

## The Impact of Social Identity on Third-Party Mediation

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### Abstract

This paper elucidates a model of identity formation and applies it to the study of international settlement negotiation. Typically, strong identities are viewed as encouraging conflict and exacerbating inter-state disputes. The intuitions from the model, however, suggest a palliative role for identity: settlement negotiation—and particularly third-party mediation—can more effectively *resolve* conflicts when it enhances shared, if initially less salient, aspects of the disputants' identities. Alone, third-party mediation can aid disputants in putting aside strong identity cleavages by providing an alternate bargaining context. When the disputants possess a shared identity aspect, mediation can enhance its salience, particularly when the mediator shares the same identity. Our model thus predicts negotiations to be more effective in the presence of either shared identity or third-party mediation, with the greatest efficacy observed when both are present and the third-party shares the same identity. Analyses of the management of territorial claims lend support for the model's implications.

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Whether or not one believes that Huntington's (1996) "clash of civilizations" obtains, there is substantial evidence that identity cleavages alter conflict behavior via increased ease of mobilization (e.g., Horowitz 1985; Reynal-Querol 2002), even if ethnic or religious cleavages are not themselves the cause of the conflict in all cases (Fearon and Laitin 2003). The argument is typically given as follows. Salient identity differences between parties aid each in defining an "other," an out-group who, by virtue of these differences, may easily succumb to any number of negative attributions.<sup>1</sup> When grievance is laid atop of strong self/other distinctions, conflict may arise or be perpetuated more easily. This is true for Huntington's civilizations, for the participants in ethnic conflict and civil wars (e.g., Sambanis 2001), and even for disputant states which only differ in identity beyond the majority group (Gartzke and Gleditsch 2006).

Resolving conflict in such a context can be difficult, as identity cleavages become proxies for more easily resolved substantive disagreements. Third-party mediation, which consists of content- and process-related strategies designed to alter substantive and perceptual dimensions of the dispute (e.g., Bercovitch 1992; Greig and Regan 2008; Regan and Aydin 2006; Wall and Lynn 1993), may be one productive approach to overcoming the problems stemming from identity cleavages. Scholarship on the role of identity in such mediations, however, is incomplete. While the identity of the mediator is a consideration, discussion of identity largely revolves around such large-scale, static factors as the nature of the state (e.g., superpower, neighboring country) or the international organization (e.g., the UN) performing the mediation (Bercovitch and DeRouen 2005), or the resources these parties can bring to bear (Bercovitch and Gartner 2006). In those cases where the analyst goes further, explicitly testing the role of shared history or culture on the choice of mediation or its outcomes (e.g., Bercovitch and Elgström 2001; Greig

and Regan 2008), identity is a fixed combination of ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, or other markers that characterize an individual, group, or state.

Yet such conceptualizations contradict the psychological literature on the salience of identity: the process whereby a linguistic difference like the Basque language becomes a rallying cry for resistance across decades, or a religious difference like the Sunni/Shi'ite split evolves to supersede among a segment of the population the nationalist split of Iraq/Iran.<sup>2</sup> Block and Siegel (2008) propose a model of identity formation that treats changes of salience over time and across circumstances as *endogenous to the process of interpersonal interaction*. We apply this model to the case of mediation, illustrating how third parties can foment a shift in the salience of common aspects of the disputants' identities, thereby reducing the level of conflict. Notably, this can be done *without* explicitly diminishing the still-salient identity cleavage developed over the course of the conflict. Instead, a mediator can enhance the salience of a different shared identity aspect, thereby providing a more favorable context for negotiation.

Our model yields several testable hypotheses. First, successful negotiations between disputants are more likely when they share some aspect of their identity. This is true whether negotiations are mediated or bilateral; even without outside help, idiosyncratic factors might produce a favorable negotiation context when the disputants have some commonality.<sup>3</sup> Second, mediation should be more effective, at least in the short term, than bilateral negotiations, since the former decreases the likelihood that the salient identity cleavage driving and being driven by the conflict is the primary context within which the negotiation takes place.

Third, mediation should be more effective when the disputants share some aspect of their identities, as mediators may strategically employ identity appeals to enhance this common identity, producing better results. Fourth, mediators who also share this identity aspect will be

the most effective at employing these appeals, and thus at resolving the conflict. Empirical analyses using data from the Issue Correlates of War (ICOW) project and a brief analysis of the 1982 Argentina-Chile settlement support all four hypotheses.<sup>4</sup>

### **SHARED IDENTITY AS A POTENTIAL SOLUTION TO INTER-STATE CONFLICT**

International negotiations are not a simple matter. Especially when the issues under contention are important to both sides, there are many obstacles to successful agreement, and even many agreements that are reached are essentially stopgap measures that leave the underlying problem unresolved. Recent examples include the failure of numerous rounds of Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Syrian talks since the mid-1990s (often with the participation of the United States or other foreign observers) and the failure of talks to settle the South Ossetian and Abkhazian problems between Russia and Georgia before their summer 2008 combat.

A useful source for investigating this matter systematically is the Issue Correlates of War (ICOW) territorial claims data set (Hensel 2001), which seeks to identify every interstate disagreement over territorial sovereignty as well as every attempt to settle such disagreements through peaceful means. Using the ICOW data on territorial claims in the Western Hemisphere or Western Europe from 1816-2001,<sup>5</sup> there is ample evidence that negotiations often fail. The success of an attempt can be defined in terms of whether or not it produces an agreement that leads the two sides to end their competing claims to the territory in question. Out of the 563 peaceful attempts to resolve territorial claims in these regions -- ranging from bilateral negotiations to third party techniques such as good offices, mediation, or arbitration -- only 127 (22.6%) ended most or all of the claim in question; the remaining 77.4% left the underlying claim unresolved.<sup>6</sup> These results are consistent with the widely-positing conclusion that territorial

issues are highly salient to leaders -- perhaps more than any other type of issue -- and very difficult to resolve peacefully (see, e.g., Vasquez 1993).

What can be done to improve this “success rate” of resolving such highly salient issues as territorial claims? A shared identity between disputants offers a potential solution. If the “otherness” of the opposition is eliminated, so that the representatives of the two claimants come to view themselves more in a common light, bargaining between them can become easier and more effective. The challenge, therefore, is for rival states to focus less on the conflict itself and more on their shared characteristics. Below, we employ our theory of identity formation to illustrate that frequent interactions can enhance the importance, or “weight,” one puts on a particular dimension of identity (henceforth ID), if that ID is emphasized in the frequent interactions.

### **A THEORY OF IDENTITY FORMATION**

Block and Siegel (2008) take as given that there are numerous dimensions along which individuals may identify themselves and that individuals may choose which IDs are most salient to them at any given time. For example, an individual might view it as beneficial to emphasize linguistic similarities in one instance and religious similarities in another (Posner 2005). The idea that individuals can select among multiple aspects of their identity is not novel (in fact, it is a central tenet of self-categorization theory; see Turner 1985). However, we depart from (and contribute to) this literature by allowing for more fluid specifications of identity while addressing the complications that arise from such deliberately-chosen identity manifestations.

