Intergroup Conflict in Lebanon: Social Identification and Involvement in Collective

Action Predict More Hopelessness for Lebanese Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

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The studies examined social identity, collective action, and individual hopelessness in young adults who were university students living through the severe escalating intergroup conflict in Lebanon in 2007 and 2008. As expected, participants in Study 1 (N = 162) viewed the conflict as escalating, potentially leading to a civil war, and as leading to hopelessness. Studies 2 and 3 applied social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) to address the determinants and consequences of social identification and involvement in collective action. As well, a hypothesis was derived from Staw's (1997) escalation of commitment theory. Structural equation modeling was conducted. As expected, participants in Study 2 (N = 566) who perceived the intergroup hierarchy as unstable, illegitimate, and group boundaries as impermeable (i.e., migration between groups is not possible) identified more with their group and were more involved in collective action. As well, social identification and collective action increased individual hopelessness. Perceiving the hierarchy as unstable was also directly linked to less hopelessness. Study 3 (N = 278) was a modified replication which focused on perceived instability and social identity as determinants of hopelessness and depression. Parallel effects emerged, and hopelessness was linked to depression. As well, not only did social identification in Study 3 increase depression via hopelessness, but identification unexpectedly also directly decreased depression. Across both studies, perceived instability both increased and decreased hopelessness, via different pathways. The findings reveal complex pathways

by which social identity processes influence adjustment. Implications are discussed for

SIT and the broader context of Lebanon.

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CONTRIBUTIONS OF AUTHORS

This MA. thesis consists of an extended introduction, one manuscript (Study 1,
Study 2, and Study 3), and an extended conclusion. From the onset of the present
research, Dr. Michael Conway, my principal supervisor, and myself each contributed to
the selection of the research topic and the formulation of hypotheses that were addressed
in this thesis. In collaboration with Dr. Michael Conway, I selected and developed the
theoretical framework of the present studies. I also designed the studies, developed self-
report measures, analyzed the results and interpreted them in collaboration with Dr.
Michael Conway. I was also responsible for data collection. I traveled to Beirut,
Lebanon to collect the data for Studies 2 and 3 and made arrangements to have access to
the student populations under study. I also entered the data while in Lebanon and
oversaw translation of the materials for Studies 2 and 3. Finally, I prepared the
manuscript, which is embedded in this thesis, in collaboration with Dr. Michael Conway.

Dr. Arang Keshavarzian, a former member of my thesis committee, provided
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Study 2 and 3.

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Introduction

The present research applied social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) to the severe and escalating intergroup conflict in Lebanon in 2007 and 2008. The research addressed the determinants of social identification with one's group and involvement in collective action for Lebanese young adults. We also examined whether young adults who identify with their group and are involved in collective action to support their group experience more hopelessness for their futures in a context of severe and escalating intergroup conflict. This hypothesis was derived from Staw's (1997) escalation of commitment theory.

In Chapter 1, I provide a general overview of intergroup relations in Lebanon. I also elaborate on the consociational power-sharing arrangement between the different groups and how it was rearranged after the Lebanese civil war, which lasted from 1975 to 1990. Correspondingly, I elaborate on events from the conclusion of the civil war which have led to the onset of the political crisis in 2006. It is important to note that foreign interference played a significant role in the Lebanon's history and the political crisis which began in 2006. However, a discussion of the historical and contemporary influences of foreign interference in Lebanon goes beyond the scope of the present research. The aim of the present research was to examine the intergroup conflict in Lebanon by focusing on the psychology of the individual. As such, the role of foreign interference will not be discussed in great detail (interested readers can see Khalaf, 2002, for an in-depth analysis on the role of foreign interference in Lebanon).

Following the sections on Lebanon, I briefly describe social identity theory in aim to orient the reader with the theoretical framework used in the present research. In

Chapter 2, I present the manuscript-based version of the thesis. In this Chapter, I present the introduction, Studies 1, 2, and 3, and their related discussions, along with a general discussion of the findings. In the general discussion, I briefly expand upen the results in terms of their implication for Lebanese young adults and the broader context of Lebanon.

Intergroup Relations in Lebanon: An Overview

Lebanon's society is heterogeneous. It is composed of several religious minorities that are geographically segregated and organized along political lines. The different religious groups or sects operate in a social order without a majority group (Salibi, 1988; Hourani, 1954). There are over 27 religious sects of which 18 are recognized by the Lebanese state. Only 6 of the recognized groups play a major role in government and politics. Specifically, 3 of these groups are Christian, whereas the other 3 are Muslim. The Christian groups concerned are the Maronite, Greek Orthodox, and Greek Catholic sects whereas the Muslim groups concerned are the Sunni, Shiite, and Druze sects. Historically, the different religious groups were vehemently distrustful of each other and relied on foreign assistance and support to safeguard their communities (Makdisi, 2000; Salibi, 1988).

The different religious groups operate politically within the framework of a consociational democracy (Lijphart, 1969). Consociational democracies involve the establishment of a power-sharing arrangement for heterogeneous societies to coexist with the aim of transforming them into stable democracies. Consociationalism consists of four pillars: a grand coalition, proportional representation, mutual veto, and autonomy for each community. Specifically, the elites of each community represent their communities within the framework of a grand coalition in government that emphasizes co-operation.

The representation of the groups in government is based on proportionality (i.e., the numerical size of each group), whereas the rights and interests of each community are protected with a mutual veto in government. Finally, the consociational power-sharing democracy grants each group a high degree of autonomy in running their own affairs, such as education. Other goals of consociationalism involve government stability, survival of democracy, and the avoidance of violence, where each of these goals is contingent on the endurance of the power-sharing arrangement between the different groups.

In line with consociationalism, the political elites representing their religious communities mediated the relationship between the citizen and the state. A Lebanese citizen, by law, has to belong to one of the recognized religious groups in order to vote and this information is indicated in government registries (Salibi, 1988). However, the political elites behave more like supreme leaders or patrons of their religious communities with the aim of increasing their influence and power, as opposed to heads of state with the aim of working collectively for the greater good of the country (Deneoux, 1993). For example, all national or state projects, such as building roads, linking electricity and telephones, dispensing of jobs... etc. were a function of the political elites who exclusively improved their regions and electorates, which were composed of members from their religious group. In consequence, Lebanese citizens developed a dependence on their elites for services by becoming their clients. For example, Lebanese individuals would seek out their political leaders or patrons to interfere on their behalf when carrying out a government transaction or when applying for a job. In return, they would owe their political leaders undisputed political allegiance.

In addition, belonging to one's religious group has financial benefits. Previous research indicates that many university students receive financial support from institutions and charitable organizations which were developed by their religious group for its members (El-Amine & Faour, 1998). For example, the Hariri Foundation was developed to assist needy Sunni students enrolled at institutions of higher education. In sum, many Lebanese individuals became attached to, and identified with, a traditional leader and their religious group. Previous research indicates that members of the different religious groups are strongly attached to, and prefer political leaders from, their own religious group (Faour 1998; Haddad, 2001; Khashan, 1990).

As mentioned above, religious group affiliation is an important political structure in Lebanon. Religious group affiliation is also an important social structure of Lebanese society since it is a primary source of social differentiation (Starr, 1978). Specifically, Lebanon's geography is divided along sectarian lines. That is, members of a religious group exclusively occupy entire regions in Lebanon or entire neighborhoods in a city. As such, Lebanese individuals can determine the religious background and political affiliation of their compatriots by paying attention to several distinct features, such as the way one is dressed, listening to one's Arabic accent, and knowing one's name and their place of residence in Lebanon. Another example includes the religious paraphernalia Lebanese individuals use to decorate their cars, such as stickers of Koranic calligraphy, pictures of saints, and emblems of political parties.

Furthermore, most enterprises in Lebanon, such as professional associations, businesses, schools, hospitals, sport clubs, leisure centers, and charitable organizations are organized along religious lines (Starr, 1978). Involvement in these exclusive

associations is also reflective of one's religious background or affiliation. Moreover, political tensions between the different religious groups at the national level often manifest in sporting events between the players of competing clubs that are affiliated with the religious groups. In short, religious group affiliation is a salient feature of Lebanese society, especially when there are political and social tensions, or conflict, between the religious groups.

However, religious group affiliation has little to do with an individual's strength of belief or spirituality. Instead, religious group affiliation regulates life in Lebanon. In particular, all civil courts in Lebanon which deal with religious transactions, such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance, are administered by each religious group for its members. Like government transactions, religious transactions are facilitated by the political leaders for members of their religious group.

Consequently, a lack of adherence to the political leader or patron of one's religious group in Lebanon may lead to problems and difficulties when carrying out essential religious and government transactions, or when seeking protection in times of conflict. However, a lack of affiliation and involvement with one's religious group in Lebanon may lead individuals to be involved with secular political parties, such as the Lebanese Communist Party or the Syrian Social Nationalist Party. Yet, these secular parties do not have much political power compared to the political parties associated with the various religious groups. Furthermore, secular parties do not have a central role in Lebanon and are on the fringes of the political system. In sum, religious group affiliation plays a profound and pervasive role in the daily lives of the Lebanese. Specifically,

religious group affiliation is a fundamental socio-political structure of Lebanese society that provides individuals with a sense of identification, security, advantage, and intimacy.

Consociational Agreements: The National Pact and Taif Accord

An important consociational agreement between the religious groups was the National Pact, which dates back to 1943 when Lebanon achieved independence from France (Trabulsi, 2007). The agreement centered on the Maronite and Sunni communities of Lebanon. Specifically, the National Pact stipulated that the Maronite community would trade Western protection for political supremacy guaranteed by the constitution, whereas the Sunni community would drop the idea of aligning Lebanon with Syria (or any other Arab unions) in return for Muslim partnership in running the affairs of Lebanon. Historically, the Maronite community of Mount-Lebanon perceived themselves as an endangered Christian minority threatened by a dominant Muslim majority that surrounded them in neighboring lands, whereas the Sunni communities in the coastal cities of Beirut, Tripoli, and Sidon desired union with Syria (Salibi, 1988). As such, the National Pact attempted to allay Maronite fears of being engulfed by the Muslim communities and to maintain Muslim partnership in running the affairs of Lebanon.

The National Pact also distributed power, jobs, benefits, and services between the religious groups at all levels of government, which was based on a population census conducted in 1932. Specifically, political power was distributed using a 6/5 ratio in favor of Christian representation in parliament, cabinet, and other governmental bodies. The census did not reflect the demographic reality of the time, yet the Muslim communities viewed the uneven distribution of power as a concession to allay Maronite fears (Khalaf, 2002).

In addition, the three major positions in government were also distributed between the religious groups. The post of President was given to the Maronites, whereas the post of Prime Minister was given to the Sunnis and the post of House or Parliament Speaker was given to the Shiites. The National Pact and constitution also granted the Maronite President ultimate executive authority that trumped those of the Sunni Prime Minister and the Shiite House Speaker, while not providing a mechanism for presidential accountability. The remaining groups did not receive a considerable share of power due to their relatively small demographic size. However, these relatively small groups were also represented in parliament and the government cabinet.

The power-sharing arrangement dictated by the National Pact collapsed in 1975 (Salibi, 1988; Trabulsi, 2007). Specifically, the dominating Maronite political elites alienated the traditional Muslim leadership by electing nontraditional and weak Muslim leaders to serve as Prime Minister and House Speaker. In addition, the Maronite political elites were unwilling to share or give more political power to the Muslim communities. The unbalanced distribution of power that favored the Christians, especially Maronites, coupled with regional developments, such as the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the settlement of the Palestine Liberation Organization and Syria's army in Lebanon, exacerbated tensions between the different religious groups and led to a protracted and violent civil war. The war began in 1975 and ended in 1990.

The Taif Accord brought an end to the civil (Trabulsi, 2007). It redistributed power using a 5/5 ratio in parliament and reduced the prerogatives of the Maronite President in favor of the Sunni Prime Minister and the government cabinet, and the Shiite House Speaker. In other words, the Taif Accord shifted power away from the Maronite

community and increased the power of the Sunni and Shiite communities despite using an even distribution of seats in parliament. It also legalized the Syrian armed presence in Lebanon as a mandatory power to maintain security in a post-war society. Furthermore, the Taif accord also called for the secularization of Lebanon as a national priority. However, as mentioned above, the Taif Accord merely reproduced the consociational power-sharing arrangement without instituting any reforms or a mechanism to move the country towards secularism. Moreover, none of the Lebanese governments since the Taif Accord have taken concrete steps to reduce the influence of the religious groups in politics, government, and the civil courts.

