

Enhancing Trust through Group-Affirmation

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Abstract: In East Asia, memory persists even when it counterproductively interferes with rational self-interest. This paper is based on a pilot study that was conducted as part of a larger project that aims to find what can improve relations between countries where animosity from past interactions vividly lasts and inhibits cooperation, even when they do not actually pose a serious, realistic threat to each other. Here, I specifically focus on levels of trust as an indicator of group relations. I argue that group-affirmation increases levels of trust, measured by payment amounts between Chinese, Korean, and Japanese nationals in a trust game. My findings have implications for international peace and reconciliation policy: where negative emotions last between groups with different social identities, the remedy might not be to pursue a weakening or erosion of identities, but counter-intuitively, to strengthen them. (138 words)

Keywords: group-affirmation, trust, social identity, intergroup relations

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Introduction

New values, institutions, and governance... and back to the future?

Just five years ago when I was a student at the London School of Economics, one of the most popular classes offered in the Department of Government was called “*The Idea of Europe*,” a brand new class that discussed the ongoing efforts of European integration as a grand and novel experiment in history; one that could potentially present an exciting supranational alternative to the modern nation-state. Arguments of hyperglobalists such as Ohmae (1995) were offered as the theoretical underpinnings: if states could overcome individual nationalisms, perhaps they could move forward to a more mutually-beneficial and peacefully coexistent future, where the entity to ‘Other’ (Said 1978) is not a temporally coexisting neighbor state but our very history of conflict and tragedy. Excessive antagonism, clashing pursuit of selfish interests, and exhaustive security expenditures could become things we have grown beyond and left in the past (Waever 1996, 1998).

This was what seemed to be the upcoming neo-nationalism, or perhaps even post-nationalism at the time. These were the ‘new values’ that would draw new lines of institutions and governance. Slowly but steadily, nationalism would go out of fashion. National boundaries and exclusive sentiment along those lines were in no sense primordial (Smith 1998), but artifacts of the modern nation-state, something that had unnecessarily triggered international tension and conflict for decades. Perhaps if we could become part of a larger ‘we’ (Boll 2008), rather than a ‘you vs. I’, the excessive hatred could diminish. Modern-day nationalism would become a legacy. The heyday of supranationalism seemed to be in full-swing.

From this viewpoint, individual nationalisms and national identities were an impediment to interstate peace. However, after disappointments in the progress of a single European

constitution with Irish rejection of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2008 and the following economic crises that shook all of a 'chain-ganged'-Europe into risky conditions, countries now seem to be taking an increasingly intergovernmental approach of the EU. Individual national identities have not disappeared, but are more ardently defended than ever. Whither nationalism now?

Unlike hyperglobalist predictions in the late 90s and early 2000s, what we are witnessing now is a reversal of the 'new' ideas of regionalism that states can integrate into a supranational and overarching entity. In my view, the prospects for supranational integration are limited due to underlying attachment and allegiance to the nation that have lasted for generations. People want some sense of belongingness (Brewer 2003), and disregarding the idea of the traditional nation-state altogether is a threat to familiarity, a disruption in people's ontological security (Mitzen 2006).

I take the approach that nationalism and national identities are not just something we need to live with because they won't easily go away, but they can actually become a channel for achieving more peaceful coexistence with the 'other' state. Theories of self-affirmation (Steele 1988) argue that making one feel good about their self, in other words, not eroding but reinforcing their own identities, can actually make one less-defensive and more even-handed when dealing with the other. I see here an opportunity for more objective judgment and cool-headed sentiment between states. If affirmation effects work on a country-level, these could be the new ideas of regionalism, something of a 'neo-neo nationalism,' where people can achieve win-win benefits through interstate cooperation and a modest degree of integration that coexists with extant nationalisms and state-identities. In this sense, tighter regional integration and nationalisms need not be antithetical. This new nationalism, which coexists with an overarching

peace, is in my view what can constitute the new lines of values, institutions, and governance to come.

East Asia: The European Model?

Conflictual interactions between states may always evoke resentment, but there is variation on how long these feelings last afterwards. Experts in East Asia point to lingering historical animosity between Japan and China, and Japan and South Korea as the key impediment to cooperation in the region (Kristof 1998; Berger 2003; Christensen 1999; Hughes 2009; He 2006; Yoon 2008). Agonizing experiences of invasion, war, and colonialism created negative emotions between these countries that last today and make affable relations difficult.