The theory begins by postulating a set of all possible identity aspects. Unlike conventional models of identity choice (see, e.g., Posner 2005; Turner et al. 1987), we do not

categorize types of identity (e.g. ethnic or linguistic). Instead, each potential aspect of identity (such as Spanish-speaker or practitioner of Sunni Islam) is its own dimension. Formally, an individual's identity is a vector assigning a weight between zero and one to each potential identity aspect.<sup>7</sup> These weights need not add to one, and may in fact be completely uncorrelated with each other. For example, assume that there are only two possible aspects of identity in the world: *citizen* and *foreigner*.<sup>8</sup> In this (admittedly simplistic) reality, each person's identity looks like this:  $(a, b)$ , where  $a$  is the weight on the *citizen* ID, and  $b$  is the weight on the *foreigner* ID. The identity vector of a person who is solely a *citizen* would be  $(1, 0)$ , while the vector of a person who is wholly a *foreigner* would be  $(0, 1)$ .

This extreme example typifies common characterizations of social identity theory: Individuals automatically (often unconsciously) divide themselves and others into “in-groups” (comprised of people with like identities) and “out-groups” (whose members share identities that differ from, or even oppose, those of the in-group), and tend to favor the group with which they identify (De Cremer and Van Vugt 1999; Huddy 2004; Kramer and Brewer 1984). While accurate in many circumstances, such characterizations betray an oversimplified view of identity expression, for even seemingly static racial identities may be affected by context (for historical discussions of the malleability of racial designations, see Smedley in Stokes et al. 2001; Nobels 2000, chaps. 1 - 2).<sup>9</sup> In our example, while a new immigrant might still solidly view herself as a foreigner, a naturalized citizen who has nonetheless maintained ties to her old culture might very well have high weights on both the *citizen* and the *foreigner* dimensions, and her identity vector might look like  $(0.6, 0.8)$ .

Implicit in this example is the notion of *identity change*—although she remains the same person, the identity configuration of a new immigrant changes over time, and will likely be

different by the time she has become a naturalized citizen. How does this change occur? We draw on the extensive literature on identity salience in postulating that identity changes endogenously via repeated social interactions (see Kurzman 2005 and Stryker 2008 for reviews). One might think of this purely in sociological terms—the more time one spends within a group, the more one identifies with that group. Alternatively, one could think of this as the natural outcome of repeated rational interactions. If there is a benefit to being a member of a certain group (in terms of improved transactions with members of that group), then frequent transactions with a specific group will induce a rational actor to strengthen her in-group affiliation. Either way, the core of the theory is that interacting with others who manifest similar aspects of identity leads to an increase in the weights that one assigns to those identity aspects. Based on this logic, we would expect immigrants who locate in enclaves strongly devoted to the maintenance of the cultural aspects of their old state of residence to place a lower weight on the *citizen* dimension of their identity and a higher weight on the *foreigner* dimension, all else being equal. We would also expect these trends to increase the more time this living arrangement holds.

Because of the importance of social interaction in the formation of identity, individuals cannot freely select a desired identity. A politician might suggest that she would be an effective advocate for a particular racial or ethnic minority, but she will have difficulty claiming her in-group status if her history does not support her alleged affiliation. Similarly, unless her upbringing was atypical, a Shi'ite Muslim raised in California is unlikely to evoke a feeling of commonality with one born in the slums of Sadr City, despite having nominally the same religious affiliation. If the politician or the Californian is sufficiently clumsy in her appeals, she may even suffer a penalty for making the attempt, as those to whom she was professing similarity might come to view her not only as inauthentic, but as a dissembler as well.

This leads us to the second aspect of our theory: the role identity plays in influencing outcomes. Our discussion of contextually-determined identity, helpful in capturing real-world nuance, presents problems here. While an in-group/out-group duality allows for straightforward payoff comparisons in most situations—payoffs to outcomes are higher when individuals interact with members of the same group than when they interact with those who are outside of their group—now the translation between identity and outcomes is less clearly defined. To overcome this challenge, we focus on the deliberate manifestation of an ID. This sounds perhaps more complicated than it is; by manifesting an ID we merely mean expressing a particular aspect or dimension of one’s identity at a given time, in a given context (see Tajfel 1982, 2 for a similar working definition). In the examples of the previous paragraph, the politician was attempting to manifest the aspect of her identity corresponding to the minority group, and the Californian the aspect corresponding to Shi’ism.

Manifestation of an ID within the model is a conscious choice, made after considering the situation. Consistent with other models of identity choice, we assume that identity manifestations can have social consequences. Successfully manifesting the same identity aspects as those of the others with whom one interacts can improve the outcome of one’s interactions; unsuccessfully doing so can make the outcome worse. Further, the attempt of manifestation is costly in time, effort, and the potential resources spent in attempting to “pass” as that ID. We assume that the probability of manifesting an identity aspect successfully is increasing in the weight on the ID, while the cost of manifestation is decreasing in the weight. It is easier to convince others that you are of a certain group -- to “pass” as a member of that group -- the more a part of that group you truly are.

As an example, assume that a mediator was trying to reach a compromise deal among a group of people who all strongly identify as Buddhist. Since manifesting a Buddhist identity aspect would likely improve each interaction between the mediator and members of the Buddhist group, doing so might also improve the chances of a successful mediation. Let us assume that the mediator's weight on the Buddhist ID is  $0.6$  before meeting with the group, and that the probability of a successful manifestation is exactly equal to the weight on that ID.<sup>10</sup> Then there is a 60% chance of manifesting successfully, which would net the mediator the benefit from doing so, but a 40% chance of unsuccessfully manifesting the Buddhist ID, which would garner the mediator a penalty. In deciding whether or not to make the attempt at manifestation, the mediator must determine if the expected payoff from this lottery over outcomes exceeds the cost of manifestation. If it does, then the mediator should make the attempt, even though it might fail. If it does not, the mediator should rely on other means of mediation.

The role of the ID weight is important in this example. Were the mediator to have a weight of 1 on the Buddhist ID, she would always manifest it. After all, it would be costless to do so, and it would always work. In contrast, a weight of 0 would leave the mediator without manifestation as a valid option, since it would always fail, and the attempt would be costly as well. The 0.6 value we chose for the example, between these two extremes, introduces uncertainty. The attempt might succeed, but it might fail. We expect this to be the norm, and so believe that manifesting an aspect of one's identity is a risky action in nearly all cases.

