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Individual Responsibility for Halting the Cycle of Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)

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Abstract

Twenty-one years after the signing of the Dayton Agreement, BiH continues to face persistent socio-political tensions, a difficult economic situation and outlook as well as problems with ethnic relations. Given BiH's history of violence, heed ought to be paid to the lack of progress associated with the reconciliation process between ethnic groups. Based on analysis of in-depth interviews, carried out between 2011 and 2015, this paper argues that focusing attention on individual responsibility for the atrocities committed during the 1992-1995 war, rather than on collective guilt, will lay the groundwork to more positive intergroup relations. Collective guilt or shame contributes to negative affect, which strengthens denial and avoidance. This article discusses how perceived outgroup heterogeneity decreases long term intergroup polarization and facilitates the participation of the "other" group's members to prevent future violence. Also, this paper addresses the question of the "black sheep effect", as research in social psychology demonstrates the tendency for group members to disparage an ingroup member who has violated an important social norm, rule or law. Once a reorientation toward the "other" begins, the process is likely to continue so long as it is reinforced by the ingroup as a social norm.

Introduction

Milorad Dodik, the president of Republika Srpska (RS), has threatened to push for a referendum on independence in 2018. The threat of Serbian independence represents one of the most significant challenges to Bosnian statehood since its separation from Federal Yugoslavia. With the United Kingdom's (UK) vote to exit the European Union (EU) on June 24th 2016, commonly referred to as Brexit, considerable uncertainty has been added to the situation in BiH (Wheeler and Hunt, 2016). Indeed, BiH formally applied for membership to the EU on February 15, 2015 (Baczynska, 2016). Despite ambivalent reactions regarding BiH's EU application (Jahic and Troncota, 2016), the Directorate for European Integration (2011) carried out a Public Opinion Poll in 2010 in BiH which indicated that 88.2% of the citizens supported BiH's EU membership. Of these, 23.5% believed EU membership would result in an improved future for citizens, 17.9% mentioned gains with respect to the freedom of movement, while 13.6% thought that greater economic development would be fostered. More recent polls conducted by the Directorate for European Integration in March and April 2016, highlight that 76% of BiH's citizens continue to support BiH's bid for membership to the EU (Sarajevo Times, 2016; Federalna Novinska Agencija, 2016). Increased cost of living and taxes were the most frequently invoked factors by those who did not support BiH's accession to the EU (Sarajevo Times, 2016). RS does not appear to oppose BiH's bid for EU membership, provided it does not impair RS's authority (Buckley, 2016), but has criticized the adoption of the coordination mechanism as Dodik asserts that RS was shut out from the negotiation process (Toe, 2016).

A window of opportunity for improved intergroup relations between the three main ethnic groups had existed following the signing of the Dayton Peace Accord (DPA)[1] but, as mentioned by the interviewees who participated in this study and others (see for instance Haider, 2007; Clark, 2009; Kosić and Bancroft. 2012; Hodžićv, 2015), inter-ethnic relations have significantly deteriorated over the last few years. Significant concerns were also raised regarding BiH's deteriorating socio-economic and political situation.[2] Given BiH's history of violence, heed ought to be paid to the lack of progress associated with the reconciliation process between ethnic groups as its political, economic and social conditions not only continue to be greatly challenged but will likely face further instability and / or deterioration (see anonymous, 2016).

The present article argues that placing less emphasis on collective guilt and more emphasis on individual responsibility for the atrocities committed during the 1992-1995 war will lay the groundwork to more positive intergroup relations and increase the likelihood of breaking the cycle of violence. In line with Brown et al. (2008), collective guilt, as with collective shame, involves negative affect in response to an ingroup's wrongdoing. "Moral consciousness-raising"[3] or "shaming"[4] fosters denial, humiliation and anger rather than empathy and responsibility, and may lead to further conflict between groups (Lickel, Schmader and Barquisseau, 2004). Based on interviews carried out between 2011 and 2015, the "us versus them" and the "denial of the other's losses" themes, promoted by political leaders, focus on "who" the members of the "other" group "are" rather than on behavior. The judicial prosecutions and commemorations, among other post-conflict interventions and initiatives, presuppose the collective guilt and shame of the "other". Very few Serb interviewees who participated in the current study felt guilt for their ingroup's wrongdoing but all indicated that their identity as a Serb had been tarnished since the war. With their identity threatened and heightened psychological defense mechanisms activated, such as blaming the victim and justifying the actions perpetrated, there exists little to no openness toward the "other" to either acknowledge the "other's" suffering or to contribute in the prevention of future potential violence. These findings are in line with other research carried out in BiH such as Čehajić and Brown's (2008) and Clark's (2012) studies. In order to alleviate this increase in ingroup favoritism/outgroup hostility, it has become imperative that less emphasis be placed on collective guilt and a greater focus be devoted to individual responsibility in order to diminish or stop further deterioration of intergroup relations in BiH.