For example, in the early 2000s, observing the EU at the height of its integration, claims and movements to pursue an East Asian community emulating the European model grew widely popular at the elite level (Ravenhill 2001; Soesastro 2001; Yahuda 2006; Bowles 2002; Chopparapu 2005; Hund 2003; Islam 2004; Jones and Plummer 2004; Soesastro2006). Scholars argued that the potentially achievable benefits from this new community would be immense, ranging from security and economic gains to larger influence on an international level (Dent and Huang 2002; Corning 2011; Harvie, Kimura, and Lee 2005). However, when these ideas met public sentiment, they lost momentum. Again, the main cause of this was negative affect – people just did not seem to like each other enough to be part of a tighter regional community (Yoon 2008).

This was a case where public opinion opposed to cooperation or integration between states despite possible gains from it. Relations between China-Japan and Korea-Japan are central to peace in Asia, the security of the United States, and the prosperity of the world. And few relationships are more fraught with hostile memories that interfere with positive economic and

political relations. Historical animosity accumulated from past interactions caused situations where people hated the other ‘so much that they didn’t want to deal with them,’ even if that meant forfeiting achievable benefits. Strong aversion to cooperate, therefore, results in a failure to learn and loss of gains that is conceivable from rational calculations. What can be done to reduce antagonism and help these countries cooperate?

While various efforts to ease intergroup hostility between Japan and China and Japan and South Korea have been made, few have proven to be successful. Scholars anticipated an improvement in relations through thick economic interdependence (Keohane and Nye 1977) or increased cultural and societal contact (Allport 1954). In economic terms however, Japan and China already trade heavily: Japan has emerged as China's greatest trading partner and China as second biggest to Japan, after the U.S. (Yahuda 2006). Numerous contact programs at a societal level promote student exchange, and cultural products are imported and exported in large quantities, but these effects have not spilled over into a reduction of hatred, and historical memories still constitute one of the big stumbling blocks to more positive relations (He 2006).

I share the assumption that attachment to one’s in-groups does not necessarily require hostility toward out-groups (Allport 1954; Brewer 1999) and combine this idea with insights from self-affirmation theory (Steele 1988). This study aims to examine whether self-affirmation works on a group level, and if so, how its effects are manifested in trust of the other group. I argue that group-affirmation has the effect of enhancing trust between people from countries that struggle from historical animosity. Through economics-style experiments of trust games, I find that group-affirmation indeed increases final monetary payments in the game. With these results I suggest group-affirmation as a counter-intuitive and novel idea of improving relations and promoting cooperation through a reaffirmation of identities. This has important implications for

smoother relations between Japan, South Korea and China and reducing tension on a regional level as well.

I start below by reviewing the literature on self-affirmation in social psychology, and the shortcomings of existing dominant claims among East Asian scholars that explicit Japanese atonement is the key to open doors to reconciliation in the region. I then explain how this study makes contributions to the existing literature of Psychology as well as Political Science. In the sections that follow, I lay out my theory and results from my empirical analysis. Finally, I conclude with the expected policy implications of this work in the longer term or in other political settings, and academic projects that could build on this study in the future.

Literature Review

Self-Affirmation in Social Psychology

Individuals strive to protect a positive image of the self. When the image of self-worth is threatened, people respond in ways to restore it (Sherman and Cohen 2006). One way that is done is through defensive biases that directly reduce the threat (Sherman and Cohen 2006). Although self-integrity can be restored via this route, the rejection of threatening information can narrow the chances of learning from the information.

The theory of self-affirmation (Steele 1988) suggests an alternative way of repairing self-worth. According to the theory, people can respond to threats by affirming the self on alternative resources that are unrelated to the threat at hand. By making salient important aspects of one's life unrelated to the threat, people can realize that their self-worth does not hinge on the immediate situation (Sherman and Cohen 2006). This is possible because there are many facets

that are make up the self-concept, and the issue related to the threat is not the only source of self-worth. In other words, by restoring some self-integrity through another source that makes an individual feel better about her/himself, (s)he is able to accept incoming information in a more evenhanded and less defensive way, even if the information undermines her prior beliefs.

With rising popularity of self-affirmation in social psychology, the dependent variables psychologists look for have grown diverse as well, as they pioneer the effect of self-affirmation on intergroup trust, emotions, and negotiations between groups. In one study, pro-choice participants entered into a negotiation with a pro-life advocate about appropriate state abortion policy (Cohen et al. 2000; Cohen et al. 2007). It was found that affirmation not only increased the number of concessions that pro-choice participants made to their pro-life adversary, but more dramatically, also led participants to evaluate their adversary as more objective and trustworthy (i.e., as less influenced by self-interest and ideology). This finding has clear implications for real-world negotiation where the cultivation of trust is a crucial step in the resolution of conflict.

