

Summary

“Solidarity is the Kindness Between Peoples”: The Role of Ethnic Identification and Conflict Narratives in Solidarity Between Different Groups

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Identification with an ethnic group has both positive and negative intergroup outcomes (Masson & Verkuyten, 1993; Phinney et al., 1997). For example, ethnic identification predicts more ingroup favoritism and more positive evaluations of one’s own group (Maloku et al., 2016; Masson & Verkuyten, 1993) as well as more wellbeing, especially among disadvantaged group members (Zdrenka et al., 2015). Ethnic identification also predicts less warmth towards outgroup members, less intergroup trust (Cakal & Petrović, 2017), less support for minority rights (Uluğ & Uysal, 2023; Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2006), and more prejudice and discrimination against outgroup members (Mummendey et al., 2001; Negy et al., 2003). A few studies which were conducted in the Turkish-Kurdish conflict context have also shown that higher ethnic identification among Turks is related to negative outgroup attitudes (see, e.g., Bağcı & Çelebi, 2017). For example, Çelebi and colleagues (2014) indicated that higher ethnic identification among Turks is associated with lower trust in Kurds. Çoymak (2018) has also shown that the importance of ethnic identity is a significant predictor of patriotism among Turks. Although it has been shown in the literature that ethnic identification may have positive or negative consequences for intergroup relations, no previous study has shown how ethnic identification may be related to intergroup solidarity.

It is fair to argue that individuals do not have only one identity and usually have more than one identity. Some of these identities have an advantaged status in society, whereas others do have a disadvantaged status in society (Cole, 2009). These multiple identities may affect individuals’ behaviors both positively and negatively. For example, previous studies have shown the effect of multiple identities on individuals’ wellbeing (Brook et al., 2008). Similarly, Curtin and colleagues (2016) showed in their qualitative study that activists’ experi-

ences, which were associated with their advantaged and disadvantaged identities, caused both activism and the emergence of new identities for them. However, as far as I know, no study in this area has examined the relationship between having both an advantaged and disadvantaged identity in the context of conflict and solidarity with disadvantaged groups.

Previous research in the Turkish-Kurdish conflict context highlighted two opposing conflict narratives endorsed by different groups: (a) a *terrorism narrative*, which describes the problem as stemming mainly from the PKK and foreign powers, and (b) an *independence narrative*, which describes the problem as a need for independence for Kurds. The independence narrative is largely endorsed by Kurds, who have a disadvantaged position in society due to their ethnic identity. On the other hand, the terrorism narrative is largely endorsed by Turks, who have an advantaged position due to their ethnic identity. Even though ethnic identities may play an important role in shaping people’s conflict understandings, there may still be some members of the advantaged group, *Turks*, who endorse the conflict narrative of the disadvantaged group, *Kurds* (i.e., independence narrative). Uluğ and Cohrs (2017a) indicated that more endorsement of the independence narrative predicted more support for reconciliation and peace among Turks. I argue that endorsement of conflict narratives may predict advantaged group members’ not only attitudes toward reconciliation and peace but also may predict their political solidarity with the disadvantaged group that is part of the conflict. However, no single study has examined the role of conflict narratives in political solidarity.

In addition, how does having both an advantaged (e.g., ethnic Turkish identity) and disadvantaged identity (e.g., *çapulcu* or *gezici* identity) play an important role in standing in solidarity with disadvantaged groups? I argue

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that advantaged group members may stand in solidarity with other disadvantaged group members that are not part of the conflict once they take the perspective of the disadvantaged through endorsing their conflict perspective. So, as researchers, we need to understand whether political solidarity with one disadvantaged group, who is part of a conflict (e.g., Kurds), may generalize to other disadvantaged groups that are *not* part of the conflict (e.g., Alevis; see Glasford & Calcagno, 2012). If generalizable, it can be argued that the endorsement of one disadvantaged group's conflict narrative by advantaged group members may also strengthen their political solidarity with other disadvantaged groups.

The Present Study

In this study, I aim to examine how identification with an advantaged identity (i.e., ethnic Turkish identity) may predict political solidarity with Kurds among *çapulcu* Turks, who have both advantaged and disadvantaged identities. Second, I aim to investigate how endorsement of conflict narratives of both advantaged and disadvantaged groups may mediate the relationship between ethnic identification and political solidarity. Third, I examine whether political solidarity with one group (Kurds) that is part of the conflict can be generalized to another group (Alevis) that is *not* part of the conflict. Thus, I aim to contribute to the discussions on social identity, conflict narratives, and intergroup solidarity by showing whether political solidarity with a disadvantaged group is generalizable to other disadvantaged groups (secondary transfer effect; Pettigrew, 1997, 2009). I propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Ethnic Turkish identification will be positively related to the endorsement of the terrorism narrative.

Hypothesis 2: Ethnic Turkish identification will be negatively related to the endorsement of the independence narrative.

Hypothesis 3: Endorsement of the terrorism narrative will be negatively related to political solidarity with Kurds.

Hypothesis 4: Endorsement of the independence narrative will be positively related to political solidarity with Kurds.

