

TARGET ARTICLE

## Social-Psychological Interventions for Intergroup Reconciliation: An Emotion Regulation Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

Intergroup reconciliation is a requirement for lasting peace in the context of intergroup conflicts. In this article, we offer an emotion regulation perspective on social-psychological interventions aimed at facilitating intergroup reconciliation. In the first section of the article, we conceptualize intergroup reconciliation as an emotion-regulation process involving positive affective change and offer a framework that integrates the emotion regulation and intergroup reconciliation literatures. In the sections that follow, we review social-psychological interventions that involve changes in beliefs and identity and assess their effects on specific intergroup emotions pertinent for intergroup reconciliation. More specifically, we focus our discussion on specific reconciliation-oriented intervention strategies and their relation to emotions pertinent for facilitating reconciliation, including intergroup hatred, anger, guilt, hope, and empathy. In the final section, we consider key implications and growth points for the field of intergroup reconciliation.

### KEYWORDS

conflict resolution; emotion regulation; group-based emotions; intergroup reconciliation

### Introduction

Violent and protracted intergroup conflicts, such as those in Syria, Libya, Egypt, South Sudan, and Israel, saturate the headlines in Western media for weeks at a time, sometime months. They then disappear, supplanted by new conflicts, or what are perceived to be more newsworthy stories. Some of these conflicts continue, at various levels of intensity, for years or even decades. In other cases, such as in the Balkans' wars, violence comes to an end with a peace settlement.

However, even after successful conflict resolution and an established agreement over resources, intergroup relations usually remain damaged (e.g., the cases of Bosnia and Herzegovina or the case of Egypt and Israel). This is because formal agreements do not fully resolve issues such as (but not limited to) responsibility, victimization, justice, and punishment. Without understating the importance of conflict cessation or formal peace agreements—which revolve mostly around pragmatic and tangible issues—(re)establishment of sustainable, peaceful, and positive relations between the former adversaries requires deep psychological changes (e.g., Knox & Quirk, 2001; Lederach, 1997; Wilmer, 1998).

Generally speaking, these psychological changes include alterations in beliefs, emotions, identity, and behavioral intentions (Bar-Tal, 2000; Kriesberg, 1998; Lederach, 1997). From this perspective, intergroup reconciliation can be defined as a postconflict resolution process of removing psychological barriers such as negative emotions and beliefs about former/current enemy groups with the goal of creating or restoring

positive and sustainable intergroup relations (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). Given that reconciliation takes place mostly after the formal disagreements have already been addressed (during the conflict resolution phase), and given its focus on restoring harmonious relationships between adversaries, we understand intergroup reconciliation as centrally involving positive affective change.

Indeed, we wish to argue that one of the main dimensions of intergroup reconciliation is helping individuals and societies let go of past and current destructive emotions, such as anger, hatred, and despair, and adopt a more hopeful and empathetic view of the outgroup and the future of the intergroup relationship more broadly. This is particularly important where considerable violence has taken place between groups and when these groups are defined on the grounds of ethnicity, nationality, or religion (Bar-Tal & Čehajić-Clancy, 2013; Čehajić, Brown & Castano 2008). In this review, we offer a perspective that conceptualizes intergroup reconciliation as an emotion-regulation process with a target of intergroup emotions. To set the stage, we first describe the role of intergroup emotions in conflict situations and introduce a broad theoretical framework for analyzing emotion regulation processes involved in intergroup reconciliation. Then, we move on to discussing specific social-psychological and reconciliation-oriented interventions while focusing on the way these interventions' effectiveness is contingent upon their ability to regulate discrete relevant intergroup emotions.

## Emotion, Emotion Regulation, and Reconciliation

### Emotions in Conflict Situations

According to William James's (1884) classical perspective, emotions are flexible response sequences (Frijda, 1986; Scherer, 1984) that are called forth whenever an individual evaluates a situation as offering important challenges or opportunities (Tooby & Cosmides, 1990). In other words, emotions transform an objective event into a motivation to respond to it in a particular manner. As such, it is not a surprise to find that emotions in conflict and postconflict societies powerfully shape reactions to conflict-related events (Bar-Tal, 2007; Halperin, 2014, 2015; Halperin, Cohen-Chen, & Goldenberg, 2014; Peterson & Flanders, 2002; Staub, 2005). They lead to the formation of intra- and intergroup attitudes (Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002; Stephan & Stephan, 1985), motivate support for certain policies, and bias group membership (Cole, Balcetis, & Dunning, 2013). Important to note, many studies show that the effect of intergroup emotions on aggressive and conciliatory intergroup attitudes goes above and beyond the effects of other prominent factors such as ideology (Halperin, Russell, Dweck, & Gross, 2011; Maoz & McCauley, 2008) and socioeconomic conditions (Maoz & McCauley, 2008). In particular reference to reconciliation processes, negative intergroup emotions undermine positive social-psychological processes such as empathy (Tam et al., 2007) or the ability to imagine a better future (Cohen-Chen, Crisp, & Halperin, 2015).

It is known that emotions are not felt only on the individual level. Indeed, empirical research stemming from intergroup emotions theory clearly shows that people feel emotions on behalf of their group (Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000; Mackie & Smith, 2002). In an important contribution, Smith (1993) argued that when group memberships are salient, people can feel emotions on account of their group's position or treatment, even if they have had little or no personal experience of the actual intergroup situations themselves. Drawn from social identity and self-categorization theories (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), this general hypothesis provided the basis for the first theorizing and research into group-based emotions<sup>1</sup> (Branscombe & Doosje, 2004; Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 1998). According to this approach, group-based emotions are emotions that are dependent upon an individual's membership in a particular social group and occur in response to events that have perceived relevance for the group as a whole (Mackie et al., 2000; Smith, 1993).

Such group-based emotions seem particularly relevant for (post)conflict contexts. For example, Reifen-Tagar, Federico, and Halperin (2011) showed that Americans' anger levels toward a Syrian influenced the extent to which participants were willing to consider creative ways to promote reconciliation between the United States and Syria (Halperin &

Gross, 2011). Other studies have examined the role played by group-based moral emotions such as guilt and shame in promoting intergroup compensation and apologies (Brown & Čehajić, 2008; Brown, González, Zagefka, Manzi, & Čehajić, 2008; Doosje et al., 1998; Iyer, Leach, & Crosby, 2003; Wohl, Branscombe, & Klar, 2006) group-based hope as a catalysts of support for policies aimed at forming better and more harmonious intergroup future (Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Crisp, & Gross, 2014; Cohen-Chen et al., 2015) and intergroup empathy as an important predictor of intergroup forgiveness (Čehajić et al., 2008).

Naturally, when people live large parts of their lives in a conflict zone, they accumulate many experiences of extreme fear, anger, and despair. Often these aggregated experiences of negative emotions turn these emotions into emotional sentiment, which refers to enduring negative feelings toward the outgroup or the conflict itself that are not contingent upon specific action or behavior of that group (Halperin & Gross, 2011). The transformation of momentary individual-level and intergroup emotions into long-term sentiments is one reason that postconflict reconciliation is so difficult to address. Because these emotions are based on collective experiences and shared interpretations (i.e., social appraisals) of past conflict-related events, they are experienced on the group level and result in emotional goals and action tendencies that powerfully and pervasively influence people's motivations and policy support in a postconflict era. As such, any attempt to let go of past anger, fear, and hatred must go through a process of emotional change on the individual and group level, a process referred to as emotion regulation.

### Emotion Regulation in Conflict Situations

The idea that even powerful emotions can be modified is the cornerstone of a rapidly developing field of research in affective science that is concerned with emotion regulation, defined as the processes that influence which emotions we have, when we have them, and how we experience and express these emotions (Gross, 2014). It is interesting that, to the best of our knowledge, the current review constitutes the first attempt to directly integrate the emotion regulation literature and the intergroup reconciliation literature.

Because emotions are multicomponential processes that unfold over time, emotion regulation may involve changes in various components of the emotional process, including the latency, rise time, magnitude, duration, or offset of responses in behavioral, experiential, or physiological domains (Gross & Thompson, 2007). Emotion regulation may increase or decrease the intensity and/or duration of either negative or positive emotions, and the defining feature of emotion regulation is the activation of a goal to modify emotion generation (Sheppes & Gross, 2011).

According to the process model of emotion regulation (see elaborated review of the model in the following section), there are five families of emotion regulation processes—situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change, and response modulation—distinguished by the point in the emotion-

<sup>1</sup> The terms *group-based emotions* and *intergroup emotions* are often used interchangeably in the literature (Iyer & Leach, 2008). Here we treat group-based emotions as all emotions that are dependent upon an individual's self-categorization as a member of a particular social group. Intergroup emotions are a subgroup of group-based emotions that are targeted at the outgroup.

generative process at which they have their primary impact (Gross, 1998). Although it is beyond the scope of the current review to address each of these families and all the different strategies they contain, it is important to understand that methods for emotion regulation are varied and tackle a range of aspects of the emotional process.

Most of the research on emotion regulation has thus far focused on individuals or dyads. However, many of the insights from such research are applicable to intergroup conflicts. Some recent examples of intergroup emotion regulation in conflict situations can be found in studies conducted in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (for a review, see Halperin & Pliskin, 2015). These studies have focused on one theoretically important and commonly used form of emotion regulation, namely, cognitive reappraisal, a type of cognitive change strategy in which one changes the meaning of a situation in order to modify its emotional impact.

The first evidence of a role for cognitive reappraisal in mitigating extreme attitudes in the context of intergroup conflicts was obtained via a nationwide survey conducted during Operation Cast Lead, a war between Israelis and Palestinians in Gaza (Halperin & Gross, 2011). Findings indicated that Israelis who used reappraisal more frequently in their everyday lives were more supportive of providing humanitarian aid to Palestinian citizens.

To determine whether reappraisal played a causal role, reappraisal was manipulated, and support for providing humanitarian aid to Palestinians in Gaza was assessed (Halperin, Porat, Tamir, & Gross, 2013, Study 1). In this study, Jewish-Israeli participants were randomly assigned either to an experimental condition (a 15- to 20-min reappraisal training) or to a control condition. All participants then watched a short anger-inducing presentation on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in Gaza and rated their emotional experiences and indicated their positions regarding Israel's response to the events depicted in the presentation. As hypothesized, participants who were trained in reappraisal were significantly more supportive of providing humanitarian aid to Palestinians. It was not clear, however, how long the effects of a reappraisal intervention might last, particularly in the midst of an ongoing conflict.

To address this question, Jewish-Israeli participants were recruited 1 week before the Palestinian United Nations bid in September 2011. As before, half the participants were randomly assigned to a reappraisal training group, and the other half received no reappraisal training. Participants' emotional and political responses were then assessed 1 week later and 5 months later (Halperin, Pliskin, Saguy, Liberman, & Gross, 2013, Study 2). Findings indicated that participants trained to reappraise (vs. not) showed lesser negative emotion and greater support for conciliatory rather than aggressive political policies toward Palestinians 1 week and 5 months after training. The effects of reappraisal on support for peaceful policies 5 months later were mediated by changes in anger.

These findings suggest not only that emotions play a pivotal role for intergroup relations in (post)conflict contexts but that decreasing negative emotions and facilitating more positive emotions (termed *emotion regulation*) can be a key psychological mechanism for achieving reconciliation. Next we offer a

new model specifying reconciliation as primarily an emotion-regulation process, which, in our view, is the first attempt at conceptualizing intergroup reconciliation in postconflict societies as a process aimed at regulating specific intergroup emotions.

### **An Emotion Regulation Perspective on Intergroup Reconciliation**

Given that reconciliation occurs when groups resist their default negative emotions, which naturally perpetuate existing conflicts (Bar-Tal, 2007; Bar-Tal, Halperin, & Pliskin, 2015), in this article we argue that the process of reconciliation can be understood through the lens of emotion regulation. In particular, we draw upon the process model of emotion regulation (Gross, 1998) and its subsequent implementation to group-based emotions (Goldenberg, Halperin, van Zomeren, & Gross, 2015) as well as the important distinction recently made between direct and indirect emotion regulation (Halperin, 2014; Halperin et al., 2014).

According to the *process model of emotion regulation* (Gross, 1998; Gross, 2008), emotions may be regulated at one of several key points in the emotion-generative process. The emotion-generative process begins with a situation, either external (e.g., I feel disgust when I encounter a rat in the street) or internal (e.g., I think about a rat and feel disgust). Therefore, it is possible to regulate an emotion either by acting to make it more likely that we will be in situations that we expect will give rise to desired emotions (situation selection) or by investing efforts in order to modify the situation in a way that will alter its emotional impact (situation modification).

A situation gives rise to emotion only if it is attended to; therefore, a related regulatory strategy (attentional deployment) would be to shift one's attention to or away from the emotion-eliciting event to change the emotional trajectory (Gross & Thompson, 2007). Assuming that a situation receives attention, it may give rise to appraisals that constitute the meaning and relevance of the situation in the eyes of the individual (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1966; Roseman, 1984; Scherer, 1984). These appraisal dimensions include pleasantness, anticipated effort, certainty, perceived obstacles, responsibility attribution (to the self, other, or situation), and relative strength. Therefore, the corresponding regulatory process of the appraisal process involves changing one's thinking on one or more of these dimensions in order to change one's emotional response (cognitive change). Finally, there are also regulation strategies that focus on modifying the emotional responses themselves once they have arisen. It is important to note that the process model does not indicate that the emotional sequence is a single instance. On the contrary, the different stages in the process model represent a constantly repeating loop and are dynamically adjusted in accordance with changes in one's inner or outer world, or in one's goals.

The *process model of group-based emotion regulation* (Goldenberg et al., 2015) is an application of the process model of emotion regulation to group-based emotions. The working assumption behind this application of the process model is that, in their structure, regulatory strategies of group-based emotions are not different from regulatory strategies of non-

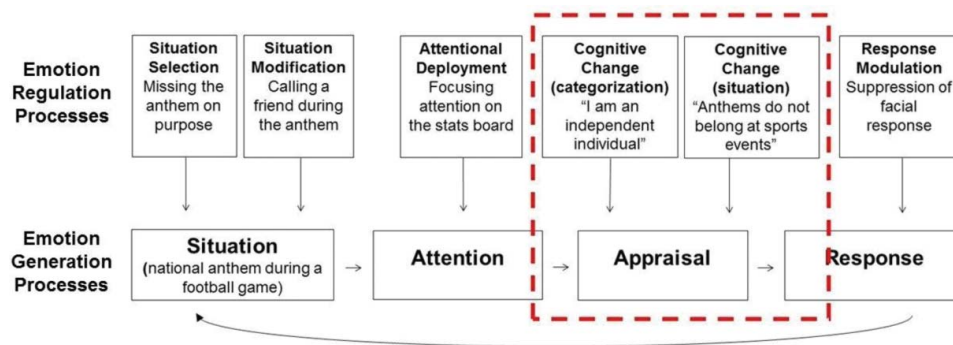


Figure 1. The process model of group-based emotion regulation.

group-based emotions. However, the specification of each strategy can shed new light on that way that these strategies play a role in many intra- and intergroup interactions and contexts (see Figure 1). In the current article we focus on a specific subset of emotion regulation strategies (outlined in the box in Figure 1) that target changes in the appraisals that trigger emotional responses. We chose to focus specifically on cognitive change, as the majority of the current literature on emotions in reconciliation processes can be interpreted using this stage. However, we are certain that future examination of the use of other emotion regulation strategies could be extremely useful to the understanding of reconciliation.

When applied to group-based emotions and to the context of postconflict reconciliation, it is important to differentiate between two possible targets of cognitive change: the situation itself versus one's level of categorization. Focusing first on changing the meaning of a situation, one may take a broader, more objective view of a certain media report and reach the conclusion that it presents only one angle of the story (McRae, Ciesielski, & Gross, 2012). In a way, the context of postconflict reconciliation provides a fertile ground for such process, given that the destructive events, which stimulated the negative emotions, have stopped or appear less often than in the past. In such a reality, people may find it easier to look at the (past) events from a more neutral or outside perspective, as done in most reappraisal experiences. Furthermore, oftentimes, society members who play central role in the reconciliation process have not directly experienced the conflict related destructive events (i.e., due to the time gap). This should also put them in a relatively good position to implement cognitive change strategies.

In addition to targeting the meaning of the situation, changing one's self-categorization can serve as a useful regulation strategy (Mackie et al., 2000; Smith, 1993; Smith, Seger, & Mackie, 2007). This process is especially important in intergroup reconciliation, in which the conflicting sides can also be members of the same superordinate group. In such situations, effective regulation of negative emotions is often achieved by shifting the salience of one self-categorization to a more inclusive level (which is referred to as recategorization). This idea was exemplified by Wohl and Branscombe (2005), who showed that changing participants' categorization from a national to a universal level influenced their willingness to forgive outgroup inequities. These findings emphasize that people are members of various groups and have the ability to recategorize themselves according to different contexts (Gaertner, Dovidio,

Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). These shifts can be horizontal (shift among different groups within the group: American, academic) as well as vertical, in both time (a Generation Y, a teenager) and space (i.e., the size of group, such as American or human).

Cognitive change strategies typically have been studied by *directly targeting* cognitions in a way that leads to changes in emotional trajectory. When we say that the appraisals are directly targeted, we mean that people are explicitly asked to regulate their emotions and are provided with instructions how to do this. In a typical reappraisal training, participants are asked to look at the emotion-inducing stimuli like scientists, objectively and analytically—to try to think about it in a cold and detached manner (see Richards & Gross, 2000). These instructions, although frequently effective, require both motivation on the side of the target audience and direct communication with each and every individual prior or during the experience of the negative event.

For all these reasons, and in order to implement cognitive change efficiently at the level of large groups of individuals, it is often useful to employ procedures in which appraisals are *indirectly targeted* (Halperin et al., 2014, for a review). In indirect forms of emotion regulation, rather than providing a direct instruction to regulate, the change in emotions is driven by an adjustment in overarching beliefs regarding the situation, or the outgroup, in a way that indirectly changes the appraisals, and hence the emotional trajectory. During indirect emotion regulation, participants are not instructed to regulate their emotions. Instead, emotion regulation is achieved by changing beliefs and attitudes associated with discrete group-based emotions, and in this manner influencing the emotional process and its trajectories on reconciliation processes.

The first step in facilitating indirect emotion regulation is to identify the target action tendency associated with the desired conflict-related process (e.g., in the case of reconciliation: openness to the other's narrative, support for compensation, offering or accepting apologies, or support for providing humanitarian aid). The next step is then connecting the target action to a discrete emotion. For example, within a reconciliation process, if the goal is to induce motivation to bring the previously conflicting parties into the same room in order to discuss the past and to form a unified narrative, then the target of the indirect regulation process would be intergroup anxiety. On the other hand, if

the goal is to increase support for providing humanitarian aid to the adversary outgroup, the target emotion would most likely be empathy.

After identifying the discrete target emotion, the next challenge is to recognize the concrete message or content that would enable the regulation of that emotion. For that purpose, we search for the emotion's core appraisal theme (Roseman, 1984; Scherer, 1984, 2005), which constitutes the basis for its motivational and behavioral implications. We assume that by changing this core appraisal theme, the associated emotion can be regulated, leading to a transformation in emotional goals, as well as action tendencies related to the conflict. For example, changing the appraisal of the outgroup's actions during the violent stage of the conflict as intentional, unjust, or unfair would dramatically reduce levels of intergroup anger, and changing the outgroup's evaluation as threatening the future of the ingroup would help to reduce fear.

But how can this core appraisal theme be changed? Once the target core appraisal theme has been identified, a successful reconciliation process should make use of a counter message or psychological process that can potentially reduce an individual's commitment to that theme. This can be done by providing direct contradictory evidence (e.g., the outgroup had good and well-justified reasons to carry out a specific action). Alternatively, adjusted forms of existing sociopsychological interventions, which were originally created for different purposes, can be used in order to fashion a more subtle intervention. Thus, instead of directly probing the target audience to regulate their emotions, indirect emotion regulation is executed by a subtle or indirect external intervention meant to change core appraisal themes related to a certain emotion. We elaborate and demonstrate this process in regard to concrete actions tendencies in the parts to follow.

More specifically, in the sections that follow, we examine social-psychological interventions that involve indirect changes in beliefs and assess their effects on specific emotions thought to be especially relevant for intergroup reconciliation. First, we discuss two specific intervention strategies (increasing perceptions of outgroup moral variability and increasing perceptions of outgroup malleability) and their relation to reduction of intergroup hatred. Second, we focus our discussion on how offers of apology and reparation might contribute to reconciliation by regulating anger. Third, we focus on acknowledgment of ingroup responsibility and self-affirmation aimed at regulating the emotion of group-based guilt. Fourth, we discuss how changing perceptions of the conflict as dynamic and changing (vs. static and stable) is associated with transforming despair into hope. Finally, we review two specific social-psychological interventions aimed at regulation of empathy as an important reconciliation process.

## Interventions Targeting Intergroup Hatred

### *Increasing Perceptions of Outgroup (Moral) Variability*

Because of our limited capacity to process information and physical/social complexity, we categorize not only objects but also people into groups. The process of differentiating "us" from "them" is a universal element of intergroup relations. Dating back to social identity theory, social psychological research

shows that we view "us" (the ingroup) as better, superior, more diversified, and more moral, whereas we view "them" (the outgroup) as inferior, bad, more homogeneous, and less moral (Brown & Gaertner, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In particular, perception of outgroup homogeneity (the belief that members of an outgroup/enemy group are all the same) is more pronounced in (post)conflict settings and constitutes a major barrier to sustainable intergroup reconciliation (Čehajić-Clancy & Bilewicz, *in press*; Lederach 1997).

We argue that the core underlying emotion associated with a perception of outgroups as inherently unchangeable and evil is the emotion of intergroup hatred. Intergroup hatred is one of the most destructive emotions because it can propel people to violence and lead them to obstruct any positive changes in (post)conflict societies (Halperin, 2008). It can be directed at either an individual or the entire group. In an intergroup context, hatred is directed at harming or destroying an outgroup and acts as a major barrier to peace and reconciliation-oriented processes. Empirical evidence shows that hatred can increase support for actions aimed at harming or even eliminating the opponent (Halperin, 2008; Halperin, Russell, Trzesniewski, et al., 2011), but even more important, it mitigates any belief in potential change for the good among outgroup members, a belief that is critical to stimulate reconciliation process.

Hatred not only is a highly difficult emotional barrier in the face of reconciliation processes but also serves as an emotional platform for the view of the outgroup as a homogenous and bad entity (Halperin, 2011). Such appraisals, which are characterized by a static view of the outgroup, often develop as a result of repeated and enduring intergroup negative experiences. Based on this analysis, we argue that increasing perceptions of outgroup (moral) variability is targeting reduction of hate, as one of the necessary preconditions for an effective reconciliation process. Previous research has demonstrated how small manipulations aimed at increasing the perceived variability of the outgroup can reduce levels of generalized negative beliefs about the outgroup (e.g., Brauer & Er-rafy, 2011). In another set of studies, conducted in the context of ongoing conflict, perceived variability has been induced by exposing ingroup members to outgroup members criticizing their own group (Saguy & Halperin, 2014). This in turn led to a significant increase in ingroup members' willingness to be exposed to the outgroup's narrative.

Borrowing this basic principle that greater perceptions of outgroup variability contributes to improved intergroup relations, Čehajić-Clancy and Bilewicz (*in press*) suggested that realizing that outgroup members were not only perpetrators but also heroic helpers could be used as a strategy to increase outgroup moral variability. The assumption of that work has been that given the high prevalence of intergroup immoral actions during the years of the conflict, postconflict reconciliation must include an aspect that isolates these actions from the innate characteristics of the outgroup. Exposing people to such individualized and personalized stories of moral outgroup members could influence current relations between historically conflicted groups by decreasing the negative emotion of hatred, thereby facilitating reconciliation.

Indeed, recent research by Bilewicz and Jaworska (2013) indicates that exposing people to stories of heroic rescuers

increased positive affect between Poles and Jews. The narratives of historical rescuers of Jews during World War II overcame the negative impact of the past on intergroup contact. The authors argued that presenting people with stories of heroic helpers is very important for reconciliation after mass violence, as it may prevent entitative categorizations of groups as exclusively victims or perpetrators and thus increasing perceptions of outgroup (moral) variability: “Discussing individual life stories provides a unique opportunity for reconciliation between members of historically conflicted groups” (Bilewicz & Jaworska, 2013, p. 166).

Following our earlier argument and in our recent research conducted in the postgenocide setting of Bosnia and Herzegovina, we have examined the effects of learning about outgroup moral exemplars on various reconciliation indicators. Results from two studies showed significant positive changes after exposure to documented stories of outgroup individuals (moral exemplars) saving lives of the other. We found that a focus on moral exemplars increased forgiveness and other positive reconciliation indicators (Čehajić-Clancy & Bilewicz, *in press*). In other words and following our model just outlined, we can argue that exposure to moral exemplars increased perceptions of outgroup (moral) variability through regulating negative emotion of hatred and facilitating reconciliation processes.

### ***Increasing Perceptions of Outgroup Malleability***

Another critical foundation of feelings of intergroup hatred is people’s belief that the future can be fundamentally different from the past, in terms of intergroup relations. This means that any progress toward intergroup reconciliation, which is driven by reduction of hate and requires mutual gestures, apologies, and compromises, must be accompanied by the belief that the outgroup is capable of changing its destructive behavior. Empirical support for this assumption comes from research showing that the most harmful intergroup attitudes are those implying that the rival group is evil by nature and therefore will never change its immoral, violent behavior (Halperin, 2008). It stands to reason that people who believe that the outgroup is irrevocably evil not only experience greater levels of hatred but also, more important, show reluctance to take part in reconciliation processes. Indeed, empirical data show that those who hold such (strong) beliefs and negative emotions also oppose intergroup negotiation, compromises of different kinds, and even long-term normalization of intergroup relations (Halperin, 2011).

How can these destructive beliefs and emotions be changed? It has recently been suggested that by emphasizing the dynamic, malleable nature of groups and conflicts in general, we can indirectly affect people’s beliefs about the rival group and the specific conflict in particular. That is, by dispelling the idea that groups or conflicts have a fixed or immutable nature, we can potentially decrease hatred between specific groups and stimulate the kind of emotions and beliefs that are necessary for reconciliation process.

Studies have shown that individuals who hold entity beliefs about groups do not think that groups in general can change, while those who hold incremental beliefs see groups as dynamic

and capable of change. Some empirical work has demonstrated that these beliefs influence intragroup attitudes and dynamics, but more relevant to this article, they also have implications for intergroup relations. For example, Rydell and colleagues (2007) demonstrated that those maintaining an incremental implicit theory of groups are less prone to holding and forming stereotypes. This is highly relevant when studying intergroup conflicts and reconciliation processes, given that the central players in these conflicts are social groups rather than isolated individuals.

Indeed, several studies have demonstrated the great promise contained in interventions aimed at reducing hatred through changing beliefs about the malleability of groups, although most of them were conducted during a conflict resolution rather than a reconciliation stage of a conflict. For example, Halperin, Russell, Trzesniewski et al. (2011) conducted a series of studies with the aim of reducing negative intergroup perceptions and emotions and the destructive policy outcomes of these features. Drawing on a growing body of literature suggesting that implicit beliefs about the malleability of groups (e.g., Rydell et al., 2007) can be changed, the researchers examined whether an intervention designed to promote an incremental view of the malleability of groups would lead to reduced levels of hatred (and hatred associated appraisals) and increased support for compromises required for peace. Participants belonging to different groups living within an intractable conflict (i.e., Jewish Israelis, Palestinian citizens of Israel, and West Bank Palestinians) read an informative text indicating that research shows group in general can (vs. cannot) change over time. Results showed that teaching people that groups have a malleable (vs. fixed) nature led them to express less negative attitudes and emotions toward their respective outgroup, compared to those who learned that groups have fixed nature. This further led people to be more willing to make concessions at the core of the conflict. Thus, in all cases and for all groups the indirect implementation of the idea of a malleable nature among groups in general led to a transformation in the appraisal of the specific outgroup as fixed, decreasing negative perceptions and emotions and increasing support for compromises required for peace (Halperin et al., 2011). In a subsequent study, conducted in Cyprus, a very similar intervention increased the motivation of Turkish Cypriots to interact and communicate with Greek Cypriots in the future, compared with those who were led to believe that groups cannot change (Halperin et al., 2012).

Finally, a set of recent studies conducted by Wohl and colleagues (2015) demonstrated another positive role of changing beliefs about group malleability specifically within reconciliation processes. Across four studies taking place in different contexts, the authors found that victimized group members who had an inclination toward incremental theories of groups (as opposed to entity theories)—whether that inclination was measured or manipulated—were more forgiving in the presence of a collective apology than those who had an entitative view of groups. Of importance, they also found that the positive effect of an apology on forgiveness emerged via perceived perpetrator remorse. Indeed, an apology is likely to be deemed trustworthy and the transgressor remorseful only when it is believed that groups can

change. When change is possible, it becomes easier to envision a future devoid of re-offense.

### Interventions Targeting Intergroup Anger

Even though the literature on the effectiveness of apologies and reparation offers in helping to rectify a wrong and to promote reconciliation in intergroup contexts paints a confusing picture, review of social-psychological literature suggests reduction of anger to be the emotional mechanism underlying its effects. In addition to hatred just discussed, anger is another powerful and prevalent emotion relevant for not only conflict resolution but also intergroup reconciliation (Bar-Tal, 2007). Indeed, anger is also viewed as a destructive affective force because of its relationships with aggressive behavior. According to appraisal theories of emotion (e.g., Scherer, Schorr, & Johnstone, 2001), anger is elicited when outgroup actions are perceived as unjust and/or deviating from acceptable norms. Such an appraisal often leads to confrontation and other aggressive-related behavior (Mackie et al., 2000).

Regulating anger over past wrongdoings constitutes one of the major challenges of reconciliation processes. This is because anger (together with fear) constitutes one of the most prevalent and dominant intergroup emotion during the years of the conflict itself (see Halperin, 2015, for similar argument). Think, for example, of the emotional experiences of U.S. citizens who watched the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on television almost as they were happening. Surely rage (among other emotions) was central to their experience. Similarly, it is not hard to imagine the rapid heartbeats, the sweaty palms and faces, and the extreme anger felt by Jewish Israelis who sat down to a Passover dinner on March 27, 2002, and suddenly heard about the destructive suicide bombing at the Park Hotel in Netanya, which resulted in the deaths of 30 citizens dressed in festive holiday clothing.

Although they may seem extreme, the events just described are typical to intractable conflicts. Such conflicts are often marked by belligerent actions, provocative statements, and mutual insults. In most such cases, members of conflicting societies or groups view the conflict through a unidimensional, biased lens and therefore perceive the other group's actions as unjust, unfair, and incompatible with acceptable norms. These biased evaluations of the events are exactly the core appraisal themes usually associated with anger, and hence it is not surprising that intergroup anger is a pivotal emotion in every conflict. To many people who are personally involved in such occurrences, anger seems like the ideal and most adaptive emotional reaction to outgroup provocations. Accordingly, in the vicious cycle of perceived provocation that leads to violence, and that in turn leads to additional provocation, anger can be viewed as the emotional fuel that keeps the engine of that cycle working at full capacity.

Given the centrality of anger during years of conflicts, down-regulating anger is a crucial goal of any reconciliation process. It must be difficult for angry individuals and groups to seriously consider the outgroup's narrative or even to accept their apologies when anger triggered by previous outgroup actions is still at its peak. Indeed, empirical studies conducted in conflict and postconflict settings such as Northern Ireland or the Basque

country have shown that anger toward the enemy constitutes a significant emotional barrier to negotiation, compromise, and forgiveness (Tam et al., 2007). Next we suggest that offers of apologies and reparation are one important way of regulating the emotion of anger in intergroup conflict contexts and thus may promote more conciliatory responses from the wronged group.

Historical analyses of official apologies suggest that the form in which they are to be given is often vigorously contested and they do not always lead straightforwardly to intergroup reconciliation (Barkan & Karn, 2000; Blatz, Schumann & Ross, 2009; Čehajić-Clancy & Brown, 2016; Nobles, 2008; Wohl, Hornsey, & Philpot, 2011). There are many reasons underlying the equivocal effects of intergroup apologies: They may be attributionally ambiguous—is the apology a sincere acknowledgment of the perpetrator's responsibility for the malfeasance, or merely a cynical reputation-saving ploy? (Blatz, Schumann & Ross, 2009; Kirchhoff & Čehajić-Clancy, 2014; Wohl et al., 2011); the apology, however sincerely made, may not adequately address the victim group's needs for (re)empowerment (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008); apologies may simply be perceived as insufficient to right the wrongs experienced by the victim group, either because they are seen as "empty gestures" or because they fail adequately to rectify current inequalities or injustices (Wohl et al., 2011); and apologies may be seen as a strategy by the harm-doer to shift the reconciliation burden away from the perpetrator group onto the victim group as a way of turning the page on history (Zaiser & Giner-Sorolla, 2013). For any or all of these reasons, apologies made by or on behalf of perpetrator groups may not result in a reconciliatory gesture from victim groups.

Despite these many challenges, social psychological research on intergroup apologies suggests that offers of apology are associated with reduced feelings of anger. Given that anger is associated with a perception of an unjust and unfair behavior, it can be argued that an effective apology and offers of reparation target exactly such perceptions as they essentially assume acceptance of responsibility and an acknowledgment of unfairness. Such implications of acknowledgment of ingroup responsibility for an unjust behavior embedded in sincere and effective offers of apology and reparations address underlying appraisals associated with anger and as such can contribute to regulating this specific and often destructive intergroup emotion. For example, Brown, Wohl, and Exline (2008) found that an outgroup representative's apology to the victims of his country's "friendly fire" incident reduced feelings of revenge and avoidance among members of the victim group, especially (but not exclusively) for less strongly identified members of that group. In addition, Wohl, Hornsey, and Bennett (2012) also examined the effects of apologies accompanied with emotions, as compared to a no-apology control condition on forgiveness and found that an out group apology accompanied by primary emotions (vs. apology accompanied by secondary emotions or no apology at all) enhanced forgiveness, an important reconciliation process associated with reduced negative intergroup emotions such as anger (Tam et al., 2007).

Research on the effects of offering or making reparations after a misdeed presents a more consistent story and suggests the same underlying emotional mechanism (reduction of anger) contributing to reconciliation as offers of reparation

imply a certain degree of responsibility acceptance for unjust behavior. For example, Giner-Sorolla, Castano, Espinosa, and Brown (2008) found that people were less insulted by an out-group perpetrator who offered to make reparations for his company's negligence than by one who made no such offer. In the former condition, the degree of insult was qualified by the emotion which he appeared to feel while offering reparation: Least insult was felt when he expressed shame, compared to a guilt or no-emotion condition. In a subsequent study, Leidner, Castano, Zaiser, and Giner-Sorolla (2010) found that Black British participants felt less insulted when they received an apology together with an offer of compensation by a senior police officer in relation to ethnic bias in police "stop and searches" than if no apology or compensation was offered. This effect was moderated by the degree of blame attributed to the police and by the emotions apparently expressed by the spokesperson (somewhat less insult felt under high blame and shame).

## Interventions Targeting Group-Based Guilt

### *Increasing Perceptions of Ingroup Responsibility*

In the recent decade, sociopsychological research has paid a very specific attention to the emotion of guilt and its relations to reconciliation-oriented processes. Even though the emotion of guilt can be classified as negative and unpleasant, there is some consensus that feelings of group-based guilt are likely to generate tendencies to repair the damage and thus benefit the outgroup (e.g., Branscombe & Doosje, 2004; Doosje et al., 1998; Iyer, Leach, & Crosby, 2003; McGarty et al., 2005; Swim & Miller, 1999; Brown & Čehajić, 2008). For instance, in four studies in the United States, Swim and Miller (1999) found that European American's guilt consistently predicted reparation in the form of favorable attitudes toward affirmative action policies and less prejudice toward African Americans. This was supported by Iyer, Leach, and Crosby (2003), who also found that guilt was mainly correlated with "compensatory" forms of affirmative action but not with equal opportunities policies. Elsewhere, Leach, Iyer and Pederson (2006) and McGarty et al. (2005) found that group-based guilt of Non-Indigenous Australians about the treatment of Indigenous Australians was correlated with support for official government apologies to the Indigenous community. Pederson et al. (2004) found that both collective guilt and empathy were negatively associated with prejudice toward Indigenous Australians.

However, given that the emotion of guilt is indeed experienced as unpleasant, the consequence is that people are motivated to avoid feeling it in the first place (Leach, Snider, & Iyer, 2002). The appraisal underlying the group-based emotion of guilt is a perception of ingroup responsibility. An important precondition for guilt to be felt at all is at least some awareness of the ingroup's responsibility for wrongful acts (Branscombe, Doosje, & McGarthy, 2002). Those who are not aware, or those who defend themselves from such a realization, have little psychological basis for feeling guilt about their ingroup's actions (Cohen, 2002; Leach, Iyer, & Pedersen, 2006). However acknowledgment

of ingroup responsibility is rather rare. People are motivated to defend themselves against such perceptions and any form of self-criticism (Leach, Zeineddine, & Čehajić-Clancy, 2013). Among many possible explanations of the rarity of self-criticism, moral disengagement appears to be the most popular. Bandura (1999) identified a variety of strategies by which people disengage their behavior from the self-criticism that should typically follow from reprehensible acts such as genocide or other mass violence. These strategies work to frame actions as less unjust, construe actions as causing little harm, or frame victims as deserving of their treatment.

Our research shows that one way to facilitate one's readiness toward acknowledgment of ingroup responsibility and as a consequence regulate the associated emotion of group-based guilt is through intergroup contact. Indeed, our results found that good-quality contact with members from the victim group predicted acknowledgment of ingroup responsibility reaffirming intergroup contact as one of the key variables in improving intergroup relations (Čehajić & Brown, 2010). Ordinary Serbian adolescents who engaged in contact with Bosnian Muslims were more ready to acknowledge that their own group was responsible for atrocities committed during the 1992–1995 war.

Psychological readiness to acknowledge ingroup responsibility in (post)conflict contexts is rare, as such distorted justifications or denials serve the purpose of group (self) protection. Next we discuss how positive affirmation of personal identity can be in the service of regulating group-based guilt and as such pave the road toward reconciliation.

### Self-Affirmation

Given that people derive feelings of self-worth and integrity in part from group membership, acknowledging transgressions committed by group members can be regarded as highly self-threatening. Accordingly, strategies that allow individuals to view *themselves* positively despite their group members can be highly positive reconciliation-oriented processes. Indeed another important social-psychological intervention oriented toward reconciliation is self-affirmation. Next we discuss how self-affirmation is indeed related to positive reconciliation-oriented processes through guilt regulation.

Following the logic of decreasing self-threat, we tested the effects of affirming positive image of the self (self-affirmation) on group-based guilt in two different (post)conflict contexts. Some prior research suggests that self-affirmation can reduce defensiveness in the face of potentially threatening facts about a group with which one identifies. For example, Sherman, Kinias, Major, Kim, and Prenovost (2007) showed that reflecting on a personally important value reduced the tendency of sports team members and fans to engage in biased ("group-enhancing") attributions for team successes and failures. Similarly, Sherman and Cohen (2006) found that White participants who completed a self-affirmation procedure reported perceiving more racism, expressed greater belief that White Americans deny racism, and rated the average White person as more racist than did participants who had not been induced to self-



affirm. There is also evidence that self-affirmation may increase the willingness of citizens to question the wisdom of the policies of their country and its leadership. In one study, reflecting on a personally important value increased American participants' willingness to express agreement with a Muslim author who claimed that U.S. foreign policy in the Islamic world was partially to blame for breeding terrorists like the ones responsible for the 2001 attacks. This effect was only observed, however, when participants had previously been prompted to think about the importance of standing up for their values. Finally, some evidence suggests that self-affirmation can encourage the giving of resources to outgroups: Harvey and Oswald (2000) found that a self-affirmation manipulation increased the importance White undergraduates placed on funding programs for Black students, but only when these participants had previously watched a video depicting a violent response to a Black civil rights protest.

In our research we found that opportunities for self-affirmation increased participants' group-based guilt (Čehajić-Clancy, Effron, Halperin, Liberman, & Ross, 2011) through an acknowledgment of harm their ingroup had inflicted on others. Across three studies set in two different (post)conflict contexts, we found that writing about an event that made our participants proud of themselves increased acknowledgment of the group's *responsibility* for victimizing others, which increased feelings of guilt, which in turn increased support for reparation policies.

These studies add to the evidence that bolstering individuals' feelings of global self-integrity (Sherman & Cohen, 2006; Steele, 1988) can reduce their inclination and need to respond defensively to threatening information. Our results go beyond prior work by demonstrating that self-affirmation can reduce defensiveness about the misdeeds of one's group even when they involve the most extreme forms of victimization including murder and other genocidal acts. The results also provide evidence for another positive consequence of self-affirmation: its capacity to foster and facilitate processes that serve the goal of intergroup reconciliation after a history of conflict and victimization.

Our research also showed that group affirmation was consistently less effective than self-affirmation in increasing acknowledgment of wrongdoing, feelings of guilt, and support for reparations. On the other hand, a recent set of studies conducted among Jewish Israelis within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has demonstrated that inducing pride related to ingroups' achievements and conduct during conflict escalation promotes group-based guilt in the same context among high, but not low, glorifiers (Schori-Eyal, Reifen Tagar, Saguy, & Halperin, 2015). It is very clear that, whereas self-affirmation enables individuals to affirm their identity on one domain (i.e., individual one) and accept responsibility on a different domain (i.e., group based), group affirmation or pride-inducing interventions may cause dissonance, and hence they would be effective only to some individuals and under very specific conditions. This present research suggests that self-affirmation holds promise as a strategy to increase group-based guilt and consequently acknowledgment support for reparations to victimized groups.

## Interventions Targeting Hope

### *Changing Perceptions of the Conflict Nature*

In addition to changing negative emotions toward the outgroup such as hatred and anger, previously discussed, reconciliation processes require a fundamental change of beliefs and feelings regarding the fundamental nature of the conflict itself, which is often perceived as a never-ending cycle of violence. Given the defining characteristics of long-term violent conflicts, it is not surprising that those involved in conflict adopt a perception of the conflict as stable and unchanging, further feeding into its hopelessness in a cyclical manner. Such rigid and unchangeable beliefs about the nature of the conflict itself can indeed be regarded as one of the major obstacles to intergroup reconciliation as it implies categorical, biased, selective and somewhat "black-and-white" thinking while it reduces complexity of the reality and distorts processing of information in regard to intergroup relations. Consequently, the main challenge is how to turn the core emotion related to such rigid perceptions of conflict—despair—and transform it into hope.

Hope is a positive emotion that arises due to a cognitive process involving thought regarding a desired outcome in the future (Frijda, 1986; Snyder, 1994, 2000; Staats & Stassen, 1985; Stotland, 1969). Hope has been described as a vital coping resource (Lazarus, 1991), as it enhances the human experience and guides goal-directed behavior, and it has been found to induce cognitive flexibility and creativity (Breznitz, 1986; Clore, Schwarz, & Conway, 1994; Isen, 1990; Lazarus, 1991). Higher hope orientation (Snyder et al., 1996), the disposition toward hope held by different people, has been associated with better performance on cognitive tasks and problem-solving abilities (Chang, 1998; Snyder et al., 1996), and hopeful individuals tend to spend more time trying to solve problems (Snyder et al., 1996). The state-related emotion of hope was found to improve both physical and psychological health. Because reconciliation processes require both setting a positive long-term goal and planning and acting to address that goal, the transformation of despair to hope seems critical for these processes.

Within the context of intergroup conflicts and reconciliation, hope has been found to play a constructive role in reducing hostility, increasing problem-solving in negotiations, and promoting support for conciliatory policies (Carnevale & Isen, 1986; Cohen-Chen et al., 2014). A recent project, the Messages of Hope program taking place in Rwanda, uses messages of hope to create an awareness of positive stories based on the assumption that such stories have the potential to assist in recovery by increasing feelings of hope and efficacy (Lala et al., 2014). An emotional transformation from despair to hope would require a creation of a belief that a different, better future of the conflict is possible because conflict situations are malleable. It follows that to initiate a successful reconciliation process, one would need to alter people's general beliefs about the malleability of conflicts (and not just the malleability of groups), which could then be applied to the specific conflict by participants.

In line with the aforementioned rationale, Cohen-Chen et al. (2014) conducted two studies among Jews in Israel to

assess the possible relationship between the perceived malleability of conflicts, experienced hope and support for conciliatory policies. The first study examined this question correlationally and found incremental beliefs about conflicts (i.e., beliefs that conflicts can change) to be positively associated with both hope and support for concessions, with the association between incremental beliefs and support for concessions mediated by experienced hope. The second study employed a similar experimental design to the one used above for hatred, only this time focusing on promoting the view of conflict situations as malleable. Results showed that those who learned that conflicts are malleable (vs. those in the control condition) experienced higher levels of hope regarding the end of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and consequently were more willing to support concessions toward peace than those in the entity group (Cohen-Chen et al., 2014).

Based on these findings, an ensuing line of research developed the broader hypothesis that a general belief in a dynamic and ever-changing world would induce hope for intergroup reconciliation, leading to increased support for conciliatory policies (Cohen-Chen et al., 2015). In that project, the intervention was more neutral, less direct, and to some extent more realistic. Five studies, including observational, correlational and experimental methodologies, demonstrated that inducing a general perception of the world as ever-changing and dynamic leads to greater support for conciliatory policies in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Crucially, this effect was mediated by individuals' heightened experience of hope for intergroup reconciliation. Thus, even though the manipulations did not refer to the conflict, the outgroup or conflicts in general, the intervention increased support for concrete concessions through hope for intergroup reconciliation. Finally, in another recent set of studies (Kudish, Cohen-Chen, & Halperin, 2015), hope was induced by conveying messages about the similarity of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict to other conflicts that have already been resolved. This message enabled people to draw some hope from other, already resolved conflicts while overcoming the barrier of seeing “their” conflict as unique (see also Mazur & Vollhardt, *in press*).

## Interventions Targeting Empathy

### *Increasing Perspective-Taking*

In addition to the interventions just discussed and targeted emotions, empirical research on intergroup relations in general and reconciliation particularly suggests that an ability and willingness to take the perspective of the other can be regarded as an important social-psychological intervention for improving intergroup relations. More specifically, social-psychological literature has demonstrated specific benefits of perspective taking on reconciliation. For example, Zebel, Doosje, and Spears (2009) found that taking the perspective of the harmed group evoked guilt for the ingroup's historical misdeeds toward the outgroup and increased perceived ingroup responsibility for harm inflicted on the outgroup. Moreover, perspective taking

predicted intergroup forgiveness in conflict settings such as Chile and Northern Ireland (Noor, Brown, & Prentice, 2008).

The literature on perspective taking argues that the thoughtful consideration of the world from other viewpoints (Davis, 1983) increases the perceived overlap between the perspective taker and the target of perspective taking, thereby increasing tolerance, empathic concern, and helping (Batson, 2009) and decreasing bias and ingroup favoritism (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). In other words, positive transformations of intergroup relations require groups to engage with each other's views of the conflict. Indeed and for the relevance of this article, Brown and Čehajić (2008) have found that Serbian adolescents who were willing to look at the conflict also from the perspective of Bosnian Muslims were more ready to support reparation policies to be offered by their group, such as issuing an apology or providing material compensations to the victims. From a victim group's perspective, Čehajić et al. (2008) also found that perspective taking was linked to greater willingness to forgive the perpetrator group for its past wrongdoings. Perspective taking can indeed be regarded as a cognitive component of empathy (e.g., Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994; Davis, Conklin, Smith, & Luce, 1996; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Tangney, 1991), which has been found to be an important predictor of intergroup reconciliation.

Two recent projects demonstrate that expressions of empathy toward the outgroup can communicate and indicate understanding of outgroup suffering and thereby induce more conciliatory tendencies. For example, Nadler and Liviatan (2006) explored the effects of expressions of empathy for the ingroup's conflict-related suffering and assumed responsibility for causing it by a representative of the rival outgroup on recipient's willingness for reconciliation. They found that empathy communicated by the outgroup increased the readiness of Jewish participants toward reconciliation, but only for those who highly trusted Palestinians. In addition, Gubler, Halperin, and Hirschberger (2015) found that when one outgroup member expressed empathy for the suffering of another group, participants were more likely to humanize the entire group, an important precondition for sustainable reconciliation.

One setting that can potentially enable both the expression or communication of intergroup empathy and the firsthand experience of the outgroup's perspective of the conflict and its history is that of intergroup contact. For example, a study conducted among Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland (Tam et al., 2008) found that the opportunity to create intergroup friendships was a major antecedent of perspective taking and consequently empathy. Dozens of studies show that bringing together descendants of groups involved or affected by conflict in a safe, supported environment seems to be a strategy embedded in peace-building and reconciliation-oriented processes (Čehajić et al., 2008; Hewstone, Cairns, Voci, Hamberger, & Niens, 2006; Noor, Brown, & Prentice, 2008). For example, research on intergroup forgiveness conducted in BIH has shown that young Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) who report having frequent and good quality contact with members of the other group(s) are more ready to forgive outgroups for their past misdeeds (Čehajić et al., 2008) due to an increased level of empathy.

Besides intergroup contact as a way of inducing perspective taking and consequently empathy, intergroup discussions have been found as another strategy for increasing this perspective-taking ability. Recent research conducted in the context of Polish–Jewish relationships has shown that discussions between members of historically conflicted groups have the potential to produce positive effects for intergroup relations (Bilewicz, 2007). When Polish participants talked with their Jewish counterparts about the past, such discussions did not produce any significantly positive effects on attitudes or positive affect. However, when the same groups engaged in contact and discussed present-day issues, intergroup relations improved.

In relation to the preceding, recent research by Paluck (2009) investigated the impact of a mass media program (a talk show designed to promote discussions about intergroup conflict and cooperation) on conflict reduction processes in Congo. The intervention encouraged listeners to consider outgroup perspectives. Results suggest that such specific instructions promoted discussions but decreased tolerance and likelihood to provide aid to disliked community members. In line with Bilewicz's (2007) work, it can be argued that discussions with a focus on the past marked by conflict might inhibit potentially positive consequences of contact or perspective taking due to specific frustrated emotional needs related to the past.

### **Creation of a Common-Ingroup Identity**

Another strategy to induce empathy is to alter perceptions of intergroup boundaries, hence redefining who is conceived to be an ingroup member (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2014). If members of conflicting groups are induced to conceive of themselves as a single superordinate group rather than as two separate groups, attitudes toward former outgroup members are expected to become more positive through processes of increased perspective taking and consequently empathy. The common-ingroup identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2014) draws heavily on theoretical foundations of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

The question of social identity in the context of intergroup conflict is important simply because it might produce unified and consistent social attitudes toward ingroup behavior (e.g., denial of ingroup actions). People who identify strongly with their group will be less likely to critically evaluate ingroup behavior and more likely to express rigid and inflexible attachment to one's group. Such an uncritical attachment with the ingroup has the potential for people to think and behave in a uniform and often destructive way. Although higher levels of ingroup identification are not always linked to negative treatment of the outgroup (e.g., Brewer, 1999; Brown, 2000), in postconflict situations of hostility and distrust it is plausible to suppose that group identification would be connected to ingroup favoritism and hence antithetical to a pro-outgroup orientation like intergroup reconciliation (Brown, 2000; Castano et al., 2002; Yzerbyt, Castano, Leyens, & Paladino, 2000). Generally, strength of group identification refers to the degree a person is ready to use a particular social category for

self-definition. Given that people are motivated to perceive the ingroup in a positive light, people might naturally try to avoid or reinterpret negative information regarding their group in order to sustain a positive social identity derived from their group membership. When faced with morally objectionable behavior by the ingroup, people may try to reject, downplay, or even deny the misdeeds committed by their own group (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999). Likewise, one can expect that those who are highly identified with their ingroup maintain a positive social identity through protective information processing such as ignoring, denying, or simply downplaying the negative actions of their ingroup. Indeed our research shows that people who identify strongly with their ingroup are more likely to deny or justify their ingroup actions and express less empathy for the suffering of others (Čehajić & Brown, 2008).

One strategy to facilitate more empathy, we suggest, is through creating a common frame of identification. Indeed, Gaertner and Dovidio (2014), in their common ingroup identity model, proposed that if intergroup encounters can be engineered so as to foster a more inclusive categorization 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, Brown, and Prentice (2008) found that the more Catholic respondents in Northern Ireland identified with the superordinate category "Northern Ireland," the more forgiveness they showed toward Protestants through an increase in empathy. These findings offer support for the idea that when outgroup members are perceived as members of a common ingroup, a more empathetic response is likely to occur.

Also, and in our research conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we have found that relatively higher identification with the superordinate category (Bosnian) positively predicted intergroup forgiveness and approach-related behavioral tendencies among Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims). 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 multicultural 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 would argue that the best predictor of intergroup reconciliation processes will be the relative strength of these two types of identification.

Related to the preceding, Shnabel, Halabi, and Noor (2013) found that creating a common victim identity (reading an article that both Jews and Palestinians are victims of the conflict) reduced competitive victimhood, decreased moral defensiveness, and promoted greater forgiveness—all important and significant indicators of sustainable intergroup reconciliation. Reduction of victimhood beliefs is, in turn, associated with higher levels of perspective taking, as it enables individuals to step out of their frame of reference (Čehajić & Brown, 2010). Perceiving others within a common frame of identity creates psychological space for overlaps of perspectives and empathic concerns for others who are now perceived as members of one common group.

### Implications and Future Directions

Even after successful conflict resolution, intergroup relations remain heavily damaged and as such require understanding of processes that not only obstruct but, more important, facilitate sustainable intergroup reconciliation. Even though the past decade has seen growing research in the field of intergroup reconciliation, social-psychological theoretical and empirical insights require further developments. In this article, we have introduced a new model conceptualizing intergroup reconciliation as an emotion regulation process. Even though the impact of emotions on processes related to intergroup reconciliation have been acknowledged and as such included in social-psychological empirical research, intergroup reconciliation has not been primarily conceptualized as an emotion regulation process. The social psychology literature usually differentiates between two types of intergroup reconciliation: instrumental reconciliation, which seeks to change current intergroup relations (social/relation focused understanding), and socioemotional reconciliation, which focuses more on processes related to the past, such as victimization, emotions, and so on. In this article we offer an integrative and novel understanding of intergroup reconciliation, which merges theoretical and empirical insights from two seemingly separate literatures: emotion regulation and intergroup reconciliation literature.

According to our proposed model, we have defined reconciliation as operating mostly at an emotional level involving positive affective change through changing specific psychological barriers (e.g., beliefs and identities). We have argued not only that emotions play a pivotal role for intergroup relations in (post)conflict contexts but that decreasing negative and facilitating more positive emotions (termed *emotion regulation*) can be the key psychological mechanism for achieving reconciliation. With such an understanding of reconciliation, we have shown that specific social-psychological interventions directly targeting beliefs and/or

understanding of identities are indirectly associated with reductions of specific negative intergroup emotions such as hatred and anger and creation of more positive intergroup experiences such as hope and empathy.

Changing specific perceptions about outgroups in (post)conflict societies, understanding of one's own but also others' identity, as well as perceptions about the nature of the conflictual intergroup relations, is related to reduction of negative emotional barriers, which not only obstruct positive restoration or creation of intergroup relations but also (if not addressed) feed into further cycle of violence and mistrust. In this article we have identified the following intervention strategies aimed at regulation of specific intergroup emotions and as such contributing to intergroup reconciliation: (a) increasing perceptions of outgroup moral variability and group malleability as ways of reducing intergroup hatred; (b) offers of apology and reparations as ways of reducing intergroup anger; (c) changing perceptions of the nature of conflict from unchangeable and forever lasting, which transforms despair into hope; (d) increasing acknowledgment of ingroup responsibility and affirming personal (vs. social) identity as strategies aimed at regulating group-based guilt; and (e) increasing perspective taking and creating common-ingroup identity as ways of inducing empathy. Even though we have argued and shown that the effects of social-psychological interventions can be understood through the prism of emotion regulation, we do not wish to argue that specific interventions are only exclusively aimed at regulating *one* specific emotion. What we have argued is that social-psychological interventions aimed at intergroup reconciliation operate at the level of various emotion regulation processes.

Here, we must note that our discussion on emotion regulation processes related to reconciliation has focused primarily on cognitive appraisal changes. With such a focus we have reviewed specific social-psychological interventions directly targeting specific cognitive appraisals—as emotion regulation processes. However, this is not to say that other emotion regulation processes such as situation selection or modification or response modulation (see Figure 1) cannot or should not be addressed in the context of designing and evaluating social-psychological interventions aimed at intergroup reconciliation. To the contrary, we believe that future research on reconciliation intervention should address all stages of emotion regulation processes. For example, and in reference to situation selection (as an emotion regulation process), examination of which historical events/stories/images in (post)conflict settings, and so on, could produce more positive and less negative emotional orientation toward the “other” could indeed be an interesting research question worthy of investigation.

Given that our discussion of reconciliation-oriented interventions has focused primarily on their direct linkage with changes in cognitive appraisals (as emotion regulation processes) we have “isolated” five specific emotions in that process (hatred, anger, guilt, hope, and empathy). However, this is not to say that other intergroup emotions such as fear, shame, or anxiety should not be taken into future empirical consideration. If anything, we hope that our proposed model will serve as an integrative theoretical platform for any future research on intergroup reconciliation conceptualized through the prism of emotion regulation processes.

From an implication and applied perspective and based on this review, we can conclude that post(conflict) societies ought to systematically create situations where members of conflicting groups have the opportunity to engage in contact marked by narratives of outgroup moral variability and malleability and hence promote ideas that outgroups are not inherently evil and unchangeable. Perceiving “others” as an essentially bad and homogenous entity constitutes one of the main psychological barriers toward improving intergroup relations through feeding and facilitating further development of intergroup hatred. Consequently, programs and curricula as offered by both formal and informal education institutions should use these insights and develop specific educational activities and curricula aimed at countering such perceptions. Exposing members of (post)conflict societies to narratives that accentuate outgroup moral behavior and malleability can indeed help to restore broken relationships primarily through reduction of intergroup hatred. Even in times of violence and gross human rights violations, there were and always will be examples of positive or moral human conduct on all sides of intergroup divides (such as saving the life of the “other[s]”). Our research and the current review show that such examples of outgroup morality and malleability communicate a narrative that differs from that which is likely to develop when postconflict groups remain in isolation, and that this new narrative in turn promotes sociopsychological correlates of reconciliation.

In relation to reductions of anger and reviewing existing social-psychological interventions, our model suggests offers of apologies and reparation to potentially present an effective anger regulation strategy. From an applied perspective, any future public or similar offers of apologies/reparation ought to include an explicit acknowledgment of responsibility for an unjust behavior if such offers are to decrease intergroup anger and as a consequence promote more conciliatory-oriented attitudes and behavior. Such explicit acknowledgment of ingroup responsibility when coupled with offers of apology and/or reparation regulates the emotion of anger but also has the potential to facilitate group-based guilt as an important prerequisite for other specific reconciliation-supportive tendencies. In our view, schools, media, and other public sources of information should place greater emphasis on self/group-critical acceptance rather than outgroup blame or other forms of justifications—commonly found in any (post)conflict context. As indicated by the current review, such self-critical appraisals (offers of apology/reparation and increasing acknowledgment of ingroup responsibility) have the potential to regulate very specific intergroup emotions and as such contribute to intergroup reconciliation.

Also and in specific relation to overcoming other psychological defense mechanisms, we suggest that schools should create more opportunities for individuals to affirm themselves and their personal (rather than social) identities such as sport or the arts, which consequently empowers individuals, making them psychologically stronger and more able to adopt a group-critical perspective, which is rather a rare description of intergroup relations in (post)conflict settings. The default psychological response is to protect the ingroup, which unfortunately implies distorted beliefs and negative emotional orientation toward “others.” Affirmation of personal identities and other forms of self-empowerment are even more important in contexts of high group identity salience found in contexts of intergroup conflict.

In conclusion, we have offered a new integrative understanding of intergroup reconciliation while discussing how specific social-psychological interventions relate to regulation of specific intergroup emotions and as such contribute to reconciliation. At the same time, it is obvious that much more remains to be researched, developed, and evaluated. We hope that our model will be useful for researchers working in the field on intergroup reconciliation and look forward to learning about new social psychological interventions in the field.

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