Another study gives reason to be hopeful for lasting effects of self-affirmation over time. Examining trust levels in a school setting, it was found that minority students in 7th grade typically displayed a decline in trust in their teachers and school administrators over the course of the 7th grade school year, judging their grades and treatment in school as less fair and more biased at the end of the year than they had at the beginning (a decline not found for their majority student peers) (Aronson, Fried, and Good 2002). By contrast, affirmed minority students remained constant in their relatively high levels of trust and perceived fairness over the course of the school year. In other words, self-affirmation was found to make a significant difference throughout one year. Just as affirmation increases trust across partisan lines in the context of

negotiation (Cohen et al. 2007), it cultivates trust and reduces threat across racial lines as well, and with lasting effects.

While the Aronson, Fried and Good (2002) piece looks at the minority in society, studies on self-affirmation have also scrutinized its effects on the dominant class. Adams, Tormala, and O'Brien (2006) discovered self-affirmation helps majority groups in society realize the oppression practiced and prejudice they hold against minority groups. In other words, self-affirmation leads those 'inflicting' some sort of harm on others to acknowledge guilt and shame for their wrongdoings. This is because normally the idea that one may have been unfairly privileged or benefited from the oppression of minority groups damages the self-integrity of one's equality and egalitarianism. Building on this logic, Adams, Tormala, and O'Brien (2006) examined the effect of self-affirmation on perceptions of prejudice against minorities, with European American and Latino participants. When European Americans were affirmed, they perceived significantly more racism against minorities in the U.S. (Adams et al. 2006). Affirmed European American participants also agreed, to a far greater extent than their non-affirmed peers, that European Americans in general tend to understate the impact of racism in daily life. Thus, the otherwise threatening idea of that one's in-group may have been inflicting some harm on another group was more acceptable among those who were buffered by a self-affirmation. This study shows that the 'inflictors' come to acknowledge their guilt in an evenhanded way than defensively protecting the in-group's image.

Crocker, Niiya, and Mischkowski (2008) also illustrate that self-affirmed individuals reported more positive other-directed feelings, such as love and connection. This implies that self-affirmation might increase positive affect of the out-group.

Finally, Sivanathan et al (2007) establish that self-affirmation can attenuate irrational escalation of commitment. For example, political leaders might feel a need to continue to defend a certain policy even if it is proving to be counterproductive, to fulfill needs to self-justify earlier decisions. This kind of process leads to an extremization of politics, where conflict in attitudes becomes overheated in order to defend earlier beliefs. In an international politics context, this could be the reasons for snowballing incidents of nationalism or antagonistic sentiment against another country. Sivanathan et al (2007) conclude that self-affirmation can be used as a vehicle to de-escalate commitment.

Existing Claims: Correcting the Unjust Past

The dominant claims from South Korea and China on reasons why the countries cannot move forward in their relations with Japan attribute the cause to Tokyo's failure to acknowledge and apologize for their misdeeds of colonization, aggression, and atrocities of the first-half of the twentieth century (Onishi 2007; Christensen 1999; Kydd 1997; Friedberg 1993/94; Berger 2003). An often-quoted example in comparison is that European states were able to successfully reconcile because of Germany's contrition for World War II crimes (He 2008; Kristof 1998; Lebow 2004; Van Evera 1990/191). Following this logic, the majority of experts and politicians from South Korea and China pressure Japan to explicitly acknowledge and compensate for its past deeds (He 2006, 2007; Scanlon 2005; ROK MOFAT 2012; Takahashi 2004).

However, whether pressuring Tokyo for explicit contrition is the only key to open the doors to smoother relations in Asia is debated. I say this for three reasons. First, an official policy of contrition is not necessary for reconciliation. A close look at European history reveals that adversaries in the region were able to successfully mend relations without "coming to terms

with the past". For example, in the early years after the war, West German commemoration, education, and public discourse ignored Nazi Germany's atrocities and instead mourned only German suffering during and after the war (Lind 2008). Nevertheless, during this period Bonn and Paris drastically transformed their relations. The French viewed the West Germans as their closest friend and security partner by the early 1960s, *before* Bonn started expressing atonement through apologies, history textbooks, and memorials to Germany's victims.³

Second, Chinese and Korean efforts to receive a public apology from Tokyo have been unsuccessful for decades, and the plausibility of expecting one in the foreseeable future is up for debate. The Japanese government has incentive to save face to its domestic audience, and a governmental apology entails costs to reputation (O'Neill 1999).

