



Variation in conflict outcomes and Their effect on social identification of group members, a web experiment

Maya Hadar

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Introduction

One of the most outstanding aspects of conflict is that it is practically intrinsic to the life and dynamics of groups; Conflict is present in interpersonal relations (e.g., Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993; Rice, 2013), in intragroup and intergroup relations (e.g., Gotsis & Kortezi, 2015) and in strategic decision-making (e.g., Hurt & Abebe, 2015). While a growing empirical literature estimates the (mostly negative) effects of conflict on later income, poverty, wealth, health, and education of individuals and groups¹, conflict can also give rise to beneficial effects on both individuals and societies (enhance group cohesiveness and unity, see for example (De Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997; O'Neill, McLarnon, Hoffart, Woodley, & Allen, 2015; Richard A. Posthuma, Ayub, & Jehn, 2014; M. E. Turner, 2014) and through which identity is constantly constructed and reconstructed identity (Caselli & Coleman, 2013).

It is long been known that in-group formation arises from processes of social categorization and the need for cooperative interdependence within groups². At the individual level, identification with in-groups is motivated by the need to belong and to participate in bounded cooperative social units. Once the self is attached to a distinctive in-group, additional motives to achieve positive valuation, maintain secure inclusion and protect in-group boundaries are engaged (Brewer, 2001). One of the most comprehensive theories of group relations is *social identity theory* (Emler & Hopkins, 1990; Tajfel, 1959; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This theory builds on some basic assumptions; Individuals strive to achieve positive self-esteem, an important part of an individual's sense of self comes from membership in social groups, and that values connotations associated with groups are the result of social comparisons between one's in group and a relevant out-group. Once a positive relationship between an individual and a group is formed, according to Heider's (1958) *balance formulation theory*, people who positively evaluate the group, will also evaluate the associated individual in a more positive way.

The context of real life conflict between groups has interesting characteristics that permit a close examination of some of the central assumptions in social identity theory. It has been maintained that identity's salience changes over time, both within the lifetime of individuals and in terms of wider societal perceptions; 'The raw materials from which identity is produced may be inherited from the past but they are also worked on, creatively or positively, reluctantly or bitterly, in the present' (Gilroy, 1997, p. 305). War, in particular, transforms and rigidifies that legacy; evidently, if one is threatened with death because of a particular identity, that identity becomes salient (Kaldor, 2013). This suggests that when individuals are confronted with an identity threat (for example, when war erupts between their home country and an adversary), an increase in social identity's saliency will be demonstrated.

The primary contribution of this study is in examining the effect of different conflict outcomes on group member's social identity saliency, national identity, sense of belonging as well as group

¹ Justino (2007, 2009) also surveys this literature.

² For example, see Sumner's structural functional theory of the origins of groups in the context of conflict over scarce natural resources (Sumner, 1906).

member's sense of community. Future research, aggregating these newly acquired insights is needed to further advance and expand the existing theories of social identification and their application in intergroup and intragroup conflicts.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

In a formal theoretical statement by Tajfel and Turner (1979, p. 40), self-esteem was explicitly referred to as a motivation behind intergroup behavior. This rests on the further assumption (based on social comparison theory) that "individuals strive to maintain or enhance their self-esteem: they strive for a positive self-concept". In addition, an individual's self-esteem could be plausibly associated with the esteem in which his or her group holds itself (Tajfel, 1981). It follows that groups compete, not just for material resources, but for anything which can enhance their self-definition: i.e., for positive social identity (D. E. Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Oakes & Turner, 1980; J. C. Turner, 1982). The problem here is that self-esteem is a relative state rather than an absolute one.

According to *Social identity theory*, one of the most comprehensive theories of group relations (Emler & Hopkins, 1990; Tajfel, 1959; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), an important part of an individual's sense of self comes from membership in social groups (i.e. social identity) which are positively or negatively valued. Values connotations associated with groups are the result of social comparisons between one's in group and a relevant out-group and as such, a positive social identity is only achieved if one's group is seen as being different from a relevant out-group in a favorable way³. In other words, the process of between-group differentiation is tied to objective measures that reflect success or failure (i.e. winning or losing a war). Notwithstanding controversies in early literature (Bradley, 1978; Miller, 1978; Miller & Ross, 1975; Weary, 1979), the relationship between Individual's identification with the group and group performance may well be mediated through biases such as taking undue credit for success (BIRGing) and deny responsibility for failure (CORFing).

