Forgive and Forget? Antecedents and Consequences of Intergroup Forgiveness in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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The present study examines the effects of contact and common-ingroup identification on intergroup forgiveness and outgroup behavioral tendencies. A sample of Bosnian Muslims (N = 180) were asked to report their readiness to forgive the misdeeds committed by Bosnian Serbs during the 1992–95 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A path analysis of the presumed antecedents and consequences of forgiveness revealed that frequent and good quality contact with members from the perpetrator group predicted forgiveness (positively) and desire for social distance (negatively). Moreover, the positive relationship between contact and forgiveness was mediated by empathy and trust towards the outgroup and by perceived outgroup heterogeneity. Common-ingroup identification was also found to be positively associated with forgiveness and negatively with social distance towards the outgroup. Finally, intergroup forgiveness also predicted social distance from the outgroup. The theoretical and applied implications of these findings are discussed.

"The word 'forgiveness' insults me. It makes me a victim again. I have never been in fight with anybody hence there is no need to forgive the other. Nobody has the right to demand from the victim to forgive or to reconcile with the offender. We want neither forgiveness nor reconciliation. All we want is that each perpetrator gets its name and surname, hence to be punished. It is a *shame* to talk about forgiveness while the

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main perpetrators who have killed our children and husbands still have not faced legal prosecutions." (M. Subasic, President of the Association of Citizens "Mothers of Srebrenica and Zepa Enclaves," speaking at an International Conference in Bosnia and Herzegovina: "Pathways to Reconciliation and Global Human Rights," Sarajevo 2005).

The above remarks, made by a prominent member of a group that has experienced much brutality at the hands of another group, provide a graphic counterpoint to the questions with which this paper is concerned: What are the psychological processes that promote a willingness to forgive another group the misdeeds it has perpetrated against them? Is forgiveness functional for intergroup reconciliation? The quotation suggests that there may well be resistance to forgiveness until the perpetrators have acknowledged the victim's losses and received an adequate punishment. Legal accountability, many victims may feel, is the only way to achieve justice. Although legal accountability may well be essential for the restoration of moral equality between "victims" and "perpetrators" and for the creation of a just society, we suggest that punishment and prosecution alone might not be sufficient for the restoration of a political community. In deep-rooted conflicts, such as those in the former Yugoslavia, some forgiveness by the "victims" may also be important for developing sustainable psychological and political reconciliation (Lederach, 1997; Staub, 2006; Tutu, 1999). The question of which psychological processes might promote intergroup forgiveness and whether the willingness to forgive a "perpetrator" group is functional for intergroup reconciliation, as many theorists and practitioners claim, constitutes the main focus of this paper.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation

In interpersonal relationships, forgiveness is typically considered as a prosocial orientation whose aim is the restoration of a relationship with someone who has committed some offence to the "victim" (Scobie & Scobie, 1998). Past research on forgiveness at the interpersonal level has documented its positive effect on prosocial behavior. McCullough, Worthington, and Rachal (1997) showed that forgiveness was associated with approaching rather than avoiding the offender and that the motivation to pursue relationship-constructive actions was mediated by empathy for the offender. Similarly, Karremans and Van Lange (2004) showed that forgiveness predicted various prosocial behaviors towards the offender. Other research has found that a victim's decision to forgive is associated with the release of feelings of anger and revenge towards the offender (Enright, 1991; McCullough, Finchman, & Tsang, 2003).

Consistent with such a conceptualization, *intergroup* forgiveness involves a reduction of feelings of revenge, anger, and mistrust towards the perpetrator group and intentions to understand, approach, and engage with its members. In addition,

members of the perpetrator group might be less inclined to legitimize the committed misdeeds after being forgiven (Staub, 2006). Such a process of engaging with past political violence may ultimately lead to development of more positive intergroup relations and facilitate the healing of political society (Lederach, 1997; Staub, 2006). Although intergroup forgiveness has become a popular research topic in recent years (e.g., Hewstone et al., 2004), only one study has empirically examined both the antecedents and consequences of intergroup forgiveness (Wohl & Branscombe, 2005). Their findings show that when members of the victim group (Jewish participants) were induced to think of themselves as "human" as opposed to the less inclusive category of "Jew," they were more willing to forgive the perpetrator group their transgressions and assigned them less guilt. Higher levels of forgiveness were also related to reduced social distance, both from members and symbols of the perpetrator group.

