intolerant (9% and 7% in 2004 and 2005, respectively) moved an impressive three or four steps in the pro-rights direction.

Table 2 describes the measurement of our dependent and primary explanatory variables, as well as the remaining variables generated from the hypotheses above. A few measures are worthy of elaboration. For *Deference to authority*, preexisting measures are highly problematic<sup>47</sup>, so we use a measure that taps into a Burkean trustee model of representation, asking respondents if they would yield to the will of a leader instead of requiring the leader to follow citizens' wishes. For *Institutional trust*, we test the relationship to persuasion of trust in the Duma. We ran a similar

---

<sup>47</sup> John J. Ray. 1985. "Defective Validity in the Altemeyer Authoritarianism Scale." *Journal of Social Psychology* 125: 2: 271-72.

analysis with the Supreme Court as the reference institution, both for institutional trust and as the source cue, with similar results.<sup>48</sup>

**Table 2. Measures\***

Variable	Survey Questions
Persuasion	Difference between two survey questions: Forbid/allow Jehovah’s Witnesses the right to distribute literature (five point scale) subtracted from agree/disagree with a contrary institutional decision (five point scale) (seven point scale from -2 = strengthened initial anti-rights position two steps to 4 = persuaded four steps in the direction of the pro-rights decision).
Deference to Authority – Support for leader’s instincts over citizen wishes	If citizens disagree with a political leader on a particular issue, should the political leader follow their wishes or follow his own instincts? Do you feel this way strongly or only somewhat? (five point scale)
Legalism – Support for procedural justice over distributive justice	Some people think that, when making decisions, judges should follow ONLY legal guidelines. Others think that judges sometimes should take other factors and circumstances, besides laws, into account. If we are talking about what you personally would want to see in the ideal, to what extent do you think judges should follow ONLY legal guidelines even if this prevents people from getting what they are owed? always, in the majority of cases, don’t know, from time to time, almost never (five point scale)

<sup>48</sup> The model includes an interaction term between institutional trust and the institution that was used as the source cue in our survey questions (Duma or the Supreme Court), given that trust in the particular institution doing the cuing is most theoretically relevant to persuasion. Due to collinearity, we present the model with only one reference institution.

Institutional trust (Supreme Court, Duma)	Using this card, please tell me how much trust you have in each of the following organizations and government bodies/public figures – a great deal of trust, a fair amount of trust, not very much trust, or no trust at all? (four point scale for each)
Liberalism – opposition to censorship of extremist ideas	Should the government have the right to impose censorship of the news media to protect society from extremist political ideas? Yes, no. Do you feel this way strongly or only somewhat? [“don’t know” accepted but not offered] (five point scale)
Initial attitude weakness	Some people think Jehovah’s Witnesses are a religious cult that present a danger to Russian society and should be forbidden from distributing literature on the street. Other people think that, regardless of whether they present a danger to Russian society, Jehovah’s Witnesses should have the right to distribute literature on the street. Which view is closer to your own? Do you feel this way strongly or only somewhat? (three point scale: strongly forbid, somewhat forbid, uncertain)
Being unopinionated	Count variable of the “don’t know” responses to 115 questions (virtually every attitudinal variable in the data set), including attitudes toward the economy, courts, rule of law, judicial independence, corruption, procedural fairness, interest in politics, trust in political institutions, respect for various professions, and perceived efficacy of political activities (low 0, high 94, mean 12)

Lack of hostility	[Interviewer assessment] During the interview, was the respondent very, somewhat, not very, or not at all hostile? (four point scale)
Institutional source cue (Supreme Court, Duma)	Institution said to grant or deny rights to Jehovah's Witnesses (dummy, with Supreme Court being the omitted institution)
Perceived exclusion from majority views	How much do think your opinions on the basic questions of contemporary Russian politics coincide with the opinions of the majority of Russians? fully coincide, on the whole coincide, coincide only a little, don't coincide at all (four point scale)
Self-efficacy	[Prefaced by: What is the single most serious problem facing you today?] Can you yourself do anything to help solve this problem, or is the problem completely out of your control? can do something, completely out of my control ["don't know" accepted but not offered] (three point scale)
Age	What is your age? (years)
Religiosity	How important is religion in your life – very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important? (four point scale)
Income	Taking account of the income of all members of your household last month, please select the category on this card which corresponds approximately to the total income of your family. less than 2000 rubles, 2001-3000 rubles, 3001-4000 rubles, 4001-6000 rubles, 6001-8000 rubles, 8001-10000 rubles, 10001-15000 rubles, more than 15000 rubles (eight point scale)
Gender	Dichotomy

Education	What is your educational level? 7 grades or less, incomplete secondary, complete secondary (including secondary PTU, specialized secondary (technikum), incomplete higher (at least three years), higher (complete), advanced degree (seven point scale)
-----------	--

\* A response of “don’t know” was coded in the middle of the scale only when justified theoretically because an uncertain response seemed to fall between the scale’s extremes (Legalism, Liberalism, Self-efficacy). For questions that required some knowledge or information, “don’t know” responses were kept distinct, given the possibility that the respondents’ informed opinions would not fall in the middle of the scale (Trust in government, Perceived exclusion from majority views).