Finally and most counter-intuitively, such a policy can create a backlash, only further harming relations. Apologies can be counterproductive, typically triggering a backlash that undermines its positive effects. Evidence from Austria, France, Britain, and elsewhere shows that expression of contrition by the government commonly prompts conservatives to offer a counter-narrative that celebrates a country for its past and justifies or denies its atrocities.⁴ When these narratives are observed from the victim country's side, hatred and nationalistic sentiment is once again reinforced, creating a spiral of hostility that makes reconciliation even more elusive.

³ Beyond the Franco-German case, Britain and Germany achieved peaceful and productive relations, although Britain did not contrite for its Dresden fire bombings. In addition, Japan and the U.S. have achieved a warm friendship and security alliance without either one of them expressing contrition for wartime atrocities (Lind, 2009).

⁴ In France, Jacques Chirac's historic apology for French complicity in the Holocaust was denounced by both Rightists and the Socialist opposition (Lind 2008). Conservatives in Switzerland, Italy, and Belgium also mobilized against attempts to confront past collaboration (Lind 2008). In Britain, apologies by Tony Blair to Ireland for the Potato Famine and Bloody Sunday massacre of 1972 led many British and Northern Irish unionists to dismiss British culpability and criticize the Irish for their "victim mentality" (Ward 2007; Lyall 1997). In the U.S., a Smithsonian exhibit that proposed the horrors of Hiroshima and questioned its necessity triggered statements from Congress, veterans' groups, and the media that justified the bombing (Ringle 1994). The U.S. Senate unanimously passed a resolution that declared the museum script "revisionist, unbalanced, and offensive", and the exhibition text was rewritten.

Ironically in this way, well-meaning efforts to soothe relations between former enemies can actually inflame them.

Therefore, although denials of past violence are indeed detrimental to international reconciliation, a policy of contrition is not a panacea to improving relations. Normatively, it is certainly just and satisfying to see those who are guilty atone for war crimes. But pressuring an ‘inflictor’ country for an apology is not necessarily in the ‘receiver’ country’s best interest.

I argue for an easier and more viable way to improve group relations. I hypothesize that group-affirmation allows for a more probable way to ‘fix’ the past that is not just more efficient than mobilizing political resources to pressure Tokyo to apologize but also more effective in moving the psychological underpinnings of both sides toward agreement.

This study makes contributions to the literature as well as real-world applications on intergroup conflict. First of all, in an international context, my findings entail whether states in rival or adversarial relations are able to come closer to peace and reconciliation without having to weaken their national identities. Since group-affirmation makes people feel good about the group they are in, it suggests a fascinatingly counterintuitive way of lessening conflict and opening gateways for cooperation with the out-group by *strengthening*, not weakening, their own identities. This could also apply to groups in tension within a community. States that suffer from internal ethnic, linguistic, or religious divisions could find that reconciliation of the groups does not have to engage an erosion of sub-identities.

Many studies have suggested as a way to peaceful relations a promotion of universalism that covers over existing identities. This could be on the basis of a common good that replaces extant ethnic identities (Penn 2008), a super-ordinate identity based on cosmopolitan values

(Nussbaum 1994; Mazzini, Recchia, and Urbinati 2009; Held 2005), integration into a larger in-group that dismantles sub-categories through individual contact (Allport 1954) or a neo-functionalist spillover (Haas 1958; Rosamond 2000).

My theory does not directly disconfirm the validity of, nor is it antithetical to, these findings. Rather, I offer my theory as an easier and more realistic route to intergroup peace. I make this claim for three reasons. First of all, from what we are witnessing in our world, achieving peace through an erosion of preexisting boundaries of clashing identities is less feasible. Even with accelerating and intensifying forces of globalization, regional integration (e.g. European Union, ASEAN), and the proliferation of international organizations, we have not seen a decline in national or sub-national identities. Predictions of withering nationalism or an obsolete nation-state (Ohmae 1995) have either been proven wrong or have yet to be confirmed, and nationalist interstate tension continues between countries. Paradoxically, such tension is strongest in East Asia, which is also one of the most globalized areas of the world. Furthermore, within states, conflict on the lines of ethnic, linguistic, or religious differences remains undiminished today, as witnessed in areas of intra-state uprising such as Iraq, China, and Russia. Therefore, the plausibility of peace via waning or dissembling of categories of identity is questionable.

