Conflict, fear, and social identity in Nagaland

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Abstract

This survey study tested the effects of exposure to ethnopolitical conflict and violence and social group identification on psychosocial well-being among a sample Nagas (N = 280). Nagaland is located in North-East India, and for decades has suffered from armed conflict and political instability. It was predicted that reported exposure to conflict would be positively associated with reported levels of fear, which in turn would decrease psychosocial well-being (assessed with the indices life satisfaction, self-esteem, and general health). It was also expected that being strongly identified with being Naga would be positively related to perceived levels of social support, which in turn were predicted to be positively related to well-being. Last but not least, it was hypothesized that conflict and fear would also directly and negatively impact on levels of identification with being Naga: Increased conflict-induced fear was expected to reduce the strength of the group identification. These predictions were confirmed by structural equation modeling.

Keywords: ethnopolitical conflict, social identity, well-being, Nagaland

High up in the hills bordering Burma, where the rhythm of life follows the monsoon seasons, live the Nagas. Nagaland is a part of India and since Indian independence in 1947, the Nagas have endured political instability and conflict. There are over 16 recognised native tribes represented in Nagaland (as well as several smaller ones). Tribal affiliations, as well as Naga identity, are more meaningful to many people in Nagaland than the fact that their homeland forms part of India. It is in this setting that we sought to explore the effects of ethnopolitical conflict and social group identities on psychosocial well-being. Hence, the aim of this paper is to test psychological theories about intergroup conflict and identity processes, whilst also trying to increase public awareness of the plight of the Nagas.

Ethnopolitical conflict and well-being. The impact of armed conflict on physical and psychological health has received notably less attention than the consequences of exposure to (for researchers) more easily accessible forms of violence such as domestic violence. However, those who have studied the topic rather unsurprisingly find negative and long term pathological effects on individuals growing up in conditions of ongoing violence (Pedersen, 2002). Studies in South Africa have documented a series of mental health problems (PTSD, eating and sleep disorders, anxiety) as a consequence of exposure to political violence (Dawes, Tredoux, & Feinstein, 1989; Magwaza, Killian, Petersen, & Pillay, 1993; Slone, Lobel, & Gilat, 1999). Exposure to war, terrorism and ethnopolitical violence has also been found to lead to psychosocial impairment in other contexts (La Greca, Silverman, Vernberg, & Roberts, 2002). For example, maladjustment following conflict has been found in samples in Northern Ireland (Myers, Hewstone, & Cairns, 2009), Israel and Palestine (Punamäki, Qouta, & El Sarraj, 1997; Thabet, Abed, & Vostanis, 2004), and Lebanon (Macksoud & Aber, 1996). However, not everyone exposed to violence manifests clinical symptoms as a result. Many cases of good mental health have been reported amongst victims. Strikingly, those who underwent the objectively most severe tribulations might well not show any

deterioration in mental health at all (Kellezi & Reicher, 2012). It has been suggested that the extent of psychosocial damage depends on the extent to which events are experienced as traumatic (Punamäki et al., 1997).

While previous research has largely focused on describing the consequences of exposure to violence without studying the psychological mechanisms which mediate these effects, one aim of this research was to establish a more fine-grained picture of the psychological processes involved. Specifically, the present study aimed to test whether the impact of exposure to conflict on psychosocial outcomes is due to the emotion of fear. Indeed, exposure to ongoing ethnopolitical violence may leave people feel that their daily routines are consistently interrupted and that their safety is constantly compromised (Dubow et al., 2010). It is plausible to assume that this stress-inducing fear, in turn, might reduce a person's overall life satisfaction, perceived self-efficacy and therefore self-esteem, and general psychosocial health. The first hypothesis, therefore, was that reported exposure to ethnopolitical conflict would be positively related with reported levels of fear, which in turn would have a negative effect on indices of psychosocial well-being.

