

HAIGAZIAN UNIVERSITY

Self- and Group-Affirmation as Means for Reducing Defensiveness and Facilitating Contact with  
Out-Group Members

Sevana Topalian

Beirut - Lebanon

July 2021

HAIGAZIAN UNIVERSITY

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Out-Group Members

Sevana Topalian

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Art in Psychology – Emphasis Clinical at Haigazian University.

Beirut - Lebanon

July 2021

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Self- and Group-Affirmation as Means for Reducing Defensiveness and Facilitating Willingness to  
Engage in Contact with Out-Group Members

By

Sevana Topalian

is accepted by the Graduate Thesis Committee as satisfying the thesis requirements for the degree  
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Date 12-07-2021

Signature of Thesis Committee Chairperson

*Hanine Hout*

Date 12-07-2021

Signature of Thesis Committee Member

*Lou Justice*

Date 12-07-2021

Signature of Thesis Committee Member

*Shaghig Hudaverdian*

Haigazian University

June 2021

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### Abstract

Self- and group-affirmation, where individuals are prompted to reflect upon central personal or collective values respectively, have been proposed as social psychological mechanisms to reduce defensive reactions and promote intergroup relations in the context of intergroup conflict. Lebanon, with its 18 officially recognized sects, presents as a unique site to explore intergroup relations specifically among Armenians as they are the one of the very few ethnic minority groups in Lebanon who have high vitality and maintained their distinct Armenian ethnic identity, language and culture. The purpose of the present study was to assess the effects of self- and group-affirmation in reducing defensiveness in a sample of Armenian adolescent high school students when presented with an implicit identity threat and to subsequently examine their willingness to engage in contact with the Lebanese mainstream. The study employed a 3 x 2 between groups factorial design with three affirmation (self, group and no-affirmation) and two threat (implicit identity threat and no threat) manipulations. In addition, strength of identification with ethnic identity, attitudes towards and frequency of contact with non-Armenians were measured. The study was administered online via Qualtrics with a sample of 121 Armenian adolescent high school students from seven Armenian high schools. Results of the main analysis indicated to null findings; likely attributable to the small sample size and low statistical power of the study due to the low response rate. The total number of students from all participating schools equaled 465 of which 431 (~92%) showed initial interest in participation. However, only 121 (~25%) actually participated in the present study. Further exploratory analyses were implemented to better understand the characteristics of the sample and inform future research. As reported in a previous study, the current sample highly endorsed their Armenian ethnic identity and females were more willing to engage in contact with and had

higher positive favorable attitudes towards non-Armenians. A possible explanation for this finding might be attributable to the notion that Armenian culture and Armenian men endorse patriarchal traditional roles and values associated with an Eastern influence. Accordingly, in a minority setting males may be motivated to protect the self and thus, the collective shared identity through abstaining or engaging less in contact with non-Armenians. In addition, participants with ethnically non-Armenian parents were more willing to engage in contact with non-Armenians perhaps due to the fact that they encounter non-Armenians frequently in their setting. While, participants who are members of scouts, socio-cultural institutions or are affiliated with a political party had higher positive favorable attitudes towards and more frequent contact with non-Armenians possibly also as a consequence of meeting with non-Armenians frequently in these settings; however, they were less willing to pick non-Armenians in the team building exercise. Along with some situational factors such as the experience of online learning and lack of habituation in participating in online studies, the saliency of the Armenian ethnic identity is proposed as a possible gatekeeper that may have produced reluctance to participation in the study. Furthermore, the analysis of participants' responses in the team building scenario, demonstrated that participants employed their Armenian ethnic identity in making decisions, indicating the collective identity as an important part of their self-concept. Limitations, internal validity threats and clinical implications are discussed and future recommendations are made regarding the current study.

• *Keywords:* self-affirmation, group-affirmation, ethnic identity threat, willingness to engage in contact with out-group members, Lebanon, Armenian ethnic identity.

## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Group and Self-Affirmation as Means for Reducing Defensiveness and Facilitating Willingness  
to Engage in Contact with Out-Group Members

Self-affirmation theory, advanced by Steele (1988), centers on how individuals adapt to information or events that are threatening to their self-concept. Self-affirmation theory proposes that individuals are driven to protect their perceived sense of self; mainly their sense of self-worth and self-integrity (Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Sherman & Cohen, 2006; Sherman et al., 2017; Sherman, 2013; Steele, 1988). According to Steele (1988), the self is composed of several elements: roles, values and belief systems. Roles are duties that one has, such as being a parent, a student, a friend; values are desires and inclinations that people tend to live according to, for example, patriotism, honesty and loyalty; belief systems are ideologies which individuals assign to themselves, for instance, religious and political beliefs (Steele, 1988). These roles, values and belief systems are directly related to an individual's perceived worth and integrity (Sherman & Cohen, 2006; Steele 1988). Furthermore, self-affirmation theory proposes that people have a flexible sense of self-integrity (Sherman et al., 2017). Therefore, when one of the aforementioned domains is threatened, individuals are motivated to protect their perceived sense of self-worth and self-integrity by affirming another aspect of the self from another domain (Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Sherman & Cohen, 2006; Sherman et al., 2017; Sherman, 2013; Steele, 1988).

In addition to roles, values and belief systems, the social identity of an individual constitutes an integral part of their self-concept (Hogg, 2006). Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), assumes that individuals' self-concept is derived from their perceived

membership in a social group. Social identity theory has been widely used in research to explain intergroup relations and intergroup comparisons (Hogg, 2006). Comparisons between groups highlights their differences and creates disparities, all the while individuals strive to maintain a positive perception of their groups (Turner & Tajfel, 1986). If these positive perceptions are challenged, individuals experience a sense of threat leading to negative emotional and physiological reactions, negative attitudes and prejudices, negative verbal and nonverbal behaviors, and possibly overt hostile behavior (Badea & Sherman, 2019; Stephan & Stephan, 2017; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Thus, in-group identification precedes out-group hostility and intergroup conflict (Brewer, 2001). Since conflicts have been associated with intergroup biases and prejudice, research has examined ways to reduce intergroup conflicts and one such strategy is self-affirmation (Sherman et al., 2017). The social psychological approach of self-affirmation has been increasingly applied in the realm of intergroup conflict, as it is suggested as a means of reducing intergroup biases and explaining the role of self-threat (Sherman et al., 2017). For instance, a study examining the role of self-affirmation in encouraging individuals to acknowledge their groups responsibility for their wrongdoings – specifically, Israel’s responsibility for past and ongoing victimization of Palestinians – has demonstrated that, indeed, self-affirmation increases one’s willingness to acknowledge in-group responsibility for wrongdoing of others, express feelings of group-based guilt, and consequently be willing to provide greater support for material compensation for victimized out-groups (Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2011).

Although far less studied than self-affirmation, research studies have also suggested Group-Affirmation or Collective Self-Affirmation as having similar effects of buffering stress and defensiveness when individuals are presented with a threat to their collective identity

(Sherman et al., 2007; Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2016). For instance, Sherman et al., (2007) demonstrated that engaging in group affirmation boosts psychological resources and reduces defensive responses to social identity threat. In their study, group-affirmed athletes compared to non-affirmed athletes were more receptive to threatening information regarding their group and more likely to attribute failure to their own team's performance (Sherman et al., 2007). Another study, showed that the self-esteem of group-affirmed women was protected from the negative effects of perceived sexism (Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2016). Group-affirmation of values may have enduring benefits, especially for people who habitually define themselves via their group membership (Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2016).

### **The Present Study**

Lebanon, for many Armenians is referred to as “our second homeland” or even for some “our first homeland” (Abramson, 2013). This is hardly surprising, as nowhere else in the Levantine region or in the regional diaspora, Armenians have been offered with the economic freedom to achieve prosperity, the political freedom to pursue their interests and the collective autonomy to preserve their identity (Abramson, 2013). As it happens, Armenian's social integration too, marks their community off, as distinctive (Abramson, 2013).

The present study seeks to better understand the role of self- and group-affirmation interventions in reducing defensiveness in the presence of identity threat, and facilitating interaction with out-group members. The sample of the current study are Armenian high school students from Armenian high schools in Lebanon, who develop their Armenian identity within this specific educational context. Accordingly, the following research question will be addressed: Will collective- and self-affirmation reduce defensiveness in a sample of adolescent Armenian

high school students when presented with an implicit identity threat, and subsequently facilitate interaction between Armenians and the Lebanese mainstream?

### **The Lebanese Context**

Lebanon presents a unique site to examine the effects of intergroup relations. The foundations of sectarianism in Lebanon date back to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century during the Ottoman rule, it was reinforced with the creation of the Republic of Lebanon in 1920 and its constitution in 1926, and finally, it was established with the National Pact of 1943 (Haddad, 2002; Weiss, 2009). The Pact served as a compromise solution for the different sects in Lebanon, yet each sect held its own institutions and political aspirations (Haddad, 2002). While presenting the historical background of the evolution of sectarianism in Lebanon is beyond the scope of this study, it serves as an important framework to understand the intra- and inter-group relations in Lebanon.

At present, there are 18 officially recognized religious sects<sup>1</sup> in Lebanon most of which belong to one of two large clusters: Muslims and Christians (Faour, 2007). As noted earlier, sects play a fundamental role in political representation, such that the latter is based upon the numerical size of these different religious groups (Faour, 2007). Individuals in Lebanon seem to identify themselves on the basis of their collective sectarian identity as opposed to a common national Lebanese identity (Haddad, 2002; Tavitian et al., 2019; Weiss, 2009). This indicates sectarianism and religion in Lebanon as not only the foundation of political distribution, but the foundation of society's structure (Haddad, 2002). Previous research has demonstrated that, groups are a facet of an individual's identity (Ross, 1993), and as long as the group's conformity

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<sup>1</sup> The 18 acknowledged religious groups are the following: Alawite, Armenian Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Assyrian Church of the East, Chaldean Catholic, Copts, Druze, Greek Orthodox, Ismaili, Jewish, Latin Catholic, Maronite Catholic, Melkite Greek Catholic, Protestant, Sunni, Shia, Syriac Catholic Church, Syriac Orthodox Church.

demands are met by the individual's desire to assimilate and become part of the group, the group-individual relationship can be considered beneficial (Haddad, 2002). However, this relationship can also lead to in-group identification and inter-group differentiation (Haddad, 2002). Hence, one's in-group is evaluated more positively than the out-group (Haddad, 2002; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). A study by Haddad (2002), exploring sectarian identity and inter-group interaction among sects in Lebanon concluded that distrust, misperception, suspicion and fear characterizes the relationship amid these groups. The current research study will be focused on one of these groups; particularly, Armenians in Lebanon.

### *Armenians in Lebanon*

Armenians exiled from their lands in Western Armenia by the Ottoman Empire, arrived to Lebanon starting in 1915 (Abramson, 2013; Geotcherian, 2014). Like other sects in Lebanon, Armenians are politically represented in the parliament based on their numerical size (Faour, 2007). As a group they have managed to maintain their distinct Armenian ethnic identity, language and culture (Abramson, 2013; Geotcherian, 2014). They have established themselves in the host country, by building their own schools, churches and political groups (Abramson, 2013; Geotcherian, 2014).

Armenians constitute a large fragment of the Lebanese population that are neither Arabs, nor Arab-speaking, nor Muslims (Abramson, 2013). They have resisted integration by conserving their own school systems and ethnic organizations (Melikian & De Karapetian, 1977). Armenian schools and ethnic organizations in Lebanon were established in the 1920's, as a direct need-response to Armenians fleeing Turkish oppression and surviving the Armenian Genocide of 1915 (Migliorino, 2008). The historic trauma of the Armenian Genocide presented a threat to the formation of the Armenian ethnic identity (Kazarian, 1997). As a consequence, the

educational mission, goals and objectives of these institutions were centered around the preservation of the Armenian identity (Migliorni, 2008). In addition, the assimilation process of Armenians into the Lebanese community presented as a threat to their ethnic identity, accompanied by fears of losing this identity (Melikian & De Karapetian, 1977). A primary concern for Armenians in Lebanon accordingly, is the group's continuity (Smeeks & Verkuyten, 2015) as demonstrated by the collective anxiety regarding the group's future (Jetten & Wohl, 2012 as cited in Tavitian et al., 2019).

These various factors may impose difficulties for the integration of Armenians in Lebanon (Abramson, 2013). They can also generate intergroup anxiety, which involves feelings of uneasiness and tension when anticipating or actually interacting with out-group members (Stephan & Stephan, 2017). Previous studies have shown that expectations of being treated with prejudice negatively predict intentions to engage in future contact (Stephan & Stephan, 2017). For instance, Stephan and Stephan (2017) demonstrated that high levels of intergroup anxiety were associated with low levels of contact with out-group members, stereotyping of out-group members, and assumed dissimilarity compared to out-group members. Furthermore, intergroup anxiety and negative intergroup contact have been shown to make group membership more salient, hence, potentially worsening intergroup relations and even creating long-lasting intergroup conflict (Paolini et al., 2010).

As per self-affirmation theory, when individuals are faced with information that threatens their self-worth, the response to this information is often defensive in nature (Sherman & Cohen, 2006; Steele 1988). Since Armenians are keen on preserving their collective Armenian ethnic identity which is directly related to their values, roles and belief systems, a threat to their

collective ethnic identity may likely produce defensive reactions which in turn are central in interacting with out-group members (Paolini et al., 2010).

### **Rationale**

Extant empirical research supports the advantages of self-affirmation in reducing individuals' stress response and defensiveness in the context of identity threat and intergroup conflict (Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2011; Sherman et al., 2017; Sherman, 2013). Reminding people of who they are by having them engage in value affirming activities, reduces their stress and defensiveness under identity threat (Sherman, 2013). Thus, self-threat is attenuated leading to a reduction in defensiveness, which in turn promotes openness (Sherman, 2013).

In a series of experiments, self and group affirmation were evaluated as interventions aimed at increasing acknowledgement of in-group responsibility, facilitating the expression of group-based guilt and showing support for reparative measures (Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2011; Ehrlich & Gramzow, 2015). Results showed that while self-affirmation was successful in increasing individual's willingness to acknowledge their group's wrongdoings towards others, express emotions of group-based guilt, and provide support for compensation; group-affirmation failed to increase willingness and to acknowledge and rectify in-group wrongdoings (Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2011). The authors propose that, group-affirmation may have failed to increase acknowledgment of in-group wrongdoing because boosting the group's self-esteem via affirmation may have led individuals to link their own identities more closely to their group membership (Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2011). Another study, in which participants affirmed a value important to their political party found that, the more they identified with their in-group, the more negatively they evaluated the out-group (Ehrlich & Gramzow, 2015). The authors

suggested that, group-affirmation may have been driven by an increase in identity salience (Ehrlich & Gramzow, 2015).

To the best of my knowledge, a study examining the effects of self- and group-affirmation in Armenian high school students and their willingness to engage in contact with the mainstream Lebanese has not been carried out before. Ethnic Armenians in the diaspora, and specifically in Lebanon represent a unique sample for psychological research on ethnic identity, considering their distinctive culture in terms of the Armenian language, Christian tradition, history of physical, ethnic and religious persecution and dispersion, and threat of cultural assimilation (Kazarian, 1997). Social psychological research on Armenians in the Middle Eastern country of Lebanon has been scarce and generally, historical, political, sociological or anthropological in nature (Alajaji, 2013; Geotcherian, 2014; Geukjian, 2007; Nalbantian, 2008). In addition, there has been little recent psychosocial research on Armenians in Lebanon (Tavitian et al., 2019). A study examining collective references and identity threat among Lebanese and Lebanese-Armenians in the context of continuous intergroup conflict found that, when Armenians were given the chance to self-affirm via a mastery recall affirmation exercise, they spontaneously referred to their collective Armenian ethnic identity, highlighting the saliency of this identity (Tavitian et al., 2019). The authors also argued that the Armenian ethnic identity might be chronically accessible for Lebanese-Armenians with a heightened sensitivity to threats as this potentially relates to the group's internalized fear and worry regarding their identity and the collective's continuity (Tavitian et al., 2019). Such a tendency towards ethnic identity maintenance is not only a function of prejudice and perceived stereotypes, rather it also relates to the group's historical background of persecution, genocide and anxiety regarding the group's continuity (Tavitian et al., 2019).

Being in a constant state of fear and concern regarding the continuity and perseverance of one's own collective ethnic identity, might prompt Armenians to engage in behaviors that serve to maintain a more isolated community, and would eventually serve as a deterrent in integrating into the larger mainstream Lebanese society with a level of ease and a solid understanding that integration does not equate assimilation and thus, does not correspond with losing the Armenian ethnic identity. In the efforts of addressing this matter and promoting interaction with out-group members and eventually a healthy integration of an ethnic group into the larger Lebanese community, the present study proposes self- and group-affirmation as means for reducing defensiveness and facilitating contact with out-group members. By building upon existing research concerning self- and collective-affirmation, the current study seeks to examine the role of these two independent yet, related strategies in attenuating defensiveness and facilitating interaction among Armenians and the Lebanese mainstream.

### **Significance**

According to Erikson's (1968) stages of psychosocial development, identity formation is the central developmental task of adolescence (ages 12-18). During this stage an adolescent's main task is to develop a sense of self (Erikson, 1968). Adolescents who are successful at this stage have a strong sense of identity, and are able to remain true to their beliefs and values (Erikson, 1968). Adolescents who are apathetic, do not make a conscious search for identity and develop a weak sense of self; and thus, experience role confusion (Erikson, 1968).

A study by Phinney et al. (2001), has shown that the strengths of ethnic and national identity in a group varies depending on the support for ethnic maintenance and the pressure for assimilation; and that a combination of a strong ethnic identity and a strong national identity promotes the best adaptation. However, in each country the characteristics and preferences of

ethnic groups interact with official policies and attitudes of members of the host society and can produce any of the four possible acculturative outcomes: assimilation, separation, integration and marginalization (Phinney et al., 2001). While data on the acculturation status of Armenians in Lebanon is not yet available, many studies have pointed to the saliency of the Armenian collective ethnic identity, the importance to maintain this identity, and its role in hindering the integration of the Armenians in the Lebanese mainstream context (Kazarian & Boyadjian, 2008; Kazarian, 1997; Tavitian et al., 2019).

When one's value system including the identity of their social group is challenged by exposure with out-group or host community members with discrepant worldviews this produces prejudice towards those members (Sherman et al., 2017). This threat to worldview could be experienced as a threat to the self or the group and lead people to derogate others (Sherman et al., 2017). In turn, this can potentially lead to intergroup comparisons and hostile or defensive intergroup behaviors (Sherman & Cohen, 2006). Accordingly, when an ethnic group's social identity is challenged to assimilation by exposure to the host community such as in the case of Lebanese-Armenians, this may be perceived as a threat to the group's continuity, and may result in further retention of the Armenian ethnic identity through withholding contact with or derogating the out-group.

