

Agents of Prosociality: Agency Affirmation Promotes Mutual Prosocial Tendencies and Behavior Among Conflicting Groups

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Members of conflicting groups are motivated to restore their ingroup's agency, leading to antisocial tendencies against the outgroup. The present research tested the hypothesis that affirming conflicting groups' agency would increase their members' mutual prosociality. The effectiveness of agency affirmation was demonstrated in three contexts of conflict between groups: Switzerland and the EU following the 2014 referendum (Study 1), Israelis and Palestinians (Study 2), and Israeli rightists and leftists (Study 3). Study 1 found that in a nonconflictual context Swiss participants prioritized their moral (prosocial) over agentic goals, yet in the context of conflict with the EU, they prioritized their agentic over moral goals. This "primacy-of-agency" effect, however, was eliminated once their ingroup's agency was affirmed. Studies 2 and 3 demonstrated the positive effect of agency affirmation on prosociality among Israelis referring to Palestinians and Israeli rightists and leftists referring to the adversarial political camp. This effect was mediated by group members' readiness to relinquish some power for the sake of morality. Pointing to the importance of the affirmation's specific content, Studies 2 and 3 demonstrated that morality affirmation failed to increase prosociality. As such, the present research puts forward a promising strategy to reduce hostility and promote prosociality between conflicting groups.

KEY WORDS: group affirmation, agency, morality, intergroup conflict, prosociality, the needs-based model of reconciliation

Whether it is nations clashing over territory or opposing political camps disputing over governmental funds, conflicting groups never negotiate solely about tangible resources; rather, they also "engage in a process of negotiating identity" (Kelman, 2004, p. 112). In line with this understanding, the needs-based model (Nadler & Shnabel, 2015), the theoretical framework that guided this research, argues that reconciliation requires the restoration of the conflicting groups' positive identities.

According to the model, conflict threatens group members' identities in asymmetrical manners. Members of victimized groups experience threat to their agentic identity, namely, to their ingroup's competence, self-determination, and ability to control its outcomes and consequently need to restore their ingroup's agency. Members of perpetrating groups experience threat to their moral-social identity and consequently need to restore their ingroup's morality. The model further argues that the restoration of victim groups' agency through empowering messages from their perpetrators (e.g., messages that acknowledge the victim group's competence and right for self-determination), and the restoration of perpetrator groups' morality through accepting messages from their victims (e.g., messages conveying empathy despite the wrongdoings), should address group members' psychological needs, restore their positive identities, and consequently increase their willingness for reconciliation. This theorizing was supported in various conflictual contexts (e.g., Jews and Germans referring to the Holocaust; Shnabel, Nadler, Ullrich, Dovidio, & Carmi, 2009).

While the needs-based model originally focused on contexts characterized by clear-cut roles of victims and perpetrators, most conflicts are characterized by mutual transgressions. In such *dual conflicts*, group members often view their ingroup as the conflict's "real" victim (Noor, Shnabel, Halabi, & Nadler, 2012). In line with this, SimanTov-Nachlieli and Shnabel (2014) found that even though "dual" group members (i.e., whose ingroup was victim and perpetrator at the same time) experienced threats to both their agency and morality, their ultimate behavior resembled the behavior of members of victim groups. That is, consistent with theorizing on vengeance as a means to restore agency (Frijda, 1994), the experience of agency threat translated into "dual" group members' aggressive behavior against the outgroup—similar to the pattern found among victims. Contrary to the pattern found among perpetrators, however, the experience of morality threat failed to increase duals' prosocial behavior. These findings point to a *primacy of agency* effect, such that members of conflicting groups that transgress against each other prioritize the restoration of their ingroup's agency over its morality.

This effect seems to contradict literature on the prominent role of morality in determining group members' judgments and behavior (see Ellemers, Pagliaro, & Barreto, 2013). In particular, Leach, Ellemers, and Barreto (2007) found that morality was perceived as the most important dimension in group members' identity, affecting their pride in their ingroup more than any other dimension. However, the apparent contradiction between the primacy-of-agency effect observed by SimanTov-Nachlieli and Shnabel (2014) and the primacy-of-morality effect observed by Leach and colleagues (2007) may be resolved by considering the context—conflictual versus nonconflictual—as a potential moderator. Specifically, we theorized that morality would be prioritized in nonconflictual contexts (in line with Leach et al., 2007), whereas agency would be prioritized in conflictual contexts (in line with SimanTov-Nachlieli & Shnabel, 2014). We further theorized that restoring conflicting group members' agentic identity can eliminate the primacy of agency effect, leading to reduced aggressiveness and increased conciliatory tendencies towards the outgroup.

Group Affirmation as a Means to Restore Agentic Identity

How can the ingroup's agency be restored in a way that promotes reconciliation? So far, the needs-based model, which focused on conflicts with clear-cut roles of victims and perpetrators, pointed to empowering messages from the perpetrators as a means to restore the victims' agency and facilitate their conciliatory tendencies. However, conflicting parties are often unwilling to take the risk involved in conveying such messages, which might not be reciprocated, especially if the conflict involves mutual transgressions (Noor et al., 2012). As for uninvolved third parties, who might be readier to express empowering messages, research found that their intervention failed to promote conciliatory tendencies among members of victim groups (Harth & Shnabel, 2015).

Due to these shortcomings of messages from the outgroup or third parties, we examined *self*-affirmation of the ingroup's agency, through short reading or writing exercises, as a means to restore group members' positive social identities. According to self-affirmation theory (Steele, 1988), an affirmation of the self can protect it against various psychological threats. Applying this logic to the group level, research on group affirmation demonstrated that the negative effects of social identity threat on group members' attitudes and behavior can be alleviated by affirming positive aspects of their ingroup's identity (e.g., Derks, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2006; Gunn & Wilson, 2011; Miron, Branscombe, & Biernat, 2010; Sherman, Kinias, Major, Kim, & Prenovost, 2007).

Interestingly, while earlier theorizing pointed to the interchangeability of self-affirmation strategies (suggesting that threats in one domain can be addressed through self-affirmation of other, unrelated domains; Steele, 1988), more recent research revealed that when basic human needs are threatened, the effectiveness of self-affirmation interventions depends on the "match" between the type of threat and the affirmation's content. For example, self-affirmation exercises successfully mitigated threats of social rejection when participants focused on belonging, but not on other themes (Knowles, Lucas, Molden, Gardner, & Dean, 2010). In contexts of interpersonal transgressions, affirming perpetrators' moral identity through the affirmation of the specific values breached by the transgression, but not of other, unrelated values, increased their conciliatory tendencies (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2014).

