

# A Whole Other Story: Inclusive Victimhood Narratives Reduce Competitive Victimhood and Intergroup Hostility

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## Abstract

Conflict narratives, having at their core the belief that the ingroup suffered more than the outgroup (competitive victimhood), are key in maintaining conflicts. Three experiments conducted with Jewish Israelis (Study 1), Turkish Kurds (Study 2), and Americans (Study 3) tested whether conflict narratives can reduce conflict. Studies 1 and 3 showed that people respond to inclusive victimhood narratives that emphasize both ingroup *and* outgroup suffering with a reduction in competitive victimhood and, in turn, reduced support for aggressive policies—but only when people were relatively less concerned that acknowledgment of outgroup suffering might risk loss of third-party support. Study 2 further found that inclusive narratives reduce conflict for low-power groups, yet without being moderated by concern. Together, these studies show that inclusive victimhood narratives can reduce conflict when people are not concerned about losing third-party support. The important role of third parties in conflict resolution is discussed.

## Keywords

intergroup conflict, narrative, competitive victimhood, third party, inclusive victimhood

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Intergroup conflict leads to vast amounts of human suffering for people directly and indirectly involved. Protracted conflicts, having persisted for generations, are particularly harmful. When a society is engaged in protracted conflict, it develops a set of deep-seated and widely shared beliefs about the conflict and the group's role in it (Bar-Tal, 2000; Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006). The resulting conflict narrative encourages societies to maintain the conflict despite its costs (Bar-Tal, 1998; Hammack, 2008; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). While conflict narratives play a central role in maintaining conflict (e.g., Hammack, 2009; Vollhardt, 2009), we argue that they may also hold the power to reduce conflict. We tested this idea in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Turkish-Kurdish conflict, and the U.S. “war on terror,” investigating if an alternative conflict narrative can decrease support for aggressive intergroup policies and, if so, how.

To date, research on conflict narratives has focused primarily on small intergroup contact sessions or “encounter programs” that bring together people from adversarial groups to discuss and present their competing narratives. The findings have been very inconsistent, some indicating that alternative narratives can indeed create positive change (e.g., Bar-On & Kassem, 2004; Sonnenschein, 2008), others indicating that the dialogue was

unsuccessful or even exacerbated discord (e.g., Hammack, 2006, 2009). Similarly, research has identified ways to reduce obstacles to conflict resolution or to increase factors that can facilitate conflict resolution. For example, Shnabel, Halabi, and Noor (2013) found that re-categorizing Israelis and Palestinians into a common victim identity was able to reduce the usual competition over who is the “real” victim, and Sullivan, Landau, Branscombe, Rothschild, and Cronin (2013) found that portrayals of a conflict group's actions as harming itself increased the group members' collective guilt. Yet, these ways to reduce or resolve conflict are rather limited in practice. Common identity re-categorization, for instance, may be fleeting and unrealistic in conflict settings (Gaertner et al., 2000), and collective guilt for ingroup-committed harm so low that it is doubtful whether increases in collective guilt will change much in practice (Leach,

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Zeineddine, & Čehajić-Clancy, 2013). Conflict narratives, however, have large and lasting impacts on conflict—if usually negatively so. Thus, if we can transform standard conflict narratives into constructive ones, they may be able to reduce intergroup hostility and conflict in lasting ways, by the very nature of the lasting and central role that narratives take in conflict. The question then becomes *why* or *how* a conflict narrative could do so. What properties should the alternative narrative have?

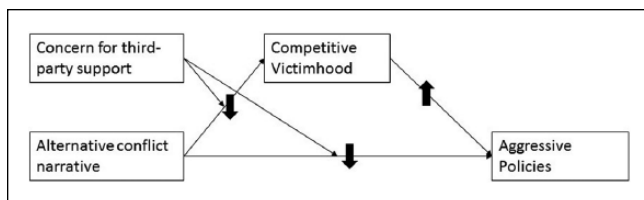
For many groups engaged in conflict, the conflict narrative, and often the narrative of their group's history, rests on beliefs about their victim status (Hammack, 2006; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998; Vollhardt, 2009, 2012). One such belief, called competitive victimhood, is that one's own group (rather than the adversarial group) is the primary or sole victim of the conflict (Noor, Brown, Gonzalez, Manzi, & Lewis, 2008; Noor, Brown, & Prentice, 2008; Vollhardt, 2012). Competitive victimhood has been identified as an important factor in maintaining intergroup conflict (Noor, Shnabel, Halabi, & Nadler, 2012; Vollhardt, 2012). For instance, it negatively predicted forgiveness for victimization as well as reconciliation in Northern Ireland, Chile, and Israel (Noor, Brown, Gonzalez, Manzi, & Lewis, 2008; Noor Brown, & Prentice, 2008; Noor, Shnabel, Halabi, & Doosje, in press; for reviews, see Noor et al., 2012; Vollhardt, 2012). Problematically, competitive victimhood beliefs are acquired at a young age, as a key component of society's dominant conflict narrative (Nasie, Diamond, & Bar-Tal, 2015). Yet, this problem also points to a possible solution: One key way for an *alternative* conflict narrative to facilitate conflict resolution might be to reduce competitive victimhood, ideally by taking a perspective of shared victimhood and fostering inclusive victim beliefs (Shnabel et al., 2013; Vollhardt, 2009, 2012; see also Lickel, Miller, Stenstrom, Denson, & Schmader, 2006) rather than by construing the social roles of "victims" and "perpetrators" as mutually exclusive (Gray & Wegner, 2009). Instead of focusing solely on their own exclusive victimhood, people could alternatively acknowledge both their own group's *and* the other group's victimhood.

Should the alternative inclusive victimhood narrative be successful in reducing competitive victimhood, it will then remove an important obstacle to conflict resolution, paving the way for peace and reconciliation. While past research on competitive victimhood has focused on its effects on approaching past conflict (e.g., in terms of forgiveness; Noor, Brown, Gonzalez et al., 2008; Noor, Brown, & Prentice, 2008) or past wrongdoings in ongoing conflict (e.g., Shnabel et al., 2013), we believe its effects should also extend to behavioral intentions for the future course of the conflict. Therefore, we tested whether a reduction in competitive victimhood induced by an alternative, inclusive victimhood conflict narrative will translate into a reduction in support for policies that sustain or escalate conflict (e.g., aggressive policies targeting the other group).

For an alternative narrative to have any effect, however, it is necessary for the narrative to be heard in the first place. A wealth of social-psychological research has found that people employ motivated reasoning when faced with new information that is considered extreme or potentially threatening, and will reject or discount that information (e.g., Kunda, 1990; Sharvit, Brambilla, Babush, & Colucci, 2015). This is particularly true in conflict, where the main challenge is to overcome people's tendency to cling to their conflict narrative and the belief in their own group's exclusive suffering, which is usually a key component of the group narrative (e.g., Nasie et al., 2015). Therefore, it is unclear whether a conflict society will be receptive to an alternative narrative that challenges the preferred narrative of sole or main victimization, and therefore whether an alternative narrative will be able to reduce competitive victimhood and support for intergroup hostility.

To understand how people can become more receptive to an alternative narrative, it is of course crucial to understand why they cling to the standard narrative of competitive victimhood to begin with. The reason, we argue, is that competitive victimhood serves the specific functional goal of improving a group's chances of winning the conflict (see also Noor et al., 2012). More specifically, we hypothesized that while there are many reasons why a conflict group may be motivated to develop and maintain a competitive victimhood narrative (see also Noor et al., 2012; Sullivan, Landau, Branscombe, & Rothschild, 2012), central among these is the desire to attain or maintain third-party support. As continued conflict is taxing on a group's morale and resources, support from third parties becomes critical to mitigating the costs of long-term conflict (Balch-Lindsay, Enterline, & Joyce, 2008; Gleditsch & Beardsley, 2004). To attain and maintain this support, groups develop narratives that help recruit such support and that are therefore shared not only inside but also outside the group. The competitive victimhood narrative's portrayal of the group as being the victim in the conflict is particularly well-suited for this task, as people are more willing to help others they see as innocent victims (Zagefka, Noor, Brown, de Moura, & Hopthrow, 2011) or underdogs in a competition (Vandello, Goldschmied, & Richards, 2007). Thus, by maintaining the narrative that their own group is the victim of wrongful aggression in the conflict, people can increase the likelihood that third-party groups will see them as innocent victims and underdogs who are deserving of their support. In other words, people use competitive victimhood narratives as vehicles of identity and power politics to gain the moral high-ground and attract the attention and support of third-party groups. Ultimately, this support leads to more tangible resources and power, which, all else being equal, increases their chances of winning the conflict.

