

# Identity Centrality and In-Group Superiority Differentially Predict Reactions to Historical Victimization and Harm Doing

Rezarta Bilali, Department of Conflict Resolution, Human Security, and Global Governance, University of Massachusetts Boston, United States

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# Identity Centrality and In-Group Superiority Differentially Predict Reactions to Historical Victimization and Harm Doing

Rezarta Bilali, Department of Conflict Resolution, Human Security, and Global Governance, University of Massachusetts Boston, United States

Two U.S. studies report a differential effect of identity centrality and in-group superiority on reactions to in-group victimization and in-group harm-doing. Study 1 (N = 80) found that higher identity centrality predicted less justification for freely-recalled in-group victim events, whereas higher in-group superiority predicted more justification for freely-recalled in-group harm-doing events. Study 2 (N = 105) reexamined these findings in specific contexts of historical victimization (Pearl Harbor) and harm-doing (Hiroshima and Nagasaki), finding that in-group superiority was a predictor of reactions to historical in-group harm-doing (justification, emotional reactions, importance of events), whereas centrality was a predictor of reactions to historical in-group victimization.

Historical memory serves important functions for groups. History constitutes an important part of a group's self-image and serves to establish a sense of common fate in group members (Billig 1995). Group members rely on history to enhance group identity (Volpato and Licata 2010). History also informs a group's understanding of the present and shapes expectations for the future (Bilali and Ross 2012). For instance, historical memories play an important role in maintaining and exacerbating intergroup conflict (Devine-Wright 2003). They serve to justify outbreaks of violence and delegitimize the opponent (Bar-Tal 2003).

In recent years, a surge of social psychological research has investigated people's reactions to their groups' or nations' troubled histories (e.g., Branscombe and Doosje 2004; Doosje et al. 1998; also see the *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* focus section on collective memories, Volpato and Licata 2010). Generally this research has examined the consequences of historical memories, such as reactions to descriptions of historical events of an in-group's harm doing (e.g., Cehajic, Brown, and González 2009; Doosje et al. 1998; Zebel, Doosje, and Spears 2004; Iyer, Leach and Crosby, 2003), or the impact of reminders of past victimization on emotional reactions (Frijda 1997; Liu and László 2007) and on attitudes toward current conflicts (e.g., Wohl

and Branscombe 2008). The factors that shape individuals' historical memories are not as well understood, however.

People learn about the in-group's history through media, education, leaders, public images and symbols, and conversations with family and peers. Although historical memories are often shared within a group (Bar-Tal 2003), members exhibit clear differences in their endorsement of historical memories. Therefore, individual-level factors might also influence historical memories. Whereas some research has investigated factors that influence historical memories of the in-group's harm-doing (e.g., in-group identification, Bilali, Tropp, and Dasgupta 2012; Sahdra and Ross 2007; right wing authoritarianism, Sibley, Wilson, and Robertson, 2007), our knowledge of what shapes memories of past victimization is limited. The research described here investigates the factors that shape historical memories of past in-group victimization and harm-doing events. Building on previous research, I adopt social identity theory as the guiding framework in this research.

## 1. In-Group Identification and Historical Memories

According to social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986), people derive their self-concepts, in part, from their membership in social groups. Because individuals are

motivated to view themselves positively, they are also motivated to view their groups favorably. History constitutes an important part of a group's image. The drive to maintain a positive self-image should encourage in-group-serving attributions in recollections of the group's past (Doosje and Branscombe 2003). For instance, Baumeister and Hastings (1997) observed that distortions of past events that portray the in-group positively are more frequent than distortions that portray the in-group negatively.

Similar patterns have emerged both in laboratory and field settings. For example, in a lab study, participants categorized into arbitrary groups expected in-group members to engage in more positive behaviors than out-group members and subsequently recalled more positive behaviors and fewer negative behaviors committed by members of their in-group than by out-group members (Howard and Rothbart 1980). In addition, because group members are not equally attached to their group, they are not equally motivated to protect the in-group's positive image. Individuals to whom group identity is important ought to be more motivated to maintain a positive image of their group, which in turn should lead to endorsing more in-group-favorable memories of the past (Sahdra and Ross 2007). For instance, Sahdra and Ross (2007) found that the more participants identified with their group (either Sikh or Hindu), the less they recalled events in which the in-group was a perpetrator. However, they did not find a relationship between in-group identification and recollections of in-group victim events. While the motivation to maintain a positive self-image helps to illuminate biases in historical memories of in-group's misdeeds, it does not explain individual differences in historical memories of in-group victimization. Is in-group identification then irrelevant to remembering an in-group's past victimization? I suggest that historical memories surrounding in-group victimization and in-group harm-doing are likely to be linked to distinct dimensions of in-group identification.

### 1.1. Dimensionality of Identification with Ethnic or National Group

There are two main approaches in the study of ethnic and national identification. The first draws from social identity theory and conceptualizes national identification as yet another form of in-group identification. Within this tradi-

tion, in-group identification has been usually treated as a unidimensional construct; however, a growing literature (e.g., Cameron and Lalonde 2001; Cameron 2004; Ellemers, Kortekaas, and Ouwerkerk 1999; Jackson 2002; Leach et al. 2008) shows that a multidimensional conceptualization is more appropriate. While there are disagreements about the number and the nature of the dimensions (see Leach et al. 2008), Tajfel's original conceptualization of social identity (1978) included evaluative, cognitive, and affective components.

The second approach conceptualizes national identity as a specific form of attachment to the group expressed either as nationalism or patriotism. Patriotism is perceived as a healthy national self-concept, and as positive love of one's own country (Bar-Tal 1993; Kosterman and Feshbach 1989) independent of out-group derogation (Brewer 1999). In contrast, nationalism is related to intergroup differentiation. The most important underlying dimension of nationalism is the view that one's own group is superior to other groups (Kosterman and Feshbach 1989).