In the present study, we sought to examine whether forgiveness might indeed play a role in intergroup reconciliation in a real-conflict setting and integrate the research findings on both the antecedents and consequences of the willingness to forgive the offender group its past injustices.

Antecedents of Forgiveness

Intergroup Contact. Recent quantitative (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) and narrative (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew, 1998) reviews have provided support for the "Contact Hypothesis" (Allport, 1954), reaffirming intergroup contact as a key variable in improving intergroup relations. Brown and Hewstone (2005) noted that the beneficial effects of intergroup contact have now been observed on a wide range of outcome measures. These include perceived outgroup variability (Islam & Hewstone, 1993; Paolini, Hewstone, Cairns, & Voci, 2004), mutual accommodation (Harwood, Hewstone, Paolini, & Voci, 2005), positive and negative emotions and associated action tendencies (Tam, 2005), and, most pertinently for our present purposes, trust in the outgroup and intergroup forgiveness (Hewstone et al., 2004; Tam, 2005).

Studies on trust conducted in Northern Ireland showed that contact with friends from the outgroup was positively associated with higher trust in that outgroup and with a greater willingness to forgive it for any past misdeeds (e.g., Hewstone et al., 2004). A willingness to forgive a perpetrator requires, at a minimum, a belief that the perpetrator will not exploit such a move as a sign of weakness. Although the direction of the trust-forgiveness link could still be debated in the sense whether trust increases forgiveness or vice versa, the empirical research shows that there should be *some* degree of trust in the good faith of the other party for forgiveness to occur (Hewstone et al., 2004; Nadler & Liviatan, 2004). If contact *increases* trust (Norman, 2002; Tausch, 2005) and trust seems to facilitate forgiveness, a prima facie case exists for predicting that trust will also mediate the relationship between contact and forgiveness.

Besides trust, Brown and Hewstone (2005) identified several other potential mediators of the effects of contact on a wide range of outcome measures. One of these is empathy (Ensari & Miller, 2002; Harwood et al., 2005; Tam, Hewstone, Harwood, & Voci, 2004), which has also been shown to *improve* outgroup attitudes (Batson et al., 1997). Therefore, it makes good theoretical sense that empathy should be implicated in eliciting forgiveness since it promotes an appreciation of the other's current (distressed) emotional state (Batson, 1998). If empathizing with members of the "perpetrator" group provides insight into feelings of guilt or shame that they might be feeling, then this may be a first step towards forgiveness and, ultimately, reconciliation (McCullough et al., 1997; Noor, Brown, & Prentice, in press). Studies in Northern Ireland and elsewhere have found consistent associations between empathy and forgiveness, even when contact was not assessed (Noor et al., in press). Furthermore, empathy has been found to mediate the effects of contact on intergroup forgiveness (Hewstone et al., 2004).

Previous research (e.g., McCullough et al., 1997; Noor et al., in press) relied mainly on Batson empathy measures (1987), which focus primarily on emotional aspects—i.e., empathic concern. However, given the highly charged context in which our research is based, we judged that it might be still inappropriate to expect Bosniaks to show much emotional empathy with the perpetrator group. Therefore, we decided to focus primarily on a more cognitive form of empathy, namely perspective taking (Davis, Conklin, Smith, & Luce, 1996; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000).