## Results

The first column in Table 3 shows the results of an ordered logit conducted on our seven category dependent variable representing institutional persuasion to support rights (-2 to 4). The analysis lends support to the hypothesis that deference to authority can facilitate persuasion. The more strongly a person thinks a political leader should follow his own instincts even if citizens disagree, the more likely that person is to be persuaded by an institutional decision to support rights. Believing a political leader should follow his instincts over citizen wishes remains positively and significantly related to persuasion to support rights, even when controlling for a wide range of other variables in the model, including initial attitude weakness and being unopinionated, suggesting that the effects of deference cannot be written off as a function of indifference or ambivalence toward the particular minority in question, Jehovah’s Witnesses.

The analysis in Table 3 also lends support to the hypothesis that legalism matters for institutional persuasion. Russians who think that judges should follow legal procedures even if this prevents people from getting what they are owed are more likely to be persuaded by a pro-rights institutional decision. Institutional trust matters for persuasion to support rights. However, as previous analysis<sup>49</sup> and Table 3 show, the source cue (here, either the Duma or Supreme Court) has no independent effect on persuasion to support rights, suggesting that persuasion can originate with any authoritative institution. The interaction of trust in a particular institution with that institution being the presumed source of the pro-rights decision also has no statistically significant effect on persuasion.

<sup>49</sup> Baird and Javeline. “The Persuasive Power of Russian Courts.”

Liberalism matters for persuasion to support rights, and not surprisingly, *Initial attitude weakness* is the single most powerful explanatory variable for persuasion to support rights. (See Table 3’s footnote for a brief discussion of other variables hypothesized above to correlate with tolerance and therefore included in the model but that have no impact on our substantive findings.)

**Table 3: Effects of Deference to Authority on Persuasion to Support Rights and Approval of Compliance**

Ordered Logit Estimates

		Persuasion to agree to support rights	Approval of compliance with pro-rights decision
Deference to authority	<i>Leader should follow instincts over citizens’ wishes</i>	.12 (.04)	.10 (.04)
Initial attitude weakness	<i>Initially uncertain about forbidding rights (v. somewhat v. strongly)</i>	1.42 (.20)	1.16 (.16)
Legalism	<i>Support procedural justice over distributive justice</i>	.11 (.03)	.13 (.03)
Institutional trust	<i>Trust in Duma</i>	.19 (.08)	.32 (.06)
Institutional source cue	<i>Duma as source cue</i>	.05 (.24)	.12 (.19)
Institution interaction	<i>Source cue x trust in Duma</i>	-.07 (.11)	-.14 (.09)
Liberalism	<i>Oppose censorship of extremist ideas</i>	.14 (.04)	.09 (.04)

Being unopinionated	<i>Count of “don’t know” responses to 115 questions</i>	.002 (.005)	.01 (.004)
Lack of hostility	<i>Not hostile as assessed by interviewer</i>	.17 (.10)	.07 (.08)
N		7,771	7,754
Cutpoints	$\tau_1$	-3.63	-2.49
	$\tau_2$	-1.18	-.28
	$\tau_3$	2.91	3.04
	$\tau_4$	4.36	4.33
	$\tau_5$	5.20	5.14
	$\tau_6$	6.06	6.36

