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The Effects of Identity (Subordinate Vs. Superordinate) Salience on Intergroup Attitudes, Anxiety, and Contact Intentions in North Cyprus

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Social identity theory suggests that strength of identification with the ingroup will increase negative attitudes toward the outgroup. The common ingroup identity model builds on this assumption by arguing that when a person is categorized as an ingroup rather than an outgroup member, evaluations of that person will become more positive and group-based biases will reduce. The present research ($N = 280$) tests these assumptions of social identity theory and common ingroup identity model in the context of an ongoing political conflict, that of Cyprus, while using a range of different outcome measures. According to findings, priming superordinate identity reduces intergroup anxiety and increases future contact intentions compared to subgroup priming condition. Further analyses revealed that intergroup anxiety mediated the effects of identity priming on outgroup evaluation and future contact intentions. These findings contribute to theoretical explanations and ongoing debates around the causal relationship between social identity and intergroup relations.

Public Significance Statement

Understanding the role of social identity in improving intergroup relations and assisting with solutions to psychological or societal problems.

Keywords: social identity theory, common ingroup identity model, Cyprus issue

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Violent and prolonged conflicts between various racial, ethnic, ideological, or cultural identity groups constitute a growing problem of a global scale (Fisher, 2001). The concept of identity-based conflict developed by Rothman (1976) introduced a new way of addressing ongoing struggles between groups that are relatively unwilling to compromise and resistant to resolution. Such conflicts are believed to be rooted in the underlying needs and values that form people's social identities. According to Rothman (1976), intractable conflict is almost unavoidable when group identities, and the needs that underlie them, are threatened, or frustrated. In light of the assumptions of social identity theory (SIT) and common ingroup identity model (CIIM), the present article examines the role social identity plays in shaping intergroup relations. The research is based on an identity-based conflict, that of Cyprus and focuses on three outcome measures: intergroup anxiety, outgroup evaluation, and future contact intentions. The assumptions of the SIT and CIIM have not previously been tested within the North Cyprus context. In particular, the role of intergroup anxiety in mediating the relationship between identity priming, outgroup evaluation, and future contact intentions has not been explored within this context. We address this gap in literature by carrying out an experimental study that tests the assumptions of these theories among the underrepresented sample of Turkish Cypriots. Specifically, the study explores the effect of identifying with a superordinate (here, Cypriot, civic) group as opposed to subordinate (Turkish, ethnic) group in shaping the attitudes and behavioral tendencies of Turkish Cypriots toward Greek Cypriots.

SIT

SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) suggests that people are motivated to achieve and maintain positive concepts of themselves to develop their self-esteem. The need for self-esteem motivates group members to protect and enhance the positivity of their group. Individuals consider groups they belong to superior to others and high ingroup identification can lead to biased attitudes toward external groups (Balliet et al., 2014). Wenzel et al. (2003) study also supports the assumptions of the SIT by showing that when identification increases, ingroup favoritism and negative attitudes toward the outgroup will also increase. Research on Dutch citizens has shown that as ingroup identification strengthens, positive attitudes toward minority groups decline (Verkuyten & Brug, 2004). A number of studies on Turkish and Greek Cypriots were also in line with the SIT's assumption that ingroup favoritism may operate through both derogating the outgroup and praising the ingroup (Danielidou & Horvath, 2006; Rustemli et al., 2000).

Contrary to the above, there are studies suggesting that there is no direct negative relationship between ingroup identification and attitudes toward the outgroup. For example, Brewer (1999, 2001) findings suggest that there is no direct relationship between ingroup love and outgroup hate. Mummendey et al. (1992) have argued that for truly aversive discriminatory behavior to occur, subjective legitimation is required. Subjective legitimation refers to the individual's perception that their discriminatory behavior is justified, or legitimate within their social and cultural context. This concept emphasizes the role of legitimation in discrimination, as individuals may rationalize their discriminatory actions based on social norms, stereotypes, or perceived threats. For instance, Otten et al. (1996)

have found that participants whose positive social identity was threatened by assigning them to inferior or minority groups showed an increased willingness to favor their ingroup over the outgroup. A study by Duckitt and Mphuthing (1998) demonstrated that in the context of 1994 South Africa's transitional election Black African identification was significantly related only to attitudes toward Afrikaans Whites but no other ethnic outgroups.