Sherman et al., (2017) noted that self-affirmation has the potential to reduce conflict and intergroup defensiveness by changing people's perception of the conflict and, therefore altering intergroup behaviors. They have also reviewed a number of studies suggesting that affirming core values can reduce prejudice and out-group hostility, increase knowledge of collective responsibility for wrongdoing and facilitate greater trust and open-mindedness in negotiation over limited resources or opposing values (Sherman et al., 2017). From this perspective, self-

affirmation can be seen as a tool that increases openness to information and change when a threat occurs (Sherman et al., 2017). Therefore, the current study can be of benefit to Armenians to reduce fear and anxiety associated with the group's continuity and in turn, promote an easy and effortless integration of the Armenians in the larger Lebanese context while facilitating interaction with non-Armenians.

Both, social psychological and developmental approaches suggest that a strong, secure ethnic identity contributes to psychological well-being (Phinney et al., 2001). Theory and research on acculturation determine the importance of adaptation to the host society (Phinney et al., 2001). Phinney et al., (2001), conducted a study in which they explored whether ethnic and national identities, separately or in combination, were related to the adaptation of immigrant adolescents. Results revealed that immigrant adolescents with integrated identities scored significantly higher than all other groups on measures of psychological adjustment (Phinney et al., 2001). Although examining the psychological wellbeing of Armenian adolescents is beyond the aim of this study, it is important to explore their willingness to engage in contact with the Lebanese mainstream following a self- and group-affirmation manipulation since the act of interacting with the other might eventually help to find a balance between ethnic retention and adaptation to the larger Lebanese mainstream society.

It is unclear whether Armenians in Lebanon have a reluctance to engage in contact with the Lebanese mainstream as research on Lebanese-Armenians is very little. However, the saliency of the Armenian ethnic identity along with perpetual fears and anxiety of losing that identity, may have created a social gap between Armenians and non-Armenians in Lebanon (Kazarian & Boyadjian, 2008; Kazarian, 1997; Tavitian et al., 2019). For this reason and those stated above related to psychological well-being, it is deemed important to examine whether such

a gap exists and further explore the interplay between identification strength of ethnic identity and willingness to engage in contact with the Lebanese mainstream in the context of threat and affirmation.

## CHAPTER II

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Acceptance of threatening information and reduction of intergroup defensiveness have been studied within the framework of self- and group-affirmation (Badea & Sherman, 2019; Sherman & Cohen, 2002; Sherman et al., 2017; Sherman et al., 2007). People seem to resist evidence contradicting long-held beliefs, and persist in engaging in maladaptive behaviors despite the presence of persuasive information or personal experiences that advocate change (Sherman & Cohen, 2002). These defensive tendencies are largely rooted in an underlying motivation to protect the perceived sense of self-worth and self-integrity (Sherman & Cohen, 2002). Research in self- and group-affirmation have shown that when people affirm important values related either to their self-concept or to their group, they are more likely to be open to criticism, accept threatening information, and experience a decrease in feelings of defensiveness and hostility towards members of the out-group (Badea & Sherman, 2019; Sherman & Cohen 2002; Sherman et al., 2007).

Lebanon, with its 18 officially recognized religious sects (Faour, 2007), presents a unique site for social psychological research with regard to self- and group-affirmation, identity threat, and intergroup relations. Lebanon is a country in which multiple in-groups and out-groups engage in conflict over their perceived survival, where the gains of one group is interpreted as potential losses of another (Tavitian et al., 2019). This creates a tense political structure with a strong fear of intergroup conflict (Tavitian et al., 2019). Despite that, a relatively recent large-scale study found that the Lebanese national identity is a salient source of belonging for Lebanese youths (ages 18-25); however, this study also found blatant bias towards one's sect regardless of gender or region of origin, which suggest sectarian identity as a crucial source of

social categorization for the Lebanese (Harb, 2010). Armenians constitute a large fragment of this antagonistic, segregated and defensive milieu. The assimilation of Armenians in the Lebanese society presents as a threat to their distinct ethnic identity (Melikian & De Karapetian, 1977). Apart from their efforts for preserving their ethnic identity, the main concern of Armenians is their group's continuity (Tavitian et al., 2019). Such concerns are addressed by Armenian social, political, cultural and educational organizations in their attempt to develop a solid ethnic identity.

The aim of the present study is to better understand the roles of both, self- and group-affirmation in reducing defensiveness in the presence of identity threat, and in facilitating interaction among Armenians and the Lebanese mainstream. The following chapter elaborates on literature pertaining to group- and self-affirmation, and defensiveness as the result of social identity threat, and their associations with willingness to engage in contact with out-group members.

### **Self-Affirmation Theory**

Self-affirmation theory posits that individuals faced with a threat to their perceived sense of self-worth or integrity are driven to protect their self-representation (Steele, 1988). When a person's self-integrity is threatened, meaning their sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem, they generally deploy one of three categories of responses to cope with such threats (Sherman & Cohen, 2006). First, they can respond by accommodating to the threat; meaning, they can accept the threatening information and then use it as a basis for behavioral or attitudinal change (Sherman & Cohen, 2006). Second, they can try to ameliorate the threat by way of direct psychological adaptation (Sherman & Cohen, 2006). That is, they manifest defensive biases through dismissing, denying or avoiding the threat in some way (Sherman & Cohen, 2006). A

third alternative, proposed by self-affirmation theory, denotes that people can respond to threatening information using indirect psychological adaptation of affirming alternative self-resources unrelated to the provoking threat (Sherman & Cohen, 2006; Steele, 1988). As such, according to Steele (1988), affirming values in domains unrelated to the threat promotes self-integrity and reduces the perceived threat. Such “self-affirmations” by fulfilling the need to protect self-integrity in the face of threat, enable people to deal with threatening information without resorting to defensive biases and judgments (Sherman & Cohen, 2006; Sherman & Cohen, 2002; Steele, 1988).

Early research examining stereotyping and prejudice as means of maintaining one’s self-image postulate self-affirmation as a possible approach to prejudice reduction (Fein & Spencer, 1997; Steele, 1988). In a seminal study on self-affirmation, Fein and Spencer (1997) asked participants to evaluate a member of a stereotyped group and found that, when participants’ self-images were bolstered (self-affirmed) they were less likely to evaluate the stereotyped person negatively. Conversely, receiving negative feedback (self-image threat) increased the likelihood of stereotypical evaluations (Fein & Stein, 1997). When individuals’ positive self-view is threatened, they may become more defensive, invalidate the threatening information, and derogate the source of the threat (Sherman & Cohen, 2002; Sherman et al., 2007). Within the broader framework of intergroup relations, prejudice and conflict supporting beliefs may result in intergroup conflict (Sherman et al., 2017). Intergroup conflict can create strong hostility and prejudice towards opposing groups, psychological reactions that serve as “freezing factors” that lock people in a conflict-supporting narrative (Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2011). When people are given the opportunity to self-affirm values unrelated to the presented threat, the resulting boost in self-worth and integrity reduces the need to derogate out-group members (Sherman et al., 2017).

Therefore, in the context of intergroup conflict, affirmation might allow individuals to see their threatened group identity as one smaller aspect of a broader self-image (Sherman et al., 2017). By viewing the outside threat to their in-group as psychologically “smaller”, people may have sufficient perspective to pursue a more balanced resolution of the conflict (Sherman et al., 2017).

The mechanisms through which self-affirmation exerts its effects on prejudice reduction are not yet clear (Crocker et al., 2008). For a phenomenon as rich and complex as bias reduction, it seems unlikely that there is one mechanism or mediator through which self-affirmation produces its effects (Sherman & Cohen, 2006). It is more likely that there are a number of affective, cognitive, and motivational processes that produce the effects of self-affirmation (Sherman & Cohen, 2006). A study exploring the underlying operating mechanisms of self-affirmation concluded that, writing about important values has positive effects on other-directed feelings such as love (Crocker et al., 2008). Reminding individuals what they love or care about may foster acceptance under difficult circumstances (Crocker et al., 2008). Moreover, different studies have found evidence of potential mechanisms underlying self-affirmation such as, individual self-esteem (Cohen et al., 2000; Fein & Spencer, 1997; Sherman & Cohen, 2006), collective self-esteem (Sherman & Kim, 2005 as cited in Sherman & Cohen, 2006), and elevations in positive affect (Koole et al., 1999 as cited in Sherman & Cohen, 2006).

### ***Self-Affirmation Versus Group-Affirmation***

Researchers have extended self-affirmation theory by comparing two strategies that affirm self-integrity; self-affirmation and group-affirmation (Badea & Sherman, 2019). While self-affirmation allows members of a threatened group to bolster values central to the self, group-affirmation allows them to affirm values central to a collective identity (Sherman et al., 2007).

Social identity theory proposes that groups which people belong to are important sources of pride and self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Membership in ethnic, organizational, and sports groups provides individuals with a sense of social identification (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). As such, the self and the group develop into highly connected constructs, where one's group constitutes an important part of the self (Sherman et al., 2007). When people identify with a group they tend to favor and defend that group, for example allocating more resources to their group or making attributions that reflect positively on their group (Sherman et al., 2007). In addition, people defend their group because the group is seen as a crucial part of the self (Sherman et al., 2007). Accordingly, identifying with a group or being a member of a group can lead to defensiveness on behalf of that group (Sherman et al., 2007). Thus, one's own group can serve as a resource from which they can draw upon group-affirming values to confront information that is potentially threatening to the group (Badea & Sherman, 2019; Sherman et al., 2017; Sherman et al., 2007; Villicana et al., 2018).

Indeed, a study examining the effects of group affirmation among sports teams found that, affirming important group values increases acceptance of group threatening information (Sherman et al., 2007). The study also concluded that the effectiveness of group affirmation may possibly depend on the degree of identification with one's group (Sherman et al., 2007). Therefore, group identification seems to be a necessary condition for a group to serve as an affirmational resource (Sherman et al., 2007). Another study investigating the effects of group-affirmation on the self-esteem of women exposed to blatant sexism has shown that, group-affirmed women who were threatened by sexism were protected from the negative effects of perceived sexism (Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2016). Nonetheless, contrary to self-affirmation the effects of group-affirmation in some instances remains unclear (Badea & Sherman, 2019).

Group-affirmation seems to attenuate, have no impact or even accentuate negative attitudes (Badea & Sherman, 2019). A study by Čehajić-Clancy et al., (2011), found that only self-affirmation was successful in increasing Serb's acknowledgment of atrocities committed against Bosnian Muslims; while group-affirmation had no effect. In this case, thinking about in-group values and in-group wrongdoings at the same time causes conflict, and by emphasizing group boundaries and divisions, group affirmation may exacerbate defensiveness and biases (Badea & Sherman, 2019). Furthermore, the normative context of group-affirmation should be taken into account (Badea & Sherman, 2019). For instance, a study in Canada applied group-affirmation in college campuses in which attitudes toward indigenous people were favorable, generating a positive normative context (Donakowski & Essess, 1996).

### **Social Identity Threat**

Social identity is a component of an individual's self-concept that stems from their perceived membership in a social group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Similarly, ethnic identity – a type of social identity – is the part of one's identity associated with membership in a particular racial or ethnic group together with the value and emotional significance that are attached to that membership (Phinney, 1990; Tajfel, 1981).

Jean Phinney's (1989), model of ethnic identity development is composed of three stages with theoretical underpinnings in Erikson's (1968) stages of psychosocial development. In line with Erikson's (1968) identity formation, Phinney (1989) focuses on the adolescent. According to Phinney (1989), individuals in minority groups undergo the following three stages of ethnic identity development: diffusion/foreclosure an unexamined state of ethnic identity, moratorium a central phase in ethnic identity development during which individuals explore their ethnic

identity, and ethnic identity achievement characterized by acceptance, internalization, and a clear understanding of one's ethnic identity (Phinney, 1989).

Erikson identified eight psychosocial stages that individuals pass through from infancy to late adulthood: Trust vs. Mistrust, Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt, Initiative vs. Guilt, Industry vs. Inferiority, Identity vs. Role Confusion, Intimacy vs. Isolation, Generativity vs. Stagnation, Integrity vs. Despair (Erikson, 1968). Each stage is characterized by a psychosocial crisis of two conflicting forces (Erikson, 1968). The successful resolution of each stage leads the individual to emerge from that stage having obtained its corresponding virtue (Erikson, 1968). Phinney's (1989) model of ethnic identity development coincides with Erikson's (1968) "Identity vs. Role Confusion" of psychosocial development. According to Erikson (1968), adolescents during this stage develop a sense of self or personal identity. A successful resolution of this stage leads to an ability to stay true to oneself and acquire the virtue of fidelity, while failure leads to role confusion and a weak sense of self (Erikson, 1968).

Social or ethnic identity threat is a state of psychological discomfort that people experience when confronted with negative group or individual information related to their ethnic identity (Aronson & McGlone, 2009; Steele & Aronson, 1998). People strive to maintain a positive perception of their group, and when these positive views are challenged they experience a sense of threat (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Social identity threats can take many forms (Aronson & McGlone, 2009). One type of social identity threat is stereotype threat in which people feel at risk of conforming to stereotypes concerning their social group (Aronson & McGlone, 2009; Steele & Aronson, 1998). Stereotype threat has been thoroughly investigated in studies of racial and gender gaps in academic performance (Nguyen & Ryan, 2008; Steele & Aronson, 1998; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Another type of social identity threat titled social identity

contingencies used in studies with underrepresented groups in workplace settings; refers to possible judgments, opportunities, restrictions, and treatments that are associated with an individual's social identity in a given environment (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). Consequently, these cues can determine the extent to which one feels threatened or safe in a given setting (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008).

Social identity theory addresses the issue of potential problems that may arise from the participation in two groups (Phinney, 1990). Accordingly, the process of adaptation of ethnic minority groups in the host society is referred to as acculturation (Berry, 1997). Acculturation is best represented by a bidimensional model with integration into the receiving-culture and separation from the heritage-culture representing two independent dimensions (Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008). Working within the bidimensional model of acculturation Berry (1997), crossed these two independent dimensions to create four categories: assimilation (accepts the host culture and rejects the heritage culture), integration (accepts the host culture and retains the heritage culture), separation (rejects the host culture and retains the heritage culture), and marginalization (rejects the host culture and discards the heritage culture).

According to Tajfel (1978), identification with two groups can be problematic to identity formation in ethnic group members. In such cases, individuals face conflicts in attitudes, values, and behaviors between their minority ethnic group and the majority group (Tajfel, 1978). Studies have found that biculturalism is often the most favorable acculturation orientation where one strongly endorses the values and practices of both, the host and heritage culture (Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008). Certainly, the combination that produces the best outcome in minority ethnic groups associated with psychological well-being is the integration of a strong identity of the minority group and a strong identity of the majority group (Phinney et al., 2001).

### **Social Identity Threat and Affirmation: Reduction of Defensiveness in The Presence of Identity Threat**

Intergroup relations have been studied extensively in the context of social identity theory and prejudice (Eriksen, 2001). When people are presented with negative information about a group that they strongly identify with, they tend to experience threat to their social identity which induces defensiveness (de Hoog, 2013). In their social identity theory, Tajfel and Turner (1986) state that being a member of a group effects individuals' levels of self-esteem, their inter- and intra-group cognitions, attitudes and behaviors. This in turn, influences intergroup relations leading to intergroup discrimination characterized by in-group favoritism, and discrimination or prejudice that requires an active component of out-group derogation and aggression (de Hoog, 2013; Eriksen, 2001). Accordingly, research has shown that individuals who highly identify with their group devote more attention to negative information, experience higher threat perceptions, and have more defensive thoughts such as criticizing and minimizing out-group members (de Hoog, 2013). Moreover, studies have shown that threatening people's self- or group-image leads to more out-group derogation compared to individuals who have not received social identity threats (Fein & Spencer, 1997).

Defensive biases arise in part, from a fundamental motivation to protect the perceived worth and integrity of the self or of the group (Sherman & Cohen, 2002). Self-affirmation has been proposed as a potential mechanism that can attenuate psychological biases underlying conflict (Badea & Sherman, 2019; Sherman & Cohen, 2006; Sherman & Cohen, 2002; Sherman et al., 2017). When global perceptions of self-worth and integrity are affirmed, threatening events or information lose their self-threatening capacity as the individual can perceive them within a broader, larger view of the self (Sherman & Cohen, 2006). As such, since social

identities are only one part of a larger, flexible self-system people can respond to threats to their group memberships or social identities by affirming some other aspect of the self, unrelated to their group (Sherman & Cohen, 2006). Another social psychological mechanism, far less-studied than self-affirmation, collective- or group-affirmation has shown to reduce defensiveness among individuals exposed to a potential collective identity threat (Sherman et al., 2007). Based on the idea of one's own group constituting an important component of the self and that the group and the self are highly connected constructs, people should be able to use the group as a resource to confront collective threats just as they use the self to confront individual threats (Sherman et al., 2007). If affirmation strategies could potentially reduce biases and defensiveness between conflicting groups, this can possibly help promote openness and facilitate intergroup relations (Sherman et al., 2017).

### **Aims and Hypotheses**

Following this logic, the current study aims to better understand the roles of self- and group-affirmation in reducing defensiveness in a sample of adolescent Armenian high school students when presented with an implicit identity threat and to subsequently examine their willingness to engage in contact with the Lebanese mainstream.

#### ***Hypothesis 1***

**Main Effect of Affirmation.** It is expected that participants who engage in self- or group-affirmation without receiving an implicit identity threat will be more willing to engage in contact with and have higher positive favorable attitudes towards non-Armenians.

#### ***Hypothesis 2***

**Interaction Effect of Affirmation and Threat.** It is expected that participants in the self- and group-affirmation conditions who receive an implicit identity threat will be more

willing to engage in contact with and have higher positive favorable attitudes towards non-Armenians as compared to participants who will not engage in an affirmation manipulation yet receive an identity threat.

### ***Hypothesis 3***

**Self-Affirmation Versus Group-Affirmation.** Bearing in mind the saliency of the Armenian ethnic identity, the recent altercations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the ongoing aggressions of Azerbaijan on Armenia, and the constant social media attacks on Armenians (Kazarian & Boyadjian, 2008; Kazarian, 1997; Simmons & Gauthier-Villars, 2021; Tavitian et al., 2019), the Armenian collective identity is currently under stress and Armenians are experiencing heightened levels of threat. As such, by asking Armenians to think about their group's identity, it is expected that the group-affirmation might create a reactance effect and thus, self-affirmation compared to group-affirmation will likely reduce defensiveness and facilitate participants' willingness to engage in contact with and have higher positive favorable attitudes towards non-Armenians.

