Perceived Out-Group (Dis)Continuity and Attribution of Responsibility for the Lebanese Civil War Mediate Effects of National and Religious Subgroup Identification on Intergroup Attitudes

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Abstract

Successful reconciliation between groups following a violent conflict requires psychological change. We test a model predicting intergroup attitudes towards Muslims in Lebanon among Maronite (Christian) Lebanese youths. Identification with both their religious subgroup and with the superordinate national group predicted attitudes towards Muslims, in opposite directions. These effects of levels of identification on intergroup attitudes were mediated by attributions of responsibility for the war (Muslim responsibility) and perception that the current generation of out-group members is different from the war generation (perceived out-group discontinuity). Identification with Lebanon fosters positive attitudes towards Muslims by lowering Muslim responsibility for the war, and by increasing perceptions of foreign responsibility and perceived out-group discontinuity. In contrast, increased identification with their own religious subgroup undermines attitude change by increasing Muslim responsibility for the war and lessening perception of out-group discontinuity. Representations of the past have implications for attitudes towards former enemies and reconciliation in the present.

Even though the guns cease firing after a civil war, it does not necessarily mean that intergroup conflict is over or that peace between the factions will be achieved. It may only represent the starting point of a long process that *could* lead to lasting peace, although the resurgence of the conflict and a return to violence remain a possibility.

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Among the many possible outcomes following a violent conflict, reconciliation is the most important and perhaps the most difficult step towards peace. Reconciliation between the conflicting parties is especially difficult to achieve 'because it asks for a deep cognitive change, a real change of beliefs, ideology, and emotions not only among the ruling elites but also among most if not all sectors of both societies' (Bar-Siman-Tov, 2000, p. 237). In other words, to attain lasting peaceful relations between former enemies, psychological changes are required in members of both groups (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004). In Kelman's model (2004, 2008), reconciliation is seen as a process of identity change, with the primary feature being 'the removal of the negation of the other as a central component of one's own identity' (Kelman, 2004, p. 119). Indeed, Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1999), in his work with the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, argued that reconciliation between civil groups with a history of conflict requires the creation of a shared and inclusive national identity. Since the end of World War II, civil conflicts have become, by far, the most pervasive type of violent conflict in the world, so that, in the 1990s, the ratio of civil war to international conflicts was 5 to 1 (Brecke, 1999). This means there is much scope for applying a model of intergroup reconciliation based on the redefinition of social identities to understand the means by which intergroup relations can be improved following a violent civil conflict.

(Re)defining collective identities: social categorization processes

According to self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987), the cognitive process of self-definition is a fundamental determinant of judgment and behavior towards others, with those differing depending on how the self and others are defined. From this perspective, social categorizations are hierarchically organized, with more inclusive identity levels including those who might be defined as out-group members at less inclusive levels. Categorizing at the social identity level has

consequences for how groups are cognitively represented as well as for attitudes towards those others. Because people seek to achieve a positively distinct social identity, they will engage in inter-group comparisons that favor the in-group on relevant dimensions (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). So, when people self-categorize at the social identity level, they tend to favor their in-group and, under conditions of threat, they are likely to derogate relevant out-groups (Branscombe & Wann, 1994; Brewer, 1999; Riek, Gaertner, Dovidio, Brewer, Mania, & Lamoreaux, 2008; Turner, 1999). As a consequence, categorizing at the group level is likely to perpetuate intergroup conflict, while categorizing at a more inclusive level favors harmonious relationships among members of different groups. Likewise, according to Gaertner and Dovidio's (2000) Common In-group Identity Model, recategorizing group members into a more inclusive superordinate category should help lessen intergroup conflicts occurring at the subgroup level. Indeed, this hypothesis has received confirmation in various experimental studies involving minimal groups as well as different racial groups in American school settings (Dovidio, Gaertner, John, Halabi, Saguy, Pearson, & Riek, 2008).

Wohl and Branscombe (2005) applied this model of categorization to an intergroup situation where the historical victimization still affects current intergroup relations: the attitudes of Jews and their behavioral responses towards contemporary Germans. They showed that Jewish participants assigned less collective guilt to contemporary Germans, and were more willing to forgive Germans, in the inclusive human identity condition compared to when the oppositional ethnic group categorization was salient. The same results were obtained with Native Canadian participants; in the human identity condition, White Canadians were forgiven more and they were assigned less collective guilt for their group's harm to the in-group than when self-categorization had been induced at the ethnic subgroup level.

