

**Debra Javeline**, University of Notre Dame

### **Abstract**

The horrific 2004 hostage taking in Beslan, North Ossetia, was commonly predicted to provoke retaliatory violence by ethnic Ossetians against ethnic Ingush and Chechens. The hostage taking was not commonly predicted to inspire peaceful political activism. Using original survey data from 1,098 victims of Beslan, as well as journalistic and scholarly reports, we chronicle the surprisingly peaceful aftermath of Beslan. We explain why retaliatory violence and peaceful political activism might both have seemed justifiable to victims and the degree to which each type of response materialized. We then draw a portrait of who among the victims participated in politics and who supported retaliatory violence. We conclude that a lack of political alienation and the presence of social alienation, pessimism, and self-efficacy (as opposed to political efficacy) correlate highly with support for retaliatory violence. The presence of political alienation and anger, two supposedly undesirable traits, along with political efficacy and a history of prior activism, correlate highly with peaceful political responses to violence. Our findings suggest that a key to breaking the cycle of ethnic violence lies in an angry emotional response directed toward government.