Social identity and well-being. People vary in the extent to which they attach importance to the different social groups they belong to. While for some people being a citizen of a certain nation, an inhabitant of a certain region, or a member of a certain ethnic group might be crucially important in defining their sense of self, for others these group memberships might barely feature in their psychological reality. It has been highlighted that there are different facets to group identification (e.g. Leach et al., 2008). At a minimum, we can distinguish between a cognitive (awareness of group membership) and an affective (feeling good about group membership) component (Brown, Condor, Matthews, Wade, & Williams, 1986).

Social Identity Theory (SIT, Tajfel & Turner, 1986) proposes that membership in social groups can positively contribute to a sense of self-esteem, and that people strive to positively distinguish their groups from relevant outgroups. Entailed in this assumption, of course, is the idea that identity and identification are inextricably linked to well-being. For example, group membership has been found to be a protector against stress (Haslam, Jetten, Postmes, & Haslam, 2009). Several other theoretical approaches have also highlighted this link, and particularly the protective properties of group identification. Notably, the rejection-identification model (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999) argues that group identification can bolster well-being. This has been confirmed for a range of groups, for example African Americans (Branscombe et al., 1999), multiracial groups (Giamo, Schmitt, & Outten, 2012), and international students (Ramos, Cassidy, Reicher, & Haslam, 2012). The theoretical argument for expecting this effect is that group belonging furnishes people with a heightened sense of belonging and social support, which in turn boosts well-being. A feeling of belonging to a group will give people the sense that there are others they can count and rely on; that they are part of a community which will offer support in the face of adversity. However, just like the assumed mediator 'fear' is typically not measured in studies investigating the effect of conflict on well-being, the variable 'social support' is usually not measured in studies investigating the effect of identification on well-being. Hence, the second aim of the present study was to test explicitly measure all three variables. The second hypothesis was therefore that strong group identification with being Naga would be positively related to perceived social support, which in fact would positively impact on indices of well-being.

Conflict, fear, and social identification. A number of theories propose that adverse intergroup relations increase the extent to which people identify with their ingroups. From a Social Identity perspective, Tajfel and Turner (1986) argue that conflicts of group interests

lead to heightened identification. One reason might be that threats to the ingroup lead to people to 'rally around the flag' (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001), thereby enhancing identification. The rejection-identification model, developed in the context of racial minorities in the USA, also proposes the idea that perceived rejection and discrimination on the basis of group membership will *strengthen* identification with this group.

However, not all research has found a positive link between intergroup adversity and identification (Major & Schmader, 1998). Further, supportive research has mainly focussed on settings with comparatively moderate levels of adversity and discrimination. Research in the SIT tradition has often focussed on ad-hoc groups in lab settings, with minimal relevance outside the context of the study (Tajfel, 1981). And, although many minorities in the USA face real challenges of inequality and discrimination which we do not wish to belittle, as we shall see below their existence is not compromised to the same extent as is the case for many people in Nagaland. A third aim of the present study was to test whether under conditions of extremely adverse intergroup relations one might find different effects of intergroup hostilities on group identification than have typically been found in Europe and the USA. Hence, a third aim of this study was to test the boundaries of the 'rejection/ conflict on identification' effects which have previously been reported.

Why, then, would one expect different patterns under conditions of severe adversity? If people have to fear for their safety, security and livelihood because they are a member of a certain group, and if they do not believe that they can improve their situation because any attempt at collective action is seen as futile, then group belonging is imbued with solely negative consequence for the individual. Under such conditions of perceived hopelessness, it will make little sense for people to be psychologically strongly invested in their group membership which only bears negative consequences. In situations where it is impossible to actually leave the group, people might still psychologically leave the group by disidentifying

with it (Ellemers, van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1990). Hence, we propose that the African American and other minority samples studied previously would, although feeling discriminated against, not have manifested the same level of despair and hopelessness, and would have felt to a lesser extent that their personal safety is compromised. This may be why previous studies found positive associations between perceived discrimination and group identification, and we hypothesise that the valence of this association might be different under extremely adverse intergroup conditions. A third hypothesis of this study, then, was that in the Nagaland setting where political unrest and instability has been ongoing for decades, exposure to conflict and fear would not, as has been demonstrated in the West, be positively related to Naga identification. Instead, we explored the possibility whether the effect on identification might even be negative.