Although people's clinging to competitive victimhood narratives for the sake of third-party support is problematic and can maintain conflict, we argue that it also has an upside:



**Figure 1.** The hypothesized model predicts that an inclusive victimhood narrative (compared with the standard competitive narrative) will decrease support for aggressive policies targeting the other party to the conflict, but only for people who are not concerned that acknowledgment of inclusive victimhood will lead to a loss of third-party support.

*Note.* This relationship is mediated by a decrease in competitive victimhood for the people who are not concerned, which, in turn, decreases support for aggressive policies. Small arrows indicate the existence of an effect; big arrows indicate the direction of the effect (i.e., increase or decrease).

When people are not concerned about losing third-party support, they may be receptive to inclusive (rather than competitive) victimhood narratives. Thus, a narrative of inclusive victimhood, focusing on *both* groups' suffering (and, by implication, both groups' harm doing), may be able to be heard under the right circumstances. This hypothesis is in line with recent research showing that members of conflict groups are receptive to messages when both groups in the conflict are portrayed as both victims *and* perpetrators (Shnabel et al., 2013). This means that people who are relatively unconcerned that acknowledging the outgroup's suffering or (mutual) victim status will lead to loss of third-party support for the ingroup might be willing to reduce their competitive victimhood beliefs in response to an alternative, inclusive victimhood narrative. In other words, people's concern about possibly losing third-party support should moderate any effects of alternative conflict narratives on competitive victimhood and support for aggressive policies (see Figure 1 for the proposed model). Thus, understanding people's motivated need for third-party support as a precursor of competitive versus inclusive victimhood should pave the way for alternative conflict narratives to be heard and be effective.

## Study 1

In Study 1, we tested our proposed model with Jewish Israelis in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the longest ongoing violent conflicts, and both conflict parties tend to self-identify as victims (Hammack, 2006; Leidner, Castano, & Ginges, 2013; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998; Vollhardt, 2009). We tested whether exposure to an inclusive victimhood narrative that acknowledged the suffering of both ingroup *and* outgroup, relative to a narrative that only discussed ingroup suffering, could decrease support for national policies aimed at punishing Palestinians by decreasing competitive victimhood. In the baseline condition, we used a competitive victimhood narrative that only discussed

(Jewish) Israeli victimhood while ignoring (rather than actively rejecting) Palestinian suffering, which matches most closely the official Israeli narrative (Bet-El & Ben-Amos, 1999; Bilu & Witztum, 2000; S. J. Cohen, 2013; Oren & Bar-Tal, 2007; Oren, Nets-Zehngut, & Bar-Tal, 2015; Ram, 2009). As ignoring Palestinian suffering is less extreme than actively rejecting/denying it, using this baseline narrative should, if anything, make it harder to detect the hypothesized differences between the standard and alternative narrative. Thus, our baseline narrative also served as a stringent test of our hypotheses. Critically, we also tested whether the extent to which the alternative narrative might reduce competitive victimhood and support for punitive policies depended on how concerned Jewish Israelis were that acknowledging shared victimhood with the Palestinians would risk the loss of American support for Israel.

## Method

### Participants

One hundred seventy-eight Jewish Israelis were recruited during August 15 to 16, 2013, through Project Midgam, an Israeli polling company with access to representative samples of Jewish Israeli participants. Five participants were excluded for reporting that they did not take the survey seriously, 26 were excluded for incorrectly answering manipulation check questions testing whether they had read and understood the narrative, and seven were excluded for taking significantly more time than other participants to complete the study (univariate outliers; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). All analyses were conducted with the remaining 140 participants (51% female; age:  $M = 42.70$ ,  $SD = 15.06$ , range = 18-75; political orientation:  $M = 3.99$ ,  $SD = 1.67$  [ $0 = \text{extremely left wing}$ ,  $8 = \text{extremely right wing}$ ]; relationship status: 31% single, 58% married, and 12% divorced or widowed; religiosity: 56% secular, 26% traditional, 12% orthodox, and 6% ultraorthodox; geographic location: 61% central Israel, 23% northern Israel, 10% southern Israel, and 5% West Bank), with slightly different numbers of missing data points across variables due to occasional non-responses.

### Materials and Procedure

We randomly presented participants with one of two narratives in the form of opinion articles regarding suffering in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, ostensibly written from the perspective of a Jewish Israeli author. The competitive victimhood narrative discussed only Jewish Israeli suffering ("It is time to reawaken and remember our experiences . . . We need to remember burnt-out convoys on the way to Jerusalem, and . . . bullet-proof tractors in the fields of the Galil, and burnt-out restaurants and buses in the streets of Tel Aviv.") In contrast, the inclusive victimhood narrative discussed both Jewish Israeli and Palestinian suffering (e.g., ". . . Recognize how long we held down the Palestinians, deprived them of their economy, of their freedom,

and of their expression . . . While the Palestinians have indeed caused us harm, we have done equal or maybe even greater harm to them. Through checkpoints, raids, and humiliation, we have brought death and suffering to many Palestinians.”). See the online appendix for the complete narratives. All continuous items in the study were measured on scales from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 8 (*strongly agree*).

**Manipulation checks.** Five manipulation checks tested comprehension of the manipulation materials, asking participants to identify the ethnicity of the author, the target audience, and the content of the narrative.

**Preference for the narrative.** Three items assessed how much participants liked, agreed with, and were convinced by, the narrative they had read ( $\alpha = .98$ ;  $M = 4.08$ ,  $SD = 2.94$ ).

**Competitive victimhood.** Seven items assessed competitive victimhood (e.g., “Throughout the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Israelis suffered more than Palestinians”;  $\alpha = .88$ ;  $M = 4.55$ ,  $SD = 1.67$ ), partially adapted from Noor, Brown, Gonzalez et al. (2008).

**Support for aggressive policies.** Four items measured participants’ support for anti-Palestinian policies (e.g., “Israel should withhold tax money from the Palestinians if they don’t fight terrorism”;  $\alpha = .75$ ;  $M = 5.10$ ,  $SD = 1.80$ ).

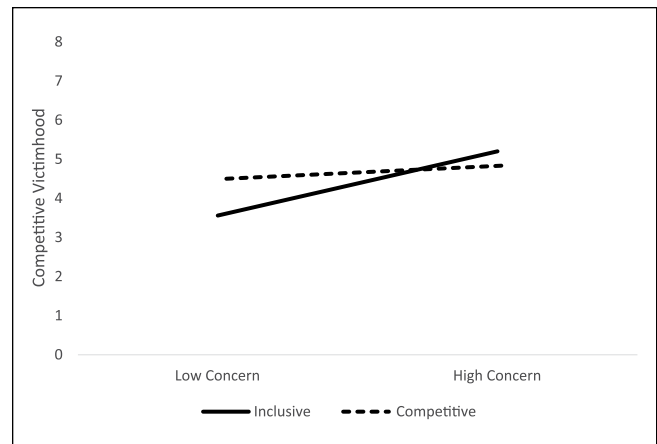
**Concern over loss of third-party support in the event of acknowledging shared victimhood.** Six items measured participants’ concern about losing international support if Israel were to recognize Palestinian suffering (e.g., “If Israel was to recognize the victimization of the Palestinians, then we would risk losing financial and material support from the other countries of the world”;  $\alpha = .91$ ;  $M = 4.24$ ,  $SD = 2.15$ ). While this scale was intended to be used as a moderator, following others (Feygina, Jost, & Goldsmith, 2010; Leidner, Castano, Zaiser, & Giner-Sorolla, 2010), we presented it after the manipulation so as not to disclose the purpose of the study.