While we have presented the interaction within which individuals might choose to manifest an aspect of their identities as something separate, it is really just one more piece of historical context of the sort that gave rise to that person's identity in the first place. Thus, manifesting an identity aspect can also alter one's identity weights. The Californian Shi'ite

Muslim might fail to convince her Iraqi religious fellows of her sincerity, but the act of attempting to do so might increase her weight on her Shi'ite religion, making it easier for her to manifest that identity in the future. This closes the theoretical loop, and ends our discussion of the model.

### **IDENTITY AND MEDIATION: OUR EXPECTATIONS**

The preceding discussion covers identity change and expression, but not how to get two disputing parties with seemingly divergent identity weights to see one another in a common light. In this section, we make the case that third party mediators can provide the context through which such commonality can be achieved.

Our model suggests two ways in which parties can overcome the in-group/out-group trap discussed earlier. One way to avoid this trap would be for members of one party to manifest the most salient identity of the other, as did the Buddhist mediator in our example above. However, with the two disputants accustomed to viewing their identities as being singular (and, possibly, as being diametrically opposed), neither one is likely to be willing to manifest the opposing identity aspect in order to obtain a more favorable resolution. Even if members of one party were willing to play that strategic game, it is likely that a cleavage made highly salient through prolonged conflict would lead to strongly divergent weights on the opposing identity aspects, making the cost of any such strategic play high. Given these costs, identity cleavages are likely to be maintained, which increases the difficulty of a resolution. For example, consider the extreme case of one disputant (party A) with weights of (0, 1) on her citizen-foreigner identity dimensions, while another disputant (party B) places the weights of (1, 0) on these same IDs. There is little reason to expect these disputants—who have framed the conflict with respect to

their inversely weighted identities—to reconfigure their weights. The odds of doing so convincingly are low, while the likelihood that the attempt will worsen the dispute is high.

A second possibility highlighted by our model would be for each party to increase the salience of some shared third identity aspect. If this ID could be sufficiently strengthened so that each party could credibly manifest it -- i.e., the chance of a successful manifestation is high, and the cost of the attempt is low -- then the parties would find it beneficial for further negotiations to take place in the context of this shared identity aspect. In this case, due to the benefits provided by negotiation within a common context, progress in negotiations could be made *without* altering the salience of either of the two disputants' primary IDs.

How might this take place? To see, consider a conflict of the following form. There are three possible identity dimensions, so that one's identity is represented by a vector  $(a, b, c)$ . During the long conflict the first disputant, party A, has come to manifest aspect  $a$  consistently, leading to its strengthening, and has come to distance itself from aspect  $b$  consistently, leading to a decrease in its weight. The converse is true for party B, which emphasizes aspect  $b$  and plays down aspect  $a$ . The third aspect,  $c$ , is some shared identity dimension that has received little attention during the conflict, and each disputant's weight on it remains near pre-conflict levels. This ID could be a shared language common across races, a shared nationality common across ethnic groups, or any other identity aspect common to both A and B. To put these assumptions on participants in the dispute concretely, assume that one disputant enters negotiations with identity  $(1, 0, 0.5)$ , while the other enters with identity  $(0, 1, 0.6)$ .

Our model suggests two possible ways to strengthen aspect  $c$ . The first involves repeated social interactions in the context of  $c$  (a context, we argue, that third-party mediators provide).

The second possibility involves bilateral attempts by each party to manifest  $c$ , in the absence of a third-party mediator. Each is possible, but not equally likely.

Bilateral negotiations between the parties occur in the extant context of the conflict, and the parties are therefore likely to fall back on their most salient identity dimensions, that is,  $a$  and  $b$ . Thus, bilateral negotiations are unlikely to take full advantage of a shared identity aspect between the disputants, though we do expect this likelihood to vary with the disputants' weights on  $c$ . In contrast, mediation is a process that brings a third party into frequent contact with the groups in conflict (Bercovitch 1991, 4), and the repeated contact of mediation provides an alternative context for the negotiation. Even apart from the actual tactics taken by the mediator, then, the provision of this new context increases the probability that the parties will be able to interact in the context of their shared identity, and thus the probability of a successful resolution to the conflict. Of course, this argument relies upon a shared identity aspect between the disputants that may be credibly manifested by each. If no such ID exists, then we expect that the negotiation context mediation provides will be less effective than if there were such a shared ID between the disputants. However, in that mediation can create an alternative context that moves disputants' focus away from their salient identity cleavage, we do expect it to be more effective than bilateral negotiation, at least in the short term.<sup>11</sup>

Our first three hypotheses follow directly from this argument.

***Hypothesis 1:** Given that disputants attempt a settlement, disputants who share an identity aspect will be more likely to resolve the dispute than those who do not share an identity aspect.*

***Hypothesis 2:** Given that disputants attempt a settlement, third-party mediation is more likely to resolve the dispute than is bilateral negotiation.*

***Hypothesis 3:** Given that disputants attempt a settlement, a shared identity aspect between the disputants increases the marginal benefit that third-party mediation has upon the probability of ending a dispute.*

The first two hypotheses are not conditional; they merely state that, all else equal, disputants who share an identity or use a third-party mediator are more likely to resolve a dispute, assuming they attempt a settlement negotiation at all.<sup>12</sup> The third hypothesis is conditional and states that, again assuming that disputants attempt a settlement, a shared identity aspect will make mediation a more effective strategy for resolution of the dispute.

As stated, the application of the theory ignores the tactics taken by the mediator; further, thus far our hypotheses have not considered the mediator's identity either. Can a carefully chosen mediator, who in turn carefully chooses tactics, produce even better results than obtainable by the average mediator? Our theory would suggest that carefully chosen mediators can use identity to their advantage.

To make this clearer, let us add a third-party mediator to our earlier example. If the third party manifests either *a* or *b*, little is likely to change as a result. While this manifestation, if made credibly, might endear it either to party A or to party B, respectively, it will do little to bridge the gap between them. However, if the third party can credibly manifest aspect *c*, and does so in a uniform and repeated manner, progress can be made. The disputants—or rather, the representatives of the disputants present at the mediation—will view the third party in the

context of identity dimension  $c$ , and in interacting with it will tend to manifest  $c$  themselves. This in turn will tend to increase the weights that A and B place on  $c$ , increasing the salience of the identity aspect, and thus the likelihood that it will form the context within which further negotiations will take place. Third-party mediators who deliberately and repeatedly display the same shared identity aspect of the two disputants can alter the negotiation context toward that of commonality between the parties more effectively than a generic third-party mediator. This insight leads to our last hypothesis:

***Hypothesis 4:*** *Given that two disputants share an identity aspect and attempt to resolve their dispute via third-party mediation, mediators who also share this identity aspect will be more effective in resolving the dispute than those who do not share the identity aspect.*<sup>13</sup>

Before moving to the tests of these hypotheses, we offer a brief word as to how a mediator might act on our suggestions. Though our preceding discussion has been presented in a simplified world of three identity aspects and two parties, it holds more generally. To apply it, one need only follow two steps. First, the greatest point of similarity in identity across the disputant parties must be discerned. A third party manifesting an identity aspect on which both parties do not place appreciable weight is not likely to be effective in spurring commonality.