Taken together, then, we would expect exposure to conflict to have a detrimental effect on well-being which is mediated by fear. We would also expect it to have a detrimental effect on well-being because it decreases Naga identification (which is in itself positively linked to well-being, via social support). In other words, although we expect identification to have positive effects on well-being as is suggested by Branscombe et al. (1999), we also expect identification to be decreased – and fear to be increased – by conflict exposure. Identification is expected to have self-protective properties, but it is also expected to be reduced by conflict exposure and fear.

Nagaland: The setting of the study. To back up our claim that the extent of intergroup adversity is larger in Nagaland than in the settings previously studied, it is imperative to describe the context of this study in somewhat more detail. It is one of the eastern most states of India, part of North East India, connected to the rest of India by a thin, narrow stretch of about 20 miles. The tribes native to Nagaland all belong to the Sino-Tibetan family. Today the majority of the Nagas are Christians, although religious minorities such as Muslims and

followers of indigenous religions exist. Although English is the official language in Nagaland, every tribe has its own unique language. Inter-tribal communication is often conducted in Nagamese, the most widely spoken dialect.

Nagaland became a state of the Indian Union in 1963. There had been ideas to incorporate it into the state of India as early as Indian independence in 1947. However, guerilla warfare was soon launched by some groups which wanted to establish the political independence of Nagaland from India. There has been a strong presence of the Indian army in the region ever since, and there are reports that the Indian army has often acted very harshly towards civilians suspected of sympathizing with the guerillas. Many factions feel that the Indian government ignores the interests and concerns of the people in the North East, and a feeling of second-class citizenship prevails. However, there is not one united Naga national front. Rather, there are a whole range of different political factions with different tribal affiliations and political agendas. Although some factions are concerned with the political autonomy of Nagaland from India, other disputes are essentially power struggles between different Naga factions. All factions engage in armed combat which often significantly harms the civilian population, and many rely on extorting money from civilians to fund their activities.

A cease-fire was agreed between the Indian government and the guerrillas in 1964, however a political settlement of the conflict was not achieved. Since then, although it would be incorrect to speak of full-scale hostilities, the stability in the region is precarious, cease-fire violations occur routinely and continuously, and the activities of the political factions continue to threaten the civilian population and compromise the people's ability to go about their daily lives undisturbed despite the second peace agreement signed by the Indian government and various waring factions in 1997. For more information on the Naga situation, see Kotwal (2003), Phillips (2004), and Iralu (2002, 2004, 2005).

Due to the prevalence of unrest it is reasonable to assume that most Nagas, and therefore most of our participants, would have been exposed to some level of conflict (witnessing shootings, money extortions etc.). It also seems likely that Naga identity will be more important than Indian identity, given the political history and geographical remoteness from the Indian political and administrative centers. Although Tribal affiliations are important, prior research clearly demonstrates that Naga identity is very strongly subscribed to by the people of Nagaland. We therefore focused on the implications of Naga identity for well-being. We are unaware of any previous research studying general levels of well-being among the Nagas, and it is difficult to make predictions in this regard. On the one hand, there is evidence from other settings that mean levels of well-being might be low if people have been exposed to conflict-induced stress for a long time. On the other hand, there is also evidence that people are often happy and content even if outside observers believe they should feel bad about themselves and their situation (Crocker & Major, 1989; Tov & Diener, 2007; Zagefka, & Brown, 2005). However, the hypotheses we wanted to investigate were about associations between variables, not about the mean levels manifested on these variables.

To recap, it was proposed that exposure to ethnopolitical conflict would increase fear, which in turn would compromise well-being. In addition, it was proposed that identification with being Naga would increase the extent to which participants felt they benefitted from social support; and social support was expected to positively impact on levels of well-being. Last but not least, we aimed to test whether the impact of conflict and fear in this setting of extreme intergroup hostilities on identification might be negative, and not – as has been found in other contexts – positive.