Unlike the studies listed above, the study by Phinney et al. (2007) found that individuals with strong ethnic identity are in fact more moderate and, contrary to assumptions of the SIT, exhibit more positive attitudes toward outgroups. A recent article by Bagci and Husnu Raman (2020) further elaborates on these findings by demonstrating that the effect of identification on outgroup attitudes can differ across different intergroup contexts (Cyprus and Turkey). In line with assumptions of the SIT, Bagci and Husnu Raman's (2020) first study found that priming Turkish ingroup identification in the context of Cyprus led to decreased perspective taking with respect to Greek Cypriots and thereby resulted in more negative outgroup attitudes and behavioral tendencies. On the other hand, their second study showed that priming Turkish ingroup identification in the context of Turkish citizenship led to decreased realistic threat toward Syrian refugees in Turkey which resulted in more positive outgroup attitudes and behavioral tendencies. As in Phinney et al. (2007) study, strong identification with the ingroup led to more positive attitudes toward the outgroup.

To summarize, the findings from previous literature examining the assumption of the SIT that strength of identification with the ingroup will reduce positive attitudes toward the outgroup (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) can be divided into three groups. The first group includes studies in support of this assumption (see Masson & Verkuyten, 1993; Verkuyten & Brug, 2004). The second group includes studies suggesting there is no direct relationship between ingroup identification and attitudes toward the outgroup (see Mummendey et al., 1992; Otten et al., 1996). Finally, the third group includes studies which, in contrast to the assumptions of the SIT, have found a positive relationship between the strength of identification with one's ingroup and positive attitudes toward the outgroup (see Bagci & Husnu Raman, 2020; Phinney et al., 2007). Together, these findings demonstrate that the effect of ingroup identification on outgroup attitudes can occur differently in different intergroup contexts. Therefore, a theoretical contribution of the present research is testing the assumptions of SIT among an underrepresented sample, while investigating a causal relationship between ingroup identification and attitudes toward the outgroup in the context of North Cyprus.

CIIM

The possession of multiple identities is not a new concept. We belong to different groups, and we attribute different characteristics to ourselves and others. In an increasingly multicultural world, people can classify themselves along multiple dimensions of category membership simultaneously, such as being Turkish and Cypriot at the same time (Crisp, 2002). The CIIM (Gaertner et al., 1994) took assumptions of the SIT a step further by proposing a method of conflict reduction between people who belong to different social groups. According to this model, individuals' representation of different group memberships (us and them) could be transformed into one inclusive membership (we). Rather than trying to eliminate group boundaries, the CIIM describes a process by which group

boundaries are covered by a more inclusive superordinate identity. When a person is categorized as an ingroup rather than an outgroup member, evaluations of that person are expected to become more positive and group-based biases are expected to reduce (Andrighetto et al., 2012).

Literature provides longitudinal evidence for Gaertner and Dovidio's CIIM (Eller & Abrams, 2004; Kunst et al., 2015; Vezzali et al., 2015). According to Riek et al. (2010), identifying with a common ingroup identity can decrease intergroup threat while increasing positive outgroup attitudes. More recently, Psaltis and Cakal (2016) found that compared to those identifying as Greeks or Turks of Cyprus, participants identifying as Cypriot showed significantly lower levels of threat, prejudice, and distrust toward members of the opposing community. Donno et al. (2021) findings also demonstrate that cueing common identity among religious Greek Cypriots can increase trust toward the Turkish Cypriot community. The present research builds on these findings by investigating how identifying with a superordinate category can shape Turkish Cypriot attitudes and behavioral tendencies toward the Greek Cypriot community.

Intergroup Anxiety, Outgroup Evaluation, and Future Contact Intentions

In light of the assumptions of SIT and CIIM, the present study examines the impact of social identity on intergroup anxiety, outgroup evaluation, and future contact intentions in North Cyprus. Intergroup anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1985) refers to the negative affect evoked by the prospect of having to engage in an intergroup encounter, which may lead individuals to feel uncertainty, distrust, and antipathy toward members of the outgroup (Dijker, 1987). It is more likely to arise in situations of large status differences between groups: high-status groups may fear the resentment of low-status groups due to their own advantageous position, while members of low-status groups may be anticipating exploitation or inferior treatment. According to the integrated threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), intergroup anxiety is a type of threat that is associated with prejudice. Literature suggests that anxiety toward outgroup members can inhibit positive intergroup relations and reduce future contact intentions (Swart et al., 2011; Wagner et al., 2006). Stathi et al. (2017) found that anxiety mediates the relationship between intergroup contact and forgiveness in various post conflict contexts, including Cyprus. Other studies found that intergroup anxiety can also mediate the relations between contact and prejudice (Paolini et al., 2004; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