The identity dimension to manifest will be the one with the maximal minimal weight across all parties and across all aspects. To find this, the minimal weight placed on each aspect for each disputant is first determined. These minimal weights form a set, one for each aspect. In the simple example above, the set of minimal weights is  $\{0, 0, 0.5\}$ .<sup>14</sup> Then the greatest of these

weights is chosen, and the corresponding aspect will be the optimal one on which a mediator should focus. Note that this procedure yields aspect  $c$  for the example above.

Second, once the optimal aspect has been discerned, a mediator must be chosen who can credibly manifest this aspect, and can do so repeatedly.<sup>15</sup> If no such mediator is available, one could traverse the set of minimal weights and choose the next largest, though with an accompanying decrease in efficacy. If all parties need not be satisfied for the conflict to be resolved, then it may be possible to do better by considering only the identities of the combinations of disputants able to resolve the conflict on their own. The maximal minimal weight will be no smaller in this case than when considering all parties, and may very well be larger.

Thus, we argue that the social identity of disputants, often seen as solely prolonging conflict, can be used by an appropriate mediator to diminish social differences and to reduce the role that conceptualizations of the “other” play in causing and maintaining strife. This approach is likely to be particularly effective when applied to territorial disputes, assuming that any points of social commonality remain after long strife. Does our theory hold up? In the next section, we test our hypotheses against ICOW data.<sup>16</sup>

## EMPIRICAL ANALYSES

We evaluate these hypotheses using the Issue Correlates of War (ICOW) project’s data set on territorial claims, which currently covers all claims to territory in the Americas or Western Europe from 1816-2001. We consider two different conceptions of identity that fit with our theory, to make sure that the results are robust and do not depend on one particular measure. The first is religious; states sharing this identity have the same dominant religion (distinguishing

between Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox for Christianity and between Sunni and Shi'ite for Islam).<sup>17</sup> The other conception is linguistic; states sharing this identity speak the same dominant language. Each state is coded based on the information in *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* (<http://www.ethnologue.com/web.asp>) for linguistic identity, Adherents.com for religious identity, and the CIA *World Factbook* for both.

[Table 1 about here]

Table 1 summarizes the extent to which participants in territorial claims have shared identity in one or both of these ways. Looking at the two dimensions of identity separately, over half of the territorial claims (106 of 191, or 55.5%) occur between two claimants that share the same religion, while less than half (40.3%) share the same language. Considering both together, more than six in ten (60.2%) share at least one of these forms of identity, and just over one-third (35.6%) share both.

### **Analyses of Settlement Attempt Effectiveness**

Our first empirical analyses, testing Hypotheses 1 and 2, are presented in Table 2, supplemented by a display of marginal effects from that model in Figure 1. Table 2 considers all attempts to end a territorial claim peacefully via either bilateral negotiations or third-party activities. This latter category includes both non-binding techniques like mediation or good offices and legally binding techniques like arbitration/adjudication. The dependent variable in Table 2 indicates whether the settlement attempt ends most or the entire territorial claim.

[Table 2 and Figure 1 about here]

We treat both types of identity in the same analysis, considering claimants to share identity if they share either language or religion, to avoid the correlation between aspects

observed in Table 1. In order to display a cleaner test of our first two unconditional hypotheses, we leave out any interaction between shared identity and mediation in this regression. Any marginal effects of either shared ID or mediation identified are thus with respect to the average value of the other variable.

Beyond the impact of shared identity, we control for the effects of several other factors that are believed to be associated with the management of territorial claims. First is the salience, or importance, of the claimed territory, which is expected to make successful agreements more difficult. The ICOW project measures salience on a 0-12 point scale, reflecting the presence or absence of a number of factors that make territory generally more valuable (Hensel 2001; Hensel et al. 2008). We use several measures of recent interactions over the territorial claim, the number of fatal militarized disputes over the claim and the number of failed negotiations, each of which is also expected to make agreement more difficult. Each is measured on a weighted scale, where an event in the past year counts the most, an event ten years earlier counts the least, and events before that do not count at all (Hensel et al. 2008). We control for joint democracy, using the standard Polity IV threshold of a value of 7-10 on the polity scale that subtracts a given state's autocratic characteristics from its democratic characteristics. Finally, we control for the relative capabilities of the two states using the standard Correlates of War (COW) Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC) measure; here we measure the CINC score of the challenger state (i.e., the state that is making the territorial claim) as a proportion of the two states' total capabilities.

As we can see from Table 2, Hypotheses 1 and 2 are both supported. The effect of each of shared ID and third-party mediation is positive and significant, as predicted. The addition of each factor is substantively important as well, as we can see easily in Figure 1. Shifting to shared

ID increases the probability of a successful settlement attempt by roughly 50%. Shifting to third-party mediation is even more effective, increasing the chance of a successful mediation by nearly 130%.

[Table 3 and Figure 2 about here]

Table 3 and the accompanying Figure 2 illustrate the results of a test of Hypothesis 3. This regression is identical to that displayed in Table 2, save that now we include an interaction term between shared ID and third-party mediation to test whether the presence of shared ID increases the efficacy of third-party mediation. As we can see, while both the coefficients on shared ID and mediation remain positive and significant, the interaction term is not significant, although its sign is as predicted. However, since the presence of the interaction term complicates analysis of the results (Brambor, Clark, and Golder 2006), we also look explicitly at the marginal effect of moving from bilateral negotiation to mediation under both values of the shared ID dummy. Figure 2 illustrates this analysis. Here, we see that mediation is approximately 17% more effective in the presence of shared ID, and the coefficient on the mediation dummy is substantially more significant with shared ID as well. Thus, though the lack of significance on the interaction term prevents us from claiming with confidence that the interaction is present, there is some (albeit weak) evidence in favor of our third hypothesis.

To understand why the support for this hypothesis is not stronger, note that the regression displayed in Table 3 pools all types of mediators. That is, we simultaneously considered mediators whom we expected to be able to manifest the shared ID aspect credibly during the mediation (i.e., those mediators who also shared this ID), and those whom we did not (those who did not share this ID). While we cannot simply separate out both types of mediator in our previous regression, since in order for a mediator to have a shared ID the claimants must share an

ID as well, we can test our fourth hypothesis, which states that mediators with shared ID should be more effective than those without shared ID, conditional on the claimants sharing ID and seeking mediation.

[Table 4 and Figure 3 about here]

Table 4 and the accompanying Figure 3 illustrate the results of a test of Hypothesis 4. The control variables are the same as the previous regressions, as is the dependent variable. The independent variable of interest here is the identity of the mediator and, as the table illustrates, the coefficient on the mediator's identity is large, positive, and strongly significant, in line with our theoretical expectations. As Figure 3 indicates, a negotiation in which the mediator shares the ID of the claimants is roughly 140% more likely to produce a resolution of the claim than one in which this is not the case. Thus, we might have seen weaker results in support of Hypothesis 3 because only mediators with a shared ID greatly increase the efficacy of mediation when the claimants share an ID.