## CHAPTER III

## METHODS

**Participants**

According to Phinney (1990), identity formation is an integral part of the psychological functioning of members of ethnic and racial minority groups. The three stage model of ethnic identity development outlined by Phinney (1989), unexamined ethnic identity, search for ethnic identity and ethnic identity achievement, overlap with Erikson's (1968) identity vs role confusion stage of psychosocial development that adolescents (ages 12-18) engage in. Since the present study is interested in investigating the role of ethnic identity and its moderating effects on affirmation, ethnic identity threat and willingness to engage in contact with out-group members; the sample consisted of Armenian adolescent high school students in grades 10, 11 and 12. Students' ages in these grades range from 16 to 18. As per Phinney's (1989), three stage model of ethnic identity development, students with ages ranging from 16 to 18 should either be in the process of exploring their ethnic identity or have already accepted, internalized and clearly understood their ethnic identity; assuming that an unexamined state of ethnic identity occurred prior these ages. Students younger than 15 or 16 have a limited understanding and commitment to their ethnic group as a result of a lack of active exploration regarding their ethnic identity (Phinney, 1989). They give ethnicity little thought or are assumed to have derived their ethnic identity from others (Phinney, 1989).

The sample of the study was calculated using G\*Power version 3.1.9.4 (Faul et al., 2007). The *F* statistic, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to be able to detect fixed, main and interaction effects with an a priori type of power analysis where statistical power and effect size were determined. The following parameters were set: A medium size effect ( $d = 0.5$ ;  $p < 0.5$ ), degrees of freedom ( $df = 2$ ), 6 groups and 1 moderator. The calculation yielded a total sample

size of  $N = 246$ , with  $n = 41$  participants in each experimental condition. Bearing in mind the sample size generated by G\*Power, the study aimed to collect data from  $N = 300$ , with  $n = 50$  in each experimental group.

A total of 121 students took part in the current study. According to the extracted data, 431 responses were recorded of which 176 were complete responses and the remaining were partial responses which were removed. From the 176 remaining, 34 participants did not continue beyond the assent form as they did not consent to participate. From the remaining 142 questionnaires, 21 participants did not permit access to their data following debriefing (See Table 1). The participating students were recruited from 7 Armenian high schools located in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. Keeping in mind that prolonging the duration of an experimental study increases and gives rise to multiple internal validity threats especially history threats that would in turn influence the results of the experiment, data collection was terminated regardless of the small number of participants. The experiment was conducted remotely via an online Qualtrics link (<https://www.qualtrics.com>), where students were randomly assigned to an experimental group. An incentive was provided for participation, where 20 students from the overall participating schools won a one-time delivery only gift voucher from a local restaurant. Participants full socio-demographic information is presented in Table 2.

**Table 1.**

*Distribution Of Participants Refusing Access To Their Data Across Experimental Groups (N= 121)*

Group	Category	N
Group 1	Self-Affirmation x Threat	3
Group 2	Self-Affirmation x No Threat	1
Group 3	Group-Affirmation x Threat	6
Group 4	Group-Affirmation x No Threat	1
Group 5	No-Affirmation x Threat	6
Group 6	No-Affirmation x No Threat	4

**Table 2.***Participants Full Socio-Demographic Information (N= 121)*

Demographics	Categories	N	Valid %
Age	15-16	45	37.1
	17-18	73	60.2
	19-20	3	2.5
Sex	Male	47	38.8
	Female	65	53.7
	I would prefer not to answer	9	7.4
School	YMC	38	31.1
	Djemaran	36	28.5
	Mesrobian	17	14
	AEC (Beirut)	12	9.8
	AEC (Ashrafieh)	1	.8
	AGBU	8	6.6
	UAC	9	7.4
Grade	10 <sup>th</sup>	36	29.8
	11 <sup>th</sup>	39	32.2
	12 <sup>th</sup>	46	38.0
Nationality	Lebanese	70	57.9
	Armenian	27	22.3
	Syrian	9	7.4
	Other (Lebanese-Armenian, Canadian, Palestinian-Armenian)	15	12.4
Mother's Ethnic Identity	Arab	5	4.1
	Armenian	116	95.9
Father's Ethnic Identity	Arab	4	3.3
	Armenian	117	96.7
Male Old Siblings	Yes	43	35.5
	No	78	64.5
Male Young Siblings	Yes	43	35.5

	No	78	64.5
Female Old Siblings	Yes	19	15.7
	No	102	84.3
Female Young Siblings	Yes	28	23.1
	No	93	76.9
Religious Sect	Protestant	2	1.7
	Armenian Orthodox	98	81.0
	Armenian Catholic	14	11.6
	Other (agnostic, atheist, non-denominational, Greek orthodox)	7	5.8
Member of a socio-cultural institution or a political party	Yes	28	23.1
	No	93	76.9
Member of a scouts group	Yes	48	39.7
	No	73	60.3
Siblings' members of a socio-cultural institution or a political party	Yes	25	20.7
	No	96	96
Siblings' members of a scouts group	Yes	43	35.5
	No	78	64.5

### **Ethical Considerations**

The present research study received ethical approval from the Haigazian University Social and Behavioral Sciences Ethics Committee (TT.6.20, July 7, 2020).

Permission to conduct the research study was obtained from each school. Parents of participating students were provided with a Qualtrics link (<https://www.doodly.com>) containing the passive parental consent letter in the form a video. The short video clip was created using an animation website called Doodly (<https://www.doodly.com>). The video was a voiceover of the main researcher stating information about the purpose of the study, the rights of the participants as well as the risks and benefits of participation. The passive consent procedure assumes that the

parent or guardian has consented unless they return the consent form signed (Christensen et al., 2014). Accordingly, students whose parents did not agree for them to participate were asked to indicate their first name and last name in the space provided below the video.

In addition to parental consent, students were provided with an assent letter in the form of a short video clip. The student assent video was on a separate Qualtrics link (<https://www.doodly.com>) which also contained the questionnaire of the study. Similar to the parental consent video, the student assent video was created using the animation website Doodly (<https://www.doodly.com>), and it was a voiceover of the main researcher stating information about the research study in general, its expected risks and possible benefits, and what is expected of the participants. After watching the video, participants indicated their consent to participate by clicking on “Agree, I want to participate in this research”.

The present study employed deception and the actual intent of the study was not revealed to participants so as to not influence their answers. Participants were asked to fill in an automated questionnaire after engaging in either a self-affirmation manipulation, a group-affirmation manipulation, or a no affirmation control condition. Participants in some of the experimental groups also received an implicit identity threat while others did not and deception was also employed in these two conditions. Participants in the threat and no-threat conditions were told that they are going to be asked questions regarding their general knowledge about certain social groups such as Lebanese, Syrian, Palestinian, Armenian, Chinese, Senegalese, American, French, based on their random selection of a number ranging from 1 to 8. In the threat condition, regardless of the number participants picked they answered questions related to Armenians and then read a feedback vignette; whereas, in the no-threat condition, regardless of the number participants picked they answered questions related to Senegalese and then read a

feedback vignette. The subtle identity threat implemented in this study did not cause any emotional harm to the participants. After filling in the automated questionnaires, participants and their parents were debriefed. They were informed about the intent of the study and that some participants, depending on the experimental condition, were subjected to an identity threat. Participation was entirely voluntary. Participants had the right to refuse access to their answers after disclosure. If participants felt uneasy, they could terminate the study at any time they want. Participants were also asked to provide demographic data relevant to the study but not their names. Therefore, their privacy and confidentiality were ensured and their anonymity maintained.

### ***Ethical Dilemma***

Midway through data collection it became evident that the option of “Force Response” was chosen while creating the questionnaire on Qualtrics (<https://www.qualtrics.com>). This ethical concern was addressed in a formal letter that was sent to the Social and Behavioral Sciences Ethics Committee.

“Force Response” requires for respondents to answer the question before they can continue to the next page of the survey and answer the next question. If respondents try to progress without answering the question, they would see a message letting them know they must answer the question to proceed. In the consent form, participants were informed that if they felt uneasy, they could terminate the study at any time they want. They also had the right not to answer the question that made them feel uncomfortable. “Force Response” is usually used with questions that are more important than others, or if the survey logic depends on them. For example, one appropriate way to use “Force Response” is in the beginning of the survey when participants are shown the consent form such that those participants who do not want to

participate in the study will be directed towards the end of the survey. A more diplomatic and convenient way to increase question response rate without violating privacy and ethical guidelines would have been to remind participants that they missed a question without requiring that they go back and answer it using the “Request Response” option.

It is worth noting that the six experimental conditions employed in this study did not cause any physical or emotional harm to participants. Some participants may have felt uneasy in the threat condition however, they were debriefed at the end of the study and permission to access their questionnaire was requested.

### **Research Design & Procedure**

Based on previous studies that have shown the effects of self- and group-affirmation in reducing defensiveness and facilitating intergroup contact (Badea & Sherman, 2019; Gunn & Wilson, 2011; Sherman & Cohen, 2002; Villicana et al., 2008), the current study aimed to examine the effects of self- and group-affirmation in reducing defensiveness among a sample of Armenian adolescent high school students when presented with a subtle identity threat, and their willingness to engage in contact with the mainstream Lebanese. Thus, the variables of the study were the following: Affirmation manipulation (self, group, and no-affirmation); implicit identity threat (Threat and no threat condition), willingness to engage in contact with non-Armenians (attitudes towards non-Armenians and team building scenario), ethnic identity identification, and frequency of contact with non-Armenians.

To monitor the possible effects of self- and group affirmation on reducing defensiveness and facilitating willingness to interact with out-group members, the study employed a 3 (self-affirmation, group-affirmation and no affirmation) x 2 (identity threat and no threat) between groups factorial design. This study design produced six experimental groups. Groups received

either a self-affirmation, group-affirmation or no affirmation manipulations coupled with either an implicit identity threat manipulation or no threat manipulation. The various interactions of these variables and their effects were observed on the outcome variables: attitudes towards non-Armenians and team building scenario. In addition, ethnic identity was considered as a moderator and its effects on the relationship between affirmation, threat and willingness to engage in contact with non-Armenians was observed. Moreover, the study included a control variable: frequency of contact with non-Armenians. The 3 x 2 between groups factorial design layout of the present study and the number of participants in each group is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.**

*Between Participants' Factorial Design Layout*

		Implicit Identity Threat	
		Threat	No Threat
Affirmation	Self Affirmation	Group 1 <i>n</i> = 25	Group 2 <i>n</i> = 27
	Group Affirmation	Group 3 <i>n</i> = 21	Group 4 <i>n</i> = 17
	No Affirmation	Group 5 <i>n</i> = 7	Group 6 <i>n</i> = 24

Purposive convenience sampling was applied to approach potential participants from Armenian high schools. Contact was established with Armenian high schools located in Beirut and Mount-Lebanon, and an email containing the school consent letter in both languages English and Armenian were sent to the principals of these schools. The following 7 Armenian high schools consented to participate in this study: Yeghishe Manoukian College, Melankton & Haig Arslanian Djemaran, Armenian Evangelical College (Beirut), Armenian Evangelical Central High School (Ashrafieh), Mesrobian High School & Technical College, Armenian General Benevolent Union Lebanon Schools, and United Armenian College. Following the agreement of

the principals, a second email was sent detailing the steps of the experiment. In addition, as an appreciation of their agreement, participating schools were offered with an incentive where the main researcher offered to provide two workshops, lectures, or support groups to address any social or academic challenges that students, parents or teachers may have faced during the uncertain events of the past year.

The first Qualtrics link (<https://www.qualtrics.com>) containing the parental consent video was sent to the parents, and the second Qualtrics link (<https://www.qualtrics.com>) containing the student assent video along with the questionnaire, was sent to the students two to three days later. This duration was intentionally set to give parents some time to decide whether they would like their child to participate in the study. In addition, three to four days later students were also reminded to complete the questionnaire through a personal message sent by the main researcher containing the link of the experiment. The study links were forwarded to parents and students via WhatsApp. Only one school preferred to post the links on their e-platform. The names of the parents who did not agree for their children to participate in the study were provided to the schools.

Students who agreed to participate in the study were randomly assigned to one of six experimental conditions, and based on their assignment completed an automated questionnaire. In addition, all students completed a demographic form, answered questions checking the validity of the experimental manipulation, and completed scales regarding ethnic identity, attitudes towards and frequency of contact with non-Armenians. The completion of the survey took on average 30 minutes. The questionnaires of students who took longer than 30 minutes were not discarded due to the small number of participants in the study, and maturation threat to internal validity was not controlled. However, all threats to internal validity were accounted for

and are later discussed in the final chapter. The duration of data collection was approximately one month, and given that first, almost all schools in Beirut and Mount Lebanon were contacted to participate in the current study and second, prolonging the duration of the experiment would have increased and multiplied threats to internal validity mainly history threats, data collection was stopped regardless of the small number of participants obtained.

Since the current experiment entailed deception, the questionnaires of students who did not permit access to their data were removed from analysis. In addition, all students whether they permit access to their answers or not, were offered with an incentive for participation where they were given the choice to enter a draw to win one out of twenty, one-time delivery only gift vouchers from a local restaurant. Interested participants were asked to generate an ID to preserve their anonymity consisting of three letters and four numbers. Letters were the first participants' name initials and numbers were the first four numbers of the participants' phone number (without the code). Participants were also reminded to save their ID and follow the updates about the draw on the Facebook page titled "Sevana's Thesis Project". Once data collection was complete, the draw took place and the winners were announced to the participating schools and on the study's Facebook page.

Data was analyzed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (Version 27) using a two-way Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) where the main and interaction effects of the independent variables, affirmation and identity threat were observed on the dependent variables, attitudes towards out-group members and team building scenario. The MANCOVA was followed by exploratory analyses where a thorough investigation of the data was conducted to discover patterns, spot anomalies, and to better understand the characteristics of the sample.

### **Instruments**

In the current study participants indicated the importance of their ethnic identity, and they either engaged in a self-affirmation manipulation by ranking “personal values” from most important to least important and wrote about the three most important “personal values”, or in a group affirmation manipulation where they ranked “group values” from most important to least important and wrote about the three most important “group values”, or a no affirmation control condition where they recalled their morning routine. In addition, participants either received a subtle identity threat, specifically a representative threat by engaging in an “population estimation” exercise, or did not receive a threat. The effects of these different manipulations were observed upon the dependent variables, attitudes towards the mainstream Lebanese and team building scenario. While the frequency of contact with the mainstream Lebanese was controlled for. Lastly, participants completed a demographic form. The questionnaire was administered both in English and Armenian based on the preference of each participant.

### ***Translation***

The questionnaire and the consent forms including the school consent, parental consent and participant assent letters, were translated into Armenian using guidelines outlined in the process of cross-cultural adaptation of self-report measures (Beaton et al., 2000). However, the translated measures were not examined for their cross-cultural applicability rather they were reviewed for their linguistic and conceptual interpretations. Following this protocol (Beaton et al., 2000), the questionnaire was first translated by a translator who was not aware of the concepts being examined in the study. Next, it was translated for a second time by one of the committee members, who was aware about the aim, purpose and nature of the study. Then, the two translations were synthesized by the primary researcher to produce one common translation.

This final version of the questionnaire was subjected to a pilot phase where both, cognitive interviewing and think aloud techniques, were employed to further check the semantic, idiomatic, and conceptual meanings of the instruments. Along with the changes that became evident following the pilot phase, the questionnaire was examined for a last time by a third translator to check for any linguistic or grammatical errors.

### ***Pilot Phase***

The study protocol was evaluated through cognitive interviewing with 12 students from Haigazian University, and through concurrent probing with 3 students from one of the participating schools.

The students from Haigazian University were recruited via their instructors. Following their completion of the questionnaire, the primary investigator contacted the students and set a date and a time for an individual 30-minute online cognitive interview on Zoom. Cognitive interviewing entails verbal questioning about survey responses (Beatty & Willis, 2007). It is used to evaluate the quality of response or to help determine whether the question is generating information that its authors intend (Beatty & Willis, 2007). From the 12 participating students (11 females, 1 male), 7 filled out the questionnaire in Armenian and 5 filled it out in English. The distribution of the students in the different experimental conditions was as follows: one student in group 1 (self-affirmation – threat), one student in group 2 (self-affirmation – no threat), two students in group 3 (group-affirmation – threat), one student in group 4 (group-affirmation – no threat), three students in group 5 (no-affirmation – threat), four students in group 6 (no-affirmation – no-threat). In addition, 3 students (all females) from Melankton and Haig Arslanian Djemaran high school were recruited by the main researcher for a 40-minute online meeting on Zoom with each student to take part in concurrent probing. From these 3

students, one student filled the questionnaire in English and two in Armenian. Students were assigned to the following experimental conditions: one student in group 2 (self-affirmation – no-threat), one student in group 5 (no-affirmation – threat), one student in group 6 (no-affirmation – no-threat). Students were asked to speak aloud whatever comes to their mind as they completed the experimental protocol. Concurrent probing and think-aloud techniques have been shown to have a sound theoretical basis and provide a valid source of information about participant thinking (Charters, 2003), also providing researchers with insight into the participants' cognitive processes (Charters, 2003). The students who participated in the concurrent probing did not participate in the study however, they were offered with the same incentive as other participating students and took part in the draw.

Prior to the cognitive interviews and the concurrent probing, problem areas were identified by the main researcher. Accordingly, the cognitive interview and the concurrent probing consisted of target questions addressing these problem areas. All verbalizations from all students were noted and the questionnaire was modified accordingly.

All students participating in the pilot phase were first asked about their conception and understanding of the term “ethnic identity”. Next, to examine the validity of the threat condition, students were inquired about the threat such as: What did you think about when you were reading the text? How did the text made you feel? Students were then asked about the team building scenario: What did they think of the names of the participants? How did they choose members in the team building exercise? Did they adopt a particular strategy (e.g. picking females instead of males, picking Armenians instead of non-Armenians)? Finally, a manipulation check was conducted to assess how students perceived the manipulation of the independent variables (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999). Although popular, manipulation checks have been criticized to

introduce bias in the experimental protocol via unwanted and extraneous variables, that is the act of checking the manipulation (Kidd, 1976). As a suggested solution, a previous study examining identity threat among Lebanese and Lebanese-Armenians in the context of continuous intergroup conflict (Tavitian et al., 2019) has assessed participants' reactivity using questions from the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999). Thus, in the pilot phase and in the actual implementation of the current study the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999) was administered to determine how participants viewed the manipulation of the independent variables. All other comments and feedback were recorded and taken into consideration while implementing changes.

**Changes Implemented to the Experimental Protocol.** Both groups of students, from Haigazian University and Haig & Melankton Arslanian Djemaran, provided similar responses during the cognitive interviews and the concurrent probing and changes were carried out accordingly.

Upon reading the term "ethnic identity" students were asked to share what they understood by the term, most students thought of their Armenian ethnic identity. To maintain such clarity, the term "ethnic identity" was modified to "Armenian identity".