Intergroup Conflict in Lebanon from 2006 to 2008

The seeds of the political conflict in Lebanon from 2006 to 2008 can be traced back to the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafic El Hariri on the 14th of February 2005. His assassination forced Syria to withdraw its army from Lebanon in April 2005 after 29 years of presence. Prior to Hariri's assassination, Syria played a decisive role in the social and political affairs of post-war Lebanon. First, it disarmed the Palestinian armed resistance and all domestic militias except for Hezbollah, since Hezbollah was formally recognized as the national resistance against the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon (Trabulsi, 2007). Second, Syria's armed presence in Lebanon gave it a monopoly over security, which allowed it to manipulate the outcome of Lebanese politics. Specifically, Syria insured the election of pro-Syrian candidates from the various religious communities at all levels of government. As a result, Syria controlled Lebanon's domestic and foreign policies.

The first general elections in post-war Lebanon designated Rafic El Hariri as Prime Minister. Hariri served as Prime Minister until 1998 and again in 2000 until his resignation in October 2004. In the post-war period, the Maronite traditional leadership and their Christian supporters boycotted the general elections to signal their discontent at Syria's meddling in Lebanon's political affairs and their rejection of the new power-sharing formula embodied in the Taif Accord, which favored the Muslim communities. However, less influential Maronite leaders went against the Maronite rank and file by serving in pro-Syrian governments (El Khazen, 1994).

Since the end of the civil war, the Christian anti-Syrian movement was dominated by the Maronite community and was supported by other Christian communities. They voiced their opposition to Syria's military presence and strong involvement in Lebanon's domestic affairs. Specifically, the political organizations representing the Christian communities of Lebanon, such as the moderate Free Patriotic Movement of former General Michel Aoun and the right-wing Lebanese Forces of Samir Geagea, engaged in demonstrations and public protests to contest Syria's role and presence in Lebanon. However, their efforts were violently repressed by the Lebanese army and intelligence service at the behest of Syria and their pro-Syrian Lebanese allies who controlled the country. For example, members of the Christian anti-Syrian movement were imprisoned, assaulted, and kidnapped by the Syrian and Lebanese intelligence services, including the Lebanese army (e.g., Agents Round Up protesters", 2001; "Arrests are 'Illegal and Unconstitutional'", 2001; "Crackdown Continues", 2001; "Murr Touts Specter of Coup to Defend Heavy-Handedness", 2001)

Nevertheless, on the international level, the Christian anti-Syrian movement was instrumental in the adoption of the Syrian Accountability Act & Lebanon Sovereignty Restoration Act in the US congress in 2003. The Syrian Accountability Act & Lebanon Sovereignty Restoration Act applied pressure on Syria to withdraw its army and intelligence apparatus from Lebanon by imposing economic sanctions. Correspondingly, in September 2004, the United Nations passed Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1559, which called for the disarmament of all militias in Lebanon, namely Hezbollah, and the expulsion of foreign forces from Lebanon, namely Syria. In addition, UNSCR 1559 called for free and fair elections in Lebanon (International Crisis Group, 2005).

In 2004, Prime Minister Hariri fell out of favor with Syria when he opposed the forced extension of pro-Syrian President Emile Lahoud's term. Furthermore, President Lahoud clashed with Prime Minister Hariri and his cabinet on a number of issues related to the handling of Lebanon's spiraling national debt, its economic programs, and the privatization of public enterprises (e.g., "Lahoud-Hariri Power Clash Shifts to Economic Focus", 2004). These events led Prime Minister Hariri to resign along with his cabinet. He later joined the Christian anti-Syrian opposition when the newly elected pro-Syrian government introduced an electoral bill that would ensure his failure in the upcoming elections in the spring of 2005. In addition, other traditional leaders from different religious communities who once favored Syria, such as Walid Jumblat from the Druze community, also joined the anti-Syrian opposition. The new electoral bill crystallized the anti-Syrian opposition, which now included Muslim and Christian groups. In response to the electoral bill, the anti-Syrian opposition drafted the "Bristol Declaration", which called for Lebanon's right to self-determination and the desire to live in peace with Syria,

with mutual respect for each other's sovereignty. The declaration was ratified by opposition members and former Prime Minister Hariri emerged as its leader in January 2005 (International Crisis Group, 2005).

On the 14th of February 2005, former Prime Minister Hariri was assassinated in Beirut. His assassination led to a massive demonstration by the followers and supporters of the anti-Syrian opposition in Lebanon. They demanded an international investigation into the assassination and the implementation of UNSCR 1559, which called on Syria to withdraw its army from Lebanon and for Hezbollah to disarm. Their consistent mass demonstrations led to the resignation of the pro-Syrian government and the institution of a caretaker government that would oversee the next general elections.

However, the Shiite community and their socio-political organizations, namely Hezbollah, were not involved in the anti-Syrian demonstrations nor were they aligned with the anti-Syrian movement. Hezbollah's lack of involvement increased tensions between the religious communities. In short, Hezbollah viewed the anti-Syrian mass mobilizations as threatening their power, since they demanded the full implementation of UNSCR 1559, which indirectly called on Hezbollah to disarm. In reaction, the Shiite community and their pro-Syrian allies mounted a counter-demonstration on the 8th of March 2005 to reveal numerical superiority and to "thank" Syria for its role in maintaining stability and calm in Lebanon during the post-war period. In reaction to the Shiite community's demonstrations, the anti-Syrian movement launched a massive counter-demonstration on the 14th of March 2005 in attempt to reveal numerical superiority over the Shiite community and their allies. This massive uprising became known as the Cedar Revolution (International Crisis Group, 2005). In sum, both

demonstrations drew hundreds of thousands of supporters on separate occasions and the polarized movements became known as the "March 8" and "March 14" movements.

After Hariri's assassination and the withdrawal of Syria's army from Lebanon, the country witnessed its first free general elections since the end of the civil war. The 2005 elections were significant because it involved, for the first time since the Taif Accord, major Christian participation in the elections. Most notable were the involvement of former General Michel Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement and the right-wing Lebanese Forces who campaigned in the past against Syria's involvement in Lebanon. The results revealed that the Free Patriotic Movement and Lebanese forces won most of their electoral ridings. The results also affirmed that Saed El Hariri, the son of slain former Prime Minister Rafic El Hariri, was the undisputed leader of the Sunni community in Lebanon (Ajami, 2005). In short, the March 14 movement had a sweeping victory and was now in control of the Lebanese government.

However, the March 14 movement headed by Saed El Hariri attempted to marginalize the role of former General Michel Aoun and his Free Patriotic Movement in government. In response, the Free Patriotic Movement formed an alliance with Hezbollah and other leaders from the Sunni and Druze communities who were part of March 8 opposition. This maneuver challenged the March 14 government because former General Michel Aoun and his Free Patriotic Movement was the largest and most popular Christian party in Lebanon. However, some traditional, but less influential, Maronite leaders continued to support the March 14 government, such as Samir Geagea's right-wing Lebanese Forces party and Amin Gemayel's Phalangist Party.

As such, the March 8 opposition was comprised of members from the Christian, Shiite, and Druze communities, with little support from the Sunni community, whereas, the March 14 movement was comprised of members from the Christian, Sunni, and Druze communities, with very little support from the Shiite community. In terms of a sectarian split, the widest was between the Shiite and Sunni communities, whereas the Christians and Druze fell on both sides of the political divide. On the one hand, the March 14 movement was backed by major Western powers, such as the US, which sought to increase their influence in Lebanon, to pressure Syria, and to disarm Hezbollah. On the other hand, the March 8 opposition movement had a tacit alliance with Syria and Iran, and sought to limit American influence in Lebanon. In short, the March 14 and March 8 coalitions had irreconcilable visions for Lebanon. This conflict was described as "one Lebanon against another" (International Crisis Group, 2006, p. 1).

The political elites representing the different religious groups on both sides of the political divide engaged in a national dialogue to quell their differences on certain points of disagreement. These points included the distribution of power in government, disarmament of Hezbollah, Lebanon's relationship with Syria, the election of a consensus President after the expiration of pro-Syrian President Lahoud's term in November 2007, and the United Nations investigation into the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri (e.g., Bakri & Hatoum, 2006; Hatoum, 2006; International Crisis Group, 2006; Qawas, 2006).

The national dialogue was a failure, since the rival movements were unable to achieve consensus on any of the abovementioned points. In particular, the March 14 government was unwilling to share power with the March 8 opposition. That is, they

refused to grant the March 8 opposition a third of the seats in the government cabinet which would enable them to have a mutual veto over government decisions. Moreover, the March 14 government was not ready to put in place a good national defense strategy that would protect Lebanon's sovereignty from any future Israeli aggressions if Hezbollah were to disarm. Following this discord, Israel and Hezbollah entered a destructive war that devastated and crippled Lebanon in the summer of 2006.

In the aftermath of the Israel-Hezbollah summer war, tensions increased between the March 14 government and the March 8 opposition. Specifically, the opposing groups were still unable to achieve consensus on any of the abovementioned points. In particular, the March 14 government argued that Hezbollah's armed status endangered Lebanon because it feeds into Israel's sense of insecurity and challenged the right of the government to unilaterally decide when to go to war. However, Hezbollah was still unwilling to disarm because Israel still occupied part of Lebanon and the government was unable to put in place a good national defense strategy. Most importantly, the opposing groups were unable to reach an agreement over the distribution of power in government (International Crisis Group, 2006).

However, the March 8 opposition continued to press the March 14 government to grant them the minimum number of seats in the government cabinet necessary for them to have a mutual veto. From the perspective of the March 14 government, the mutual veto would give Hezbollah political guarantees against disarmament and enable the March 8 opposition to bring down the March 14 government at their discretion. As such, the March 14 government categorically refused to share power with the March 8 opposition. In response, the March 8 opposition sought to pressure the March 14 government. First,

they withdrew all their cabinet ministers from government. This strategy deemed the government unconstitutional, since the Shiite community was no longer participating in government within the frameworks of consociationalism and the Lebanese constitution.

Second, the March 8 opposition took to the streets in attempt to bring down the March 14 government and initiate early parliamentary elections ("Nasrallah: Be 'Psychologically' Ready for Mass Street Protests", 2006; "Nasrallah Pledges 'Very Big Action' Soon Against Government", 2007). These events led to mass demonstrations and counter-demonstrations by the supporters of the March 8 and March 14 movements which, in some cases, have ended in violent clashes (e.g., Austin, 2006; Bakri, 2006; Ghazal, 2006; Ghazal, 2007; Samaha 2006a; Samaha, 2006c). Furthermore, the March 8 opposition instituted a sit-in protest involving several thousand supporters at the office of the Prime Minister in December of 2006. The sit-in protest would last until May 2008.

The actions of the March 8 opposition paralyzed the March 14 government and country. Their actions also blocked the March 14 government from electing a new President after the term of President Lahoud expired in November 2007. In fact, the election of a new President was postponed over 10 times. As such, the March 14 government was unable to govern the country without, let alone against, the March 8 opposition. This situation worsened the political impasse and intensified the public demonstrations and counter-demonstrations, which frequently turned violent. In short, the conflict was being waged in the streets using mass mobilizations, as opposed to being resolved through formal dialogue. In fact, the lack of extensive dialogue between the government and opposition coalitions and the use of demonstrations has contributed to the escalation in violence (International Crisis Group, 2007).

The violence was predominantly between the Shiite supporters of the March 8 opposition and the Sunni supporters of the March 14 government. For example, there were violent clashes in mixed Sunni-Shiite neighborhoods between residents who supported either the government or opposition movements. There were also intra-Christian (Samaha, 2006a) and intra-Druze clashes ("Two Wounded in Clashes Between Rival Druze Parties", 2008) between the supporters of the March 8 opposition and March 14 government. In short, the clashes between the supporters of the March 8 and March 14 movements were sectarian, which increased tensions between all the religious communities.

The numerous clashes and inter-communal tensions increased fears of a new civil war in Lebanon. As the crisis worsened, many foreign and domestic interlocutors attempted to put forward new formulas to re-arrange the power-sharing formula in government to end the political logjam. However, their efforts were met with little success, since neither of the opposing groups was willing to give up their demands on the distribution of power in government. As such, the March 14 government and March 8 opposition forces have been unable to achieve political dominance. News reports in 2007, and 2008 indicated that the political discourse in Lebanon became more radicalized and increased tensions and violence amongst the supporters of the competing groups. The increase in violence diminished any hope for resolving the power struggle and revived fears of a new civil war (e.g., "Lebanon Heads Into 2008 with Little Hope", 2007; "Lebanon's New Civil War Recipe", 2008; "Political Crisis No End In Sight", 2008; "Clashes In Beirut", 2008; "Hariri's Murder Anniversary Seen Pushing Lebanon to Brink of Strife", 2008).

In May 2008, the March 14 government attempted to crackdown on Hezbollah's private telecommunication network, which is a key part of their military apparatus. The March 14 government also attempted to marginalize the role of a Shiite general in the Lebanese Armed Forces. Hezbollah interpreted the government crackdown on its telecommunications network as a declaration of war. As such, Hezbollah and their March 8 allies engaged in a take over of West Beirut, which is a Sunni area of Beirut and March 14 stronghold. Their aim was to disarm the supporters of the March 14 movement.