Applying Woodyatt and Wenzel's (2014) logic to the context of dual intergroup conflicts (i.e., conflicts characterized by mutual transgressions), we theorized that to effectively restore group members' identity, we should use affirmations that target the conflicting parties' agency; namely, the identity dimension whose impairment has the most critical influence on their behavior. We hypothesized that group affirmations that restore conflicting group members' agentic identity by reassuring their ingroup's competence and self-determination would increase group members' prosociality, that is, reduced aggressiveness and increased helpfulness, towards their outgroup. Preliminary support for this hypothesis was provided by a recent study which found that Palestinians and Israeli Jews who read short texts that affirmed their ingroup's agency reported greater prosocial tendencies towards the adversarial group (SimanTov-Nachlieli, Shnabel, & Halabi, 2016).

The goal of the present research was to extend these initial findings in several ways. First, it aimed to integrate our argument regarding the "primacy of agency" with the research pointing to the "primacy of morality" (Leach et al., 2007) through examining the moderating role of conflict involvement (i.e., testing the hypothesis that morality would receive primacy in nonconflictual contexts, and agency—in conflictual contexts). Second, it aimed to demonstrate the critical role of the affirmation's *specific content* by testing not only the effects of agency affirmation, but also of corresponding morality affirmation. We hypothesized that, despite their positivity, group affirmations focused on morality would not exert positive effects on prosociality, because they fail to address the more pressing identity need of conflicting parties (i.e., their need for agency). Third, given the complex link between behavioral tendencies and actual behavior (LaPiere, 1934), the present research aimed to examine whether agency affirmation affects group members' actual pro- and antisocial behaviors (i.e., beyond their self-reported tendencies). Finally, it aimed to increase the generalizability of our hypotheses by examining the effectiveness of agency affirmation in highly diverse contexts (e.g., nonviolent or intrasocietal conflicts).

Overview of Studies

Three studies tested our hypotheses. Study 1 tested the predictions that Swiss citizens would prioritize moral-social over agentic intergroup goals in a nonconflictual context, but in the context of their ingroup's conflict with the European Union (EU), they would prioritize their agentic over

moral-social goals—*unless* their ingroup’s agency is affirmed. Study 2 tested the effects of agency affirmation on Israeli Jews’ prosocial tendencies and behavior in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, during both a relatively calm phase and wartime. Consistent with our theorizing that it leads to changes in need prioritizing, the effect of agency affirmation on prosociality was expected to be mediated by group members’ greater willingness to relinquish some power for the sake of morality. Study 2 also examined the role of affirmation *content* by testing the effects of a corresponding morality affirmation on prosociality. Finally, Study 3 tested the generalizability of Study 2’s findings to a substantially different context—the intrasocietal conflict between Israeli leftists and rightists, examining both behavioral tendencies and actual donation and allocation behaviors.

STUDY 1

Study 1 tested our hypotheses in the context of the February 2014 Swiss referendum, in which the Swiss accepted an initiative to restrict immigration to Switzerland, thereby breaching an existing treaty with the EU. In response, the EU imposed various sanctions against Switzerland, such as exclusion from student exchange programs and research funding schemes. While Swiss people who supported the initiative realized that they transgressed against the EU (by breaching an existing treaty with it), they nevertheless viewed the EU’s sanctions as an illegitimate interference with the Swiss democratic system, which caused unfair damage to their country.¹

Participants in Study 1 were Swiss citizens who had voted in support of the referendum and were assigned to three experimental conditions: The first condition examined their communal and agentic goals when referring to other countries in general (i.e., a nonconflictual context); the second condition examined their goals when referring to the EU, with whom their ingroup was in conflict; and the third condition examined their goals in the context of the conflict with the EU, yet following the affirmation of their ingroup’s agency. We expected Swiss participants to place greater importance on communal, moral-social goals as opposed to agentic goals in the absence of conflict (in line with Leach et al., 2007), but to prioritize agentic over communal goals (i.e., a primacy of agency effect) in the context of a conflict with the EU. This relative prioritizing of agentic over communal goals was expected to be eliminated in the agency-affirmation condition.

Method

Participants

One hundred and thirty-five participants (71 women, $M_{\text{age}} = 42.01$, $SD = 14.01$) who supported the initiative to restrict immigration were recruited through snowball sampling via the mailing list of a Swiss graduate student in exchange for a chance to win a gift coupon.

Procedure

After providing demographic information, participants were randomly assigned to the control/no-conflict, conflict, or conflict-with-agency-affirmation conditions. We then examined their need prioritizing using the Circumplex Scales of Intergroup Goals (CSIG; Locke, 2014). The CSIG suited our purposes because the circumplex structure of the measured goals allows to calculate two overall

¹ Confirming that participants viewed their ingroup as victimized by the EU, the mean of an item that measured how participants perceived their ingroup in the context of the initiative (1 = *perpetrator* to 7 = *victim*) was significantly above the neutral midpoint, $M = 5.17$, $SD = 1.59$, $t(132) = 8.52$, $p < .001$.

vector scores—representing group members’ needs for agency and communion (i.e., moral-social goals).²

In the no-conflict condition, participants were not reminded of the conflict with the EU and simply completed the CSIG while referring to other countries in general, that is, “When Swiss representatives or leaders interact with representatives or leaders of other countries it is important to me that. . .” (see Measures section for example items). In the two conflict conditions, participants were reminded of the conflict with the EU and then asked how the Swiss should act toward the EU. Thus, these participants responded to the same questions as participants in the no-conflict condition, yet with “other nations” substituted for “the EU” (“When Swiss representatives or leaders interact with representatives or leaders of the EU, it is important to me that. . .”).

Participants assigned to the conflict-with-agency-affirmation condition also read, preceding the conflict reminders, that a recent study found that “most of the Swiss perceive their country to be strong, successful and highly developed in many fields” and were asked to think and write about a situation in which Switzerland shows one of those characteristics. This manipulation is consistent with previous studies that induced group affirmation through short writing exercises, except that it focused specifically on the ingroup’s agency (whereas previous manipulations did not attempt to control the affirmation’s content; e.g., Sherman et al., 2007). Upon completion, participants were thanked and debriefed.

Measures

Participants’ agentic and communal tendencies were measured using Locke’s (2014) 32-item CSIG, which consists of eight four-item 5-point scales (1 = *not at all* to 5 = *very much*). Spanned by the two orthogonal axes of agency and communion, those “octant scales” comprise a circle in which each point can be specified as a weighted mixture of agency and communion goals (Locke, 2014). Examples of items are: [It is important to me that. . .] “we are assertive” (representing high agentic/average communal goals), “we show we can be tough” (high agentic/low communal), “we do whatever is in our best interest” (average agentic/low communal), “they stay out of our business” (low agentic/low communal), “we avoid conflict” (low agentic/average communal), “we are cooperative” (low agentic/high communal), “we show concern for their welfare” (average agentic/high communal), and “they respect what we have to say” (high agentic/high communal).