*In-group superiority.* Drawing from both literatures, Roccas, Klar, and Livitan (2006) distinguish between two dimensions of identification: glorification and attachment. Glorification refers to beliefs in in-group superiority and deference to group norms and symbols (related to nationalism), whereas attachment refers to cognitive and emotional attachment to the in-group, such as self-definition as a group member or commitment to the group. The glorification dimension possesses a strong evaluative component. The evaluative component (i.e., evaluating the in-group as positive or negative) has been the most common way of thinking about in-group identification (Leach et al. 2008; for a review see Ashmore, Deaux, and McLaughlin-Volpe 2004), and has driven predictions regarding the effects of the strength of in-group identification. That is, the motivation to view one's group in a positive light may drive distortions and legitimizations of past events where the in-group was the perpetrator. Roccas and colleagues (2006; see also Leidner et al. 2010) used this rationale to suggest that the glorification dimension (i.e., positive evaluation dimension), rather than group attachment, drives denial of in-group responsibility for harm-

doing and legitimization of past in-group harms. Recently, Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, Halevy, and Eidelson (2008) further distinguish two dimensions of in-group glorification: deference and superiority. Of these two dimensions, only the latter constitutes an evaluative component. One way in which group members can maintain an in-group's favorable image is to view the in-group as better than other groups. This is particularly relevant in conflict contexts due to the comparative and competitive nature of intergroup conflict. Based on this discussion, it is in-group superiority that drives favorable in-group interpretations of an in-group's harm doing.

*Identity centrality.* Roccas and colleagues (2008) also distinguish between two components related to attachment: commitment and identity centrality (which they refer to as importance). I will specifically focus on identity centrality as an important component capturing the cognitive and affective aspects of in-group identification. Identity centrality is defined as the degree of importance and chronic salience of a group membership to a person's self-concept (Ashmore et al. 2004; Leach et al. 2008; Luhtanen and Crocker 1992). Identity centrality has been linked to increased perceptions of threat toward the in-group (Leach et al. 2008; Sellers and Shelton 2003). Indeed, various studies suggest a link between identity centrality and perceived in-group victimization (e.g., in-group discrimination). In one direction, discrimination experiences or prejudice toward the in-group might strengthen the importance of that group membership (e.g., Branscombe, Schmitt, and Harvey 1999; Jetten et al. 2001). In the other direction, high centrality of the group membership to a person's self-concept might intensify the sense of in-group discrimination (e.g., Major, Quinton, and Schmader 2003). In support of the latter directional link, a longitudinal study with Latino and White college students on a university campus in the United States showed that ethnic identification at Time 1 predicted heightened perceptions of ethnic victimization three years later, whereas the reverse link from a sense of victimization to ethnic identification was not significant (Thomsen et al. 2010). In that study, the ethnic identification measure was closely related to identity centrality: The three-item ethnic identification scale included two items tapping the identity centrality dimension, whereas one

item assessed in-group ties (i.e., how close respondents felt to other members of their ethnic group). Overall, these studies support the idea that the centrality dimension of in-group identification is closely related to perceptions of in-group victimization.

### **1.2. Identity Centrality, In-Group Superiority and Historical Memories**

The conceptual distinctions between in-group superiority and identity centrality may lead to differences regarding how each dimension relates to memories and interpretations of past intergroup conflict. Recent literature suggests that harm-doing events pose a threat to a group's morality (e.g., Doosje et al. 1998; Wohl, Branscombe, and Klar 2006). Shnabel and Nadler (2008) argue that the conflictual past poses different concerns for victims and perpetrators. Whereas perpetrators are concerned with restoring the morality of their group, victims are motivated to restore lost power. These perspectives suggest that different types of events (i.e., in-group harm-doing vs. in-group victimization) raise different concerns for group members. For instance, terrorist attacks might threaten American identity and the well-being of American people, but not necessarily the evaluation of American identity as positive or negative. However, harm-doing events (e.g., the Abu Ghraib events) typically threaten the in-group's positive image. Furthermore, different ways of relating to the in-group might elicit sensitivity to different types of group threats. The desire to maintain a positive and moral self-image might prompt members of groups that have perpetrated harm to downplay in-group's negative events, minimize the negative consequences of these events, or shift the focus to mitigating conditions that serve to displace in-group's responsibility. Building on previous research (e.g., Roccas et al. 2006; Leidner et al. 2010), I suggest that in-group superiority should further strengthen these effects. In turn, identity centrality might elicit responses when an in-group's wellbeing or in-group identity (not its positive evaluation) is directly threatened. For instance, Baumeister and colleagues (e.g., Baumeister, Stillwell, and Wotman 1990; Baumeister and Catanese 2001) observe that victims' accounts of interpersonal transgressions emphasized the negative and lasting consequences of harm and perpetrators' responsibility for the acts. I predicted that in an intergroup context identity centrality

should strengthen these effects. The more central group identity is to self-concept, the more the members of victim groups will emphasize in-group victimization – the negative consequences of the harm and perpetrators' responsibility for the acts.

## 2. Study 1: U.S. as Victim or Perpetrator

The aim of Study 1 was to provide an initial test of these ideas. For this purpose I adopted the free recall task used by Sahdra and Ross (2007, study 1). I hypothesized that identity centrality and in-group superiority would differentially predict the number of freely-recalled victim and perpetrator events, as well as the degree to which these violent acts are perceived as justifiable. Based on this, I derived two hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 1.* In-group superiority should predict remembering of an in-group's past misdeeds, such as recollections of fewer events in which the in-group was a perpetrator (H1a), and increased justification for in-group perpetrator events (H1b).

*Hypothesis 2.* Identity centrality should predict remembering of an in-group's past victimization, such as recall of more events in which the in-group was a victim (H2a), and less justification for in-group victim events (H2b).

### 2.1. Methods

#### 2.1.1. Participants and Procedures

Eighty participants (61 women, 19 men) were recruited at a university in the Northeastern United States. Participants were told that they were participating in a study examining their opinions on important events in U.S. history. First, participants were asked to complete measures of in-group (i.e., American) identification, then they were asked to freely recall and rate the justifiability of past events in which the U.S. was either a victim or a perpetrator.