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. The dependent variable is seven ordinal categories (-2 = strengthened initial anti-rights position two steps, -1 = strengthened one step, 0 = no change, 1 = persuaded one step in the direction of the pro-rights decision, 2 = persuaded two steps, 3 = persuaded three steps, 4 = persuaded four steps). Deference is a five category variable (1 = should follow citizens’ wishes strongly, 2 = should follow citizen’s wishes somewhat, 3 = don’t know, 4 = should follow his instincts somewhat, 5 = should follow his instincts strongly, or 1 = much better, 2 = somewhat better, 3 = equally, 4 = somewhat worse, 5 = much worse). Measurement of the remaining variables is described in Table 3. Results are not shown for several other included variables that have been hypothesized by others to correlate with tolerance: Perceived exclusion from majority views, Self-efficacy, Age, Religiosity, Income, Gender, and Education. Inclusion or exclusion of these variables from the model does not affect the substantive results for our variables of interest. Also included were dummies for “don’t know” and missing responses for all the substantive variables except those for which there were no missing data (Strength of initial opinion, Lack of hostility, Duma as source cue, Age, Gender, and Education). Rather than toss out these missing respondents, reduce our sample size, and risk biasing our results, we coded nonrespondents as -1 and included dummy variable controls for whether the respondent gave a substantive response. Results of the dummy nonresponse variables are available from the authors on request. Taylor linearization was used for variance estimation. In two instances, only one primary sampling unit and very few observations existed for a given stratum, so these primary

sampling units were collapsed into the most adjacent strata. (For an explanation of this procedure, see Donna Brogan. 2005. "Sampling Error Estimation for Survey Data" invited chapter (#21) in *Household Sample Surveys in Developing and Transition Countries*, Series F, No. 96. Edited by Ibrahim S. Yansaneh and Graham Kalton).

The second column in Table 3 shows the results of an ordered logit conducted on our seven category dependent variable representing institutional persuasion to approve of compliance with official pro-rights decisions (-2 to 4). The conclusions about deference to authority are much the same as they are in the model of persuasion to agree to support rights. The more strongly a person thinks a political leader should follow his own instincts even if citizens disagree, the more likely that person is to approve of official compliance with a pro-rights decision. This relationship is statistically significant even when controlling for initial attitude weakness, being unopinionated, and a range of other variables. As with persuasion to support rights, initial attitude weakness, legalism, and institutional trust have positive, statistically significant effects on approving compliance, whereas the institutional source cue does not have such effects, either independently or in interaction with institutional trust.

Interestingly, most of these variables, including deference to authority, are not statistically significant in models of persuasion to be *intolerant*. Of the 2,126 urban Russians who initially preferred to allow Jehovah's Witnesses to distribute literature on the streets and who were then presented with a contrary, anti-rights institutional decision, more than half (52% in 2004 and 54% in 2005) could be persuaded in the direction of the anti-rights decision. An even larger majority (62% in 2004 and 68% in 2005) could be persuaded to approve of official compliance with an anti-rights institutional decision. These findings are consistent with the findings from many other studies<sup>50</sup> that it is far easier to persuade people to be intolerant than to persuade them to be tolerant. Liberalism, legalism, and institutional trust do not guarantee that tolerant individuals will persist in their tolerance when given the easy out of an institutional anti-rights decision. Using our models in Table 3 and substituting persuasion to *deny* rights and approval of an *anti*-rights institutional decision as the dependent variables, the above explanatory variables are not statistically significant. The only explanatory variable with strong statistical significance is the strength of the initial pro-rights opinion (not shown). The most deeply tolerant individuals are most resistant to persuasion to be otherwise. Deference to authority neither facilitates nor hinders persuasion to deny rights or approve of compliance with anti-rights institutional decisions. Deference to authority is statisti-

---

<sup>50</sup> Gibson. "A Sober Second Thought.", Gibson and Gouws, *Overcoming Intolerance...*

cally significant only for persuasion to support rights and approve of pro-rights compliance.

### **Effects of Deference to Authority on Being Persuaded to Support Rights**

Using the parameters estimated by the ordered logits in Table 3, we can estimate the probability of persuading an intolerant Russian to support rights given varying levels of deference to authority. To generate predicted probabilities, all explanatory variables are held constant at their means, except for our measure of deference to authority, which is varied from 1 (low deference) to 5 (high deference).<sup>51</sup>

For persuasion to support rights, comparing intolerant Russians who think that a political leader should follow citizens' wishes to intolerant Russians who think the political leader should follow his instincts, the probability of retaining initial intolerant attitudes drops from .74 to .67, whereas the probability of being persuaded in the direction of a pro-rights institutional decision increases from .20 to .29.<sup>52</sup> These probabilities include intolerant Russians who were persuaded only a little (by, for example, continuing to be unsupportive of minority rights, only less emphatically) and those who were persuaded a lot (by completely changing their minds and supporting rights). If we look only at the extreme cases of persuasion three or four steps in the direction of a pro-rights institutional decision, the probability of being persuaded increases from .025 for the least deferential Russians to .04 for the most, a probability that is still low but nearly double what it otherwise might have been.