Basking in Reflected Glory (BIRG; Cialdini et al., 1976) is a strategic impression management technique which enables individuals to raise their esteem in the eyes of others by publicizing their connection with a successful other (Hirt, Zillmann, Erickson, & Kennedy, 1992)⁴. Although it is understandable that people might wish to share in another's success when they have been instrumental to that success, the one who basks in the glory of another has done nothing tangible to bring about the group's success (i.e., citizens of a victorious country who live in the diaspora and did not contribute in any way to the war effort). Cialdini et al. (1976) argued that BIRGing

³ This tendency of a perceiver to accentuate differences between motivations from different categories is generalized from the perceptual to the social domain and referred to as *between group differentiations* (Tajfel, 1978). In social identity theory, this process is used to explain the clear distinctions that are often made between in-groups and out-groups (Hogg & Abrams, 1988).

⁴ In the sports realm, Cialdini et al. (1976) found that university students were more likely to wear school-identifying apparel on the Monday after a winning performance by their school's football team than after a losing performance. Students were also found to use the pronoun "we" more frequently when describing the outcome of a game in which their school's team had been victorious than when their school's team had lost.

involves a process of unit formation between the individual and the successful group. Tesser's self-evaluation maintenance model (1986, 1988) views the reflection process of BIRGing as an important means by which individuals maintain a positive self-concept. The tendency to BIRG has been found to be greatest when one's public image is threatened (Schlenker, 1980), for example, when facing a war or a violent conflict. The preceding analysis explains the "fair weather" Fan-ship observed when sport teams are successful (e.g., Becker & Suls, 1983; Cratty, 1983; Hirt et al., 1992) and lend support to the potential increase in group members' identification with the group following positively valuated group performance (for example, victory). In addition, research found that "high and equal power group members reported that they felt more comfortable, satisfied and happy than lower and no power group members about their group membership" (Sachdev & Bourhis, 1985, p. 430), whereas low status groups experiences lowered self-esteem (Sachdev & Bourhis, 1987).

H1: an increase in social identity's saliency among group-members will be demonstrated only following positively valuated group performance.

Consistent with the aforementioned *balance formulation theory*, an important corollary to the BIRGing phenomenon is individuals' active avoidance from being connected to, and attempting to distance themselves from unsuccessful or negatively evaluated others. Snyder, Higgins, & Stucky (1983), have labeled this phenomenon *Cutting off reflected failure* (CORFing) and argued that where BIRGing is an enhancement tactic, CORFing is an image protection tactic that allows the individual to avoid negative evaluations by others, resulting from association with unsuccessful people or group⁵. Consequently, individuals are motivated to proclaim their associations with others who are successful, and dissociate themselves from others who fail (Hirt et al., 1992). These contentions were supported by extensive literature⁶. While identifying with a group may affirm the individual's sense of self-worth (for example, by BIRGing in group's success), several theorists stressed the existence of unavoidable consequences and costs that the individual bears, in case of group's defeat (e.g., Edwards, 1973; Roberts, 1976). In light of the CORFing phenomenon, one might expect individuals to identify less or even disassociate themselves from their in-group following defeat.

H2: a decrease in social identity's saliency among group-members will be demonstrated following negatively valuated group performance.

⁵ Snyder, Lassegard, and Ford (1986) showed that Subjects involved in a successful group effort manifested more association with their group relative to a no-feedback control group, whereas subjects involved in a failed group effort showed less association with their group (relative to controls).

⁶ For example, research indicated that subjects are reluctant to transmit bad news to another because they want to avoid any association with the bad news and the negative evaluations that follow from that association. However, subjects were ready to transmit good news to others in order to embrace the resulting positive associations (Manis, Cornell, & Manis, 1974).

However, further scholarship addressing the consequences for the individual once an association with a group has been formed, suggests a more complex state of affairs; Individuals who have formed a strong unit relationship and therefore associate themselves with a specific group are not always free to dissociate themselves from that group. Social identity (ethnic belonging, group membership or Fanship in the sport realm⁷) constitutes an affiliation in which a substantial emotional significance and value are derived from group membership (cf. Abrams & Hogg, 1990). For many individuals, commitment to their identity as members of a particular group, constitutes an integral part of their self-identity (McCall & Simmons, 1966; Nuttbrock & Freudiger, 1991), and as such, they may see their group as an extension of their personal sense of self, and as a result, the group's performance reflects directly upon group members ((Hirt et al., 1992). While identifying with a group may affirm the individual's sense of self-worth (for example, by BIRGing in group's success), Taylor, Doria, & Tyler, (1983) suggested that in some cases, group members are not likely to detach themselves from their group even following defeat⁸; when group's identity is integral to the individual sense of self, the option of CORFing following poor performance of the group- may not exist (Hirt et al., 1992).