## Results

Before testing our moderation hypotheses, we confirmed that *concern over loss of third-party support in the event of acknowledging shared victimhood* was not affected by the manipulation,  $F(1, 138) = 0.58$ ,  $p = .562$ , allowing us to treat it as a (centered) moderator together with condition (inclusive victimhood narrative vs. competitive victimhood narrative) as independent variables in subsequent moderated regression analyses.<sup>1</sup>

### Preference for the Narrative

The main effect of narrative was significant,  $F(1, 136) = 71.61$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .345$ , such that participants generally



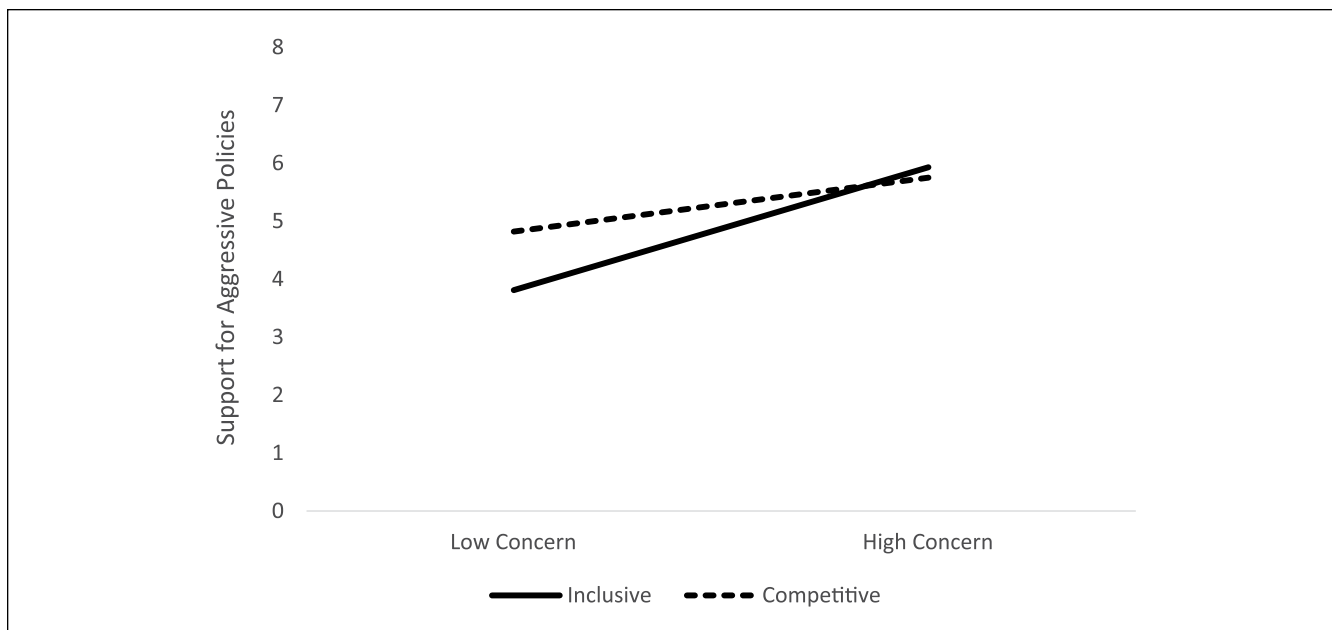
**Figure 2.** The function of narrative (inclusive vs. competitive) by concern (high vs. low) on competitive victimhood in Study 1.

preferred the competitive victimhood narrative ( $M = 5.60$ ,  $SD = 2.23$ ) over the inclusive victimhood narrative ( $M = 2.39$ ,  $SD = 2.70$ ). The main effect of concern that acknowledging shared victimhood would lead to a loss of international support was marginally significantly negative,  $b = -.36$ ,  $F(1, 136) = 3.70$ ,  $p = .057$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .027$ . Both main effects were qualified by the two-way interaction,  $F(1, 136) = 32.11$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .191$ . Jewish Israelis who were more concerned (+1  $SD$ ) that acknowledging shared victimhood risked the loss of international support preferred the competitive narrative ( $M = 6.34$ ) over the inclusive narrative ( $M = 1.03$ ),  $t(136) = -10.01$ ,  $p < .001$ . While Jewish Israelis who were relatively less concerned (−1  $SD$ ) also somewhat preferred the competitive narrative ( $M = 4.93$ ) over the inclusive narrative ( $M = 3.89$ ),  $t(136) = -1.96$ ,  $p = .052$ , they did so to a significantly lesser degree.

### Competitive Victimhood

As predicted, the interaction between narrative and concern was significant,  $F(1, 135) = 6.04$ ,  $p = .015$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .043$ . Among people who were less concerned, the inclusive narrative decreased competitive victimhood ( $M = 3.56$ ) relative to the competitive narrative ( $M = 4.50$ ),  $t(135) = -2.51$ ,  $p = .013$ , whereas among people who were more concerned, the inclusive narrative if anything tended to increase competitive victimhood ( $M = 5.20$ ) relative to the competitive narrative ( $M = 4.84$ ),  $t(135) = .97$ ,  $p = .336$  (see Figure 2). Alternatively, for people who were presented with the inclusive narrative, the more they were concerned, the more competitive victimhood they expressed,  $b = .82$ ,  $SE = .19$ ,  $t(135) = -4.28$ ,  $p < .001$ . For those who were presented with the competitive narrative, there was no relationship between concern and competitive victimhood,  $b = .17$ ,  $SE = .19$ ,  $t(135) = .90$ ,  $p = .372$ . The main effect of concern was also significant,  $b = .50$ ,  $F(1, 135) = 13.77$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .093$ , whereas the main effect of narrative was not,  $F(1, 135) = 1.19$ ,  $p = .278$ .





**Figure 3.** The function of narrative (inclusive vs. competitive) by concern (high vs. low) on support for aggressive policies in Study 1.

### Support for Aggressive Policies

The interaction between narrative and concern was significant,  $F(1, 134) = 4.73, p = .031, \eta_p^2 = .034$ . Among people who were less concerned, the inclusive narrative decreased support for aggressive policies ( $M = 3.81$ ) relative to the competitive narrative ( $M = 4.82$ ),  $t(134) = -2.58, p = .011$ , whereas among people who were more concerned, there was no difference ( $M_{\text{inclusive}} = 5.93, M_{\text{competitive}} = 5.75$ ),  $t(134) = .49, p = .628$  (see Figure 3). Looking at this in another way, for people who were presented with the inclusive narrative, the more they were concerned, the more they supported aggressive policies,  $b = 1.06, SE = .29, t(134) = 5.41, p < .001$ . For those who were presented with the competitive narrative, this relationship was in the same direction, but weaker,  $b = .47, SE = .19, t(134) = 2.42, p = .017$ . The main effect of concern was significant,  $b = .76, F(1, 134) = 30.88, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .187$ , whereas the main effect of narrative was not,  $F(1, 134) = 2.21, p = .139$ .

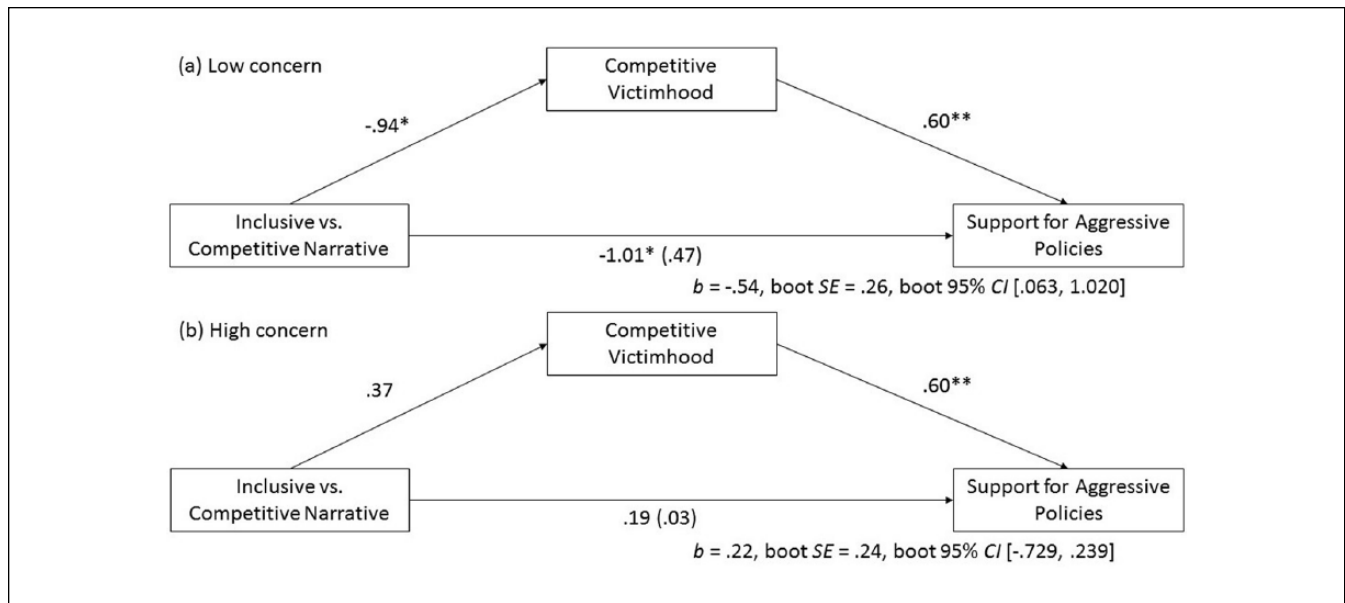
### Mediation Model

We then tested the moderated mediation hypothesis that the interaction between narrative and concern on support for aggressive policies would be mediated by competitive victimhood (Hayes, 2013, Model 8). As expected, the indirect effect of the inclusive (vs. competitive) narrative on support for aggressive policies through competitive victimhood was significant for people less concerned that acknowledging outgroup suffering would risk loss of third-party support,  $b = -.55, SE = .26, 95\% \text{ confidence interval (CI)} = [.060, 1.09]$ , but not for those more concerned,  $b = .23, SE = .24, 95\% \text{ CI} = [-.760, .215]$  (see Figure 4, Panels a and b).