The contention that categorization at the human level—as a superordinate inclusive category—will result in more positive attitudes toward the

out-group because they come to be seen as more similar to the in-group can be extended to other instances of superordinate groups (Azzi, 1998). Indeed, Noor and colleagues (Noor, Brown, Gonzalez, Manzi, & Lewis, 2008; Noor, Brown, & Prentice, 2008) recently showed that national identification had positive effects on intergroup forgiveness between left-wingers and right-wingers in Chile and between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, whereas identification with subgroups had the opposite effect. Similarly, Čehajić, Brown and Castano (2008) found a positive relation between superordinate identification and intergroup forgiveness among Bosnians.

In the current research, we address, using the Lebanese case, whether greater identification with the superordinate category—the nation, Lebanon—results in more positive attitudes towards Lebanese Muslims, and whether degree of identification with their subgroup— i.e., participants' own religious community, Maronites—results in more negative attitudes towards out-group members—Lebanese Muslims. We also assess why differential identification with the subgroup versus superordinate group affects intergroup attitudes. We propose that, in real post-conflict intergroup situations such as Lebanon, the effect of these different levels of identification on intergroup attitudes will be mediated both by attributions of responsibility for the war and by perceptions of the out-group as continuous or temporally different from out-group members of the past.

Attributions of responsibility for the war

According to Liu and Hilton (2005), 'Representations of history help to define the social identity of peoples, especially in how they relate to other peoples and to current issues of international politics and internal diversity' (p. 537). However, some representations of the past are more crucial than others in terms of their ability to facilitate or impede reconciliation. Those relating to the attribution of responsibility for the conflict are particularly important

(Rosenberg & Wolfsfeld, 1977). Specifically, reconciliation can be facilitated by examining 'what has generated violence in the course of two groups' history with each other' to the extent that it leads to 'acknowledging and taking responsibility for actions of one's own group, without the usual justifications' (Staub, 2003, p. 14). Examination of a shared violent past is not, however, without its pitfalls (Licata, Klein, & Gély, 2007). To the extent that doing so leads group members to see themselves as the victims and the other group as the perpetrator, it is likely to have a negative effect on intergroup relations (Bar-Tal, Chernyak-Hai, Schori, & Gundar, 2009; Devine-Wright, 2003; Wohl & Branscombe, 2008). We hypothesize that perceiving the subnational out-group as responsible for the past civil war will legitimize negative attitudes of contemporary in-group members toward contemporary out-group members. Accordingly, those who are most highly identified with their subgroup should be most likely to subscribe to this attribution for the past conflict, while those who are most highly identified with the superordinate national group should be least likely to attribute the conflict to the out-group.

In the case of a civil war, other kinds of responsibility attributions for the conflict are usually available: foreign states are often involved in civil conflicts e.g., by providing direct or indirect support to one of the parties. Attributing the civil war to foreign states should result in a depiction of both the subnational in-group and the out-group as victims of foreign states, which should positively impact intergroup attitudes. We expect that identifying with the national group will promote more positive attitudes towards subnational out-group members, to the extent that outside forces are seen as responsible for the conflict. In contrast, identification with one's own subgroup should be less strongly related to perceiving a role of foreign groups in the past conflict because, according to self-categorization theory, categorizing at one level should influence perceptions and attitudes towards out-groups at the same level, not toward out-groups at more inclusive levels of categorization. We test the relative influence of

subordinate and superordinate group identification on intergroup attitudes, and assess the extent to which those relationships are mediated by the attributions that are made for the past conflict, either to the subnational out-group or to foreign powers (i.e. superordinate out-groups).

Are contemporary out-group members different from those in the civil war?