How can a positive identity be sustained when social comparisons are made with a clearly superior out-group (for example, following groups' defeat in a war)? No empirical work on the effects of group performance on individual's identification with the group has so far been framed within social identity theory and applied in the context of political science.

According to social identity theory, in order to cope with a threatened social identity, an individual may employ the following *social change strategies* (Tajfel & Turner, 1979): *Individual mobility*, involves an attempt to dissociate from the in-group and possibly to move into a higher status group, and is predicated on the belief that social mobility is possible and that group boundaries are permeable⁹ (the implementation of this strategy by group-members is indicated by H3). Two other strategies, *social creativity* and *social competition* are predicated on the belief that group boundaries are rigid and fixed. *Social creativity* involves cognitive behaviors such as comparing the in-group with the out-group on a new dimension of social comparison (Lalonde, Moghaddam, & Taylor, 1987; Lemaine, 1974), changing the values assigned to traditional dimensions of social comparison, or changing the out-group of social comparison (the implementation of this strategy by group-members is indicated by H4). *Social competition* is more collective in nature, and involves engaging in conflict with the advantages out-group in

⁷ Hirt et al. (1992) view fanship as representative of any of a number of important social identities to which individuals might ally themselves. It was suggested there that similar effects might be observed when positive and negative outcomes are experienced by any important social group or affiliation (e.g., a nation, political party, or ethnic group) with which the person has strong allegiance.

⁸ These findings were later confirmed, see for example Lalonde, 1992; Lalonde, Moghaddam, & Taylor, 1987.

⁹ While there are agents who are willing to endure the utmost sacrifices to stay true to their identity, evidence exists which confirms that in at least some cases individuals are able and willing to shed their identity to respond to external circumstances, particularly discrimination against one's group. For example, in post-Reform Europe, entire populations switched back and forth between Catholicism and Protestantism, as the political alliances of their princes switched back and forth between the Pope, the Emperor, and other potentates. In Fascist Italy many Jews converted to Catholicism to escape discrimination. In modern day India, some lower-caste Hindus convert to the Muslim or Catholic faiths, which are relatively less discriminated against (Caselli & Coleman, 2013).

order to reverse the positions of in-group and out-group. Among the aforementioned strategies, individual mobility and social competition are largely not viable options in the context of individual identification with countries and nations. Individual mobility would require members of the group to quite it¹⁰, and social competition is not applicable as an option since the group is already involved in a conflict. Thus, the only remaining option is social creativity. While Social identity theory assumes that members of a disadvantaged group in a social hierarchy cannot ignore their situation when they engage in social comparison process¹¹, group members must try to maintain positive in-group distinctiveness if they are to have some form of positive social identity, which is vital for maintaining their self-esteem. As mentioned, this could be achieved by sustaining superiority on an attribute that is unrelated to performance and by consciously ignoring certain information regarding group's performance in order to maintain a form of positive distinctiveness.

When self-categorization as a group member is salient, a person is influenced by group norms, behaves in line with those norms and shares the concerns and interests of the group. While any social categorization may be rendered salient in certain contexts, and need for a positive self-image may motivate subsequent intergroup behavior, it is also plausible that certain broader socio-psychological factors may effectively "fix" the level of social identification at the interpersonal place (D. Abrams & Hogg, 1988), for example, when self-identity and group identity are embedded in one another. In this analysis, self-esteem does not motivate high levels of social identification among group members and as such, poor group performance won't result in lower social identification levels among group members.

H3: no significant differences in identification levels among group-members will be demonstrated between positively and negatively valuated group performances.

How would individuals react if confronted with a situation of increasing/diminishing value of their group in the context of a real time conflict? Do individuals react differently to different conflict outcomes, depending on their group's performance? Building on social identity theory, the aforementioned strategies of coping with diminishing social identity and the concepts of BIRGing and CORFing, the current work aims at answering those questions by studying the variations in social identity's saliency among group members, generated by different conflict outcomes (victory, defeat, stalemate and agreement).

