

Perceptions of Truth Commissions in Spain

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To what extent, if any, should truth be pursued long after conflict? Should the past be reopened or forgotten? Can different formats of truth commission alleviate concerns about reconciliation and polarization? Are perceptions driven more by justice considerations or political position?

Truth commissions are used for many purposes, including reconciliation within a country. Often, there is an assumption that more truth will bring more reconciliation. However, there is little empirical evidence that this is so. The proposed research will investigate a range of questions related to these issues through a survey experiment in Spain. Spain followed its transition with a “Pact of Forgetting” and there has been little formal investigation of the violence committed during the Civil War and the Franco era. This study tests whether different formats of truth commission impact on perceptions of reconciliation, polarization and trust in democracy and whether these perceptions are affected by political position. The study also tests perceptions on whether the past should be reopened. A number of experimental primes will be embedded in an original survey, which will ask various outcome questions.