Self-categorization theory has thus far focused on how the self and others are categorized in the present. However, because we are interested in the consequences of the past for intergroup relations in the present, it is necessary to consider whether people perceive the present out-group as identical to its past incarnations (i.e., during the war). Perceived collective continuity has been theorized, but only with regard to *in-group* perception (Sani, Bowe, Herrera, Manna, Cossa, Miao, & Zhou, 2007). For example, the more people perceive their national or regional in-group as continuous through time, the more they perceive the in-group as an entity, identify with it, and experience positive collective self-esteem (Sani, Bowe, & Herrera, 2008). We propose that perceiving the *out-group* as continuous across time has implications for post-conflict intergroup relations. When contemporary out-group members are perceived as basically the same as their ancestors who fought in the war, it may legitimize negative intergroup attitudes, whereas perceiving them as different from their ancestors should encourage positive intergroup attitudes. In line with this argument, Wohl and Branscombe (2005) found that Jewish participants tended to perceive contemporary Germans as more different from Germans who lived during WWII when their superordinate identity as humans was salient compared to when their Jewish identity was salient. In a post-civil war setting, stronger identification with one's own subnational group and with the superordinate national group should affect the perceived continuity of the out-group in opposite ways. Subnational group identification

should facilitate perception of the out-group as historically continuous, which in turn should result in more negative attitudes towards out-group members. Conversely, greater identification with the superordinate national group should result in more perceived discontinuity in the out-group across time, which in turn should result in more positive attitudes towards subnational out-group members.

Hypotheses

In line with self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987), we posit that who is included (and excluded) from the in-group depends on the level of category inclusiveness, and this has consequences for attitudes toward former enemy subgroup members. Specifically, we focus on the processes at work in reconciliation by considering the effects of subgroup and superordinate group identification among current members of one of the conflicting parties on their attitudes towards out-group members. We predict that stronger superordinate group identification (i.e., the nation) will lead to more benevolent attitudes towards current members of a past enemy subgroup. Conversely, we predict that stronger identification with one's own subgroup (i.e., the religious community) will lead to more negative intergroup attitudes.

Further, we investigate the role of attributions of responsibility for the past conflict. These attributions are likely to vary as a function of the degree of identification with the superordinate and subordinate group, thus yielding differential attitudes toward current out-group members. We predict that subgroup identification will lead to more attribution of responsibility for the past conflict to the subordinate out-group whereas identification with the superordinate in-group will lead to less attribution of responsibility to the subordinate out-group, but to more attribution of responsibility to superordinate out-groups— foreign powers. We also predict that perception of the subordinate out-group as continuous or discontinuous should vary as a function of the degree of identification with the superordinate

and subordinate group: identification with the subordinate in-group should result in perceptions of the subordinate out-group as continuous, whereas identification with the superordinate group should result in perceptions of the contemporary subordinate out-group as different from the civil war generation.

We also predict that attributions of responsibility for the civil war and perceptions of out-group continuity will mediate the effects of identification with the subordinate and superordinate in-group (but in opposite directions) on intergroup attitudes. Attribution of responsibility to foreign powers (superordinate out-groups) should mediate the effect of identification with the superordinate group on intergroup attitudes. Finally, perceptions of out-group continuity should mediate the effects of identification with the subgroup, and of identification with the superordinate group, in opposite directions.

To test these hypotheses, we examine one particular, yet emblematic, example of a violent civil conflict: the Lebanese civil war (1975–90). We present results from a study conducted among Lebanese Maronites—the largest Lebanese Christian community—that assesses their self-definitions as Maronites and as Lebanese, their attributions of responsibility for the civil war, and their perceptions and attitudes towards Lebanese Muslims, their former enemies.

The Lebanese Civil War

During the period between independence from France in 1943 and 1975, Lebanon was a frequently cited example of inter-faith coexistence and cooperation in a region haunted by violence. But, on 13 April 1975, skirmishes between Christian gunmen and Palestinian factions led to a large-scale conflict that engulfed all of the Lebanese communities (Abul-Husn, 1998; Corm, 1986; Salibi, 1988). The Taïf agreement, signed in October 1989, officially put an end to a war that left over 100,000 people dead and millions displaced. Various groups were involved via organized militias: of the 17 Lebanese religious communities, Maronites, Druzes and Sunni

Muslims were the first to be involved via community-based armed militias, and were joined later on by Shiite Muslim militias.

In March 1991, soon after the Taïf agreement, the parliament passed an amnesty law covering most 'political' crimes committed in the war. According to the Amnesty Law, 'real' justice was deemed impossible—too many events to account for, too many groups involved. Therefore, the law officially claimed that each community was equally guilty, and that they should forgive each other; its slogan was 'la ghalib, la maghloub' (no winner, no loser), i.e., no group was assigned the status of victim or perpetrator of the war. As a consequence, even though there is normative pressure towards reconciliation, each group may see itself as a victim and attribute the responsibility for the war to out-groups.