¹⁰ The psychological costs of giving up one's identity may vary with the nature of that identity. For example, in some cases passing from one group to the other may require religious conversion, while in others both origin and destination groups have the same religion. Abandoning one's religious identity may be more costly psychologically than abandoning other traits of one's cultural identity (Caselli & Coleman, 2013). Furthermore, some religions create physical markers, such as circumcision or scarring, that further increase the cost of passing.

¹¹ Members of a losing group could not ignore performance indicators and positive in-group distinctiveness could not be achieved on dimensions of social comparison that related to successful performance (denial).

Method

Participants

321 visits from unique IPs were reported on the introductory page of the experiment. 238 participants completed the experiment, out of which, only 124 provided a response to the information given to them during the initial phase of the experiment (“task 1”). A total of 120 participants provided sufficient data which was analyzed in the results’ section.

Procedure

The experiment was conducted via the Internet using WEXTOR, a platform for web experiments (Reips & Neuhaus, 2002). As part of the recruiting procedure, mainly done through social networks, potential participants were instructed to enter the web-experiment from different links, which resulted in four groups of participants; university students of any discipline excluding Political Science or Peace Research, students of Political Science or Peace Research, researchers/academics in the field of conflict research and others.

The introductory page of the experiment included a seriousness check in order to address the problem of non-serious answering behavior which increases noise and reduces experimental power (Aust, Diedenhofen, Ullrich, & Musch, 2013). Next, the participants were asked to provide information regarding their gender, age group and whether they lived in a country which experienced a war or conflict during the time of their presence (possible answers were yes/no/don’t know). All participants were presented with the following short passage:

“You are a citizen of the country of Narvia, a peaceful country situated in a galaxy far far away. Narvia is a beautiful country with an average temperature of 24 degrees Celsius, low unemployment rate, high life expectancy, successful economy and rainbows. Since Narvia is a small country, people are usually kind and friendly and enjoy camping, long walks by the beach and drinking bio-Narvia, Narvia’s most popular and beloved drink”.

Following reading of the above passage, participants were asked to write a short text, describing their life as citizens of the country of Narvia. Only data originated in participants who fulfilled the task by providing at least one relevant sentence were kept. The participants were then randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions, a conflict between the country of Narvia and a the country of Barekia with variations in its outcome (victory/defeat for Narvia, a stalemate or a ceasefire agreement). The conflict scenario itself was identical for all participants and included the following paragraph:

“Two years ago, a meteor made of pure gold fell from the sky, right on the border between Narvia and its’ neighboring country Barekia. Since both

countries wanted to keep the gold and could not agree on which side of the border the meteor fall, a war erupted”.

Together with the above description of the conflict, the participants were given additional information which related to the termination of the conflict following protracted and intense fighting (triggered by the random assignment). The “victory” group was presented with a scenario according to which the Narvian army managed not only to cease the meteor but also to conquer 15% of the territory of Barekia, including Barekia’s most fertile land. The “defeat” group was presented with the exact opposite scenario (victory of Barekia and conquering 15% of Narvia’s territory). The “agreement” group was presented with a scenario, according to which both countries decided to stop the fighting, to melt down the golden meteor and split the gold between them. Lastly, the “stalemate” group were given the information that both countries decided to stop the fighting since it was clear that no army is powerful enough to win the war, and that the meteor was then confiscated by the united federation of planets.

Following the conflict and the randomly assigned outcome, participants were presented with five statements. Using five levels Likert-type scaling¹², the participants were asked to grade their agreement with said statements on five points scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” (0) to “strongly agree” (5). The order of the statements was not manipulated. The statements were: “Narvia is my home”, “I don’t consider other Narvians as my friends”, “Staying in Narvia is important for me”, “I would like to see Narvia prospering”, and “I’m proud to be a Narvian”.

The independent variable was conflict’s termination type (victory, defeat, stalemate and agreement), whereas the dependent variables were the grading of agreement with the five aforementioned statements, concerning participants’ identity as Narvians, their sense of belonging to Narvia, and their feelings toward other Narvians.

Results and discussion

Participants

44.17% of the participants (n = 120) reported that they were female, 53.33% reported they were male, 2.5% did not report their gender. Participants were aged 20 to 69 with an estimated mean of 28.9¹³. 11.67% of the participant reported to be over 40 years old. 2.5% of the responders did not report their age.