Moreover, students who received the implicit identity threat implemented in this study perceived the threat as a danger and a risk to their Armenian ethnic identity, suggesting that the threat did indeed provoke or threaten the participants. Some students stated that the threat which was directed to the representativeness of Armenians in Lebanon, made them feel sad and worried that Armenians are outnumbered by non-Armenians in Lebanon. Nonetheless, other students elaborated on this concern and stated that this fact is justifiable as long as Armenians are leaving their current place of residence and settling in Armenia. To address this type of interpretation and

maintain the effect of the subtle identity threat, the unity of the collective Armenian group was also threatened by adding that along with leaving Lebanon, Armenians are scattering all over the world.

Furthermore, in the team building scenario almost all students picked to include one to two non-Armenians in their group that was set up to perform a community service task. When asked about their reason of choice nearly all students stated that they picked randomly. However, after further probing other motives became evident. The most common response for picking more Armenians versus non-Armenians was the use of Armenian language. Students stated that they think they would feel more comfortable when communicating with someone in their native Armenian language. Another common response was based on familiarity. Students stated that they picked certain people because in their personal life they know and interact with individuals having those names. When it came to ranking how much they would like to meet each person that they picked, there was no significant difference between Armenians and non-Armenians. The majority ranked neutral. The most common reason for this was that they did not know the person or they did not have any further information about the person therefore, it was difficult for them to hypothesize and try to imagine whether they would like to go out with these people beyond the completion of the community service task. Accordingly, the set of questions in this exercise was eliminated and students were only asked to write down their reason of choice for each name in the provided blank space.

Finally, when students were asked about the purpose of the study, what the study was trying to examine, and if any of the tasks that they engaged in were related to each other, some students were able to associate together the different experimental tasks. A majority of students stated that the main researcher is trying to examine how the threat affects their willingness to

engage in contact with the mainstream Lebanese. Others stated that the experimenter is trying to observe the interaction between Armenians and non-Armenians, whether Armenians are an isolated group preferring to interact with other Armenians only, or if they are open to contact the mainstream Lebanese. Few students were able to tell that the experimental tasks were related to each other however, they could not detect exactly how they were related. Based on this information, it was decided to employ further deception and inform the participants that they would be participating in two separate studies instead of one. Accordingly, participants in the main study were informed from the beginning, in the assent letter, that they were being invited to take part in two research studies titled “Personal and Group Values” and “Perceptions of Social Groups”. The aim of the first study was framed as to examine how students evaluate themselves and the group to which they belong in terms of values and attributes. The aim of second study was framed as assessing student's general knowledge about certain social groups. No other significant modifications were implemented to the experimental protocol.

### ***Psychometric Properties of the Scales***

Internal consistency of the attitudes towards non-Armenians and frequency of contact with non-Armenians scales was assessed for both versions English and Armenian. Overall, an acceptable to excellent reliability of Cronbach's alpha was obtained for both scales: attitudes towards non-Armenians  $\alpha = .694$ ; frequency of intergroup contact with non-Armenians  $\alpha = .884$ . No significant increase in the alpha level for the total scale was associated with the deletion of any item.

### ***Affirmation Manipulation***

Participants were randomly assigned to engage in either a self-affirmation manipulation, a group-affirmation manipulation or a no affirmation control condition.

**Self-Affirmation.** When an individual's self-concept is threatened, they experience a psychological discomfort that they are motivated to reduce (MCQueen & Klein, 2006). Several strategies for reducing this discomfort have been proposed; for instance, Tesser's self-evaluation maintenance (SEM) model (1988) derived from his self-evaluation maintenance theory. The SEM model is based upon two main broad assumptions: people want to maintain a positive evaluation of the self, and the way they evaluate themselves is partially determined by the accomplishments of people around them, especially to whom they are close (Tesser, 1988). The most prominent self-affirmation manipulations in experimental studies are based upon Steele's (1988), self-affirmation theory, which states that to maintain and restore one's global positive self-image from threats, requires affirmation of some important aspects of one's self unrelated to the threatened domain. Hence, self-affirmation can serve as a buffer and a coping strategy when the self is threatened (Steele, 1988).

A systematic review by MCQueen and Klein (2006), examining experimental manipulations of self-affirmation found that nearly all studies that used the value scales of self-affirmation manipulation, employed some version of the list of values by Allport et al. (1960). The Allport-Vernon-Lindzey value scale (1960) is composed of six different value domains: religion, theoretical, aesthetic, political, social, and economic. Participants choose one of two answers after reading an affirmation about a value (Allport et al., 1960). For example, "Do you think it is justifiable for great artists, such as Beethoven, Wagner and Byron to be selfish and negligent of the feelings of others? (Yes/No)" or "When witnessing a gorgeous ceremony (ecclesiastical or academic, introduction into office, etc.), are you more impressed by (a) the color and pageantry of the occasion itself or (b) the influence and strength of the group?" (Allport et al., 1960). Value scales have only been developed for global values and some items

may be outdated or difficult to use with certain populations, such as those with low literacy or education (MCQueen & Klein, 2006).

Other studies reviewed by MCQueen and Klein (2006), reported using different types of value essays. The most common of which is to ask participants to circle their most important value from a list provided similar to that of Allport et al., (1960), and to take a few moments to write about why these values are important to them (MCQueen & Klein, 2006). Other studies employed writing tasks (MCQueen & Klein, 2006). For example, one study asked participants to identify and write about a positive characteristic or experience such as writing about a life event that made participants feel proud (Klein et al., 2001 as cited in MCQueen & Klein, 2006). Another study asked participants to write about a brief description about an area in their life that is important to them and makes them feel proud, this can be an aspect of their identity, a talent, a relationship, or a basic value (Blanton et al., 2001 as cited in MCQueen & Klein, 2006). Furthermore, a study provided eight affirmations to participants (intelligent, kind, honest, strong-willed and persistent, friendly, good-hearted and caring, a good significant other, and compassionate) and subsequently asked them to think of a time when they felt this emotion and write it down (Dillard et al., 2005 as cited in MCQueen & Klein, 2006). Moreover, a study asked participants to list three positive aspects of themselves (Van Den Bos, 2001 as cited in MCQueen & Klein, 2006), and another asked them to think about these positive characteristics for a few minutes (De Cremer & Sedikides, 2005 as cited in MCQueen & Klein, 2006).

There appears to be no consensus among researchers on the optimal way to experimentally manipulate self-affirmation (MCQueen & Klein, 2006). Therefore, being mindful of the population of the study, a values essay self-affirmation manipulation was employed. The different domains of values in the value scale by Allport-Vernon-Lindzey (1960) might not have

been applicable to a sample of Armenian adolescent students in Lebanon. Students might not be well informed about global topics related to politics, aesthetics or economics. In addition, some types of value essays might not be appropriate to the overall study. For example, asking students to write a short description about an area in their life that is important to them and makes them feel proud might have lead them to write about their Armenian ethnic identity. As mentioned earlier, it is best if the affirmation of an important aspect of one's life is unrelated to the threatened domain (Steele, 1988). Since the current study aimed to induce defensiveness by presenting an implicit identity threat, specifically a representative threat associated with the Armenian ethnic identity, then such a self-affirmation manipulation might not have been feasible.

Instead, values essay self-affirmation manipulations such as presenting eight affirmations to students and asking them to think of times when they felt these emotions and to write them down; or asking students to list three positive aspects of themselves and to think of them for a given period of time, is more appropriate and serves the purpose of the study. Accordingly, students were asked to rank a list of "11 personal values" from most important to least important such as in the experiments by Cohen et al., 2000; Sherman et al., 2013; Sherman et al., 2007. The 11 personal affirmations were the following: being good at art, being good at sports, being smart or getting good grades, having a sense of humor, being creative, being religious, being independent, being with friends or family, having good social skills, being physically attractive, listening to music or playing music (Cohen et al., 2000; Sherman et al., 2013; Sherman et al., 2007). Participants were then asked to provide three reasons of why the top ranked personal value is important to them and then, they were asked to provide one example of something that they have done to demonstrate the importance of that value.

**Group-Affirmation.** Social identities, including being part of groups such as sports teams or other organizations, and memberships in gender, ethnic, and nationality groups are important sources of a person's identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). There exists a direct link between representations of one's self and representations of one's group; hence, people are motivated to protect and maintain the integrity not only of the individual self but also of their social identities (Sherman et al., 2007). Group affirmation allows participants to affirm values or resources central to a collective identity (Sherman et al., 2007).

Research has previously shown that group affirmation can attenuate, have no impact, or accentuate negative attitudes (Badea & Sherman, 2019). For instance, a group of Canadians who wrote about the most important values of being a Canadian acknowledged greater guilt about Canada's mistreatment of aboriginal children in residential schools compared to a control condition (Gunn & Wilson, 2011). However, another study found that group affirmation of Serbs' in trying to increase their recognition of atrocities committed against Bosnian Muslims had no effect (Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2011). In addition, group affirmation made in the same domain as the threat increases a group member's identification with their group, motivating them to protect the social identity associated with the group (Badea & Sherman, 2019). Indeed, prior research has shown that group affirmation in the same domain as the threat lead to greater bias as individuals focus on defending that domain (Badea & Sherman, 2019). This situation may lead to an individual experiencing a reactance effect (Steindl et al., 2015). Brehm's Reactance Theory (1966), a theory of social influence, focuses on how individuals act when their realm of free behavior is limited. Accordingly, a reactance effect is a form of psychological arousal directed towards the reestablishment of free behaviors that have been eliminated or threatened with elimination (Brehm, 1972; Brehm, 1966; Brehm & Brehm, 2013; Steindl et al., 2015). In this

case, individuals are motivationally aroused to fight for freedom which often results in a boomerang effect of non-conformity (Brehm, 1972; Brehm, 1966; Brehm & Brehm, 2013; Steindl et al., 2015). A study examining the relationship between exposure to a political message, psychological reactance and attitude change among students, found that those who were excessively exposed to the message had negative evaluations of it as opposed to those to who were moderately exposed (Miller, 1976). Reactance effect was suggested as a possible explanation for these findings (Miller, 1976). Similarly, a meta-analysis examining the type of stereotype threat in affecting the performance of minorities and women found that blatant stereotype threats, as opposed to moderately explicit and subtle stereotype threats, often produce reactance effects and motivate participants to prove the stereotype wrong (Nguyen & Ryan, 2008).

In the current study, to avoid a reactance effect, students in the group affirmation manipulation condition were presented with the same “11 personal values” modified to the group level and titled “11 group values”: being good at art, being good at sports, being smart or getting good grades, having a sense of humor, being creative, being religious, being independent, being with friends or family, having good business / leadership skills, being physically attractive, listening to music or playing music. Students were then asked to rank these values from most important to least important according to their Armenian ethnic group, provide three reasons of why the top ranked value is important to their group and provide one example of something that their group has done to demonstrate the importance of that value.

**No-Affirmation Condition.** According to the systematic review by MCQueen and Klein (2006), in most studies non-affirmed participants in the control condition complete a value scale of low importance or write an essay about why a value of low importance to them might be

important to someone else. Another study using a non-self-focused task, asked participants in the control condition to write everything that they had ate or drunk in the past 48 hours (Harvey & Oswald, 2000 as cited in MCQueen & Klein, 2006). A recent study by Tavitian-Elmadjian et al., (2019), investigating the effects of autobiographical memories as a possible self-affirmation strategy in identity threat situations asked participants in the control condition to recall and write down their morning routine. As such, the participants in the control condition of the current study engaged in a non-self-focused and non-group-focused task and were asked to recall and write about their morning routine.

### ***Implicit Identity Threat***

Along with the self, group and no affirmation control condition, participants were randomly assigned to either an implicit identity threat condition or a no threat condition.

**Threat.** As mentioned earlier, stereotype threat activation cues are classified into three types: blatant, moderately explicit, and indirect or subtle (Nguyen & Ryan, 2008). In general, stereotype threat theories predict that explicit threat cues will have a stronger negative effect on test or task performance as compared to implicit threat cues (Nguyen & Ryan, 2008). Explicit stereotype threat cues produce over performance in test takers during a test or a task, resulting in a stereotype reactance effect (Nguyen & Ryan, 2008). According to Nguyen and Ryan (2008), moderately explicit stereotype cues might yield the greatest stereotype threat effects. When a general message about subgroup differences is explicitly conveyed but the direction of these differences is not specified and instead is left open for the test takers' interpretation, the threat might draw the targets' attention but it would not be too blatant to make some targets motivated to prove it wrong (Nguyen & Ryan, 2008).

Armenians being a minority in the mainstream Lebanese population, and as a product of their fear of losing their Armenian ethnic identity by integrating into the Lebanese community, already feel threatened (Kazarian, 1997; Melikian & De Karapetian, 1977). Therefore, a blatant or a moderately explicit threat activation cue to the Armenian identity would likely produced a reactance effect. Thus, in the current study an indirect or subtle identity threat was elicited.

Previous research examining the effects of gender stereotyping on test performance have induced indirect stereotype identity threats through race/gender priming (Anderson, 2001; Dinella, 2004; Oswald & Harvey, 2000; Spicer, 1999; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Schmader & Johns, 2003 as cited in Nguyen & Ryan, 2008). For example, asking about race/gender or race/gender priming by other means such as making a race/gender inquiry prior to the test (e.g. the collection of demographic data prior to testing), engaging in tasks (e.g. completing an ability diagnostic test) or presenting an environmental cue (e.g. creating a hostile environment by showing women a derogatory cartoon related to their math ability) (Anderson, 2001; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Oswald & Harvey, 2000 as cited in Nguyen & Ryan, 2008).

In the present study, a representativeness identity threat which is a type of implicit identity threat was imposed. In their study, Purdie-Vaughns et al., (2008), have demonstrated that a variety of cues in a given setting can signal social identity contingencies and threaten an individual based on their group identity. Most settings – that reflect the broader society – are full of cues that signal devaluation of certain social identities for instance, low minority representation, few individuals from underrepresented groups with positions of power, and practices that unintentionally marginalize certain group identities (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). Purdie-Vaughns et al., (2008), further suggest that decreasing identity-related threats that are embedded in the setting may be the most effective intervention to improve intergroup relations.

Therefore, in the present study students participated in a “general knowledge exercise” where they were asked general questions about a social group based on their random selection of a number ranging from 1 to 8. In the threat condition, regardless of the number that participants picked they were requested to estimate the percentage of Armenians relative to non-Armenians currently living in Lebanon, estimate the current number of Armenian Deputies and Ministers in the Armenian Parliament, and finally to state whether they thought these numbers would increase in the upcoming years. Each question was followed by three possible choices. After submitting their responses students read a vignette (See Appendix I) consistent with the idea that presently Armenians are outnumbered by non-Armenians in Lebanon, and it is most likely that the number of Armenians will decrease in the upcoming years as they are leaving Lebanon and travelling to different countries around the world. In addition, to avoid students skipping the vignette and to make sure that they were properly exposed to the threat condition a one-minute time limit was set after which the students were allowed to move to the next page.

**No Threat.** Participants in the no-threat condition were presented with an identity-irrelevant threat (Tavitian et al., 2019). Similar to the identity threat condition, in the no-threat condition students were requested to engage in a “general knowledge exercise” where they were asked general questions about a social group based on their random selection of a number ranging from 1 to 8. In the no-threat condition, regardless of the number that participants picked they were asked general questions about Senegal and the Senegalese: where is Senegal located; what is the most commonly language spoken in Senegal; and how many languages are spoken in Senegal. Each question was followed by three possible choices. After submitting their responses, students read a vignette (See Appendix J) addressing the above mentioned questions. In addition, to avoid students skipping the vignette and to make sure that they were properly exposed to the

no-threat condition a one-minute time limit was set after which the students were allowed to move to the next page.

### ***Willingness to Engage in Contact with Out-Group Members***

To measure participants' willingness to engage in contact with the mainstream Lebanese a team building exercise was created coupled with evaluating participants' attitudes towards non-Armenians.

**Team Building Scenario.** An individual's willingness to have contact with a member of the out-group has been used as a measurement for how much prejudice a person has towards people from that group (Sherman et al., 2017). Studies have shown that group and self-affirmation increase the willingness of individuals to meet an out-group member (Fein & Spencer, 1997; Sherman et al., 2017; Stone et al., 2011).

In one study, highly prejudiced people were asked if they wanted to meet an Arab American to discuss the topic of prejudice (Stone et al., 2011). Self-affirmed individuals were more interested in meeting the person as compared to individuals who were not self-affirmed (Stone et al., 2011). In this study, the desire to meet the other person was assessed by asking participants how much they would like to meet the person on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "1 = do not want to meet" to "7 = would definitely want to meet" (Stone et al., 2011). Another study in which a threat to the self-image produced more out-group derogation, an affirmation manipulation led to a reduction in prejudice and out-group derogation (Fein & Spencer, 1997). In this study, the researchers employed an evaluation task in which they asked participants to assess an individual who had applied for a job as a personal manager at a particular organization (Fein & Spencer, 1997). The participants were provided with broad information about the general responsibilities of a personal manager and were encouraged to evaluate the candidate's

suitability for the job (Fein & Spencer, 1997). Moreover, a longitudinal study examining intergroup contact and intergroup attitudes among adolescent students assessed intergroup attitudes using four items: “How much do you like Z school students?”; “How much would you like to go on a trip with students from Z school?”; “How much would you like to attend Z school?”; “How much would you like to be friends with students from Z school?” (Brown et al., 2007). Items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “1 = not at all” to “7 = a lot” (Brown et al., 2007).

In the present study, willingness to engage in contact with members of the mainstream Lebanese was assessed through a team building scenario. Participants were provided with eight neutral candidates (two male Lebanese, two female Lebanese, two male Armenians, two female Armenians) and were given instructions to choose three people out of eight and build a team of four individuals including themselves, to participate in a community service task to deliver groceries to the elderly who were affected by the Beirut blast. No information was provided about the candidates, only their names which were fictitious and neutral. After choosing three members to include in their team, participants were asked to write their reason of choice for each member in the provided blank space.

**Attitudes Towards Non-Armenians.** To further assess participants’ attitudes towards the mainstream Lebanese, the Attitudes Towards Out-Group Members scale (Winer et al., 1981) was used. The scale is composed of seven items measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “1 = not at all” to “5 = extremely” (Winer et al., 1981). Participants indicated the extent they would engage in the following behaviors: meeting a non-Armenian Lebanese, sitting next to a non-Armenian Lebanese on a 3-hour bus trip, willing to go to school with a non-Armenian Lebanese, willing to have a non-Armenian person eating lunch with them, invite a non-Armenian

Lebanese to their home, ask a non-Armenian Lebanese for advice, and have a non-Armenian Lebanese teacher (Winer et al., 1981).