Hypothesis 5: There will be a negative indirect effect of ethnic Turkish identification on political solidarity with Kurds through the endorsement of a) the terrorism narrative and b) the independence narrative (Theoretical Model of Political Solidarity with the Primary Group; Figure 1).

Hypothesis 6: Political solidarity with Kurds will be positively related to political solidarity with Alevis.

Hypothesis 7: There will be a negative indirect ef-

fect of ethnic Turkish identification on political solidarity with Alevis through a) the endorsement of the terrorism narrative, b) the endorsement of the independence narrative, and c) political solidarity with Kurds (Theoretical Model of Political Solidarity with the Secondary Group; Figure 2).

Method

Participants and Procedure

All participants completed the survey online. The link to the survey was distributed on a variety of Facebook and email groups. First, participants were asked about their ethnic identity (e.g., Kurdish, Turkish). Second, participants who reported their ethnic identity as Turkish indicated whether or not they saw themselves as *çapulcu* based on the recent Gezi protests. In total, 295 participants were included in the analyses: 135 (45.8%) self-identified as women, 155 (52.5%) as men, and five participants did not respond to this question. Their age ranged from 18 to 69 ($M = 30.79$, $SD = 11.07$).

Materials

All items were responded to using a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*).

Ethnic identification. Ethnic identification was assessed with three items adapted from Roccas et al. (2006): “*Being a Turk is an important part of my identity*,” “*It is important to me to view myself as a Turk*,” and “*When I talk about Turks I usually say ‘we’ rather than ‘they’*” ($\alpha = .83$).

Conflict narratives. I used two conflict narratives identified by previous research with lay people (Uluğ & Cohrs, 2016), academics and journalists (Uluğ & Cohrs, 2017b) and members of parliament (Uluğ & Cohrs, 2017c): (a) a *terrorism narrative* and (b) an *independence narrative*. Participants were asked to indicate their endorsement of each of the two narratives:

Independence narrative. The following one-item measure assessed participants' endorsement of the independence narrative: “*In my opinion, the Kurdish problem is an independence problem for Kurds because the status of Kurds living in Turkey is like a colony under the Republic of Turkey. Therefore, to solve this problem, an independent Kurdistan should be established, and its imprisoned leader, Abdullah Öcalan, should be released.*”

Terrorism narrative. The following one-item measure assessed participants' endorsement of the terrorism narrative: “*In my opinion, this problem is a problem created by the PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan). The causes of this problem are PKK and the instigation of foreign powers. To solve this problem, PKK should*

give away their weapons, and TSK (Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri-Turkish Armed Forces) should fight and end terror by active counterterrorism policies. No matter what happens, the unitary state structure of Turkey should not be changed.”

Political solidarity with Kurds and Alevis. Political solidarity was measured with three items adapted from Glasford and Calcagno (2012): “Çapulcus and Kurds/Alevis should work together to improve the position of both groups,” “Çapulcus and Kurds/Alevis must stick together and work with each other to change the position of both groups,” and “Çapulcus and Kurds/Alevis would be better off if they worked together to improve each group’s position” ($\alpha_{Kurds} = .96$; $\alpha_{Alevis} = .96$).

Demographic variables were measured with categorical questions, including ethnic identity, ideology (çapulcu), gender, age, education, and religious sect.

Results

Preliminary Analysis

Preliminary analyses examined relations between the variables. Turkish ethnic identification correlated positively with the endorsement of the terrorism narrative ($r = .57, p < .001$; see Table 1). On the other hand, Turkish ethnic identification correlated negatively with the endorsement of the independence narrative ($r = -.46, p < .001$), political solidarity with Kurds ($r = -.48, p < .001$) and political solidarity with Alevis ($r = -.35, p < .001$).

Endorsement of the independence narrative correlated negatively with the endorsement of the terrorism narrative ($r = -.59, p < .001$) and positively with political solidarity with Kurds ($r = .42, p < .001$) and Alevis ($r = .39, p < .001$). Endorsement of the terrorism narrative correlated negatively with political solidarity with Kurds ($r = -.56, p < .001$) and Alevis ($r = -.43, p < .001$). Last, solidarity with Kurds correlated positively with solidarity with Alevis ($r = .82, p < .001$).

Path Analysis

Using the Calis Procedure in SAS 9.4 (Sas Institute Inc., 2016) with maximum likelihood estimation (ML), I conducted a path analysis to provide one simultaneous test of our hypotheses with respect to the outcome variable (political solidarity with Alevis), using 1) ethnic identification as an exogenous variable, 2) endorsement of the independence and terrorism narratives and solidarity with Kurds as endogenous mediating variables, and 3) political solidarity with Alevis as an endogenous outcome variable. The hypothesized model showed a good fit (except the RMSEA value), $\chi^2(4) = 21.60, p < .001$, $RMSEA = .12$, $SRMR = .04$, $NFI = .97$, $CFI = .98$.