Method

Participants

Two hundred eighty Nagas participated in the study in 2012 (61% males, 39% females). The mean age of the sample was 25.9 (the age ranged from 20 to 30). Efforts were made to recruit participants from all tribes and different geographical areas of Nagaland (see Table 1). 6% held a degree lower than graduate level, 47% held a degree at graduate level, and 34% had earned a postgraduate degree (missing data on this variable for 13%). 35% of the sample reported being in paid employment. Participation was voluntary and no monetary compensation was offered.

Procedure and Measures

Participants were contacted via online forums (Facebook, The Naga Blog, Naga online Barter and Sell) and asked to complete an online questionnaire. In areas without internet access, hardcopies of the questionnaire were distributed. It was attempted to recruit people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and educational levels. All aspects of the research were in line with American Psychological Association (APA) ethics guidelines. For example, participation was anonymous.

Exposure to conflict was measured with 11 items: Did you or your family ever witnessed gun shooting within the state of Nagaland; Was your house patrolled by any of the factions/ army; Are the taxes (money extortion, not legal taxes) that you or your family pay to the factions a burden to your family; Were any of your personal belongings burnt, stolen or taken by forced by the factions/ army; Have you or your family ever been stopped at checkpoints in Nagaland; Were you or any of your family members injured due to violence caused by the factions/ army; Were you or your family forced to give money to the factions/ army; Were your votes during elections ever predetermined by the factions; Were you or your family threatened in any way by the factions/ army; Were you ever in a physical fight with any members from the factions/ army; Have you ever feared going out at night or to a

particular part of Nagaland because of the killings by the faction/ army (1 = not at all to 5 = very much; α = .73).

Fear was measured with six items: I do not fear stating my views against the government/ factions/ army (reversed); I do not feel bothered by any faction/ army and I can travel alone at night and travel to any part of Nagaland (reversed); I fear talking to strangers as they might be part of a faction/ the army; I fear there might be killings or firings anytime; I fear that my life or my family's life will be in danger if we do not pay the taxes demanded by the factions; the factions/ army will come and hurt my family if I say something against them (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; α = .71).

Naga identification was measured with three items: It is important to me to be Naga; I see myself as Naga; I am glad to be Naga (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; α = .80). The same three items were used to measure identification with the participant's tribe (α = .91) and with being Indian (α = .92).

Perceived *social support* was measured with 9 items based on the items used in the Health and Social Wellbeing Survey 2001 (http://surveynet.ac.uk/index/ _search1099%5cNihsws% 5c4590_2001_quest_casi.pdf#search="survey"): There are people among my family or friends who do things which make me happy; There are people who make me feel loved; There are people who can be relied on no matter what happens; There are people who would see that I was taken care of, if I needed to be; There are people who accept me just as I am; There are people who make me feel an important part of their lives; There are people who give me support and encouragement; There are teachers around who guide me; My school/ college has prepared me well to face problems in life (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; α = .85).

Life satisfaction was assessed with five items taken from Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985): In most ways my life is close to my ideal; The conditions of my life are

excellent; I am satisfied with my life; So far I have gotten the important things I want in life; If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; α = .75).

Self-esteem was assessed with 10 items taken from Rosenberg (1965): On the whole, I am satisfied with myself; At times, I think I am no good at all (reversed); I feel that I have a number of good qualities; I am able to do things as well as most other people; I feel I do not have much to be proud of (reversed); I certainly feel useless at times (reversed); I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others; I wish I could have more respect for myself (reversed); All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure (reversed); I take a positive attitude toward myself (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; α = .73).