The article begins by briefly discussing how group dynamics such as ingroup favoritism can affect intergroup relations. More specifically, the social identity approach, recognized as a valuable framework to elucidate the intergroup phenomena (Amiot and Aubin, 2013: 564), is used to clarify how ingroup bias affect intergroup relations in BiH. Then, this article highlights the necessity to look beyond retributive justice to enhance the focus on individual responsibility as judicial prosecutions contribute to the growing distance between ethnic groups. Indeed, individual responsibility must not exclusively aim to punish the criminal individual (see Subotić, 2011).[5] Criminal law *per se* does not extend to bystanders (Drumbl, 2011). However, as argued by Fletcher (2005), mass violations of human rights cannot materialize without the participation via silence and passivity / inaction of other citizens i.e. the bystanders. The author adds that post-conflict social reconstruction should also include active participation of the bystanders. They are after all important stakeholders with the ability to contribute to stabilizing or destabilizing the long term peace via, notably the extent of their influence in regards to the perception and remembrance of past events and their support to social reconstruction initiatives. Moreover, the bystander may perceive the convicted perpetrator "as the symbolic placeholder" of his or her group (Fletcher: 2005: 1029). To this extent, trials can lay the groundwork to groupthink[6] (Fletcher and Weinstein, 2002). Focusing on individual responsibility via education at different levels, where the "other" group ceases to be seen as an homogeneous group and intergroup polarization diminishes, will foster the development of an openness towards the "other" group's members. After this, the "black sheep effect", which encompasses the bystander, can be harnessed as a means to regulate ingroup behavior and foster pro-social behaviors towards all groups. The "black sheep effect", a term coined by José Marques, is the tendency for group members to disparage an ingroup member who has violated an important social norm, rule or law Marques and Pàez, 1994; Otten and Gordijn, 2014). Lastly, collective responsibility, comprising not only the acknowledgement of the "other's" suffering but also the ingroup's responsibility in the prevention of future violence, will become more likely.

Diminishing Intergroup Generalizations and Denial via an Increased Emphasis on Individual Responsibility

The Social Identity Approach: Elucidating how Ingroup Bias can Intensify Intergroup Divisions

The social identity approach, including both social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Tajfel 1981) and self-categorization theory (SCT) (Turner et al., 1987), offers valuable insights into why individuals enter into conflict with outgroup(s) (Turner and Reynolds, 2001). SIT essentially seeks to explain how individuals come to behave as group members or social identities rather than as personal identities (Tajfel, 1978). According to SIT, the group(s) to which one belongs constitute(s) a source of self-esteem (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). To enhance his or her self-image, the individual magnifies the status of the group to which he or she is affiliated by diminishing the status of the outgroup via an advantageous comparison between the ingroup's defining characteristics, i.e. traits, attitudes and behaviours, with those of the outgroup(s) (Tajfel and Turner 1979). However, as noted by Brewer (1999), ingroup favouritism does not necessarily cause intergroup prejudice or discrimination. Other factors ought to be considered which may also provoke negative intergroup relations (Hewstone et al. 2002). Threat perception is such a factor (Stephan and Stephan, 2000): the more highly identified one is with the threatened group, the stronger is the relationship between the perception of threat and prejudice and discrimination (Tausch, Hewstone, Kenworthy, Cairns and Christ, 2007). On the other hand, Čehajić-Clancy (2012: 242) found that "personal success" and "global self-integrity" increases the likelihood of one's acknowledgment of ingroup responsibility for the commission of mass atrocities and diminishes the need to defend oneself from threatening information via justifications and denial.