Maronites form the main Christian community in Lebanon. The main issue that divides Maronites from other Lebanese communities is their desire to maintain a distinction between Lebanese and Arab identities (Levin, Henry, Pratto, & Sidanius, 2003). Thus, unlike other Lebanese subgroups, the main sources of social identification for Maronites are their subordinate—religious—identity (Christian Maronite) and their superordinate—national—identity (Lebanese) (Joseph, 2004). This is the reason why we collected data among members of this particular Lebanese subgroup.

Although it is often presented as a religious conflict, the Lebanese war cannot be reduced to that dimension alone: Economic and political causes, as well as historical and geographic ones, played a role in leading to that conflict and making it last so long (Corm, 1986). Nevertheless, the conflict is usually remembered as opposing Muslims and Christians only. In the eyes of the Christian Maronites, the causes of this conflict could easily be attributed to Lebanese Muslims i.e., to an out-group at the subordinate level.

However, there were also a number of organized armed groups associated with the different Palestinian factions based in camps across Lebanon, as well as various regional states who were involved militarily, either directly or

indirectly, namely Israel and Syria. The Syrian army entered Lebanon in 1976 and only left Lebanon in April 2005, following a UN resolution, and a wave of mass protests that occurred after the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. In 1978, the Israeli army occupied a large part of southern Lebanon, and withdrew in 2000. As a consequence, the cause of the civil war can also be reasonably attributed to out-groups at the superordinate level, i.e., non-Lebanese groups.

Whereas intercommunity animosity did not disappear after the conflict's settlement, Lebanese people were generally keen to avoid the resurgence of violence. Indeed, Azar, Mullet and Vinsonneau's (1999) research revealed high levels of willingness to grant forgiveness to Muslims for war crimes and strong rejection of revenge among members of various Christian Lebanese communities. Azar and Mullet (2002) also found generally convergent worldviews on political issues across Lebanese religious groups. These results suggest that, although the Lebanese situation is extremely complex, there is room for hope.

In this article, we aim to identify some of the factors that facilitate or impede reconciliation in this context. To the best of our knowledge, the mediating effects of attribution of responsibility for a past conflict and of perception of out-group continuity on the relation between subordinate and superordinate identification and intergroup attitudes have never been investigated.

Method

Participants

Some 151 Lebanese students completed our internet-based study. Only fully completed questionnaires were recorded; 49 questionnaires from various non-Maronite students were eliminated. The final sample therefore comprised 102 Maronite participants (47% males, 44% females, and 9% did not indicate their gender). Their average age was 24 years (SD = 5.47). Participants were recruited at an English-speaking university located in a Christian neighborhood of Beirut, thanks to the Director of the Alumni Affairs

office, who sent them a link to our questionnaire. Participants completed the questionnaire on a voluntary basis. The data were collected between April and June 2005, which is shortly after Former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and 23 members of his escort were assassinated on 14 February 2005. Thus, the data were collected at the peak of the anti-Syrian movement.

Procedure

Participants completed online a survey concerning their perceptions of intergroup relations in Lebanon. Degree of identification with the Maronite community and Lebanon as a whole was assessed first, followed by their attitudes towards Muslims, attributions of responsibility for the war, and perceptions of out-group continuity. Participants expressed their degree of agreement with the items by clicking on buttons ranging from 1 to 8, with response option labels ranging from 'Definitely disagree' to 'Definitely agree'. Each new item appeared on the screen after the previous one had been completed. After completion of the measures, participants were debriefed.

Materials

Identification   Four items, selected from the collective identification scale developed by Brown, Condor, Mathews, Wade, and Williams (1986), measured participants' degree of identification with the Maronite community, and then the same four items were used to assess degree of identification with Lebanon: 'My identity as a Maronite/Lebanese is very important to me'; 'Being Maronite/Lebanese is an important reflection of who I am'; 'I feel strong ties with other Maronites/Lebanese'; and 'I identify with other Maronite/Lebanese people.'

Intergroup attitudes   Six items, inspired by Wohl and Branscombe (2005), assessed participants' contact-relevant attitudes towards Muslims: 'I could be a close friend with a Muslim

person'; 'I would feel comfortable having a conversation with a Muslim person'; 'I would like to share Ramadan's meals'; 'I would like to visit Muslims' quarters'; 'I would like to attend Muslim wedding parties'; and 'Maronites should be willing to engage in business activities with Muslims.'