#### 2.1.2. Measures

*Identity centrality and in-group superiority.* Identity centrality was measured by the following three items: "Being an American is an important part of how I see myself," "I often think about the fact that I am American" (adapted from Cameron 2004; Leach et al. 2008), and "Being an American

is an important part of my self-image" (adapted from Cameron 2004). All items were measured using six-point scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The three items were aggregated to form a measure of identity centrality ( $\alpha = .87$ ) ( $M = 3.59$ ,  $SD = 1.17$ ).

Two items that tapped the superiority dimension (rather than deference dimension) in Roccas et al.'s glorification scale (2006) were used to measure in-group superiority: "Relative to other nations, the U.S. is a very moral nation" and "The U.S. is better than all other nations in all respects." The two items were averaged to form a composite measure ( $\alpha = .66$ ) of in-group superiority ( $M = 2.85$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ).

The correlation between identity centrality and in-group superiority was moderate ( $r = .40$ ) suggesting that the two identity dimensions are distinct and could be entered as simultaneous predictors in data analyses without raising multicollinearity concerns.

*Free recall task.* Participants were asked to think about the recent history of the United States (past one hundred years) and its role in international arena. Then, they were asked to recall up to six events in which the United States was a perpetrator of violent episodes committed toward another country or group, and up to six events in which the United States was a victim of violent episodes committed by other countries or groups.

*Justification.* For each recalled event, participants were asked to rate the extent to which they believed the events were justifiable in a scale ranging from 1 (not justified) to 6 (very justified). Justification ratings were averaged separately across perpetrator and victim events, forming one composite score for the degree of justification of victim events and one score for the degree of justification of perpetrator events.

#### 2.1.3. Data Analysis

Repeated measures general linear models (GLM) were conducted with identity centrality and in-group superiority as continuous predictors. Type of event (perpetrator vs. victim) was the within-subject factor. The dependent variables were (1) the number of recalled events, and (2) justifi-

cation of the events. The simultaneous inclusion of identity centrality and in-group superiority as predictors made it possible to assess the unique effects of each identity dimension controlling for the other dimension. The interaction between in-group superiority and identity centrality was also tested in initial analyses. Because there were no significant interaction effects, the interaction term was excluded from the final analyses.

**2.2. Results**

**2.2.1. Number of Recalled Events**

The recalled events included the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, slavery, abuse at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as perpetrator events, and terrorist attacks on U.S. targets as victim events including the Pearl Harbor attack, the 9/11, the Iranian hostage crisis, and the USS Cole bombing. Some events, such as the Vietnam War, were included among perpetrator events by some participants, but among victim events by others.

The GLM yielded no difference between the number of perpetrator events and the number of victim events recalled,  $F(1, 77) = 2.01, p = .16, \eta^2 = .025$ . For each type of event, participants wrote down, on average, slightly more than two events (for means and standard deviations of all items see Table 1). The results revealed a superiority x type interaction,  $F(1, 77) = 7.46, p < .01, \eta^2 = .09$ . As expected

(H1a), higher in-group superiority marginally predicted recall of fewer events in which the in-group was a perpetrator, but in-group superiority did not predict the number of recalled events in which the in-group was a victim.

Contrary to the predictions (H2a), centrality was not associated with the number of recalled events,  $F(1, 77) = 1.53, p = .22, \eta^2 = .02$ , and its interaction with type of event was not significant,  $F(1, 77) = 1.08, p = .30, \eta^2 = .01$ . All standardized regression coefficients are shown in Table 1.

**2.2.2. Justification**

The GLM yielded a main effect of type of event,  $F(1, 59) = 19.53, p < .001, \eta^2 = .25$ , indicating that in-group victim events were perceived to be less justifiable than in-group harm-doing (perpetrator) events (see Table 1). As expected, the effect of type was qualified by two-way interactions with centrality,  $F(1, 59) = 18.46, p < .001, \eta^2 = .24$ , and Superiority,  $F(1, 59) = 11.18, p = .001, \eta^2 = .16$ . Supporting both hypotheses (H1b and H2b), higher identity centrality predicted less justification for events in which the in-group was a victim, whereas higher in-group superiority predicted more justification for events in which the in-group was a perpetrator (see Table 1). Identity centrality did not predict justification for perpetrator events, and superiority did not predict justification for victim events.

**Table 1: Regressions predicting construals of historical events from identity centrality and in-group superiority (means, standard deviations, and standardized beta coefficients) (Study 1)**

	M	SD	Centrality		Superiority	
			$\beta$	p	$\beta$	p
Victim events						
Number of recalled events	2.12	1.11	.14	.31	-.13	.36
Justification	1.89	.99	-.34	.01	-.16	.23
Perpetrator events						
Number of recalled events	2.25	1.73	.18	.29	-.24	.08
Justification	2.91	1.31	.14	.32	.36	.009



### 2.3. Discussion

This study lends support to the hypothesis that identity centrality and in-group superiority are differentially associated with justification of different types of events. As expected, the results revealed that higher identity centrality predicted less justification for events in which the in-group was a victim, whereas higher superiority predicted more justification for events in which the in-group was a perpetrator of attacks. In addition, the superiority dimension was a marginal predictor for the number of recalled events in which the in-group was a perpetrator. Interestingly, there was no difference between the number of perpetrator and victim events recalled, and contrary to predictions, identity centrality was not associated with the number of recalled victim events.

Unlike Sahdra and Ross's study (2007), in which participants were asked to recall violent events that occurred within a particular intergroup conflict context, participants in the present study were asked to recall a variety of perpetrator and victim events in U.S. history. As a consequence, participants in this study reported major historical events such as the Vietnam War, Pearl Harbor, atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the 9/11 attacks, or the war in Iraq. Due to the prominence of these events in the history of the United States, it is possible that individual differences in dimensions of in-group identification (e.g., identity centrality) might influence construals of major events without impacting their recollection. This might explain the lack of relationship between the two in-group identification dimensions and the number of recalled events. Therefore, in Study 2, I extended the investigation by examining group members' construals of a specific in-group victim event (Pearl Harbor) and a specific in-group perpetrator event (Hiroshima and Nagasaki), which were mentioned by the majority of participants in Study 1.