¹² A Likert scale is a psychometric scale, most widely used to scale responses in survey research. A Likert scale refers only to a scale proper which emerges from collective responses to a set of items. When responding to a Likert questionnaire item, respondents specify their level of agreement or disagreement on a symmetric agree-disagree scale for a series of statements. Thus, the range captures the intensity of their feelings for a given item (Burns & Bush, 2008, p. 245).

¹³ As participants indicated their age group and not their actual age.

Experiment Design

In the experiment, participants were asked to imagine that they are citizens of Narvia, an idyllic made-up country, located in a different galaxy. The countries' description was purposely realistic and detailed so to enhance sympathy towards Narvia (whose name and characteristics were as neutral as possible in order to avoid being associated with any existing country). In order to assess the initial effect of the story on the participants and as an additional seriousness check, participants were asked to write a short text, describing their life as citizens of Narvia. More than half of the participants did not supply any answer whereas only a few other participants wrote a completely irrelevant text. As expected, this task vastly increased the number of drop-outs, yet the existing data is of high quality and is more than sufficient ($n= 120$) in order to test the aforementioned hypotheses, following the experiment's design. The texts were typically positive which corresponded with the bucolic way of describing Narvia in the experiment.

At the core of the experiment, subjects were presented with a conflict's scenario between their home-country Narvia and a neighboring country- Barekia over a golden meteor which landed on the border between the two (a classic conflict over resources). The conflict scenario was specially designed in order not to resemble any known conflict, but was not as farfetched as to prevent projection of the findings on real life conflicts and their effect on group members' feelings toward their group. The participants were then randomly assigned to one of four different conflict outcomes from the point of view of their home-country Narvia (defeat, victory, stalemate and agreement). With the intention of enhancing the differences between the aforementioned conflict outcomes (and consequently, their effect on the participants' answers in the following stage of the experiment), each type of conflict termination was described in a clear and distinct manner (for example, the victorious country did not only managed to cease the golden meteor but also conquered 15% of the defeated country's most fertile land). The "agreement" conflict termination's scenario was characterized by a joined consent of both belligerents to stop the war and to equally divide the gold between them. The "stalemate" outcome was also characterized by a joined consent of both countries to stop the fighting since it was clear that no army is powerful enough to win the war. The meteor was then confiscated by an external third entity (the united federation of planets).

National Identity and the Sense of Belonging

In an analysis of the effect variations in conflict outcome have on individual's sense of belonging to their country and on national identity, we conducted an ANOVA with participants' levels of agreement with statements 1,3 and 5 as the dependent variable across conditions (conflict outcomes: defeat vs. victory vs. agreement vs. stalemate). The three relevant statements ("Narvia is my home", "staying in Narvia is important to me" and "I'm proud to be a Narvian") addressed participants' sense of belonging, secure relationship and affinity to their country. Whereas statement 1 related to the existing relationship between the individual and his/her country,

statement 3 anticipated the future of this relationship. Statement 5 complemented the previous statements while addressing a higher and more emotional level of social identification- national pride (Sullivan, 2014).

In relation to statement 1, we observed a slightly significant effect, $F(3, 116)=3.79$, $p = 0.012$. A post-hoc Tukey test showed that the greatest difference value (0.857) was demonstrated between the “victory” and “agreement” groups¹⁴. In comparison, the former was almost double the difference between the “victory” and the “defeat” groups (0.449). In relation to statement 3, we observed a non-significant effect, $F(3, 116)=0.42$, $p = 0.741$. In relation to statement 5, we observed a non-significant effect, $F(3, 116)=1.50$, $p = 0.217$.

Figure 1 presents the plots of the agreement scores with the three statements across conditions. The dotted line marks the overall average scoring whereas the bold line marks the different average grade per condition.