### ***Frequency of Contact with Non-Armenians***

To obtain a baseline level measure of previous contact between participants' and non-Armenians, and to statistically control for its effects that might influence the outcome variables, the Frequency of Intergroup Contact scale (Merrilees et al., 2018) was used. Participants responded to four questions measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "1= never" to "5 = very often" that assess frequency of contact with non-Armenians across four domains: home, school, in each other's neighborhoods, and through extracurricular activities such as sports or community service (Merrilees et al., 2018).

### ***Ethnic Identity***

Since an inventory of questions about ethnic identity risked alerting participants in the research interest and could have primed them prior to the affirmation and threat manipulations, a single-item scale (Cohen & Garcia, 2005) was used to measure participants' strength of identification with their Armenian ethnic identity. The scale asked participants to indicate how important is their Armenian identity to them, and it was measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "1 = not at all important" to "7 = extremely important" (Cohen & Garcia, 2005).

### ***Demographics***

Participants were asked to provide their (1) age, (2) gender, (3) name of school, (4) grade, (5) nationality, (6) parents' ethnic identity, (7) religious sect, (8) having male old siblings (if any), (9) having male young siblings (if any), (10) having female old siblings (if any), (11) having female young siblings (if any), (12) being a member of a socio-cultural or political party,

(13) being a member of scouts, (14) siblings being a member of a socio-cultural or political party, (15) siblings being members of scouts.

### ***Threats to Internal Validity***

Multiple threats to internal validity were foreseen to likely affect the study as follows. Even though the survey was short, a maturation threat was expected where participating students would feel bored, which may affect the quality of their self-reported responses. An added concern relates to the fact that participants were able to take breaks, or even return to the study link to complete their responses. This poses a threat to internal validity in the form of a history threat as there is no way of knowing what the student did during these breaks that were at times as long as a day. While the best solution would have been to exclude participants with extended response durations, doing so would have shrunk the sample even beyond the 121 available. Selection was another potential threat, especially that non-random sampling was used. However, given that this is a limitation in most experimental studies that apply random assignment but not random selection, a replication of the current study is required to validate current or unravel new findings. Instrumentation threat was controlled as the experiment was administered with consistency through Qualtrics (<https://www.qualtrics.com>). Attrition was a threat to the current study, where a large number of students dropped out without continuing the study. That said, there was no discernable pattern to the dropouts per experimental condition. Finally, a history threat presented itself given the unprecedented times that Lebanon is passing through, at the political, security, economic and health levels (“Lebanon’s Economic Update – October 2020,” 2020; “Lebanon between explosion, pandemic and economic crisis”, 2020). Also, relevant to Armenians in Lebanon, the recent and ongoing political conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan likely served as a history threat – and a threat to the continuity and the perseverance

of the Armenian ethnic identity (Simmons & Gauthier-Villars, 2021) – that may have interacted with one’s ethnic identification strength to impact the level of representativeness threat – manipulated in the current study – experienced. Nevertheless, like the selection threat a replication of the study in the future might help minimize history threat or better understand the effects of this threat on the matter being investigated.

## CHAPTER IV

## RESULTS

**Preliminary Analysis*****Missing Value Analysis***

As stated above, the option of “Force Response” was employed on Qualtrics (<https://www.qualtrics.com>). This issue was closely addressed in the Ethical Considerations section of this dissertation as well as in a formal letter directed to the Social and Behavioral Sciences Ethics Committee. As such, there were no missing values in this study.

***Outliers***

Univariate outliers were examined using z-scores and all values exceeding the absolute value of  $\pm 2.58$  were considered outliers significant at the 95<sup>th</sup> confidence interval. No outliers were found on the attitudes towards non-Armenians scale. Only one extreme outlier was found on the team building scenario such that only one participant from the total sample picked 3 non-Armenians to include in the team building exercise.

***Normality***

Normality of the data for all continuous variables was checked through the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. The dependent variable, attitudes towards non-Armenians was normally distributed for the groups ( $p < .05$ ); while, the dependent variable team building scenario indicated a significant departure from normality ( $p > .05$ ). Since transformations and non-parametric statistical tests are beyond the scope of this study, parametric tests were retained and no transformation applied.

**Table 4.*****Tests of Normality***

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>	Shapiro-Wilk
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Affirmation Condition	Threat Condition		Satistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Self-Affirmation	Threat	MeanATOM	.112	26	.200*	.950	26	.229
		NonArmeniansPicked	.288	26	.000	.777	26	.000
	No Threat	MeanATOM	.151	26	.130	.917	26	.039
		NonArmeniansPicked	.235	26	.001	.825	26	.000
Group-Affirmation	Threat	MeanATOM	.111	21	.200*	.933	21	.155
		NonArmeniansPicked	.290	21	.000	.777	21	.000
	No Threat	MeanATOM	.197	17	.080	.926	17	.188
		NonArmeniansPicked	.260	17	.003	.789	17	.188
No-Affirmation	Threat	MeanATOM	.122	7	.200*	.973	7	.917
		NonArmeniansPicked	.296	7	.063	.840	7	.099
	No Threat	MeanATOM	.145	24	.200*	.897	24	.019
		NonArmeniansPicked	.329	24	.000	.476	24	.000

MeanATOM = mean attitudes towards non-Armenians; NonArmeniansPicked = number of non-Armenians picked in the team building exercise.

\*  $p < .05$ .

### *Descriptive Statistics*

**Scale Descriptives.** The mean of the one-item identification measure of ethnic identity was well above the midpoint score of 4 ( $M = 5.93$ ,  $SD = 1.153$ ). In addition, the mean of the attitudes towards non-Armenian scale was slightly above the midpoint score of 3 ( $M = 3.776$ ,  $SD = .760$ ). While the mean of the frequency of intergroup contact scale was slightly below the midpoint score of 3 ( $M = 2.783$ ,  $SD = .848$ ). This indicates that participants regard their Armenian ethnic identity as very important. In addition, they do not seem to engage in contact with non-Armenians frequently, yet they present with slightly positive attitude towards non-Armenians.

### **Main Analysis**

#### *Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA)*

To assess the main research question of the study and to detect if collective or self-affirmation helped reduced defensiveness in a sample of adolescent Armenian high school students when presented with an implicit identity threat, and if this subsequently facilitated the intent of Armenians to interact with non-Armenians, a two-way Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) with Bonferroni corrections was conducted. Bootstrapping was used for a more robust interpretation of the data.

The MANCOVA was used to assess whether the means of the different levels of affirmation (self, group, and no affirmation) and threat (threat and no threat) on intergroup relations (attitudes towards non-Armenians and team building scenario) are significantly different while controlling for frequency of contact with non-Armenians. The assumption of homogeneity of variance and covariance, assessed through the Box's M statistical test was not assumed ( $F(15, 8549.320) = 69.276, p = .000$ ). Accordingly, and given the unequal cell sizes, Pillai's trace criterion was applied throughout.

In line with expectations, the covariate frequency of contact with non-Armenians had a significant main effect on the attitudes towards non-Armenians ( $b = .351, p = .000$ ), demonstrating that as participants' frequency of contact with non-Armenians increased so did their attitudes towards non-Armenians. Higher scores on the attitudes towards non-Armenians scale is an indicative of positive and favorable attitudes towards non-Armenians. Conversely, the covariate frequency of contact with non-Armenians did not have a significant main effect on team building scenario ( $b = -.069, p = .603$ ).

To test for threat buffering effects of self- and group-affirmation relative to the control condition specifically as it relates to attitudes and willingness to interact with the Lebanese mainstream, the multivariate main and interaction effects were examined. Contrary to the

hypotheses of the current study, where it was first expected, that: (H1) participants in the no threat / self- and group-affirmation conditions will be more willing to engage in contact with and have higher positive favorable attitudes towards non-Armenians; (H2) participants in the threat / self- and group affirmation conditions will be more willing to engage in contact with and have higher positive favorable attitudes towards non-Armenians; (H3) participants in the self- versus group-affirmation condition will be more willing to engage in contact with and have higher positive favorable attitudes towards non-Armenians; results showed that the affirmation manipulation had no significant effect on the outcome measures as indicated by non-significant main (Affirmation: Pillai's Trace = .016,  $F(4, 228) = .471, p = .757$ ; Threat: Pillai's Trace = .005,  $F(2, 113) = .265, p = .768$ ) and interaction effects (Pillai's Trace = .30,  $F(4, 228) = .880, p = .477$ ).

### **Exploratory Analysis**

In light of the non-significant null findings in the main analysis, exploratory analyses including correlational analyses, one-sample t-tests and independent samples t-tests were conducted to better understand the characteristics of the sample and further provide some insights in relation to the results obtained.

### ***Correlational Analyses***

Pearson's correlation was first calculated between the two dependent variables: attitudes towards non-Armenians and team building scenario. A small, positive, significant correlation was found ( $r = .216, p = .017$ ) meaning that as participants attitudes towards non-Armenians increased so did their willingness to pick non-Armenians in the team building scenario.

A second Pearson's bivariate correlation was calculated between the dependent variables attitudes towards non-Armenians and team building scenario, and importance of one's ethnic

identity within each experimental condition. One positive, moderate and significant correlation was evident in the self-affirmation and no-threat condition ( $r = .480, p = .013$ ). Suggesting that in this particular experimental group, where participants did not receive an implicit identity threat, more favorable attitudes towards non-Armenians was associated with an increased tendency to include a higher number of non-Armenians in the team building scenario. This may possibly suggest that when participants were not threatened, and their core self-values were highlighted, the saliency of their ethnic identity decreased as they focused on the self rather than the group. Therefore, interacting with a non-Armenian might not seem as an anxiety provoking situation and hence, participants demonstrated more positive favorable attitudes towards non-Armenians and were more willing to interact with non-Armenians.

### ***One Sample T-Test***

One sample t-tests were conducted to assess whether the means of participants in each of the 6 experimental conditions on the importance of ethnic identity, using the one-item ethnic identity measure (Cohen & Garcia, 2005), were significantly different relative to the scale's midpoint. Results obtained were statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) for all experimental groups, indicating that the sample as a whole identified greatly with their ethnic identity and deemed it as important to the self (See Table 5).

**Table 5.**

### ***One Sample T-Test Of The Means Of Experimental Conditions On Ethnic Identity***

Experimental Condition	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Self-Affirmation x Threat	25	5.85	1.084	8.683	24	.000
Self-Affirmation x No Threat	27	5.46	1.421	5.245	26	.000
Group-Affirmation x Threat	21	6.10	1.300	7.385	20	.000
Group-Affirmation x No Threat	17	6.29	.772	12.257	16	.000
No-Affirmation x Threat	7	6.00	1.000	5.292	6	.002
No-Affirmation x No Threat	24	6.13	.947	10.993	23	.000

***Independent Samples T-Test***

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to assess differences across the study outcomes and covariate as across the demographic factors such as sex, scouts membership, socio-cultural and political institution membership, and parental ethnic identity (See Table 6).

**Sex.** Prior to interpreting the t-test results, homogeneity of variance was assessed through the Levene statistic and results indicated that homogeneity of variance was assumed for frequency of contact with non-Armenians ( $F = .142, p = .707$ ), team building scenario ( $F = 2.777, p = .111$ ), and attitudes towards non-Armenians ( $F = 2.896, p = .092$ ).

In general, female's scored higher on attitudes towards non-Armenians ( $M = 3.920, SD = .807$ ) and picked more non-Armenians in the team building exercise ( $M = .923, SD = 1.492$ ) than males (attitudes towards non-Armenians:  $M = 3.644, SD = .630$ ; team building scenario:  $M = .723, SD = .649$ ). The difference in the means of females versus males on attitudes towards non-Armenians was marginally significant ( $t(110) = -1.955, p = .053$ ). While, it did not reach statistical significance for team building scenario ( $t(110) = -.859, p = .852$ ). This indicates that females as compared to males displayed more positive favorable attitudes towards non-Armenians and they were more willing to engage in contact with non-Armenians. For the frequency of contact with non-Armenians there was no significant noticeable difference between the mean of males ( $M = 2.819, SD = .856$ ) versus females ( $M = 2.788, SD = .859$ );  $t(110) = .187, p = .392$ .

**Being a Scouts Member.** Homogeneity of variance was assessed through Levene statistic and results indicated that homogeneity of variance was assumed for all three variables: attitudes towards non-Armenians ( $F = .099, p = .754$ ), frequency of contact with non-Armenians ( $F = .085, p = .771$ ), and team building scenario ( $F = .360, p = .550$ ).

There was a slight difference between the means of those who are scouts members on attitudes towards non-Armenians ( $M = 3.934$ ,  $SD = .763$ ) and frequency of contact with non-Armenians ( $M = 2.968$ ,  $SD = .832$ ) and those who are not scouts members (attitudes towards non-Armenians:  $M = 3.673$ ,  $SD = .745$ ; frequency of contact with non-Armenians:  $M = 2.661$ ,  $SD = .843$ ). However, scouts members scored lower on the team building scenario ( $M = .687$ ,  $SD = .689$ ) compared to non-scouts members ( $M = .958$ ,  $SD = 1.408$ ). Suggesting that those who belong to a scouts group are less willing to engage in contact with non-Armenians. The differences in the means on attitudes towards non-Armenians  $t(119) = 1.869$ ,  $p = .064$ , and team building scenario  $t(119) = 1.974$ ,  $p = .218$  were not significant. Whereas, the differences in the means on frequency of contact with non-Armenians was marginally significant  $t(119) = -1.240$ ,  $p = .051$ .

**Being a Member of a Socio-Cultural Institution or a Political Party.** Homogeneity of variance was assessed through Levene statistic and results indicated that homogeneity of variance was assumed for all three variables: attitudes towards non-Armenians ( $F = .773$ ,  $p = .381$ ), frequency of contact with non-Armenians ( $F = .023$ ,  $p = .879$ ), and team building scenario ( $F = .036$ ,  $p = .850$ ).

The means of participants who are members of socio-cultural institutions or affiliated with a political party on attitudes towards non-Armenians ( $M = 3.923$ ,  $SD = .699$ ) and frequency of contact with non-Armenians ( $M = 2.902$ ,  $SD = .872$ ) was slightly higher than those participants who are not members of socio-cultural institutions or a political party (attitudes towards non-Armenians:  $M = 3.732$ ,  $SD = .775$ ; frequency of contact with non-Armenians:  $M = 2.747$ ,  $SD = .843$ ). While the means of those who are not members of a socio-cultural institution or a political party was higher ( $M = .881$ ,  $SD = 1.284$ ) on team building scenario than

participants who are members of a socio-cultural institution or a political party ( $M = .750$ ,  $SD = .751$ ). These differences were not significant: attitudes towards non-Armenians  $t(119) = 1.166$ ,  $p = .246$ ; team building scenario  $t(119) = -.516$ ,  $p = .607$ ; frequency of contact with non-Armenians  $t(119) = .843$ ,  $p = .401$ .

**Ethnic Identity of Mother.** Homogeneity of variance was assessed through Levene statistic and results indicated that homogeneity of variance was assumed for all three variables: attitudes towards non-Armenians ( $F = .209$ ,  $p = .648$ ), frequency of contact with non-Armenians ( $F = .361$ ,  $p = .549$ ), and non-Armenians picked in the team building scenario ( $F = .412$ ,  $p = .522$ ).

Participants with ethnically Arab mothers scored higher on all three measures (attitudes towards non-Armenians:  $M = 4.342$ ,  $SD = .651$ ; frequency of contact with non-Armenians:  $M = 3.200$ ,  $SD = .693$ ; non-Armenians picked in the team building scenario:  $M = 1.000$ ,  $SD = .707$ ) as compared to participants with ethnically Armenian mothers (attitudes towards non-Armenians:  $M = 3.752$ ,  $SD = .757$ ; frequency of contact with non-Armenians:  $M = 2.765$ ,  $SD = .852$ ; non-Armenians picked in the team building scenario:  $M = .844$ ,  $SD = 1.198$ ). This suggests that those participants who have ethnically Arab mothers have higher positive favorable attitudes towards non-Armenians and they are willing as well as, frequently engage in contact with non-Armenians. However, these differences were not significant: attitudes towards non-Armenians  $t(119) = 1.714$ ,  $p = .089$ ; team building scenario  $t(119) = .287$ ,  $p = .775$ ; frequency of contact with non-Armenians  $t(119) = 1.123$ ,  $p = .264$ .

**Ethnic Identity of Father.** Homogeneity of variance was assessed through Levene statistic and results indicated that homogeneity of variance was assumed for all three variables: attitudes towards non-Armenians ( $F = .258$ ,  $p = .613$ ), frequency of contact with non-Armenians

( $F = .070, p = .791$ ), and non-Armenians picked in the team building scenario ( $F = .405, p = .526$ ).

Participants with ethnically Arab fathers scored higher on all three measure (attitudes towards non-Armenians:  $M = 3.794, SD = .748$ ; frequency of contact with non-Armenians:  $M = 2.801, SD = .841$ ; team building scenario  $M = 1.250, SD = .500$ ) as compared to participants with ethnically Armenian fathers (attitudes towards non-Armenians:  $M = 3.250, SD = 1.032$ ; frequency of contact with non-Armenians:  $M = 2.250, SD = 1.020$ ; team building scenario  $M = .837, SD = 1.195$ ). This finding suggests that participants with ethnically Arab fathers have higher positive favorable attitudes towards non-Armenians, they also seem to be engaging frequently in contact with non-Armenians, and are more willing to engage in contact with non-Armenians. These differences were not significant: attitudes towards non-Armenians  $t(119) = -1.416, p = .160$ ; team building scenario  $t(119) = .685, p = .494$ ; frequency of contact with non-Armenians  $t(119) = -1.280, p = .203$ .

**Table 6.**

*Independent Samples T-Tests On Socio-Demographic Factors*

Demographics	Categories	N	Attitudes Towards Non-Armenians		Frequency of Contact with non-Armenians		Team Building scenario – non-Armenians picked	
			M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Sex	Male	47	3.644	.630	2.819	.856	.723	.649
	Female	65	3.920	.807	2.788	.859	.923	1.492
Mother's Ethnic Identity	Arab	5	4.342	.651	3.200	.693	1.000	.707
	Armenian	116	3.752	.757	2.765	.852	.844	1.198
Father's Ethnic Identity	Arab	4	3.794	.748	2.801	.841	1.250	.500
	Armenian	117	3.250	1.032	2.250	1.020	.837	1.195

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Member of a socio-cultural institution or a political party	Yes	28	3.923	.699	2.902	.872	.750	.751
	No	93	3.372	.775	2.747	.843	.881	1.284
Member of a scouts group	Yes	48	3.924	.763	2.968	.832	.687	.689
	No	73	3.673	.745	2.661	.843	.958	1.408

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## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The current research study was interested in better understanding the role of self- and group-affirmation in reducing defensiveness in a sample of adolescent Armenian high school students when presented with an implicit identity threat, and to examine whether these interventions facilitated the intent to interact with the Lebanese mainstream. To investigate the relationship between self- and group affirmation, identity threat and willingness to engage in contact with non-Armenians, a two-way MANCOVA was performed to analyze main and interaction effects between the independent and dependent variables of the study. The two-way MANCOVA resulted in null findings; no significant main or interaction effects were detected. Further exploratory analyses were conducted to better understand the results obtained, and bring to light the characteristics of the sample and what might have contributed to the absence of findings. However, prior to interpreting the results obtained from the main and exploratory analyses it is of utmost importance to address the small sample size of the study.