### Discussion

In Study 1, we found that the inclusive narrative acknowledging ingroup and outgroup suffering decreased competitive victimhood and, in turn, support for aggressive policies, but only for people less concerned that acknowledging outgroup suffering would undermine third-party support for the ingroup. Furthermore, the reduction in support for aggressive policies was explained by the reduction in competitive victimhood. Importantly, the inclusive narrative was successful at reducing competitive victimhood and support for aggressive policies among those low in concern despite a clear preference across the board (i.e., including those low in concern) for the competitive narrative. The inclusive victimhood narrative's success at reducing competitive victimhood and support for aggressive policies among those low in concern in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is rather remarkable, given that information about suffering on both sides is widely accessible from both national and international news sources. This suggests that the effectiveness of the alternative narrative is not merely due to providing people with new information they had not considered before. Rather, the effectiveness seems to stem from an opening in people's receptiveness to the shared victimhood narrative when they are not too concerned that acknowledging shared victimhood might risk loss of third-party support.

These findings supported our hypothesis that competitive victimhood serves a motivated purpose of ensuring outside support. Only those people who were less concerned that acknowledging shared victimhood would lead to a loss of American support decreased their competitive victimhood in response to a shared victimhood narrative, and in turn also



**Figure 4.** The moderated mediation model of narrative (inclusive vs. competitive) by concern about loss of third-party support (high vs. low) on support for aggressive policies through competitive victimhood in Study 1.

Note. Panel a (people with low concern about losing third-party support,  $-1$  SD) displays how the inclusive (vs. competitive) narrative decreases competitive victimhood, which, in turn, decreases support for aggressive policies. In contrast, Panel b (people with high concern about losing third-party support,  $-1$  SD) displays how the inclusive (vs. competitive) narrative does not decrease competitive victimhood and therefore does not decrease support for aggressive policies.

decreased support for aggressive intergroup policies. It is important to note, however, that Study 1 looked at Jewish Israelis, which is a relatively high-power group in the conflict. High-power groups like Jewish Israelis have access to many resources (e.g., military power, economic power, political influence) and rely less on the moral resource of competitive victimhood to gain third-party support and pursue their aims in the conflict. In contrast, low-power groups have access to fewer resources, and may therefore be less willing to forgo the moral resource of competitive victimhood by acknowledging shared victimhood. Therefore, it was important to test whether the inclusive narrative can have a similar effect with a low-power group. Study 2 thus tested whether the findings in Study 1 would generalize to low-power groups.

## Study 2

Study 1 showed that an inclusive narrative about shared victimization can successfully reduce competitive victimhood and, in turn, support for aggressive policies. Yet, it remained unclear whether the effects only occurred among high-power conflict groups such as Israel. As low-power groups in conflicts usually suffer more, for example, in terms of number of casualties, alternative narratives that acknowledge shared victimhood may be seen as adding insult to injury and therefore backfire (see Ginges, Atran, Medin, & Shikaki, 2007). However, by the same token (i.e., because low-power groups suffer more) they might be more motivated to end the

conflict. Thus, Study 2 tested whether or not the effects of an alternative narrative would generalize to low-power groups, attempting a conceptual replication of Study 1 with Turkish Kurds, a minority group in Turkey that has been engaged in a struggle for their rights for nearly a century (Ergil, 2000).

## Method

### Participants

Two hundred Turkish-Kurdish participants (58% female; age:  $M = 23.14$ ,  $SD = 2.39$ , range = 19–34; political orientation:  $M = 2.49$ ,  $SD = 0.73$  [ $1 = \text{extremely left wing}$ ,  $5 = \text{extremely right wing}$ ]<sup>2</sup>; mother tongue: 89% Kurdish; 8% Turkish; 3% Armenian; religion: 91% Sunni Islam, 1% Alevi Islam, 8% other) were recruited from a university in Turkey to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

### Materials and Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to read either an inclusive victimhood narrative, which mentioned both Kurdish suffering (e.g., violence against Kurds at Newroz celebrations) and Turkish suffering (e.g., the Anafartalar bazaar bombings of 2007), or the competitive victimhood narrative, which only mentioned Kurdish suffering. Again, both narratives were allegedly written by a member of participants' ingroup (i.e., a Turkish-Kurdish author). All continuous measures in the study were administered on scales from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6

(*strongly agree*), on paper-and-pencil questionnaires. *Preference for the narrative* ( $\alpha = .95$ ;  $M = 4.48$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ), *concern over loss of third-party support in the event of acknowledging shared victimhood with Turks* ( $\alpha = .81$ ;  $M = 2.74$ ,  $SD = 1.60$ ), *competitive victimhood* ( $\alpha = .79$ ;  $M = 4.80$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ), and *support for aggressive policies* ( $\alpha = .78$ ;  $M = 4.19$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ) were all adapted from Study 1.

## Results

Concern that acknowledging outgroup suffering risks loss of international support was significantly affected by the manipulation,  $F(196) = 6.10$ ,  $p = .014$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .030$  ( $M_{\text{inclusive}} = 2.47$ ,  $SD_{\text{inclusive}} = 1.47$ ,  $M_{\text{competitive}} = 3.02$ ,  $SD_{\text{competitive}} = 1.68$ ), raising the possibility that collinearity may limit interpretability of any moderation/interaction effects (Muller, Judd, & Yzerbyt, 2005). Nonetheless, we tested for and report the interactions below.

### Preference for the Narrative

The main effect of narrative was significant,  $F(1, 194) = 17.46$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .083$ . Again, people preferred the competitive narrative ( $M = 4.92$ ,  $SD = 1.28$ ) over the inclusive narrative ( $M = 4.06$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ ). There was no main effect of concern of losing third-party support,  $F(1, 194) = 0.01$ ,  $p = .903$ ,  $\eta_p^2 < .001$ . The interaction between narrative and concern was also non-significant,  $F(1, 194) = 0.19$ ,  $p = .660$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .001$ .

### Competitive Victimhood

The main effect of narrative was significant,  $F(1, 193) = 8.15$ ,  $p = .005$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .041$ , such that the inclusive narrative decreased competitive victimhood ( $M = 4.57$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ ) relative to the competitive narrative ( $M = 5.02$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ). There was no main effect of concern,  $F(1, 193) = 0.38$ ,  $p = .538$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .002$ , and the interaction between narrative and concern was non-significant,  $F(1, 193) = 0.70$ ,  $p = .404$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .004$ .

### Support for Aggressive Policies

The main effect of narrative was significant,  $F(1, 193) = 20.35$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .100$ , in that the inclusive narrative decreased support for aggressive policies ( $M = 3.75$ ,  $SD = 1.57$ ) relative to the competitive narrative ( $M = 4.62$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ). Once again, there was no main effect of concern,  $F(1, 193) = 0.00$ ,  $p = .994$ ,  $\eta_p^2 < .001$ , and the interaction between narrative and concern was non-significant,  $F(1, 193) = 0.83$ ,  $p = .363$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .004$ .