Second, the aforementioned paths to peace asserted by other scholars that involve some weakening or elimination of sub-identities is difficult and takes long too. Many social identities such as national or ethnic ones are deeply ingrained and socialized into its members' mindsets and influence their feelings, cognition, and behavior in everyday lives. People do not, and in many cases cannot, simply choose or abandon social identities when it has some association with

family, heritage, or common bloodline (cf. for an opposite view of identity as a rational choice, see Penn 2008).

Third, integrating into a larger group and trying to weaken sub-categories of identification is costly not just in terms of time or difficulty, but risky in that it has a possibility of backfiring as well. People want some sense of belonging (Brewer 2003), and since national identities are deeply ingrained, any attempt of integration that is felt to be forceful or at a faster pace than people are ready for can trigger a threat to ontological security and harsher resistance (Mitzen 2006). It is thus harder to guarantee positive outcomes of cooperation or integration when the process requires doing away with identities that were socialized into people's minds from birth as a precondition.

Instead of finding ways to receive an apology as the critical goal, I propose a theory of group-affirmation that focuses on how psychological change within a group can improve intergroup sentiment. Rather than trying to push Japan into offering an apology as the first step to cooperative relations, it is a more viable and effective strategy to find ways to directly lessen the biases or very emotions underlying the behavioral features of both sides.

Studies in International Relations that explore enemy countries with enduring negative interactions tend to focus on the external behavioral aspects or final products of interaction. An example is the Enduring Rivalries literature, which defines enduring rivalries as state dyads that have experienced at least five Militarized Interstate Disputes (MID) in the last twenty years (Goertz and Diehl 1995). Key findings in this literature identify the main causes of termination of rivalries as external shocks or leadership change (Bennett 2006, 2007, 2008; Goertz and Diehl 2005).

While these seminal findings have contributed to the growth of a rich body of literature, they are limited in that they do not look at what is actually happening in people's minds when there is a change of interstate relations. Alternatively, I focus on the psychological effects underlying the relief of tension from politics of memory (He 2008).

I make several contributions from a purely academic perspective as well. First, this study contributes to Political Science in that I make an innovative attempt of introducing the social-psychological concept of self-affirmation to the field. This is a first endeavor of applying the theory into a context of international relations.

Second, my findings contribute to Social Psychology as well in that studies of self-affirmation to date are limited on individual-level analyses, but I look at affirmation of a social and not self-identity, or affirmation on a group level.

Theory

Assumptions: Psychological Bias as Obstacle to Cooperation

A key assumption of this project is that failure to resolve negative feelings is rooted in self-serving acceptance of information and defensiveness that perpetuate existing negative feelings of the other. For this reason, I focus on psychological biases in the populace that prohibit cooperation between groups. I define psychological biases as consisting of cognitive, affective, and behavioral tendencies that are sticky and last to the extent that they inhibit rational learning (Kahneman and Tversky 1972).

According to the findings of Balci et al. and Dunning (2006), when humans are processing incoming information preexisting beliefs tend to have larger weight and thus influence

acceptance of the information. This tendency is called cognitive inertia (Huff et al. 1992). Information that contradicts or is different from prior beliefs is likely to be disregarded as unreliable or unimportant.

Because I do not always update to information in a perfectly rational manner due to cognitive inertia, it could be that distrust and dislike between countries that have a history of conflict are perpetuated because it is harder for the people to change their beliefs even when facing information that assures win-win benefits from cooperation.

Scope Conditions

I hypothesize that group-affirmation will increase trust between groups with a history of conflict. A word of caution is needed here, however: I do not propose group-affirmation as ‘the ultimate solution’ for intergroup animosity, but rather as a catalyst for positive relations when certain conditions are met. By correcting for psychological biases, group-affirmation could generate the first move towards bettering relations, even if it is not the force that leads the groups toward a final product of affable relations. In cases of realistic threat for example, such as between Israel and Palestine, group-affirmation could lose its strength. It could also be said that because real security threats exist in these cases, it is more natural and can be intuitively understood that negative emotions are perpetuated as well. There is no real puzzle there. I look at cases where there is persisting hatred between countries although there is not much rational gain from it.

In addition, when there are chauvinistic leaders that have strong interests to create and maintain domestic support based on nationalistic out-group hatred, it could be that effects of group-affirmation are overwhelmed or overpowered. Therefore, I am looking at cases where

there is no realistic threat to survival, and no extreme determining force such as a nationalistic leader that has overwhelming power over the country.