These actions escalated the power struggle into open and armed combat between pro-government supporters and the supporters of the opposition (International Crisis Group, 2008a). The armed combat bore a direct resemblance to events from the 1975-1990 Lebanese civil war. For example, Beirut Internal Airport and major roads were forcibly closed by protestors. In addition, there were violent battles between gunmen from the opposing camps in residential and commercial areas all over Lebanon, in which more than 40 people perished (Abdullah, 2008a; Abdullah, 2008b; Abdullah, 2008c; Elghossein, 2008a).

The significant escalation in violence forced the leaders of the opposing camps to reach a compromise over the distribution of power in the government cabinet, which would last until the next general elections in 2009. This agreement became known as the Doha Accord and led to the election of a new Maronite President after a 6 month vacuum. The Doha Accord formula granted the March 8 opposition a mutual veto in government and increased the prerogatives of the newly elected President. However, the opposing groups have had difficulty in implementing the Doha Accord in its entirety and violent sectarian clashes between supporters of the opposing groups continued to take

place across Lebanon (e.g., Elghossein, 2008b; Elghossein, 2008c; "Three Dead As Rival Gunmen Clash", 2008).

It is important to note that the Lebanese intergroup conflict is multi-layered. One of the layers is political. As mentioned above, the conflict concerns two coalitions of religious groups that each has a separate and competing vision for Lebanon. Another layer is sectarian. As discussed above, the intergroup conflict concerned the distribution of power in the government cabinet between the March 8 opposition and March 14 government. However, the conflict is also sectarian because representation in government is based on one's religious sect. For example, the power-sharing formula embodied in the Doha Accord empowered the Christian communities of Lebanon and returned some of the prerogatives of the Maronite President (e.g., "Christians To Regain Their Rights", 2008; International Crisis Group, 2008b). Another example includes the Shiite community's desire for more political power in the government cabinet to guard against the disarmament of Hezbollah.

Furthermore, the clashes between the March 8 and March 14 movements were also inter-communal. For example, Sunnis and Shiites living in mixed districts of Lebanon engaged in open violence against one another. However, there were also intra-communal clashes between the Christian supporters of the Free Patriotic Movement allied to the March 8 movement and the Christian supporters of the Lebanese Forces allied to March 14 movement (e.g., Samaha, 2006a). Other intra-communal clashes involved the rival political parties of the Druze community ("Two Wounded in Clashes Between Rival Druze Parties", 2008).

In sum, the intergroup conflict in Lebanon is essentially a conflict over the distribution of political power between the Sunni, Shiite, Druze, and Christian communities of Lebanon. This power-struggle was also layered by competing and irreconcilable visions for the future of the country. The lack of consensus and open dialogue between the rival coalitions led to a protracted political crisis in which public demonstrations and protests by the competing groups pushed the country to the brink of a new civil war.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity refers to that "part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). The degree to which individuals identify with their group represents the importance or internalizing of group membership in the self-concept. A core assumption of social identity theory is that individuals are motivated to achieve or maintain a positive and distinct social identity vis-à-vis relevant comparison groups.

According to social identity theory, intergroup behavior involves the processes of social identification, social categorization, and social comparison. Tajfel and Turner suggested that individuals compare their groups with other groups on valued dimensions, such as power, wealth, and prestige, which establishes a representation of a status hierarchy between the groups. In short, the status representation is the outcome of intergroup comparisons, which confers positive (i.e., high status) or negative (i.e., low status) social identity. Social identity theory is largely formulated in terms of members of a low status ingroup who compare to a high status outgroup.

Tajfel and Turner suggested that low status group members may engage in identity maintenance strategies, which are classified as either being collective or individual strategies. Collective strategies involve individuals' attempts at improving their status by enhancing their group's status, whereas individual strategies involve attempts at improving one's own status while leaving group status unchanged. Social identity theory outlines 3 major strategies that members of low status groups may engage in to enhance their social identity: (1) individual mobility (e.g., leaving the low status ingroup to join the high status outgroup), (2) social creativity (e.g., finding new dimensions to compare the low status ingroup with the high status outgroup), and (3) social competition and action (i.e., collective action that directly challenges the high status outgroup in aim to alter the intergroup hierarchy). The present research addressed collective action.

Social identity theory states that the choice of whether collective or individual strategies are adopted is determined by individuals' perceptions of the instability and illegitimacy of group status differences, and the extent to which they believe they are able to leave their group to join another one (i.e., impermeability of group boundaries). In short, group members who perceive the intergroup hierarchy as unstable and illegitimate, and group boundaries as impermeable, identify more with their group and in turn are more involved in collective action to support their group.

The Present Research

The present research was conducted in Lebanon in 2007 and 2008. The aim was to examine the determinants of social identification with one's religious group and involvement in collective action to support one's religious group for young adults within

the framework of social identity theory. We also examined whether individuals who identify with their religious group and are involved in collective action experience more hopelessness for their own futures in a context of severe and escalating intergroup conflict. This hypothesis was derived from Staw's (1997) escalation of commitment theory.

In Study 1, we canvassed Lebanese university students' perceptions of the political conflict in their country. It was expected that university students would perceive the intergroup conflict in their country as escalating, potentially leading to civil war, and leading young adults to feel hopeless. In Study 2, we tested predictions from social identity theory to the intergroup conflict in Lebanon. Specifically, individuals' perceptions of the intergroup hierarchy and group boundaries were examined as determinants of social identity and involvement in collective action. We also examined whether individuals who identify more with their group and are more involved in collective action to support their group feel more hopelessness for their own futures. Study 3 was a modified replication of Study 2 in which we examined how social identification and other social identity variables may be linked to hopelessness for one's future and depression.

"The differences between Lebanese have led them to the brink of suicide."

—Michel Sulieman, President of Lebanon (as cited in Abdallah, 2008d)

"To leave one's sect was to leave one's whole world and to live without loyalties, the protection of a community, the consciousness of solidarity, and the comfort of normality."

—Albert Hourani (1954, p. 64)

Social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) provides a rich framework with which to examine intergroup conflict over scarce resources – such as political power – from the perspective of individual perceptions, identity, and action. The present research applied SIT to the political upheaval in Lebanon during 2007 and 2008 (International Crisis Group, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008a). We examined how people's perceptions of the intergroup context led them to identify with their group and engage in collective action to support their group. These perceptions were of the status of their group, of the instability and illegitimacy of group status differences, and of the degree to which individuals can leave their group to join another one (i.e., permeability). The present research also addressed the hypothesis that in the context of severe and escalating intergroup conflict found in Lebanon in this period, individuals who identify with their group and who are involved in collective action experience hopelessness for their own personal futures as well as depression.

Lebanese society consists of multiple religious groups that are politicized (Salibi, 1988; Trabulsi, 2007) and to which people identify (El Amine & Faour, 1998; Faour, 1998; Haddad, 2002; Khashan, 1992). Lebanon is a country of religious minorities in

which no one group is in the majority, and in which there is a power-sharing agreement between groups that defines power differences between groups (Trabulsi, 2007). In the Lebanese crisis between 2006 and 2008, none of the groups or coalition of groups was dominating the others. Events such as assassinations of political leaders and journalists reflected the political crisis between the different religious groups over government control. Furthermore, the supporters of the competing groups engaged in mass demonstrations and counter-demonstrations to challenge one another, which in some cases ended in violent clashes (Ghazal, 2006; Samaha, 2006a). News reports in 2007 and 2008 described the public political discourse as being more radicalized and as increasing tensions between the competing groups; the increase in violence revived fears of a new civil war ("Rival Camps 'Ready' For Confrontation", 2008).

The present research was conducted in 2007 and 2008 with young adults enrolled at universities in and near Beirut, Lebanon. These individuals were not sheltered from the intergroup conflict. To the contrary, Lebanese national politics played out on university campuses in that student parties were aligned with national political parties. There were significant tensions in student elections (Samaha, 2006b; Samaha & Azzi, 2006), violent clashes between students ("Clashes at Rafik Hariri University Wound Two", 2008), and a riot that began in a university cafeteria spread across Beirut in 2007 left 3 dead, 158 injured, and substantial property damage (Azzi & Ghazal, 2007). University students were insecure about their futures (Chakmakjian, 2006) and desired emigrating because they fear a new civil war (Hourani & Sensenig-Dabbous, 2007).

The political conflict in Lebanon from 2006 to 2008 has the key features of escalation situations (Staw, 1976, 1997). The competing groups were unable to reach a

compromise over the distribution of power in government, which led them to engage in collective action to achieve political dominance. Initial efforts were unsuccessful and generally worsened the situation. Nevertheless, the competing groups escalated their levels of collective action, which saw a spiral of public demonstrations and counter-demonstrations to reveal superiority and achieve political dominance (International Crisis Group, 2007). This intensification led to violent and armed conflict between the competing groups, a damaged economy, and brought the country to the brink of a new civil war. Staw (1976, 1997) identified the features of this type of escalation of commitment and it has been examined in previous research in terms of individual choices and actions (see Staw, 1997, for a review), group decision-making (e.g., Bazerman, Giuliano, & Appleman, 1984; Kameda & Sugimori, 1993), and in organizational settings (e.g., Ross & Staw, 1986; Ross & Staw, 1993).

According to Staw (1997), escalating situations involve several steps: an initial investment of effort or money into a project, obtaining negative results after the initial investment, and escalating commitment to the project by investing even more money or effort despite evidence that it is clearly failing. An important determinant of escalation of commitment is external binding or what Staw (1997) referred to as *social identity*. In his theory, the degree individuals socially identify with a project or group determines their level of commitment to a chosen course of action for that project or group, regardless of its merits or faults. Of particular relevance to the current situation in Lebanon, social identity as defined by SIT may facilitate commitment in escalating situations (Dietz-Uhler, 1996; Haslam, Ryan, Postmes, Spears, Jetten, & Webley, 2006). In the latter experimental studies, group members who identified with their group escalated their

commitment over time to a losing course of action by investing more money into a failing group project.

The first study that we conducted was a survey in which we assessed Lebanese university students' perceptions of the political crisis in their country. The expectation was that they would perceive the political crisis as an escalating situation; namely, they would view the collective action by the competing groups as being ineffective and worsening the situation in the country for everyone, and potentially leading the country to a new civil war. The second and third studies applied SIT to understanding psychological aspects of the political conflict in Lebanon. The aim of Studies 2 and 3 was to examine the determinants and consequences of social identification and involvement in collective action. Studies 2 and 3 addressed hypotheses regarding identity, hopelessness, and depression, and these hypotheses were derived from, but were also distinct from Staw's (1997) escalation of commitment theory. Studies 2 and 3 were not aimed at documenting escalation of commitment over time. The escalation of conflict was nevertheless widely documented in local Lebanese and international media at the time the studies were conducted.

Hypothesis 1a, which is grounded in SIT, was that people who perceive status differences as unstable and illegitimate, and who perceive group boundaries as impermeable identify more with their group and, in turn, are more involved in collective action. Status differences are perceived as unstable if individuals conceive possible improvement in their groups' status position within the intergroup hierarchy. Status differences are perceived as illegitimate if individuals believe their groups' status position in the intergroup hierarchy is unfair or unjust. Group boundaries are perceived as

impermeable if individuals believe that people are unable to leave one status group to join another one. Hypothesis 1a has been very well supported in prior research (Brown, 2000; for a recent exception, see Kessler & Mummendey, 2002). Research that has focused exclusively on perceptions of impermeability also indicates that people who perceive group boundaries as impermeable exhibit more identification, more collective action, or more of both (e.g., Ellemers, van Knippenberg, de Vries, & Wilke, 1988; Lalonde & Silverman, 1994; Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990).

A key theme in SIT is how individuals construe the status hierarchy in which their own group is located, and the particular location of their group vis-à-vis other groups. Given the importance of perceived status differences in SIT, such perceptions were directly assessed in Studies 2 and 3, and we examined the extent to which these perceptions were related to social identity. Specifically, individuals were asked to report on their perceptions of the status of their own groups in Lebanese society, and we examined the relation of these perceptions to their social identity. Hypothesis 1b was that people who perceive their group as higher in status identify more with their group. Such perceptions were assessed on an individual by individual basis, and Hypothesis 1b is consistent with the findings of previous experimental research that indicate that individuals assigned to high status groups identify more strongly with their groups compared to individuals assigned to low status groups (see Ellemers, 1993 for a review).

The most novel aspect of the present research is that we examined how social identification may be linked to individual hopelessness. Hypothesis 2a was that in a context of severe escalating conflict, people who identify with their group and are involved in collective action feel more hopeless for their own futures. The rationale here

is that their involvement in collective action is part of a pattern of escalating commitment to a losing course of action (i.e., moving toward civil war). Our assumption is that people were aware of this deadlock in resolving the political crisis, even as they continued to demonstrate in the streets. These demonstrations raised the risk of civil war, which led people to feel insecure and more hopeless about their own futures (Hourani & Sensenig-Dabbous, 2007). This assumption is addressed in Study 1, in which we canvassed Lebanese university students for their perceptions of the ongoing political crisis in Lebanon, and on its psychological consequences for young Lebanese adults. We expected that they would perceive the conflict as an escalating situation that potentially may lead to a civil war, and which was leading young adults to feel hopeless about their own futures. Indeed, such views were expressed in the local Lebanese media (e.g., Chakmakjian, 2006; "Lebanon On High Alert", 2008). News reports also indicated that Lebanese civilians were purchasing large amounts of weapons (e.g., "More Lebanese Arming Themselves", 2008).