Turner (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987) elaborated on some aspects of SIT as the basis for his self-categorization theory of group behaviour. Depersonalization, for instance, takes place when a transformation from personal to group-based perceptions and behaviors occurs to the extent where one comes to define oneself and to behave in line with one's group identity (Haslam, Turner, Oakes, McGarty and Reynolds, 1998). Adhering to and supporting the norms of the group is key to one's acceptance by ingroup members (Yamagishi and Mifune, 2008). Ingroup members who do not conform to the group may be punished more severely than outgroup members who acted in the same way i.e. the black sheep effect (Marques and Paez, 1994). Otten and Gordijn (2014) contend that in addition to evaluations of deviant members being harsher, people react more angrily when hostile intentions or required cognitive efforts, such as manipulation, are clearly identified by the other ingroup members. Also, Montoya and Pitensky (2013) indicate that group members who adhere to the ingroup-favouring norm are more likely to act according to the group norm, whether competitive or cooperative, that was seen as most beneficial to the ingroup. Brewer (1999) adds that group members prefer maximizing their group's benefit over harming outgroups.

Intergroup Generalizations in BiH: Increasing Collective Guilt and Shame

Ellemers, Spears and Doosje (2002) and Páez, Marques and Vincze (2006) contend that when confronted to ingroup negative past behavior, individuals with a high level of in-group identification, e.g. very nationalistic individuals, exhibit more defensive mechanisms, such as denial, than low identifiers.[7] Similarly, Rensman (2004) and Pàez, Marques, Valencia and Vincze (2006) highlight that individuals who were directly involved in mass violations of human rights, such as perpetrators and passive bystanders, tend to not exhibit feelings of guilt and shame. Collective guilt and shame, both engendered by past negative collective events, are more likely to manifest in new generations (Rensman, 2004; Pàez, Marques, Valencia and Vincze, 2006; Clark, 2012). Members of the perpetrator group can even emphasize their group's suffering at the hands of the antagonist group (Biruski and Penic, 2014) to justify their own violent actions in times of war (Baumeister, 1997; Clark, 2012).

In BiH, the silencing of atrocities served to strengthen the association between the ethnic identity Serb with the identity of perpetrator / genocidaire. Among the interviewees belonging to the Serb ethnic group, many spontaneously shared being negatively affected by this overly broad label, especially the younger ones:

> It makes me sad to know that anywhere I would go, everybody hates me because I'm Serb. The whole world hates Serbs (Young woman, 15-20 years old, Serbia, 2011)

> I always feel the need to justify myself, compensate for the fact that I am Serb (Young man, 15-20 years old, Serbia, 2011)

This interviewee mentions being ashamed of being A Serb, despite the fact that he did not participate in the atrocities that were committed in the 1990s. He links his shame to the Serbs' reputation since the 1992-1995 war. He avoids talking about his identity as a Serb.

> I avoid discussing about my identity as a Serb, I try to hide it because I do not want more problems… I feel ashamed of being Serb. Since the war, Serbs have a bad reputation. We are seen as killers. I am seen as a killer even though I did not participate. I was a child at the time. (Man, 25-30 years old, Serbia, 2011)

Moreover, among the younger interviewees, a few added that the genocidaire stigma linked to their Serb identity affected their career opportunities: an important consequence in a challenging economic situation.

> There are no job opportunities for us in Serbia. I want to apply to other European countries but I don't think I have much chance to obtain a job because I'm Serb. Serbs are seen as Nazis so it's difficult to apply elsewhere when you're a Serb (Young man, 15-20 years old, Serbia, 2011)

Intergroup generalizations and the focus on "who the other is" generate individual and collective victimization and victimhood which affect all sides, i.e. Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats. As discussed in the next section, relying solely on retributive justice will prove to be insufficient to alleviate collective guilt or shame and could further jeopardize the likelihood of intergroup reconciliation, and the eventual breaking of the cycle of violence.

Increasing the Emphasis on Individual Responsibility in BiH: Requiring More than Retributive Justice

Proponents of retributive justice maintain that trials foster reconciliation and long term peace (Mani, 2002; Huyse, 2003; Pillay, 2009), and deter mass atrocities (Osiel, 2005). Mark Osiel (2005: 1810), highlighting a number a limitations linked to mass atrocities prosecutions, suggests that "public attributions of responsibility" should be carried out "in a convincing and defensible fashion" where "ascriptions of responsibility are consistent with the actual culpability of those it pursues." However, many critics contend that retributive justice is adversarial and divisive, feeding further intergroup mistrust and animosity (see Lu, 2006; DeLaet, 2014).