Another factor implicated in contact effects is the perception of outgroup variability. Substantial evidence exists for the "outgroup homogeneity effect," or the tendency to perceive the outgroup as more homogeneous than the ingroup (Ostrom & Sedikides, 1992; Quattrone & Jones, 1980). Depending on the valence of the judgmental dimension, perceiving the outgroup as a homogeneous whole can be detrimental to intergroup relations, and is sometimes associated with more negative attitudes towards the outgroup (Islam & Hewstone, 1993a). Intergroup contact often reduces the perception of outgroup homogeneity (Islam & Hewstone, 1993b; Paolini et al., 2004; Ryan, Bogart, & Vender, 2000; Voci & Hewstone, 2003) and, perhaps through the process of subgrouping (Maurer, Park, & Rothbart, 1995), leads to the separation of negative outgroup exemplars from the image of the outgroup as a whole. This, in turn, may facilitate forgiveness of the group as a whole, as the latter is no longer perceived as a homogenous entity.

In summary, there are reasons to expect that frequent and high-quality intergroup contact might facilitate intergroup forgiveness by enhancing trust of the outgroup, the amount of perspective taking, and the perception of outgroup heterogeneity.

Group identification. As is well known, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) posits a direct link between people's identification with the ingroup and the tendency to positively differentiate the ingroup from outgroups in terms of judgements, attitudes, and behavior, especially in circumstances when that identity

is threatened in some way. Although ingroup favouritism is not always and necessarily linked to negative treatment of the outgroup (e.g., Brewer, 1999), in postconflict situations of hostility and distrust it is plausible to suppose that group identification would be connected to ingroup favouritism and hence antithetical to a pro-outgroup orientation like intergroup forgiveness (Brown, 2000; Castano & Yzerbyt, 1998; Yzerbyt, Castano, Leyens, & Paladino, 2000). The few studies that have examined this link have found that, indeed, the correlation between strength of ingroup identification and intergroup forgiveness is negative (Hewstone et al., 2004; Noor & Brown, 2006; Noor et al., in press).

In the context we focus on here, where the ingroup and the outgroup are also part of a common, superordinate identity, things are more complex. Although subgroup and superordinate identifications can be negatively correlated (e.g., Cinnirella, 1997), these two levels of identification can sometimes be positively correlated, notwithstanding that the two levels may be differently associated with outcome variables such as attitudes towards the outgroup (e.g., Noor & Brown, 2006).

Gaertner and Dovidio (2000), in their Common Ingroup Identity model, have proposed that if intergroup encounters can be engineered so as to foster a more inclusive categorisation of the situation such that the ingroup and outgroup become subsumed into a single enlarged ingroup, intergroup relationships would benefit. The former outgroup members are now seen as ingroup members and bias against them should lessen. In support of this rationale, Karremans, Van Lange, and Holland (2005, Study 1) found a positive association between the level of interpersonal forgiveness and the number of first-person plural pronouns used (e.g., "we," "our"). Of more direct relevance, Wohl and Branscombe (2005) found that, when induced to think of themselves as belonging to their own group, Jewish participants assigned more collective guilt to Germans and were less forgiving than when they were induced to think of themselves in terms of a more inclusive level of identity ("humans"). Similarly, Noor and Brown (2006) found that the more Catholic respondents in Northern Ireland identified with the superordinate category "Northern Ireland," the more forgiveness they showed towards Protestants (the equivalent relationship was not visible among Protestants).

In our research context, the superordinate category (Bosnian) is neither symmetrically nor hierarchically defined by its subcategories. Looking at it from a historical and geographical perspective, there is an important overlap between the Bosnian and Bosniak category which results in a strong positive correlation (Karic, 1998).[1] The identification that is likely to have a positive effect on forgiveness, therefore, is a subgroup-free, common-ingroup identification. Specifically, a high identification with Bosnia (superordinate category) over and beyond the identifi-

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[1] This is not as contradictory as it might seem. In many national and pan-national contexts, such dual identifications can often be observed, as is the case in East and West Germany (e.g., Kessler & Mummendey, 2001) and in the context of the European Union (e.g., Castano, 2004; Cinnirella, 1997; Huici et al., 1997).

cation as Bosniak (subordinate category) should make individuals more prone to forgiveness and less inclined towards social distance.