According to Myers and Twenge (2016), outgroup evaluation (a judgment of a group and its members) is an important determinant of whether individuals would like to establish relationships between groups. The more negative evaluations are the less willing group members will be to interact with members of the outgroup. The present study also investigates future contact intentions as a form of behavioral intentions which represent our strivings to attain a goal or desire. Intentions are the most proximal psychological variable to actual behavior (Husnu, 2009). Research has demonstrated that "approach and avoidance" behavioral intentions are not always automatic. In changing social circumstances, such as in the conditions of imagined contact (Turner et al., 2013) or under a temporary salient norm of fairness and equality (Wyer, 2010), approach behavioral tendencies increase, while avoidant tendencies

decrease. Research within the theory of reasoned action framework (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) has consistently revealed that, compared to general attitudes, behavioral intentions are more directly and strongly predictive of a range of behaviors (e.g., Albarracín et al., 2001). According to the theory of planned behavior, individuals with a high sense of perceived control are more likely to follow through with their intentions, compared to those with low sense of perceived control (Armitage & Conner, 2001). The underlying assumption in this line of research is that the likelihood of carrying out an action is based on the extent to which one intends to do so (Husnu, 2009).

Previous literature on SIT and CIIM explored the relationship between social identity and intergroup anxiety, outgroup evaluation, and future contact intentions. In accordance with the SIT, studies have found negative associations between the strength of identification and behavioral intentions (Yitmen & Verkuyten, 2018), particularly future contact intentions (Crisp & Hewstone, 2007) toward the outgroup as well as positive associations between strength of identification and intergroup anxiety (Aberson & Gaffney, 2009). As follows from the CIIM, through superordinate identity salience, outgroup members can be perceived as ingroup members, which leads to changes in attitudes toward them (Stone & Crisp, 2007). This way, former outgroup members are being awarded greater trust, decreased threat, and other benefits. This can result in more positive evaluations and behavioral intentions toward these former outgroup members (Guerra et al., 2021) and reduced intergroup anxiety (Riek et al., 2010).

The North Cyprus Context

The focus of the present article is on Cyprus, the third largest island in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Republic of Cyprus was established in 1960, as a bicomunal government between Greek and Turkish Cypriots (Hatzimihail, 2013). By the time of independence from British rule, Turkish and Greek communities had a stronger identity attached to their ethnic groups, setting the stage for an identity-based conflict (Fisher, 2001). Ethnic differences between the Greek Cypriot majority and the Turkish Cypriot minority led to the Cyprus Conflict (Hadjipavlou, 2007), which resulted in a ceasefire line. This line was meant to keep the Greek Cypriots in the southern part and the Turkish Cypriots in the northern part of the island. The city of Nicosia is widely recognized as the last divided capital in the world and the United Nations' mediation efforts continue today, while United Nations soldiers remain along the "Green Line" that divides the island (Husnu & Paolini, 2019).

Within the legal terminology of national and international law, people living in Northern Cyprus are Cypriot by region (territory, birthplace), Turkish by ethnic origin, members of Turkish-speaking community by language and European by desire or ideal (see Vural & Rustemli, 2006). The focus of this research is on the underrepresented group of citizens of Northern Cyprus, with a population of 190,494 people (Ruh & Koprulu, 2022). Studies delving into social psychological phenomena in Cyprus, such as intergroup relations, conflict resolution, and identity dynamics, are relatively scarce (see Husnu & Lajunen, 2015). This underrepresentation hampers the development of theories and interventions that are culturally and contextually relevant to the Cypriot population. To enhance the comprehensiveness and applicability of theories, social psychology needs to focus more on diverse

contexts like Cyprus. This research aims to address the above by examining how ethnic and civic conceptions of social identity can affect intergroup relations in the island.

The Relationship Between Superordinate (Cypriot, Civic) and Subgroup (Turkish, Ethnic) Identities in the Island

Bloom (1990) describes national identity as a condition where a mass of people identify with the same national symbols. This permits them to act together as one psychological group in order to enhance or reduce a threat to these symbols. In this sense national identity is not an unchanging and essentialist concept but is dependent on the cultural and sociopolitical context (Sutherland, 2005). For example, national identities fluctuate over time due to reasons such as economic depression and war shame (Hutchinson, 2000), while modernization softens intergroup boundaries within the community, leading to changes in communal categories (Melson & Wolpe, 1970).

In a given community collective identity is constructed through both subjective components like the belief of common descent and objective components such as territory and citizenship. The salience of these components among group members' collective identity may vary (Vural & Rustemli, 2006). There are two main conceptualizations of national identity and nationalism: ethnic and civic (Smith, 1991).