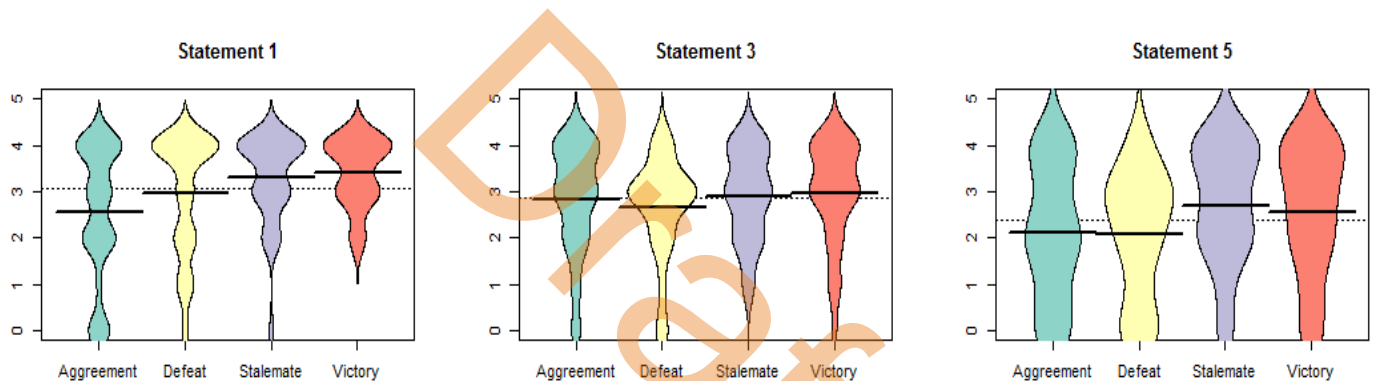


Figure 1. levels of agreement with statements 1, 3 and 5 across conditions

In large, conflict outcome did not significantly affect the level of agreement with the statements relating to group member’s sense of belonging to their country and to their national pride.

Sense of Community

The statement (“I don’t consider other Narvians as my friends”) addressed participants’ attitude other Narvians, members of their (in)group. Traditionally, people’s sense of safety and security has been viewed as related to one’s sense of belonging, that is, to the communion identity dimension. Belonging to a community has been argued to enhance one’s sense of safety in a world perceived as insecure (Bauman, 2001). Society is not a static structure, but rather an emerging entity generated and constituted by an ongoing process of “*sociation*” (Cederman & Daase, 2003; Simmel, 1908). In society, the dynamic of interaction is the living reality which

¹⁴ In addition, the largest difference in aggregated means in relation to the first statement across conditions was demonstrated between the “victory” group (3.406) and the “Agreement” group (2.548).

leads to the emergence and change of social constructs (Helle, 1988, p. 106). Interaction processes can be of many types, including exchange, conflict and domination, all depending on the specific situation. According to Simmel's conflict hypothesis, conflictual interactions between two groups of individuals often trigger a *sociational* dynamic. This not only strengthens the internal cohesion of pre-existing groups, or creates group consciousness where it did not exist prior to conflict. It also creates boundaries between the conflicting parties while connecting them as parts of a social configuration (Simmel, [1908] 1955). Since Simmel's conflict hypothesis did not relate to the conflict's outcome but to the mere existence of conflict (similarly to H1), we expected participants in all four conditions to report similar (and relatively high) levels of agreement with said statement. As other statements were positively phrased, we chose to phrase statement number 2 in a negative way¹⁵ and re-code it's scores.

In an analysis of the effect variations in conflict outcome have on the relationship between group members as a community, we conducted an ANOVA with participants' levels of agreement with statements 2 as the dependent variable across conditions (conflict outcomes: defeat vs. victory vs. agreement vs. stalemate). We observed a non-significant effect, $F(3, 116)=0.053$, $p = 0.98$. As demonstrated by Figure 2 and consistent with Simmel's conflict hypothesis, higher level of agreement with the above statement was found across conditions. The overall average score and the average score in the individual groups almost completely coincide across conditions. In comparison with the other three conditions, no participant in the "defeat" group indicated that he/she "strongly disagree" (0) or even "disagree" (1) with statement 2. This suggests that defeat hold a greater uniting power than any other conflict outcome. Future research should further investigate this interesting finding.

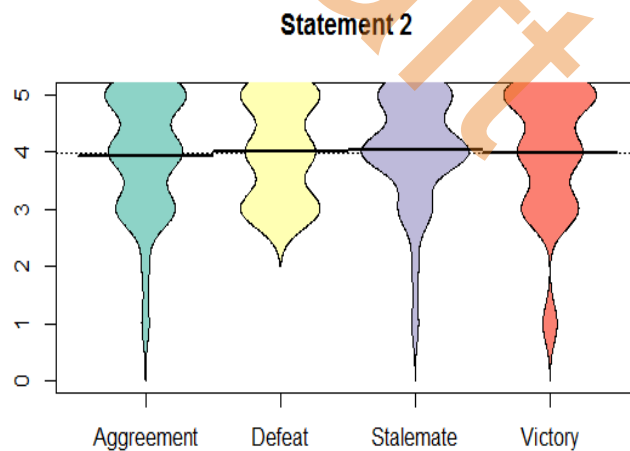


Figure 2. levels of agreement with statement 2 across conditions

¹⁵ Alternate between positive and negative wording is done in order to minimize extreme response bias and acquiescent bias (Sauro & Lewis, 2011).