### Mediational Model

The indirect effect of the inclusive (vs. competitive) narrative on support for aggressive policies through competitive

victimhood was significant,  $b = -.29$ ,  $SE = .12$ , 95% CI =  $[-.564, -.093]$  (Hayes, 2013, Model 4). While these results did not indicate an interaction between narrative and concern on competitive victimhood or support for aggressive policies, we nonetheless proceeded with a test for moderated mediation (i.e., Hayes, 2013, Model 8), to explore whether there were at least similar trends as in Study 1 (as well as in view of a mini meta-analysis across all three studies of this article, detailed further below). The conditional indirect effect of narrative on support for aggressive policies through competitive victimhood was significant at low levels of concern,  $b = -.40$ ,  $SE = .18$ , 95% CI =  $[-.784, -.078]$ , but not at high levels of concern,  $b = -.22$ ,  $SE = .14$ , 95% CI =  $[-.498, .050]$ .

## Discussion

Study 2 found that the beneficial effects of an inclusive narrative generalize beyond higher power groups. Even among the low-power Turkish Kurds, the inclusive narrative decreased competitive victimhood and consequently support for aggressive policies. As noted above, we tested for the predicted interaction despite the possibility that the results of the interaction tests may be difficult to interpret due to our moderator itself being affected by the manipulation (see Muller et al., 2005). The alternative narrative worked for everyone, across different levels of concern (i.e., without moderation by concern, unlike Study 1). While there was no significant interaction between narrative and concern on competitive victimhood and support for aggressive policies, and thus no significant support for the moderated mediation we found in Study 1, the conditional indirect effects nonetheless showed a similar pattern: The indirect effect of narrative on support for aggressive policies was significant at low but not at high levels of concern.

A possible explanation for the lack of moderation of the direct effects of narrative on competitive victimhood and support for aggressive policies is that unlike high-power groups, low-power groups that are minorities within a country often have relatively low levels of international support. This is true for Turkish Kurds (Ayata & Yüксеker, 2005) and thus may be the reason why concern did not appear to limit the effects of acknowledging outgroup suffering. The Turkish Kurds in our sample may have believed that there is not much support to lose to begin with.<sup>3</sup> Another possible explanation is that many third parties call on Turkish Kurds to take responsibility for Turkish suffering at the hands of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Kurdish: Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan [PKK]) as much as they call on ethnic Turks to take responsibility for Kurdish suffering at the hands of the Turkish state (e.g., International Crisis Group, 2014). Thus, the Turkish Kurds in our sample may have believed that their acknowledgment of shared (i.e., also outgroup) suffering would be appreciated by third parties. Although all this is admittedly speculative, we can conclude from our data with

certainty that alternative narratives of inclusive victimhood are effective in reducing competitive victimhood and consequent support for aggressive policies even among low-power groups.

### Study 3

Study 3 provided another test of our predicted effects. Both Studies 1 and 2 showed the effects in a rather “hot” conflict that all members of a high- and low-power group, respectively, were directly subjected to (i.e., the Israeli-Palestinian and the Turkish–Kurdish conflict). In Study 3, we aimed to show the effects in a similarly “hot” conflict, but one that people are not directly subjected to. Therefore, in Study 3, we tested our predicted effects with American participants in the context of the U.S. drone war in Waziristan, Pakistan, which is a “hot” conflict that most Americans are more removed from. The drone war enjoys wide support in the United States across political lines, with 65% of all Americans in favor of launching drone strikes on suspected terrorists in other countries (Brown & Newport, 2013). Study 3 also served as a more powerful test of the moderating role of people’s concern that acknowledging outgroup suffering risks loss of third-party support. Unlike Israel, the United States boasts the most powerful military and economy in the world (International Monetary Fund, 2015). Therefore Americans should, if anything, be less likely than Israelis to be concerned over third-party support in conflict, making it harder to find a moderating effect of concern.

## Method

### Participants

Two hundred eighty American participants were recruited on Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). One participant was excluded after requesting that their data not be used, eight for having multiple responses from the same IP address, nine for not paying attention to the measures (e.g., answering the highest scale score on all items), five for taking significantly more time than all other participants to read the materials, five for having significantly unusual patterns of responses on the measures in the study (multivariate outliers; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2004), and 39 for failing the manipulation checks. The resulting 25% exclusion rate is not uncommon for online studies and has been deemed necessary to maintain high data quality (Chandler, Mueller, & Paolacci, 2014). All analyses were conducted with the remaining 212 participants (48% female; age:  $M = 38.70$ ,  $SD = 13.79$ , range = 19–72; political orientation:  $M = 4.16$ ,  $SD = 2.08$  [1 = *extremely liberal*, 9 = *extremely conservative*]<sup>4</sup>; race: 82% White, 7% Black, 5% Asian, 6% other).

### Materials and Procedure

Participants first read a short paragraph informing them about the drone war in Waziristan and widespread support

for the Taliban among the local population. We adapted the two narratives used in Study 1 to this context, such that the inclusive narrative recognized American suffering at the hands of the Taliban while also recognizing the suffering of the people of Waziristan, whereas the competitive narrative only recognized American suffering while ignoring that of the people of Waziristan. Again, both narratives were presented as being authored by a member of participants’ ingroup. Participants were randomly assigned to read one of the two narratives. All continuous measures were administered on scales from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*). *Concern over loss of third-party support in the event of acknowledging shared victimhood* (e.g., “If the United States were to recognize the victimization of the people of Waziristan, we would risk losing international support for our war against terrorism”;  $\alpha = .89$ ;  $M = 4.60$ ,  $SD = 1.67$ ), *competitive victimhood* (e.g., “Throughout the war on terror, Americans have suffered more than the people of Waziristan”;  $\alpha = .91$ ;  $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = 1.72$ ), and *support for aggressive policies* (e.g., “The United States should increase drone attacks on Taliban leaders”;  $\alpha = .74$ ;  $M = 4.76$ ,  $SD = 1.83$ ) were all adapted from Study 1. As *preference for the narratives* did not affect the results of Studies 1 or 2, we did not measure it in Study 3.

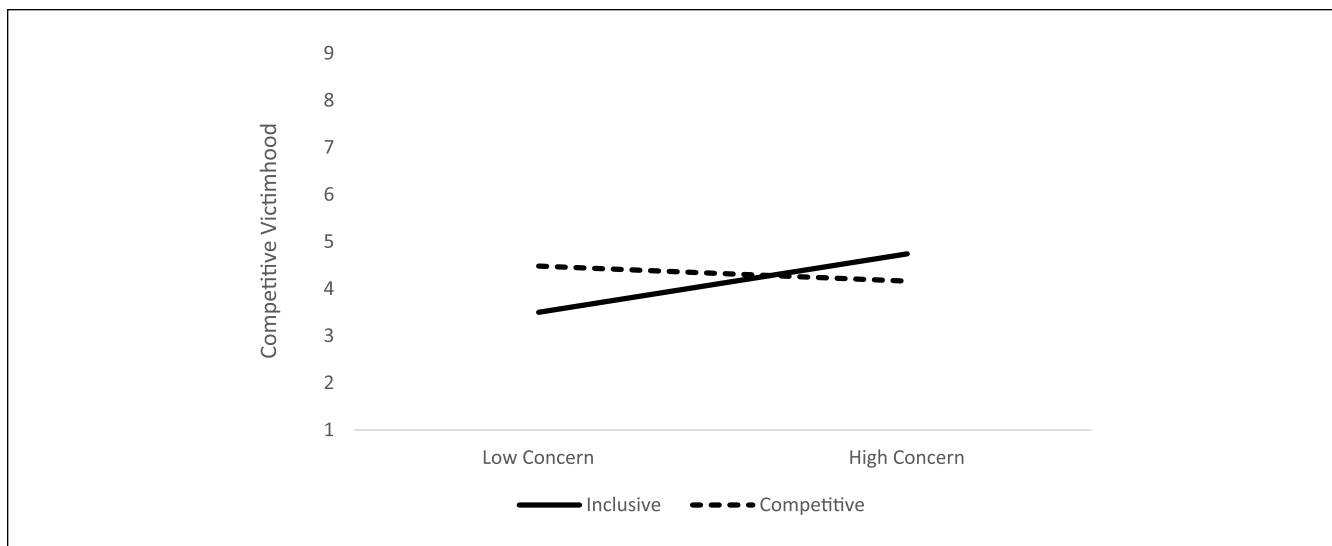
## Results

The concern that acknowledging shared victimhood risks loss of international support was unaffected by the manipulation,  $F(1, 210) = 0.67$ ,  $p = .413$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .004$ , allowing us to treat it as a (centered) moderator in subsequent analyses.