Civic identity "is based on well-defined territory, a community of laws and institutions, a single political will, equal rights for members of the nation and common values, traditions or sentiments that bind people together" (Sekulic, 2004, p. 460). Cypriotness has been the territorial-civic component of collective identity, used by both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities to separate their identities from Greece and Turkey. When individuals assign priority to a territorial entity regardless of their ethnic, religious, linguistic, or tribal affiliations, civic identity would gain saliency (Citrin et al., 2001). For both Greek Cypriots (Papadakis, 1993) and Turkish Cypriots (Vural & Rustemli, 2006), the Cypriot category is most salient among those who support rapprochement with each other. In line with Hutchinson (2000) assumption that national identities fluctuate over time, the salience of the Cypriot civic-national category among Turkish Cypriot community also seems to vary from study to study. For instance, Yetkili (2007) North Cyprus study found Cypriot identity to be the most salient one compared to Turkish and Muslim categories, respectively. Vural and Rustemli's (2006) article on the other hand found Turkishness to be more central and salient than Cypriot and Muslim categories.

Ethnic identity refers to a type of identification based on cultural, ethnic, or national characteristics including national language (Safran, 2004) or the belief of common ethnic-national origin (Sekulic, 2004). The Turkish ethnic identity indicates the existence of a common Turkish culture or a Turkish ethnic background (Vural & Rustemli, 2006). According to Lacher and Kaymak (2005), Turkish identity has been constructed and sustained in the struggles against Greek Cypriot efforts after 1960 to transform the governance system of the Republic of Cyprus into a majoritarian structure. Pollis (1973) argues that both Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot identifications with their own communities increased as a result of the British colonial policies. The intercommunal disputes in Cyprus have transformed the relations between the Turkish

Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities into "an extension of Turco-Greek relations" (Yavuz, 1991, p. 60).

The Present Research

The first aim of present research was to test the SIT assumption that strength of identification with the ingroup will increase negative attitudes toward the outgroup (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Previous literature demonstrated that the effect of ingroup identification on outgroup attitudes can occur differently in different intergroup contexts (see Bagci & Husnu Raman, 2020; Phinney et al., 2007; Verkuyten & Brug, 2004). The present study investigated a causal relationship between ingroup identification and attitudes toward the outgroup in the context of North Cyprus.

The CIIM proposed that when a person is categorized as an ingroup rather than an outgroup member, evaluations of that person are expected to become more positive and group-based biases are expected to reduce (Andrighetto et al., 2012). Based on the above, in this study we expected to observe a difference in outgroup attitudes and contact intentions upon different types of identity priming.

Finally, in intergroup contact research anxiety has been shown to create an expectation that intergroup interactions will be challenging (Britt et al., 1996). Previous research suggests that anxiety toward outgroup members can inhibit positive intergroup relations and reduce future contact intentions (Swart et al., 2011; Yetkili et al., 2018), in some cases, this anxiety can even lead to the avoidance of intergroup interactions altogether (Plant & Devine, 2003). In the present study, we expected there to be mediational sequences between the type of identity that is primed (subgroup vs. superordinate), participants' perceived level of intergroup anxiety and the dependent variables: outgroup evaluation and future contact intentions.

In light of the above, the following hypotheses were tested:

Hypothesis 1: Compared to the control condition, priming the subgroup (Turkish, ethnic) identity will increase intergroup anxiety and reduce positive outgroup evaluations and future contact intentions toward the Greek Cypriot outgroup.

Hypothesis 2: Priming the superordinate (Cypriot, civic), compared to subgroup (Turkish, ethnic) identity will reduce intergroup anxiety and increase positive outgroup evaluations and future contact intentions toward the Greek Cypriot community.

Hypothesis 3: Intergroup anxiety will mediate the effect of identity priming (subgroup [Turkish, ethnic] versus superordinate [Cypriot, civic]) on future contact intentions and outgroup evaluations (see Figure 1).

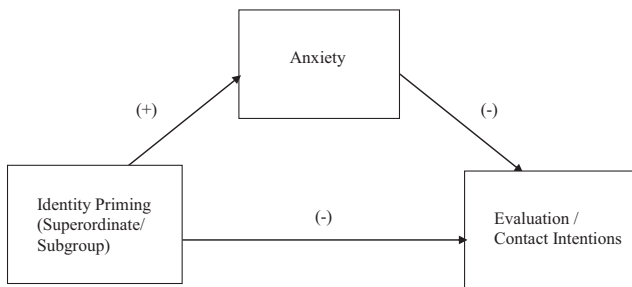
Method

Design and Participants

The study employs a between subjects experimental design. Faul et al. (2009) suggest that a three-group design requires an N of 159 for 0.80 power to detect a medium effect. To increase statistical power, and reduce probability of a type II error, a priori power analysis was conducted where power was set to .95 instead of .80. According to the results of the power analysis, the same three-group design would require an N of 252 to detect a medium effect (Cohen, 1992). In light of this, 280 Turkish Cypriot participants

Figure 1

Mediation Model Outlining the Effect of Intergroup Anxiety on the Relationship Between Identity Priming, Outgroup Evaluation, and Future Contact Intentions



were recruited and randomly assigned to one of three identity priming conditions outlined in the procedure section. The sample included 157 female and 116 male participants; seven participants did not disclose their gender. Participants were aged between 18 and 71 ($M = 35.91$, $SD = 11.21$) years.