#### **Sample Size**

In planning the sample size for the current study, an a priori type of power analysis was applied which showed that a minimum of 246 participants are needed to detect a medium size effect. Unfortunately, of the 431 recorded responses on Qualtrics (<https://www.qualtrics.com>) only 121 were complete responses that were analyzed in the current study, constituting roughly 50% of the required sample size. An assessment of the total number of students in the contacted schools relative to the final sample further highlighted the low response rate. The number of students in each school and the number of students who participated in the study from each school was as follows: Yeghishe Manoukian College 66 students of which 38 participated;

Melankton & Haig Arslanian Djemaran 90 students of which 36 participated; Armenian Evangelical College (Beirut) 19 students of which 12 participated; Armenian Evangelical Central High School (Ashrafieh) 65 students of which 1 participated; Mesrobian High School & Technical College 107 students of which 17 participated; Armenian General Benevolent Union Lebanon Schools 58 students of which 8 participated; and United Armenian College 60 students of which 9 participated. The total number of students from all schools equaled 465. This indicates that most students from all participating schools accessed the questionnaire of the experiment (~ 92%) however, they discontinued participation for different reasons and only a small number of these participants completed the questionnaire (~ 25%). The majority of the participants exited the questionnaire either upon clicking on the link or after answering the first few questions ( $N = 255$ ). Some participants did not consent to participate in the research study ( $N = 34$ ) and others did not permit access to their data following debriefing ( $N = 21$ ). This phenomenon of low participation rate gives rise to several questions: Was the sample reluctant to participate in the research study? Is participating in research studies not common for the sample? Does the topic of the research study which centers on ethnic identity perhaps promotes resistance to participation?

### ***Participation in Research Study***

A total of 121 adolescent Armenian high school students, from seven Armenian high schools participated in this study. The sample size was much lower than the 241 participants required to detect a medium size effect ( $d = 0.5, p < .05$ ). Data collection was lengthy and challenging, and despite the small number of participants, it had to be terminated due to the reason that prolonged duration in experimental research studies increases threats to internal validity, mainly history threats, and influences the results of the study. Initially, only three

schools were contacted for data collection: Yeghishe Manoukian College, Haig & Melankton Arslanian Djemaran, and Mesrobian High School and Technical College. As the data collection proceeded the number of participants from these three schools was very small. Therefore, a decision was made to contact additional schools to reach the maximum number of participants required to detect an effect. Apart from the ones previously contacted, there were eight Armenian high schools in Lebanon with secondary classes that could potentially participate in the study: Armenian General Benevolent Union-Lebanon schools, Armenian Evangelical College (Beirut), Armenian Evangelical High school (Ashrafieh), Armenian United College, Saint Hripsimiantz College, Holy Cross Harboyan High school, Kaloust Gulbenkian Secondary school (Anjar), and Armenian Secondary Evangelical school (Anjar). Two of these schools, Kaloust Gulbenkian Secondary school (Anjar) and Armenian Secondary Evangelical school (Anjar), were located outside of Beirut in a remote village situated in the Bekaa valley, and as the study mainly focused on schools that were located in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, these schools were not contacted. All other mentioned schools were contacted for participation. However, two schools did not respond to the invitation. The remaining schools who agreed to participate were the following: Armenian General Benevolent Union-Lebanon schools, Armenian Evangelical College (Beirut), Armenian Evangelical High school (Ashrafieh), and Armenian United College.

It is worth noting as well that, participating students in each school were sent several reminders to assist the main researcher in collecting data and to participate in the study. Students were also instructed to follow the study's page on Facebook to know updates about the study and the results of the draw. During the entire period of data collection, the Facebook page was active and encouraging messages were posted to motivate the students to participate. However, the

page did not have much followers (approximately 10 to 15 students) pointing out to a general disinterest in participating in the study.

### ***Saliency of The Armenian Ethnic Identity***

Many research studies conducted among Armenians and Lebanese-Armenians have discussed the distinctiveness and the saliency of the Armenian ethnic identity (Abramson, 2013; Goetcherian, 2014; Kazarian, 1997; Melikian & de Karapetian, 1977; Migliorini, 2008; Tavitian et al., 2019). Moreover, one of these studies examining collective references and identity threat among Lebanese and Lebanese-Armenians in the context of intergroup conflict demonstrated that, Lebanese-Armenians employ their ethnic identity as a buffer to guard or protect themselves against identity threat (Tavitian et al., 2019). This same study encountered similar circumstances of low participation during data collection (Tavitian et al., 2019). The authors suggested that the absence of findings may very likely be attributed to the small sample size of the study and proposed that, Armenians may have chosen not to participate because they may have been apprehensive and defensive about being singled out as Armenians, which are common responses to perceived identity threat (Steele 1988; Tavitian et al., 2019). Even though, the study attempted to reach participants in several different ways first, through an electronic link then, through paper and pencil and lastly, by contacting and soliciting approval from prominent Armenian parties and other Armenian organizations, it managed to collect data from  $N = 252$  adult Lebanese-Armenians (Tavitian et al., 2019). Likewise, in the current study, of 431 students who showed initial interest in participation, only 121 actually participated. This reflects a common pattern between studies, and demonstrates Lebanese-Armenian participants' potential reluctance to participate in research studies (Tavitian et al., 2019).

The saliency of the Armenian ethnic identity was accounted for during the design of the current experimental study, and bearing in mind the different levels of threat: blatant, moderately explicit and subtle or indirect (Nguyen & Ryan, 2008), an implicit identity threat specifically, a representativeness threat targeted at the continuity and preservation of the Armenian ethnic identity was administered. The implementation of this type of threat was carefully calculated so as to avoid a reactance effect (Nguyen & Ryan, 2008; Miller, 1976). Yet, a conclusion whether the threat used in the current study produced a reactance effect cannot be made, due to the small number of participants and low participation rate, indicating participants' possible reluctance to take part in the experiment prior to being exposed to the different experimental conditions.

Previous research has shown that individuals from vulnerable minority groups or indigenous cultures are hesitant to participate in studies especially, in research studies that investigate sensitive topics (Alexander et al., 2018; Kawulich, 2011). In these studies, the term "gatekeeper" has been coined to indicate any person or institution that acts as an intermediary between a researcher and participants (Kawulich, 2011). A "gatekeeper" may also have the power to grant or deny permission for access to potential research participants (Kawulich, 2011). In the present study, there were no physical "gatekeepers" per se, in fact, all principals of participating schools welcomed the invitation and readily agreed to participate in the research study. However, the topic of the research itself centering on ethnic identity or participants' reluctance to take part in the study may have acted as "gatekeepers" which in turn resulted in low participation rate, discontinuation and denial of access to data.

It is important to note that, the one-item measure of ethnic identity importance (Cohen & Garcia, 2005) was the first question that participants answered regardless of their assignment to the experimental conditions. Perhaps administering such a question at the beginning of the

experiment primed participants to think about their ethnic identity and possibly adopt a tense and guarding attitude. It may have also awakened the fear of annihilation or ceasing to exist, as this has been a prominent source of worry and fear for Armenians (Tavitian et al., 2019). Previous research has shown that, perceived discontinuity in a group's past can contribute to increase efforts in maintaining identity particularly as it undermines or threatens a groups future survival (Jetten & Wohl, 2012 as cited in Tavitian et al., 2019). Thus, it is important to also highlight that eight months prior to data collection an armed conflict occurred between Armenia and Azerbedjian (Simmons & Gauthier-Villars, 2021). This conflict ended after the involvement of a Russian third-party (Simmons & Gauthier-Villars, 2021). However, its consequences were dire for Armenians and have had a lasting effect (Simmons & Gauthier-Villars, 2021). Although discussing political turmoil and war is beyond the scope of this paper, the conflict which seemed like a normal territorial conflict for non-Armenians represented an existential threat in a long line of existential threats that have loomed over Armenians in the diaspora and specifically in Lebanon where the community has been bleeding in terms of members and organizations. Therefore, the participants in the current study may have felt threatened and were hesitant to participate in a research study that is examining affirmation and identity threat in the context of intergroup relations specifically, willingness to engage in contact with non-Armenians.

Lastly, it is important to keep in mind that by employing purposive convenience sampling, the current study collected data from Armenian students in Armenian high schools in Lebanon. As such, students in these schools are continuously exposed to the Armenian ethnic identity since the educational role and mission of these schools is not only to prepare the students for the world they live in, but also to teach, develop, and preserve the Armenian ethnic identity while aspiring to ensure the healthy integration of the Armenian identity with the Lebanese

identity (Kandaharian-Hudaverdian, 2021). Therefore, a conclusion regarding the Armenian ethnic identity acting as a potential gatekeeper that obstructed students' participation in the current study would be too simplistic as Armenian schools have a direct and continuous connection with the young community with regard to exposure, formation and maintenance of this ethnic identity (Kandaharian-Hudaverdian, 2021).

### **Interpretation of Main Analysis**

In the present study, it was expected that participants who were given the chance to affirm self- or group values, would feel less defensive when faced with an identity threat and thus, will be more willing to engage in contact with out-group members. To examine the main research question of this study and to determine the relationship between affirmation, threat and willingness to engage in contact with out-group members a two-way MANCOVA was implemented. The main analysis resulted in null findings. The absence of findings is likely attributable to the small sample size of the study. Statistically significant mean differences among groups were not detected as well as any main or interaction effects. Similarly, a study examining the relationship between threat, affirmation and collective self-esteem among Lebanese-Armenians found null findings due to small sample size (Tavitian et al., 2019). As mentioned before, the absence of findings may be attributable to the low participation rate, discontinuation and refusal to access of data which may have been potentially the result of the reluctant nature of the participants (Tavitian et al., 2019). For this reason, additional exploratory analyses including correlational analyses, one samples t-tests and independent samples t-tests were performed to take a closer look at the participants' characteristics.

### ***Team Building Scenario***

In this exercise which was designed to behaviorally measure willingness to engage in contact with out-group members, participants were asked to build a team of four including themselves, and pick three individuals to carry out a community service task. Pearson's Correlation coefficient demonstrated a small, positive and significant correlation ( $r = .216, p = .017$ ) between the two dependent variables, attitudes towards non-Armenians and team building scenario. Suggesting that as participants' attitudes towards non-Armenians increased so did their willingness to include non-Armenians in the team building scenario.

Upon a closer examination of the team building scenario, it became evident that the majority of participants chose one to two non-Armenians to include in their team. The answers of participants justifying their choice of picking the three individuals out of eight (Hadi, Kevork, Leila, Talar, Kareem, Hagop, Nisrine, Nanor) were visually analyzed. The most common reason for including Armenians versus non-Armenians was the individual bearing an Armenian name, indicating that they are Armenian. Only one student picked three non-Armenians. While justifying their choice the participant provided the same reason for all team members.

*"Because I want to meet an Arab person."*

*Female, 16 years old (11<sup>th</sup> grade)*

Moreover, there was no specific technique that participants adopted to decide which individual to pick. Mainly, participants picked individuals based on:

(1) Familiarity, such as having a parent, a sibling or a close friend with the same name:

*"Hagop because my best friend's name is Hagop and I like this name."*

*Male, 17 years old (12<sup>th</sup> grade)*

(2) Communication, for example one prominent reason for including Armenians in the group was language:

*“He's Armenian, we won't have trouble in communication (I'm not good at Arabic).”*

*Female, 18 years old (12<sup>th</sup> grade)*

(3) Gender and ethnic identity. Some participants included an equal number of females and males, and an equal number of Armenians and Arabs in their group:

*“I'm a girl so my team would be consisted by 2 boys and 2 girls / 2 Armenians and 2 Arabs because we could learn stuff from each other. I think Hadi is an arab guy so I chose him.”*

*Female, 16 years old (10<sup>th</sup> grade)*

In general, other responses given by participants were divided in two categories:

(1) Those who stated that they would like to include non-Armenians in their group for diversity and because they are interested in learning the language and the culture of the non-Armenians.

*“It's interesting to work with people from different entourages, genders and cultures.”*

*Female, 16 years old (10<sup>th</sup> grade)*

*“I chose Hadi in order to get familiar with the Arab community, with their culture, traditions and their perspective at looking and analyzing situations; moreover, I chose Hadi so as to have colleagues with different backgrounds.”*

*Male, 15 years old (10<sup>th</sup> grade)*

*“Because she is Arab. There will be a good mix in the group.”*

*Female, 17 years old (12<sup>th</sup> grade)*

(2) Those who mentioned that they believe Armenians would be more fit to accomplish the task, they would feel more comfortable, safe and secure by having Armenians in their group, and that this will be an opportunity for the non-Armenians to learn about Armenians and their history.

*“We live in Lebanon and I believe that there is no difference between us and we must include some Lebanese people in our community so they they can know more about us, our history, traditions, and our pain.”*

*Male, 15 years old (10<sup>th</sup> grade)*

*“Because he has an Armenian name, which probably means that he's Armenian. It feels better to work with someone who's of the same race as me.”*

*Female, 17 years old (12<sup>th</sup> grade)*

*“Kevork is Armenian and I believe Armenians are more efficient when it comes to matters like this.”*

*Male, 16 years old (11<sup>th</sup> grade)*

*“The name seems familiar. I am unconsciously programmed to feel safer when the name of the person is found a lot in my surrounding.”*

*Female, 17 years old (11<sup>th</sup> grade)*

The responses of participants in the team building scenario demonstrate that Armenians employed their salient ethnic identity in deciding to include Armenians versus non-Armenians in their team. While there was a tendency towards wanting to get to know the Lebanese mainstream and learn more about their language and culture; there was also a need to acquaint them about Armenians indicating to a need to think about the self through the collective shared Armenian identity. Furthermore, this collective identity seemed to provide a sense of safety and security to the individual. This exhibits the Armenian ethnic identity as an integral part of the self, and as central in providing feelings of safety and security (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In addition, it is worth mentioning that the sample as a whole highly rated the importance of their ethnic identity, demonstrated by the one-item ethnic identity measure, further exhibiting that the Armenian

ethnic identity is indeed a salient part of the self. Furthermore, the Armenian ethnic identity seemed to be chronically accessible especially that it was directly tied to the self-concept of the individual, a finding consistent with a previous study (Tavitian et al., 2019). Lebanese-Armenians tend to chronically employ their ethnic identity or make frequent references about it in their daily interactions particularly in a context characterized by intergroup conflict (Tavitian et al., 2019).

### **Interpretation of Exploratory Analyses**

In light of the absence of any significant findings resulting from the main analysis, further exploratory analyses were conducted to better understand the characteristics of the sample.

#### ***Correlational Analysis***

Pearson's correlation was calculated between the dependent variables attitudes towards non-Armenians and team building scenario, and ethnic identity with each experimental condition. A positive, moderate and significant correlation was found in the self-affirmation / no-threat condition ( $r = .480, p = .013$ ). Suggesting that in this particular experimental group, more positive favorable attitudes towards the Lebanese mainstream was associated with an increased instance of including non-Armenians in the team building scenario. This finding is not unusual, as participants in this condition were not threatened so it is expected of them to have more positive favorable attitudes towards non-Armenians and to pick more non-Armenians than Armenians in the team building scenario. Nonetheless, it is an important finding as it may also suggest that in this condition participants focused on core values pertaining to the self which in turn, attenuated their group's identity – an essential part of the self as demonstrated in the team building scenario and the ethnic identification measure – and thus, interacting with members

from the out-group no longer presented as an anxiety provoking situation. Therefore, participants were more willing to engage in contact with and had higher positive favorable attitudes towards non-Armenians. Furthermore, this may indicate self-affirmation as a possible tool for reducing defensiveness in the presence of identity threat and promoting interaction with out-group members. However, this would be difficult to accomplish with the Armenian ethnic group since the Armenian collective identity constitutes an integral part of the self as demonstrated in the current and a previous study (Tavitian et al., 2019).

**Self-Affirmation and Cultural Relevance of Values.** The majority of research on values affirmation have been carried out in Western contexts (Tavitian-Eldmajian & Bender, 2020). Typically, self-affirmation is studied through value-affirmation, which allows the individual to reflect upon an unthreatened, valued element of the self as a means to restore or preserve global self-worth (Tavitian-Eldmajian & Bender, 2020). However, affirming standard values about the self may not be applicable in non-Western contexts (Tavitian-Eldmajian & Bender, 2020). A study examining autobiographical recall of mastery experiences – where one reflects upon a personally relevant memory about overcoming obstacles – as a mechanism of self-affirmation under social identity threat in the United States Americans found that, autobiographical recall can be a possible self-affirming tool under identity threat (Tavitian et al., 2019). However, the same mechanism employed with Lebanese-Armenians was not as successful and in fact, it backfired (Tavitian et al., 2019). When Lebanese-Armenians were given the opportunity to reflect upon a personal memory regarding overcoming obstacles, the majority referred to their group's identity and thought about themselves through their group's ethnic identity (Tavitian et al., 2019). Suggesting the collective identity as an important part of the self and thus, making the self and the group inseparable. This is not uncommon, as the history

pertaining to the Armenian group's continuity has instilled fears of dissipating in Armenians (Tavitian et al., 2019).

In the present study, participants were asked to engage in a self-affirmation exercise composed of 11 values: being good at art, being good at sports, being smart or getting good grades, having a sense of humor, being creative, being religious, being independent, being with friends or family, having good social skills, being physically attractive, listening to music or playing music (Cohen et al., 2000; Sherman et al., 2013; Sherman et al., 2007). In the self-affirmation / no threat condition, participants demonstrated positive favorable attitudes towards and an increased willingness to engage in contact with non-Armenians. However, such a significant finding was not shown in other experimental conditions. Suggesting that, as the threat is removed and participants focus on the self, the group's identity is diminished and thus, interacting with out-group members becomes less anxiety provoking. This does not necessarily signify that the values list in the self-affirmation manipulation promoted interaction with non-Armenians. Nonetheless, it may suggest that the self and the group can be distanced from each other in non-threatening situations where the individual is given the opportunity to reflect about core self values. Perhaps, employing a values-affirmation manipulation with culturally relevant values may be the key in developing an affirmation exercise suitable to use with a group characterized by a distinct ethnic identity. One possible way of developing culturally relevant values is to conduct a detailed study, to identify culturally appropriate values (Scheider & Weber, 2020). However, in doing so researchers might risk in selecting culturally relevant values that are associated with the Armenian culture and so, prompting Armenians to affirm core collective values rather than self core values. This conundrum demonstrates the difficulties of

using affirmation exercises with a group of individuals that are highly attached to their ethnic identity and where inherently, the self and the collective are merged into one.