Attributions of responsibility We created three items to assess attributions of responsibility to Muslims: 'Muslims are responsible for the Lebanese war'; 'The Muslims always wanted to get rid of the Christians in Lebanon, so what they did during the war was predictable'; and 'The civil war happened because it is in the nature of Muslims to attack the Maronites.' Four items addressed attributions of responsibility to external powers, either in general terms—'The Lebanese civil war was a plot of foreign powers'—or with reference to relevant foreign powers—'The Lebanese civil war was exacerbated by Syrian political leaders'; 'The Lebanese civil war was due to the manipulations of Syrian political leaders'; and 'The Lebanese civil war was a consequence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.' Finally, one item measured attribution of responsibility to the ingroup: 'Maronites are responsible for the Lebanese civil war.'

Perception of out-group continuity Three items, adapted from Wohl and Branscombe (2005), explicitly asked participants whether they perceive a difference between today's Muslims and Muslims of the war generation: 'Today's young Muslims are fundamentally different from Muslims of the war generation'; 'Young Muslims today and Muslims of the war generation are basically the same' (reverse-scored); and 'I make a distinction between young Muslims and Muslims of the war generation.'

Results

Identification

Two identification scores were constructed by averaging the items assessing identification with the national group, Lebanese (α = .94) and identification with the religious subgroup, Maronites (α = .90). See Table 1 for means, standard deviations, and correlations. On average, Lebanese identification was stronger than Maronite identification; t (98) = 5.34; p < .001. These two levels of identification were significantly correlated, although the positive relationship was somewhat low.

Table 1. Correlations between measured variables

	Maronite ID	Lebanese ID	Muslim resp	Foreign resp	Maronite resp	Out-group discont	Intergroup attitudes
Maronite identification	6.57 1.52						
Lebanese identification	.27**	7.42 1.04					
Muslim responsibility	.48**	−.26**	4.06 1.46				
Foreign responsibility	.25*	.35**	.08	6.74 1.34			
Maronite responsibility	.19†	−.03	.21*	−.05	3.63 1.66		
Out-group discontinuity	−.33**	.21*	−.38**	.16	−.14	5.21 1.31	
Intergroup attitudes	−.18†	.34*	−.45**	.38*	−.29**	.52**	6.35 1.32

Note: Means and standard deviations. are reported in the main diagonal. $^\dagger p$ < .07 *p < .05 **p < .01.

Intergroup attitudes

We constructed an intergroup attitude scale by averaging the six items referencing Muslims (α = .94). A principal components analysis yielded a single factor, with all items loadings greater than .75.

Attributions of responsibility

We first ascertained whether participants differentiate between Muslims and external powers in their attributions of responsibility for the Lebanese Civil War, rather than treating both as a single out-group. We first conducted a principal components analysis, using Varimax rotation, on all 8 responsibility items (the 3 concerning Muslim responsibility, the 4 concerning foreign powers, and the single item assessing Maronite responsibility). As expected, three distinct factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 emerged. The four items loading on the first factor assessed responsibility assignment to foreign powers, explaining 47% of the variance in the items; all factor loadings were > .65. Scores on these items were averaged to form a 'Foreign responsibility' score (α = .90). The three items loading on the second factor assessed Muslim responsibility for the war and explained 26% of the variance in the items. These items were averaged to form a 'Muslim responsibility' score (α = .71). Because the items assessing foreign and Muslim responsibility formed separate factors, these two targets of responsibility for the civil war appear to have been clearly differentiated by participants. As expected, the in-group attribution of responsibility item was the only item that loaded on the third factor, explaining 11% of the variance in the items.

Perception of out-group discontinuity

The three items assessing out-group discontinuity were averaged to form a single scale (α = .75).

Correlations among the measures

As shown in Table 1, all of the measures were moderately associated with intergroup attitudes. As expected, Maronite and Lebanese identification were correlated in opposite directions with attributions of responsibility for the civil war to Muslims, perceptions of out-group discontinuity, and intergroup attitudes. Both levels of identification correlated positively with attributions of responsibility to foreign powers, although the association with Lebanese identification is stronger than with Maronite identification.

Multiple Regression and Path Analyses

Our first hypotheses were that national superordinate identification and religious subgroup identification would exert opposite effects on intergroup attitudes. A multiple regression analysis using both levels of identification as predictors of intergroup attitudes indicated that this was indeed the case. As shown in Table 2, Lebanese identification seemed more strongly predictive of positive attitudes than Maronite identification was predictive of negative attitudes.