To justify the calculation of overall vector scores for agency and communion, the circumplex structure, that is, a specific pattern of octant intercorrelations, such that octant-pairs which are closer together in the circle should be more strongly positively correlated than octant-pairs further apart, has to be verified. The CSIG’s conformity to a circular model in our study was significant, CI (RANDALL) = .77, $p < .001$, RMSEA (CircE) = .066, AGFI (CircE) = .962. Because the scales formed a circumplex, respondents’ octant scores could be combined to yield an overall horizontal (communal/moral-social) score and an overall vertical (agentic) score. Note that combining the octant scores with values ranging from 1 to 5 to vector scores results in a different scaling (see below; for a detailed explanation on circumplex models, see Gurtman, 2009). The reliabilities of the dimension scores, which were computed using Nunnally and Bernstein’s (1994) formulas for reliabilities of weighted sums, were .75 for both dimensions.

² The CSIG’s measure of communal goals subsumes together goals related to the ingroup’s sociability and morality. Although the distinction between sociability and morality is meaningful (Leach et al., 2007), lumping them together suited the present purposes (examining prosocial goals) and was consistent with the “Big-Two” theorizing (Abele & Wojciszke, 2013), which points to agency and communion as the two core dimensions of groups’ identities, the latter representing both sociability and morality.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation Check

To check the effectiveness of the agency-affirmation manipulation, the situations described by the participants were screened by two independent coders. The agency affirmation was generally successful. Out of 37 participants assigned to the agency-affirmation condition, 31 described a situation that confirmed Switzerland's agentic identity (excluding the six participants who failed to describe adequate situations did not change our statistical conclusions).

Intergroup Goals

Figure 1 displays the obtained results. A 3 (Condition [conflict-without-affirmation, conflict-with-agency affirmation, no-conflict]) \times 2 (Intergroup goals [agency, communion]) ANOVA with repeated measures on the latter variable revealed a significant condition \times intergroup goals interaction, $F(2,132) = 11.51, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .148$. Participants in the no-conflict condition prioritized communal goals ($M = 1.16, SD = 0.56$) over agentic goals ($M = 0.54, SD = 0.62$), $t(132) = 4.73, p < .001$, whereas participants in the conflict-without-affirmation condition tended to prioritize agentic goals ($M = 1.00, SD = 0.55$) over communal goals ($M = 0.76, SD = 0.61$), $t(132) = 1.87, p = .064$.³ As expected, in the conflict-with-agency-affirmation condition, agentic goals ($M = 0.84, SD = 0.67$) no longer exceeded communal goals ($M = 0.83, SD = 0.70$), $t(132) = 0.07, p = .941$.

In summary, group members changed their prioritizing of intergroup goals in response to their ingroup's involvement in a conflict, as well as to an affirmation of their ingroup's agency. Consistent with theorizing regarding the importance of morality (Leach et al., 2007), in a neutral, nonconflictual context, group members prioritized moral-social over agentic goals. Yet, consistent with our theorizing, this pattern was reversed in the context of a conflict, in which group members tended to prioritize their agentic over moral-social goals. Despite the conflict, once their agency was affirmed, group members no longer prioritized agentic goals over communal goals, showing a balanced tendency to pursue both types of goals.

STUDY 2

Study 2, consisting of two substudies, extended the findings of Study 1 in several ways. First, it conceptually replicated the positive effect of agency affirmation on prosociality using different outcome variables (i.e., prosocial tendencies and actual donation behavior) and population (i.e., Israeli Jews, referring to the conflict with Palestinians). Despite the substantial power asymmetry between the groups (e.g., Palestinians are subjected to Israeli occupation in the West Bank), many Israeli Jews engage in "competitive victimhood" with Palestinians and view their ingroup as the conflict's "real" victim (Noor et al., 2012). Therefore, restoring their ingroup's agency (e.g., reassuring its self-determination) becomes a prominent goal in their lives, which gains precedence over other, otherwise important, goals (Bar-Tal, 2013).

A second goal (Study 2a) was to establish the critical role of the affirmation's *specific content*, namely, to show that not every positive affirmation of the ingroup's identity can "do the trick." Rather, only affirmation that focuses on agency restoration increase prosociality. For this purpose, the

³ Previous research by Locke (2014) found ingroup identification to predict group-based needs, such that ingroup identification correlated positively with agentic intergroup goals and negatively with communal intergroup goals. When controlling for ingroup identification (which was measured in all studies), the marginal effect of the conflict-without-affirmation condition on group members' need prioritizing became significant, such that participants' need for agency, $M = 1.02, SE = 0.09$, was significantly higher than their need for communion, $M = 0.75, SE = 0.09$; $t(129) = 1.99, p = .049$. In all other studies, our statistical conclusions persisted when controlling for ingroup identification.

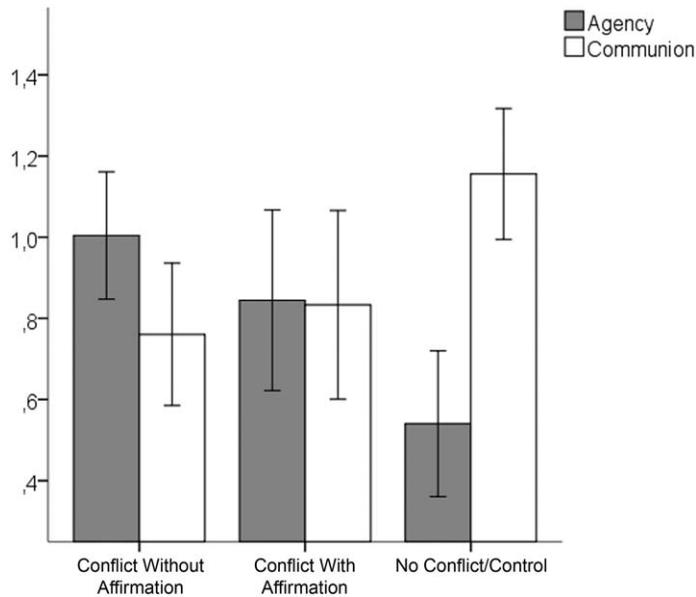


Figure 1. Two-way interaction between experimental condition and intergroup goals (agentic vs. communal). Error bars represent 95% CI. Values range from -0.69 to 2.08 for agentic goals and from -0.74 to 2.44 for communal goals.

experimental design in Study 2a included a morality-affirmation condition, which reaffirmed the ingroup's moral identity. Morality affirmation was chosen both because agency and morality are the identity dimensions that are impaired among conflicting groups (Shnabel et al., 2009) and because the social-labeling literature (e.g., Kraut, 1973) suggests that such affirmation, which labels the ingroup as moral, can activate prosocial behavior that is consistent with this label. Indeed, among perpetrator groups (e.g., Germans reminded of the Holocaust, Shnabel et al., 2009), morality affirmation through an accepting message from the victim outgroup increased conciliatory tendencies. Nevertheless, we did not expect morality affirmation to exert positive effects in the present context of a dual conflict because it would not restore the identity dimension about which group members care the most—namely, their agency. A third goal (Study 2b) was to examine whether group members are actually willing to sacrifice some power for the sake of morality. Following Maslow's (1943) classical model of human needs, and consistent with the changes in the relative prioritizing of needs found in Study 1, we theorized that addressing their agency-related needs would allow group members' morality-related needs to exert more influence on their behavior, leading to greater readiness to relinquish some power for the sake of being just and fair towards Palestinians (see also SimanTov-Nachlieli et al., 2016). We expected that Israeli Jews' increased readiness to relinquish some power for morality would lead, in turn, to more prosocial tendencies.