### 3. Study 2: Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima

Study 2 aimed to replicate and extend the findings of Study 1. In Study 2, instead of asking participants to freely recall historical events, I assessed their construals of two important events in U.S. history: the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (a harm-doing event) and the Pearl Harbor attack (a victimization event). There were two main

reasons for the choice of these two events. First, a majority of respondents in Study 1 freely recalled Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima/Nagasaki bombings, suggesting that American college students are familiar with these two events. Second, as Study 2 aimed to compare construals of a victim versus a perpetrator event, it was important to consider two historical events that differed mainly in one dimension (i.e., victim versus perpetrator), but were similar in other important dimensions that might drive differential construals. For instance, the events have similar temporal distance, and the out-group (i.e., the Japanese) is the same in both incidents. Therefore, any differences in participants' reactions to these events will be due to the type of event (i.e., victim versus perpetrator) rather than to different temporal distance or characteristics of the out-group.

One important weakness of Study 1 was the single-item justification measure. To better assess the construals of these events, and to complement the justification measure used in Study 1, in study 2 I also examined exonerating cognitions. In addition, I assessed emotional reactions (anger and sympathy) and the perceived importance of each historical event (personal importance and importance in U.S. history).

Similar to the predictions in Study 1, I expected that identity centrality would predict construals of in-group victim event, whereas in-group superiority would predict construals of in-group perpetrator event.

*Hypothesis 1.* In-group superiority should predict favorable in-group construals of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but should not be associated with construals of the Pearl Harbor attack. Specifically, higher in-group superiority would predict more justification of the atomic bombings (H1a), less anger toward the United States, and less sympathy for the Japanese (H1b). Higher in-group superiority should also be associated with evaluating the atomic bombings as less important in U.S. history (H1c).

*Hypothesis 2.* In contrast, identity centrality should predict construals of the Pearl Harbor attack, but not of the atomic bombings. Those participants to whom identity is more central to their self-concept should view Pearl Harbor to be

less justifiable (H2a). They would also report more anger toward Japan, more sympathy for American victims (H2b), and would view Pearl Harbor as more important in U.S. history (H2c).

### 3.1. Methods

#### 3.1.1. Participants

Participants were 105 undergraduates (86 women, 19 men) at a university in the Northeastern United States (mean age = 20.64,  $SD = 3.17$ ). Participants were awarded research credits for their participation.

Sixteen participants reported coming from a working class or a lower-middle-class family, forty-eight from a middle-class family, and forty-one from an upper-middle-class family. Eighty-six participants identified themselves as White, five as Asian, three as Black, six as Hispanic, and the rest identified with an ethnic group not identified in the questionnaire.

One item asked participants to categorize themselves politically on a six-point scale from -3 (very liberal) to +3 (very conservative). The mean self-reported political orientation within the sample was slightly liberal ( $M = -1.04$ ,  $SD = 1.64$ ). Another item assessed participants' interest in history: "Generally speaking how much interest would you say you have in history?" (-3 = very uninterested; +3 = very interested). Participants were mildly interested in history ( $M = .45$ ,  $SD = 1.91$ ).

#### 3.1.2. Procedures

Participants in the psychology department's subject pool were invited to participate in a survey research on "public opinions about contemporary and historical events in the United States." The first set of items in the questionnaire assessed identity centrality and in-group superiority (with regard to American identity). The second set assessed reactions toward two historical events: the Pearl Harbor attack and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. To control for order effects, half of the sample first completed the survey section on Pearl Harbor, whereas the other half first completed the Hiroshima and Nagasaki section. At the end, participants completed demographic items. Participants received research credits for their participation.

#### 3.1.3. Measures

*Identity centrality and in-group superiority.* As in Study 1, three items were used to assess identity centrality. However, in order to increase the validity of the scale, the item "I often think about the fact that I am an American" (referring to identity salience, see Sellers et al. 1998) was replaced with another item specifically tapping the identity centrality construct: "The fact that I am American is an important part of my identity" (adapted from Leach et al. 2008).

The same items as in Study 1 were used to assess in-group superiority, with the addition of one more item to improve the scale's reliability: "My nation is superior to other nations in most respects." All items were measured on six-point scales (1 = strongly disagree; 6 = strongly agree). Each three-item scale revealed good reliability ( $\alpha = .90$  for identity centrality; and  $\alpha = .74$  for in-group superiority).

The mean identity centrality ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ) and in-group superiority ( $M = 3.24$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ) were both slightly above the respective scale's mid-point. The correlation between identity centrality and in-group superiority was moderate ( $r = .46$ ).

*Justification.* The same item as in Study 1 was used to assess the degree to which participants perceived the violent events to be justifiable.

*Exonerating cognitions.* Three items were constructed to assess the degree to which participants used exonerating cognitions to legitimize the attacks: "Considering the conditions of the World War, the Americans [Japanese] attacked Hiroshima and Nagasaki [Pearl Harbor] because they did not have any other choice of action," "The American [Japanese] attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki [Pearl Harbor] were intended to save American [Japanese] lives," and "The attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki [Pearl Harbor] can be considered to be a patriotic act of the Americans [Japanese] to save their country and their people." The three-item scales revealed good reliabilities (( = .75 for Pearl Harbor; ( = .72 for atomic bombings).

*Perceived importance of the event.* Participants were asked to rate the importance of each event in U.S. history as



well as the personal importance of the events on a six-point scale (1 = not at all important; 6 = very important). The items read: “How important is Pearl Harbor attack [Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings] in the United States history?” and “How important is Pearl Harbor attack [Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings] to you personally?”

*Emotional reactions.* For each event, participants were asked to rate the degree to which they felt each of the following emotions when thinking about the historical event: (1) “I feel anger toward Japan [the U.S.],” (2) “I feel sympathy toward the victims of the attacks,” and (3) “I feel sympathy toward the Japanese [Americans] in general.” All items were measured on six-point scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

**3.1.4. Data Analysis**

As in Study 1, repeated measures General Linear Models (GLM) were used to analyze the data. Type of event (perpetrator vs. victim) was entered as the within-subject factor, whereas identity centrality and in-group superiority

were entered as continuous predictors. Target group (in-group vs. out-group) was included as an additional within-subject factor in the analyses of emotional reactions.