Procedure

Researchers obtained ethical approval from their institution prior to data collection. Participants engaged in an online experiment using Qualtrics, during which they were requested to provide informed consent for their participation in the study. Subsequently, they supplied demographic information and were randomly assigned to one of three priming conditions: control (no priming), superordinate (Cypriot, civic) identity priming, or subgroup (Turkish, ethnic) identity priming. The assignment was randomized using the randomizer feature on Qualtrics, ensuring an equal distribution of participants across all priming conditions.

In these conditions, participants read different scripts used in previous identity priming studies and were instructed to write down what they have imagined in as much detail as possible. This procedure was initially used by Sassenberg and Wieber (2005) who primed identification with different age groups (youth vs. elderly) and found that the scripts did increase participants' ingroup identification. Studies have tested the same manipulation in various intergroup settings including North Cyprus and Turkey. In two separate studies, Bagci and Husnu Raman (2020) found that priming the national identity (being Turkish Cypriot in Study 1 and Turkish in Study 2) using Sassenberg and Wieber's (2005) instructions did increase ingroup identification in both contexts compared to a no priming control condition.

Following the priming task, participants wrote down what they have imagined before completing dependent measures. The control, superordinate, and subgroup identity priming instructions are listed below:

Control Task

Please take a minute to imagine you are walking in the outdoors. Try to imagine aspects of the scene around you (e.g., is it a beach, a forest, are there trees, hills, what is on the horizon).

Superordinate Identity Priming Task

Please try to remember a situation in which you were happy about several Cypriot people. It is important that you do not choose a situation in which you were happy about only one Cypriot person but a situation in which you were happy about several Cypriot people. If you cannot remember an experience of your own, you can also write about an experience a different or an imagined person had. Take as much time as necessary and try to get into the feeling and the situation as intensively as possible. Please describe in as much detail as possible which concrete events led to your happiness.

Subgroup Identity Priming Task

Please try to remember a situation in which you were happy about several Turkish people. It is important that you do not choose a situation in which you were happy about only one Turkish person but a situation in which you were happy about several Turkish people. If you cannot remember an experience of your own, you can also write about an experience a different or an imagined person had. Take as much time as necessary and try to get into the feeling and the situation as intensively as possible. Please describe in as much detail as possible which concrete events led to your happiness.

Materials

Outgroup Evaluation

Attitudes toward the outgroup were measured using six items adapted from Wright et al. (1997) General Evaluation scale: "Using the scales below, please describe how you feel about Greek Cypriots in general (1 = cold, to 9 = warm; 1 = positive, to 9 = negative [reversed]; 1 = friendly, to 9 = hostile [reversed]; 1 = suspicious, to 9 = trusting; 1 = respectful, to 9 = contempt [reversed]; 1 = admiration, to 9 = disgust [reversed])." Higher scores represented more positive attitudes toward members of the outgroup. A composite outgroup evaluation score was created from the mean of these items ($\alpha = .86$).

Intergroup Anxiety

Participants were asked: "If you were to meet a Greek Cypriot in the future, how do you think you would feel?" followed by 10 items from the scale by Stephan and Stephan (1985). Participants reported how awkward, suspicious, embarrassed, defensive, anxious, happy (reversed), comfortable (reversed), self-conscious, confident (reversed), and careful they would feel on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*). Items were recoded such that higher scores represented higher intergroup anxiety. A composite intergroup anxiety score was created by the mean of these items ($\alpha = .86$).

Future Contact Intentions

To measure contact intentions, participants were asked to respond to two items adapted from Mackie et al. (2000); "If you had a chance, how much more contact would you like to have with Greek Cypriots?," "To what extent do you think you avoid contact with Greek Cypriots? (reversed)." These items were correlated with each other ($r = .58$, $p < .001$) and were answered using a 7-point Likert

scale (1 = *not at all*, to 7 = *very much*). Higher scores represented enhanced contact intentions with members of the outgroup.

Results

Means and standard deviations of all dependent measures can be found in Table 1.

A series of one-way between groups (identity priming task: no priming [control] vs. civic priming vs. ethnic priming) analyses of variance with Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference post hoc comparisons were carried out to test Hypotheses 1 and 2 by evaluating the difference in dependent measures across the three priming conditions. The outgroup evaluation scores revealed no main effect for priming task, $F(2, 266) = 1.94, p = .146, \eta_p^2 = .014$. There was no difference in outgroup evaluation between the three priming conditions.