STUDY 2A

Study 2a assigned Israeli Jewish participants to three experimental conditions: agency affirmation, morality affirmation, and control/no-affirmation. We operationalized agency affirmation through a short text highlighting the ingroup's competence and self-determination, and morality affirmation through a short text highlighting the ingroup's moral conduct and care for those in need (care is a core moral foundation, Haidt, 2007). Participants were then given the opportunity to donate money to pro-Palestinian and/or anti-Palestinian organizations, representing prosocial versus antisocial behaviors, respectively.

Method

Participants

Participants were 155 Israeli Jews recruited by an online research firm. Ten participants who failed the instructional manipulation check (IMC, Oppenheimer, Meyvis, & Davidenko, 2009), indicating that they were responding without reading the questions, were excluded from the sample.⁴ Thus, the final sample included 145 Israeli Jews (112 women, $M_{\text{age}} = 26.20$, $SD = 2.68$). Participants indicated their political orientation on a 7-point Likert-scale (1 = *radically rightwing* to 7 = *radically leftwing*): 61.4% were rightists (values 1–3), 19.3% centrists (4), and 19.7% leftists (5–7).

Materials and Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to three experimental conditions. In the agency affirmation condition, adapted from SimanTov-Nachlieli et al. (2016) and consistent with the conceptualization of agency as representing traits and practices that enable people to attain their goals (Abele & Wojciszke, 2013), participants were exposed to a text, allegedly taken from a recent position paper of the Israeli government, which affirmed Israel's competence and self-determination:

Israel is considered one of the strongest nations in the world... Israel has proved its resiliency in many domains: [It] ranks first in terms of economic viability and crisis resilience, and in investment in research and development. Seven Israelis won the Nobel Prize for their contributions to humanity, and Israeli medical and agricultural developments are a source of pride and strength.

Reverberating the common Israeli saying that “the IDF is the most moral army in the world,” (Kempinski, 2015), the morality-affirmation condition exposed participants to a text affirming Israel's morality:

Israel is considered one of the most moral nations in the world... Israel is known worldwide for sending teams to aid countries facing natural disasters (e.g., the earthquakes in Haiti, Japan, and Turkey). These activities are rooted in a Jewish tradition of compassion and kindness... Israel is known worldwide for its moral conduct and values and its actions are guided by values such as “thou shalt love thy brother as thyself.”

The control condition included no additional text. In the two affirmation conditions, as manipulation checks for content comprehension, participants indicated the extent to which the text reassured their ingroup's agency and morality (e.g., “According to the position paper, Israel today is highly [agentic/moral]”). To verify that the texts in the agency affirmation and moral-affirmation conditions were perceived as equally positive and elicited similar levels of pride (see Schori-Eyal, Reifen-Tagar, Saguy, & Halperin, 2015), participants indicated the extent to which the text “presented Israel in a positive light” and “made them proud in Israel.”

Participants then had up to 50 NIS (given by the researchers) at their dispense, and if they wished they could donate to a pro-Palestinian organization (providing Palestinians with humanitarian aid)

⁴ When these participants were included in analysis, the key interaction of donation type \times agency affirmation (vs. control) became nonsignificant, $F(1,150) = 2.20$, $p = .140$, $\eta_p^2 = .014$. Nevertheless, excluding them was justified given our a priori decision to drop participants who failed the IMC.

and/or to an anti-Palestinian organization (advocating more forceful policies against Palestinians). Upon completion, participants were thanked and debriefed.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation Checks

Manipulation checks for text comprehension confirmed that the texts were understood as intended. Participants in the agency-affirmation condition indicated that according to the text, Israel was agentic, $M = 6.75$ ($SD = 0.55$), more than participants in the morality-affirmation condition, $M = 3.42$ ($SD = 2.08$), $t(92) = 10.72$, $p < .001$. Participants in the morality-affirmation condition indicated that according to the text, Israel was moral, $M = 6.67$ ($SD = 0.57$), more than participants in the agency-affirmation condition, $M = 1.65$ ($SD = 1.37$), $t(92) = 23.02$, $p < .001$. There was no significant difference between participants' perception of the text as presenting Israel in a positive light in the agency-affirmation, $M = 6.56$ ($SD = 0.71$), compared to the morality-affirmation condition, $M = 6.72$ ($SD = 0.54$), $t(92) = 1.18$, $p = .240$. Also, both agency-affirmation and morality-affirmation resulted in similar levels of ingroup pride, $M_s = 6.33$ ($SD = 1.33$) and 5.96 ($SD = 1.58$), $t(92) = 1.26$, $p = .212$. Thus, as intended, participants understood the two affirmations as different in content yet equally positive.⁵

Main Analysis

To isolate the unique effect of the affirmations on prosocial tendencies, we controlled for political orientation (a leftist political orientation predicted participants' donations to the pro- and anti-Palestinian organizations, $rs(145) = .57$ and $-.46$, respectively, $ps < .001$). The total amount of money donated by participants (for both pro- and anti-Palestinian organizations) did not differ across experimental conditions, $F(2,141) = 0.43$, $p = .654$, $\eta_p^2 = .006$. We conducted a repeated-measures ANOVA with donation type, *pro-* vs. *anti-*Palestinian, as a within-subjects factor, and condition (coded as two-dummy variables with the control condition as the reference group) as a between-subjects factor. As predicted, the donation type \times agency affirmation (vs. control) interaction was significant, $F(1,141) = 4.17$, $p = .043$, $\eta_p^2 = .029$, whereas the donation type \times morality affirmation (vs. control) interaction was nonsignificant, $F(1,141) = 0.22$, $p = .637$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$. In the agency-affirmation condition, participants donated *more* money to the pro-Palestinian organization, $M = 15.31$ ($SD = 18.55$), and *less* money to the anti-Palestinian organization, $M = 22.60$ ($SD = 20.28$), compared to the control condition, $M_s = 11.98$ ($SD = 15.74$) and 27.24 ($SD = 20.13$). Participants' donations to pro- and anti-Palestinian organizations in the morality-affirmation condition, $M_s = 12.83$ ($SD = 17.95$) and 28.80 ($SD = 21.32$), did not differ from the control condition.