The severe, escalating conflict in Lebanon was the setting for the present research, and the particularity of this setting can explain the contrast between Hypothesis 2a and research indicating that social identification decreases feelings of hopelessness (Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine, & Broadnax, 1994) and enhances psychological adjustment and well-being (e.g., Goodman, 2003; Greenfield & Marks, 2007; Phinney, 1990; Schmitt, & Branscombe, 2002). Hypothesis 2a also contrasts with prior research indicating that collective action leads to a sense of empowerment and positive affect (Drury, Cocking, Beale, Hanson, & Rapley, 2005; Drury & Reicher, 2005; Drury & Reicher, 1999). One should note that some research indicates that identity can be linked to more negative

affect, but this is when highly identified individuals perceive discrimination against their group (e.g., McCoy & Major, 2003, Yoo & Lee, 2008). In the present research, perceived discrimination was not considered as playing a key role in and of itself, and was addressed in terms of the perceived illegitimacy of group status differences.

Another novel aspect of the present research is that we examined the hypothesis (2b) that people who perceive more potential upward mobility for their group (i.e., instability) in the status hierarchy feel less individual hopelessness. Given that better outcomes are expected for one's group, it follows that group members can also be hopeful for their own individual outcomes. Hypothesis 2b would seem to hold in general, not only in the particular context of severe intergroup conflict. Taking Hypotheses 1a, 2a, and 2b together, people's perceptions of instability are expected to have two opposite effects on individual hopelessness in a context of severe intergroup conflict. On the one hand, people who perceive more instability are expected to identify more with their group and be more active, which lead them to feel hopeless for their own futures. On the other hand, perceptions of instability are expected to directly reduce individual hopelessness.

The implications of hopelessness for depression were also addressed. As an extension to Hypothesis 2a, we expected that in a context of severe intergroup conflict, people who identify with their group feel more individual hopelessness and exhibit greater depressive symptomatology. This expectation is based on both theoretical and empirical research on depression. Hopelessness is a component in Beck's (1967; Beck Rush, Shaw, & Emery, 1979) cognitive triad model of depression, and is posited to be an immediate cause of depression in the hopelessness model of depression (Abramson,

Metalsky, & Alloy, 1989). Research supports this causal link (Alloy, Abramson, Safford, & Gibb, 2006).

Finally, we also took into consideration the impact of perceived individual status, in terms of the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status (MacArthur Research Network on Status & Health, 2007). Including individuals' sense of their own individual status ensured that we could accurately assess the impact of their perceptions of the status of their own group. One might expect that the two constructs are positively related, but nevertheless distinct. We expected that individuals who attributed themselves higher individual status would be less hopeless about their own futures and less depressed. Perceptions of high individual status have been reliably associated with decreased depression and less negative affect (for a recent example, see Hu, Adler, Goldman, Weinstein, & Seeman, 2005). Note that perceptions of individual status are distinct from self-esteem, are related to objective indicators of social status (e.g., education or income), but predict significant outcomes (e.g., physical health) above and beyond the contribution of objective status indicators.

In sum, the present research examined social identity and involvement in collective action, and their consequences for individual hopelessness and depression for people in a context of severe escalating conflict. The studies were conducted in Lebanon in 2007 and 2008, which was a period of great political upheaval. Study 1 was a survey of university students in Lebanon, and was conducted to address our assumption that they were aware that the political crisis was escalating, possibly leading to civil war, and making young Lebanese adults feel hopeless. Studies 2 and 3 addressed the determinants and consequences of social identification and involvement in collective action within the

framework of SIT for university students in Lebanon. Study 3 was a modified replication of Study 2 in which our aim was to demonstrate once again that social identity can be linked to individual hopelessness. In addition, Study 3 also examined how social identity may be linked to depression in a context of severe escalating conflict. Study 2 addressed all the hypotheses listed below. Study 3 addressed Hypotheses 1b and 2b, in addition to examining how perceived instability determines social identity and hopelessness (as per Hypothesis 1a), and how identity determines hopelessness and depression (as per Hypothesis 2a). In sum, the hypotheses addressed in Studies 2 and 3 were as follows:

Hypothesis 1a: People who perceive status differences as unstable and illegitimate, and who perceive group boundaries as impermeable identify more with their group and, in turn, are more involved in collective action.

Hypothesis 1b: People who perceive their group as higher in status identify more with their group.

Hypothesis 2a: In a context of severe escalating intergroup conflict, people who identify with their group and are involved in collective action feel more hopeless for their own futures.

Hypothesis 2b: People who perceive group status differences as unstable (i.e., greater potential for upward group mobility) feel less individual hopelessness.

Study 1

In Study 1, we conducted a survey of university students' views on the political conflict in their country. We expected them to perceive the political crisis as an escalating conflict, leading possibly to a new civil war, and as leading young adults to feel hopeless about their own futures. The survey was conducted over the internet. Internet-based

research using questionnaires yields findings which are consistent with traditional paper-based methods (Gosling, Vazire, Srivastava, & John, 2004).

Method

Participants

One-hundred and seventy-seven students completed the online survey; the data of 15 students were excluded due to missing data, which resulted in a final sample of 162 participants (84 women and 78 men). Participants reported their country of residence and the university at which they were enrolled; these items served to confirm that participants were university students living in Lebanon. Mean age was 21.73 years (range: 18 – 32). Participants also reported the religious group (i.e., *Ta'ifa*, plural *Tawa'if*) to which they and their family belong. Percentages were as follows: Maronite (29.1%), Sunni (22.8%), Shiite (15.4%), Druze (9.3%), Greek Orthodox (8.6%), Greek Catholic (8.0%), Armenian Christian (3.1%), Other Christian (1.2%), and Other Muslim (.6%). There was no response for 1.9% of participants.

Materials

Perceptions of the political conflict. Perceptions of the political conflict in Lebanon were assessed with 5 items: a) "The persisting attempts by my and other *Tawa'if* to gain more political power continue to improve the situation in Lebanon," b) "The attempts over time of my *Ta'ifa* and other *Tawa'if* to gain more political power have been effective," c) "Since 2005, the escalation in public demonstrations by the different *Tawa'if* has made a civil war less likely," d) "Sometimes, I think that when my or other *Tawa'if* try to gain political power with public demonstrations, it actually worsens the situation for everyone in Lebanon," and e) "The persisting attempts by my and other

Tawa'if to gain more political power are leading young Lebanese adults to feel hopeless about their own future." Participants responded on 7-point Likert scales with endpoints *strongly disagree* (1) and *strongly agree* (7). Items were presented in one of two random orders. Items a, b, and c were reverse coded so that higher scores reflect more negative perceptions. The questions were presented in English.

Procedure

Participants were recruited over the internet using Facebook. Facebook is a peer-network website on which individuals from across the world can create a profile containing personal information for the purpose of networking with peers. Individuals can also join different social, recreational, and university groups on Facebook. For the purpose of the present study, we recruited participants from 10 university groups on Facebook that are associated with universities in Lebanon (e.g., the American University of Beirut Facebook group). In short, we contacted the administrators of the different groups to obtain approval for recruiting participants from their groups. Following approval, a message describing the survey and providing the URL link to our online survey was sent to all group members inviting them to complete the survey. In the message, the researcher (N.T.) introduced himself as being a Lebanese citizen completing graduate work in Canada, and that his thesis project concerned Lebanese young adults and their "views on the current situation in Lebanon."

<div align="center">Results and Discussion</div>

Responses to the 5 items were submitted to a principal components analysis with oblimin rotation. A 2-factor solution emerged, with the factors positively correlated ($r =$ .22). Items a, b, and c loaded on the first factor with an eigenvalue of 2.04, which

explained 40.7% of the variance. Items d and e loaded on the second factor with an eigenvalue of 1.17, which explained 23.3% of the variance. Items a, b, and c were averaged to form a scale measuring the perceived social consequences of the political conflict (α = .64), whereas items d and e were averaged to form a scale measuring the perceived psychological consequences of the political conflict (α = .60).

For the perceived social consequences, the mean of 4.95 (SD = 1.28) indicates that participants perceived the situation as one of escalating collective action by competing groups, and that this action was ineffective, not improving the situation in Lebanon, and potentially leading to a new civil war. The value of 5 on the scale corresponds to *somewhat agree*. Concerning the perceived psychological consequences, the mean of 5.36 (SD = 1.35) indicates that participants tended to perceive the escalating collective action by the competing groups as worsening the situation for everybody in Lebanon and as leading young adults to feel hopeless for their own future. These findings are in line with the views expressed in news and research reports regarding the political conflict in Lebanon (e.g., Chakmakjian, 2006; Hourani & Sensenig-Dabbous, 2007). Finally, separate one-way ANOVAs were conducted to examine mean differences between the religious groups on each scale. No significant differences emerged for analyses including only the 6 major groups, or including all groups. As such, the bleak view was held regardless of one's group affiliation.

Study 2

In Study 2, we applied SIT to understand social identity processes related to the intergroup conflict in Lebanon, and addressed a hypothesis derived from Staw's (1997) escalation of commitment theory. The study addressed Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 2a, and 2b that

are described above. In sum, we examined the factors that determine the extent to which people identify with their group and engage in collective action. Further, we examined the degree individuals identify with their group and their involvement in collective action as determinants of individual hopelessness.

<div align="center">Method</div>

Participants

Six-hundred and thirty-two students were recruited at different universities in and near Beirut, Lebanon. The data of 66 students were excluded due to missing data, which resulted in a final sample 566 participants (344 women, 222 men). Mean age of the sample was 20.38 years (range: 17 – 41). Participants reported the *Ta'ifa* (i.e., religious group) to which they and their family belong. Percentages were as follows: Maronite (32.3%), Shiite (18.4%), Sunni (11.8%), Greek Orthodox (11.1%), Druze (10.2%), Greek Catholic (10.1%), Other Christian (2.7%), Armenian Christian (2.1%), Other (.7%), and Other Muslim (.2%). There was no response for .4% of participants.

Materials

Questionnaires were presented in either English or Arabic. The different scales were translated from English to standard Arabic by a certified translator in Lebanon. Each scale was coded such that higher scores reflect more of the construct. Participants responded on 7-point Likert scales with endpoints *strongly disagree* (1) and *strongly agree* (7), unless indicated.

Perceived illegitimacy. Four items assessed perceptions of illegitimate status differences (e.g., "Members of my *Ta'ifa* don't have the political power they deserve").

Perceived impermeability. Three items assessed perceptions of impermeable group boundaries (e.g., "No matter what effort an individual makes, he or she can never truly become a member of a different *Ta'ifa*").

Perceived instability. Perceptions of unstable status differences were defined as an expectation that group status and the country will improve in the future. Positive expectations for one's group (e.g., "My *Ta'ifa* will prosper economically in the future") and positive expectations for the country (e.g., "I have great faith in Lebanon's economic future") were each measured with 3 items. SIT defines perceptions of unstable status differences as the capacity for low status group members to conceive an improvement in their low status position within the intergroup hierarchy. Positive expectations for the future of the country were also included as part of the construct of instability because the competing groups view their outcomes as being tied to the outcome of the country as a whole (International Crisis Group, 2006).

Perceived group status. Perceptions of group status concern individuals' subjective beliefs about their groups' standing in the country along the dimensions of income, political power, and occupation. A 10-step ladder scale was used, which was adapted from the McArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status (MacArthur Research Network on Status & Health, 2007), and it was stated that the *Tawa'if* stood on various steps. Respondents placed their group on a step.

Perceived individual status. Perceived individual status is an indicator of an individual's subjective beliefs about their standing in a society along the dimensions of income, education, and occupation. The McArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status was used. It is a 10-step ladder scale. Instructions were modified in one respect, with an

explicit reference to Lebanon (to avoid comparisons with Canada). Respondents placed

themselves on a step.

Social identification. In line with Tajfel (1978) and Ellemers, Kortekass, and

Ouwerkerk (1999), we included 3 cognitive items (e.g., "I identify with other members of

my *Ta'ifa*"), 3 affective items (e.g., "I am strongly attached to my *Ta'ifa*"), and 3

evaluative items (e.g., "I feel good about my *Ta'ifa*").

Collective action. Three items measured level of involvement in collective action

to support one's group (e.g., "I participate in public demonstrations that aim to support the

political power of my *Ta'ifa*"). Participants responded on 7-point scales with endpoints

not at all (1) and *extremely* (7).