A path analysis was carried out to test the remaining hypotheses, using EQS 6.1 (Multivariate Software, 2001). Our initial model included all indirect paths only. This means that the direct paths from identification to intergroup attitudes were fixed at zero. This model tests whether Lebanese and Maronite identification jointly influence intergroup attitudes through their

Table 2. Multiple regression: predicting intergroup attitudes by level of identification

	B	Std. Error	β	p
Maronite identification	−.27	.08	−.30	.002
Lebanese identification	.52	.12	.42	.000

Note: R^2 = .19.

impact on perceptions of Muslim Responsibility (with Muslims being perceived as more responsible to the extent that Maronite identification was high and Lebanese identification low), Perceptions of Foreign Responsibility (which should increase as a function of Lebanese identification) and Perceptions of out-group discontinuity (which should decrease as a function of Maronite identification and increase as a function of Lebanese identification).

This fully mediated model yielded a satisfactory fit ($\chi^2(6) = 8.30$, $p = .21$, NFI = .95, NNFI = .96, CFI = .98, GFI = .98, RMSEA = .06) to the data (Kline, 1998), accounting for 45% of the variance in intergroup attitudes towards Muslims among Maronite participants. However, as expected, the path coefficient from Maronite identification to Foreign responsibility was not significantly different from zero ($\beta = .17$, $p = .09$). This model is shown in Figure 1.

In order to ensure that the Muslim and Foreign Responsibility measures and perceptions of out-group discontinuity could be considered as jointly mediating the influence of identification on intergroup attitudes, we specified another model that included both of the direct paths from the identification variables to intergroup attitudes. Doing so did not reliably increase the fit of the model, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 2.36$, ns, and neither of the direct effect coefficients were significantly different from 0 (βs= $-.036$ for Maronite identification and .086 for Lebanese identification).

To provide a more fine-grained analysis of this model, we considered indirect effects through the bootstrapping procedure recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2008). To take into account the presence of the two forms of identification, the effect of each independent variable was assessed while entering the other as a covariate. The direct effect of Lebanese identification on
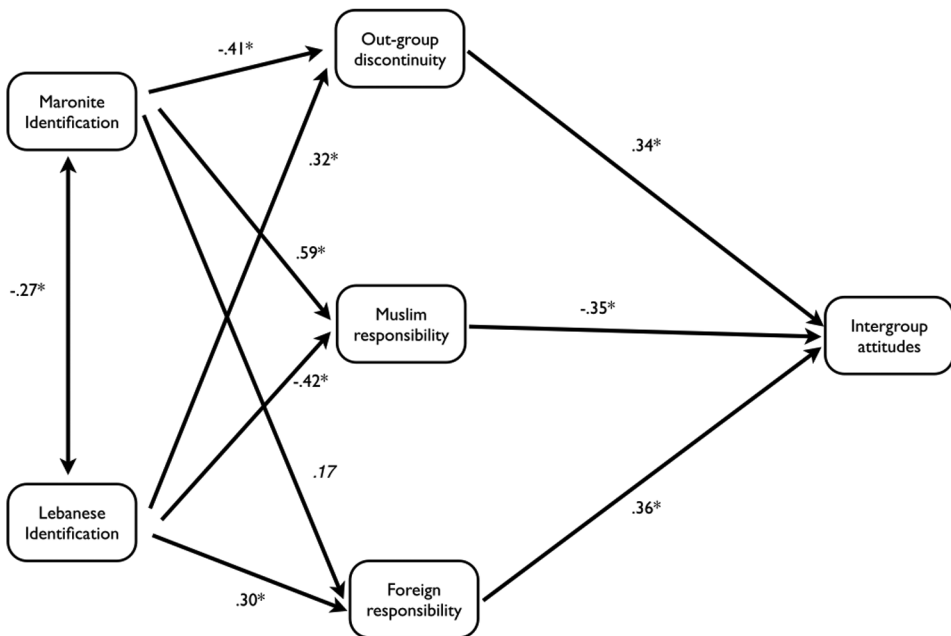

Figure 1. Path analytic model of intergroup attitudes predicted by Maronite identification and Lebanese identification, with perception of out-group discontinuity, attributions of responsibility for the war to Muslims, and attributions of responsibility for the war to Foreign powers as mediators. Values are standardized regression coefficients. The covariance between the two identification scores was set to its actual value.
Note: *p < .05.