In conclusion, agency affirmation increased Israeli Jews' pro-Palestinian and decreased their anti-Palestinian behavior. As for the morality affirmation, although it was perceived as equally positive and prideful, it failed to exert positive, prosocial effects. This result is opposed to the prediction derived from social-labeling literature (e.g., Kraut, 1973), yet it is consistent with our theorizing that restoring conflicting groups' agentic identity is a prerequisite to the reduction of antisocial tendencies and the promotion, instead, of prosociality.

⁵ Further supporting the argument that the effects of agency affirmation did not stem from general positivity, a pilot study ($N = 57$) revealed that (1) agency affirmation did not change participants' (members of minimal groups) mood as compared to a control/no affirmation condition ($p = .616$); and (2) agency affirmation increased prosocial behavior *specifically* toward members of the conflicting outgroup ($p = .035$) but not towards *unrelated* third parties ($p = .502$).

Admittedly, a limitation of Study 2a was that its sample was comprised predominantly of women and rightists, which might limit generalizability. We did not specifically intend to recruit a representative sample because our goal was to infer causality through the use of a randomized experiment, not to estimate parameters in the population. Also, we had no a priori reason to expect the effect of agency affirmation to be influenced by gender and/or political orientation.⁶ Importantly, the agency-affirmation manipulation effectively increased prosociality in Study 2b (see below), the sample of which was balanced in terms of gender composition, as well as in a Jewish sample that was balanced in terms of participants' political orientation (SimanTov-Nachlieli et al., 2016, Study 1). These findings bolster our confidence in the validity of conclusion drawn from Study 2a.

STUDY 2B

Study 2b was conducted during Operation Pillar of Cloud, which provided us with an unfortunate opportunity to test the effectiveness of agency affirmation during wartime. Following the assignment of Israeli participants to either the control/no-affirmation or the agency affirmation conditions, we measured their willingness to relinquish some power for the sake of morality (the proposed mediator), and their anti- and prosocial tendencies towards Palestinians.

Method

Participants

Sixty-seven Israeli Jews (30 women, $M_{age} = 33.15$, $SD = 8.46$, 55.2% rightists, 29.9% centrists and 14.9% leftists) were recruited during the operation's sixth day by an online research firm (different from the one used in Study 2a; we also verified that none of them had previously participated in similar studies).

Materials and Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned either to the no-affirmation/control or the agency-affirmation condition, which exposed them to the text used in Study 2a with some adjustments to the war context (e.g., a reference to the Iron-Dome antirocket defense system, which was successfully used during the operation). Following a manipulation check for text comprehension, participants completed the dependent measures (using 7-point scales; 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*). Two items measured participants' willingness to relinquish some power for morality (e.g., "Israel should restrain its operations in Gaza in order to be fair with the Palestinians," $r(67) = .54$, $p < .001$). The purpose of this measure was to capture participants' willingness to trade off (some) power for morality; thus, participants high on this measure believed that their ingroup should reduce its use of power (indicating a weaker pursuit of agentic intergroup goals) for the sake of morality (rather than due to other reasons, such as the ineffectiveness of using power). Directly examining this trade-off allowed to show that group members are actually willing to sacrifice some power for the benefit of their outgroup, consistent with our theorizing that agency affirmation changes group members' need prioritization. Finally, 10 items measured participants' tendencies toward Palestinians (e.g., "If the operation continues for a

⁶ The results reported above persisted when controlling for *both* gender and political orientation. Specifically, the donation type \times agency affirmation (vs. control) interaction remained significant, $F(1,140) = 4.19$, $p = .042$, $\eta_p^2 = .029$, whereas the donation type \times morality affirmation (vs. control) interaction remained nonsignificant, $F(1,140) = 0.24$, $p = .625$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$.

long time, Israel must provide humanitarian aid to the civil population in Gaza”; “The operation in Gaza should aim for maximum disruption of Palestinians’ everyday life”; reverse-scored, $\alpha = .88$).⁷

Results and Discussion

The manipulation check for text comprehension confirmed that participants thought that according to the text, Israel is agentic (scores were significantly above four, the neutral midpoint, $M = 6.31$ ($SD = 1.12$), $t(32) = 11.82$, $p < .001$). Consistent with Study 2a, all analyses controlled for political orientation (a leftist political orientation significantly increased prosociality, $r(67) = .64$, $p < .001$). As predicted, participants exhibited greater prosociality in the agency affirmation, $M = 3.11$ ($SD = 1.17$), than the control condition, $M = 2.57$ ($SD = 1.12$), $t(64) = 2.42$, $p = .019$, $\eta_p^2 = .084$. Also, willingness to relinquish power for morality was higher in the agency affirmation, $M = 4.00$ ($SD = 1.59$), compared to the control condition, $M = 3.32$ ($SD = 1.45$), $t(64) = 2.01$, $p = .049$, $\eta_p^2 = .059$. Bootstrapping analysis (1,000 resamples) revealed that the indirect effect of agency affirmation on prosociality through willingness to relinquish power for morality was significant, $B = .24$, $SE = .14$, 95% CI [.022, .607]. Thus, reassuring group members of their ingroup’s agency can reduce antisocial and increase prosocial tendencies towards the conflicting outgroup even under wartime.

Together, Studies 2a and 2b revealed that although members of groups involved in intractable conflicts often feel entitled to behave aggressively and their conflict-related attitudes are rigid and resistant to change (Bar-Tal, 2013), agency affirmation consistently led to less hostility and greater prosociality towards the outgroup, as expressed in both self-reported tendencies and actual donation behavior. These findings have important practical implications for promoting prosociality even in this type of protracted conflicts.

STUDY 3

The goal of Study 3 was to test the generalizability of Study 2’s conclusions in a substantially different context, namely, one in which the conflicting groups feel solidarity and unity and should therefore prone to behave prosocially towards each other despite the conflict (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). For this purpose, Study 3 used the context of the intrasocietal conflict between (Jewish) Israeli leftists (“the peace camp”) and rightists (“the national camp”). This conflict, which involved mutual transgressions (e.g., the 1948 killing of 16 rightist fighters of Altalena; the 1995 assassination of the leftist Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin), has always been on the state’s political agenda; nevertheless, the two camps share an underlying core of beliefs, values, and shared collectivity (Waxman, 2008).

After the assignment of Israeli rightists and leftists to the three experimental conditions (agency affirmation, morality affirmation, and control/no-affirmation), we measured their willingness to relinquish some power for the sake of being moral towards the adversarial political camp, as well as their prosociality, using a measure that combined both self-reported tendencies and actual donation and allocation behaviors.