Hopelessness. Three items measured feelings of hopelessness for one's future

(e.g., "When I think of my own life, things won't work out the way I want them to"),

which were adapted from the Beck Hopelessness Scale (Beck, Weissman, Lester, &

Trexler, 1974).

Procedure

Participants were recruited from classrooms at universities in Lebanon to

complete questionnaires. The questionnaires were presented in one of two

counterbalanced orders. The researcher (N.T.) introduced himself as a Lebanese citizen

completing graduate work in Canada, and that his thesis project concerned how Lebanese

young adults perceive themselves "in the context of Lebanese society and the many

social, political, and economic issues that are facing Lebanon today." He introduced the

study to the students while in their classrooms and invited them to participate. Interested

participants immediately completed the questionnaires. The participation rate was approximately 95%.

<div align="center">Results</div>

Descriptive statistics, internal consistency coefficients, and correlations between the scales are presented in Table 1. For the perceived instability scale, all 6 items loaded on a single factor in a principal components analysis with oblimin rotation. The eigenvalue was 2.40, and the factor explained 40.1 % of the variance. As such, the 6 items were averaged into one scale. To validate ratings of perceived group status differences, they were compared to documented differences in political power between the groups (Trabulsi, 2007). A one-way ANOVA across the 6 major groups indicated significant mean differences in participants' perceptions of their groups' status (F (5, 531) = 5.52, $p < .001$). Sunnis had the highest perceptions of group status ($M = 6.93$, $SD = 2.05$) followed by the Shiites ($M = 6.19$, $SD = 2.53$), Greek Catholics ($M = 5.91$, $SD = 1.89$), Maronites ($M = 5.90$, $SD = 2.12$), Greek Orthodox ($M = 5.43$, $SD = 2.09$), and Druze ($M = 5.07$, $SD = 2.30$). These results are consistent with the Lebanese government power structure in that Sunnis have the most power, followed by the Shiites, and Maronites, and finally the Druze, who have the least power (Trabulsi, 2007).

Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 2a, and 2b were evaluated using structural equation modeling (SEM; Kline 2005). The hypotheses were expressed as paths in a model: perceptions of instability, illegitimacy, impermeability, and group status each led to social identification. In turn, social identification led to collective action which, in turn, led to individual hopelessness. Perceived instability and individual status also had direct paths to individual hopelessness. We used EQS version 6 for Windows (Bentler, 2005) with

Maximum Likelihood estimation procedures that analyzed the covariance structure of the data. Model fit was assessed using the likelihood ratio chi-square (χ^2), the comparative fit index (CFI), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and its 90% confidence interval (CI). A good fit is reflected in a nonsignificant χ^2, a CFI close to 1, a value of SRMR less than .1, RMSEA less than or equal to .05, and CI being 0 to .08. Finally, we used Bollen and Long's (1993) criterion that the χ^2/df ratio should be close to or less than 2.

The SEM analysis provided an admissible fit to the data (χ^2 (15) = 23.83, p = .07, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .03, CI = .00 – .06, SRMR = .04, and χ^2/df = 1.59). However, given a residual between perceived individual status and social identification, the analysis was repeated after a path was added leading from perceived individual status to social identification. The second SEM analysis provided an excellent fit to the data (χ^2 (14) = 18.03, p = .21, CFI = .99, RMSEA = .02, CI = .00 – .05, SRMR = .03, and χ^2/df = 1.29). The model is presented in Figure 1 with standardized path coefficients. A chi-square difference test indicated that the addition of the path significantly improved model fit ($\Delta\chi^2$ (1) = 10.80, p < .05). The model explained 19% of variance in social identification (R^2 = .19), and over 20% of variance in each of collective action (R^2 = .21), and individual hopelessness (R^2 = .22). Finally, with the exception of some paths for group or individual status becoming nonsignificant, the model provided an excellent fit to the data after controlling for religious group affiliation,[1] and when comparing parameters across language groups.[2] As well, excluding group self-esteem from the social identity measure left the model intact.[3]

Hypothesis 1a was that individuals who perceive status differences as unstable and illegitimate, and group boundaries as impermeable identify more with their group and, in turn, are more involved in collective action. As expected, perceptions of unstable ($\beta = .31, z = 8.06, p < .001$) and illegitimate ($\beta = .27, z = 6.85, p < .001$) status differences and impermeable group boundaries ($\beta = .12, z = 3.23, p < .05$) increased social identification. In turn, social identification ($\beta = .45, z = 12.07, p < .001$) increased involvement in collective action. Furthermore, perceptions of instability ($\beta = .14, z = 6.70, p < .001$), illegitimacy ($\beta = .12, z = 5.96, p < .001$), and impermeability ($\beta = .06, z = 3.12, p < .05$) all increased involvement in collective action through social identification. Hypothesis 1b was that individuals who perceive their group as higher in status identify more with their group. Indeed, perceptions of high group status increased social identification ($\beta = .10, z = 2.52, p < .05$; see Footnote 1, however). Furthermore, perceptions of high group status ($\beta = .05, z = 2.47, p < .05$) increased involvement in collective action through social identification.

Hypothesis 2a was that in a context of severe escalating intergroup conflict, individuals who identify with their group and are involved in collective action feel more hopeless for their own futures. As expected, social identification ($\beta = .06, z = 3.22, p < .05$) indirectly increased individual hopelessness through involvement in collective action, and collective action directly ($\beta = .13, z = 3.34, p < .05$) increased individual hopelessness. Hypothesis 2b was that individuals who perceive group status differences as unstable feel less individual hopelessness. Indeed, perceptions of unstable status differences directly ($\beta = -.42, z = -11.07, p < .001$) reduced individual hopelessness. [4]

Finally, in line with expectations, individuals who perceive their own status as high feel less hopeless for their own futures. Indeed, perceptions of high individual status ($\beta = -.21, z = -5.71, p < .001$) decreased individual hopelessness. Unexpectedly, individuals who perceived their own individual status as high identified less with their group and were less involved in collective action to support their group. Specifically, perceptions of high individual status directly reduced social identification ($\beta = -.10, z = 2.42, p < .05$; see Footnote 1, however) and indirectly reduced involvement in collective action through social identification ($\beta = -.04\ z = -2.37, p < .05$).

Suppressor effect. In line with hypothesis 2a, social identification with one's group predicted involvement in collective action ($\beta = .45, z = 12.07, p < .001$), which in turn predicted increases in individual hopelessness ($\beta = .13, z = 3.33, p < .05$; see Figure 1). Analyses revealed the operation of a suppressor effect (Conger, 1974). The zero-order correlation between collective action and individual hopelessness ($r = .06$) was nonsignificant. However, a partial correlation revealed that collective action correlated positively with individual hopelessness ($r = .09, p = .03$) after controlling for all variables in the model (see Figure 1 for the variables). Yet after only controlling for perceived instability, the partial correlation between collective action and individual hopelessness was significant ($r = .15, p < .001$).

Similarly, social identification was not correlated with individual hopelessness ($r = -.02$). However, a partial correlation indicated that social identification correlated with individual hopelessness ($r = .11, p = .01$) after controlling for perceptions of group status, impermeability, illegitimacy, and instability. In fact, only controlling for perceptions of instability allowed the identification of this relation, since the magnitude of the partial

correlation did not change. In sum, perceived instability is a suppressor for the relation between social identification and collective action on the one hand and individual hopelessness on the other.

Test of alternative models

As recommended by Kline (2005), we tested alternative models. Apart from the various fit indices mentioned above, the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) was used to compare alternatives to the model in Figure 1. In the first alternative model, perceived group status and perceived individual status were examined as consequences of hopelessness. The SEM analysis revealed a poor fit to the data (χ^2 (17) = 83.77, $p < .001$, CFI = .86, RMSEA = .08, CI = .07 – .10, SRMR = .06, and χ^2/df = 4.93). As such, the first alternative model was rejected. In the second alternative model, hopelessness was examined as a determinant of social identification which, in turn, predicted involvement in collective action. Perceptions of the group hierarchy and individual status maintained the same causal roles as in Figure 1. The SEM analysis indicated that the model did not provide an adequate fit to the data (χ^2 (14) = 26.37, $p = .02$, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .04, CI = .01 – .06, SRMR = .03, and χ^2/df = 1.88). As such, the second alternative model was rejected. In the third alternative model, we tested the reverse of the model in Figure 1. That is, we examined whether individual hopelessness is driving the relations between the variables in the model. The SEM analysis indicated that the model provided a poor fit to the data (χ^2 (14) = 32.01, $p < .001$, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .05, CI = .03 – .07, SRMR = .03, and χ^2/df = 2.29). In sum, the three alternative models do not provide good fits to the data. In addition, the AIC values associated with these alternative models were 50.25, -4.29, and .28, which are larger than the -13.46 AIC value for the model in Figure 1.

Discussion

Participants in Study 2 reported on how hopeless they felt for their own futures, and a significant amount of variance on this measure could be explained by their social identification, engagement in collective action, as well as their perceptions of instability (i.e., of potential upward mobility) for their group. In line with Hypothesis 2a, individuals who identified more with their group and who engaged in more collective action were more hopeless about their own futures. As well, in line with Hypothesis 2b, individuals who expected more upward mobility for their group were also more hopeful regarding their own personal futures. As noted earlier, these findings contrast with much previous research on the psychological benefits of social identity and collective action, but severe escalating conflict between groups is a distinctive context in which people may be aware of significant potential loss (Staw, 1997).

A striking feature of the results of Study 2 is that perceived instability influenced individual hopelessness in different, and competing, ways. The more participants perceived that their group would be better off in the future, the more they identified with their group and the more they engaged in collective action. As noted above, we also found in Study 2 that identity and collective action were linked to feeling more hopeless about one's own future. As such, feeling hopeful about one's group indirectly leads to feeling more hopeless about one's own future. At the same time, we also found that people who were more hopeful for their group also felt more hopeful for themselves, without any intervening variables linking these two perceptions.

Perceived instability predicted social identity and collective action, and acted as a suppressor (Conger, 1974) in masking the relation between social identity and collective

action on the one hand, and hopelessness on the other. This was apparent in the following ways. First, there was no zero-order correlation observed between identity and hopelessness, or between collective action and hopelessness. However, once one controlled for shared variance with perceptions of instability, the relation between these constructs emerged: both identity and collective action were seen to be linked to increased hopelessness for one's own future. Suppressor effects are not unusual in psychological research (Paulhus, Robins, Trzesniew & Tracy, 2004), and in particular they have been identified in prior research on intergroup phenomena (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999). Nevertheless, replication is important, and this was one of the purposes of Study 3.

Some findings that emerged in Study 2 are replications of prior SIT research. As in prior research, greater perceptions of instability, illegitimacy, and impermeability all predicted greater identification and collective action. The one hypothesis that was not clearly supported was Hypothesis 1b, which was that people who perceive their group as higher in status identify more with their group. This hypothesis is consistent with findings of prior experimental research (e.g., see Ellemers, 1993 for a review), and the expected relation did emerge in the overall SEM model reported in Figure 1. However, perceived group status was of no consequence for social identity when analyses controlled for religious group affiliation (see footnote 1). In short, the relation between perceptions of group status and social identity is unclear and was addressed again in Study 3.

Study 3

The goal of Study 3 was to replicate the key, novel findings of Study 2. We examined once again the impact of perceptions of instability (i.e., potential upward

mobility of one's group) on social identity and on individual hopelessness. The goal was to confirm that perceptions of instability are linked to greater identification (as per Hypothesis 1a), which in turn would be linked to more individual hopelessness (as per Hypothesis 2a). At the same time, perceptions of instability would be directly linked to less individual hopelessness (Hypothesis 2b). These results were expected, given the context of escalating commitment (Staw, 1997) in severe intergroup conflict. As well, we aimed to replicate the suppressor effect of instability on the relation between identity and hopelessness.

We also examined perceived group status in Study 3, just as we had in Study 2. Indeed, the findings for perceived group status were equivocal in Study 2, and our aim in Study 3 was to collect more data in an attempt to clarify its relation to social identity. Hypothesis 1b remained, which was that perceptions of higher group status are linked to greater identification. Lastly, we examined the implications of hopelessness for depression, with the expectation that more hopelessness would be linked to greater depression. This is by no means a novel prediction, but the novelty here is that we are linking social identity processes to such outcomes.

<div align="center">Method</div>

Participants

Three-hundred and twenty students were recruited at different universities in Lebanon. The data of 42 students were excluded due to missing data, which resulted in a final sample of 278 participants (170 women and 108 men). Mean age was 20.45 years (range: 18 – 38). Participants reported their religious group as in Study 2. Percentages were as follows: Maronite (34.1%), Shiite (20.5%), Sunni (12.6%), Greek Orthodox

(12.2%), Greek Catholic (7.9%), Druze (6.5%), Armenian Christian (2.5%), Other

Christian (2.2%), and Other (.4%). There was no response for 1.1% of participants.