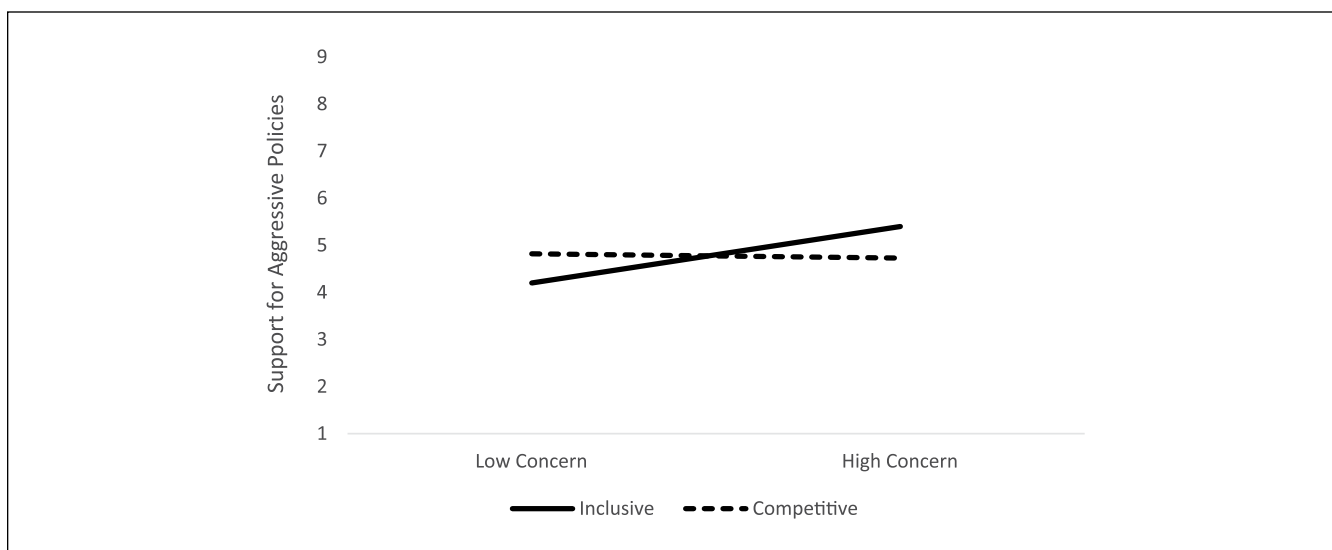
### Competitive Victimhood

The interaction between narrative and concern was significant,  $F(1, 208) = 11.11$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .051$ . For people less concerned ( $-1$   $SD$ ) that acknowledging shared victimhood risks loss of international support, the inclusive narrative decreased competitive victimhood ( $M = 3.50$ ) relative to the competitive narrative ( $M = 4.48$ ),  $t(208) = -2.98$ ,  $p = .003$ . Among people more concerned ( $+1$   $SD$ ), however, the inclusive narrative marginally increased competitive victimhood ( $M = 4.74$ ) relative to the competitive narrative ( $M = 4.16$ ),  $t(208) = 1.77$ ,  $p = .079$  (see Figure 5). Looking at this in another way, for people who were presented with the inclusive narrative, the more they were concerned, the more competitive victimhood they expressed,  $b = .62$ ,  $SE = .16$ ,  $t(208) = 3.85$ ,  $p < .001$ . For those who were presented with the competitive narrative, there was no relationship between concern and competitive victimhood,  $b = -.16$ ,  $SE = .17$ ,  $t(135) = -.95$ ,  $p = .343$ . The main effect of concern was also significant,  $b = .50$ ,  $F(1, 208) = 3.90$ ,  $p = .050$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .018$ , whereas the main effect of narrative was not,  $F(1, 208) = .75$ ,  $p = .388$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .004$ .





**Figure 5.** The function of narrative (inclusive vs. competitive) by concern (high vs. low) on competitive victimhood in Study 3.



**Figure 6.** The function of narrative (inclusive vs. competitive) by concern (high vs. low) on support for aggressive policies in Study 3.

### Support for Aggressive Policies

The interaction between narrative and concern was significant,  $F(1, 208) = 6.74, p = .010, \eta_p^2 = .031$ . Among people who were less concerned, the inclusive narrative marginally decreased support for aggressive policies ( $M = 4.20$ ) relative to the competitive narrative ( $M = 4.82$ ),  $t(208) = -1.77, p = .078$ . Among those more concerned ( $+1 SD$ ), however, the inclusive narrative marginally increased support for aggressive policies ( $M = 5.40$ ) relative to the competitive narrative ( $M = 4.73$ ),  $t(208) = 1.93, p = .055$  (see Figure 6). In another way to look at this interaction, for those who were presented with the inclusive narrative, the more they were concerned, the more they supported aggressive policies,  $b = .60, SE = .17,$

$t(208) = 3.50, p < .001$ . For those who were presented with the competitive narrative, there was no relationship between concern and support for aggressive policies,  $b = -.05, SE = .18, t(135) = -.27, p = .786$ . The main effect of concern was significant,  $b = .28, F(1, 208) = 4.91, p = .028, \eta_p^2 = .023$ , whereas the main effect of narrative was not,  $F(1, 208) = .01, p = .911, \eta_p^2 < .001$ .

### Mediational Model

Again we found a significant indirect effect of the inclusive (vs. competitive) narrative on support for aggressive policies through competitive victimhood for people low in concern,  $b = -.47, SE = .24, 95\% CI = [-.978, -.002]$ , but not for those

high in concern,  $b = .23$ ,  $SE = .19$ , 95% CI =  $[-.140, .617]$  (Hayes, 2013, Model 8).

## Discussion

Study 3 reproduced the findings of Studies 1 and 2 in a different context and sample, with different history, culture, language, and status. Importantly, Study 3 provided a stricter test of the moderating role that concern over third-party support plays in conflicts that we found in Study 1. Given that the United States is the world's most powerful country, we might expect that Americans would be less concerned about retaining third-party support than Jewish Israelis. Yet, Americans were also concerned about losing international support if they were to acknowledge shared victimhood. Again, only for those less concerned, the inclusive victimhood narrative decreased competitive victimhood and support for aggressive policies. It is important to note, however, that while the omnibus test of the overall interaction between narrative (inclusive vs. competitive) and concern was significant, the simple effects disentangling the interaction were only marginally significant. Yet, this pattern of results was both in line with our hypothesis that the motivation to maintain competitive victimhood may be partially explained by a need to attain and maintain third-party support, and in line with the results of Study 1. As in Study 1, the alternative, inclusive victimhood narrative reduced competitive victimhood and support for aggressive policies among people who were relatively unconcerned that acknowledging that the other group also suffers might lead to a loss of third-party support.

## Statistical Power and Meta-Analysis

Post hoc power analyses using G\*Power (Erdfeider, Faul, & Buchner, 1996) revealed that our statistical power for the interaction effects was .65 in Study 1, .76 in Study 2, and .83 in Study 3. While two of the three are below the recommended standard of .80 (J. Cohen, 1977), all three exceed the average power in social-psychological studies of .35 (Bakker, van Dijk, & Wicherts, 2012; Marszalek, Barber, Kohlhart, & Holmes, 2011) and match or even exceed the average power of .65 for studies published in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (JPSP), *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* (PSPB), and *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* (JESP; Fraley & Vazire, 2014). Nonetheless, following recent calls for testing effects obtained in multiple studies across these studies with more statistical power (Braver, Thoemmes, & Rosenthal, 2014), we combined the data from all three studies<sup>5</sup> (combined power of .94), and tested for our predicted interaction between narrative type and concern about losing third-party support while controlling for all variance accounted for by the differences between the three studies.<sup>6</sup>