⁷ One complication was that due to the war circumstances, an alternative explanation to the positive effect of agency affirmation could be that it reduced the experience of existential threat. To rule out this possibility, one item measured perceived existential threat. Existential threat was generally high but did not differ between the agency affirmation, $M = 5.00$ ($SD = 2.01$), and the control condition, $M = 4.85$ ($SD = 2.08$), $t(64) = 0.23$, $p = .821$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$. Moreover, when controlling for existential threat, the effects of agency affirmation persisted on both prosociality, $t(63) = 2.39$, $p = .020$, $\eta_p^2 = .083$, and willingness to relinquish power for morality, $t(63) = 1.99$, $p = .051$, $\eta_p^2 = .059$, and so did the indirect effect, the 95% CI being [.027, .611].

Method

Participants

Participants were 216 Israeli Jews recruited by an online research firm. Twelve participants who failed the IMC and four participants who expressed strong suspicion of the experiment were excluded from analysis.⁸ Thus, the final sample included 200 participants (99 women, $M_{\text{age}} = 38.82$, $SD = 4.12$, 47.5% rightists, 52.5% leftists).

Materials and Procedure

The study was presented as dealing with the relations between the opposing political camps in Israel. Following a brief reminder of the conflicts' core issues and historical milestones, participants were assigned to three experimental conditions.⁹ Participants in the agency affirmation condition were exposed to a text allegedly taken from a position paper that affirmed their ingroup's agency (e.g., "For many years, since the establishment of Israel, the [right/left] held political power and made a vital contribution in shaping the character and image of the Israeli society [...] the [right/left] camp showed its resilience over the years and it is still influential today").

Participants assigned to the morality-affirmation condition were exposed to a text of about the same length, which affirmed their ingroup's morality (e.g., "The [right/left] led a policy of concern for the weaker, marginalized sectors within the Israeli society [...] among [rightists/leftists] there exists a particularly high rate of volunteers contributing their time and energy to promoting important societal goals such as [concern for the needy/concern for human rights]"). The control/no-affirmation condition did not include any text.

Following a manipulation check for text comprehension ("The position paper highlighted:" 1 = *mainly the ingroup's agency*, 4 = *the ingroup's agency and morality to the same extent*, 7 = *mainly the ingroup's morality*), participants in all conditions indicated their agreement with two items measuring their willingness to relinquish some power for morality (e.g., "Even at the cost of giving up some power my ingroup must be fair with the other political camp," $r(200) = .61$, $p < .001$). Next, 10 items measured participants' prosocial tendencies towards the outgroup, for example, "Members of my ingroup should respect the views of outgroup members even if they do not agree with them"; "Public funds for activities that are associated with the agenda of the [left/right] should be cut"; reverse-scored; $\alpha = .81$. Upon completion, participants provided demographic information and were thanked for participation.

Participants then proceeded to an ostensibly new study, which examined their actual pro- and antisocial behavior toward the outgroup. To assess participants' conciliatory behavior, they could donate up to 50 NIS (given by the researchers) to an organization that promotes intergroup reconciliation ("Tzav Pius").¹⁰ Participants' antisocial behavior was assessed using a variation of the intergroup prisoner's dilemma-maximizing difference game (IPD-MD; Halevy, Bornstein, & Sagiv, 2008). Participants were told that both rightists and leftists would take part in an investment game and that 10% of the participants would be randomly assigned to receive additional payments in line with investment choices made by other participants. Each participant was given 5 NIS and could invest them in one of two options. In the first option, each NIS invested added 1 NIS to the ingroup fund without affecting

⁸ The positive effect of agency affirmation on prosociality remained significant, $p = .016$, whereas the effect of morality affirmation remained nonsignificant, $p = .448$, when including all participants.

⁹ A pilot study ($N = 19$) confirmed that both affirmations were perceived as highly positive, that is, significantly above the scale's neutral midpoint, $t_s > 9.00$, $p_s < .001$. Also, the two affirmations did not significantly differ in terms of perceived positivity, $t(16) = 1.60$, $p = .128$; if anything, participants tended to perceive the morality affirmation as more positive than the agency affirmation, $M_s = 6.70$ ($SD = 0.48$) and 6.25 ($SD = 0.71$). Thus, the positive effect of agency affirmation on prosociality cannot be accounted for by its greater positivity compared to the morality affirmation.

¹⁰ Retrieved from <http://www.tzavpius.org.il/en>

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of Main DVs (Study 3)

Condition	Prosocial Behavior		Antisocial Behavior		Prosocial Tendencies		Relinquish Power for Morality	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Whole Sample								
Agency-Affirmation	36.33	19.95	0.83	1.55	4.62	1.05	4.33	1.23
Morality-Affirmation	31.15	21.56	1.17	1.78	4.20	0.99	3.95	1.58
Control	30.45	21.82	1.45	2.00	4.06	1.13	3.81	1.57
Leftists								
Agency-Affirmation	41.18	18.09	0.84	1.56	4.93	0.86	4.41	1.15
Morality-Affirmation	33.59	20.92	1.22	2.07	4.16	1.00	4.08	1.51
Control	32.85	20.56	1.13	1.67	4.30	0.80	3.94	1.55
Rightists								
Agency-Affirmation	30.00	20.83	0.83	1.57	4.22	1.15	4.23	1.34
Morality-Affirmation	28.85	22.22	1.12	1.48	4.24	0.98	3.84	1.66
Control	27.77	23.14	1.80	2.28	3.79	1.38	3.67	1.59

Note. $N = 200$ Israeli leftists and rightists. Prosocial tendencies, relinquish power for morality were measured using 7-point Likert scales. Donation to “Tzav Pius” was measured using a continuous scale ranging from 0 to 50. Antisocial behavior was measured using a continuous scale ranging from 0 to 5.

the outgroup fund (manifesting, in Halevy et al.’s terms, “ingroup love”), whereas in the second option, every NIS invested added 1 NIS to the ingroup fund *and* subtracted 0.5 NIS from the outgroup fund (manifesting “outgroup hate”) (note that as opposed to the original paradigm, participants could not keep the money for themselves). Finally, participants were debriefed and received additional payments as promised.