### **One Sample T-Test**

The one sample t-test showed that the means of the six experimental conditions on the one-item ethnic identity importance measure (Cohen & Garcia, 2005) were significantly higher from the midpoint of the scale. This demonstrates the saliency and the importance of the Armenian ethnic identity, and indicates that the sample of the study highly endorses their Armenian ethnic identity.

### **Independent Samples T-Tests**

Independent samples t-tests were conducted for the following socio-demographic factors: sex, being a scouts member, or a member of a socio-cultural institution or a political party, and ethnic identity of parents.

Females as compared to males displayed higher positive favorable attitudes towards non-Armenians and they were more willing to engage in contact with non-Armenians. This finding may likely be attributable to the notion that the Armenian culture and Armenian men endorse patriarchal traditional roles and values associated with an Eastern influence (Gevorgyan, 2001). Thus, making Armenian men less likely to be willing to engage in contact with non-Armenians, perhaps as a way to preserve or guard the self and the Armenian ethnic identity. A gender assessment conducted in Armenia has shown that men have comfortably adopted patriarchal features while Armenian women were generally quicker to accept Western values, concepts and ideas (Gevorgyan, 2001). They have also demonstrated flexibility and openness to learning new skills and languages (Gevorgyan, 2001). Although there are no studies conducted on the patriarchal roles and values of Lebanese-Armenian men in Lebanon as studies on Lebanese-

Armenians in general are scarce, Lebanese-Armenian males may be influenced by the Middle Eastern male-led and male-dominated patriarchal culture. The current explanation may be a potential reason of why females had higher more positive favorable attitudes towards non-Armenians and were more willing to engage in contact with non-Armenians as opposed to males.

The pattern of findings in participants who are members of scouts and socio-cultural institutions or are affiliated with a political party were alike, as members of such groups displayed positive favorable attitudes towards non-Armenians and reported frequent contact with non-Armenians as compared to participants who are not members of such groups. While, the contrary was evident in the team building scenario. Participants who are members of these groups were less likely to choose non-Armenians as compared to participants who are not members of these groups. A possible explanation for this finding might be that perhaps members of scouts and socio-cultural organizations or those who are affiliated with a political party engage in contact with non-Armenians in these settings hence they have higher frequency of contact and positive favorable attitudes towards non-Armenians. It is difficult to tell whether these scouts groups, socio-cultural institutions or political parties are those that are associated with or belong to Armenians, as the question in the experiment did not specify this matter. However, it is also interesting to note that when given the choice to pick between Armenians and non-Armenians, members of scouts groups, of socio-cultural and political institutions, chose more Armenians to include their team.

With regards to participants parents' ethnic identity, those participants who had ethnically Arab parents reported engaging more in contact with non-Armenians, having positive favorable attitudes towards non-Armenians and chose non-Armenians in the team building scenario, as opposed to participants with ethnically Armenian parents. A study examining the relationship

between adolescents' perceptions of parental racial attitudes and their intergroup contact and cross-race relationships found that, adolescents' intergroup contact and parental racial attitudes are significantly associated with their cross-race relationships and experiences (Edmonds & Killen, 2009). Perhaps a similar interpretation can be made here, as participants with ethnically non-Armenians parents frequently engage in contact with their familial surrounding with non-Armenians and so they displayed more positive favorable attitudes towards non-Armenians and were more willing to engage in contact with non-Armenians.

### **Clinical and Practical Implications**

The examination of the qualitative entries in the team building exercise along with the findings from the exploratory analyses, confirmed that the Armenian ethnic identity is an integral part of the self, and it may be in a state of constant affirmation and threat due to the group's discontinuity in the past (Tavitian et al., 2019). Such chronic affirmation and a state of continuous perceived threat, regardless of the situational demands may be maladaptive (Tavitian et al., 2019). This sensitivity to threat could possibly be evaluated as a defensive reaction to an underlying fear and concern of preserving the Armenian ethnic identity (Tavitian et al., 2019). Accordingly, this raises several questions regarding the repercussions of persistently employing the collective identity even when thinking about the self, and being in a state of threat: is this adaptive to the psychological wellbeing of the individual? How does this translate into the teaching of the values and beliefs of the Armenian ethnic identity to future generations?

Affirmation is viewed as one aspect of a psychological immune system which reminds people of their psychological resources, helps them to keep the threat in proper perspective, and dissociates the threat from the self (Sherman & Hartson 2011 as cited in Howell, 2017). However, this may not be applicable when the group's identity constitutes an important part of

the self, and the group is in a constant state of fear and worry regarding their identity. Previous research has shown that minority individuals who identify strongly with their minority group report greater psychological wellbeing (Phinney, 1989). A study testing a model of minority identity achievement, identity affirmation, and psychological wellbeing among ethnic minorities in the United States found that the process of identity achievement can serve as an important basis for developing positive feelings about and a sense of belonging to one's minority identity, which in turn contributes to psychological well-being (Ghavami et al., 2011). The findings of the present study, indicate that participating adolescents highly rated the importance of their Armenian ethnic identity. However, it is difficult to tell whether this signifies that these adolescents have adaptively attained ethnic identity achievement and more importantly, whether they did so through questioning, exploring and finally committing to their ethnic identity. This is not to say that students will surely fit into one of the categories proposed by Phinney (1989), as the unique context of the study may dictate otherwise. That said, as assessment of the stages of ethnic identity formation that students would be in is beyond the scope and aim of the current study.

A recent study in progress examining the role of Armenian history and social studies teachers in Armenian high schools in Lebanon, regarding ethnic identity development and how this role is translated into operational educational practices found that, students assign high significance to their teachers' role in their ethnic identity development (Kandaharian-Hudaverdian, 2021). Suggesting that students perceive this role as a dominant aspect of their development (Kandaharian-Hudaverdian, 2021). Teachers evaluating their own role and practices indicated that, they do believe in the implementation of value-effective curricular and educational approaches however, they do not actually connect these intentions to their already

adopted practices that largely rely on the sole belief to transmit and educate the student about their ethnic identity (Kandaharian-Hudaverdian, 2021). Accordingly, if the students regard the role of their teachers as highly important, and if teachers focus exclusively on transmitting the Armenian ethnic identity, then students perhaps might not be given the chance to freely question, review failures and successes, explore, and understand this identity. Possibly also leading students to believe and grow in a mindset that highly focuses on the continuity of the Armenian ethnic identity and the associated fears of losing this identity, may evoke feelings of guilt and treason when they attempt to engage in a critical evaluation of the history of the Armenian collective ethnic identity.

### **Limitations & Future Recommendations**

As previously mentioned, multiple limitations and internal validity threats were foreseen to influence the results of the present study.

#### ***Sample Size***

To begin with, a major limitation to the current study was its small sample size. Regardless of the many reminders that were sent to the students via WhatsApp or posted on the Facebook page of the study, the number of participants remained little. A previous study also encountered similar difficulties while collecting data from the Lebanese-Armenian population (Tavitian et al., 2019). While, a more recent study in progress managed to collect data from  $N = 797$  Armenian adolescent high school students in intermediate and secondary classes from 19 Armenian high schools (Kandaharian-Hudaverdian, 2021). It is worth mentioning that, in this particular study data collection was conducted through paper and pencil and in the presence of an undergraduate assistant from the department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Haigazian University (Kandaharian-Hudaverdian, 2021). A study comparing the differences between, and

adequacy of, response rates to online and paper-based surveys concluded that in general, online surveys are much less likely to achieve response rates as high as surveys administered on paper (Nulty, 2008). In addition, the study suggested several approaches to boost response rate for example, sending frequent reminders, offering incentives through a lottery, and persuading respondents that their answers will be used (Nulty, 2008). In the present study, all three approaches were used. Participants were sent frequent reminders via a personal message from the main investigator requiring their assistance in the completion of the study, implicitly implying that their answers will be used. Also, as previously mentioned students were offered with an incentive to win a gift voucher from a local restaurant through a lottery. Despite these many efforts, the number of participants remained small. Another potential reason for low participation in online studies might be attributable to the lack of familiarity to electronic surveys (Nulty, 2008). Although in the current study no such concern was explicitly conveyed from the students however, keeping this in mind perhaps future research should aim to collect data from this specific sample through paper and pencil in the aim of increasing participation rate.

Another study conducted on the indigenous Muscogee community of Oklahoma suggested that gaining access to a secluded community requires establishing trusting relationships through social networking, acquiring permission from key informants of the community, presenting oneself appropriately, and showing respect to the culture's norms and morals (Kawulich, 2011). In addition, the study also proposed to employ purposive snowball sampling, as the sample does not take shape without the help of community members, especially key informants (Kawulich, 2011). While this method has been attempted with Lebanese-Armenians before and has met with little success (Tavitian et al., 2019), it is important to keep in mind factors that might aid in future data collection. Perhaps future researchers can employ

snowball sampling for instance, through identifying key figures in the Lebanese-Armenian community and assigning these figures as data collectors in the hopes of increasing the number of participants. However, results should be carefully interpreted as this would be introducing bias in data collection and would influence the results of the study.

While, small sample size and low statistical power were major limitations to the present study, the nature of data collection and participants' responses on the team building exercise were important for the interpretation of the group's situation and their potential reluctance to participate in research studies, an observation also made in a previous study (Tavitian et al., 2019). A replication of the current study with a much larger sample size is essential to be able to determine whether affirmation is an effective intervention in identity threat situations and to examine their effects on willingness to engage in contact with out-group members. In addition, and as mentioned before, a conclusion regarding the reluctance of participants to take part in the current study based on their high endorsement in the Armenian ethnic identity is too simplistic and cannot be made. It should be acknowledged that the sample of the study consisted of Armenian students from Armenian high schools where they are consistently exposed to the many facets of the Armenian ethnic identity. As such, to be able to make a clear conclusion about the Armenian ethnic identity as being a possible gatekeeper in obstructing participants' participation in research studies examining ethnic identity, perhaps future research investigating affirmation, identity threat and willingness to interact with out-group members should compare the responses of Armenian students from Armenian schools versus Armenian students from non-Armenians schools. Future follow-up studies, could also benefit from qualitatively evaluating narratives on identity development and social identity complexity especially with Lebanese-Armenians (Tavitian et al., 2019). Perhaps such studies would help researchers and scholars understand in

depth how this particular group views their ethnic identity, how this perception is translated into its transmission to future generations, and if affirmation manipulations are effective interventions.

### ***Other Internal Validity Threats***

Other internal validity threats related to participation rate in the study that might have affected the results, are maturation and attrition. In the current study, maturation was not controlled for, and the questionnaires of participants who took longer than 30 minutes to finish were not removed from analysis. One rationale for including these responses in the analysis is attrition. Many participants did not continue beyond the first click on the link or after answering the first few questions of the experiment. Another reason is that some participants may have clicked on the link when it was sent to them however, they did not complete the questionnaire until a day or two later when the main researcher sent a reminder of the experiment. Limiting access to the questionnaire via Qualtrics (<https://www.qualtrics.com>) through the option “Allow Respondents to Finish Later” is a possible way to control for maturation. This option is set by default for one week, meaning that participants have one week to return to the survey and finish their response. Therefore, it is recommended for this option to be removed or edited in future studies, especially in experimental studies involving manipulations and interventions.

A way to control attrition is to increase the number of participants in the study by inviting as much as participants as possible. Moreover, as discussed before in the ethical consideration section, the present study employed the “Forced Response” option on Qualtrics (<https://www.qualtrics.com>). Although, this was an honest mistake from the part of the main researcher and there are no studies suggesting that the use of “Forced Response” might make participants frustrated from answering all questions even those that they do not want, and can

possibly contribute to discontinuation from the study, however, this notion is worthy of considering when conducting future studies.

Since non-random sampling was applied, selection presented as a threat. Nevertheless, participants were randomly assigned to experimental conditions. A replication of the current study is a must to confirm current or elucidate new findings. Instrumentation threat was initially controlled for as the experiment was administered with consistency through Qualtrics (<https://www.qualtrics.com>) however, during analysis it became evident that the first question of the experiment which was the one-item identity measure (Cohen & Garcia, 2005), may have prompted participants to adopt a guarding attitude regarding their ethnic identity or may have led to the creation of a reactance effect and hence, might have obstructed participation. Accordingly, one technique to eliminate this issue would be to counterbalance the questionnaire or include this sensitive question in the demographic section of the study.

### ***External Factors***

Besides the multiple limitations and internal validity threats, there are many important external factors that should be mentioned as they might have influenced participation and the responses of the participants in the study.

**Stress & Online Learning.** During data collection several principals voiced their concern regarding the students being in a stressful period due to online learning and final year exams, specifically 12<sup>th</sup> graders who are expected to participate in the Lebanese Baccalaureate Official exams in June, 2021. Several studies have reported the effects of e-learning during COVID-19 on the mental health specifically, on anxiety, depression and stress symptomatology among high school and university students (Fawaz & Samaha, 2021; Giannopoulo, 2021; Moawad, 2020). The majority of these studies have reported that the sudden exclusive shift to

online learning methods have produced anxiety, depression and stress symptoms among a significant proportion of the students (Fawaz & Samaha, 2021; Giannopoulo, 2021; Moawad, 2020). It may be possible that the stress of online learning, lack of habituation in participating in research studies and specifically online studies, coupled with the co-occurrence of students' exams, effected the participation rate of the study.

**Situational Factors.** As stated previously, the situation in both, Lebanon and Armenia, may have created a history threat and consequently effected participation rate and participants' responses ("Lebanon's Economic Update – October 2020," 2020; "Lebanon between explosion, pandemic and economic crisis", 2020; Simmons & Gauthier-Villars, 2021). The ongoing armed conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan more so than the Lebanese dire economic, security and political circumstances, may have contributed to a reluctance in participation in the sample of the current study. The ending of the armed conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan was sudden and shocking, and it prompted further internal political clashes between political parties in Armenia. Lebanese-Armenians felt a strong pull to the conflict as many young Lebanese-Armenian men volunteered to join the armed fight (Proctor, 2020). The conflict was more than the territory itself: as it was a wider assault on the essence of the Armenian identity (Proctor, 2020). All throughout the conflict slogans on social media and on streets in Armenia and Armenian populated areas in Lebanon advocated triumph. The slogan of "We are going to win" became familiar and multiple massive protests took place in the diaspora namely, in Europe and the United States (Proctor, 2020). The conflict ended approximately eight months later with Armenians not only losing territorial grounds, but also countless human lives.

The narrative of the Armenian history thrives not on unity but on togetherness, which is defined as the state or the quality of being together. This is possibly why for many Armenians

who are not from Armenia or who have never been to Armenia, this conflict presented a frightening prospect. It evoked heavy, and paralyzing fears of disappearance. This is a familiar feeling for Armenians, as this feeling of fearing disappearance may be the force that drives Armenians to strongly hold on to this identity and ergo, to exist and live though a state concern and fear.

### **Conclusion**

The current study aimed to assess self- and group-affirmation as possible mechanisms to reduce defensiveness in a sample of adolescent Armenian high school students when presented with an implicit identity threat, and to evaluate its effects on their willingness to interact with non-Armenians. The main analysis yielded null findings, most likely attributable to the small sample size and low statistical power of the study. Further exploratory analyses were carried out to better understand the characteristics of the sample. It was found that the sample highly endorses their Armenian ethnic identity. In addition, being a female, having an ethnically non-Armenian parent, and being a scouts member or a member of socio-cultural and political institutions, were associated with having frequent contact with and positive favorable attitudes towards non-Armenians. A replication of the present study with a larger sample is paramount to corroborate current or bring forward new findings. Along with external factors and the method of data collection being online and electronic, the saliency and the distinctiveness of the Armenian ethnic identity was proposed as a potential gatekeeper that might have obstructed participation. Moreover, the current study builds on existing research regarding the saliency of the Armenian ethnic identity and further confirms that the Armenian ethnic identity might be perceived as endangered and in turn, in need of constant affirmation irrespective of situational demands (Badea & Sherman, 2019; Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Sherman et al., 2017; Sherman, 2013;

Sherman & Cohen, 2006, Tavitian et al., 2019). Since research on Lebanese-Armenians in general is scarce the present study only serves as a basis for future social psychological research. Perhaps future research studies can be directed towards qualitatively exploring the Armenian ethnic identity, to capture Lebanese-Armenians understanding of their ethnic identity, and how, and if, this understanding could be targeted and used in experimental studies investigating affirmation and threat in the context of willingness to interact with the Lebanese mainstream.

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## Appendix A

### School Consent Letter

Dear Principal,

My name is Sevana Topalian, and I am a Graduate student in Clinical Psychology at Haigazian University in Beirut, Lebanon. As part of the requirements of the Masters in Clinical Psychology program, I am working on my thesis aimed at examining Self- and Group-Affirmation as possible tools in facilitating intergroup relations among adolescent Armenian high school students and mainstream Lebanese. This study will be conducted under the supervision of Drs. Lucy Tavitian-Elmadjian.

I am hereby seeking your consent to approach the students in grades 10, 11, and 12, and request their participation in my study. The research will be conducted through a hyperlink that will be sent to students and from which they can access the questionnaire. Completing the study protocol is expected to take about 20-30mins. Participation in the study is voluntary and there are no known or anticipated risks. Consent to participate in research will be obtained from students and their parents electronically. All information will be kept confidential and would be used only for academic purposes. Data provided by the students will be stored in aggregate on my personal computer. Only the principle investigators (myself and Drs. Tavitian-Elmadjian) of this study will have access to the compiled data which will be stored for a period of 10 years as per the regulations set by the Social and Behavioral Sciences Ethics Committee at Haigazian University.

Students will have the right to withdraw their consent or discontinue participation at any time for any reason. Your decision, as a principal/director, to refuse the participation of your students will not affect your school's and students' relationship with Haigazian University. This research study has been reviewed and has received clearance from the Haigazian University Social and Behavioral Sciences Ethics Committee (Protocol ID: TT.06.20). If you have any further concerns about the rights of your students as research participants, please, do not hesitate to contact the committee at [SBS.Ethics@haigazian.edu.lb](mailto:SBS.Ethics@haigazian.edu.lb). You can also contact my thesis advisor Drs. Lucy Tavitian-Elmadjian.

In acknowledgment of their participation in the research project, participants will enter a draw in which 20 students (based on the number of participation from each school) will win a gift voucher. In appreciation of your agreement, we would like to offer our services in providing 2 workshops / lectures / support groups to address any social or academic challenges your students, parents or teachers may be facing in these uncertain times (e.g. stress management, online teaching...). We would like to work collaboratively with you to tailor such a service based on your needs as per your assessment.