### **Analysis of Settlement Attempt Onset**

There are several stages leading up to the peaceful resolution of a territorial claim. Actors must first engage in competing claims to territorial sovereignty, a decision that is likely dependent on economic, historical, geographic, and socio-political factors, and related to strategic considerations of both parties. Second, both actors must attempt to settle the claim peacefully. Third, they must agree upon the details of these negotiations, such as whether or not a third party should be involved and if so, which one(s). Fourth and finally, they must decide whether the terms offered by each side during the negotiations are sufficient to end the claim. Thus far, our empirical analyses have focused only on the outcome of the negotiation, not on the

initial choices to engage in a claim or to attempt a resolution, or on the factors that led claimants to choose a particular mode of negotiation.

On the one hand, we are not familiar with any theoretical rationale that systematically links the willingness to engage in a territorial claim with a willingness to procure a mediator or to resolve the claim more easily later. On the other, Greig and Regan (2008) provide evidence that common historical ties—in a sense a common identity aspect—leads to more frequent offers of mediation in civil wars. More generally, we recognize the substantive importance of understanding the pre-outcome phases of conflict resolution, and we acknowledge that not focusing on the earlier stages is potentially problematic if there is a “selection effect” present. For example, the claimants most likely to resolve conflicts might be more likely to use mediation, so that mediation itself is not the cause of its associated positive outcomes.

We cannot fully account for the effect of selection on our results, as we do not have data on the decision processes that led to the involvement of third parties (or that left third parties uninvolved). Specifically, while we do know which third parties intervened in an attempt to settle these territorial claims, we do not know about third parties that did not become involved. This includes situations in which the claimants desired the involvement of a third party that declined their request, as well as situations where a third party offered its services and one or both claimants declined the offer; both scenarios are potentially relevant to this study if the decision processes are different for third parties that share identity with the claimants and for those that do not.

Despite the lack of such information, though, we can address the conditions under which claimants choose mediation in order to gain some insight into possible selection effects.<sup>18</sup> As we

can see in Table 5 and the associated Figure 4, our results in the context of interstate territorial claims mirror those of Greig and Regan (2008) in civil wars.

[Table 5 and Figure 4 about here]

The dependent variable in the regression displayed in Table 5 is the decision to use third-party mediation, conditional on seeking a peaceful settlement. Our independent variable of interest, shared ID, and all controls are the same as in earlier regressions. The positive and significant coefficient on shared ID indicates that claimants with shared ID are more likely to seek mediation. Since we know that claimants who share ID are more likely to resolve their claims in negotiation, in some sense the selection effect we feared is present: claimants more likely to resolve claims are selecting into mediation, implying that mediation may not be as strong a causal factor behind positive settlement outcomes as indicated above. Yet, in another sense, this is completely consistent with our theory, as it is *shared ID* which leads to mediation. As per Figure 4, shared ID increases the probability of seeking mediation by over 80%. Thus, shared ID plays multiple palliative roles here: it helps to resolve claims, and helps to lead parties into mediation, which is also beneficial. Further, if shared ID were to cause parties to seek mediation, it would seem unlikely that the shared ID would not be in play during the mediation itself as well. Accordingly, we do not feel that selection undermines our empirical results, at least not with respect to shared ID.

What about the control variables? Two of these have significant effects at the 5% level: the salience of the claim and the number of recent fatal militarized conflicts.<sup>19</sup> In both cases, the coefficient on these variables is positive, implying that more salient claims and additional recent fatal conflicts lead to more use of mediation. Note that these two have opposite effects on the probability of a successful resolution according to Tables 2 and 3. Further, intuitively, both

factors should not necessarily lead to easier resolutions. Accordingly, we see no clear selection issue here.<sup>20</sup>

Our model and related empirical analysis suggest that mediation can be an effective tool for conflict resolution via the deliberate manipulation of the claimants' identities, and that this is likely to be most effective when the claimants share an ID that is also shared by the mediator. To see how this might work in practice, we consider an historical example before briefly concluding.

### **THE 1982 TREATY OF PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP AS A CASE STUDY**

The Beagle Conflict of 1978 offers an example of a third party resolving an inter-state conflict by appealing to an aspect of the claimants' identity that, while seemingly unimportant to the conflict itself, became a point of common interest. This century-old conflict gets its name from the islands of Picton, Lennox, and Nueva that are located along the southeastern opening of the Beagle Channel. Both Argentina and Chile claimed these islands, wishing to benefit from their strategic location (the channel connects the Pacific and Atlantic oceans at the tip of South America) as well as fishing and mineral (possibly oil) rights in the area (Garrett 1985). In response to the failed 180-day negotiation attempt of the previous year, Pope John Paul II sent a personal message to the president of Buenos Aires (Raúl Alfonsín) and the (then) General of Santiago (Augusto Pinochet) urging a peaceful solution. Both countries allowed the Roman Pontiff to mediate the dispute through the good offices of Cardinal Antonio Samoré, his special emissary, and the 1982 resolution (known as the Treaty of Peace and Friendship) granted the islands to Chile while giving most of the maritime rights to Argentina (see Parish 2006 for details).

The Vatican's presence as a third-party mediator proved tremendously effective, perhaps because of Alfonsín's and Pinochet's professionalism and their openness to negotiate (Garrett 1986, 81), the widespread perception of the Vatican as a neutral arbitrator—in the sense that it stood to gain little from resolving the dispute (Parish 2006), and, most importantly, the Pope's stature among Catholics as a "moral authority" (Laudy 2000, 293). While the exact terms of the resolution are not publicly available, it is safe to assume that Pope John Paul II appealed to the Christian sensibilities of the claimants. Catholicism is the national religion of both nations, and, as Garrett (1986) notes, the Pope knew that this shared denominational identity, if made salient in the context of the negotiations, could overshadow Chile and Argentina's secular (arguably more superficial) grievances and play an important role in resolving the Beagle Channel conflict. One could argue that, given the feuding nations' overwhelmingly Catholic populaces, much of the Pope's success in mediating this conflict stemmed from his ability shift the dialogue of the negotiations away from territorial disagreements while reminding the claimants of their religious affiliation.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The role of identity in conflict typically focuses on its detrimental aspects. Cleavages between claimants' identities make it easy for each to view the other in a self-other dichotomy that renders bargaining more difficult. However, as we have shown, identity can also be used to help resolve conflict. When claimants share some aspect of their identities, even when this aspect is not initially salient, a third-party mediator can help to enhance this commonality and so reduce the barriers to successful settlements. Third parties that share this same identity aspect will be particularly effective at doing so, and produce the best chances for successful resolution of the

issue. The theory we present traces the causal chain behind these claims; the empirics upon which we draw provide strong support for the positive role of third parties in ending conflicts, particularly when claimants share a common identity aspect. This leads to a strong policy prescription: the use of third parties in mediated settlements should be encouraged by international organizations, and the third parties so used should share a secondary identity aspect with both claimants whenever possible.<sup>21</sup> We hope that additional analyses of identity in mediation will help to identify practices and strategies well suited to such constructive identity plays.