This rationale is consistent with research on the effects of different levels of group identifications on perception of authority and justice concerns which has shown that positive effects of superordinate identification on social cohesion in multiculturalistic societies do not require people to identify less with their subgroup (Huo, Smith, Tyler, & Lind, 1996). Of utmost relevance here is that people do not have to give up their subgroup identity, only identify *more strongly* with the superordinate group. Moreover, Kessler and Mummendey (2001) showed that xenophobia in Germany is dependent upon relative levels of identification as German and East-German. A salient German categorization did not reduce the intergroup conflict between the subgroups. However, a stronger German categorization relative to the East German categorization was negatively related to public protest (as a type of intergroup conflict). Given the expected relationship between the ingroup and superordinate group, we argue that the best predictor of intergroup reconciliation processes will be the relative strength of these two types of identification.

Research Context

Our research was set in the context of post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH). Between 1992 and 1995, people from BIH suffered one of the most tragic wars ever to happen on European soil since the Holocaust (Malcolm, 1994). These years were characterized by mass killings, rapes, and deportation, particularly of the non-Serbian population. It is estimated that the overall death toll reached approximately 250,000, while a further 800,000 became refugees in their own land (Bosnian Institute, 2005). The resulting transformation of the demographic and social pattern has nevertheless left the essential ethnic proportions unchanged. Bosnia and Herzegovina remains the home of Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks; c. 44%), Serbs (c. 32%), Croats (c. 17%), and other ethnic groups (7%).

Hypotheses

We designed a study to test the following four hypotheses:

H1: Frequent and good quality contact with members of the perpetrator group is expected to predict forgiveness of the outgroup and lessened social distance from it.

H2: The association between contact and forgiveness should be mediated by empathy for and trust in the outgroup and by perceived outgroup heterogeneity.

H3: Relative common identification (i.e., common-ingroup identification) should predict forgiveness.

H4: Intergroup forgiveness should predict social distance.

Method

Participants

One hundred and eighty participants (56 males; 122 females; 2 gender unspecified; age range 17–29: M = 18.16 years) at the University of Sarajevo and one high school (final grade) served as participants in class time and on a voluntary basis. All identified themselves as Bosniaks.

Procedure and Measures

The measures were administered via a questionnaire in the Bosnian language. After a brief explanation of the study on the first page, participants were asked to answer a series of questions regarding the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war. Debriefing took place immediately after the questionnaire administration and lasted for approximately 20 minutes.

Intergroup Contact. This scale was an adaptation of Zagefka and Brown's (2002) measure and consisted of two subscales measuring quantity and quality of the contact participants had with outgroup members. Quantity of the contact was measured with one question: "How many friends do you have among Serbs?" Quality of the contact was assessed using two items: "I feel close to my Serbian friends"; and "My Serbian friends are very similar to me." These two items formed a reliable scale (Cronbach's α = .81). Since we hypothesized that it is not contact, per se, but rather frequent and close contact that facilitates forgiveness, we decided to create a single index of contact by multiplying the scores of quantity and quality of contact (Voci & Hewstone, 2003).[2]

Ingroup Identification. This was assessed using an adaptation of the scale developed by Brown, Condor, Mathews, Wade, and Williams (1986) and included six items aimed at measuring the level of identification with the subgroup category of Bosniaks: "I consider myself as belonging to Bosniaks"; "Being a Bosniak is an important part of my life"; "I identify with Bosniak"; "I feel strong ties with Bosniaks in general"; "Bosniaks are an important group to me"; and "I am glad to be a Bosniak" (Cronbach's α = .93).

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[2] Prior to the multiplication, the quantity scores were recoded so that 0 corresponded to no self-reported contact and 4 to high amount of contact. This enabled us to keep 53 participants who reported to have no contact at all in the new scale. In order to reduce the highly skewed distribution (skewness = 1.32) of the new computed contact index, we performed a square root transformation which resulted in reduction of skewness (= .30) of the distribution.

Common-Ingroup Identification. The items were equivalent to those used in the ingroup identification scale with a change of category. "Bosniaks" was replaced with the superordinate category "Bosnians" (e.g., "I consider myself as belonging to Bosnians."[3]) (Cronbach's α = .92).