Intergroup attitudes was significant (b = .52, $t(97)$ = 4.41, $p < .001$) as were the indirect effects for the three mediators. This was indicated by bias corrected confidence intervals above 0 at $\alpha = .05$ using 1000 Bootstrap resamples: b = .13, CI between .03 and .27 for Out-group discontinuity, b = .16, CI between .035 and .30 for Muslim responsibility and b = .13, CI between .02 and .34 for Foreign Responsibility. When controlling for the mediators, the direct effect became nonsignificant (b = .10, $t(94)$ = .38, $p = .71$).

With respect to Maronite identification, the direct, unmediated, effect was reliable as well (b = −.25, $t(97)$ = 3.11, $p < .02$). The indirect effect of Maronite identification through Muslim responsibility (b = −.16, CI between −.27 and −.04) and Out-group discontinuity (b = −.22, CI between −.23 and −.04), but not Foreign Responsibility (b = .04, CI between −.01 and .13), were significant (α = .05 using 1000 Bootstrap resamples). The direct effect of Maronite identification became nonsignificant (b = −.03, $t(95)$ = −.36, $p = .71$) when the effects of Muslim responsibility and out-group discontinuity were controlled.

Finally, we tested two reverse causality models, one for each level of identification. Thus, our first alternative model tested whether an effect of intergroup attitudes on Lebanese identification could be mediated by perceptions of out-group discontinuity, Muslim Responsibility and Foreign Responsibility. This model fit the data poorly, χ^2 (4) = 14.34, $p < .01$; NFI = .86, NNFI = .73, CFI = .89, GFI = .94, RMSEA = .16. We then specified a similar model using Maronite identification as a dependent variable. Again, this model did not fit well, χ^2 (4) = 13.68, $p < .01$; NFI = .89, NNFI = .78, CFI = .91, GFI = .95, RMSEA = .16. These alternative model analyses did not provide support for such reverse causality models.

Taken together, these findings support our predictions: The positive effect of Lebanese identification on intergroup attitudes was mediated by attribution of responsibility to Muslims (negatively), perception of Out-group discontinuity (positively) and Foreign Responsibility (positively) whereas the negative effect of Maronite identification on Intergroup attitudes was mediated by attribution of responsibility to Muslims and Out-group discontinuity only.

Discussion

The present results provide support for our hypotheses, which were derived from self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987) and Gaertner and Dovidio's (2000) common in-group identity model, which predict opposite effects of subgroup and superordinate national identification on intergroup attitudes. Identification with one's own subgroup negatively impacts intergroup attitudes, whereas identification with the superordinate group has the opposite effect (Wohl & Branscombe, 2005). Moreover, structural equation modeling analyses supported our prediction that the effects of identification at these two levels are mediated by both the kind of attributions being made for the past conflict and by how participants perceive contemporary out-group members— either as similar to or different from the former generation that was involved in the conflict.

These results are important for several reasons. First, they show that, in a post-civil war conflict situation like Lebanon, reconciliation depends on the way people define their own identities and those of out-groups, which conforms to Kelman's model of intergroup reconciliation (2004, 2008). More precisely, we showed that intergroup attitudes depend on in-group definition. In this respect, defining oneself at the national level allowed for a less temporally homogenized representation of the out-group. As different generations were more clearly distinguished from those of the past, it was possible to express more positive attitudes toward Muslims. As we have seen, identifying at the subgroup level has the opposite effect: as Muslims of today and Muslims of the war generation were seen as one continuous out-group, intergroup attitudes were less positive. We believe that perception of out-group continuity is a crucial factor for reconciliation processes that, so far, has not received sufficient attention from researchers.

Participants' current attitudes towards members of the former rival subgroup also depend on

the way they remember the conflict, and in particular on how they explain its origins. Attitudes are more negative when people hold the outgroup responsible for that conflict, whereas blaming groups that do not belong to the superordinate national group is associated with improved attitudes. We showed that attributions of responsibility for the past conflict also depend on the way respondents define their identity in the present.