The results showed that higher ethnic identification predicted more endorsement of the terrorism narrative (confirming the first hypothesis) and less endorsement of the independence narrative (confirming the second hypothesis). More endorsement of the terrorism narrative predicted less political solidarity with Kurds (confirming the third hypothesis). In contrast, more endorsement of the independence narrative predicted more political solidarity with Kurds (confirming the fourth hypothesis). Higher ethnic identification predicted less political solidarity with Kurds through a) more endorsement of the terrorism narrative and b) less endorsement of the independence narrative. Thus, the fifth hypothesis was confirmed, and the results provided empirical support for the Political Solidarity Model with the Primary Outgroup.

More political solidarity with Kurds predicted more political solidarity with Alevis (confirming the sixth hypothesis). More ethnic identification predicted less solidarity with Alevis through a) more endorsement of the terrorism narrative, b) less endorsement of the independence narrative and c) less political solidarity with Kurds. The results both confirmed the seventh hypothesis and provided empirical support for the Political Solidarity Model with the Secondary Outgroup.

Discussion

This study contributes to the literature on social identity, conflict narratives, and intergroup solidarity. The findings show that more ethnic identification predicted more endorsement of the terrorism narrative (*Hypothesis 1*) and less endorsement of the independence narrative (*Hypothesis 2*). In other words, the results highlight that identification with an advantaged ethnic identity may be related to more endorsement of the conflict narrative of this advantaged group (i.e., terrorism narrative) and less endorsement of the conflict narrative of the disadvantaged group (i.e., independence narrative). Thus, the results contribute to the literature on social identity by indicating the critical role of a) having both advantaged and disadvantaged identities in intergroup relations and b) ethnic identification in endorsing different conflict narratives. Previous studies have suggested that, on the one hand, ethnic identification predicts more ingroup favoritism and more positive evaluations of one’s own group (Maloku et al., 2016; Masson & Verkuyten, 1993) and more wellbeing (Zdrenka et al., 2015). On the other hand, ethnic identification predicts less warmth towards outgroup members, less intergroup trust (Cakal & Petrović, 2017), less support for minority rights (Uluğ & Uysal, 2023; Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2006), and more prejudice and discrimination (Maloku et al., 2016; Mummendey et al., 2001; Negy et al., 2003). The

findings of this study complement previous findings by showing how ethnic identification may also predict endorsing different conflict narratives.

The findings also show that the endorsement of the terrorism narrative predicts less political solidarity with Kurds (*Hypothesis 3*), and the endorsement of the independence narrative predicts more political solidarity with Kurds (*Hypothesis 4*). Previous studies on conflict narratives have shown that conflict narratives may predict intergroup trust (Çelebi et al., 2014) and attitudes toward conflict, peace, and reconciliation (Uluğ & Cohrs, 2017a; Uluğ et al., 2021). The findings of this study contribute to the literature by showing that conflict narratives do not only affect conflict- and peace-related attitudes but also political solidarity, which may strengthen the relations between advantaged and disadvantaged groups. Given that there have been few empirical studies on political solidarity in social psychology (Christie & Dawes, 2001; Glasford & Calcagno, 2012), the results of this study are critical in indicating the relationship between conflict narratives and political solidarity, especially in conflict contexts.

The results also confirm the mediating effects of conflict narratives between ethnic Turkish identification and political solidarity with Kurds (*Hypothesis 5*). Specifically, these results show a negative indirect effect of ethnic Turkish identification on political solidarity with Kurds through the endorsement of a) the terrorism narrative and b) the independence narrative. In other words, the findings highlight that identification with an advantaged ethnic identity may be related to less political solidarity with the disadvantaged through a) more endorsement of the conflict narrative of this advantaged group (i.e., terrorism narrative) and b) less endorsement of the conflict narrative of the disadvantaged group (i.e., independence narrative) among *çapulcu* Turks, who have both advantaged and disadvantaged identities. Thus, the results provide empirical support for the Theoretical Model of Political Solidarity with the Primary Group.

Last, the findings show that there is a positive relationship between standing in solidarity with a disadvantaged group (Kurds) and with another disadvantaged group (Alevi; *Hypothesis 6*), and there is a negative indirect effect of ethnic Turkish identification on political solidarity with Alevi through a) the endorsement of the terrorism narrative, b) the endorsement of the independence narrative, and c) political solidarity with Kurds. The results confirm *Hypothesis 7* and provide empirical support for the Theoretical Model of Political Solidarity with the Secondary Group. More importantly, it has been demonstrated that identification with an advantaged ethnic identity predicts solidarity with a disadvantaged group that is not part of the conflict by

reducing the endorsement of the conflict narrative of the disadvantaged group and solidarity with that disadvantaged group, thereby creating a secondary transfer effect (see Pettigrew, 1997, 2009). Based on intergroup contact literature, I argue that the secondary transfer effect can be applied not only in prejudice reduction (Tausch et al., 2010; Van Laar et al., 2005) but also in the context of solidarity between groups. Therefore, it is fair to argue that showing solidarity with one group that is part of the conflict can also be generalized to another group that is *not* part of the conflict through the endorsement of conflict narratives.

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