Out-group trust was originally assessed with six items. Three items were adapted from Hewstone et al. (2004; "Most Serbs can not be trusted to deliver on their promises"; "I think that Serbs can be trusted on their apology"; and "Only few members of Serbian nation can be trusted"), and the other three were developed for the purposes of the present study ("Despite the events that occurred during the war, I trust Serbs"; "I think that Bosniaks can't trust the Serbs after everything they have done during the war"; and "Intergroup trust is an important step towards the reconciliation"). Factor analysis of these six items resulted in a two-factor solution with items 3 and 6 loading on a second factor (loadings from .68 to .81). The cross-loadings were <.40. These two items were eliminated, and a composite score with the remaining four was computed (Cronbach's alpha = .66).

Empathy. This scale consisted of five items tapping the ability to take the perspective of the outgroup: "I sometimes think how Serbs might have felt during the war"; "Usually, I am able to understand Serbs point of view"; "I try to see things that happened during the war from the point of Serbs"; "I try to understand how Serbs might feel after everything they have done"; and "I think it must be difficult for Serbs to deal with the consequences of war." Factor analysis resulted in a single-factor solution (loadings from .56 to .80; Cronbach's α = .76).

Perceived outgroup heterogeneity. This scale was measured using four items derived from Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead (1998): "I think all Serbs are basically very similar in their nature"; "Although Serbs constitute a national group, there are many differences between them"; "I don't think that Serbs are all alike"; and "Serbian people feel and think pretty much in the same way." Factor analysis indicated a two-factor solution with items 1 and 4 loading on the second factor .83 to .89 (cross-loadings < .40). Inspection of the items' content suggested that items 1 and 4 reflected more of an essentialist outgroup perception, and we therefore decided to eliminate these two items. The final outgroup heterogeneity scale was reliable (Cronbach's α = .72). *Intergroup forgiveness* was measured by four items which were adaptations of items devised by Noor and Brown (2006): "I think that Bosniaks should forgive Serbs their misdeeds"; "It is important that Bosniaks never forgive the wrongdoings committed by the Serbs during the war"; "Bosnia will never move forward until Bosniaks forgive Serbs their misdeeds"; and "I am prepared to forgive Serbs their misdeeds." All items loaded on one factor (loadings from .53 to .72; Cronbach's α = .80).

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[3] Bosnian refers to a common-ingroup category (Bosnia and Herzegovina) which includes various ethnic sub-categories such as Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), Bosnian Serbs, and Croats.

Social distance was measured with four approach and five avoidance items: "I would like to have more friends from a Serbian ethnic background"; "I would like to participate in a exchange program with the University from the Republic of Srpska"; "I would not mind being in a close relationship with somebody else than Bosniak"; "I wouldn't mind if my next door neighbor was a Serb"; "I think that only Bosniaks should live in Bosnia"; "It is much better if Bosniaks keep their distance from other ethnic groups in social relationship"; "I doubt that we will ever be able to live together in a peaceful way"; "If I was to marry, I would rather it was a Bosniak"; and "Even if I was offered my dream job, I would never move to a Serbian majority area in BIH." The measures of contact and social distance are distinct since the former captures the quality of a relationship one already *has* with particular outgroup members while the latter measures one's attitudes towards seeking or avoiding a relationship with the outgroup *in general*. A factor analysis of the contact and social distance items yielded a two-factor solution: the first factor (eigenvalue = 4.63) comprised all five avoidance items and one approach item, "I would like to participate in an exchange program with the University from the Republic of Srpska" (loadings from .58 to .82). The second factor (eigen-value = 1.28) comprised all contact items and the other three approach items. In order to preserve the face-validity of our contact measure, we eliminated the three approach items from further analysis. The resulting social distance scale was reliable (Cronbach's α = .78).

With the exception of demographic information (gender, age, place of birth, course of study, education level of parents, ethnicity, nationality, and place of living during the war) and the contact quantity question, all items were answered on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree").