Self and group relationship

The statement (“I would like to see Narvia prospering”) addressed participants’ attitude toward their country. As identification is depicted as caring about a group’s status, and in accordance with the behavioral evidence mentioned in the introduction, it can be expected that individuals will report higher levels of identification with a winning group (who enjoys higher payoffs and hence higher status), a notion consistent with H2. However, status is not the only factor determining identification. Consistent with H3, in some cases, we may observe strong identification of individuals with their low-status group, if their group identity is embedded in their self-identity and if they perceive their fate as “linked” to their group¹⁶.

In an analysis of the effect variations in conflict outcome have on the relationship between group members and the group, we conducted an ANOVA with participants’ levels of agreement with statements 4 as the dependent variable across conditions (conflict outcomes: defeat vs. victory vs. agreement vs. stalemate). We observed a non-significant effect, $F(3, 116)=0.109$, $p = 0.95$. As demonstrated by Figure 3, the data is consistent with H3 and contradicts H2. Similar to the analysis of statement 2, the overall average score and the individual groups’ average score are almost identical across conditions. In comparison with the other three conditions, no participant in the “defeat” group indicated that he/she “strongly disagree” (0) or even “disagree” (1) with statement 4. This finding is not surprising in light of the poor performance of the “defeat” group. It is also of interest to note that none of the participants in the experiment, regardless of the different conditions, indicated the highest level of agreement with the aforementioned statement.

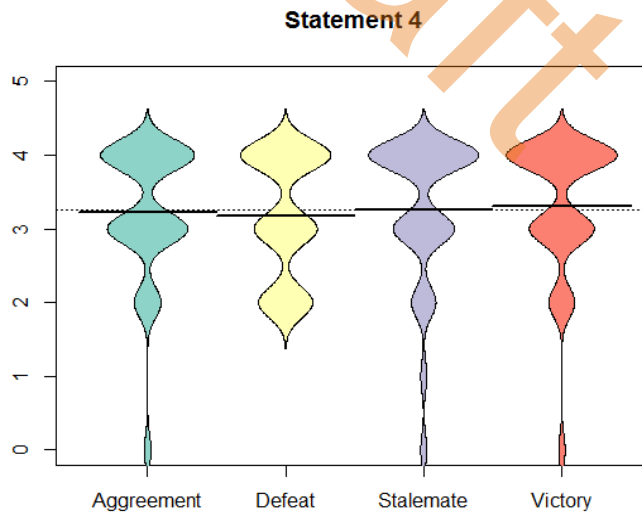


Figure 3. levels of agreement with statement 4 across conditions

¹⁶ The notion of “linked faith” is discussed by Dawson (1995).

Witnessing a conflict

Witnessing a conflict in participant's real life could be a confounding factor in estimating the effect variations in conflict outcomes have on social identification by group members. The participant's own experience of a national or international conflict which ended in a way unknown to us, may cognitively project on the described conflict and affect his/her answers in the experiment. As hundreds of intrastate and dozens of interstate conflict had taken place since the Second World War¹⁷, it was to be expected that individuals who had the potential of witnessing a violent conflict of any kind, will take part in the experiment. Thus, in the beginning of the experiment and together with ordinary demographic questions, participants were asked whether they lived in a country which experienced a war or conflict during the time of their presence. A staggering 48.18% of the participants positively answered the above question¹⁸. To control for base rate effects derived from witnessing a real-life conflict, we have repeated the analysis excluding data which was originated in the aforementioned participants. In an ANOVA conducted with participants' levels of agreement with all five statements, excluding participants who indicated witnessing a real-life conflict, the effect remain non-significant across all conditions and in relation to all statements¹⁹. Interestingly, when conducting the ANOVA analysis when excluding the participants who indicated not witnessing a conflict, a slight significance was spotted in relation to the first and fifth statements²⁰ ("Narvia is my home" and "I'm proud to be a Narvian") which were aimed at evaluating social identification in its' core.