The future contact intention scores revealed a significant main effect for priming task, $F(2, 266) = 3.61, p = .028, \eta_p^2 = .026$. Compared with contact intentions in civic priming ($M = 5.93, SD = 1.06, p = .021$), intentions were significantly lower in the Ethnic priming condition ($M = 5.40, SD = 1.48$). There was no difference in contact intentions between control and civic priming ($p = .421$) or control and ethnic priming ($p = .280$) conditions.

The intergroup anxiety scores once again revealed a significant main effect for priming task, $F(2, 266) = 4.19, p = .016, \eta_p^2 = .031$. Compared with intergroup anxiety in civic priming ($M = 2.21, SD = .91, p = .011$) anxiety level was significantly higher in the ethnic priming condition ($M = 2.68, SD = 1.24$). There was no difference in intergroup anxiety scores between control and civic priming ($p = .329$) or control and ethnic priming ($p = .258$) conditions.

Through these analyses, we investigated a causal relationship between ingroup identification and attitudes toward the outgroup in the context of Cyprus. Our findings reject Hypothesis 1 by showing that compared to control condition, priming the subgroup (Turkish, ethnic) identity did not change intergroup anxiety, attitudes, or behavioral tendencies toward the Greek Cypriot outgroup. Findings do, however, show some support for Hypothesis 2, as participants in the superordinate (Cypriot, civic) priming condition did report reduced intergroup anxiety and increased willingness to engage in contact with Greek Cypriots compared to those in the subgroup (Turkish, ethnic) priming condition. Outgroup evaluation on the other hand did not differ based on identity priming task.

When we look at the relationship between the dependent variables, intergroup anxiety was significantly correlated with outgroup evaluation ($r = -.47, p < .01$) and with future contact intentions ($r = -.65, p < .01$). There was also a significant correlation between outgroup evaluation and future contact intentions ($r = .70, p < .01$). Therefore, in line with Hypothesis 3, we examined and found

that intergroup anxiety mediated the relationship between identity priming, outgroup evaluation and future contact intentions. We used PROCESS (Model 4) to test this hypothesis. The overall model for evaluation was significant, $R^2 = 0.05, F(1, 168) = 8.12, p < .01$. As shown in Figure 2, the total effect of priming on outgroup evaluation was not significant, $b = -0.49, SE = 0.25, t = -1.96, p = .052, 95\% CI [-0.98, 0.01]$. The direct effect of priming on evaluation was nonsignificant, $b = -0.13, SE = 0.22, t = -0.58, p = .564, 95\% CI [-0.57, 0.31]$, but the indirect effect of priming via anxiety was significant, $b = -0.36, SE = 0.13, 95\% CI [-0.62, -0.12]$.

The overall model for future contact intentions was also significant, $R^2 = 0.05, F(1, 168) = 8.12, p < .01$. As shown in Figure 3, the total effect of priming on contact intentions was significant, $b = -0.53, SE = 0.20, t = -2.71, p < .01, 95\% CI [-0.92, -0.15]$. The direct effect of priming on contact intentions was nonsignificant, $b = -0.14, SE = 0.14, t = -0.96, p = .341, 95\% CI [-0.42, 0.15]$, but the indirect effect of priming via anxiety was significant, $b = -0.40, SE = 0.15, 95\% CI [-0.70, -0.12]$.

Discussion

A theoretical contribution of the present research was testing the assumptions of the SIT among an underrepresented sample, while investigating a causal relationship between ingroup identification, outgroup attitudes, and behavioral intentions in the context of North Cyprus. Understanding ingroup identification in the context of Cyprus is important due to its close relationship with the Cyprus issue: the ongoing conflict between the Greek Cypriot majority and the Turkish Cypriot minority (Husnu & Paolini, 2019). In light of the assumptions of SIT and CIIM, the present study examined the role social identity plays in shaping intergroup relations in Cyprus.

In terms of support for the SIT's assumption of direct negative relationship between the strength of identification and attitudes toward the outgroup, the current state of research can be divided into three groups. The first group of literature (see Masson & Verkuyten, 1993; Verkuyten & Brug, 2004) supports this assumption, the second group (see Mummendey et al., 1992; Otten et al., 1996) finds no such relationship, and the third group (see Bagci & Husnu Raman, 2020; Phinney et al., 2007) suggests there to be a positive relationship instead. Our findings are in line with the second group of studies (i.e., Mummendey et al., 1992; Otten et al., 1996): When Turkish Cypriot participants' subgroup (Turkish, ethnic) identity was primed, compared with a no priming control condition, their attitudes and behavioral intentions toward the Greek Cypriot outgroup did not change. According to integrated threat theory when intergroup threat is low, the effects of ingroup identification become less pronounced (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). In the present study, despite ongoing geopolitical tensions and the divided nature of