From Self to Group Affirmation

I propose that affirmation on a group-level is possible. Smith, Seger, and Mackie (2007) find that a ‘group-emotion’ is real: their Intergroup Emotions theory holds that intergroup emotions are experienced by individuals when they identify with a social group (Mackie, Devos, and Smith 2000; Smith 1995). Since such a thing I can call a group-emotion exists, affirming a group collectively on a value they share and uphold is also plausible.

How might this work? Just like the self-identity, a person’s social-identity has several aspects to it. For instance, ‘being American’ to someone might involve a number of elements, such as a belief in liberal democratic values, cultural norms of individualism, or abiding by American-societal rules. In the same way, the ‘Chinese’ social-identity shared by Chinese entails not just anti-Japanese sentiment, but also family values, a high enthusiasm for education, or pride in achievements of rapid economic development, among others.

Many Chinese dislike having closer relations with Japan as the idea runs contrary to the common perception and awareness that Chinese suffered from Japan’s actions in the past, were treated unfairly without compensation, and should thus dislike Japan. Therefore, this feature of social-identity involves a sense of deprivation and victimization; ‘hating Japan’ is a uniting force in the ‘anti-Japanese’ facet of social-identity. Consequently, working in close cooperation with Japan poses a threat to identity. To protect the self against these contradictions to social-identity, Chinese oppose closer relations with Japan. Information that depicts possible benefits from

closer relations are met with defensive reactions that rejects the information (or questions its validity), leading to a failure in rational learning.

Psychological research on self-affirmation has recently advanced into the examination of effects of self-affirmation on a collective level. However, these studies look at how affirming on an *individual* level can reduce biases and defensiveness that stem from *group* identities (Sherman and Kim 2005). The mechanism through which this works is thought to be that self-affirmed individuals are reminded that there are other sources that can affirm self-worth other than their social identity with the group, thus allowing for a more evenhanded judgment and releasing them from the need to make group-serving judgments. In other words, through self-affirmation individuals realize, consciously or non-consciously, that their social identities are only one part of a larger, flexible self-system. In this way self-affirmation allows people to evaluate their groups independently of the way they evaluate themselves (Sherman and Cohen 2006). The difference here is that these studies look at social-identity as just another source of the *self*-concept. Thus the self-affirmation process works on an individual level again. My study however looks at the possibility of affirmation on a group level, as there are aspects of social-identity that are shared collectively by group-members. The very idea of a ‘culture’ shared by a collective indicates that there exists a commonality in what comprises the meaning of being a group-member. This allows for affirmation on a group level. Because there are group-values shared by the majority of the group, these could be affirmed via policy, education, media, or leaders’ rhetoric.

To summarize, I propose that affirmation of a social identity is also possible, and this will increase levels of trust between groups. Rather than finding alternative sources of self-worth that pertain to the individual but are unrelated to the social identity, people could restore integrity *as*

a group by affirming values that are important to their group. This kind of ‘group-affirmation’ could work through a similar mechanism as ‘self-affirmation’ in that people are reminded the integrity and importance of their social identity do not rely only on opposition against the out-group or out-group hatred. By affirming some other value that is important to the group as a whole, people can react in a more evenhanded manner towards the out-group while being able to retain a sense of in-group attachment.

Empirical Analysis

Sample

I examined the effect of group-affirmation on how subjects play trust games. The dependent variable is levels of trust, to suggest that an increase in trust indicates promising prospects for an improvement in relations.

Experiments were conducted with Ohio State undergraduates that were nationals from South Korea, Japan, and China. This is because subjects with actually deeply-ingrained national identities provide the external validity that using a sample of American undergraduate students cannot.

Manipulation: Group-Affirmation

The method was an economics-style experiment, where participants played a computerized trust game. Subjects were randomly placed into a control or treatment condition. Before playing the trust game, subjects were told that the experiment would consist of two unrelated studies, where the first task would involve a short writing task. Subjects in the treatment condition received

affirmation as a group, where they were given a list of 18 values that could be important to their Asian country of origin. Subjects were asked to rank these values in order of importance to people in their country, and then write a paragraph on why they think the value they ranked as No.1 is most important to their country. Subjects in the control condition performed a non-affirmation task in place of the affirmation task, where they received a list of exotic-sounding jelly beans and were asked to rank them by how tasty they believed the flavors would be (Critcher, Dunning, and Armor 2010).