In BiH, contrary to what one might expect, the judiciary system actually lays the groundwork to the denial of mass atrocities that were committed in the 1990's. Among the contributing factors behind the denial we find the minimization of the severity of the crimes perpetrated, the perception of the perpetrators' deeds as being heroic and the inducement of intimidation and threats towards the victims in regards to their testimony. For instance, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) effectively fuels the relativization of the crimes perpetrated through its negotiated settlements with war criminals by offering shorter sentences in exchange for confessions (Lu, 2006; DeLaet, 2014). Moreover, many perpetrators that have been convicted and have served their sentences, such as Mitar Vasiljević and Momčilo Krajišnik, are still considered heroes (Vukušić, 2015). The perpetrators are constructed as heroes who fought for a just cause. According to Natalia Ojewska (2016), ethnocentricism and favouritism become more apparent when the "perpetrators convicted by the Hague tribunal are released from prisons and welcomed home as war heroes by the politicians from the Republika Srpska, Croatia or Serbia."[8] Considering criminals as heroes allows the demonization of victims and the characterization of the latter as perpetrators.

Interviews carried out for this study confirm that the retributive justice process further contributes to the occurrence of intimidation and threats towards witnesses that are about to testify in court; thereby, further increasing the divide between victims and perpetrators.

> I know many that were threatened before their testimony in court so they don't talk and live in fear (Young woman, 15-20 years old, Survivor of war in Bosnia, June 2015)

The president of the prisoners of war association in BiH, Murat Tahirovic, points out that recurring harassment and death threats deter or discourage victims and potential witnesses from testifying in court:

> The witnesses are afraid to give testimony and then go back to their homes and continue living. (…) We have often received notifications from our members having testified in trials and telling us that they're being threatened with death or being told their families would be killed because they agreed to testify. Simply put, people are afraid of testifying (Ponder, 2016)[9]

Vukušić (2015) brings forward the question: what is the purpose of war crimes trials to begin with? It is to allow for the conviction of the perpetrators and the establishment of facts or rather to prescribe how to perceive these individuals and their deeds (Vukušić, 2015)? Also, divergent views are often marginalized by those belonging to one's own group (Clark, 2012). Moreover, authorities in Republika Srpska, particularly Milorad Dodik, has stated that the BiH judiciary system is biased against Serbs and even goes as far as denying crimes established by the courts such as the Court of BiH and ICTY (see Halimović, 2010). However, as discussed elsewhere (anonymous, 2016), this denial comes in spite of the fact that although the Serbs are not the only ones who committed atrocities in the 1990's wars in ex-Yugoslavia, they are the primary perpetrators (Tabeau et al. 2003; Čekić, 2009; Halilovich, 2013; Nettelfield, 2010; Bećirević, 2014).

The profound psychological wounds fostered by years of ethnonationalist generalizations, cultivate fear and mistrust, and interfere with the rebuilding of relationships. In times of socio-economic hardship, where the political elites focus on their own interests, as is the case in BiH, heed ought to be paid to the growing divide between ethnic groups, especially when further insecurities, e.g. political, social, economic, lie on the horizon. The present article emphasizes the need to work toward the distinction between actions and predispositions, an awareness of the heterogeneity among members of each antagonist group and the perspective that change is possible. As pointed out by Ervin Staub (2006), negative attitudes and distrust toward an antagonistic group can impede conflict resolution. The incremental widening of the gap between the "us versus them" in BiH and its resulting victimhood, raises the need to diminish the prevailing collective guilt and shame and to focus more on individual responsibility in order to allow "a changed psychological orientation toward the other" (Staub, 2006: 868).

The Black Sheep Effect: Contributing to Breaking the Cycle of Violence in BiH by Fostering a Collective Sense of Responsibility

The Bystanders' Defensive Stance: Dissociating from the Victims, Joining the Perpetrators

Vetlesen (2000) indicates that in most cases of mass killings, the perpetrators and the victims constitute the minority and the bystanders form the majority involved in the event. The author adds that failure to act in response to an unfolding genocide implies complicity, a tacit message to both the agent and the sufferer that the bystander accepts or tolerates the action. Lučić (2013) specifies that the role of a bystander does not necessarily derive from free will, it can be imposed by the perpetrators. Then, following the logic of ethnicity, a Serb in Sarajevo, for instance, who shares a common ethnic affiliation with the Bosnian soldier who perpetrated mass atrocities, is considered as being the same as the Serb aggressors (Lučić, 2013). However, the bystander's level of responsibility varies (Vetlesen, 2000). According to Fletcher (2005: 1030), the bystander "is morally but not legally complicit" in the perpetrated atrocities. Gordy (2013) distinguishes between the notion of guilt in a legal and technical sense and the notion of responsibility at societal and moral levels.[10] In the same vein, Pàez, Marques, Valencia and Vincze (2006) highlight that only individuals can be found legally guilty and receive punishment.