Similar to the procedure in Study 1, the interaction between identity centrality and in-group superiority was entered in initial models, but was later dropped as there were no significant interaction effects. The order in which the events were presented might also influence the construals of these historical events, particularly because Pearl Harbor and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are perceived to be causally linked (i.e., Pearl Harbor might provide justification for the atomic bombings). Therefore, order was entered as a factor in the initial GLM analyses; however it was excluded from the final reports as there were no significant effects.

Following the GLM analyses, as in Study 1, regression analyses for each type of event were conducted to clarify interaction effects. The standardized beta coefficients from these analyses, as well as the means and standard deviations of all dependent variables are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Regressions predicting construals of historical events from identity centrality and in-group superiority (means, standard deviations, and standardized beta coefficients) (Study 2)**

			Centrality		Superiority				Centrality		Superiority	
	M	SD	$\beta$	p	$\beta$	p	M	SD	$\beta$	p	$\beta$	p
	Pearl Harbor (victim event)						Atomic bombings (perpetrator event)					
Justification	2.6	1.28	-.22	.05	.13	.26	3.11	1.33	.07	.50	.26	.02
Exonerating cognitions	3.01	1.13	-.13	.27	.11	.33	2.91	1.17	-.05	.67	.46	.000
Anger toward:												
the United States	2.05	1.28	.01	.96	-.15	.19	2.75	1.43	.03	.80	-.30	.007
Japan	3.57	1.53	.44	.000	-.02	.87	2.62	1.31	.18	.11	.06	.59
Sympathy for:												
Victims	5.29	1.06	.34	.002	-.19	.08	4.94	1.20	.14	.17	-.46	.000
Americans	3.93	1.26	.34	.002	.01	.96	3.07	1.42	.17	.12	.02	.84
Japanese	2.79	1.44	-.14	.19	-.20	.06	3.54	1.33	-.02	.82	-.23	.04
Historical importance	5.40	.77	.24	.03	-.12	.28	5.07	1.07	.11	.32	-.28	.01
Personal importance	3.19	1.29	.34	.002	-.07	.53	3.13	1.29	.08	.46	-.15	.17

### 3.2. Results and Discussion

#### 3.2.1. Justification

The GLM analysis revealed a marginal main effect of type of event,  $F(1, 101) = 3.35, p = .07, \eta^2 = .03$ , such that the perpetrator event (the atomic bombings) was rated as more justifiable than the victim event (Pearl Harbor) (see Table 2). There was also a marginal interaction between type of event and centrality,  $F(1, 101) = 3.39, p = .07, \eta^2 = .03$ . Supporting H2a, higher identity centrality predicted less justification for the Pearl Harbor attack, but

did not predict justification for the atomic bombings. Although type x superiority interaction was not significant,  $F(1, 101) = .88, p = .35$ , higher in-group superiority predicted higher justification for atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but did not predict justification for Pearl Harbor (supporting H1a; see Table 2). Figures 1 and 2 respectively show the effects of identity centrality and in-group superiority on justification of Pearl Harbor and the atomic bombings. Overall, these results replicated the findings of Study 1.

Figure 1: The effect of identity centrality and in-group superiority on justification of the Pearl Harbor attack