Materials

For the constructs addressed in Study 3, we used the same questionnaires as in

Study 2. Participants completed measures of perceived instability, perceived group status,

perceived individual status, social identification, and individual hopelessness.

Participants also completed a measure of depression. Participants completing the

questionnaires in English (n = 192) were given the Center for Epidemiological Studies

Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977), whereas participants completing the

questionnaires in Arabic (n = 86) were given the standard Arabic version of the Beck

Depression Inventory - II (BDI-II; Ghareeb, 2000).

The CES-D is a 20-item self-report questionnaire designed to measure the

frequency of depressive symptoms in the general population. The CES-D has high

internal consistency ranging from .80 to .90 (Nezu, Nezu, McClure, & Zwick, 2002;

Radloff, 1991; Roberts Lewinsohn, & Seeley, 1991). The standard Arabic BDI-II is a 21-

item self-report questionnaire which was adapted from the BDI-II developed by Beck,

Steer, and Brown (1996). The standard Arabic version of the BDI-II has high internal

consistency ranging from .82 to .93 (Alansari, 2005, 2006).

Procedure

Participants were recruited from classrooms at universities in Lebanon to

complete questionnaires. The questionnaires were presented in one of two

counterbalanced orders. Participants were given the same instructions as in Study 2.

Participation rate was approximately 95%.

Results

The descriptive statistics, internal consistency coefficients, and correlations

between the scales are presented in Table 2. For the perceived group status scale, a one-

way ANOVA indicated that the rank of the means for the 6 major groups was virtually

the same as in Study 2 (F (1, 261) = 3.83, p < .01); Sunnis had the highest perceptions of

group status (M = 6. 94, SD = 1.96) followed by Maronites (M = 6. 25, SD = 2.03), Greek

Catholics (M = 6. 09, SD = 1.99), Shiites (M = 5.81, SD = 2.39), Greek Orthodox (M =

5.65, SD = 2.01), and Druze (M = 4.50, SD = 1.92). For the perceived instability scale, all

6 items loaded on a single factor in a principal components analysis with oblimin

rotation. The eigenvalue was 2.65, and the factor explained 44.2 % of the variance. As

such, the 6 items were averaged into one scale. Concerning depression, the CES-D

exhibited high reliability (α = .87) with a mean of 20.94 (SD = 10.35); the BDI-II

exhibited high reliability (α = .78) with a mean of 14.10 (SD = 7.34). There were no

religious group differences for each scale. The BDI-II and CES-D scores were each

standardized separately, and the standardized scores were used in the analyses.

The hypotheses were evaluated using structural equation modeling (SEM). The

hypotheses were expressed as paths in a model: perceptions of instability and group

status each lead to social identification. In turn, social identification leads to individual

hopelessness which, in turn, leads to depression. Perceived instability and individual

status also had each a direct path to individual hopelessness.

The SEM analysis indicated that the model did not provide an adequate fit to the

data (χ^2 (7) = 24.36, p < .05, CFI = .93, RMSEA = .10, CI = .06 – .14, SRMR = .07, and

χ^2/df = 3.48). There were residuals between perceived group status and depression, and

social identification and depression. Furthermore, the path leading from perceived group status to social identification was nonsignificant. As such, the analysis was repeated after introducing paths to address the residuals, and omitting the nonsignificant path. The second SEM analysis indicated that the model provided an excellent fit to the data (χ^2 (6) = 4.70, p = .58, CFI = 1, RMSEA = .00, CI =.00 − .07, SRMR = .03, and χ^2/df = .78). The model is presented in Figure 2 with standardized path coefficients. A chi-square difference test indicated that the re-specifications for the model significantly improved model fit ($\Delta\chi^2$ (1) = 19.66, p < .001). The model explained over 25% of the variance in hopelessness (R^2 = .26) and depression (R^2 = .29), which are large effects, and 9% of the variance in social identification (R^2 = .09). Note that the model provided an excellent fit to the data after controlling for religious group affiliation[5] and the language of the questionnaires.[6] As well, excluding group self-esteem from the social identity measure left the model intact.[7]

In line with Hypothesis 1a and 2a, we expected that individuals in a context of severe escalating intergroup conflict who perceive group status differences as unstable identify more with their group and experience more individual hopelessness. Indeed, perceived instability (β = .29, z = 5.10, p < .001) directly increased social identification, and indirectly increased individual hopelessness through social identification (β = .05, z = 2.76, p < .05). As well, social identification (β = .18, z = 3.25, p < .05) directly increased individual hopelessness. We also expected that individuals who reported more hopelessness would also be more depressed, and this relation did emerge (β = .45, z = 8.68, p < .001). In addition, social identification indirectly increased depression through

individual hopelessness (β = .08, z = 3.28, p < .05). Unexpectedly, social identification (β = -.10, z = -1.96, p = .05) also directly reduced depression.

Perceived instability was expected to directly lead to less hopelessness, according to Hypothesis 2b. Indeed, perceived instability (β = -.48, z = -8.98, p < .001) directly decreased individual hopelessness. As well, perceived instability indirectly decreased depression (β = -.22, z = -6.18, p < .001). We also expected instability to act as a suppressor for the relation between social identification and individual hopelessness, just as it did in Study 2. The same effect emerged. The zero-order correlation between social identification and hopelessness (r = .04) was non-significant. A partial correlation revealed that social identification correlated positively with individual hopelessness (r = .20, p < .01) after controlling for perceived instability.

Hypothesis 1b was that individuals who perceive their group as higher in status identify more with their group. Contrary to hypothesis, perceived group status did not predict social identification. The one effect that emerged was that perceptions of high group status directly (β = -.21, z = -3.98, p < .01) predicted less depression. Finally, it was expected that individuals who perceive themselves as having high individual status feel less individual hopelessness. Perceived individual status (β = -.22, z = -4.24, p < .001) directly decreased individual hopelessness. Furthermore, perceived individual status indirectly decreased depression through individual hopelessness (β = -.10, z = -3.81, p < .05).

Test of alternative models

We tested three alternative models. In the first alternative model, depression was examined as a determinant of perceptions of group status and individual status. In short,

the alternative model was identical to the model in Figure 2 except that perceived group status and perceived individual status were now examined as consequences of depression. The SEM analysis indicated that the model provided a poor fit to the data (χ^2 (7) = 34.48, p < .001, CFI = .88, RMSEA = .12, CI = .08 – .16, SRMR = .07, and χ^2/df = 4.93). As such, the first alternative model was rejected. In the second alternative model, we tested the reverse of the model in Figure 2. The SEM analysis indicated that the model provided an admissible fit to the data (χ^2 (6) = 11.35, p = .08, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .06, CI = .00 – .11, SRMR = .04, and χ^2/df = 1.89). However, the path from hopelessness to social identification was nonsignificant. Furthermore, there was a residual between social identification and perceived group status; the latter relation is implausible on conceptual grounds. As such, the second alternative model was rejected. In the third model, we tested whether individual hopelessness may determine depression, social identity, perceived instability, and perceived individual status. The SEM analysis indicated that the model provided an admissible fit to the data (χ^2 (6) = 11.35, p = .08, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .06, CI = .00 – .11, SRMR = .04, and χ^2/df = 1.89). However, the path from hopelessness to social identification was nonsignificant and there was a residual between social identification and perceived group status. As such, the third alternative model was rejected. Furthermore, the three alternative models were rejected on the grounds that the AIC values associated with these models were 26.39, .12, and .12, which are larger than the AIC value of -6.31 for the model in Figure 2.

Discussion

Participants in Study 3 reported on their feelings of hopelessness for their personal futures and the extent to which they experienced depressive symptoms. A

significant amount of variance on these measures could be explained by the degree of social identification with one's group and perceptions of hopefulness for one's group (perceived instability). A novel finding of Study 3 was that social identity impacted depression in two opposite ways. In line with Hypothesis 2a, individuals who identified with their group felt more hopelessness for their own futures and, in turn, exhibited greater depressive symptoms. At the same time, individuals who identified with their group reported less depression. This latter finding was unexpected, but is in line with previous research indicating that social identification enhances adjustment and well-being (e.g., Goodman, 2003; Greenfield & Marks, 2007). As such, social identification had both positive and negative consequences for depression via different pathways.

In line with Hypothesis 1a, individuals who were more hopeful for their group (perceived instability) identified more with their group and in turn felt more hopelessness for their own futures. As well, in line with Hypothesis 2b, the more individuals were hopeful for the future of their group, the less they felt hopeless for their own futures. Perceived instability also acted as a suppressor in masking the relation between social identity and hopelessness. These findings are a replication of the relations between perceived instability, social identity, and hopelessness which were observed in Study 2.

Concerning perceptions of group status, Hypothesis 1b was that individuals who perceive their group as higher in status identify more with their group. However, this hypothesis was not confirmed in Study 3. What did emerge was that individuals who perceived their group as higher in status exhibited less depression. The latter finding is in line with previous research indicating that perceptions of high group status enhance adjustment (Terry et al. 2006).

The mean scores obtained for the depression measures in Study 3 indicated that participants were experiencing a significant amount of distress. Indeed, a relatively large proportion of participants would be classified as depressed. Recall that participants either completed the CES-D (if they completed the study materials in English) or the standard Arabic version of the BDI-II. Applying the cutoff of 24 (Roberts et al., 1991) indicated that 34.9% of respondents to the CES-D would be classified as depressed. As to the BDI-II, Ghareeb (2000) suggested that scores below 20 reflect no or mild depression, and scores above 19 reflect at least mild depression. According to this cutoff, 22.1% of respondents would be classified as at least mildly depressed. These findings are consistent with those of Study 1, in which respondents indicated that the political conflict was leading young adults to feel hopeless about their own future.

General Discussion

The purpose of the present research was to examine the determinants and psychological consequences of social identification with one's group and involvement in collective action to support one's group in a context of severe and escalating intergroup conflict. We investigated whether individuals who identify with their groups and are involved in collective action to support their groups feel more hopelessness for their personal futures. This hypothesis was derived from Staw's (1997) theory of escalating commitment. The population studied was young Lebanese adults attending university in and near Beirut, Lebanon. The research was conducted in 2007 and 2008, which was a period of severe and escalating conflict in Lebanon, including riots, deaths, injuries, and much property damage.

A major finding of the present research was that perceived instability, social identification, and involvement in collective action were linked to hopelessness for young adults. In particular, participants' perceptions that there was hope for improvement for their *Ta'ifa* (perceived instability) had two opposite effects on individuals' sense of hopelessness for their own futures. On the one hand, individuals who were hopeful for their groups' future felt less hopelessness for their own futures. On the other hand, we found that individuals who felt hopeful for their groups' future identified more with their group, were more involved in collective action, and in turn experienced more hopelessness for their own futures. These observed relations appeared in Study 2, and were replicated in Study 3, in which a measure of involvement in collective action was not included.

Furthermore, in Study 2, perceived instability acted as a suppressor for the relation between social identity and collective action on the one hand and individual hopelessness on the other. That is, there was no zero-order correlation observed between identity and hopelessness, or between collective action and hopelessness. Yet, controlling for perceptions of instability allowed for the identification of the consequences of social identity and collective action on individual hopelessness. The suppressor relation between perceived instability, social identity, and hopelessness was replicated in Study 3. Note that suppressor relationships in psychological research are not uncommon (Palhus et al., 2004) and suppression effects have been identified in prior research on intergroup processes (e.g., Harvey et al., 1999).

Another finding was that social identity had both positive and negative consequences for adjustment via different pathways. On the one hand, individuals who

identified with their groups felt more hopelessness (in Studies 2 and 3) and, in turn, more depression (in Study 3). On the other hand, the degree to which individuals identified with their groups directly reduced depression (in Study 3). The latter finding is in line with previous research indicating that social identification enhances adjustment and well-being (e.g., Greenfield & Marks, 2007; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002). In short, social identity influenced depression in a rather complex manner.

The juxtaposed quotes at the outset of the manuscript shed light on the complexity of the relation between social identity and adjustment. Hourani (1954) suggested that identification with one's religious group in Lebanon is beneficial as it provides individuals with a sense of belonging. In contrast, the President of Lebanon recently suggested that religious group affiliation has negative consequences in a context of severe escalating intergroup conflict. Taken together, the quotes reflect the complex relation between social identity and depression in a context of severe intergroup conflict. On the one hand, identifying with a group has psychological benefits. On the other hand, identifying with a group in a context of severe escalating intergroup conflict may also have negative consequences.

Another finding was that perceptions of group status were not related to social identity. In Study 2, perceptions of high group status increased group identification, yet this relation became nonsignificant after controlling for religious group affiliation (see footnote 1). In Study 3, perceptions of group status were unrelated to social identification. Taken together, the hypothesis 1b that perceptions of high group status increases identification with one's group, which was derived from SIT and prior SIT research, was not confirmed. As such, the relation between perceived group status and social identity is

unclear. However, perceived group status played a different role and determined depression in Study 3. Specifically, individuals who perceived their group as higher in status felt less depressed, which is in line with previous research indicating that perceptions of high group status enhances adjustment (Terry et al. 2006).