Procedures

The levels of trust were tested through a trust game using z-Tree, the standard software used for economics experiments (Fischbacher 2007). All participants played 12 rounds of the game, although they were only informed they would be playing several rounds (and not exactly how many). Specifically, Chinese and Korean participants were told that they would be randomly paired with a new Japanese participant every time a new round of the game started. Some Japanese participants were told they would be playing with Chinese participants every time, while some Japanese participants were told they would play with Korean participants every time. In truth, all subjects were randomly paired to play with anyone else in the room, so I assume that by randomization any differences in the type of opponent each subjects was matched with were ‘washed away’.

No conversation or other interaction between participants was allowed. When participants played 12 rounds of the game, the experiment ended. All participants then filled out a simple questionnaire asking for simple demographics, political attitudes, and for how many years they had lived in their Asian country of origin. Subjects randomly drew a number to

determine which round, among the 12 rounds they played, their payment would be based on. All participants received the amount of money they made in that round of the game, were debriefed about the study, and left.

The trust game is a game often used in experimental economics to measure trust between players. Procedures of the game are as follows. In the game there is a proposer and a responder, where the proposer is given \$10 in virtual 'tokens'. The proposer must decide how much, if any, of the \$10 to send to the responder with the proviso that every \$1 sent is tripled before it reaches the responder. So, if the proposer sends \$1, the responder receives \$3, and if the proposer sends \$5, then the responder receives \$15, etc. Once the responder receives the money, then the responder must decide how much if any, of the amount received, to send back to the proposer.

The responses of the proposers are the main variable of interest in the study, because by rational thinking, proposers should realize that paying more money to the responder gives him a higher chance of getting a larger amount of money back. However, this is based on the condition that (s)he trust the responder to give some amount of that money back. This is exactly how I know I are measuring trust levels and not just the degree to which self-affirmation reduces psychological biases.

The trust game is a good way to predict readiness to cooperate, because interaction in the game is analogous to situations states find themselves in when cooperating with each other. States must first invest some costs into the process; there is some time lag before the fruits of cooperation reach both actors. The trust between the two is what will allow for these states to put in these costs in the first place, with faith that there will be an increasing return.

In addition, when looking at the responder's side, her/his decision to give back a certain amount to the proposer is much like situations where cooperating states are dividing a pie. The pie is now bigger due to cooperation, just as the multiplication of the money by 3 symbolizes. Division of the amplified pie at that point allows for mutual benefits, but this is possible only when both are willing to share the pie. Failure for the responder to give back any amount to the proposer, who was the one that allowed for any amplification of the pie in the first place, would imply that future and iterated cooperation would be difficult. At this point, even if there were attempts to initiate cooperative interaction, these would likely end in a one-time game, as the proposer will feel betrayed by the responder and anger at losing the money she gave away. Finding that the responder should not have been trusted, this could lead to even more conflict between the groups.

Results

An OLS regression of the collected data from my experiments shows that group-affirmation increased the amount of money participants earned, at 0.1 level of statistical significance. This indicates that group-affirmation did indeed lead pairs of Chinese-Japanese and Korean-Japanese subjects to cooperate better with each other to produce overall larger fruits from interaction. Because of the way the game is structured, participants would have had to have some level of trust in the other to believe that there was a possibility of receiving some money back when they were offering some in the first place. Thus, I take this as a suggestion that group-affirmation increased levels of trust between players. Group-affirmed participants made \$1.40 more on average than non-affirmed participants. Other variables such as gender differences, number of

years participants lived in their Asian country of origin, and political ideology were not statistically significant.

After running a full model, I tried a simplified model that excludes variables of gender and political ideology, and still found statistically significant effects between group-affirmation and average payment. Although the results here are preliminary and based on a simple pilot study, this indicates that there is some plausibility to my theoretical claim.

Interestingly, among the different rounds of the game, group-affirmation had a statistically significant correlation with payments in the 1st, 11th and 12th round. I have some tentative theoretical guesses as to why this could be. In the 1st round, effects of group-affirmation would have been most salient, as the time between when subjects completed the affirmation task and when they started playing the trust game was shortest.

The statistical significance in the 11th and 12th rounds could have been because although participants were not aware these were the final stages of the game when they were playing, by that time, after a number of rounds participants came to learn that they could make more money if they ‘invested’ more in the beginning of each round, where they were needed to decide to give some money to their opponent. Even if this learning effect occurred for both group-affirmed and non-affirmed participants, I see from my results that group-affirmed participants could have found it easier to realize this and thus trusted their opponent with more ease as well. This finding is congruent with my theory that group-affirmation has the effect of taking people out of their narrow, defensive selves and anti-other mindset, and helps them learn the benefits of cooperating with the other in a rational and evenhanded way.