Political Science, Peace research and the study of conflicts

Previous specific knowledge of political science and conflicts was also considered as a potential confounding factor in the experiment. Since participants were instructed to enter the web-experiment from different links, four source groups (university students of any discipline excluding Political Science or Peace Research, students of Political Science or Peace Research, researchers/academics in the field of conflict research and others) were created. We have conducted an ANOVA with participants' levels of agreement with the different statements as the dependent variable across conditions (conflict outcomes: defeat vs. victory vs. agreement vs. stalemate) and "source" affiliation of the participant. No significant effect of studying political science, peace research or being a professional in the research of conflicts was spotted. The overall analysis excluding the latter participants did not change the results of the main analysis.

¹⁷ According to PRIO Battle Deaths Dataset v.3.0 (Lacina & Gleditsch, 2005) and Human security report series.

¹⁸ This could be partially due to the fact that participants were recruitment using the Israeli author's Facebook page and the post was shared by several Israeli friends. Nevertheless, recruitment also included publishing the experiment in mailing lists of international researchers and in international political science and conflict research Facebook groups.

¹⁹ Statement 1: $F(3, 55)=1.202$, $p = 0.317$, Statement 2: $F(3, 55)=0.285$, $p = 0.835$, Statement 3: $F(3, 55)=0.981$, $p = 0.408$, Statement 4: $F(3, 55)=0.097$, $p = 0.960$, Statement 5: $F(3, 55)=1.710$, $p = 0.175$.

²⁰ Statement 1: $F(3, 56)=0.394$, $p = 0.0549$, Statement 5: $F(3, 56)=2.237$, $p = 0.093$.

Limitations and future research

According to Tajfel (1978), an increase in social category salience is likely to move interpretations of behavior closer to the intergroup end of the interpersonal-intergroup behavior continuum and, as a result, make individuals more likely to engage in group-oriented behaviors. Tajfel believed that, in a social situation, one feature that will facilitate its interpretation at an intergroup level of analysis is the extent to which the individual has an emotional investment in the categorization process. Consequently, it is safe to assume that the effect of different conflict outcomes on social identification is mitigated by social category salience. The low statistical significance of our findings can, therefore, be attributed, *inter alia*, to the fact that both groups (Narvians and Barakias) had no real meaning outside of the experiment. In addition, real intergroup behavior seems most often to be based on factors such as the distribution of wealth and power, material resources, the nature of goal relations between groups and religious or political values²¹ and not on group performance as mitigated by individual's self-esteem. Predicated on past research (e.g., Lalonde & Silverman, 1994) and on social identity theory, we would expect to witness a more significant effect in a replicating experiment in which the participants are assigned to a more meaningful group or real social category²².

Moreover, since social identification levels of the participants upon describing of Narvia and prior to the mentioning of the conflict were not measured, there is no knowing of the baseline level of social category salience among participants to which post conflict identification levels should be compared to. Therefore, any replication of the experiment should probably incorporate a categorization condition for baseline and/or control, in order to address these issues.

While the current research focused the effect of variation in conflict outcomes on individual feelings (social and group identity), future research may address the behavioristic aspect of group performance on individuals in political science context. Moreover, since the measurement took place in close proximity with the termination of the conflict, the duration of the effect of variation in conflict outcomes has on social identification among group members is unknown. The issue of how long lasting these effects are, is influenced by conflict outcomes. First, the duration of these changes in fans' perceived self-competence is unknown. Thus, the issue of how long lasting these effects are, should be included in future study.

²¹ For a review of relevant research, see D. Abrams & Hogg, 1988.

²² A meta-analysis of research addressing in-group bias also serve to buttress the expectation that social identity salience will facilitate group directed behavior; Mullen, Brown, and Smith (1992) found that in-group bias effects were stronger in magnitude in studies that focused on real groups than in studies using artificial groups. Mullen et al. believed that this effect is due to the greater salience of the in-group in real as opposed to laboratory-created categorizations (Lalonde & Silverman, 1994).

Conclusions

This experiment has shown that (1) there is no significant effect of variation in conflict outcomes on social identification level, as the latter relate to group members' relation with the group, sense of community, sense of belonging, national identity and self and group relationship. (2) A low significant effect was detected in the analysis of participants' levels of agreement with statements 1 as the dependent variable across conditions (conflict outcomes: defeat vs. victory vs. agreement vs. stalemate). A post-hoc Tukey test showed that the greatest difference value (0.857) was demonstrated between the "victory" and "agreement" groups and not between the "victory" and the "defeat" groups as suggested by previous literature based on the effect of group performance on group identification. (3) The Data supported the hypothesis according to which poor performance (in comparison with superior performance) did not result in a lower social identification levels among group-members.

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