For persuasion to approve of official compliance with a pro-rights decision, comparing intolerant Russians who think that a political leader should follow citizens' wishes to intolerant Russians who think the political leader should follow his instincts, the probability of retaining initial intolerant attitudes drops from .55 to .47, and the probability of being at all persuaded in the direction of the pro-rights institutional decision increases from .39 to .49. The probability of being extremely persuaded to move three or four steps in the direction of a pro-rights institutional decision increases from .07 to .11, again a low probability in absolute terms but one that would represent huge strides for tolerance development, given that deferential Russians are fifty percent more likely than non-deferential Russians to be persuaded in an extreme way to support rights.

Not surprisingly, the substantive impacts of variables such as

<sup>51</sup> Predicted probabilities were generated using the *spost* package written by J. Scott Long (1997).

<sup>52</sup> The remaining very small percentage of intolerant Russians strengthened their initial attitudes and became even less supportive of rights upon hearing of a pro-rights institutional decision.

legalism and liberalism on persuasion are as strong as or stronger than the impact of deference to authority. We present the effects of deference to authority mainly because deference is the more theoretically and empirically interesting finding. Most other variables represent normatively positive characteristics that may be just as difficult to manipulate as tolerance: If we knew how to create legalistic liberals, tolerance development would be easy. Instead, we are interested in the impact of a supposedly negative and abundant characteristic like deference, which does not require manipulation and therefore may offer more hope for public support for minority rights.

Note that the models likely underestimate the effect of deference on institutional persuasion to support rights. Our persuasion measure includes a baseline question informing respondents of the potential danger of Jehovah's Witnesses and thus frames the rights issue competitively.<sup>53</sup> In real life, when no survey makes the group's threat salient, and indeed when an authoritative institution's pro-rights actions suggest that the threat is minimal, deferential respondents might be even more persuadable.

### **Could the Effect Be Spurious Due to Social Desirability Bias?**

A logical challenge to these findings is that they are an artifact of our measurement techniques and driven by "social desirability bias." In trying to please or avoid offending the interviewer, respondents often give answers they believe are "right," which in this case could mean agreement with an institutional decision. Our dependent variable may thus be a measure not of persuasion, but of a personality characteristic like desiring to please. Even worse, that very same personality characteristic may also correlate with our key independent variable, deference to authority, since eager to please individuals might also be the most deferential. This spurious effect could erroneously lead us to believe that deferential Russians are more likely than non-deferential Russians to be persuaded to support rights, when in reality all we have shown is that people who desire to please will appear both deferential and persuadable on a survey.

Anticipating this concern, we included in our survey several interviewer assessments that might help illuminate whether a desire to please the interviewer is driving our results. Interviewers were instructed to record at the end of each interview the degree to which the respondent was interested, patient, hostile, nervous, sincere, and intelligent. While interviewers are obviously exposed to respondents for only short amounts of time, their assessments do provide insights into a respondent's interview behavior, which is most relevant as a possible confounding explanation for

---

<sup>53</sup> Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman. 2007. "Framing Public Opinion in Competitive Democracies." *American Political Science Review*, 101: 637-655.

persuasion to support rights. In particular, we might expect that a respondent reported as very interested or patient is concerned with trying to please the interviewer and therefore more likely to “guess” that being persuaded to support rights is the “correct” answer. In contrast, we might expect that a respondent reported as very hostile shares few of these concerns and may even intentionally give the guessed “incorrect” answer.

Analysis of the relationship between these interviewer assessments and persuasion to support rights suggests that our findings are not spurious. In bivariate correlations, none of the six assessments are significantly related to persuasion to support rights. In the multivariate analysis in Table 3, we include the most important of these interviewer assessments, *Lack of hostility*, which is characteristic of someone trying to please (whereas hostility suggests little desire to please), and thereby decrease the possibility that the effect of deference is due to social desirability bias. The estimated effect of deference to authority is independent of interviewer assessed hostility and therefore more likely to be independent of a respondent’s desire to please, suggesting that the relationship between deference to authority and persuasion to support rights is meaningful and robust.

## Implications

We began this investigation pessimistically. Prior evidence suggested that the Russian public is generally unsupportive of granting rights to disliked minorities. If support for minority rights depends on traditionally accepted correlates of tolerance or persuasion such as examples of elite cooperation and compromise or trust in political institutions, the prospects for persuading Russians to support minority rights are bleak, since these correlates in Russia are in short supply.

The findings presented here in many ways reinforce the pessimism. Only a minority of initially intolerant urban Russians can be persuaded by a Supreme Court or Duma decision to support rights, and many of the variables that help explain these few persuadable Russians are not subject to easy manipulation. For example, liberalism and support for legal procedures are attitudinal correlates of support for minority rights that may be as difficult to change as support for minority rights itself.