Table 1. Group-Affirmation and Payment in Trust Games

	Average Payment		11th Payment	12th Payment
	Coef./se	Coef./se	Coef./se	Coef./se
Affirmation	1.40 (0.73)*	1.38 (0.72)*	3.94 (1.87)**	4.79 (2.05)**
Gender	-0.20 (0.80)		-0.48 (2.04)	1.20 (2.24)
Years lived in Asian country of origin	-0.64 (0.46)	-0.68 (0.44)	-0.68 (1.17)	-1.89 (1.28)
Political Ideology	0.22 (0.56)		0.17 (1.43)	0.04 (1.57)
N ⁵				54
R ²	0.09	0.09	0.08	0.12

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses. * indicates statistical significance at the 0.90 level, ** at the 0.95 level, and *** at the 0.99 level or greater.

Conclusion

We are at a confused time in history, when we are uncertain of what is the best thing to do with preexisting group identities when it comes to reconciliation between groups, or peace within an overarching group. In Iraq, clashes of religious identities within the state hamper stability and peace, but there are mixed opinions on what is the best policy to resolve this and prospects seem unclear. Making a case for how stronger identification to sub-groups can actually improve relations between larger groups, my study presents a timely contribution that holds implications for debates on nationalism, cosmopolitanism, and multiculturalism.

⁵ A total of 54 subjects, consisting of 42 Chinese, 9 Koreans, and 3 Japanese, participated. In each ethnic group, approximately half (22 out of the 42 Chinese subjects, 4 out of the 9 Koreans, and 1 out of the 3 Japanese) were group-affirmed. On the whole, over 12 rounds of the game, the average amount all participants made was \$9.59.

In a wider debate, accelerating trends of globalization and regional integration generated a proliferation of discourses on nationalism from the late 20th century (Held and McGrew 2000; Wriston 1992; Guehenno 1995 in Guibernau, 2001; Kim 2000; Ohmae 1995; Rodrick 1997; Hughes 2006). Early predictions saw nationalism as an antithetical force to globalization, and went as far as to call the nation-state obsolete (Deutsch 1969, in Dieckhoff and Jaffrelot 2005. For opposite views that contend globalization strengthens nationalism, see Anderson 1998; Plamentz 1973; Tomlinson 1997; Castells 1998; Smith 1995). To date, however, early predictions of an erosion of nationalism within accelerating globalization have neither been witnessed nor confirmed; nationalism and national identities are proving to be resilient and lasting if not only strengthening with globalizing trends. Even in the European Union, which was once seen by many as the exciting, futuristic experiment that moves beyond the nation-state , a quintessential exhibition of supra-nationalism overriding national boundaries, national identities have not weakened or been replaced by a regional identity (Hoffman 1994; Rosamond 2000).

Under these conditions, my theory presents a more realistic and plausible approach of what to do with existing boundaries of identity. In this sense, this study also has implications for debates in interethnic and interracial conflict in domestic politics, and multicultural societies. If strengthening, rather than eliminating, existing sub-group identities by reminding people about their group-values paves ways for a more peaceful coexistence within a supra-group, there is reason to be hopeful that multicultural communities where a number of different cultures coexist whilst defending each of their cultural traditions and practices can be free of conflict. In this sense, my findings can be applied to settings that are not just inter-state, with implications for

interethnic or interracial conflict in American politics, or other countries' domestic politics where sub-identities create tension.

There are several other related avenues to investigate in the future that will add to and strengthen this research. One is to see how long the effects of group-affirmation last. Studies have proven effects of self-affirmation on students last for at least a year (Cohen et al. 2006). How long group-affirmation might last has direct implications for how attractive and meaningful the concept of affirmation for groups can be.

Second, in the future it would also be helpful to clarify or separate self-esteem from the self-concept clarity enhanced by affirmation. I would like to see if how enhanced in-group love exactly shows different effects from self-esteem based on a comparison of in-group and out-group, which would be a source of nationalism and normally leads to stronger out-group bias.

This study was conducted as the first among my experiments that examine the effect of group-affirmation on improving intergroup relations. For this reason, although here I focus just on trust levels within the context of a trust game, subsequent studies that study how group-affirmation affects intergroup emotion as well as behavioral aspects will help complement this study and constructively build on to it towards a larger research project in the future.

(Word count: 5961)

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