General health was measured with 12 items taken from the General Health Questionnaire (http://www.mapi-trust.org/services/ questionnairelicensing/ cataloguequestionnaires/ 52-GHQ): Have you recently… been able to concentrate on whatever you are doing; …lost much sleep over worry (reversed); …felt that you are playing a useful part in things; …felt capable of making decisions about things; …felt under constant strain (reversed); …felt you couldn't overcome you difficulties (reversed); …been able to enjoy your normal day-to-day activities; …been able to face up to your problems; …been feeling unhappy and depressed (reversed); …been losing confidence in yourself (reversed); …been thinking of yourself as a worthless person (reversed); …been feeling reasonably happy, all things considered (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; α = .71).

The questionnaire also included some questions about demographic information and some items which are not of relevance in the present context. Upon completion of the study, participants were thanked and debriefed.

Results

Bivariate correlations between the variables in the study and their mean levels are displayed in Table 2. As is evident and as expected, Naga and Tribe identification were notably higher than Indian identification. This difference was highly significant, as confirmed by a repeated measures ANOVA, F (2, 558) = 190.85, p < .001. Pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni adjustment confirmed that although Naga and Tribe identification did not differ significantly from each other, they both differed significantly from Indian identification at p < .001. Moreover, while Naga and Tribe identification were positively correlated, identification with being Naga and with being Indian were unrelated.

An inspection of the bivariate correlations suggests that identification with the Naga does indeed have protective properties, since this variable is positively related to life satisfaction, self-esteem, and general health. Identification with Tribe seems to have notably weaker protective properties, and there are indications that identification with being Indian might even be negatively related to indices of well-being.

Next, a structural equation model (SEM) was specified using AMOS whereby 'exposure to conflict' predicted 'fear', which in turn predicted a latent factor 'well-being', with the indices 'life satisfaction', 'self-esteem' and 'general health' loading on the latent factor. The path from the latent factor to 'life satisfaction' was fixed to 1. In addition, the model included 'Naga identification' which was predicted both by conflict and fear. 'Naga identification' in turn predicted 'social support', which in turn predicted 'well-being'.

Path weights are displayed in Figure 1. The model fitted the data well. Although the chi square was significant, other fit indices demonstrated a good fit, χ^2 (12) = 25.78, p < .02; CFI = .94; RMSEA = .06. As can be seen in Figure 1, with the exception of the path from conflict to Naga identification all the individual paths were significant and in the hypothesised direction.

Bootstrapping was used to obtain significance values for indirect effects. The total standardized indirect effect of perceived conflict on well-being was -.07, $p < .001$ (90% CI -.08; -.02), the standardized indirect effect of Naga identification on well-being through social support was .07, $p < .002$ (CI .02; .08), the standardized indirect effect of fear on well-being via Naga identification and social support was -.01, $p < .005$ (CI -.02; -.001), and the standardized indirect effect of conflict on Naga identification via fear was -.04, $p < .007$ (CI -.07; -.02). This confirms that the effect of conflict on well-being was indeed mediated by fear, identification, and social support; and that the effect of Naga identification on well-being was mediated by social support. Indirect effects also showed that the effect of fear on well-being is twofold: in addition to the direct negative effect observed in Figure 1, there was also an indirect negative effect, due to fear decreasing identification. Further, as predicted, conflict did not – as previously observed by research in the rejection-identification tradition – have a positive effect on identification. Rather, there was a significant negative indirect effect on identification via fear.

An alternative model was also considered. When people are exposed to adverse conditions (such as threats, fear), they might well have poorer social networks and perceive to benefit from less social support. Moreover, the absence of rich social networks might increase one's sense of isolation, and hence decrease perceived identification with the ingroup. Further, it has been suggested that those who are highly identified are more ambitious for their group (Tropp & Wright, 1999), and they might be more sensitive and vigilant in detecting intergroup conflict. To test this alternative idea, a model was specified whereby fear predicted social support, which in turn predicted identification, which in turn predicted conflict, which in turn predicted well-being. This model fit the data considerably less well than the hypothesized model, $\chi^2 (14) = 83.61$, $p < .001$; CFI = .68; RMSEA = .13, lending further support for our hypotheses.