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**Table 1: Shared Identity and Territorial Claims**

	Do Claimants Share...			
	Same Religion?	Same Language?	Either Same Religion <b>or</b> Language	Both Same Religion <b>and</b> Language
Yes	106 (55.5%)	77 (40.3%)	115 (60.2%)	68 (35.6%)
No	85	114	76	123
Total	191	191	191	191

*Source:* Issue Correlates of War (ICOW) Project, Territorial Claims Data Set (1816-2001).

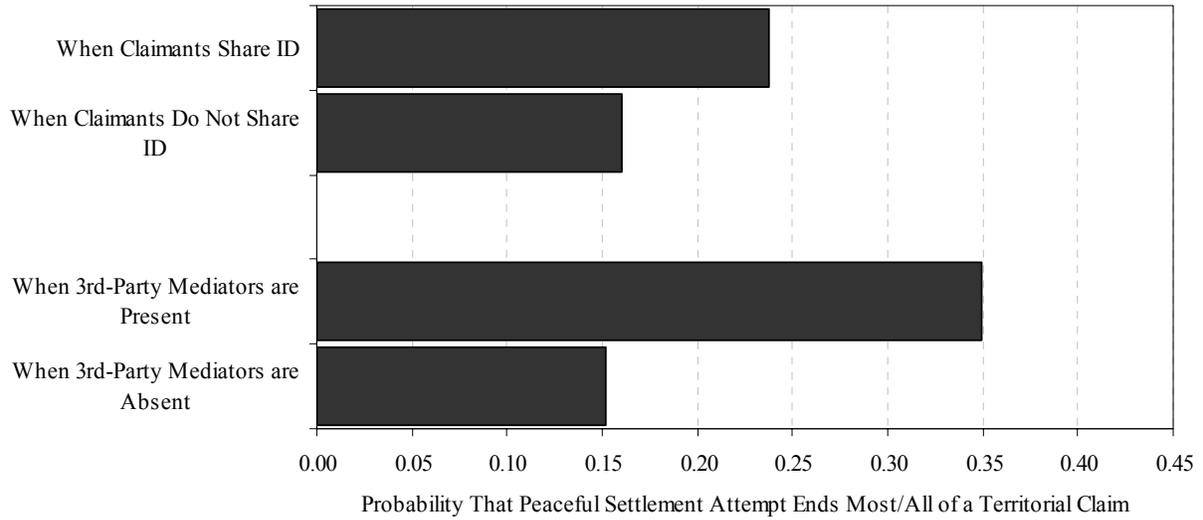
*Note:* Table entries are frequencies (with column percentages in parentheses).

**Table 2: Shared Identity, Third-Party Mediation, and the Probability of Negotiation Success**

<i>Independent Variables</i>	Logit Coefficient	Clustered Std. Error	P-Value (1-Tailed)
Claimants Share Either a Linguistic or a Religious ID	0.49	0.25	0.02
Claimants Use a Third-Party Mediator	1.10	0.26	0.00
Salience of Claimed Territory	-0.24	0.05	0.00
Recent Fatal Militarized Conflicts	0.79	0.27	0.00
Recent Failed Negotiation Attempts	-0.08	0.10	0.22
Joint Democracy	-0.06	0.34	0.43
Challenger's Relative Capabilities	0.48	0.33	0.07
<i>Constant</i>	-0.51	0.33	0.06
<i>Number of Cases</i>	535		
<i>Wald <math>\chi^2</math> (7 df)</i>	45.32		0.00

*Note:* Estimates are logit coefficients with robust standard errors (clustered by claims).

**Figure 1: Marginal Impact of Shared Identity and Third-Party Mediation on Negotiation Success**



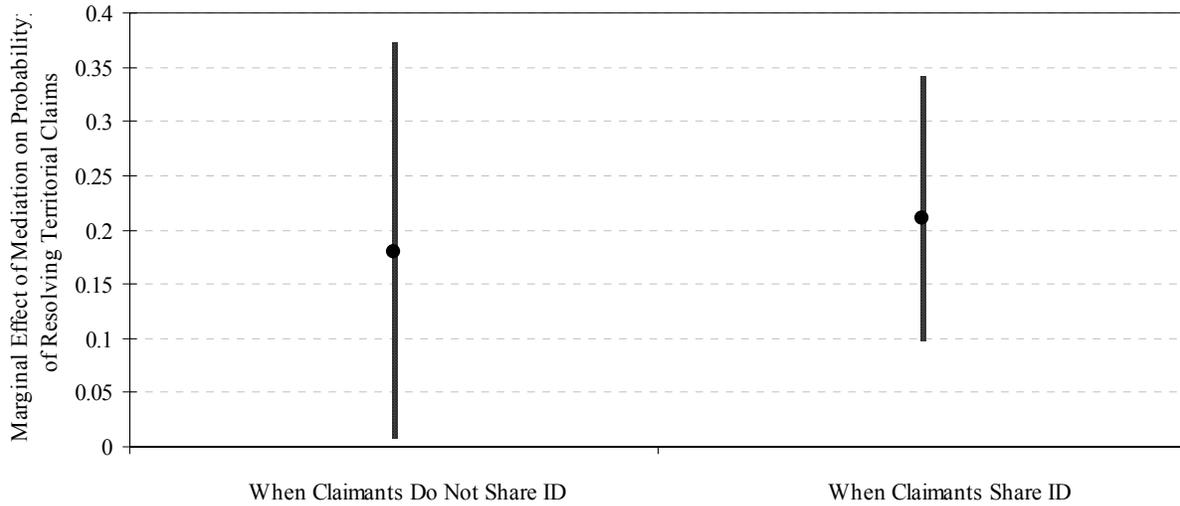
*Note:* Estimates are the marginal effects of third-party mediation and shared identity on the likelihood of conflict resolution in Table 2, holding constant the effects of the remaining variables in the model (the constant of third-party mediation or shared identity is held at its mean in the data). These estimates were calculated using the *mfx* command in Stata 9.2.