Results

Preliminary analyses revealed that none of the demographic measures had any significant effect on the criterion variables, either singly or in interaction with other predictors and so these were not included in the analyses presented below.

As expected, both levels of categorization were not exclusive but moderately well correlated ($r(176)$ = .62, $p < .001$). We thus obtained Bosniak-free Bosnian identification by regressing the latter on the former and saving standardized residuals.

Bivariate correlations were mostly in the predicted directions. It is also worth noting that the new index of relative higher common identification was not sig-nificantly correlated with the contact measure. This pattern is likely due to the high correlation between common and ingroup identification. The latter in turn showed an expected negative relationship with intergroup contact ($r(161) = -.33$, $p < .001$). See Table 1 for correlations, means, and standard deviations for all measured variables.

Table 1. Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Measured Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Contact	–	$-.05^{n.s.}$	$.48^{***}$	$.31^{***}$	$.56^{***}$	$.44^{**}$	$-.55^{***}$
2. Relative common identification		–	$-.06^{n.s.}$	$.09^{n.s.}$	$.05^{n.s.}$	$.13\dagger$	$-.18^{*}$
3. Outgroup heterogeneity			–	$.25^{**}$	$.54^{***}$	$.59^{***}$	$-.51^{***}$
4. Outgroup trust				–	$.27^{***}$	$.33^{***}$	$-.28^{***}$
5. Empathy					–	$.43^{***}$	$-.43^{***}$
6. Intergroup forgiveness						–	$.58^{***}$
7. Social distance							–
M	1.93	.04	3.66	3.05	4.34	3.18	4.47
SD	1.67	.94	1.19	1.55	1.74	1.68	1.47

Notes. N = 163.
$\dagger p < .10$; $^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$; two-tailed.

The Predictive Model

In order to test our hypotheses in an integrated manner, we designed and tested a structural equation model. The model includes all the hypotheses and it should be noted that the relationship between contact and forgiveness was predicted to be indirect. Hence, we expected contact effects to be mediated by perceived outgroup heterogeneity, outgroup trust, and empathy. In addition, we expected intergroup forgiveness to predict seeking of social distance.

Results are reported in Figure 1 and fit indices for the model are reported in Table 2. As can be seen, the model shows a reasonably good fit, and all the expected paths were significant and strong. Contact had direct positive effects on perceived outgroup heterogeneity ($\beta = .56$, $p < .001$), outgroup trust ($\beta = .48$, $p < .001$), empathy ($\beta = .32$, $p < .001$), and social distance ($\beta = -.36$, $p < .001$). Moreover, the Lagrange multiplier test for model modification indicated that including additional parameters (e.g., the direct relationship between contact and forgiveness) would not improve the fit of the model. Therefore, the mediation hypothesis of contact effects on forgiveness being mediated by perceived outgroup heterogeneity, outgroup trust, and empathy is supported.

Relative stronger common-ingroup identification proved to have a direct positive effect on forgiveness ($\beta = .15$, $p < .05$) and a direct negative effect on social distance ($\beta = -.13$, $p < .05$). Furthermore, intergroup forgiveness significantly predicted social distance ($\beta = -.45$, $p < .001$). The proportion of variance explained was substantial for both forgiveness (44%) and social distance (48%).