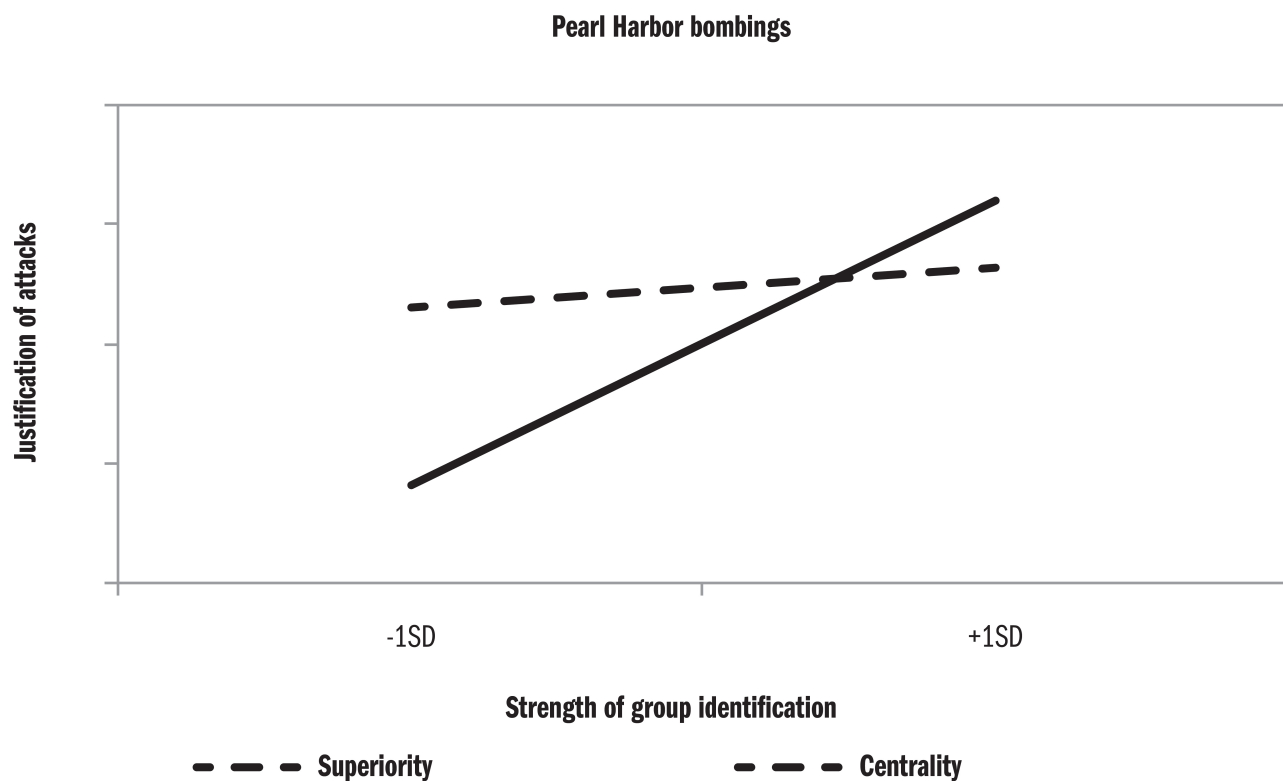
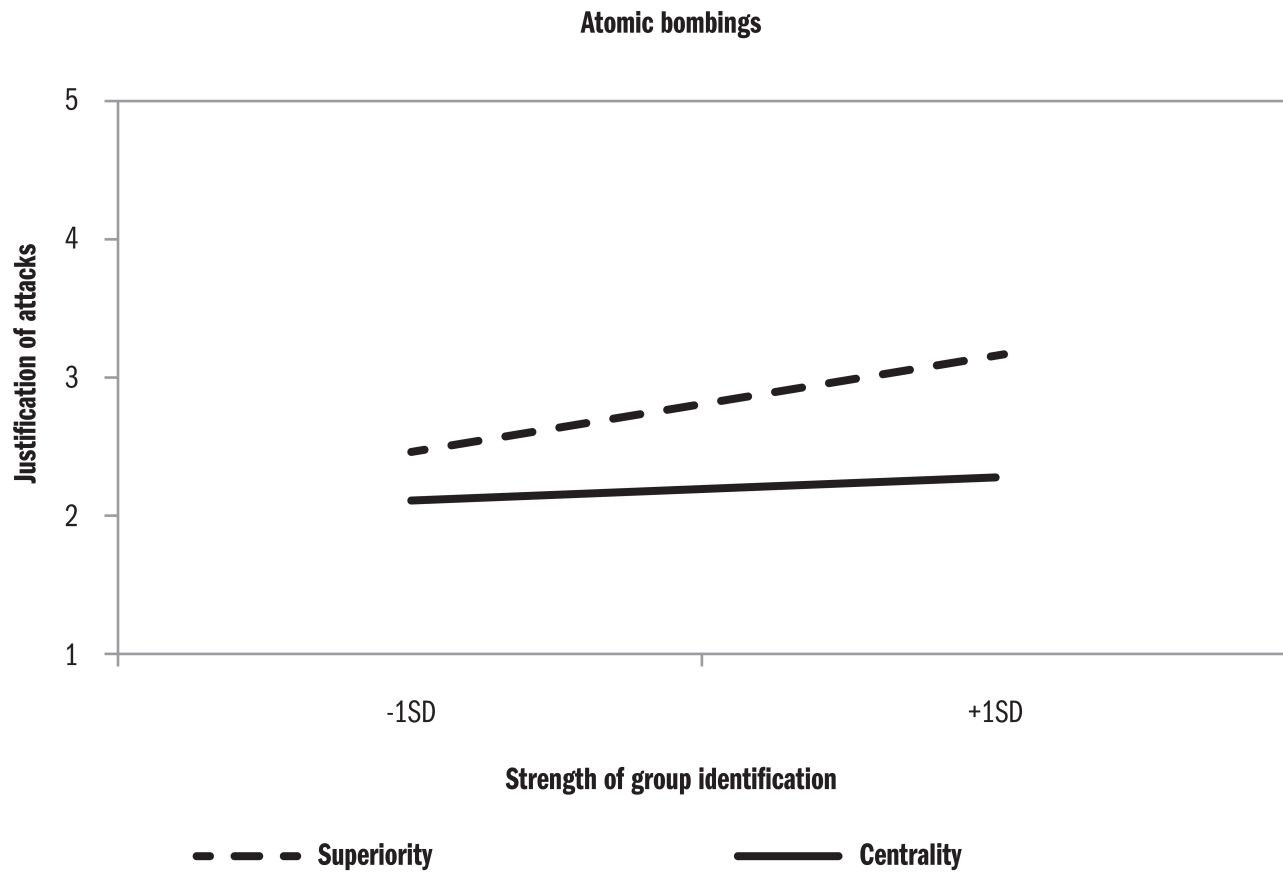


Figure 2: The effect of identity centrality and in-group superiority on justification of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings



### 3.2.2. Exonerating Cognitions

The GLM analysis yielded a main effect for type of event,  $F(1, 90) = 9.17, p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .09$ , which was further qualified by a type x superiority interaction,  $F(1, 90) = 8.9, p < .01, \eta^2 = .09$ . As shown in Table 2, the interaction effect revealed that higher in-group superiority predicted higher legitimization of the perpetrator event (atomic bombing), but was not related to legitimization of the victim event (Pearl Harbor).

The interaction between centrality and type was not significant,  $F(1, 90) = .24, p = .62$ , indicating that centrality was not a significant predictor of legitimization of either victim or perpetrator event. One explanation for the lack of relationship between identity centrality and (lower)

legitimization of the Pearl Harbor attack might be that exonerating cognitions are less relevant to in-group victimization. Exonerating cognitions constitute legitimization mechanisms that are activated when the in-group has committed misdeeds. Thus, there is no reason for group members to use exonerating cognitions in instances of in-group victimization.

### 3.2.3. Emotional Reactions

**Anger.** The repeated measures GLM revealed a marginal effect of type,  $F(1, 102) = 3.53, p = .06, \eta^2 = .03$ , such that less anger was evoked by Pearl Harbor ( $M = 1.81, SE = .11$ ) than by Hiroshima and Nagasaki ( $M = 2.67, SE = .10$ ). The results also yielded a main effect of target,  $F(1, 102) = 11.93, p = .001, \eta^2 = .11$ , such that participants re-

ported feeling less angry toward the in-group ( $M = 2.41$ ,  $SE = .11$ ) than toward the out-group ( $M = 3.10$ ,  $SE = .12$ ).

More importantly, the results yielded a target x centrality interaction,  $F(1, 102) = 9.11$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ , which was further qualified by a three-way interaction with type,  $F(1, 102) = 4.41$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ . Lending support to H2b, centrality predicted more out-group anger in response to Pearl Harbor, but did not predict out-group anger in response to atomic bombings, or anger toward the in-group in either event.