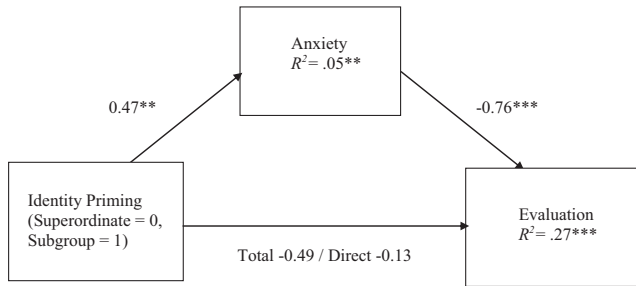
Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of All Measures as a Function of Identity Priming Task

Identity priming task	No priming (control)	Civic priming	Ethnic priming	Total
Outgroup evaluation	6.17 (1.69)	6.32 (1.59)	5.83 (1.67)	6.11 (1.66)
Future contact intentions	5.69 (1.32)	5.93 (1.06)	5.40 (1.48)	5.68 (1.31)
Intergroup anxiety	2.43 (1.04)	2.21 (0.91)	2.68 (1.24)	2.44 (1.08)

Note. Standard deviations are shown in parentheses. Full range of the scales: outgroup evaluation (1–9), future contact intentions (1–7), intergroup anxiety (1–7).

Figure 2
Coefficients for Effect of Priming Civic Versus. Ethnic Identities on General Outgroup Evaluation via Anxiety

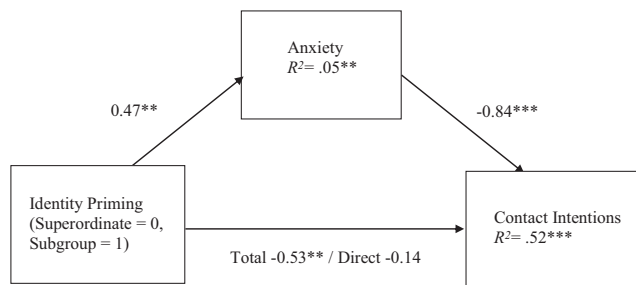


** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

the island, Turkish Cypriot participants reported relatively low levels of intergroup anxiety. Therefore, one potential explanation of why priming the subgroup (Turkish, ethnic) identity did not change attitudes and behavioral intentions compared to a control condition could be due to the low levels of perceived threat from the Greek Cypriot outgroup. These experimental findings contribute to our understanding of the SIT by endorsing the idea that the way ingroup identification affects attitudes and behavioral tendencies can vary depending on the intergroup context.

Besides testing the assumptions of the SIT, another theoretical contribution of current research was achieved through examining the CIIM’s proposition that when different group members consider themselves belonging to a higher order group, rather than two separate groups, there will be more positive attitudes between them (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). In the context of North Cyprus, as different identities of Turkish Cypriots (i.e., Turkish or Cypriot) were made salient, they differentiated more from the other groups (Greek Cypriots or Turkish people; Agdelen, 2019). In light of this, the present study focused on enhancing ingroup identification with subgroup (Turkish, ethnic) and superordinate (Cypriot, civic) categories while investigating the impact of identity priming on outgroup evaluation, future contact intentions, and intergroup anxiety. According to our findings, there was no direct effect of identity priming on outgroup attitudes. Results showed no significant difference in outgroup evaluation scores between participants in the superordinate and subgroup priming

Figure 3
Coefficients for Effect of Priming Civic Versus Ethnic Identities on Future Contact Intentions via Anxiety



** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

conditions. However, mediation analyses revealed a significant indirect effect of priming on outgroup evaluation via intergroup anxiety. In line with the CIIM (see Andrighetto et al., 2012), one potential explanation of this effect could be that priming the civic component of collective identity, rather than ethnic identity, led participants to perceive the subordinate “Greek Cypriot” outgroup as members of the superordinate “Cypriot” ingroup. This identification with the superordinate category reduced intergroup anxiety and the negative affect evoked by the prospect of engaging in an intergroup encounter with the Greek Cypriot community (see Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Finally, in line with Riek et al. (2010), the reduction in intergroup anxiety increased positive outgroup evaluations which is believed to be an important determinant of whether individuals would like to establish relationships between groups (Myers & Twenge, 2016). These results contradict Wenzel et al. (2003) findings by demonstrating that when members of different groups belong to one shared category, there can be more positive attitudes between them. This might be due to the fact that in Wenzel et al., study group members strongly identified with both ingroup and inclusive categories (dual identity).