As mass atrocities are planned, organized and depend on collectivities, many authors argue the need for transitional justice to address the collective responsibility of communities and society (see for instance Fletcher, 2002; Drumbl, 2005; Simpson, 2007; Osiel, 2009). Larry May (1992) indicates that group intentions should not be a requirement for collective responsibility to be considered. His perspective on collective responsibility is more general as it implies both relationships between members of the group and social structures (May, 1992). Čehajić-Clancy (2012) differentiates collective responsibility from collective guilt or shame. Referring to Larry May's work (1992), Čehajić-Clancy (2012:240) refers to collective responsibility as the "psychological willingness to share in the collective blame for the misdeeds of one's group, even if one did not personally took part in those misdeeds". Similarly, Isaacs (2011: 71), a philosopher, notes that collective guilt, which he refers to as "blameworthy collective responsibility", rather than praiseworthy, is not distributive, i.e. individuals are not responsible as individuals for collective actions, and should be dissociated from feelings of guilt as is often found in psychology literature, e.g. Branscombe and Doosje (2004).

Zoran Djindjić, Serbia's first post-Milosević Prime Minister, pointed out the collective responsibility of the Serbs who elected Milosević and enabled the existence of his regime: "We have to reconstruct our own past through this legal process (against Milosević), because not only is (he) a part of our past, but so are we, and that Milosević would not have become what he is without us" (Krasniqi, 2016). There are examples of official apologies from Serbs as well such as when President Tomislav Nicolic personally apologized on behalf of Serbia for the crimes committed in Srebrenica "on behalf of our State and our people" (McElroy, 2013). Another instance is when, without using the word "genocide", a resolution was voted by lawmakers in Serbia that acknowledged for the massacre of Muslims near Srebrenica (Pop, 2010). The collective responsibility of citizens who elected leaders that are responsible for mass violations of human rights, who have allowed, supported or failed to stop mass atrocities and so forth, has been pointed out by Subotić (2011). The notion of collective moral responsibility and the necessity of dealing with the past were also echoed by Čehajić-Clancy (2012) as key for long term peace.

However, as noted by Clark (2012) following her field research in Eastern Bosnia, the Serbs interviewed were not willing to consider the possible impact of their actions (or absence of) on the mass atrocities perpetrated in Srebrenica. The Serbs interviewed in the study carried out by Clark indicated that "they were not in the area during the war", they "were themselves victims of the conflict," and that Bosniaks are the ones to blame for the conflict (Clark, 2012). The interviewee below, along with most interviewees who participated in this current study, does not feel responsible for his ingroup's wrongdoing in the 1990's war.

> I don't feel guilt at all, I'm just angry because they (referring the international community and Bosniaks) make me feel like being Serb is a bad thing. I have not been implicated in the war and I'm being made to feel that I should feel ashamed of something I have nothing to do with. (..) I lost family members during the war and my uncle was beaten many times during detention. The fact that he was arrested and prosecuted does not make me feel responsible for what happened. Serbs have suffered as well and are not responsible for what happened to Bosniaks and Croats. (Man, 35-39 years old, Survivor of war in Bosnia, June 2015).

Nonetheless, as argued elsewhere, acknowledgement of responsibility is an essential element of the reconciliation process (Parent, 2016).

Ervin Staub (2006) points out that turning against an already devalued group is common. The author explains that such learning occurs through acting or participating in violence where victims are devalued and discriminated against (Staub, 2013). He adds that a reversal of morality can occur where the slaughter of the victims becomes acceptable and justifiable (Staub 2013). Congruent with Clark's findings (2012), the "other" group becomes responsible for the violence and the ingroup defends a just cause (Staub and Bar-Tal, 2003). The devaluation of the victims, the victim-blaming and the justifications of the mass violence perpetrated against them continue in times of negative peace (Staub and Pearlman, 2006). Both perpetrators and bystanders, to a lesser degree, are also affected by the atrocities perpetrated (McNair, 2002). The different mechanisms, such as group support and ideology, used by those who participate actively and passively in mass atrocities to protect themselves from guilt, shame and trauma, deter the development of a sense of empathy towards the victims (Browning, 1992; Brown et al. 2008). Staub (2006) contends that by conforming to the perpetrators' justifications and by devaluing and blaming the victims, bystanders tend to dissociate themselves from victims and a number of them affiliate themselves or join the perpetrators' group. The author adds that perpetrators and bystanders go through changes in terms of values, self-perception, identity, attitudes towards the victims and other human beings which hinder their acknowledgement of harmful deeds and mass atrocities, both to themselves and to others. Clark (2012) points out that the genocide stigma stimulates denial and avoidance of responsibility from both perpetrators and bystanders.