If you agree, kindly sign below acknowledging your consent and permission for me to conduct this study at your institution.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance for your interest and assistance with this research.

Sincerely,

Sevana Topalian  
Graduate Student in the Department of Psychology  
Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences  
Haigazian University  
Email: [stopalian01@students.haigazian.edu.lb](mailto:stopalian01@students.haigazian.edu.lb)

Lucy Tavitian-Elmadjian, Drs.  
Instructor, Department of Psychology  
Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences  
Haigazian University  
Telefax: +9611353010/2(ext.309)  
Email: [lucy.tavitian@haigazian.edu.lb](mailto:lucy.tavitian@haigazian.edu.lb)

Approved by  
Name & Date

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Signature

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## Appendix B

### Parental Consent Letter

Dear Ms./Mr.,

I am Sevana Topalian, a Graduate student at Haigazian University from the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences. I am currently carrying out two research studies, Study 1 titled “Personal and Group Values” and Study 2 titled “Perceptions of Social Groups” under the supervision of Drs. Lucy Tavitian-Elmadjian. We are requesting the participation of your son/daughter in this study. Kindly read the below information to decide whether you would like your son/daughter to participate in this research study.

#### **Purpose of the Research Project**

The aim of Study 1 is to examine how students evaluate themselves and the group to which they belong in terms of values and attributes. The aim of Study 2 is to examine student's general knowledge about certain social groups. Study 1 will contribute towards the partial fulfillment of my Thesis study requirements at Haigazian University. While Study 2 will contribute towards the partial fulfillment of my project in one of my Master's courses "Advanced Educational Psychology: Teaching & Learning".

#### **What will my son/daughter be asked to do?**

- If you choose to let your son/daughter participate in Study 1 and Study 2, they will be asked to fill in an automated questionnaire. Their participation will involve completing a survey that entails statements that they will have to rate based on agreement, and a demographic form for approximately 20 to 30 minutes. Participation in this project is voluntary. You are free to refuse the participation of your son/daughter. If you agree for your son/daughter to participate in the study, they are free to withdraw anytime without having to give any reason for their withdrawal.

#### **What are my and my son's/daughter's rights?**

- Participation in this study is completely voluntary, anonymous and confidential.
- Data provided by your son/daughter along with data from all participants in the present research will be stored in aggregate on the personal computer of Ms. Sevana Topalian. Only the principle investigators of this study (Ms. Sevana Topalian and Drs. Lucy Tavitian-Elmadjian) will have access to the compiled data which will be stored for a period of 10 years as per the regulations set by the Social and Behavioral Sciences Ethics Committee at Haigazian University.
- Your son/daughter have the right to withdraw their consent or discontinue participation at any time for any reason by clicking on the “quit” option that would remain visible on the bottom of the survey. Your decision, as a parent, to refuse participation or withdrawal will not involve any penalty to your son/daughter. Discontinuing participation in no way affects your son's/daughter's relationship with Haigazian University.
- This research study has been reviewed and has received clearance from the Haigazian University Social and Behavioural Sciences Ethics Committee. If you have any further concerns or questions, please, do not hesitate to contact the committee at

[SBS.Ethics@haigazian.edu.lb](mailto:SBS.Ethics@haigazian.edu.lb). You can also contact my thesis advisor Drs. Lucy Tavitian-Elmadjian at [lucy.tavitian@haigazian.edu.lb](mailto:lucy.tavitian@haigazian.edu.lb).

### **What are the risks and benefits of participation?**

- Participation in this study does not involve any physical risk or emotional risk to your son/daughter beyond the risks of daily life. If your son/daughter feels uneasy, they can terminate the study at any time they want.
- By participating in this research study your son/daughter will be eligible to enter a draw where 20 participants will be randomly selected to earn a gift voucher for a one-time delivery order from Zaatar w Zeit. In addition, their participation will help researchers better understand student's self and group values.

### **Contact information**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research you may contact:

Sevana Topalian  
Graduate Student in the Department of Psychology  
Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences  
Haigazian University  
Email: [stopalian01@students.haigazian.edu.lb](mailto:stopalian01@students.haigazian.edu.lb)

Lucy Tavitian-Elmadjian, Drs  
Instructor, Department of Psychology  
Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences  
Haigazian University  
Telefax: +9611353010/2(ext.309)  
Email: [lucy.tavitian@haigazian.edu.lb](mailto:lucy.tavitian@haigazian.edu.lb)

## Appendix C

### Student Assent Letter

Dear Student,

You are being asked to take part in two research studies titled “Personal and Group Values” and “Perceptions of Social Groups”. The studies are carried out by Sevana Topalian, a graduate student in Clinical Psychology in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Haigazian University under the supervision of Drs. Lucy Tavitian-Elmadjian. Kindly read the below information to decide whether you would like to participate in this research study.

#### **Purpose of the Research Project**

The aim of Study 1 is to examine how students evaluate themselves and the group to which they belong in terms of values and attributes. The aim of Study 2 is to examine student's general knowledge about certain social groups. Study 1 will contribute towards the partial fulfillment of my Thesis study requirements at Haigazian University, while Study 2 will contribute towards the partial fulfillment of my project in one of my Master's courses "Advanced Educational Psychology: Teaching & Learning".

#### **What will I be asked to do?**

- If you choose to participate in Study 1 and Study 2, you will be asked to fill in an automated questionnaire on the computer/laptop. In Study 1 you will be required to complete exercises related to personal and group values, and in Study 2 you will be asked to answer general questions about social groups. You will also be asked to complete a demographic sheet. Completing both studies will take about 20 to 30 minutes.

#### **What are my rights?**

- Participation in this study is completely voluntary, anonymous and confidential. Your name or any other identifying information will not be asked.
- Data you provide along with data from all participants in the present research will be stored in aggregate on the personal computer of Ms. Sevana Topalian. Only the principle investigators of this study (Ms. Sevana Topalian and Drs. Lucy Tavitian-Elmadjian) will have access to the compiled data which will be stored for a period of 10 years as per the regulations set by the Social and Behavioral Sciences Ethics Committee at Haigazian University.
- You have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation. Your decision to refuse participation or withdraw will not involve any penalty. Discontinuing participation in no way affects your relationship with Haigazian University.
- This research study has been reviewed and has received clearance from the Haigazian University Social and Behavioural Sciences Ethics Committee. If you have any further concerns about your rights as a research participant, please, do not hesitate to contact the committee at [SBS.Ethics@haigazian.edu.lb](mailto:SBS.Ethics@haigazian.edu.lb). You can also contact my thesis advisor Drs. Lucy Tavitian-Elmadjian at [lucy.tavitian@haigazian.edu.lb](mailto:lucy.tavitian@haigazian.edu.lb).

#### **What are the risks and benefits of participation?**

- Participation in this study does not involve any physical risk or emotional risk to you beyond the risks of daily life. If you feel uneasy, you can terminate the study at any time you want.
- By participating in this research you will be eligible to enter a draw where 20 participants will be randomly selected to earn a gift voucher for a one-time delivery order from Zaatar w Zeit. In addition, your participation will help the researchers better understand students' self and group values.

### **Participation in Research Study**

- I have read the above mentioned information regarding the research study title “Personal and Self Values”, and I:

Agree, I want to participate in this research

Disagree, I do not want to participate in this research

### **Contact information**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research you may contact:

Sevana Topalian  
Graduate Student in the Department of Psychology  
Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences  
Haigazian University  
Email: [stopalian01@students.haigazian.edu.lb](mailto:stopalian01@students.haigazian.edu.lb)

Lucy Tavitian-Elmadjian, Drs  
Instructor, Department of Psychology  
Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences  
Haigazian University  
Telefax: +9611353010/2(ext.309)  
Email: [lucy.tavitian@haigazian.edu.lb](mailto:lucy.tavitian@haigazian.edu.lb)

## Appendix D

### Parent and Participant Debriefing Letter

Dear Mr./Ms.,

The aim of this experimental study was to better understand the role of self- and group-affirmation in reducing in-group defensiveness, out-group prejudice, and facilitating intergroup relations. Accordingly, the participation of your son/daughter helped in answering the following research question: Will collective- and self-affirmation reduce defensiveness in a sample of adolescent Armenian high school students when presented with an implicit identity threat, and subsequently facilitate intergroup relations between Armenians and the mainstream Lebanese?

We did not tell your son/daughter the actual aim and intent of the study from the beginning so that they would not spend too much thinking about the purpose of the research study while completing the questionnaire. In this study, your son/daughter was randomly assigned to one of six experimental conditions, and based on their assignment they were requested to engage in the following exercises:

- 1- Self-Affirmation, Implicit Identity Threat, Intergroup Relations
  - 2- Self-Affirmation, No Threat, Intergroup Relations
  - 3- Group-Affirmation, Implicit Identity Threat, Intergroup Relations
  - 4- Group-Affirmation, No Threat, Intergroup Relations
  - 5- No Affirmation, Implicit Identity Threat, Intergroup Relations
  - 6- No Affirmation, No Threat, Intergroup Relations
- **Self-affirmation:** your son/daughter was presented with a list of 11 “Personal Values” and asked to rank them from most important to least important. Then, they were asked to specify three reasons of why the top ranked value is most important and to provide an example of something that they have done to demonstrate the importance of the top ranked value.
  - **Group-Affirmation:** your son/daughter was presented with a list of 11 “Armenian Values” and asked to rank them from most important to least important according to Armenians. Then, they were asked to specify three reasons of why the top ranked value is most important and to provide an example of something that Armenians have done to demonstrate the importance of the top ranked value.
  - **Implicit Identity Threat:** your son/daughter was presented with a series of questions about a certain social group in this case, Armenians. They were asked to try and estimate the number of Armenians relative to non-Armenians in Lebanon. Then, they read a paragraph consistent with the idea that Armenians are outnumbered by non-Armenians in Lebanon.

- **No Threat:** your son/daughter was presented with a series of questions about a certain social group in this case, Senegalese. They were asked about the Senegalese languages. Then, they read a paragraph about Senegal being a Multilingual country.
- **Intergroup Relations:** your son/daughter was presented with eight neutral profiles (2 male Lebanese, 2 female Lebanese, 2 male Armenians, 2 female Armenians) and asked to take part in a virtual community service task by building a team of 3 including themselves. After choosing two profiles they were required to provide the reason behind their choice.

Dear Participant,

If you are still willing to permit access to your data, please indicate below.

Yes, I agree

No, I do not agree

**Appendix E**

Identification Strength with Ethnic Identity

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statement by clicking on one of the options below.

<b>Not at all important</b>						<b>Extremely Important</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
How important is your Armenian identity to you?							

**Appendix F**

## Self-Affirmation Manipulation

Here is a list of 11 “Personal Values”. Note that the values have been listed with no specific order. Please rank them according to your order of importance from 1 to 11 by indicating next to each value.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Being Good at Art
- \_\_\_\_\_ Being Good at Sports
- \_\_\_\_\_ Being Smart or Getting Good Grades
- \_\_\_\_\_ Having a Sense of Humor
- \_\_\_\_\_ Being Creative
- \_\_\_\_\_ Being Religious
- \_\_\_\_\_ Being Independent
- \_\_\_\_\_ Being with Friends or Family
- \_\_\_\_\_ Having Good Social Skills
- \_\_\_\_\_ Being Physically attractive
- \_\_\_\_\_ Listening to Music or Playing Music

Please specify three reasons of why the top ranked value is important to you.

- 1- \_\_\_\_\_
- 2- \_\_\_\_\_
- 3- \_\_\_\_\_

Provide one example of something that you have done to demonstrate the importance of the top ranked value.

**Appendix G**

## Group-Affirmation Manipulation

Here is a list of 11 Armenian Values. Note that the values have been listed with no specific order. Please rank them according to the order of importance to Armenians from 1 to 11 by indicating next to each value.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Being Good at Art
- \_\_\_\_\_ Being Good at Sports
- \_\_\_\_\_ Being Smart or Getting Good Grades
- \_\_\_\_\_ Having a Sense of Humor
- \_\_\_\_\_ Being Creative
- \_\_\_\_\_ Being Religious
- \_\_\_\_\_ Being Social
- \_\_\_\_\_ Being with Friends or Family
- \_\_\_\_\_ Having Good Business/Leadership Skills
- \_\_\_\_\_ Being Physically attractive
- \_\_\_\_\_ Listening to Music or Playing Music

Please specify three reasons of why the top ranked value is important to Armenians.

- 1- \_\_\_\_\_
- 2- \_\_\_\_\_
- 3- \_\_\_\_\_

Provide one example of something that Armenians have done to demonstrate the importance of the top ranked value.

**Appendix H**

## No Affirmation Manipulation

Please take a few minutes to remember your typical, everyday morning. Recall what you usually do during a regular morning. After that, please start writing down your memory in as much detail as possible. There are no right or wrong descriptions. Writing down the memory should not take longer than 5–10 min.

## Appendix I

### Implicit Identity Threat

The following section relates to your general knowledge skills. In this section you will be asked general questions about a social group (i.e. Lebanese, Syrian, Palestinian, Armenian, Chinese, Senegalese, American, French) based on your random selection of a number ranging from 1 to 8.

- 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5
  - 6
  - 7
  - 8
- 

You picked the following Social Group: Armenians.  
Please answer the questions.

- 1- Estimate the percentage of Armenians relative to non-Armenians living in Lebanon.
    - 1.10%
    - 2.30%
    - 2.90%
  
  - 2- Estimate the number of Armenian Deputies and Ministers in the Lebanese Parliament.
    - 5
    - 6
    - 7
  
  - 3- Do you think these numbers will increase in the coming years?
    - Yes
    - No
- 

Feedback on the general questions of a Social Group: Armenians.

Armenians currently constitute 1.10% of the general Lebanese population. That means there are roughly around 75,000 Armenians relative non-Armenians (6,775,074) presently residing in Lebanon. Ten years ago these numbers were considerably higher, where Armenians constituted around 2.90% of the population averaging approximately 195,000 people. Armenians are appointed six seats in the Lebanese Parliament, in addition to one to two ministerial position. At present, there are only six Armenians in the Lebanese Parliament. It is projected that even more Armenians will leave over the next year making them an even more of a minority than they already were, and scattering them across different countries around the world.

**Appendix J**

## No Threat Condition

The following section relates to your general knowledge skills. In this section you will be asked general questions about a social group (i.e. Lebanese, Syrian, Palestinian, Armenian, Chinese, Senegalese, American, French) based on your random selection of a number ranging from 1 to 8.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8

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You picked the following Social Group: Senegalese.  
Please answer the questions.

- 1- Where is Senegal located?
  - Western Africa
  - Southeast Asia
  - The Caucasus
  
- 2- What is the most commonly spoken language in Senegal?
  - Mandarin
  - Wolof
  - English
  
- 3- How many languages are spoken in Senegal?
  - 24
  - 39
  - 45

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Feedback on the general questions of a Social Group: Senegalese

Senegal, is a country in Western Africa. Its population speaks 39 languages. Linguists divide these languages into two families: Atlantic and Mande. The Atlantic family, generally found in the western half of the country, contains the languages most widely spoken in Senegal—Wolof, Serer, Fula, and Diola. Mande languages are found in the eastern half and include Bambara, Malinke, and Soninke. Most of the population in Senegal speak Wolof. Contemporary Senegalese culture, especially music, draws largely on Wolof sources, but the influences of other Senegalese groups (the Fulani, the Serer, the Diola, and the Malinke) are also evident.

**Appendix K**

## Team Building Scenario

Dear Participant, you are asked to participate in a community service task with a group of people to deliver groceries to the elderly who were affected by the Beirut blast. You are required to build a team of four people including you. The below eight profiles are of students who are from the same age and class as yours but from different schools. Please pick three students by clicking on their names so that together you can form a team of four people and take part in the community service task.

- Hadi
- Kevork
- Leila
- Talar
- Kareem
- Hagop
- Nisrine
- Nanor

Why did you choose \_\_\_\_\_ (name of the person the participant picked)? (this question was asked three times for each name)

**Appendix L**

Attitude Towards Out-Group Members

<b>Not at all</b>				<b>Extremely</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Would you like to meet a non-Armenian Lebanese?					
Would you like to sit next to a non-Armenian Lebanese on a 3-hour bus trip?					
Would you be willing to go to school with a non-Armenian Lebanese					
Would you be willing to have a non-Armenian Lebanese person eat lunch with you often?					
Would you invite a non-Armenian Lebanese to your home?					
Would you ask a non-Armenian Lebanese for advice?					
Would you be willing to have a non-Armenian Lebanese teacher?					

**Appendix M**

Frequency of Contact with Out-Groups Members

<b>Never</b>				<b>Very often</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
How often do you interact with people from the non-Armenian community in each other's homes?					
How often do you interact with people from the non-Armenian community at school?					
How often do you interact with people from the non-Armenian community in your neighborhood?					
How often do you interact with people from the non-Armenian community through extracurricular activities such as sports or community service?					

**Appendix N**

## Manipulation Check

You will now be presented with a few general questions about the current study. Use the space allocated for each question to fill in your answer.

- 1- What do you think the purpose of this experiment was?

- 2- What do you think this experiment was trying to study?

- 3- Did you think that any of the tasks you did were related in any way? If “yes” in what way are they related?

- 4- Did anything you did on one task affect what you did on any other task? If “yes” how exactly did it affect you?

- 5- When you were reading the short description did you notice anything unusual about it?

- 6- Did you use any particular strategy in answering the questions?

**Appendix O**

## Socio-demographics

How old are you? (Please indicate in years) \_\_\_\_\_

Which school do you go to? \_\_\_\_\_

Which grade are you in? (10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>)

\_\_\_\_\_ 10<sup>th</sup>

\_\_\_\_\_ 11<sup>th</sup>

\_\_\_\_\_ 12<sup>th</sup>

What is your sex? (male, female, prefer not to answer)

\_\_\_\_\_ male

\_\_\_\_\_ female

\_\_\_\_\_ prefer not to answer

What is your nationality?

\_\_\_\_\_ Lebanese

\_\_\_\_\_ Armenian

\_\_\_\_\_ Syrian

Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

What is the Ethnic Identity of your mother?

\_\_\_\_\_ Arab

\_\_\_\_\_ Armenian

What is the Ethnic Identity of your father?

\_\_\_\_\_ Arab

\_\_\_\_\_ Armenian

Please indicate your religious sect (Protestant, Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholic, Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_\_\_ Protestant

\_\_\_\_\_ Armenian Orthodox

\_\_\_\_\_ Armenian Catholic

Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have male older siblings? If yes, how many?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ No

Do you have male younger siblings? If yes, how many?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ No

Do you have female older siblings? If yes, how many?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ No

Do you have female younger siblings? If yes, how many?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ No

Are you a member of a Socio-cultural or political group?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

Are you a member of a Scouts?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

Are your siblings members of a Socio-cultural or political group?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

Are your siblings members of Scouts?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No