In this study, besides attitudes we have also looked at behavioral tendencies toward the Greek Cypriot community. Behavioral tendencies are the most proximal psychological variable to actual behavior (Husnu, 2009). Previous research has shown that “approach and avoidance” behavioral tendencies between group members can play an important role in intergroup relations (Wyer, 2010). Even though behavioral intentions toward an outgroup are believed to be automatic, experimental studies have demonstrated that instant changes in social circumstances can also change behavioral intentions. For instance, when the contact situation is imagined (Turner et al., 2013) or egalitarian norms are made salient (Wyer, 2010), approach tendencies toward the outgroup increase while avoidance behavioral tendencies decrease. In line with the above findings, the present study has shown that changing the social circumstances through identity priming also changed participants’ behavioral intentions. Participants in the superordinate (Cypriot, civic) priming condition reported lower intergroup anxiety and higher willingness to interact with Greek Cypriot outgroup compared to participants in the subgroup (Turkish, ethnic) priming condition. These experimental findings further our understanding of the CIIM by showing that when we categorize someone as an ingroup rather than outgroup member, not only our evaluations of them become more positive (Psaltis & Cakal, 2016), but our approach tendencies toward the outgroup also increase.

Similar to the intergroup contact research, which suggests that anxiety leads to avoidance of intergroup interactions (Plant & Devine, 2003), current findings also demonstrate that, besides outgroup evaluation, intergroup anxiety mediates the effects of identity priming on future contact intentions. Priming the superordinate component of collective identity, rather than subgroup identity, reduced intergroup anxiety. This reduction in intergroup anxiety then increased future contact intentions toward the outgroup. Previous literature suggests that anxiety toward outgroup members can inhibit positive intergroup relations and reduce future contact intentions (Plant & Devine, 2003; Yetkili et al., 2018). However, the mediating role of intergroup anxiety in explaining a causal relationship between identity priming, outgroup evaluation, and future contact intentions has not previously been established. Present research fills this gap in the literature by presenting two significant mediation models.

In addition to the above theoretical contributions, this study also has a number of practical implications. First, the present study increases the understanding of the Cyprus issue and raises awareness of identity-based conflict in Cyprus. Second, it contributes to the development of potential peace building strategies in the island and abroad by demonstrating the importance of superordinate identity in improving attitudes, reducing anxiety, and enhancing contact intentions. Finally, this study enhances our understanding of the specific experience of Turkish Cypriots, which, like most minoritized communities, continue to be underrepresented in research. When it comes to conflict resolution and peace building strategies, and within social psychology in general, research is dominated by data capturing the experiences of majority groups (Roberts et al., 2020). By adding the perspective of a minoritized community, our data will enrich the current models used in social identity and conflict research, which will contribute to future interventions.

A limitation of the present study was having small effect sizes. Future research may also attempt to increase ingroup identification through the use of other strategies including visual stimuli. Despite the prominence of intention-based models, critics argue that behavioral intentions do not always translate into actions (see Sheeran et al., 2005). This prompts the need to consider actual behavior as a more reliable metric in future research. Finally, there is literature which suggests that prior contact experiences can affect intergroup attitudes and anxiety (Yetkili et al., 2018). The present study was not controlling for this potential confounding effect, and it would be useful for future identity priming research to explore how previous contact experiences may affect attitudes and intentions.

Further research is required to fully understand the role of ingroup identification in conflictual intergroup relations. In Sassenberg and Wieber's (2005) priming task, once the participants have read the instructions, they are asked to write down what they have imagined before completing dependent measures. We believe that future research could analyze these participant scripts in order to explore common themes in identifying with a social group. The effectiveness of the priming technique in increasing strength of identification has already been established in previous literature (see Bagci and Husnu Raman (2020), Sassenberg and Wieber (2005)); therefore, we have not included this manipulation check in the present study. However, future studies might benefit from having a manipulation check to strengthen the assumption that priming does increase identification. We have only examined how Turkish ethnic and Cypriot civic conceptions of social identity can affect intergroup relations in the island. However, people in Northern Cyprus can identify strongly with other social categories such as being Turkish Cypriot, Muslim, and European (Yetkili, 2007). Therefore, future studies can expand on this line of identity priming work by looking at the impact of various national, religious, and political categories in shaping intergroup attitudes and behavioral tendencies in the island. It would also be beneficial to replicate this study among the Greek Cypriot majority population.

Conclusion

In summary, the present study examined the effects of identity priming in the context of an ongoing political conflict, that of Cyprus, while using a range of different outcome measures. Findings demonstrate that participants in the superordinate

priming condition reported reduced levels of anxiety and higher willingness to interact with the outgroup compared to those in the subgroup priming condition. Intergroup anxiety mediated the effects of identity priming on outgroup evaluation and future contact intentions. Considering the role of intergroup anxiety in avoidance of intergroup interactions (Plant & Devine, 2003) and the importance of future contact intentions in predicting actual behavior (Albarracín et al., 2001), these findings contribute to SIT and CIIM's explanation of the causal relationship between identification and intergroup relations.

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