**Table 3: The Conditional Impact of Shared Identity and Third-Party Mediation on the Probability of Negotiation Success**

<i>Independent Variables</i>	Logit Coefficient	Clustered Std. Error	P-Value (1-Tailed)
Claimants Share Either a Linguistic or a Religious ID	0.46	0.28	0.05
Claimants Use a Third-Party Mediator	1.03	0.50	0.02
Shared ID * Mediator	0.09	0.57	0.44
Salience of Claimed Territory	-0.24	0.05	0.00
Recent Fatal Militarized Conflicts	0.79	0.27	0.00
Recent Failed Negotiation Attempts	-0.08	0.10	0.21
Joint Democracy	-0.06	0.34	0.43
Challenger's Relative Capabilities	0.48	0.33	0.07
<i>Constant</i>	-0.49	0.35	0.08
<i>Number of Cases</i>	535		
<i>Wald <math>\chi^2</math> (8 df)</i>	45.32		0.00

*Note:* Estimates are logit coefficients with robust standard errors (clustered by claims).

**Figure 2: Marginal Impact of Third-Party Mediation on Negotiation Success, Conditional on Shared Identity**



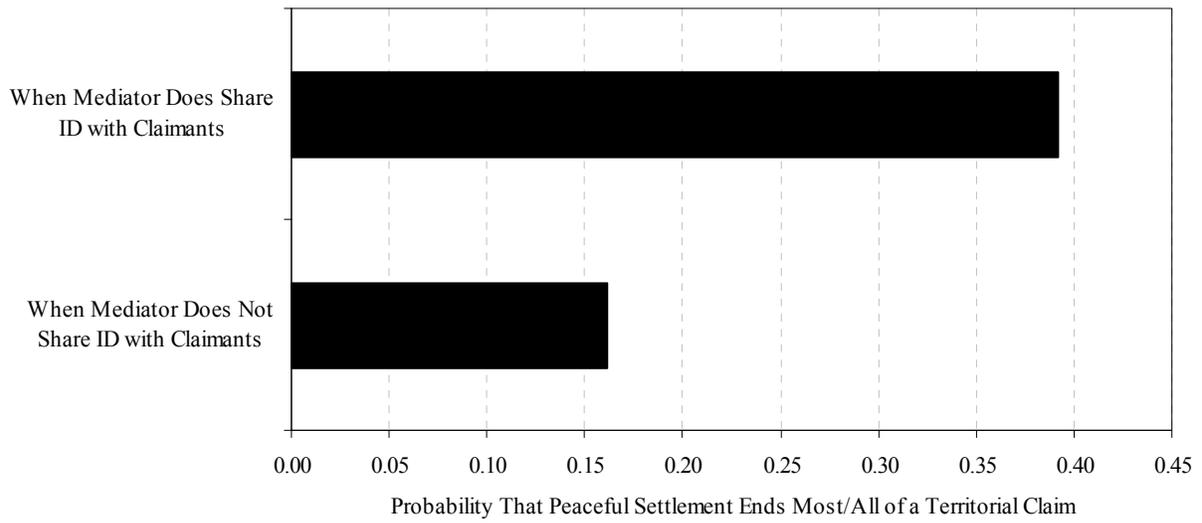
*Notes:* Estimates are the marginal of third-party mediation on the likelihood of conflict resolution (accompanied by 95% confidence intervals) in Table 3, holding constant the effects of the remaining variables in the model. Estimates and confidence intervals calculated using a modified version of Brambor, Clark, and Golder's (2006) Stata program for plotting the conditional effect of a variable of interest on a limited (binary) dependent variable with a single modifying variable.

**Table 4: Mediator Identity and the Probability of Negotiation Success for Claimants Sharing Identity**

<i>Independent Variables</i>	Logit Coefficient	Clustered Std. Error	P-Value (1-Tailed)
Mediator Shares Identity with Claimants	1.21	0.31	0.00
Salience of Claimed Territory	-0.31	0.06	0.00
Recent Fatal Militarized Conflicts	0.55	0.44	0.11
Recent Failed Negotiation Attempts	0.06	0.10	0.28
Joint Democracy	-0.12	0.37	0.37
Challenger's Relative Capabilities	1.01	0.47	0.02
<i>Constant</i>	0.11	0.44	0.40
<i>Number of Cases</i>	317		
<i>Wald <math>\chi^2</math> (6 df)</i>	46.61		0.00

*Note:* Estimates are logit coefficients with robust standard errors (clustered by claims). The sample is limited to only those cases in which claimants share either a linguistic or a religious identity.

**Figure 3: Marginal Impact of Mediator Identity on Negotiation Success**



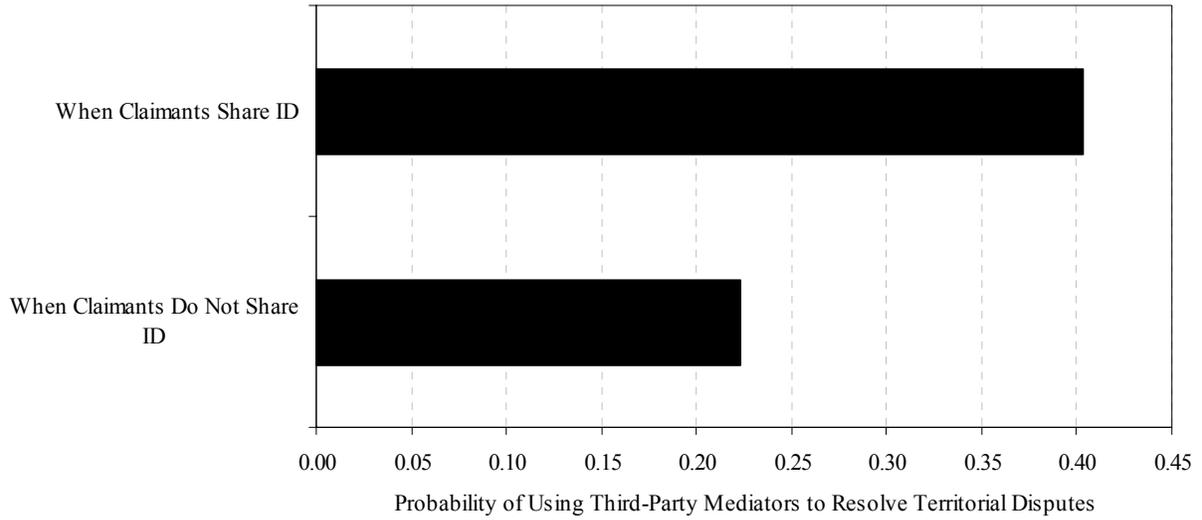
*Note:* Estimates are the marginal effects of shared identity on the likelihood of conflict resolution in Table 4, holding constant the effects of the remaining variables in the model. These estimates were calculated using the *mf* command in Stata 9.2.