Target also interacted with superiority,  $F(1, 102) = 5.52$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ , such that higher in-group superiority predicted less anger toward the in-group (i.e., the United States), but did not predict anger toward the out-group (i.e., Japan). Although the three way interaction between target, type and superiority did not reach significance,  $F(1, 102) = 2.31$ ,  $p = .13$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ , superiority was a significant predictor of in-group anger (i.e., less anger toward the United States) for the atomic bombings, but not for Pearl Harbor (supporting H1b; see Table 2).

Not surprisingly, these results suggest that the two dimensions, identity centrality and in-group superiority, predict anger directed toward the harm-doer, but not toward the victim. Furthermore, identity centrality predicts experiencing more anger toward the harm-doer (i.e., the out-group) when the in-group is the victim of violence, whereas in-group superiority predicts less anger toward the in-group when the in-group is the harm-doer.

*Sympathy.* A 2 x 3 repeated measures GLM was conducted with in-group superiority and identity centrality as continuous predictors. Type of event (victim vs. perpetrator) and target (victims of attacks vs. in-group members vs. out-group members) were the within-subject factors. The dependent variable was the amount of sympathy felt toward each target.<sup>1</sup>

The results yielded a main effect of target,  $F(2, 204) = 13.19$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .11$ , such that participants reported feeling most sympathy toward the victims of attack ( $M = 5.11$ ,  $SE = .09$ ), then toward the in-group ( $M = 3.74$ ,  $SE = .11$ ), and least toward the out-group ( $M = 2.93$ ,  $SE = .11$ ).

In addition, there was a significant type x target interaction,  $F(2, 204) = 16.78$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .14$ , which was further qualified by three-way interactions with centrality,  $F(2, 204) = 8.52$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ , and superiority,  $F(2, 204) = 5.56$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ . A decomposition of the three-way interaction effects lent support to H1b and H2b (see standardized regression coefficients in Table 2). In the context of the Pearl Harbor attack, the more American identity was central to participants' self-concept, the more sympathy they felt for the American victims and for Americans in general. By contrast, in the context of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the more participants viewed the in-group as superior, the less sympathy they felt for the victims and for the Japanese in general.

Overall, the two in-group identification dimensions, identity centrality and in-group superiority, predicted sympathy for the victims of the attacks and for members of the attacked group. As expected, identity centrality predicted more sympathy for the victims and the victim group in general when the in-group was the victim of attacks, whereas in-group superiority predicted less sympathy for the victims and the group members of the victimized groups when the in-group was the harm-doer.

#### 3.2.4. Importance of Historical Events

*Importance of historical events for U.S. history.* The GLM analysis did not yield any significant results ( $F(1, 102) = 1.17$ ,  $p = .28$  for type;  $F(1, 102) = 2.69$ ,  $p = .10$  for type x superiority interaction;  $F(1, 102) = .30$ ,  $p = .58$  for type x centrality interaction). However, in support of H1c and H2c, univariate analyses conducted for each type of event separately indicated that identity centrality predicted higher ratings of the importance of Pearl Harbor, whereas

1 Sympathy toward the victims of each event (Pearl Harbor and atomic bombings), as well as the importance of these events in U.S. history, were highly skewed

(see means in Table 1). Transformations of these variables did not restore normality. Thus, the variables were dichotomized at the mean, and logistic regres-

sions were conducted with centrality and superiority as predictors. The results of these analyses replicate the results of linear regressions presented in Table 1.

in-group superiority predicted lower ratings of the importance of the atomic bombings (see Table 2). Superiority was not related to the importance of Pearl Harbor, whereas centrality was not related to the importance of the atomic bombings.

*Personal importance of historical events.* The GLM analysis yielded a significant effect of type,  $F(1, 102) = 8.27, p < .01, \eta^2 = .075$ , such that Pearl Harbor was rated as more important ( $M = 3.19, SD = 1.29$ ) than the atomic bombings ( $M = 3.13, SD = 1.29$ ). There was also a significant type x centrality interaction,  $F(1, 102) = 5.49, p = .02, \eta^2 = .05$ , indicating that, as expected, higher identity centrality predicted heightened personal importance of Pearl Harbor, but not of the atomic bombings. The type x superiority interaction was not significant, however,  $F(1, 102) = .59, p = .44$ .

While in-group superiority did not influence the degree to which these historical events were personally important, the results confirm the expectation regarding identity centrality: That is, participants higher in identity centrality perceived the in-group's historical victimization event as more important to them.

#### 4. General Discussion

The studies reveal initial evidence that identity centrality and in-group superiority differentially predict historical memories of in-group victimization and in-group harming. Specifically, in-group superiority predicted reactions to historical memories of in-group harm doing (e.g., justification, emotional reactions, and perceived importance of events), whereas identity centrality predicted reactions to historical memories of in-group victimization. The hypotheses were consistently supported in both studies, and across the dependent variables in Study 2. This research contributes to two areas of study in the context of intergroup violence: social identity and historical memories.

Consistent with previous studies (e.g., Leach et al. 2008; Roccas et al. 2008) the current findings emphasize the importance of using a multidimensional approach to social identity. Recent research (e.g., Leidner et al. 2010; Roccas et al. 2006) demonstrates that in-group glorification,

rather than attachment, drives the adverse effects of in-group identification in intergroup conflict and violence. However, by focusing only on the in-group's misdeeds, these previous findings capture only phenomena related to one aspect of intergroup conflict. The current research suggests that identity centrality, rather than in-group superiority, might drive responses to historical victimization.

The scales previously used to assess in-group glorification and attachment consist of items tapping deference and superiority dimensions (for in-group glorification), and identity centrality and commitment dimensions (for in-group attachment). The conceptual differences between these dimensions might, however, produce mixed research findings. For instance, Sellers et al. (2008) note the difference between identity centrality and other affective and evaluative dimensions of in-group attachment in the context of racial identity. Overall, the current findings call for further investigation of the role of identity centrality and other in-group identification dimensions in intergroup conflict.