The present research also has implications for the hopelessness model of depression (Abramson et al., 1989). According to the hopelessness model, individuals who experience negative life events may feel hopelessness and in turn depression, if they attribute negative life events to stable and global causes, and infer that negative consequences will follow from the negative events. Even though the present research did not examine the hopelessness model of depression, it is worth noting that the psychosocial variables that were addressed in studies 2 and 3, namely individuals' perceptions of instability of group status differences and the degree they identify with their groups, were linked to feelings of hopelessness for one's future and depression. In short, perceptions of the status hierarchy and social identity may be another dimension in which to examine determinants of hopelessness and depression within the framework of the hopelessness model.

The present research has limitations. The first limitation concerns the correlational nature of the data. Specifically, causal relations can only be indirectly inferred from correlational data. However, previous field and experimental research investigating SIT provide support for the causal direction of the determinants of identity and collective action (e.g., see Ellemers, 1993, for a review; Mummendey et al., 1999). What remains less clear is the causal relation between social identification and collective action on the one hand, and hopelessness on the other. However, we tested different

causal models in which hopelessness was a determinant of social identity and collective action and these models could not adequately explain the data. Furthermore, some of these alternative models required paths that were not conceptually sound. As such, the findings of Studies 2 and 3 support a conceptualization of hopelessness as a consequence of social identification and collective action in a context of severe and escalating intergroup conflict.

The second limitation concerns identity maintenance strategies. The present research focused only on collective action in Study 2 and did not include other identity maintenance strategies, such as social creativity (e.g., downward group comparisons). As such, future research can examine a range of identity maintenance strategies and how they contribute to positive social identity, adjustment, and well-being. Schmitt and Branscombe (2002) recommended examining different identity enhancing strategies as possible mediators by which social identification affects psychological well-being.

A question that can be raised is whether participants in the present research are representative of the demography of the religious groups in Lebanon. The answer is unclear since the last population census was conducted in 1932 (Salibi, 1988; Trabulsi, 2007). The results of attempts to estimate the size of the religious groups vary widely by source (Faour, 1991, 2007). As such, no one knows with certainty the size of the religious groups in Lebanon. Nevertheless, the present studies were conducted across a range of universities in and around Beirut in a deliberate attempt to include most groups in a representative manner.

Implications for Lebanese young adults and the broader context of Lebanon

The present research has implications for Lebanese young adults. The present research indicates that religious group affiliation is still alive and well in Lebanon after 18 years since the termination of the 1975-1990 civil war. Indeed, in the present studies Lebanese young adults tended to identify with their religious groups and were somewhat involved in collective action to support their groups. In short, religious group affiliation for Lebanese young adults remains an important part of their self-concept, which is in line with previous research on Lebanon indicating that young adults exhibit significant levels of group consciousness (e.g., Haddad, 2002).

Furthermore, a power-struggle between the religious groups, or coalition of religious groups, does not bode well for the stability and development of Lebanon. Correspondingly, the political crisis may also have consequences for the adjustment of Lebanese young adults. A relatively large proportion of young adults in Study 3 reported experiencing depressive symptoms (34.9% using the CES-D and 22.1 % using the BDI-II). Furthermore, the adjustment of young adults was linked to their expectations of improvement in their *Ta'ifa*'s standing and their feelings of hopelessness for their own futures. Indeed, young adults who felt more hopeless for the fate of their *Ta'ifa* also experienced more hopelessness for their own futures and exhibited greater depression.

The present findings also indicate that young Lebanese adults are well aware of the status of their group in their country. Participants ranked their groups on a ladder scale representing where the different *Tawa'if* stand in Lebanon in terms of political power, wealth, and occupations. The rank order of the means for each religious group was virtually the same across Studies 2 and 3, and corresponded to documented

differences in political power between the religious groups (Trabulsi, 2007). Furthermore, these perceptions of group status had consequences for adjustment. Individuals who perceived their *Ta'ifa* as lower in status exhibited more depressive symptoms in Study 3.

In sum, the young Lebanese adults who participated in Studies 2 and 3 identified with their groups, were aware of their groups' status, and were more depressed if they belonged to a lower status group. More generally, the overall results of Studies 2 and 3 indicate that social identity processes are operating along the lines of SIT, and can be linked to major indicators of maladjustment, such as hopelessness and depressive symptoms. In terms of the broader context of Lebanon, the present findings are striking when juxtaposed with the desire of some political leaders to secularize Lebanese politics (e.g., "Karami Calls For Abolishing Sectarianism In Politics", 2008). Indeed, if university students reflect the political attitudes of society at large and are considered to be an important force that drives social change in Lebanon (Faour, 1998), then it would seem that the secularization of Lebanese politics is far beyond Lebanon's horizon.

Conclusions

The present research demonstrates the utility of a social psychological approach to examining objective conflicts over scarce resources. Undoubtedly, there is more to objective intergroup conflict than the social psychological component. Indeed, Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1986) suggested that objective conflicts are primarily driven by social, political, economic, and historical processes which go beyond social psychological processes. However, they also suggested that the social psychological or subjective account is interwoven with the objective determinants of intergroup conflict. The present

research demonstrates that the political conflict in Lebanon has a clear social psychological aspect. The present studies contribute to a better understanding of individuals' psychological functioning in a context of severe intergroup conflict.

In sum, the present research indicates that the dynamics of social identity are complex in a context of severe escalating intergroup conflict. There are competing influences. Hope for improvement for one's group was linked to stronger identification, which in turn was linked to more hopelessness for one's own future. Yet the direct impact of hope for improvement for one's group was less hopelessness for one's own future. Other competing processes were observed for social identification in Study 3. Social identification with one's group had both negative and positive consequences for adjustment.

Footnotes

[1]The SEM analysis in Figure 1 was conducted across all religious groups. An additional SEM analysis was conducted using the same model as in Figure 1 after controlling for participants' religious group affiliation by using within-group standardization (i.e., z-scores) prior to submitting the data to SEM. This approach was taken given the small sample size for a number of the religious groups, which excluded conducting a multi-group SEM analysis. The results provided an excellent fit to the data (χ^2 (14) = 14.43, p = .41, CFI = 1, RMSEA = .01, CI = .00 – .04, SRMR = .03, and χ^2/df = 1.02). All the same paths were significant, with the exception that perceptions of group status and individual status no longer predicted social identification.

The discrepancy for the path from individual status to social identification can be understood in terms of religious group differences. In the model results in Figure 1, the significant path (β = -.10, z = 2.42, p < .05) from perceived individual status to social identification corresponds to a significant zero-order correlation between these two variables (r = -.09, p < .05; see Table 1). This correlation likely reflects the religious group differences in individual status ratings and in social identification, with the groups showing the highest mean individual status ratings also showing the lowest identification ratings (r = -.64 between the respective group rankings for the 7 largest groups). Thus, controlling for religious group differences attenuates or annuls the -.09 correlation. In contrast, the discrepancy in results for perceptions of group status cannot be accounted for in a similar manner. First, the zero-order correlation between perceived group status and social identity is not significant (r = .07), yet the corresponding partial correlation is significant (r = .11, p < .05) when controlling for the covariates of perceived group status

in Figure 1. There is thus a suppressor effect. The latter effect is not apparent in the standardized data, however, with both the zero-order and partial correlations being nonsignificant (rs = .05 and .08, respectively, ps > .05).

[2]We conducted a multi-group SEM analysis to test the equivalence of individual parameters across 2 models that were identical to that reported in Figure 1. The first, base, model was for participants who completed the questionnaires in English (n = 398), whereas the second model was for participants who completed the questionnaires in Arabic (n = 168). The analysis revealed a well-fitting multi-group model indicating general equivalence in the individual parameters across both models (χ^2 (37) = 43.14, p = .23, CFI = .99, RMSEA = .02, CI = .00 – .05, SRMR = .06, and χ^2/df = 1.17). All the same paths were significant in both models (that matched Figure 1), except that the direct path leading from perceived individual status to social identity was nonsignificant for each language group.

[3]One might argue that the evaluative aspect of social identification (e.g., "I feel good about my *Ta'ifa*") may account for the relation between social identification and hopelessness. To address this argument, an additional SEM analysis was conducted after excluding the 3 evaluative items from the social identification measure (the identification scale still exhibited high reliability: α = .82). The model provided a good fit to the data (χ^2 (14) = 22.54, p = .07, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .03, CI = .00 – .06, SRMR = .03, and χ^2/df = 1.61). As such, group self-esteem does not underlie the model results.

[4]The findings also indicated that perceptions of instability, illegitimacy, and impermeability all increased feelings of hopelessness for one's future through social identification and involvement in collective action (all βs < .02, all zs > 2.28, p < .05).

Prior research suggests that members of low status groups who identify with their groups experience more negative affect and depressed emotion if they perceive discrimination against their group (e.g., McCoy & Major, 2003; Yoo & Lee, 2008). This relation was addressed in terms of perceived illegitimacy (e.g., "Members of my *Tai'fa* are unjustly kept out of higher social and political positions by other *Tawa'if*"). A hierarchical linear regression was conducted to examine whether individuals who identify with their groups and perceive group status differences as illegitimate experience more hopelessness for their own futures. In Step 1, all variables in the model (see Figure 1) were entered into the regression analysis as control variables. In Step 2, a 2-way interaction term between social identity and perceived illegitimacy was entered into the regression analysis. The results indicated that the 2-way interaction between social identity and perceived illegitimacy in Step 2 did not significantly account for more variance in individual hopelessness (Step 1: $R^2 = .22$, $F (7, 558) = 21.86$, $p < .001$; Step 2: $R^2_{change} = .01$, $F (1, 557) = 2.93$, $p > .05$; $\beta = -.07$, $p > .05$). As such, perceived illegitimacy does not contribute to hopelessness, beyond its impact on social identification and collective action.

[5]The reported SEM analysis was conducted across all groups. An additional SEM analysis was conducted after controlling for participants' religious group affiliation using within-group standardization (i.e., z-scores). The results of the same model provided an excellent fit to the data ($\chi^2 (6) = 4.41$, $p = .62$, CFI = 1, RMSEA = .00, CI = .00 – .07, SRMR = .03, and $\chi^2/df = .74$). All paths were significant, with the exception that the path leading from social identification to depression was a trend ($\beta = -.09$, $z = -1.81$, $p = .07$).

[6]For language, we standardized within English (n = 192) and Arabic (n = 86) questionnaires, since the sample size was too small in the latter group to conduct a multi-group SEM analysis. The results of the same model (as in Figure 2) provided an excellent fit to the data (χ^2 (6) = 6.54, p = .37, CFI = 1, RMSEA = .02, CI = .00 – .08, SRMR = .04, and χ^2/df = 1.09). All paths were significant.