Discussion

What we are left with, then, is a positive situation for psychological theory, and a challenging one for the people of Nagaland. Conflict and fear had the expected detrimental effects on well-being, and group identification and social support had the expected enhancing effect on well-being. Moreover, although there was a zero relationship between exposure to conflict and identification with being Naga (rather than a positive one as found in previous research, or a negative one as hypothesized), conflict *indirectly reduced* identification via fear. This suggests that intergroup adversity does not always increase identification, as proposed by SIT or the rejection-identification model. Instead, adversity might decrease identification in conditions where people are very scared; in conditions where they have to fear for not only their assets but their personal security. On the plus side, although mean levels of perceived conflict exposure were reasonably high, so were self-reported indices of well-being. This is positive, and suggests that overall participants were not struggling with clinically abnormal levels of psycho-social health. Having said that, the data still clearly show that conflict had an aggravating effect on well-being.

The findings are of theoretical significance with some important implications for the extant literature. First of all, to date there are few studies which demonstrate the negative effects of conflict exposure on well-being in Non-Western settings of ethnopolitical conflict. The present data makes an important contribution in that respect. Secondly, although studies based on Branscombe et al.'s (1999) model have previously demonstrated the positive effects of group identification on well-being, the tacit mediators of this effect have rarely been directly tested in previous studies. The present data presents some solid evidence that identification positively affects well-being *because* it increases perceived social support. In other words, the present study makes a contribution by further untangling some of the processes in the 'black box' linking identification to well-being. Thirdly and maybe most

importantly, the present data suggest that - unlike previously assumed - rejection, discrimination and conflict do not always increase identification. The data highlight that there might be some boundary conditions to this effect. Specifically, it was proposed that a positive effect on identification might emerge under moderate levels of intergroup tension, but that the effect might disappear or even turn negative under very severe levels of intergroup tension where minority members have to fear for not only their prospects and livelihoods but also for their lives.

There are some rather obvious strengths and weaknesses to this study. Our sample, albeit diverse, was not a representative sample, and generalization of the findings should therefore be made with caution. For example, it is possible that conflict exposure effects on well-being might be manifested differently for samples with different educational levels; however this cannot be ascertained without further data collection. Notably, this was a correlational study, and therefore the data cannot really speak to the causal direction of the observed effects. Although it would have been methodologically desirable to have an experimental design, this would have given rise to ethical concerns. While it is theoretically possible to increase conflict salience by, for example, getting people to recall positive (war-related) or negative (non-conflict related) previous experiences, we felt it would be questionable to ask participants to dwell on potentially traumatizing events. However, an alternative approach to study causality are longitudinal designs. It was beyond our resources to implement such a design for the present study, but this would certainly an important avenue for future investigations.

A second point of criticism is also related to the question of study design. As outlined in the introduction, we hypothesized that the effects of conflict on identification would be different to those founds in previous studies, because we reasoned that different patterns should emerge in situations where conflict levels are very high (e.g., implying threats to

personal safety) rather than just moderate, and were hope that things can be improved seems futile. To test this idea properly, of course we would have to conduct a study which experimentally induces such levels of extreme conflict and hopelessness, and compare results to a control condition of comparatively lower group adversity commensurate with that experienced by, for example, ethnic minority members in Europe or the USA. This design, of course, would not get past any modern ethics committee, which is why we would advocate that the results obtained by us here should not be dismissed, but should instead be valued as the best evidence researchers can hope to obtain, given those practical and ethical constraints. It is also worth noting that the present context differs from those previously studied in some other ways. For example, previous studies which found a positive effect of threat on identification examined settings with two clear groupings (e.g. Blacks vs. Whites). In contrast, the present setting is more complex, with the Indian army being juxtapositioned with various Naga sub-factions. Hence, although this study can show that there are certain boundary conditions to the rejection-identification effect, more work will be needed to study the exact nature of these.