The main effects of both concern,  $b = .21$ ,  $SE = .08$ ,  $F(1, 547) = 8.13$ ,  $p = .005$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .015$ , and narrative,  $F(1, 547) = 4.81$ ,  $p = .029$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .009$ , on competitive victimhood were significant. The inclusive narrative decreased competitive victimhood ( $M = 4.56$ ,  $SD = 1.67$ ) compared with the competitive narrative ( $M = 4.94$ ,  $SD = 1.58$ ). The main effects were qualified by a significant interaction,  $F(1, 547) = 11.80$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .021$ , such that for less concerned people ( $-1 SD$ ) the inclusive narrative decreased competitive victimhood ( $M = 4.27$ ) compared with the competitive narrative ( $M = 5.00$ ),  $t(547) = 3.97$ ,  $p < .001$ . In contrast, for more concerned people ( $+1 SD$ ), the difference between the inclusive ( $M = 5.14$ ) and competitive ( $M = 4.98$ ) narratives was non-significant in the opposite direction,  $t(547) = -.90$ ,  $p = .379$ . Furthermore, for people presented with the inclusive narrative, concern was positively correlated with competitive victimhood,  $b = .44$ ,  $SE = .10$ ,  $t(547) = 4.47$ ,  $p < .001$ , whereas concern and competitive victimhood were uncorrelated for those presented with the competitive narrative,  $b = -.01$ ,  $SE = .10$ ,  $t(547) = -.09$ ,  $p = .927$ . The covariate accounting for differences between the three studies was also significant,  $F(2, 547) = 31.43$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .103$ ; competitive victimhood was highest among Israelis, lowest among Americans, with Kurds falling in between ( $M_{\text{Israelis}} = 5.54$ ,  $SD_{\text{Israelis}} = 1.67$ ,  $M_{\text{Kurds}} = 4.80$ ,  $SD_{\text{Kurds}} = 1.16$ ,  $M_{\text{Americans}} = 4.19$ ,  $SD_{\text{Americans}} = 1.76$ ,  $ts > 2.35$ ,  $ps < .020$ ). Importantly, however, the main effect of narrative and its moderation by concern went above and beyond the differences between studies.

Similarly, for support for aggressive policies, the main effects of both concern,  $b = .35$ ,  $SE = .08$ ,  $F(1, 547) = 18.43$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .033$ , and narrative,  $F(1, 547) = 8.12$ ,  $p = .005$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .015$ , were significant. The inclusive narrative decreased support for aggressive policies ( $M = 4.65$ ,  $SD = 1.99$ ) compared with the competitive narrative ( $M = 5.13$ ,  $SD = 1.71$ ). Again, the main effects were qualified by a significant interaction,  $F(1, 546) = 12.76$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .023$ , such that for less concerned people ( $-1 SD$ ) the inclusive narrative decreased support for aggressive policies ( $M = 4.20$ ) compared with the competitive narrative ( $M = 5.11$ ),  $t(546) = 4.53$ ,  $p < .001$ . Once again, for more concerned people ( $+1 SD$ ), the difference between the inclusive ( $M = 5.41$ ) and competitive ( $M = 5.31$ ) narratives was non-significant in the opposite direction,  $t(546) = -.51$ ,  $p = .610$ . Looking at the results in another way, for people presented with the inclusive narrative, concern was positively correlated with competitive victimhood,  $b = .61$ ,  $SE = .11$ ,  $t(546) = 5.56$ ,  $p < .001$ , whereas for those presented with the competitive narrative, concern and competitive victimhood were uncorrelated,  $b = .10$ ,  $SE = .11$ ,  $t(547) = .90$ ,  $p = .370$ . The covariate accounting for differences between the three studies was also significant,  $F(2, 546) = 28.79$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .095$ ; support for aggressive policies was significantly higher among Israelis ( $M = 6.10$ ,  $SD = 1.80$ ) than among Americans ( $M = 4.74$ ,  $SD = 1.87$ ) or Kurds ( $M = 4.19$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ ),  $ts > 6.60$ ,

$p_s < .001$ , the latter of which did not differ significantly,  $t = -1.22$ ,  $p = .222$ ). Importantly, again, the main effect of narrative and its moderation by concern went above and beyond the differences between Study 1 versus 2 and 3.

**Mediational model.** Testing the mediational model for the combined studies while controlling for the differences between studies, we found a significant indirect effect of the inclusive (vs. competitive) narrative on support for aggressive policies through competitive victimhood. This was the case for those low in concern,  $b = -.50$ ,  $SE = .13$ , 95% CI =  $[-.756, -.257]$ , but not for those high in concern,  $b = .05$ ,  $SE = .13$ , 95% CI =  $[-.206, .311]$  (Hayes, 2013, Model 8).

Together, these meta-analytic results provide support for the hypothesized model presented here by showing the same pattern across all three studies with more statistical power than in any individual study.

## General Discussion

Protracted conflicts are notoriously difficult to resolve. One of the reasons is that each group develops a narrative of competitive victimhood, emphasizing the suffering of the ingroup while ignoring or even denying the suffering of the outgroup. Whereas past research has highlighted the role of conflict narratives in maintaining conflict (Bar-Tal, 1998), we have highlighted the role that they might play in conflict *resolution*, by reducing support for aggressive policies. Across three studies, we presented experimental evidence that exposure to an inclusive narrative that acknowledges both ingroup *and* outgroup suffering can decrease support for anti-outgroup policies, even when people dislike or disagree with the inclusive narrative (as reflected in people's reported preference for competitive over inclusive narratives in Studies 1 and 2), and that it does so through decreasing competitive victimhood beliefs. In Studies 1 and 3 we found that this was true for Jewish Israelis in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Americans in the context of the "war on terror," as long as they were not too concerned that acknowledging outgroup suffering might risk loss of international support. Study 2 extended this research even further by showing that the inclusive narrative is also effective in decreasing competitive victimhood and support for aggressive policies among Turkish Kurds, a low-power group, surprisingly without any effect of concern. When combining the data from the three studies together and controlling for differences between studies, we again found that conflict narratives can decrease support for aggressive policies, and that it does so through a reduction in competitive victimhood and specifically when concern is relatively low rather than high. While the effects we found were small to medium in size, it is important to keep in mind that they resulted from very specific experimental manipulations in the (usually "noisy") presence of hot conflict. Due to these characteristics of our studies, we did not expect large( $r$ ) effects, and would even have considered them troubling. At the same time,

however, in real-life conflict situations where differences between narratives and exposure thereof are greater than those induced by our manipulations, we do fully expect the effects to be larger and, therefore, meaningful.

## The Role of Third Parties in the Development and Reduction of Competitive Victimhood

Our research extends the current literature on competitive victimhood and conflict resolution, making a first step to empirically investigate precursors to competitive victimhood. Our findings indicate that people cling to competitive victimhood to, among other things, ensure outside support for the ingroup. This suggests that third-party groups may have a unique position in intergroup conflict: If they can assuage conflict parties' concerns over losing third-party support in the event of acknowledging the other side's suffering, third parties may be able to facilitate the positive effects of alternative conflict narratives for *all* members of the conflict parties, not just those who are not too concerned to begin with. It should be noted, however, that such third-party influence is likely only effective when the third party is generally supportive of, and trusted by, the conflict party (see Fisher, 2001). Thus, while a third party such as the United States, for example, may appear to be in a good position to influence Israel, it might be less well poised to influence Palestinians. For Palestinians, the United Nations (UN) or European Union (EU) might be in a better position to intervene, as Palestinians have more trust in these third parties than in the United States. It is also important to note that the role of third-party support was measured rather than manipulated, highlighting the need for further research to bolster the causal interpretation of these findings.

In any case, it *is* essential to address the concern over loss of third-party support, or else inclusive victimhood narratives may actually backfire and increase competitive victimhood and support for policies that aggravate rather than alleviate conflict. The data in Studies 1 and 3 not only showed a pattern whereby inclusive conflict narratives reduced competitive victimhood and support for aggressive policies for people low in concern, but also one whereby inclusive conflict narratives *increased* competitive victimhood and support for aggressive policies for those high in concern. While further research on this possibility of "backfire" is needed, it raises the possibility that attempts to foster inclusive victimhood narratives may at times also risk an increase in competitive victimhood and conflict, when underlying concerns about third-party support are not addressed. Of course, this possibility only further emphasizes the importance for third parties to "set the stage" by reassuring conflict groups of their continued support, "even" (or especially) in the event that they acknowledge each other's suffering.

However, the results of Study 2, among low-power Turkish Kurds, emphasize that there is no single predictor for competitive victimhood. Among this low-power group, concern over loss of third-party support did not seem to play any

role in the maintenance or reduction of competitive victimhood. As we noted above, this may be because Turkish Kurds have little expectation of third-party support (Ayata & Yükker, 2005), and this therefore is not a primary component in the formation of competitive victimhood. However, while concern did not moderate the success of the inclusive narrative in Study 2, the conditional indirect effects showed a similar pattern as in Studies 1 and 3; and in the meta-analysis, the interaction of narrative by concern was significant across all three studies, without being further moderated by study. This emphasizes the need to further investigate how competitive victimhood may be motivated by different concerns that are specific to conflict groups as a function of power and other group differences.