**Table 5: The Influence of Shared Identity on the Decision to Utilize Third-Party Mediators**

<i>Independent Variables</i>	Logit Coefficient	Clustered Std. Error	P-Value (2-Tailed)
Claimants Share Either a Linguistic or a Religious ID	0.85	0.28	0.00
Salience of Claimed Territory	0.22	0.06	0.00
Recent Fatal Militarized Conflicts	0.69	0.29	0.02
Recent Failed Negotiation Attempts	0.15	0.12	0.19
Joint Democracy	-0.73	0.47	0.12
Challenger's Relative Capabilities	-0.65	0.39	0.09
<i>Constant</i>	-2.72	0.50	0.00
<i>Number of Cases</i>	535		
<i>Wald <math>\chi^2</math> (6 df)</i>	48.41		0.00

*Note:* Estimates are logit coefficients with robust standard errors (clustered by claims).

**Figure 4: Marginal Impact of Shared Identity on the Decision to Utilize Third-Party Mediation**



Notes: Estimates are the marginal effects of shared identity on the likelihood of claimants using third-party mediators in Table 5, holding constant the effects of the remaining variables in the model. These estimates were calculated using the *mf* command in Stata 9.2.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Hewstone et al. (2005) and Brewer (1999) for a review of the research on in-group/out-group bias, and Herrmann et al. (1997) for an application to international relations.

<sup>2</sup> For studies demonstrating how heightened identity salience can affect attitudes and behaviors more generally, see: Abrams (1994); Giles and Johnson (1987); Hinkle and Brown (1990); Hogg (1992); Turner, et al. (1987). The literature on “negotiating identity” (see Zartman 2001 for a brief but lucid introduction) considers identity in a similarly fluid light, but to our knowledge neither formalizes nor tests empirical hypotheses about the insights derived from this conception. Further, in our model a salient identity cleavage need not be resolved to end conflict.

<sup>3</sup> This echoes Bercovitch and Elgström (2001), who find that a common culture leads to more successful mediation. Our first hypothesis and its test extend their result to bilateral negotiations as well.

<sup>4</sup> Though the focus of our study is on conflict resolution, rather than on the choice to offer or accept mediation (as in Greig and Regan 2008), we briefly consider the role of mediator selection near the end of the paper.

<sup>5</sup> ICOW data collection for the remainder of the world is currently underway, but these are the two regions with the longest history of interaction between independent states, so they offer a great deal of useful insight over the two-century span of data collection.

<sup>6</sup> We only include efforts to settle the issue itself—this excludes what ICOW calls “functional” or “procedural” negotiations, which cover the usage of the claimed territory or set the stage for future talks, but which do not attempt to settle the question of sovereignty. We also consider an attempt to be successful if it ends contention over most but not all of the disputed issue, as occurs when an agreement settles all but a small portion of a territorial claim but further investigation or negotiation is needed for the last few square miles.

<sup>7</sup> Our notion of identity vectors is conceptually similar to what psychologists refer to as an individual’s self-concept, which refers to an individual’s awareness of self. The elements within an identity vector are analogous to the information comprising an individual’s self-concept.

<sup>8</sup> An unfortunate and xenophobic view of the world, to be sure.

<sup>9</sup> Always the comedian and social critic, Dave Chappell pokes fun at the idea of celebrities’ changing their racial and/or ethnic identity the way professional athletes switch teams. He envisioned that identity groups would bid for celebrities in a televised “racial draft” ([http://www.davechappelleonline.com/Racial\\_Drafts.shtml](http://www.davechappelleonline.com/Racial_Drafts.shtml)).

<sup>10</sup> The latter assumption on the form of the probability of a successful mediation is chosen only to make the example clear; Block and Siegel (2008) vary its functional form. Note that we do not include other ID weights in the example, as they do not alter the manifestation decision in question. We also do not explain whence the 0.6 arose. This paper is concerned only with *changes* in identity brought about via interpersonal interactions, and the initial values of the weights are therefore beyond its scope.

<sup>11</sup> In the long term, negotiation contexts provided by mediation diminish in power as disputants move away from them, implying that successfully mediated disputes may be prone to reoccur in the long term (for a similar argument, see Beardsley 2008, Betts 1999).

<sup>12</sup> We consider selection issues briefly later.

<sup>13</sup> Strictly speaking, our theory predicts that mediators who credibly manifest the shared ID during the mediation will be more effective than those who do not. However, to test this, we would need measures of the tactics used by the mediators, which the ICOW project has not collected. Thus, we use a proxy—the identity of the third party. This proxy should have validity given our theory, as third parties who share the relevant ID with the disputants should be able to manifest it more credibly. However, the proxy is not perfect, as we know neither whether they in fact tried to do so, nor even their probabilities of successfully doing so, as derived from their weights on that identity aspect.

<sup>14</sup> The first two elements are zero because in each case there is one party which places no weight on that ID. The third is 0.5 as it is the smaller weight of the two weights the parties ascribe to ID *c*.

<sup>15</sup> Consistency is important here, to avoid exacerbating the primary cleavages. Being able to manifest any of the primary divergent aspects is not helpful, and may even hurt the mediation. Note that, though a mediator “biased” toward one identity is not useful in our model, it might be beneficial for other, perhaps informational, reasons (Kydd 2003).

<sup>16</sup> Doing so requires two additional assumptions: 1) the representatives from each disputant in mediations and/or bilateral negotiations share the identity vectors of the ruling coalition in their nation; and 2) these representatives have been granted the power to end the dispute, either directly, or tacitly in that the ruling coalition will support their suggested resolution of the conflict.

<sup>17</sup> While it might be ideal to combine all Christians, all Muslims, etc., for the purpose of comparing broad religious groupings along the lines of Huntington's "clash of civilizations," there is very little variation in the regions for which we currently have ICOW data (more than 99% of the claims are between two predominantly Christian states).

<sup>18</sup> We consider only selection into mediation here, and not selection into territorial claims or selection into peaceful settlement attempts. We lack a theoretical foundation to model the former. As for the latter, shared ID appears to correlate negatively with seeking any sort of peaceful settlement. This suggests that, under the assumption that disputants would seek settlements more if they were known to work, disputants who share ID do not necessarily have an easier time resolving disputes *independently* of the process of negotiation. These results are available upon request.

<sup>19</sup> Table 5 includes two-tailed tests, as we have no theoretical justification for doing a one-tailed test in this case.

<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, joint democracy proves not to be a significant predictor of successful negotiations. It is significant only at the 12% level in determining what type of negotiation is used, and the coefficient points toward *less* use of mediation by democracies. Though we do not show this result, democracies do seek peaceful settlements of any type more often than non-democracies; thus they appear to be choosing a less effective mediation scheme, despite the potential for a "Democratic" ID. At this point we can only conjecture, but perhaps democracies have too much confidence in their ability to negotiate in the context of a shared democratic identity without outside aid. Put another way, a democratic identity may not be sufficiently strong to overcome the in-group/out-group dynamic without a third-party's help.

<sup>21</sup> This is particularly true for democratic nations, who might especially benefit from turning more to third parties, despite the notion that democracies by their nature are able to solve conflicts peaceably.