Results

The manipulation check for text comprehension confirmed that the affirmation texts was understood as intended, such that scores for participants in the agency-affirmation condition were significantly *below* four (the neutral midpoint), $M = 2.02$ ($SD = 1.38$), $t(59) = -11.10$, $p < .001$, whereas scores for participants in the morality-affirmation condition were significantly *above* four, $M = 6.11$ ($SD = 1.49$), $t(65) = 11.49$, $p < .001$. Table 1 presents means and standard deviations of all dependent variables. For clarity and conciseness, we averaged the standardized scores of self-reported prosocial tendencies with the standardized scores of conciliatory behavior and antisocial behavior (reversed) to form a single prosociality score ($\alpha = .59$).¹¹ The pattern of results generally persisted when these measures were analyzed separately.¹² The experimental condition had a significant effect on prosociality, $F(2,197) = 4.65$, $p = .011$, $\eta_p^2 = .045$. Participants exhibited greater prosociality in the agency affirmation, $M = 0.25$ ($SD = 0.62$), compared to the control condition, $M = -0.13$ ($SD = 0.82$), $t(197) = 2.99$, $p = .003$, $\eta_p^2 = .043$. Prosociality in the morality affirmation condition did not differ from the control condition, $t(197) = 0.86$, $p = .391$, $\eta_p^2 = .004$. Finally, consistent with Study 2b,

¹¹ While the reliability of this measure was lower than expected, according to Schmitt (1996) there is no “sacred level” of alpha, as “measures with (by conventional standards) low levels of alpha may still be quite useful” (p. 353).

¹² The increase in prosocial tendencies, $\beta = .24$, $t(197) = 3.04$, $p = .003$, and the decrease in antisocial behavior, $\beta = -.16$, $t(197) = 1.96$, $p = .052$, in the agency affirmation compared to the control condition generally persisted, and the corresponding effects of morality affirmation remained nonsignificant, $ps > .360$. As for the donation to “Tzav Pius,” the increase in the agency affirmation compared to the control condition became nonsignificant (albeit in the predicted direction) in the separate analysis, $\beta = .13$, $t(197) = 1.60$, $p = .111$; the corresponding effect of morality affirmation remained nonsignificant, $p = .844$.

bootstrapping analysis (1,000 resamples) revealed that the effect of agency affirmation on prosociality was mediated through greater readiness to relinquish power for morality, $B = .08$, $SE = .04$, 95% CI [.011, .176].

Additional analysis. To further establish the generalizability of the obtained effect, we examined whether it differed across political camps. A 3 (Condition [agency affirmation, morality affirmation, control]) \times 2 (Political camp [Rightist, Leftists]) ANOVA revealed a main effect of condition, $F(2,194) = 4.26$, $p = .015$, $\eta_p^2 = .042$. Compared to the control condition, the effect of agency affirmation on prosociality was significant, $t(194) = 2.25$, $p = .026$, $\eta_p^2 = .025$, whereas that of morality affirmation was nonsignificant, $t(194) = -0.30$, $p = .767$. There was also a significant main effect for political camp, $F(1,194) = 6.56$, $p = .011$, $\eta_p^2 = .033$, such that leftists showed greater prosociality than rightists, $M_s = 0.15$ ($SD = 0.64$) vs. -0.12 ($SD = 0.82$). The Condition \times Political camp interaction was nonsignificant, $F(2,194) = 1.31$, $p = .273$, $\eta_p^2 = .013$. Specifically, the interaction between agency affirmation (vs. the control) and political camp was nonsignificant, $t(194) = -0.13$, $p = .898$, suggesting that the agency affirmation had an equally positive effect on both rightists and leftists. The interaction between morality affirmation (vs. the control condition) and political camp was also nonsignificant, $t(194) = 1.37$, $p = .171$.

Discussion

Study 3 replicated the positive effects of agency affirmation on prosociality in the context of intrasocietal conflict between Israeli rightists and leftists. Consistent with Studies 1–2, agency affirmation led both rightists and leftists to show greater prosociality towards the conflicting political camp. This finding has broader practical implications, given that reconciliation between right and left in Israel is often considered a prerequisite for the attainment of stable regional peace (Waxman, 2008). Consistent with Study 2b, the effect of agency affirmation on prosociality was mediated by readiness to relinquish some power for the sake of morality. Also, the morality affirmation again had no positive effect on prosociality, suggesting that the particular content (i.e., reassurance of agency) was crucial for the affirmation's effectiveness.

General Discussion

The present research demonstrated that agency affirmation, which reminded members of groups involved in dual conflicts of their ingroup's competence and self-determination, reduced antisocial tendencies and increased prosociality towards their outgroup. Noteworthy, the positive effects of agency affirmation were observed in diverse contexts of intergroup conflict, including the conflict between Switzerland and the EU (Study 1), Israeli Jews referring to Palestinians during both a relatively calm period (Study 2a) and wartime (Study 2b), and Israeli rightists and leftists referring to the intrasocietal conflict between their camps (Study 3), and for various outcome measures (i.e., circumplex scales of intergroup goals, self-reported tendencies, donation behavior, and allocations in an investment game). Consistent with our theorizing regarding the critical role of the affirmation's content, morality affirmation did not affect group members' prosociality (Study 2a and Study 3). Finally, the positive effect of agency affirmation on prosociality was mediated by group members' greater willingness to relinquish some power for the sake of morality (Studies 2b and 3).

The latter finding is theoretically important because members of advantaged groups sometimes help disadvantaged outgroups strategically, as a means to reinforce, rather than relinquish, their dominance (van Leeuwen & Täuber, 2010). However, the finding that group members showed actual readiness to give up some power for morality, and that agency affirmation did not increase their agentic goals in Study 1, bolsters our confidence that this was not the case here. Further bolstering our

confidence that the effect of agency affirmation does not reflect attempts to reassert power is that such attempts occur when a group's advantage is extremely secure (Sachdev & Bourhis, 1985). Almost by definition, this is not the case in dual conflicts. Moreover, the positive effect of agency affirmation on prosociality was not limited to the more powerful group: Leftists in Study 3 represent the weaker party (as the "peace camp" in Israel disintegrated since the collapse of the Oslo Accords; Waxman, 2008), and in Study 1 Switzerland is not more powerful than the EU. Prosocial behavior could not serve as a means to reassert dominance for groups who were not dominant in the first place. Furthermore, attempts to reassert dominance cannot explain the reduction in antisocial behavior.

At the practical level, the fact that group members whose agency was affirmed consistently showed less aggressive behavior and more generous self-reported tendencies and actual behavior is practically noteworthy. Whereas in line with the "primacy of agency" effect, existing research showed that agency threats or perceived lack of agency increased antisocial tendencies (e.g., Rauschenbach, Staerklé, & Scalia, 2016), the present research identified a strategy to reverse this process. This is important both theoretically (as proving that $A \rightarrow B$ is not logically equivalent to proving that $\sim A \rightarrow \sim B$) and practically, as previous interventions that directly attempted to reduce threat often failed to promote prosocial tendencies (e.g., Halperin, Porat, & Wohl, 2013, Study 1).