We suggest that a small ray of optimism may be found in the statistically significant relationship between deference to authority and persuasion to support rights. Given that many Russians are comfortable yielding to the will of authoritative institutions, our main finding builds on a characteristic that is already present, not one that requires manipulation. Authorities can be instrumental in carving a path to rights protections in Russia if their decisions are pro-rights and publicized to a deferential public. If institutions will lead, many Russians will follow.

“Follow” need not mean a full and sincere transformation of deeply held intolerant beliefs. Among intolerant but persuadable Russians, even if many are insincere about their responses—the easy challenge to survey-based research—the willingness to profess persuasion may bode well for rights protection. At the very least, such individuals are unlikely to punish an elected official for holding pro-rights policy positions and implementing such policies, freeing those in a position of power from electoral reprisal, should they choose to protect minority rights.

Therefore, although this is a paper about mass attitudes, the implications are for elite behavior. Prior research has shown that institutions can often alleviate group conflict but not fully<sup>54</sup> and that elites do not necessarily support the rights of disliked groups.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, our findings suggest that public support for rights rests heavily on whether legislatures, courts, and other authoritative institutions make pro-rights decisions and then make those pro-rights decisions known. Optimism or pessimism about the future of minority rights in Russia should be based on optimism or pessimism about the institutions responsible for granting and protecting rights.

These implications extend beyond Russia. Intolerance is a pervasive characteristic of even the most democratically oriented publics<sup>56</sup>, as is deference to authority.<sup>57</sup> Institutions seeking to protect rights in other countries could capitalize on deference to authority and encourage pro-rights public sentiment.

---

<sup>54</sup> Arend Lijphart. 1977. *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.; John Francis and Brendan O’Leary. 2004. *The Northern Ireland Conflict: Consociational Engagements*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.; John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary. 1993. “Introduction: The Macro-Political Regulation of Ethnic Conflict” In McGarry, John and O’Leary, Brendan. *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation: Case Studies of Protracted Ethnic Conflicts*. London: Routledge.; Brendan O’Leary, John McGarry, and Khaled Salih. 2005. *The Future of Kurdistan in Iraq*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.; Marc Weller and Stefan Wolff, eds. 2005. *Autonomy, Self-governance and Conflict Resolution: Innovative Approaches to Institutional Design in Divided Societies*. London: Routledge.

<sup>55</sup> Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups ...*; Gibson and Duch. “Elitist Theory and Political Tolerance...” Paul R. Brass. 2003. *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.; Ashutosh Varshney. 2003. “Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Rationality.” *Perspectives on Politics* 1: 1: 85-99.

<sup>56</sup> Peffley and Rohrschneider. “Democratization and Political Tolerance...”; Steven A. Weldon. 2006. “The Institutional Context of Tolerance for Ethnic Minorities: A Comparative, Multilevel Analysis of Western Europe.” *American Journal of Political Science* 50: 2 (April): 331-349.

<sup>57</sup> Milgram. “Behavioral Study of Obedience.”; Milgram, *Obedience to Authority...*

**Appendix: How the survey was conducted**

Approximately 500 respondents were selected at random for face-to-face interviews in each of the following twelve cities in 2004 and 2005: Moscow (adult population of 8.6 million), St. Petersburg (3.8 million), Nizhny Novgorod (1.1 million), Novosibirsk (1.1 million), Samara (946,000), Rostov-na-Donu (867,000), Chelyabinsk (853,000), Perm (796,000), Saratov (712,000), Khabarovsk (469,000), Irkutsk (458,000), and Tomsk (389,000). The twelve cities represent small, medium, and large cities with adult populations over 350,000.

Cities were stratified into several geographic/administrative units (urban raioni). Primary sampling units (PSUs) and sampling points were electoral districts. Electoral districts were selected at random using the method of probability proportionate to the size of the electorate (adult population 18 years or older). Within each electoral district, households were selected from a total list of households using a random digit procedure, and individuals were selected randomly using Kish grids. The final sample contained 598 sampling points, with approximately 10 interviews per sampling point.

In 2004, the overall response rate was 69 percent of the 8,805 targeted individuals, or 6,043 respondents. In 2005, the overall response rate was 67 percent of the 9,000 targeted individuals, or 6,044 respondents. The resulting data were weighted for city size and regions within a city, as well as gender and age to correct for a slight overrepresentation of women and older Russians typical of surveys in Russia.

Survey questions were written by Javeline and Baird in consultation with USAID's Moscow branch and CESSI. The Russian translation was prepared by CESSI and checked by Javeline and USAID.