Although our theoretical explanation of these effects is derived from self-categorization theory, we should also take the particular political and historical setting in which this study was conducted into account. As noted previously, our data collection took place during a period of collective mobilization that was triggered by the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, which was widely attributed to the Syrian secret services, even though the Syrian government and the then pro-Syrian Lebanese government denied this accusation. In February and March 2005, hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated in Beirut and other Lebanese cities, waving Lebanese flags, wearing T-shirts reading '100% Lebanese' and chanting 'Syria out!' In these circumstances, a united front was needed in order to fight the Syrian army, which was considered an occupying force by many Lebanese people. However, the entire Lebanese public was not aligned with this movement, as counter-demonstrations also took place in support of Syrian troops. People refer to certain self-definitions, not only because they are made salient by the perceptual context, but also because these self-definitions allow them to act together in order to reach their goals (Klein & Licata, 2003; Klein, Spears, & Reicher, 2007; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). In the context of Lebanon in the Spring of 2005, one can suppose that the national level of categorization was made salient by the threat induced by Hariri's assassination, a national figure. And defining oneself as a Lebanese, rather than as a member of a subgroup religious community, permitted a national collective mobilization against a superordinate outgroup (Syria). In this context, maintaining a strong Maronite identity as compared to a Lebanese identity would have symbolized a counter-project that would result in a division of the nation into distinct religious communities. In addition to potentially leading to another civil conflict, such a counter-project would also have impeded the fulfillment of what was presented as a common objective: setting Lebanon free from Syrian control. Thus our results, to be fully understood, need to take both components into account: the particular meanings each level of identity possessed at that time, and the cognitive and attitudinal effects of each form of self-categorization.

Limitations and future directions

Although the current study represents a unique and rare glimpse of post-conflict reconciliation processes among Maronite Lebanese citizens, we may not be able to generalize the relationships we obtained to other Lebanese religious subgroups. For example, we might predict different relationships between national identification and attitudes toward Maronites among Shiites. This might occur because Azar and Mullet (2002) found that Maronites and Shiites had opposing attitudes regarding the Syrians, with Shiites having the most favorable attitudes and greatest trust in Syrians, while Maronites tended to distrust them and held negative attitudes toward Shiites. These attitudes might be rooted in different ways of representing levels of identification among Lebanese subgroups. Muslims (especially Sunni Muslims) were attracted to the pan Arab identity idea, which advocated a union of the region's Arab countries, whereas Christians—and particularly Maronites—tended to oppose it. This is consistent with Levin et al.'s (2003) results, which found that Christians identified weakly as Arabs and strongly with Lebanon whereas Muslims identified strongly with both Arabs and Lebanon (Levin et al., 2003). So Muslims could include Syrians in the superordinate in-group (i.e., we're all Arabs), which was very unlikely for Christians at the time of the study. For these reasons, the positive effect of national identification on intergroup attitudes that was found among Maronite Lebanese might not be replicated among other Lebanese subgroups. Other studies are needed to

ascertain whether Lebanon is an equally relevant superordinate social category, and if it impacts positively on intergroup attitudes, for all Lebanese subgroups.

One important limitation that must be considered in evaluating the present research is that our model testing was necessarily based on correlational data. Because of the delicacy of the post-civil war context we chose to investigate, the crucial predictor variables—degree of subgroup and national identification—could not be manipulated. While the theoretically predicted model fit the data rather well, it is also the case that other models might have done so. Nonetheless, the results we obtained in this ecologically valid context are compatible with previous experimental results where the level of identity made salient was varied (Wohl & Branscombe, 2005). Furthermore, we tested the plausible reverse causality model, and it failed to fit these data. One must also keep in mind though that our study was based on a non-representative sample of Maronite students, using a questionnaire in English. These potential sources of bias may limit the generalizability of our findings to the whole Lebanese Maronite population.

Nonetheless, even if these results cannot be generalized to other communities or other historical periods of Lebanon, they do seem to capture the social psychology of present-day identity dynamics in Lebanon and show, as we argue, that intergroup attitudes are indeed rooted in a historical context and in changing identity dynamics at different levels of categorization. Finally, the present research makes clear that the past certainly 'weighs on the present' (Liu & Hilton, 2005). However, the picture that the present study reveals is more complex: not only do representations of the past affect current social psychological processes such as intergroup attitudes but those representations, in turn, depend on today's identity definitions. Participants' current relative identity preferences affect how the past itself is remembered. Thus, the past is not simply 'received' by the present. The present is influenced by the past and the past is reconstructed with present identity concerns in mind (Wertsch & Roediger, 2008).

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