Since alternative models are conceivable, we tested the fit of these. As suggested by interpersonal forgiveness literature, higher tendency to forgive the offender its offence can be related to increased trust in the offender. Therefore, we tested the model (B) in which forgiveness would predict trust. This alternative
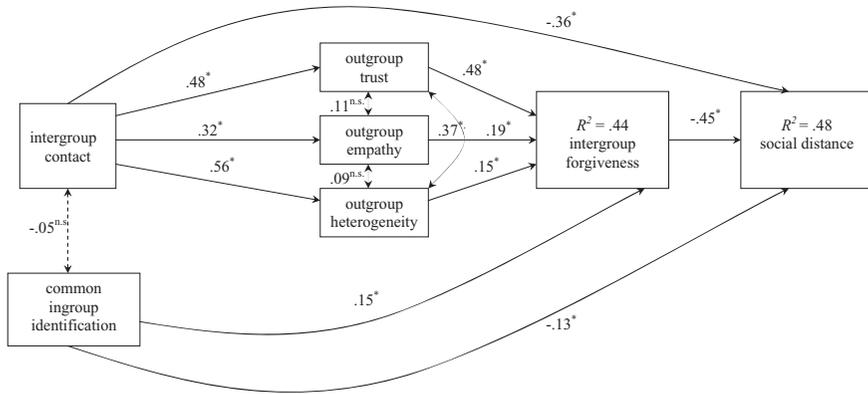
$X^2 = 10.61$, $df = 7$, $p = .16$. *CFI* = .989; *GFI* = .981; *RMSEA* = .057.

Figure 1. Structural equation model. Model A: Contact and common-ingroup identification effects on forgiveness and behavioral tendencies towards the outgroup. Dashed line represents a non-significant pathway.

Table 2. Fit Indices

	χ^2	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Model A	10.61 (p = .16)	0.989	0.981	0.057
Model B	66.20 (p < .001)	0.829	0.896	0.20
Model C	16.35 (p < .05)	0.975	0.972	0.08

scenario did not provide a good fit with the data and was certainly worse than Model A (see Table 2 for fit indices).

Given that the present study is correlational and cannot provide unambiguous inferences about the causal direction between the variables, a completely reversed model (C) is also possible: here forgiveness would predict trust, empathy, and outgroup heterogeneity, and these in turn would be related to intergroup contact. The fit of this model proved to be marginally significant and inferior to that of our hypothesized Model A (see Table 2).

Discussion

In this contribution we focused on some of the social psychological factors that are thought to play a key role in the process of reconciliation, with a particular emphasis on the antecedents and consequences of forgiveness. Building on previous findings and theoretical models from both the interpersonal and, particularly, intergroup literature, we found that positive intergroup contact and high common-ingroup identification led to greater forgiveness which, in turn, was associated

with lessened social distance from the outgroup. Moreover, as predicted, inter-group contact impacted on forgiveness through empathy for and trust in the outgroup and the perception of outgroup variability.

This finding of beneficial contact effects on intergroup reconciliation is consistent with previous theorizing and research (e.g., Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew, 1998). One way of promoting intergroup forgiveness which, in turn, decreases distancing from the outgroup seems to be bringing together members of conflicting groups and promoting both frequent and good quality contact. As found elsewhere (Brown & Hewstone, 2005), we observed that an increase in willingness to understand how the other party might feel (empathy), the development of trust, and an increase in perceived outgroup variability all played crucial roles in linking contact to forgiveness.

Another process significantly implicated in the willingness to forgive the group as a whole seems to be increased perception of outgroup heterogeneity. Since good quality contact includes engagement with individual outgroup members, it seems to promote some cognitive differentiation between "good" and "bad" outgroup members. This process of cognitive differentiation promotes a tendency to associate the group as a whole with "good" rather than with "bad" outgroup members and hence greater willingness to forgive.

In regard to identification effects, we argued that in the context where two levels of categorization are not exclusive and are also highly salient, the best predictor of reconciliation processes would be the relative strength of common-ingroup categorization. Our hypothesis was supported: A stronger preference for a common-ingroup categorization level enhanced willingness to forgive members of a perpetrator group its past transgressions and decreased avoidance-related responses. A preference for identifying with a superordinate, relative to a subordinate, level of inclusion positively predicted reconciliation processes. Although common-ingroup identification per se was not significantly related to either forgiveness or behavioral tendencies, the finding of significant and positive effects of relative preference for the common-ingroup categorization is in line with common-ingroup identity theorizing (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000) and previous research demonstrating the importance of relative identification levels (Kessler & Mummendey, 2001).