### ***Inclusive Conflict Narratives: Do They Need to Be Convincing, or Liked?***

Importantly, the inclusive narrative did not have to be preferred to reduce obstacles to conflict resolution. While recent research has suggested ways of increasing openness to alternative narratives by making people aware of their bias toward perceiving their own narrative as being objectively true (Nasie, Bar-Tal, Pliskin, Nahhas, & Halperin, 2014), our studies show that openness may not be essential for an alternative narrative to help reduce conflict. After all, the inclusive narrative had positive effects despite being preferred less than the competitive narrative (Studies 1 and 2). Our studies do point to the possibility, however, that it may be important for the inclusive narrative to be presented by an ingroup member. Much of the past research on alternative narratives have used “encounter programs,” where alternative narratives are presented by outgroup members (e.g., Bar-On & Kassem, 2004; Hammack, 2006, 2009; Sonnenschein, 2008). However, research on group-directed criticism has found that people are more accepting of viewpoints critical of their own group when it comes from ingroup rather than outgroup members (Hornsey, Oppes, & Svensson, 2002; for a review, see Hornsey & Esposo, 2009). Together with our studies, this might indicate that encounter programs could benefit from a two-stage process in which people first get exposed to the alternative narrative presented by an ingroup member, before discussing different narratives with members from the adversarial (out)group.

### ***Inclusive Conflict Narratives: Does Their Effectiveness Require Motivation or Just “Mere Exposure” to Alternative Information?***

In this article, we have argued for a motivational account of competitive victimhood as well as the effects of inclusive (vs. competitive) conflict narratives. In our view, competitive victimhood serves motivational goals. One key goal we focused on is the goal to attain and maintain third-party support. When people are concerned that acknowledgment of

outgroup suffering will risk loss of third-party support for the ingroup, we hypothesized, people will be less likely to shed any competitive victimhood beliefs they hold. One alternative account for our prediction that inclusive (vs. competitive) narratives will reduce competitive victimhood beliefs and support for conflict escalation is that when presented with a non-standard narrative (i.e., the inclusive narrative), people simply acquire new information (about shared suffering) and their responses reflect this new information.

We believe an information-processing account explains the phenomena we investigated here less well than a motivational account, for reasons both theoretical and empirical. First, an information-processing account assumes that prior to receiving the inclusive victimhood manipulation, group members were unaware of the suffering on both sides of the conflict, and even unaware that the other side believes that it suffers (as well or exclusively). This is arguably extremely unlikely to be the case for Jewish Israelis, who are frequently exposed to descriptions of Palestinian suffering, be it by Palestinians, international media and actors, or even Israeli media and actors (e.g., politicians who respond to outside criticism of Israeli policies or behavior toward Palestinians). Similarly, the Kurdish minority in Turkey frequently hears about the suffering of ethnic Turks from government-linked media and leading political figures in Turkey. Furthermore, research suggests that minorities are particularly aware of beliefs and attitudes of the relevant majority group (Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006; see also Fiske, 1993). Even Americans, who may be generally less knowledgeable about suffering of others in the “U.S. drone war” than the other populations we sampled here, are likely still aware that suffering in the drone war is not restricted to Americans. Similar to Israelis, Americans are often exposed to international criticism (which is also covered by local media) and, through that, to “alternative narratives.”

Even if people have heard of the alternative narrative before, it could still be that their reaction to it simply reflects what they believe the presenter of the narrative would like to hear. Based on our data, this seems rather unlikely to have been the case, however. For one, participants freely and openly reported their dislike of the alternative narrative. Moreover, the observed effects of the narrative occurred for both liberals *and* conservatives (Studies 1 and 3). For these reasons, we believe an information-processing account provides a rather weak explanation of our findings.

The most direct support for the motivational account we endorsed comes from the moderation of the narrative effects by concern. Concern—of any kind—is inherently a motivational construct. Simply being exposed to the inclusive victimhood narrative was insufficient to reduce competitive victimhood and support for aggressive policies. It was only among people who were relatively unconcerned that acknowledging the shared suffering of both parties might lose them third-party support that the inclusive narrative reduced competitive victimhood and support for aggressive policies.



Furthermore, this moderation effect emerged both among Jewish Israelis, a group that is widely aware of the effects of the conflict on the relevant outgroup, and among Americans, a group that is less acutely aware of the effects of the conflict on the relevant outgroup. While it was less clear to what extent this also holds for Study 2's Kurdish Turkish sample, based on our analyses across all three studies, we maintain that the theoretical reasons and the empirical evidence favors a motivational over an information-processing account.

### *The Role of Competitive Victimhood in Maintaining Ongoing (Rather Than Addressing Past) Conflict*

Last but not least, while past research has found that competitive victimhood predicts how people approach past conflict (Noor, Brown, Gonzalez et al., 2008; Noor, Brown, & Prentice, 2008; for reviews, see Noor et al., 2012; Vollhardt, 2012), we showed that competitive victimhood also predicts how people approach the future course of an ongoing conflict. We also showed that although it may help (e.g., Simantov-Nachlieli, Shnabel, & Halabi, 2015), it is not always *necessary* for any one group to affirm itself by winning the competition for victimhood to become more open to conflict resolution. Rather, by acknowledging ingroup *and* outgroup suffering, support for aggressive policies can be reduced without winning such competition. A reduction in competitive victimhood (rather than "winning the competition") is arguably preferable because it can lead to validation of the outgroup's experiences by the ingroup, which may be necessary for groups in conflict to begin the process of reconciliation (Shnabel, Nadler, Ullrich, Dovidio, & Carmi, 2009). Importantly, not winning the competition does not mean that people have to give up on their group's history of victimization and its legitimate grievances. People only have to give up on the notion that the outgroup has no history of victimization, or legitimate grievances, of its own. In other words, acknowledgment of everyone's suffering might pave the way to a future where no one suffers, and no one's grievances are "pushed aside."

### Authors' Note

Study 2 constituted an independent-study undergraduate project of the third author.

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### Supplemental Material

The online supplemental material is available at <http://pspb.sagepub.com/supplemental>.

### Notes

1. Political orientation was affected by the narrative manipulation, such that those who saw the inclusive narrative were more liberal than those who saw the competitive narrative. Therefore, we could not test political orientation as a moderator. However, when we included political orientation as a covariate, the reported effects remained unchanged. We found that political orientation was positively correlated with competitive victimhood, concern about loss of third-party support in response to acknowledgment of shared victimhood, and support for aggressive policies. Importantly, political orientation was not correlated with preference for the narrative. Thus, given the main effect of narrative on preference for the narrative, all participants in our study preferred the competitive narrative, regardless of political orientation.
2. Political orientation was influenced by narrative type as in Study 1. Yet, when included as a covariate, the effects did not change.
3. In line with this interpretation, the Turkish Kurds in this sample were markedly different in their concern about loss of third-party support than either the Israeli sample (Study 1) or the American sample (Study 3). An analysis of concern across all three studies revealed that Turkish Kurds had the least concern about losing third-party support ( $M = 3.79$ ,  $SD = 1.96$ ), compared with both Jewish Israelis ( $M = 5.24$ ,  $SD = 2.15$ ) and Americans ( $M = 4.62$ ,  $SD = 1.70$ ),  $F(1, 552) = 24.51$ ,  $p < .001$ . Furthermore, for both Israelis and Americans, concern was positively correlated with CV and aggressive policies, but concern was uncorrelated with competitive victimhood or aggressive policies among Turkish Kurds.
4. Political orientation was not affected by the narrative manipulation. When entering it as a covariate in all of the analyses, the effects remained unchanged; if anything, they increased in magnitude.
5. In each of the three studies, the scales differed. Studies 1 (0-8) and 3 (1-9) used 9-point scales. Therefore, we transformed the values of Study 1 by adding 1 to all values to make it comparable to Study 3. Study 2 used a 6-point scale, so we performed a linear transformation of the values to a 9-point scale (New Value = [New Scale Maximum – New Scale Minimum] × [Initial Value – Old Scale Minimum] / [Old scale Maximum – Old Scale Minimum] + New Scale Minimum). Thus, for example, a value of 6 becomes a 9 ( $9 = [9 - 1] \times [6 - 1] / [6 - 1] + 1$ ).
6. We conducted the same test while including the study as a full factor in a three-way full factorial model. Both the main effect of narrative and the interactions of narrative by concern remained significant. Neither was qualified by any higher order interaction with the study factor.

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