Research on the magnitude gap in interpersonal transgressions suggests that both victims and perpetrators systematically, though differentially, distort memories of the past (e.g., Baumeister et al. 1990; Baumeister and Catanese 2001). Victims' accounts of the transgressions emphasize the negative and lasting consequences of the harm and the perpetrators' responsibility, whereas perpetrators focus on the mitigating circumstances that led them to carry the acts and minimize the consequences of their actions on the victims (Baumeister and Catanese 2001). At the level of intergroup conflict, Kraft (2009) observes similar discrepancies in accounts given by victims and perpetrators to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. However, previous research has not assessed how in-group identification might differentially influence these discrepancies. The results of the present studies indicate that different ways of relating to the in-group (i.e., different identity dimensions) might strengthen these systematic differences in historical memory. For instance, in-group superiority was associated with more exonerating cognitions (i.e., the use of mitigating circumstances to legitimize the events). However, when the in-group was



the victim, identity centrality was associated with increased anger toward the perpetrator of in-group harm, more sympathy toward in-group victims, less justification of in-group victimization, and heightened perceived importance of the events.

The present research has several limitations. First, both studies used correlational methods. Participants completed measures of in-group identification before they were reminded of historical events, and in-group identification dimensions were considered predictors of construals of historical events. However, causal direction might also be reversed, such that the in-group's history might play an important role in the construction of group identity (see the extended discussion below). A second limitation of the present research is the use of student samples. Special characteristics of the student samples (e.g., education, ideology, age) might have influenced the observed relations. In particular, prior research on collective memories reveals strong generational and cohort effects on remembering of collective events (e.g., Schuman and Corning 2012).

Although group histories always include both harm-doing and victimization episodes, these types of events have typically been addressed in separate areas of research. The interpretations of historical victimization and harm-doing do not occur in a vacuum, but within the in-group's broader historical narrative. Often historical events of victimization and perpetration are causally linked (whether real or perceived). For instance, the Pearl Harbor attack is often perceived to have led to the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Although order effects in the current analyses were not significant, the perceived causal link between Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the United States represents a weakness of the repeated measures design of Study 2.

Nevertheless, the current research provides initial evidence that different dimensions of in-group identification are linked to different construals of the in-group's past. Future research should delve deeper into the nature of these relations, and determine potential moderating factors that might further explain the complex relation between group identity and historical memory.

### 5. The Nature of the Relationship between Group Identity and Historical Memories

Building on previous literature, I predicted that different cognitive and motivational factors underpinning each identity dimension would lead to biases in historical memories of in-group victimization and in-group harm-doing. According to this view, the adverse effects of in-group superiority (or in-group identification in previous research) are a result of a motivated defense to image threats posed by the in-group's misdeeds. However, there might be other explanations for the observed results. For instance, in-group superiority implies that group members have an inflated (positive) image of their group. Flattering national images are part of the national narrative of most nations. National narrative might be used as an in-group stereotype, which serves to perpetuate the glorified images of the in-group through selection and distortion of events in ways that confirm the stereotype (Hirshberg 1993). Historical events of in-group harm-doing are learned and interpreted through the existing knowledge frameworks about the in-group (i.e., in-group's master narrative, see Hammack 2009). Because those individuals who view the in-group as superior to other groups are likely to endorse flattering national images, they are also more likely to reinterpret negative historical events in ways that fit the existing images (Bilali, forthcoming). Therefore, a schema consistency effect is also a plausible interpretation of the association between in-group superiority and historical memories of in-group harm-doing.

Although the present research considered in-group identification dimensions as antecedents of construals of historical events, the relation between identity and historical memories is dynamic (e.g., Kurtis, Adams, and Yellow-Bird 2010). At a collective level, historical memories form the content of group identity (Billig 1995). Social representations of the in-group's history might in turn influence the degree and the way in which individuals identify with their group (Liu and Hilton 2005). For instance, to enhance their identity, groups often distort the past by silencing or reinterpreting the negative events in their history, and by embellishing and glorifying history to portray the in-group favorably (Baumeister and Hastings 1997). Such glorified portrayals of the in-group's history might lead group members to view their

in-group as superior to other groups (i.e., leading to higher in-group superiority). However, when the in-group's history is portrayed negatively, group members might disidentify with their group to avoid negative psychological consequences on the self (Liu and Hilton 2005). In contrast, historical memories of past victimization increase group solidarity and strengthen in-group identity (Devine-Wright 2003; Roe 2003), though they might also damage group esteem (Pratto and Glasford 2008). Additionally, the in-group's past victimization can also be used to provide moral legitimacy to current and future aggressive ventures of the in-group (Wohl and Branscombe 2008).

Overall, the above discussion suggests that although the degree (e.g., Sahdra and Ross 2007) and nature of in-group identification might lead to biases in historical memories (as shown by the present research), the characteristics and uses of historical memories might also influence how individuals relate to their groups (i.e., identity dimensions). Future research should further investigate this dynamic relationship. Longitudinal studies would be best suited to assessing how identification with the in-group influences construals of historical events, and in turn, how changes in the collective/social representations of the nation's history influence in-group identification.

## 6. Conclusion

The present research has important implications for the study of conflict and violence. Theoretically, the findings shed light on the psychological underpinnings of reactions toward historical victimization and harm-doing. Construals of historical events of perpetration and victimization are extremely important as they might either exacerbate conflicts or facilitate reconciliation. Thus, a better understanding of the psychological factors that contribute to construals of victim and perpetrator events is important in informing strategies to address the underlying motivations and needs arising from these events. Furthermore, the current research shifts the focus from the study of victim and perpetrator groups, to studying events in which a group has either perpetrated or experienced harm. This is important considering the cyclical nature of most violent conflicts. Often, establishing one group as a victim or a perpetrator is contentious, as even groups that have perpetrated mass violence and genocide might perceive themselves as victims (Bilali et al. 2012). The current research points to the benefits of integrating the two areas of research (i.e., on victim groups and perpetrator groups) to reach a better understanding of the dynamics underlying intergroup violence and conflict.

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