[7]As in footnote 3 for Study 2, an additional SEM analysis was conducted after excluding the group self-esteem component of social identification. The resultant identification scale exhibited high reliability (α = .83). The model provided an excellent fit to the data (χ^2 (6) = 5.87, p = .44, CFI = 1, RMSEA = .00, CI = .00 – .08, SRMR = .03, and χ^2/df = .98). As such, group self-esteem does not underlie the model results.
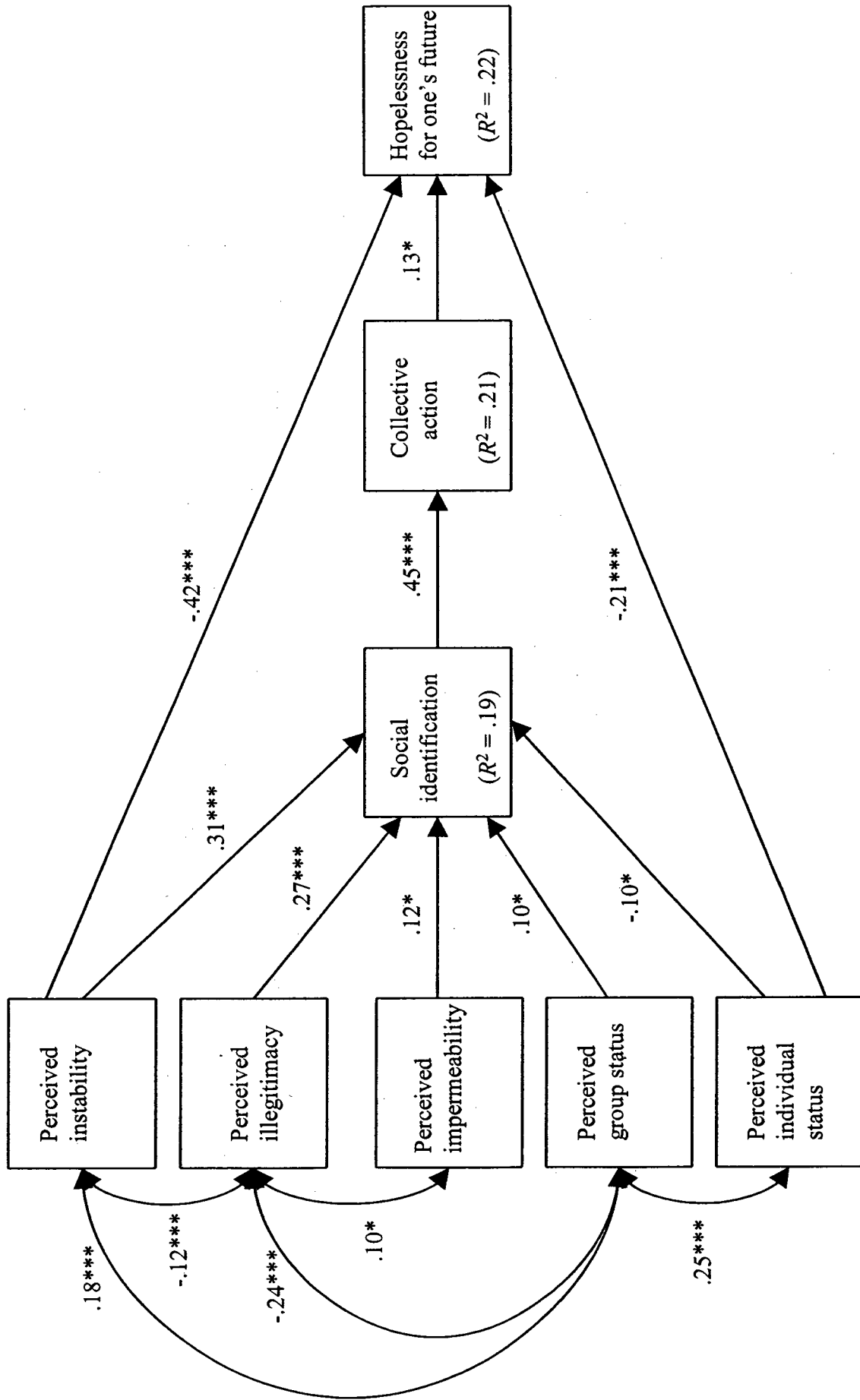
Figure 1. Perceptions of the intergroup hierarchy and of individual status predict social identity which, in turn, predicts collective action and individual hopelessness.

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.
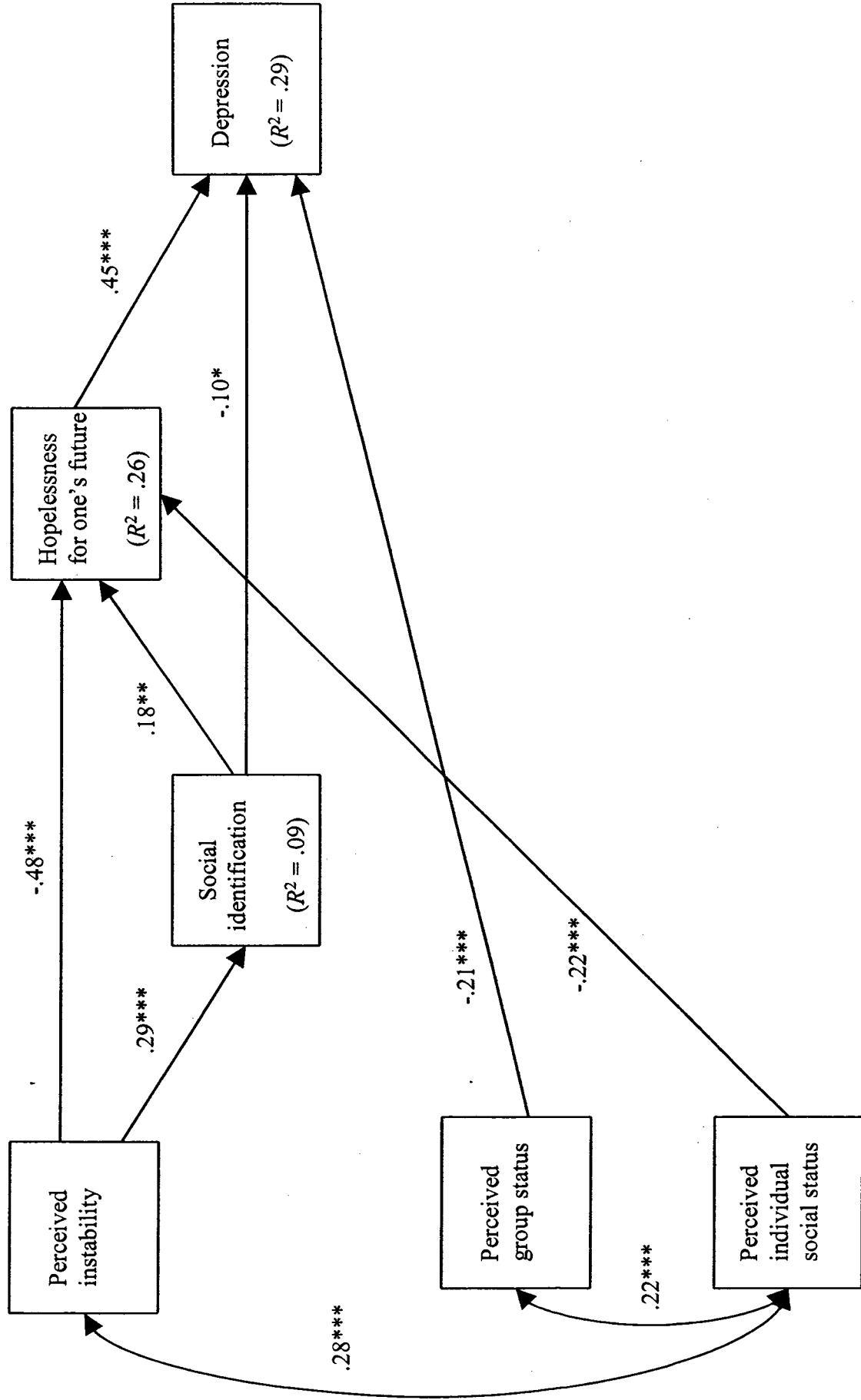
Figure 2. Perceived instability predicts social identity which, in turn, predicts individual hopelessness and depression.

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics, internal consistency coefficients, and correlations between scales in Study 2

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Instability	—							
2. Illegitimacy	-.13**	—						
3. Impermeability	-.03	.10*	—					
4. Group status	.17***	-.24***	.03	—				
5. Individual status	-.04	-.03	-.03	.25***	—			
6. Social identity	.30***	.22***	.15**	.07	-.09*	—		
7. Collective action	.20***	.14**	.01	.06	-.09*	.45***	—	
8. Hopelessness	-.38***	.07	.03	-.08	-.21***	-.01	.06	—
M	4.05	4.27	4.37	5.91	5.99	4.67	2.41	3.37
SD	1.09	1.27	1.38	2.25	1.60	1.24	1.74	1.36
Cronbach's α	.73	.70	.67	—	—	.85	.90	.72

N = 566.
*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics, internal consistency coefficients, and correlations between scales in Study 3

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Instability	—					
2. Group status	.29***	—				
3. Individual status	.06	.24***	—			
4. Social identity	.29***	.17**	-.01	—		
5. Hopelessness	-.44***	-.14*	-.25***	.04	—	
6. Depression	-.37***	-.30***	-.07	-.18**	.43***	—
M	3.86	6.01	5.96	4.52	3.44	0
SD	1.14	2.14	1.62	1.26	1.46	1
Cronbach's α	.74	—	—	.85	.74	.87/.78

Note. Depression scores were standardized. See text for CES-D and BDI-II descriptive statistics. Internal consistency coefficients are for the CES-D and BDI-II respectively.
N = 278.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

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Appendix A

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

1. Members of my *Tai'fa* are unjustly kept out of higher social and political positions by other *Tawa'if.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

2. My *Ta'ifa* is treated unfairly in government decisions, relative to other *Tawa'if.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

3. The present application of the Taif Accord is unfair for my *Ta'ifa.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

4. Members of my *Ta'ifa* don't have the political power they deserve.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

Appendix B

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

1. No matter what effort an individual from one *Ta'ifa* makes, he or she can never truly become a member of a different *Ta'ifa*.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

2. It is nearly impossible for a member of my *Ta'ifa* to change and become a member of a different *Ta'ifa*.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

3. It is very difficult for a member of one *Ta'ifa* to change over and belong to another *Ta'ifa*.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

Appendix C

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

1. My *Ta'ifa* might as well give up because we can't make things better for ourselves in the future.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

2. All I see ahead of me is more political instability for Lebanon

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

3. My *Ta'ifa* will prosper economically in the future.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

4. I have great faith in Lebanon's economic future.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

5. The political and economic future of my *Ta'ifa* is vague and uncertain to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

6. Lebanon's future seems dark to me.

| 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

Appendix D

Think of this 10-step ladder as representing where the different *Tawa'if* stand in Lebanon. At the top of the ladder are the *Tawa'if* that are the best off: those that have the most money, that have the most respected jobs, and the most political power. At the bottom of the ladder are the *Tawa'if* that are the worst off: those that have the least money, that have the least respected jobs, and the least political power.

Please place an X on the step that best represents where you think **your** *Ta'ifa* now stands on the ladder.

THE TOP OF THE LADDER
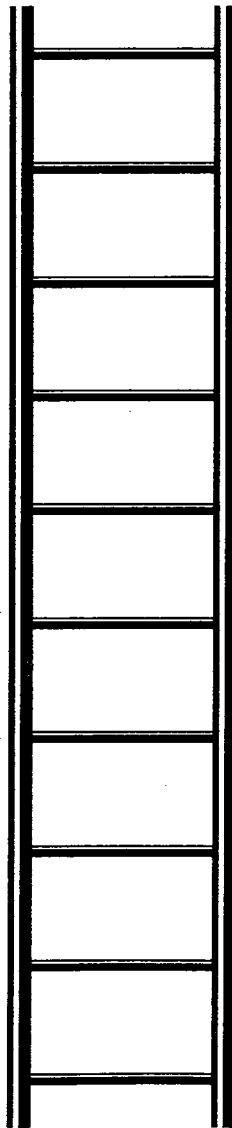
THE BOTTOM OF THE LADDER

Appendix E

Think of this 10-step ladder as representing where people stand in Lebanon. At the top of the ladder are the people who are the best off: those who have the most money, who are the most educated, and who have the most respected jobs. At the bottom of the ladder are the people who are the worst off: those who have the least money, who are the least educated, and who have the least respected jobs.

Please place an X on the step that best represents where you think **you** now stand on the ladder.

THE TOP OF THE LADDER

THE BOTTOM OF THE LADDER
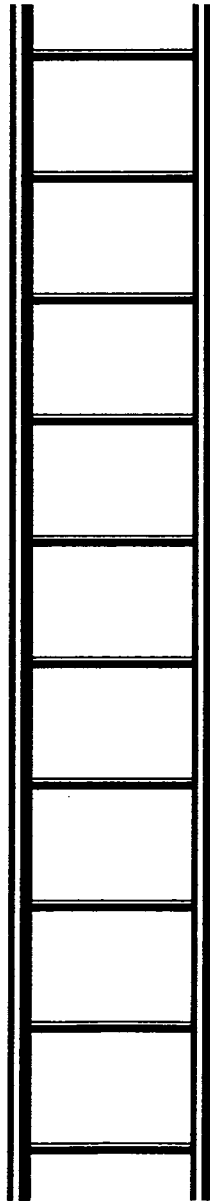
Appendix F

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

1. I have little respect for my *Ta'ifa.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

2. I feel good about my *Ta'ifa.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

3. I would rather not tell that I belong to my *Ta'ifa.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

4. I am strongly attached to my *Ta'ifa.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

5. I have a strong sense of solidarity and belonging to my *Ta'ifa.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

6. I am a person who feels strong bonds towards my *Ta'ifa.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

7. I have similar social and political values as do other members of my *Ta'ifa.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

8. I identify with other members of my *Ta'ifa.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

9. The *Ta'ifa* I belong to is **not** important to my sense of what kind of a person I am.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

Appendix G

Please indicate the extent to which you are involved in the following behaviors:

1. I participate in public demonstrations that aim to support the political power of my *Ta'ifa.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all	A little bit	Somewhat		Quite a bit	Very much	Extremely

2. I participate in student rallies to further the political goals of my *Ta'ifa.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all	A little bit	Somewhat		Quite a bit	Very much	Extremely

3. I participate in group meetings that aim to support the economic and political goals of my *Ta'ifa.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all	A little bit	Somewhat		Quite a bit	Very much	Extremely

Appendix H

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

1. When I think of my own life, things won't work out the way I want them to.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

2. When I think of my own life, I don't expect to get what I really want in the future.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

3. When I think of my own life, I look forward to the future with hope and enthusiasm.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree		Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree