

**Collective Victimhood and Acknowledgement of Outgroup
Suffering across History: Majority and Minority Perspectives**

Journal:	<i>European Journal of Social Psychology</i>
Manuscript ID	EJSP-16-0014.R1
Wiley - Manuscript type:	Research Article

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Manuscripts

Peer Review

Collective victimhood and acknowledgement of outgroup suffering and across history

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**Collective Victimhood and Acknowledgement of Outgroup Suffering across History:
Majority and Minority Perspectives**

For Peer Review

Abstract

This paper examines how temporally differentiated representations of ingroup victimhood and acknowledgment of outgroup suffering relate to present intergroup attitudes. A mixed-methods research was conducted in Bulgaria where both the ethnic majority and the Bulgarian Turkish minority can be viewed as victims and perpetrators in the past. Multigroup path models (Study 1) revealed that for the majority ($N = 192$) collective victimhood was positively related to social distance through reduced forgiveness and through reduced collective guilt for a different historical era. Acknowledgment of outgroup suffering, in turn, was associated with reduced social distance through heightened guilt and through forgiveness for another era. Among the Bulgarian Turks ($N = 160$) the result pattern differed. Collective victimhood was unrelated to forgiveness. Moreover, the relationship between guilt and social distance was positive. Semi-directive interviews (Study 2) revealed different meanings attributed to the events by the two groups. The impact of intertwined historical representations on current-day prejudice is discussed in light of power asymmetry between groups.

Keywords: collective victimhood, acknowledgment of outgroup suffering, group-based forgiveness, collective guilt, historical memory

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3 **Collective Victimhood and Acknowledgement of Outgroup Suffering across History:**
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5 **Majority and Minority Perspectives**
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8 Conflicts between groups typically have longstanding consequences on intergroup
9 attitudes. Collective victimhood represents a shared narrative in the memory of a group—
10 based on real and reconstructed experiences of ingroup suffering—in which the rival group is
11 portrayed as having inflicted intentional harm to the ingroup (e.g., Bar-Tal, Chernyak-Hai,
12 Schori, & Gundar, 2009). Groups often have a deep sense of victimhood irrespective of their
13 roles in the conflict even without personal experiences of the conflict (see Staub, 2006). The
14 role played by the ingroup in outgroup suffering, however, is usually less present in these
15 narratives (see Bilali & Ross, 2012). Yet, both acknowledgement of outgroup suffering and
16 collective victimhood of the ingroup have important implications on how the aftermath of
17 conflicts is managed, thereby shaping future intergroup relations (e.g., Noor, Shnabel, Halabi,
18 & Nadler, 2012; Vollhardt, 2012). Furthermore, across history, power relations between
19 groups change such that a group can be a victim at one point in time and a perpetrator at
20 another time. Representations of history convey shared understandings within a group of past
21 conflicts and define the role of both in- and outgroups in terms of perpetrators and victims in
22 these events (Liu & Hilton, 2005).
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40 Past intergroup configurations and experiences of victimhood and perpetratorhood are
41 likely to continue to influence present-day intergroup attitudes. This research examines the
42 role of group-based emotions in explaining how representations of past suffering link to
43 present intergroup outcomes for both majorities and minorities (see Iyer & Leach, 2008).
44 More specifically, we investigate the role of group-based forgiveness and guilt in the
45 relationship between perceived collective victimhood and acknowledgment of past outgroup
46 suffering on the one hand, and present-day social distance, on the other.¹ While prior research
47 has demonstrated links between these constructs, the novel contributions of the current study
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3 are fourfold. First, the study was conducted in Bulgaria—an understudied intergroup setting—
4 among ethnic Bulgarians (the national majority) and Bulgarian Turks (an ethnic minority).
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6 Both the ethnic majority and the Turkish minority can be viewed as victims and perpetrators
7 in intergroup conflicts involving these two groups at different moments in history. Second, we
8 examined in parallel the process through which representations of ingroup victimhood and
9 acknowledgment of outgroup suffering that took place at different historical periods coexist
10 within a group and trigger emotional reactions related to both events. Third, the research
11 simultaneously considered the perspective of the two rival groups in two different conflicts.
12 Fourth, we used a mixed-methods approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) that allows
13 highlighting the interdependence and dynamic nature of victimhood and perpetratorhood
14 across time. In Study 1, with a cross-sectional survey, we test the relationships between
15 concepts of theoretical interest related to past victimhood and perpetratorhood and current-day
16 social distance across the two groups. Study 2 seeks to gain a deeper understanding of these
17 processes by exploring the potentially different meaning making of ingroup victimhood and
18 acknowledgment of outgroup suffering across the two groups with semi-directive interviews.
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36 **Intergroup context in Bulgaria**

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38 Before examining the psychological processes related to collective victimhood and
39 acknowledgement of outgroup suffering, the Bulgarian intergroup context and varying
40 functions of collective victimhood (see Bar-Tal et al., 2009) for the two groups are introduced.
41
42 Bulgaria is a demographically multicultural nation with a long-standing history of interethnic
43 tensions between the ethnic Bulgarian majority and the Bulgarian Turkish minority. The
44 Ottoman Rule refers to the historical period starting from the conquest of the Bulgarian
45 Empire by the Ottoman Empire in 1396 until the Liberation of Bulgaria in 1878 when the
46 modern Bulgarian state was founded. Bulgarian Turks are descendants of Turks who settled in
47 Bulgaria during the Ottoman Rule. They are Bulgarian citizens constituting the largest ethnic
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3 minority in today's Bulgaria (9% of the population). Yet, throughout the country, the
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5 Bulgarian majority is the advantaged, dominant group relative to the more disadvantaged and
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7 subordinate Turkish minority group (see for example Pamporov, 2010, for differences in
8
9 education and income levels between the groups).
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12 In the eyes of many majority members, Bulgarian Turks are still associated to
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14 oppressors even 140 years after the end of the Ottoman rule (Mudde, 2005). Victimhood
15
16 resulting from the Ottoman Rule remains present in everyday discourse, partly because
17
18 Bulgarian national identity is strongly anchored in the shared representations of heroic
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20 liberation from the Ottoman rule. This representation is cultivated in the literature, in
21
22 historical movies as well as in history school books (Todorova, 2004), thereby maintaining
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24 the sense of victimhood and legitimizing negative stances towards Bulgarian Turks (Bar-Tal
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26 et al., 2009; see also Reicher & Hopkins, 2001 for the building of national identity). Attempts
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28 to deflate national myths or to include alternative minority representations of victimhood have
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30 been met with fierce criticism, advocates of such views being often portrayed as national
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32 traitors (see Pashova, Popova, Piskova, Angelova, Muratova, & Vodenicharov, 2013).
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37 Conversely, during the communist era coercive assimilationist policies were
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39 implemented by the Bulgarian government culminating in the mid 1980's with the so-called
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41 Rebirth process (also called the Revival process) in which Bulgarian Turks were targets of
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43 forced assimilation into mainstream Bulgarian culture (Crampton, 1997). Bulgarian Turks
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45 were for example forced by means of official intimidation to adopt Bulgarian names. Protests
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47 were met with violent repression by the regime and around 350'000 Bulgarian Turks exiled to
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49 Turkey (though many returned disappointed). Even after the transition from the socialist to
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51 the democratic system, the breakdown of long-standing harmonious relations between ethnic
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53 Bulgarians and Bulgarians Turks increased social distance between the groups (Elcheva,
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55 2004). In 2010 the Bulgarian parliament acknowledged that some acts that occurred during
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3 the Rebirth era were a form of ethnic cleansing, but there has been no official investigations
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5 of these acts. Though the Rebirth process is hardly present in everyday and public discourse,
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7 Bulgarian Turks are occasionally reminded of collective victimhood by politicians, in
8
9 particular from the Movement of Rights and Freedoms party, a party driving mainly the
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11 interests of Bulgarian Turks. This sense of collective victimhood helps coping with the recent
12
13 past and fosters solidarity among Bulgarian Turks (Elcheva, 2004; see Bar-Tal et al., 2009).
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15 However, unlike for the national majority, collective victimhood is not associated with a
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17 nation-building project among the Bulgarian Turkish population.
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21 The ubiquitous one-sided official representation of history reflects the current-day
22
23 power asymmetry between the two groups. Considering the perspectives of both the dominant
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25 and the subordinate group (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; see Demoulin, Leyens & Dovidio, 2009
26
27 for intergroup misunderstandings), we examine how collective victimhood and
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29 acknowledgement of outgroup suffering are related to current-day social distance. These
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31 relationships are thought to be mediated by the group-based emotions of forgiveness and
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33 guilt. Furthermore, as historically differentiated victim and perpetrator representations are
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35 intertwined, we investigate how the representations of one event relate to the emotional
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37 reactions of the other.
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40 **The Effects of Collective Victimhood and Acknowledgement of Outgroup Suffering on** 41 42 **Social Distance: The Mediating Role of Group-Based Guilt and Forgiveness** 43 44

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46 Individuals experience collective emotions through group memberships even if they
47
48 were not personally involved in an event (Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000). Such emotions
49
50 occur when one's own group has been mistreated, but also when the ingroup has inflicted
51
52 harm upon other groups (for overviews see Iyer & Leach, 2008; Nadler & Shnabel, 2015).
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54 Importantly for our purpose, collective emotional reactions have a long life, since research has
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56 shown that they can be triggered by ancient historical conflicts (e.g., Licata & Klein, 2010);
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3 Mari, Andrighetto, Gabbiadini, Durante, & Volpato, 2010, for the colonial past of a country)
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5 as well as by recent (e.g., Čehajić-Clancy, Effron, Halperin, Liberman, & Ross, 2011) and
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7 ongoing conflicts (e.g., Halperin, 2011). As restoration of positive intergroup relations and
8
9 reconciliation after an intergroup conflict is expected in modern democracies, it is crucial to
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11 uncover how group-based emotions may hinder or enhance these relations. We therefore
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13 examine the role of group-based forgiveness and guilt as key emotional reactions in the
14
15 reconciliation process from the perspectives of both victim and perpetrator groups.
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19 Intergroup forgiveness involves reductions of negative feelings such as anger and
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21 revenge towards the perpetrator group (Čehajić, Brown, & Castano, 2008; Wohl &
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23 Branscombe, 2005; for an overview Noor, Branscombe, & Hewstone, 2015). However,
24
25 collective victimhood—in particular when the victim role is exclusively associated with the
26
27 ingroup—reduces willingness to forgive the perpetrator group (Hewstone et al., 2004; see
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29 Noor, Brown, Gonzalez, Manzi, & Lewis, 2008; Vollhardt, 2015). For example, experience of
30
31 collective victimhood during the ethno-political conflict in Northern Ireland known as the
32
33 Troubles was related to reduced intergroup forgiveness (Noor et al., 2008). Yet, intergroup
34
35 forgiveness offers a constructive way of addressing past wrongdoings by improving
36
37 intergroup attitudes and willingness to reconcile (Noor et al., 2008; Staub, 2006). For example,
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39 among Jewish North Americans, higher levels of forgiveness towards contemporary Germans
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41 of the Holocaust have been shown to relate to reduced social distance (Wohl & Branscombe,
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43 2005). Čehajić and colleagues (2008), in turn, showed that Bosnian Muslims' readiness to
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45 forgive misdeeds committed by Bosnian Serbs during the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia and
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47 Herzegovina was negatively related to social distance towards Bosnian Serbs. We therefore
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49 expect that, overall, perceived collective victimhood should hinder the desire to forgive, and
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51 consequently relate to increased social distance. Nevertheless, the motivations to forgive
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53 cannot be separated from the power asymmetry that defines the current-day relationship
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3 between the dominant Bulgarian majority and the subordinate Turkish minority. The
4
5 dominant, advantaged position of the Bulgarian majority may indeed bring it relatively closer
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7 to a perpetrator than victim view (Nadler & Shnabel, 2015). The resulting motivation to be
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9 perceived moral and just may relate to a greater inclination to forgive compared to the
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11 subordinate, disadvantaged Bulgarian Turkish minority.
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14 Members of perpetrator groups are expected to engage with their prior wrongdoings in
15
16 order to acknowledge ingroup responsibility for causing outgroup victimization. This
17
18 acknowledgement of ingroup responsibility provides a basis for feelings of group-based guilt.
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20 This group-level emotional response is elicited by a conscious and articulate appraisal of the
21
22 wrongdoing arising from the awareness of the ingroup's historical transgressions
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24 (Branscombe & Doosje, 2004). Acknowledgement of ingroup responsibility for unfair
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26 treatment further triggers willingness to make reparations (Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2011; Iyer,
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28 Leach, & Crosby, 2003; Mari et al., 2010) and to restore the groups' moral image (Nadler &
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30 Shnabel, 2015). Ingroup guilt has for example been associated with support for government
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32 policies favouring the indigenous community among nonindigenous Australians (McCarthy et
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34 al., 2005) and for policies favouring African Americans among Whites in the U.S. (Iyer et al.,
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36 2003; see also Powell, Branscombe, & Schmitt, 2005). Restoration of a positive image by
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38 seeking social connections should be particularly important for perpetrator groups that
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40 maintain a dominant position after the conflict (Nadler & Shnabel, 2015), in our study the
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42 ethnic Bulgarians. Collective guilt should encourage ethnic Bulgarians to act prosocially and
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44 to foster harmonious intergroup relations by reducing social distance.
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50 Nevertheless, some scholars have argued that since guilt is an aversive feeling, it may
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52 drive pro-social attitudes only to provide relief of this feeling (Imhoff, Bilewicz, & Erb, 2012;
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54 see also Iyer et al., 2003). Similarly, seeing oneself as a descendant of a perpetrator group can
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56 foster intergroup anxiety (see Bilewicz, 2007). To downregulate anxiety, people withdraw and
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3 avoid interactions with the outgroup (e.g., Schmader & Mendes, 2015). Hence, collective
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5 guilt can also related to increased social distance. This process may be particularly prevalent
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7 among subordinate minorities, such as Bulgarian Turks, sensitive to threats resulting from
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9 stigmatisation (see Hebl, Dovidio, Richeson, Shelton, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2009, for
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11 example for Blacks in the U.S.).
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14 The distinction between victims and perpetrators is frequently ambiguous, however. In
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16 “dual” conflicts both parties can take the perspective of victims at some point of the conflict
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18 and perpetrators at another point (Nadler & Shnabel, 2015). This is the case for the Bulgarian
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20 majority and Bulgarian Turks. Victimhood and perpetratorhood at different moments in
21
22 history are intertwined and can therefore also affect reactions and emotions related to another
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24 moment in history. Wohl and Branscombe (2008) showed for example that North American
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26 Jewish respondents who were reminded of the historical threat to their ingroup (i.e., the
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28 Holocaust) felt less guilt about harm inflicted on Palestinians in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict
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30 than those who were not reminded of their group’s past victimization. Feeling that the ingroup
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32 has been victimized previously should thus reduce guilt in circumstances where one’s ingroup
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34 has perpetrated wrongdoings. Similarly, we expect that acknowledgment of outgroup
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36 suffering caused by the ingroup should be associated with forgiveness towards the outgroup
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38 for their acts that took place at another moment in history.
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43 **Current Research**

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45 The purpose of this research is to study the consequences and representations of
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47 mutual ingroup victimhood and acknowledgement of outgroup suffering that took place at
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49 different historical periods. The research was conducted among ethnic Bulgarians and
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51 Bulgarian Turks in Kardzhali, a southern Bulgarian district strongly affected by the Rebirth
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53 process. The intergroup setting in Kardzhali is particular because the Bulgarian Turkish
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55 minority is the numerical majority. However, even in this region, compared to ethnic
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3 Bulgarians, Bulgarian Turks remain a lower-status, subordinate group, with higher
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5 unemployment rates (13 % vs. 22 %) and lower levels of education (5 % vs. 23.2 % with
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7 higher education; Bulgarian National Statistical Institute, 2012).
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10 An embedded mixed method design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) was used where
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12 the outlined predictions were tested with cross-sectional survey data (Study 1) and semi-
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14 directive interviews were conducted to gain depth in the interpretation of findings of the first
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16 study (Study 2). Study 1 examines the roles of group-based forgiveness and collective guilt in
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18 the relationship between perceived collective victimhood and acknowledgment of outgroup
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20 suffering on the one hand and social distance on the other. In Study 2, we explore in more
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22 detail the meaning both groups provide for the events in which their groups were victims as
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24 well as transgressors.
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27 **Study 1**

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29 A set of mediation hypotheses were tested in Study 1. We predicted perceived
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31 collective victimhood (during the Ottoman period for ethnic Bulgarians and the Rebirth
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33 process for Bulgarian Turks) to be negatively associated with the desire to forgive the
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35 perpetrator group (See Figure 1 for relationships between concepts). Forgiveness, in turn,
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37 should be negatively related to social distance from the outgroup. We therefore expected an
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39 indirect relationship between victimhood and social distance through lowered forgiveness
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41 (H1). We also explore whether the readiness to forgive is greater for the Bulgarian majority,
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43 due to their advantaged position in Bulgarian society, compared to the Turkish minority.
44
45 Acknowledging outgroup suffering (Rebirth process for ethnic Bulgarians, Ottoman period
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47 for Bulgarian Turks), in turn, should be positively related to group-based guilt. As the
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49 literature points towards different consequences of guilt, we test opposing hypotheses as a
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51 function of intergroup power asymmetry: Group-based guilt can be expected to motivate
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53 relationship reparation by reducing social distance, but, as guilt is an aversive emotion, it may
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3 also increase social distance. We predict that acknowledgement is linked to collective guilt
4 that is negatively (for the Bulgarian majority, H2a) and positively (for Bulgarian Turks, H2b)
5 related to social distance. Furthermore, collective victimhood should be negatively related to
6 group-based guilt of a temporally different era and thus be related to increased (for the
7 Bulgarian majority, H3a) and reduced (for Bulgarian Turks, H3b) social distance. Conveying
8 willingness for social connections (i.e., reduced social distance) due to group-based guilt can
9 be a means for restoring a public moral image, and thus is more likely for the dominant ethnic
10 Bulgarian group, whereas withdrawal in the form of social distance is more likely for the
11 subordinate, Bulgarian Turk group. For both groups, acknowledgement of outgroup suffering,
12 in turn, would relate to forgiving the outgroup for misdeeds at a temporally different era and
13 thereby to reduced social distance (H4).
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27 **Method**

28 *Participants*

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31 Ethnic Bulgarians ($N = 192$) and Bulgarian Turks ($N = 160$) participated in a survey on
32 intergroup relations in Bulgaria in June and July 2014. Data used in this study were part of a
33 larger survey on interethnic relations in Bulgaria. A two-stage quota sampling strategy was
34 used. First, sampling points were defined in urban and rural areas and then eight respondents
35 stratified by age and gender were sought from each point. The questions were administered in
36 face-to-face interviews in Bulgarian language by professional interviewers. Respondents were
37 provided with the necessary information for informed consent and guaranteed anonymity and
38 that they could stop the interview at any time. In both subsamples 50% of respondents were
39 women. Mean age was 44.51 ($SD = 17.63$) for ethnic Bulgarians and 45.25 ($SD = 18.10$) for
40 Bulgarian Turks, $t(350) = 0.51, p = .699$. Regarding educational level, 0.5% of ethnic
41 Bulgarians had completed primary education only, 17.7% had completed lower secondary
42 education, 50.5% had completed upper secondary education, and 31.3% had a degree above
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secondary education. For Bulgarian Turks, 5.0% had only a primary education degree or had not completed it, 23.8% had completed lower secondary education, 48.8% had completed upper secondary education, and 22.5% had a degree above secondary education. Educational level was different in the two subsamples, $\chi^2(3) = 10.91, p = .012$: highlighting status asymmetry, ethnic Bulgarians were more educated than Bulgarian Turks. Respondents reported also the perception of "... the current economic situation of your family?" The response options ranged from 1 (*We have enough money and are able to save*) to 5 (*We have to cut back on consumption and don't manage on our earnings*). Bulgarian Turks ($M = 3.11, SD = 1.06$) reported a worse economic situation than ethnic Bulgarians ($M = 2.83, SD = 1.06$), $t(350) = 2.40, p = .017$.

Measures

All items were assessed on scales from 1 (*completely disagree*) to 5 (*completely agree*).

Collective victimhood was assessed with two items (adapted from Andrighetto, Mari, Volpato, & Behluli, 2012). Ethnic Bulgarians responded to items referring to the Ottoman period ("Ethnic Bulgarians were harmed during the Ottoman Domination" and "During the Ottoman Domination, many ethnic Bulgarians suffered physical and psychological violence from Turks;") Spearman-Brown reliability statistic for a two-item measure: $\rho = .97$), whereas Bulgarian Turks responded to victimhood regarding the Rebirth period with identically worded items ($\rho = .77$).

Acknowledgement of outgroup suffering was measured with two items. Ethnic Bulgarians responded to items referring to the Rebirth period ("Bulgarian Turks were harmed during the Process of Rebirth" and "During the Process of Rebirth, many Bulgarian Turks suffered physical and psychological violence from ethnic Bulgarians;") $\rho = .86$), whereas

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3 Bulgarian Turks responded to identically worded items regarding acknowledgement of
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5 transgressions during the Ottoman period ($\rho = .86$).
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7 In both groups, collective victimhood was assessed prior to acknowledgment of
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9 ingroup responsibility.
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11 *Forgiveness* was assessed with three items (adapted from Noor et al., 2008). Ethnic
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13 Bulgarians responded to items referring to the Ottoman period (“Ethnic Bulgarians should
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15 stop blaming Bulgarian Turks for what happened during the Ottoman Domination;” “Getting
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17 even with Bulgarian Turks for what happened during the Ottoman Domination is important”
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19 [Reverse coded] and “Ethnic Bulgarians should seek ways of forgiving Bulgarian Turks to
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21 increase amity and understanding in Bulgaria;” $\alpha = .55$) whereas Bulgarian Turks responded
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23 regarding Rebirth period ($\alpha = .62$). Albeit modest reliabilities, principal component analyses
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25 in both samples yielded a one-factor solution of the items measuring forgiveness.
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29 *Collective guilt* was assessed with two items (adapted from Wohl & Branscombe,
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31 2005). Ethnic Bulgarians responded to items referring to the Rebirth period (“Ethnic
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33 Bulgarians should feel guilty about the process of Rebirth” and “Ethnic Bulgarians should feel
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35 guilty about what Bulgarian Turks experienced during the process of Rebirth;” $\rho = .81$),
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37 whereas Bulgarian Turks responded regarding the Ottoman period ($\rho = .87$).
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40 *Social distance* was assessed with three items (see Bogardus, 1967) assessing the
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42 acceptance of the other ethnic community: “Would you accept Bulgarian Turks/ethnic
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44 Bulgarians as neighbours?”, “Would you accept to work together with a Bulgarian
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46 Turk/ethnic Bulgarian?”, and “Would you marry or cohabit with a Bulgarian Turk/ethnic
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48 Bulgarian?” The three items ($\alpha = .65$ for ethnic Bulgarian respondents, $\alpha = .54$ for Bulgarian
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50 Turkish respondents) were reverse coded so that higher values indicated more social distance.
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54 Despite modest reliabilities, principal component analyses in both samples yielded a one-
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56 factor solution of the items assessing social distance.
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Results

Preliminary analyses

Means and standard deviations of the variables and correlations between them are reported in Table 1. Both ethnic Bulgarians and Bulgarian Turks perceived high levels of collective victimhood, but these feelings were stronger among ethnic Bulgarians, $t(330) = 3.91, p < .001$. Both groups perceived to a similar degree that the outgroup had suffered, $t(339) = 0.81, p = .418$. Furthermore, both ethnic communities reported more collective victimhood than perception of outgroup sufferings, $t(191) = 13.29, p < .001$ for ethnic Bulgarians and $t(159) = 13.13, p < .001$ for Bulgarian Turks. Thus, in line with the notion of competitive victimhood (Noor et al., 2008), both ethnic Bulgarians and Bulgarian Turks were aware of the two historical events and of the sufferings of both groups, but thought that their ethnic group had suffered more than the other one (see also Bilali & Ross, 2012). Concerning emotions related to the historical events, both ethnic communities declared willingness to forgive past actions, but these feelings were stronger for Bulgarian Turks, the more disadvantaged group, than for ethnic Bulgarians, $t(347) = 2.41, p = .016$. Perceptions of collective guilt were low in both ethnic communities and lower among ethnic Bulgarians than among Bulgarian Turks, $t(350) = 3.70, p < .001$. Finally, social distance toward the other ethnic community was relatively low, but ethnic Bulgarians perceived more social distance toward Bulgarian Turks than vice-versa, $t(350) = 6.14, p < .001$.²

Multigroup path model

To test the hypothesized relationships between variables, we conducted a multigroup path analysis in Mplus 6 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2010). Because of the clustered structure of the data (the 352 respondents were nested in 44 clusters, with 8 respondents in each cluster), we used the Mplus Complex command, which provides estimates that are robust to non-independence and non-normality of observations (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2010, p. 533).

Collective victimhood and acknowledgement of outgroup sufferings were entered as predictors, group-based forgiveness and guilt as mediators, and social distance as the outcome variable. Since we expected that the effects of collective victimhood and perception of outgroup sufferings on social distance were explained by emotions related to historical events, we tested a fully mediated path model where the direct paths from predictors to the outcome variable were not estimated. Correlations between predictors and between mediators were estimated.

The initial path model, where all the paths were constrained to be equal between ethnic Bulgarian and Bulgarian Turkish respondents yielded modest fit indices, Satorra-Bentler scaled $\chi^2(12) = 15.16, p = .018$; RMSEA = .077, SRMR = .069, CFI = 0.895. We then released the paths one by one to examine whether they differed between the two groups. The Satorra-Bentler scaled χ^2 -difference test suggested that differences occurred between ethnic Bulgarian and Bulgarian Turkish respondents for the effect of collective victimhood on forgiveness, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 4.91, p = .027$, and for the effect of collective guilt on social distance, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 13.46, p < .001$. The model fit was not improved when further releasing equality constraints of other paths, Satorra-Bentler scaled $\Delta\chi^2(1)s < 1.86, ps > .172$.

The final model with the two freed paths (Figure 1) yielded an adequate fit to the data: Satorra-Bentler scaled $\chi^2(10) = 7.75, p = .189$; RMSEA = .046, SRMR = .058, CFI = 0.969.³

To test whether collective victimhood and acknowledgement of outgroup suffering had the hypothesized indirect effects (i.e., mediation patterns) on social distance via group-based forgiveness and guilt, we added to the model the direct paths from the predictors to the outcome variable and calculated the indirect effects (see Table 2). We first examined indirect effects through group-based emotions related to the same era. Collective victimhood was negatively associated to forgiveness, but only among ethnic Bulgarian respondents. Forgiveness, in turn, was negatively related to social distance. Thus, for ethnic Bulgarians, in

Collective victimhood and acknowledgement of outgroup suffering across history 16

1
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3 line with H1, collective victimhood had a positive indirect relationship with social distance
4
5 via reduced forgiveness. Moreover, acknowledgement of outgroup suffering was positively
6
7 associated with collective guilt. The association between collective guilt and social distance
8
9 was different for the two groups: collective guilt was negatively, albeit marginally, related to
10
11 social distance among ethnic Bulgarians and positively related to social distance among
12
13 Bulgarian Turks. Thus, acknowledgement of outgroup suffering had a negative indirect
14
15 relationship with social distance via collective guilt among ethnic Bulgarians (in support of
16
17 H2a), whereas the indirect relationship was positive for Bulgarian Turks (in support of H2b).
18
19 Next, we turn to indirect effects through emotions related to temporarily different eras. As
20
21 expected, collective victimhood was negatively associated to collective guilt of a temporarily
22
23 different period. For ethnic Bulgarians, collective victimhood had a positive indirect
24
25 relationship with social distance via collective guilt related to a temporarily different event (in
26
27 support of H3a), while for Bulgarian Turks the indirect relationship was negative (in support
28
29 of H3b). Acknowledgement of outgroup suffering was related to forgiveness of a temporarily
30
31 different event. Confirming H4, in both groups, acknowledgement of outgroup suffering had
32
33 negative indirect relationships with social distance via forgiveness for a temporarily different
34
35 event.
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40 **Study 1 Discussion**

41
42 In line with our predictions, group-based guilt and forgiveness mediated the
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44 relationship between collective victimhood and acknowledgement of outgroup suffering on
45
46 the one hand and social distance on the other for both ethnic Bulgarians and Bulgarian Turks.
47
48 Nevertheless, some differences occurred. Among Bulgarian Turks, the expected negative link
49
50 between collective victimhood and forgiveness was not found. Moreover, as predicted, the
51
52 two groups had opposite relations between group-based guilt and social distance. For the
53
54 ethnic Bulgarians, the dominant majority group, feeling guilt about the Rebirth process that
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3 took place in the mid 1980's was related to less social distance. This suggests that reduced
4 social distance could be conceived as a means to restore the moral image of the ingroup by
5 repairing the current relationship between the groups. It should be noted, however, that
6 reparation via reduced social distance occurs on an interpersonal level and does not involve
7 official acknowledgments and reparations, hence the status quo of power relations between
8 groups is not questioned (e.g., Shnabel, Halabi, & SimanTov-Nachlieli, 2015 for
9 counterproductivity of reparation acts). For the subordinate Bulgarian Turkish minority, in
10 support of the conjecture that guilt is an aversive emotion triggering intergroup anxiety
11 (Imhoff et al., 2012), experiencing guilt of an era that ended 140 years ago, was related to
12 increased social distance.
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25 The high levels of collective victimhood—higher than that of the minority—suggest
26 that the Bulgarian majority still sees itself as a victim of historical injustice. Bulgarian Turks
27 were more willing to forgive than ethnic Bulgarians. As a dominant majority position can
28 engender readiness to forgive, we anticipated that ethnic Bulgarians would be more inclined
29 to forgive compared to subordinate Bulgarian Turks (Nadler & Shnabel, 2015). Nevertheless,
30 it may be that the fact that the subordinate group was actually the numeric majority in the
31 district under study has counteracted this effect. To further interpret findings of Study 1 and to
32 uncover the different ways of representing collective victimhood and acknowledging
33 outgroup suffering inflicted by the ingroup, semi-directive interviews were conducted in
34 Study 2.
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47 Study 2

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49 The goal of this study was to explore in more depth the meaning people give to past
50 ingroup victimhood and ingroup responsibility in outgroup victimization and thus gain
51 insights on the findings of Study 1 (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Ingroup representations
52 of historical events define group identity and the relationships with outgroups. Given the
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Collective victimhood and acknowledgement of outgroup suffering across history 18

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3 varying temporality of events and differences in terms of group status and role in conflict, it is
4
5 plausible that history is interpreted differently by the dominant Bulgarian majority and the
6
7 subordinate Turkish minority (Liu & Hilton, 2005). Indeed, the memories of the 500 years of
8
9 Ottoman rule that ended in the late 19th century are not based on personal experience, whereas
10
11 the Rebirth period is quite recent, with many respondents having first or at least second-hand
12
13 information on this period.
14

15 16 **Method**

17
18 Twenty semi-directive interviews were conducted among ethnic Bulgarians and
19
20 Bulgarian Turks (ten each). The interviewees were drawn among survey respondents of Study
21
22 1 who agreed to take part in a follow-up interview that took place four to six weeks later.
23
24 Participants were sampled at equal gender distribution. Mean age was 48 years for ethnic
25
26 Bulgarians (range 23 – 65 years) and 45 years for Bulgarian Turks (range 23 – 72 years). The
27
28 interviewer and interviewee ethnicity were matched to facilitate discussion of ingroup
29
30 victimhood and misdeeds. The ethnic Bulgarian interviews were conducted by two Bulgarian
31
32 PhD students involved in the research project, while the Bulgarian Turkish interviews were
33
34 performed by a psychologist collaborating in the project. Interviews lasted between 21 and 66
35
36 minutes. After the interview they received a 15 Lev incentive (corresponding to circa 7.5
37
38 euros). All interviews were audiotaped and later transcribed verbatim. The data corpus was
39
40 further translated into English by professional translators under the supervision of the
41
42 Bulgarian research team.
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48 We wanted the participants to engage in both descriptive and interpretative work and
49
50 examined any references to the ingroup victimhood and outgroup suffering as well as
51
52 contrasts within and between the two groups. The dataset was analyzed with theoretically
53
54 guided thematic coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006). First, the material was read and re-read, and
55
56 next an initial coding was generated. Third, the codes were organized into themes, and finally
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1
2
3 the themes were reviewed and revised by checking them against the coded extracts. Different
4
5 themes were identified in the data for the two groups.
6

7 8 **Results and Discussion**

9 10 *Victimhood representations*

11
12 All the ethnic Bulgarian and most Bulgarian Turk interviewees evoked victimhood
13
14 resulting from the Ottoman Rule and the Rebirth policies respectively, when asked of a
15
16 moment in history when their group was victimised. Underscoring the prevailing power
17
18 asymmetry between two groups, members of these groups portrayed victimhood very
19
20 differently, however. Among ethnic Bulgarians, *ingroup victimhood* crystallized into a
21
22 narrative of nation-building, whereas for Bulgarian Turks it was a theme of suffering with a
23
24 no-longer existing perpetrator.
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27
28 Ethnic Bulgarians reiterated the official narrative referring to atrocities, massacres and
29
30 forced turkisation (i.e., conversion to Islam) during the Ottoman rule. They actively drew on
31
32 the historical « evidence » portrayed by the media, school books and cultural productions,
33
34 thereby consensually adhering to the shared representation (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Much
35
36 like in other contexts (Bar-Tal et al., 2009; see Liu & Hilton, 2005), this victimhood narrative
37
38 was crystallized around defining the victim—the ethnic Bulgarians—and the perpetrator—
39
40 Ottoman Turks—and often concluded with the (heroic) survival of the nation (see Todorova,
41
42 2004). The association between Ottoman Turks and Bulgarian Turks of today was implicit,
43
44 though some interviewees explicitly differentiated the two.
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46

47
48 Extract 1. “Well, I remember, when this movie was launched – The Goat Horn [1972,
49
50 set in 17th century Bulgaria; authors’ comments in square brackets], you see the opposite side.
51
52 When we watched it, then we really felt hatred for...you see, it was at the time of socialism,
53
54 you see, somehow we felt hatred in some way.” *Ethnic Bulgarian male, 65 years*
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Collective victimhood and acknowledgement of outgroup suffering across history 20

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3 Extract 2 “Well, generally said, this was an event which each country should be proud
4 of, in my opinion, because it was at the time that we realized our national identity, and also
5 we survived as a nation.” *Ethnic Bulgarian female, 39 years*
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9 After the communist era the word choices in the official narrative have changed, for
10 example, the term «Ottoman Slavery » has been gradually replaced by «Ottoman
11 Domination/Rule» and even «Ottoman Presence», deemphasizing the culpability of the
12 current Bulgarian Turkish population (Parvev, 2014). However, some interviewees
13 commented on this change of narrative contesting the supposed rewriting of history. For them,
14 the new terminology does not accurately portray the events—it does not fit the narrative of
15 nation-building victimhood—thereby suggesting that the shared representation of history is
16 not without controversy (Pashova et al., 2013; Liu & Hilton, 2005).
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27 Extract 3 “[...] not as of now, for example, when they are distorted in history books,
28 saying that these events didn’t happen, that it was just an invasion and so on. This domination
29 over us lasted a lot of years.” *Ethnic Bulgarian female, 39 years*
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34 Without doubt due to the temporal proximity, the Bulgarian Turk interviewees
35 presented more personal accounts of the Rebirth process, frequently referring to their own or
36 their (grand-)parents’ experiences. While Bulgarian Turks evoked the forced name changes,
37 loss of property and exile to Turkey (i.e., the official description of the policy and the known
38 consequences), their accounts also conveyed grievances resulting from harassment, beating,
39 imprisonment and hiding. Their narratives were thus more affective than those of ethnic
40 Bulgarians. While some ethnic Bulgarians expressed anger when discussing the Ottoman
41 regime, Bulgarian Turks conveyed suffering, fear and sadness resulting from this period (see
42 Bar-Tal et al., 2009; Noor et al., 2012; Vollhardt, 2012).
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53 Extract 4 “In 1984-85 when we were made to change the names, it was terrible, we
54 weren’t going out, we were hiding.” *Bulgarian Turkish male, 46 years*
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3 At the same time, the victimhood accounts of Bulgarian Turks were more nuanced
4
5 than those of the ethnic Bulgarians. The communist political system (president of the time,
6
7 Todor Zhivkov, the parliament, the Soviet Union and its president) was throughout the
8
9 interviews systematically held responsible, and ethnic Bulgarian people were hardly
10
11 mentioned as active perpetrators (though a few did evoke the possibility that some ethnic
12
13 Bulgarians, as bystanders, may have agreed with the events). Instead, events of ethnic
14
15 Bulgarians' helping behaviour were recalled. Previous research has also reported such
16
17 testimonies of war victims (see Broz, Kain Hart, & Elias-Bursac, 2005). Acknowledging
18
19 helping could be seen as an expression of loyalty and common ingroup membership with
20
21 ethnic Bulgarians, who were under the rule of the same totalitarian communist system (Noor
22
23 et al., 2008; see also Reicher, Cassidy, Wolpert, Hopkins, & Levine, 2006). Thus, the groups
24
25 shared victimhood (Vollhardt, 2015, for inclusive victimhood). Such victimhood
26
27 representations thus not only serve to explain the past (Bar-Tal et al., 2009), but they may also
28
29 empower the Bulgarian Turks through conceptions of common ingroup membership (see
30
31 Nadler & Shnabel, 2015 on the importance of restoration of agency for disadvantaged groups).
32
33 In these multifaceted representations of collective victimhood, ethnic Bulgarians were
34
35 dissociated from the totalitarian system—the common perpetrator—some as helpers, others as
36
37 bystanders. This representation of inclusive victimhood by Bulgarian Turks may explain the
38
39 lack of relationship between collective victimhood and forgiving the ethnic Bulgarians found
40
41 in Study 1. Inclusive victimhood is also another plausible reason for the higher levels of
42
43 forgiveness of the Bulgarian Turkish minority (Shnabel, Halabi, & Noor, 2013), in addition to
44
45 the regional majority explanation of Bulgarian Turks in the district under study.
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52 Extract 5 “My grandmother and uncle told me. We had a lot of Bulgarian friends who
53
54 somehow were hiding them. Saved them from being beaten or arrested. I do thank them all.”

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56 *Bulgarian Turkish male, 23 years*
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Collective victimhood and acknowledgement of outgroup suffering across history 22

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3 Extract 6 “ Bulgarians, because they were more informed, they warned us; there were
4 such times where because of a word (even unintentionally said) you could be put to Belene
5 prison [notorious prison and labour camp during the communist era in Northern Bulgaria], I
6
7
8 have a lot of colleagues who were put there because they were against this process.”
9

10
11 *Bulgarian Turkish male, 58 years*

12
13 *Acknowledging ingroup transgressions*

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15
16 Ethnic Bulgarian interviewees acknowledged the existence of the Rebirth era by
17 mentioning for example name change policies or the mass exodus to Turkey. Consistent with
18 the Bulgarian Turks’ accounts, the political system was depicted as responsible for the
19 occurrence of the Rebirth process. For ethnic Bulgarians, the Rebirth was the doings of the
20 prevailing political system—without acknowledging that individuals actively took part in
21 implementing the Rebirth policies (see Noor et al., 2012, for biases in accounts of ingroup
22 transgressions). The Rebirth process was seen as being politically instrumentalised prior to
23 elections in present-day Bulgaria, in particular by the Movement of Rights and Freedoms
24 (MRF) party, whereas the current intergroup relations were conceived as positive. This
25 instrumentalisation was acknowledged by some Bulgarian Turks too.
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39 Extract 7 “I don’t think that it is discussed among people. It is already in the past, just
40 politicians raise the issue again and again for their own reasons and purposes” *Ethnic*

41
42 *Bulgarian female, 66 years*

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44
45 Extract 8 “I don’t know, now it seems that everything is slowly being forgotten, but
46 politicians act in a way people do not forget it. Maybe they call the attention to it, all Turks
47 are associated with the MRF party. This tears us apart, people live very well together if these
48 people are not around.” *Bulgarian Turkish female, 49 years*
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54 However, while most interviewees acknowledge the period as a horrible mistake,
55 some question the gravity either by saying events were exaggerated or by justifying the
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3 imposition of Bulgarian language in Bulgaria. They morally disengage from the events
4
5 (Nadler & Shnabel, 2015). Similar to “hiding behind” the political system, legitimizing to
6
7 some extent the events, people avoid acknowledging the ingroup members’ role in the Rebirth
8
9 process. Čehajić and Brown (2008) found similar narrative strategies used by Serbian
10
11 interviewees conveying unwillingness to acknowledge harmdoing committed by ingroup (see
12
13 also Bilali & Ross, 2012; Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2011). Also, in guise of justification due to
14
15 past ingroup victimization (see Bar-Tal et al., 2009), parallels were made with the Ottoman
16
17 period in line with the idea that past victimization can reduce guilt of a more recent event
18
19 where the ingroup is the transgressor (see Liu & Hilton, 2005; Wohl & Branscombe, 2008).
20
21 Indeed, the movie “Time of Violence”, evoked by an interviewee, was presented in 1988
22
23 when the Rebirth process policies were implemented, and described how forced Islamisation
24
25 of Bulgarians took place during the Ottoman period. Such cultural products most likely
26
27 mobilized the Bulgarian national identity and provided justification of the events at that time.
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32 Extract 9 “[...] their names were changed, but I don’t think that it was forced. I don’t
33
34 think that it was something uncivilized, because finally, you see when you got to another
35
36 country, for example the USA, the first name becomes John, you see... There are other
37
38 countries where their names aren’t changed, but when they see that a foreigner has a name
39
40 that is typical for this country, it is better accepted by society. So, I don’t think that it was
41
42 forcibly done. It was rather a necessity for that period of time.” *Ethnic Bulgarian male, 38*
43
44 *years*
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47
48 Though Bulgarian Turks were aware of the official narrative of the Ottoman rule in
49
50 Bulgaria, they referred less to the accounts in books and films when acknowledging it. As the
51
52 Ottoman Turks are strongly stigmatized in these accounts and by extension Bulgarian Turks
53
54 are associated with them, the hegemonic representation of national history leaves Bulgarian
55
56 Turks the role of the villain. Interviewees noted that the events took place hundreds of years
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Collective victimhood and acknowledgement of outgroup suffering across history 24

ago, so it was hard to define who was actually responsible. They also reported being targets of ethnic Bulgarians' blame and hate, in particular by older generations of ethnic Bulgarians who have been the most exposed to the official nation-building narrative of the Ottoman presence and thus most likely to associate Bulgarian Turks with Ottoman perpetrators.

Extract 10 "This idea [responsibility of Turks] comes right from school, where we study the Ottoman rule. These materials must step by step be removed from school books. There is let's say the Batak massacre [of Bulgarians], and other things, young people should not be raised in this way, taught that the Turk is their worst enemy" *Bulgarian Turkish male, 45 years*

Outgroup victimhood was seen by ethnic Bulgarians as politically motivated at the time and currently politicized, whereas Bulgarian Turks saw it as a catalyst for ingroup stigmatization. All in all both groups dismissed their ingroup's role in outgroup victimhood (see Bilali & Ross, 2012; Noor et al., 2012). The power asymmetry underlies differences in representations. Ethnic Bulgarians' national identity is constructed through victimhood and survival during the Ottoman regime, but they disidentify from the communist regime that they see as the sole responsible for the Rebirth process. Nevertheless, as the assimilationist policies were implemented by ethnic Bulgarians, albeit under the orders of the communist Bulgarian government, guilt may have arisen and favored a tendency for reparation, for example by means of reduced social distance as revealed in Study 1. Despite distancing themselves from the Ottoman Turks, Bulgarian Turks, in turn, carry the imposed burden of responsibility of the victimization of ethnic Bulgarians as they are associated with oppressors in the collective narrative. Accepting collective guilt for this era may be irreconcilable with being part of a common Bulgarian nation⁴ and would thus be a catalyst for distancing themselves from ethnic Bulgarians (note though that mean levels of guilt were low in Study 1). Indeed, the positive

1
2
3 relationship between collective guilt and social distance revealed among Bulgarian Turks in
4
5 Study 1 can be interpreted in this way (see Imhoff et al., 2012).
6

7 8 **General Discussion**

9
10 This study contributes to the literature of intergroup conflicts by examining the role of
11 collective victimhood and acknowledgement of ingroup misdeeds on social distance *in*
12 *parallel* for a dominant national majority (ethnic Bulgarians) and a subordinate national
13 minority (Bulgarian Turks). Both groups have been victims and perpetrators in intergroup
14 conflicts *in different historical eras*. Despite a complex intergroup configuration among
15 ethnic groups in Bulgaria and the presence of past conflict in contemporary public discourse,
16 until now, surprisingly little social psychological research has examined this context. The
17 mixed-methods study allowed investigating representations about two historical eras during
18 which power relations between the two rival groups have been inverted, giving rise to the
19 current power asymmetry between the groups.
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32 Study 1 revealed that, for ethnic Bulgarians, collective victimhood inflicted by the
33 Ottoman regime (that ended in the 19th century) was related to increased social distance with
34 Bulgarian Turks through reduced forgiveness and through reduced guilt for forced
35 assimilation of Bulgarian Turks during the 1980's. Acknowledgment of outgroup suffering, in
36 turn, was related to decreased social distance through heightened guilt and through
37 forgiveness for actions perpetrated during the Ottoman period. Among Bulgarian Turks, the
38 result pattern was different. Collective ingroup victimhood due to Rebirth policies was
39 unrelated to forgiveness, but was linked to reduced social distance through decreased guilt
40 related to the Ottoman period. Perceptions of outgroup suffering during the Ottoman period,
41 in turn, were related to increased guilt and thereby to increased social distance.
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54 Through the interviews in Study 2, we examined the differential meanings the
55 dominant majority and subordinate minority gave to the events, thereby yielding insights for
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Collective victimhood and acknowledgement of outgroup suffering across history 26

1
2
3 the two different result patterns of Study 1. Among ethnic Bulgarians, victimhood due to the
4 Ottoman regime was used as a rhetoric nation-building device, whereas among Bulgarian
5 Turks victimhood resulting from the Rebirth process was more nuanced, with the ethnic
6 Bulgarians' perpetrator role being questioned. In both groups, outgroup victimization was
7 diluted. For ethnic Bulgarians, outgroup victimization during the Rebirth process was
8 essentially described as politically motivated and currently politicized notably by the MRF
9 party. For Bulgarian Turks, outgroup victimization during the Ottoman rule was seen as a
10 rhetoric strategy by ethnic Bulgarians to justify stigmatization of Bulgarian Turks.
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20 The interpretation of findings of this research must be situated within the particular
21 context in which the study took place. Collective memories are largely shaped by the
22 surrounding political culture and changing political interests. The transition from a totalitarian
23 communist system to a more democratic post-communist system represents the historical
24 backdrop of this study. Indeed, the two historical eras considered in this paper were
25 interlinked in the political project of the socialist regime. The interview findings among the
26 ethnic Bulgarians in Study 2 echoed the collective nationalist narrative of the Ottoman period
27 that was constructed for bringing the nation together and strategically employed by the system
28 to legitimise Rebirth policies. After the transition, from the 1990's onward, anti-communist
29 attitudes became widespread. A large majority of all Bulgarians, including the ethnic majority
30 as well as the Turkish minority, distanced themselves from the former communist government
31 and its forced assimilation campaigns. In addition to explaining why the Bulgarian Turks
32 were more inclined to forgive the ethnic Bulgarians than vice versa, this may explain why
33 ethnic Bulgarians' guilt for the Rebirth process was downplayed by both sides. But even
34 though Bulgarian Turks regained rights after the transition and anti-discrimination laws exist
35 now, the power asymmetry between the groups has not fundamentally changed. With
36 economic scarcity and political instability, nostalgia for communism has also emerged. This
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3 nostalgia has revived nationalist attitudes pitting the national majority against the minorities.
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5 Though Bulgarian Turks do not demand reparations, the MRF party makes such requests on
6
7 their behalf. Nonetheless the Rebirth process has attracted little attention in the public which
8
9 may go some way in explaining why these requests are not deemed legitimate by the ethnic
10
11 Bulgarian majority.
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14 The shared heroic nation building narrative of the Bulgarian nation persists despite
15
16 changes in official accounts. Even though most ethnic Bulgarians readily acknowledge that
17
18 current-day Bulgarian Turks have no responsibility for the events of the Ottoman period,
19
20 some Bulgarian Turks may feel guilt, possibly as the result of a pervasive political narrative
21
22 strategically imposed upon them. The findings of Study 1 indeed suggest that experiencing
23
24 guilt triggers distancing oneself from the majority group.
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28 Our findings on representations of these specific historical events beg the question of
29
30 generalisability. At least two distinct dimensions may be useful to consider in future studies
31
32 on intergroup reconciliation. First, representations of temporally differentiated victimisation
33
34 events in which victim and perpetrator status have been inverted and their role in current-day
35
36 intergroup relations can be examined in other intergroup contexts as well. A case in point are
37
38 formerly occupied countries in which a current minority can be linked to the former
39
40 occupying group. This is the case, for example, for the Russian minority in Estonia: during
41
42 the communist period, Russians were the dominant group within Estonia, but in current-day
43
44 Estonia they are a subordinate group and have suffered severe forms of stigmatisation. Second,
45
46 a direct comparison between historical representations of a dominant majority group and a
47
48 subordinate minority group adds an important dimension to the victim-perpetrator antagonism.
49
50 We would argue that these two antagonisms (victim-perpetrator and dominant-subordinate
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52 groups) are orthogonal. On the one hand, a former victim group can become a dominant group
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54 (Jews in Israel) and a former perpetrator group can become a subordinate group (Russians in
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Collective victimhood and acknowledgement of outgroup suffering across history 28

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3 Estonia). On the other hand, however, a former perpetrator group may maintain its dominant
4
5 position and the victim group its subordinate place (albeit being the numeric majority) as in
6
7 South Africa after the end of apartheid. Accordingly, the reconciliation processes at work may
8
9 reflect joint motivations derived from both the victim-perpetrator and the dominant-
10
11 subordinate status of the groups.
12

13 14 **Limits and Conclusions**

15
16 Some caveats of the current research must be noted. First, as the empirical evidence is
17
18 based on cross-sectional survey data and semi-directive interviews, firm causal claims cannot
19
20 be made. Nevertheless, the multigroup path model tested in Study 1 drew on theorizing and
21
22 findings from prior research on collective emotions and victimhood, thereby increasing our
23
24 confidence in these findings. Moreover, the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data,
25
26 revealing the relationships between concepts as well as differential meanings assigned to the
27
28 events by the two groups, underscored the prevailing power asymmetry between groups as
29
30 well as the temporal asymmetry of the events. This richer understanding of the phenomenon
31
32 offsets to some extent the disadvantage of not being able to draw unequivocal causal
33
34 conclusions. Experimental research would nevertheless be useful to establish causality. An
35
36 interesting avenue for future experiments would be to examine, for both a subordinate
37
38 minority and a dominant majority group, whether the outgroup's acknowledgment of ingroup
39
40 victimization counteracts the detrimental impact of collective victimhood in decreasing
41
42 forgiveness and increasing social distance.
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48 Second, the scales used in Study 1 were shortened from the original scales assessing
49
50 the concepts, partially explaining the low reliability of the social distance and forgiveness
51
52 constructs. As this was due to the overall length of the survey covering different aspects of
53
54 interethnic relations in Bulgaria, future studies on collective victimhood in Bulgaria would do
55
56 well in using more complete scales.
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3 Third, the order in which the questions were asked both in the survey and in the semi-
4
5 directive interviews may have biased some responses. Ingroup victimhood questions always
6
7 preceded those of acknowledgement of outgroup suffering. This question order may have
8
9 accentuated the finding that outgroup suffering was minimised compared to ingroup
10
11 victimhood (Bilali & Ross, 2012). Prior research has indeed shown that people feel morally
12
13 less obliged to repair wrongdoings when reminded of ingroup suffering (Wohl & Branscombe,
14
15 2008).
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18 By studying the mutual impact of historical conflicts on intergroup relations in
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20 Bulgaria, our research highlights the importance of examining in parallel the perspective of
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22 both victims and perpetrators across time. Moreover, it demonstrates the dynamic aspect of
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24 intergroup relations shaped by intergroup conflicts occurring over history in which the role of
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26 the victims and perpetrators are inverted. Indeed, different historical events and current-day
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28 intergroup attitudes are intertwined. Today, while the power asymmetry between the groups
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30 remains, there is no overt conflict between ethnic Bulgarians and Bulgarian Turks and
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32 intergroup relations are reasonably harmonious. Nevertheless, the representations of history
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34 differ between the groups. Parts of the conflictual history essential to the victimhood of the
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36 subordinate minority are “forgotten”, while other parts central to the victimhood of the
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38 dominant majority “survive”. Thus reconciliation is yet to occur.
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Footnotes

¹ Social distance is a form of prejudice assessing the degree of avoidance of different types of proximity and contact with outgroup members (Weaver, 2008; see Bogardus, 1967).

² The degrees of freedom for some t-tests vary because variances were not homogeneous as indicated by Levene tests.

³ Additional analyses were conducted to control for the effects of socio-demographic characteristics. We thus ran the same multiple-group path analysis including gender, age, educational level, and perception of the economic situation as control variables. This multiple-group path analysis was conducted without accounting for the clustered structure of the data, because of restraints in the ratio between number of clusters and number of parameters to estimate in the model. The results pattern was identical in essence to the reported model.

For ethnic Bulgarians, a more advantageous economic situation was related to forgiveness ($B = 0.16$, $SE = 0.06$, $p = .006$) and less social distance ($B = -0.20$, $SE = 0.04$, $p < .001$). Females expressed more social distance than men ($B = -0.20$, $SE = 0.09$, $p = .021$), older people expressed more social distance ($B = 0.01$, $SE = 0.003$, $p = .029$), and educational level was negatively related to social distance ($B = -0.22$, $SE = 0.07$, $p = .001$). For Bulgarian Turks, a more advantageous economic situation ($B = 0.09$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = .030$) and higher education ($B = 0.15$, $SE = 0.06$, $p = .012$) were related to forgiveness. A more advantageous economic situation was also linked to guilt ($B = 0.13$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = .014$) and higher educational level to less social distance ($B = -0.15$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = .004$).

⁴ Note that Bulgarian Turks do identify with Bulgaria. Assessed with a three-item scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *yes, very much*; $\alpha = .83$), identification with Bulgaria was relatively high ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.93$) and different from the scale midpoint (3), $t(159) = 7.99$, $p < .001$.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of the variables and correlations between them, separately for ethnic Bulgarian (n = 192) and Bulgarian Turkish (n = 160) respondents.

	Ethnic Bulgarians		Bulgarian Turks		1	2	3	4	5
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>					
1. Collective victimhood	4.68	0.59	4.42	0.62	-	-.07	.00	-.26***	.10
2. Acknowledgement outgroup suffering	3.47	1.06	3.39	0.73	-.10	-	.33***	.08	-.27***
3. Forgiveness	3.67	0.82	3.86	0.62	-.17*	.37***	-	-.26***	-.41***
4. Collective guilt	1.50	0.69	1.79	0.74	-.40***	.22**	.05	-	.29***
5. Social distance	2.46	0.74	2.00	0.62	-.01	-.15*	-.46***	-.16*	-

Note. Correlations between variables are reported below the diagonal for ethnic Bulgarian respondents and above the diagonal for Bulgarian Turkish respondents. * p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p ≤ .001

Table 2. Indirect effects of collective victimhood and of acknowledgement of outgroup sufferings on social distance via forgiveness and collective guilt.

Predictor	Mediator	Ethnic Bulgarians	Bulgarian Turks
<i>Same historical era mediation</i>			
H1 Collective victimhood	Forgiveness	$B = 0.08, SE = 0.03, p = .018$	$B = -0.01, SE = 0.03, p = .700$
H2 Acknowledgement outgroup suffering	Collective guilt	$B = -0.03, SE = 0.01, p = .073$	$B = 0.02, SE = 0.01, p = .039$
<i>Different historical era mediation</i>			
H3 Collective victimhood	Collective guilt	$B = 0.09, SE = 0.04, p = .040$	$B = -0.08, SE = 0.03, p = .011$
H4 Acknowledgement outgroup suffering	Forgiveness	$B = -0.11, SE = 0.03, p = .001$	$B = -0.11, SE = 0.03, p = .001$

Note. Unstandardized coefficients and standard errors are reported. Bootstrapping cannot be implemented with the Complex command in Mplus.

Figure 1. Path analysis of the effects of collective victimhood and acknowledgement of outgroup suffering on social distance via forgiveness and collective guilt.

Note. Unstandardized coefficients (and standard errors) are reported. The clustered structure of the data was taken into account (Complex command in MPlus). When the two paths differ between ethnic Bulgarian and Bulgarian Turkish respondents, the coefficient for ethnic Bulgarians is reported first. Relations between collective victimhood and acknowledgement of outgroup suffering $r = -0.04 (0.04), p = .218$; between forgiveness and collective guilt $r = -0.10 (0.04), p = .007$. § $p = .061$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p \leq .001$