A further reason to see the present findings as an important asset is because this research provides insights about the intergroup relations of a new population which to date has never been the focus of psychological research which is traditionally dominated by (student) samples from Europe and the Anglophone world. A PsycInfo search (in May 2013) reveals only 21 studies which mention 'Nagaland', and none of these focus on conflict or intergroup relations (the predominant themes are sex workers and drug use). We would suggest that anyone who believes that inferences about human nature in general should not be based almost exclusively on data from Western students should welcome attempts to access not only hard-done-by but also hard-to-reach populations like the Nagas.

There are several promising avenues for future research. Unfortunately, the Nagas are far from the only minority exposed to ongoing conflict and violence. Countless other examples exist, and it would be interesting to study if the processes uncovered for the Nagas can be replicated in other settings of extreme conflict and adversity. Clearly, accessing such comparable populations will necessitate again leaving the classrooms of Western Universities and instead seeking out indigenous people and other minorities in other parts of the world.

In such future endeavours, it would be beneficial to attempt to measure the source of conflict in a more fine-grained way. The situation in Nagaland is complex, and our measure of conflict exposure measured perceived violations generally, without differentiating those committed by the Indian army and by various Naga factions. This is in line with other research: For example, studies on the perceived discrimination of Black Americans often just ask about a perception of the participants to be victimized, without specifying whether the perpetrators are Whites, Hispanics, fellow Blacks, etc. However, it seems that in future research it will be essential to consider the source of the violations more carefully, in order to obtain a more nuanced understanding of their effect on identity processes.

Moreover, although this study, by focusing on social support, has made a first step at studying the variables which transmit the effects of identification on well-being, there are other variables which could potentially be influential. For example, it is conceivable that the effects of identification on well-being are not only due to increased social support but also an increased sense of uncertainty reduction and meaning (Hogg, 2000), and future studies could aim to include these variables.

Last but not least, more research on the Nagas themselves would fill an important gap. Given the intricacies of the tribal, regional, and national identities which are of relevance, this is an ideal setting to study all kinds of identity processes, ranging from those involving superordinate identities to those of cross-cutting friendships. It would be hoped that any such

research would further aid to increase awareness of the Naga situation, so that although

conflict has prevailed in the region for the last 60 years, the next 60 years will not be marked

by more of the same.

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Table 1

Participant numbers from different Naga tribes

Tribe	N
Ao	80
Angami	41
Chakesang	20
Sumi	25
Lotha	24
Konyak	35
Pochury	6
Rengma	6
Zeliang	6
Sangtam	5
Khiamniungan	4
Tanghkul	4
Yimchunger	3
Phom	3
Rongmei	3
Mao	2
Thikir	1
Missing data	12

Note. The first 5 tribes are those more likely to have internet access because they have a stronger representation in more urbanized areas. The 6th tribe represents the people from the most underdeveloped area.

Table 2

Bivariate correlations and mean levels of variables in the study

	Conflict exposure	Fear	Naga identification	Tribe identification	Indian identification	Social support	Life satisfaction	Self-esteem	General health
Conflict exposure		.25 ***	-.01	.01	-.13 *	-.04	-.15 *	.06	-.04
Fear			-.13 *	-.01	.03	-.12 +	-.27 ***	-.19 **	-.25 ***
Naga identification				.58 ***	.03	.21 ***	.18 **	.16 **	.21 ***
Tribe identification					.13 *	.17 **	.09	.09	.14 *
Indian identification						.10	.12 +	-.17 **	-.07
Social support							.20 **	.25 ***	.30 ***
Life satisfaction								.27 ***	.35 ***
Self esteem									.61 ***
Mean levels	3.31 (.64)	3.18 (.69)	4.53 (.55)	4.46 (.65)	3.49 (1.03)	4.35 (.52)	3.17 (.74)	3.51 (.49)	3.40 (.45)

Note. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; + $p < .06$. *SD*s in parentheses.

Figure Captions

Figure 1

The effects of conflict and Naga identification on well-being.

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