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Our findings support the needs-based model's argument that restoring conflicting group's positive identities, which are impaired due to the conflict, is critical for reconciliation (Nadler & Shnabel, 2015). Previous work within the model's framework focused on identity-restoration through the exchange of messages, conveyed in public speeches by official representatives, between the conflicting groups (Shnabel et al., 2009) or through third parties (Harth & Shnabel, 2015). However, more recent work has begun to examine the effects of affirmations originating in the self or the ingroup. Barlow et al. (2015) found that when members of perpetrating groups learned that their group offered an apology to the victim group and their fellow group members supported this apology, it restored their positive moral identity; the restoration of morality, in turn, increased their willingness to reconcile and compensate the victim group. The present research complements this work by demonstrating the effectiveness of agency affirmation in contexts of dual-intergroup conflicts. These findings are important because other identity-restoration strategies (i.e., conveying empowering messages by official representatives of the other conflict-party or neutral third parties) are either practically unfeasible or ineffective.

Another theoretical contribution of our findings is that they explain the apparent discrepancy between theorizing regarding the importance of morality for group members (Leach et al., 2007) and findings that in dual conflicts agency-related needs exert greater influence on group members' behavior (SimanTov-Nachlieli & Shnabel, 2014) by pointing to the context (conflictual vs. nonconflictual) as a moderator. Identifying this moderator is critical for understanding the conditions under which moral considerations may be expected (or not) to guide behavior towards other groups. Moreover, consistent with Maslow's (1943) classical theorizing about human needs, our findings suggest that once group members' pressing need for agency is addressed, their moral-needs come to fore and exert greater influence on their behavior. This implies that, at least to some extent, conflicting group members become relatively unresponsive to moral considerations not because they simply do not care about morality (perceiving the outgroup to be outside the "scope of justice"; Clayton & Opatow, 2003), but rather because they are preoccupied with their need to feel that their ingroup is an agentic social actor.

From a broader theoretical perspective, our findings contribute to the relatively recent extension of self-affirmation theory (Steele, 1988) to the group level. So far, research that found positive effects

of group affirmations has not explored contexts of conflicts involving mutual transgressions. To illustrate, Derks et al. (2006) and Sherman et al. (2007), focused on contexts of structural inequalities or sport teams losing a game, and Gunn and Wilson (2011) and Miron et al. (2010) focused on contexts of clear-cut roles of victims and perpetrators, in which participants' ingroup was the perpetrator (e.g., European Canadians' historical mistreatment of the native population). The only exception was research by Čehajić-Clancy, Effron, Halperin, Liberman and Ross (2011), which focused on incidents in which participants' ingroup was the perpetrator, yet these incidents occurred in contexts of dual conflicts (e.g., the Israeli-Palestinian conflict). This research was also the only one that did not find positive effects of group affirmation (specifically, group affirmations failed to increase group members' readiness to admit collective guilt, as opposed to the findings of Gunn & Wilson [2011] and Miron et al. [2010]). Because Čehajić-Clancy et al. (2011) used general group affirmations (without focusing on a particular identity dimension), their findings align with our theorizing that in contexts of dual conflicts, group affirmations must focus on the ingroup's agency to exert positive effects.¹³

In terms of practice improvement, existing interventions to promote constructive intergroup relations (e.g., Maoz & Bar-On, 2002) stress the importance of empathy and mutual recognition of suffering within intergroup dialogues. However, group members often defensively refuse to recognize the outgroups' suffering because this threatens their moral image (Noor et al., 2012). Therefore, existing interventions may benefit from affirming participants' ingroup's agency, which can open them to reconciliation and to which they are unlikely to show defensive responses. Also, agency affirmation does not require direct communication between the conflicting parties, which is an advantage when such communication is missing.

Limitations and Future Directions

One limitation of this research is that it did not identify the potential bounding conditions of agency affirmation. Perhaps in contexts of gross human rights violations, in which members of the outgroup are subjected to extreme moral exclusion (i.e., are outside of scope of justice; Clayton & Opatow, 2003), agency affirmation would not increase the influence of moral considerations on group members' behavior towards the outgroup. Relatedly, in certain types of conflicts, the aggressive acts inflicted upon the outgroup are paternalistically perceived to be carried out in its service. This may happen when this outgroup is perceived as culturally inferior and its exploitation and victimization are construed by the perpetrating group as a "moral duty" intended to help it, as was the case for Asian and Africans in the eyes of Europeans during the colonialist period (Alexander, Brewer, & Herrmann, 1999). In these cases, agency affirmation might actually lead to greater aggressive behavior (construed as "helping") against the outgroup.

Future research may integrate our findings with the literature and common intuition, that "power corrupts" (Rummel, 1994). For example, members of the upper class are generally less helpful towards others and show more unethical behavior compared with their lower-class counterparts (Kraus, Piff, Mendoza-Denton, Rheinschmidt, & Keltner, 2012). Also, members of groups with high power or status discriminate against groups with low power or status more than the other way around (Sachdev & Bourhis, 1985). However, the seeming contradiction between the present results and the "power corrupts" findings can be resolved by considering the presence (or absence) of salient agency threats. The prosocial effects of agency affirmation were found in contexts of dual conflicts, in which agency threats to the groups' identities are highly salient (SimanTov-Nachlieli & Shnabel, 2014). By contrast, the research revealing negative effects for power or status focused on two types of contexts

¹³ Čehajić-Clancy et al. (2011) did find positive effects of *self*-affirmation on collective guilt. Possibly, the affirmation of the self led to positive outcomes because it decreased the salience of participants' group membership.

in which the powerful, high-status groups were not subjected to salient agency threats. The first type is that of laboratory settings in which group members were induced with power or status in “neutral” situations, with no salient identity threats (e.g., Sachdev & Bourhis, 1985). The second type was that of the relations between advantaged and disadvantaged groups within a given society, namely, structural inequality (e.g., Kraus et al., 2012). Yet in such contexts, if anything, advantaged group members experience threat to the moral-social, not to the agency dimension of their identity (Nadler & Shnabel, 2015).

This difference in contexts is critical because the consequences of identity affirmation can be of opposite direction depending on whether or not it occurs on the background of identity threats. To illustrate, in the presence of moral threat (when one or one’s ingroup committed a transgression), moral affirmation, which removes this threat, was found to promote prosocial tendencies (Barlow et al., 2015; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2014). Yet in the absence of moral threat, moral affirmation can lead people to feel that they have “moral licensing” to behave in antisocial manners (Merritt, Effron, & Monin, 2010). Similarly, opposite to our findings, agency affirmation might have negative consequences when induced in the absence of agency threat. This possibility awaits direct examination.

In conclusion, the present research offers innovative integration between the needs-based model of reconciliation, self-affirmation theory, and research on the primacy of morality in intergroup relations. Pointing to the importance of identity-restoration processes, this research puts forward a simple yet efficient strategy to reduce aggressiveness and promote prosocial behavior across the boundaries of conflicting groups.

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