Overall, we believe that this paper makes a valuable contribution by integrating the existing findings on sociopsychological precursors of intergroup forgiveness and behavioral intergroup tendencies that can follow from forgiveness. Furthermore, contrary to most investigations of intergroup relations, this study was conducted in the context of recently experienced, actual intergroup violence. In our opinion, this lends additional significance to the data and the conclusions drawn here with respect to psychological theory and provides some practical indications that could influence policy.

Working with real groups which have recently engaged in violent conflict has some disadvantages, however. We could not manipulate some of the factors that

we theorized to be exogenous variables in our model. In order to address the obvious question regarding the direction of causality between the various variables, we tested alternative plausible models. Although the model with the reversed position of trust and forgiveness did show a poorer fit to the data than our own model, the fully reversed model with forgiveness as an exogenous variable should not be ruled out. This model suggests that an initial tendency to forgive the perpetrator group might be a significant point of departure for processes such as trust, empathy, outgroup variability, and contact to occur in the first place. Therefore, a next plausible suggestion would be to test the effects of one's *general* proneness to forgive one *specific* type of intergroup forgiveness. In addition, longitudinal studies would be an obvious next step since they permit stronger inferences about causality. Because of the difficulty of collecting data on such issues in the present context, we limited ourselves to a cross-sectional study.

Working on the assumption that intergroup contact plays a causal role on the variables investigated here, we would also offer some reflections regarding the significance of the present findings for policymaking. As can be seen from our data, the majority of participants reported low inclination to forgive members of the offender group their past wrongdoings (M = 3.22). This pattern of relatively low readiness to forgive might be due to several reasons. Given the rather high mean value of ingroup identification (M = 6.28) and well-established negative effects of ingroup identification on restoration of intergroup relations (Brown, 2000; Yzerbyt et al., 2000), participants might be protecting their group by "not forgiving" the pain and injustices experienced in the recent past. Another explanation could be a tendency to associate forgiveness with forgetting. These two concepts are often interchangeable in human perception, and so low scores on intergroup forgiveness might be also due to a resistance to forget the past (Tutu, 1999). An additional explanation could be offered by the recently conducted research on collective guilt and shame in the same context (Brown & Cehajic, in press), where Bosnian Serbs constituted the sample (in this study they served as the outgroup). Very low levels of both guilt and shame feelings were explained by a low inclination to accept that members of the ingroup had committed atrocities in the past. Such unwillingness to acknowledge the misdeeds by one's group is unlikely to promote intergroup forgiveness. Rather, it will likely maintain negative intergroup relations and quite possibly worsen them. Therefore, official acknowledgement of misdeeds by members from the offender group could be one way of promoting conciliatory changes between members of conflicting groups.

Given the beneficial effects of intergroup contact via empathy and trust, one way of restoring intergroup relations by promoting forgiveness would be increasing the opportunity for engaged, structured, and good quality contact between members of conflicting groups. The efforts, initiated by OHR (Office of High Representatives), to establish centralized and unified political (OHR, 2005) and social institutions (e.g., schools) serve as good examples of creating structured contact situations serving the interests of both sides. For example, in Brcko (a town

in BIH) children from different communities study in the same classes; the police, justice system, and district council are integrated. Perhaps it is no accident that Brcko is also one of the most prosperous places in Bosnia, thus providing a model of ethnic harmony (Popham, 2005).

Moreover, methods of enhancing a common-ingroup identification (relative to subgroup identification) also would seem to be efficacious. The beneficial effects of these variables were supported by this study. However, the current political structure with two entities within one state does not facilitate the development of such a common identity but rather sustains the group divisions. Nationalistic parties, which represent the three major ethnic communities and which foster community segregation, are still in power.

Therefore, one practical suggestion for restoration of damaged intergroup relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina could be creation of a new constitution with centralized government. Such a new unified political structure might promote both more frequent intergroup contact and the creation of a politically and psychologically meaningful common-ingroup identification. Clearly, the main challenges to such institutional changes are precisely those psychological factors investigated here—the establishment of dialogue among communities that is based on trust and empathy and that is also focused on the achievement of desired common objectives.

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