In accordance with Clark's and Čehajić and Brown's studies mentioned earlier, many of the Serbs who participated in the present study spontaneously and explicitly shared that the accusing of Serbs of genocide or the labelling of them as being Nazis harms or impedes dialogue and certainly does not help establish openness towards others' experiences and suffering. They add that these labels further their feeling of being victimized as they make them relive and fixate on the past instead of focusing on the present or on the others' suffering:

> I have lived in three camps since the war. I was detained during the war... Most of my family were detained in different concentration camps and were beaten. My brother died in detention. Am I supposed to listen to Bosniaks's exaggerations and accusations and stay silent when I am being called a Nazi because all Serbs are Nazis? My children go to university and have to come back to the camp. My eldest son cannot obtain any job because of the address... they always know he lives in a camp... we are being punished because we are Serbs while we are the real victims in all of this (Interview with man in his late fifties, Survivor of war in Bosnia, June 2015).

The Serbs' voluntary recognition of the Srebrenica genocide would mark a profound shift in the Serbs' understanding of the Bosnian war (Clark, 2012) while the Serbs' denial that genocide occurred in Bosnia furthers the legitimization of Republika Srpska (Clark, 2012). Based on our interviews, a minority of Serbs subjected to different degrees of attacks in Serbia do acknowledge the genocide committed in Bosnia during the 1990s as well as other mass atrocities perpetrated by Serbs. One such example are the Women in Black in Belgrade (*Zene u Crnom*) formed in 1991, who have protested against the denial of the Srebrenica genocide and other events.[11] The author of the current article met with an activist from the group in 2014 who, during an exchange, shared that she and other women from the group were being threatened on a daily basis, including death threats. Another example is the Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR). This non-governmental organization was formed in 2003 to build links via dialogue and cooperation amongst young people from different ethnic groups in the post-conflict region of ex-Yugoslavia. Its programs, found throughout Serbia, Croatia, BiH, Kosovo and Montenegro, focus on human rights violations and transitional justice[12] There is also the Centre for Antiwar Action (CAA) which was founded in 1991 in Belgrade. It is a non-governmental organization promoting human rights and assisting disadvantaged ethnic groups in regards to discrimination and repression.[13] A number of similar initiatives such as Antiwar Campaign in Croatia, Citizen's Forum from Sarajevo and Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, promoting human rights and non violence, have been launched throughout former Yugoslavia.[14] Bar-Tal (2013: 348) indicates that the emergence of a small group, organized and cohesive, constitutes a key part of the "societal process of peacemaking" as the minority's consistent dissemination of peace-supporting arguments can eventually influence the majority and bring a change.[15]

Such initiatives lay the groundwork to an increased awareness of the heterogeneity of the antagonist group(s). Based on Turner's work, Ellemers and Haslam (2012) explain that the self is constituted of numerous self-categories that can be conceived at different levels of abstraction ranging from exclusive self-categorization, i.e. personal identity such as "I Kate", to inclusive self-categorization, i.e. diverse social identities such as "Us Europeans". One can use more than one category at the same time i.e. multiple categories can become simultaneously salient which increases the likelihood of positive evaluation of outgroups (Roccas and Brewer, 2002; Brewer and Pierce, 2005; Crisp and Hewstone, 2007). Verkuyen (2004: 208) highlights that a number of social identities can be cognitively associated together and different "identity clusters" can occur; thus, impacting our understanding of conflicts and how they can be managed. The author notes that when religion and ethnicity, for instance, are grouped together, "the one is likely to inform the content of the other" (Verkuyen, 2004: 2008). Along similar lines, Jeong (2009) explains that multiple identities, enabling the growth of cross-group relations, facilitate cooperative efforts toward common goals, decrease intergroup bias and contribute to positive intergroup relations. The author adds that the salience of identities changes and is dynamic but that some collective identities such as ethnic, political and national identities are more pervasive and contribute to the deterioration of intergroup relations via growing insecurity, among other factors.

Group heterogeneity via an increased emphasis on individual responsibility, a step away from intergroup destructive generalizations and a first step toward collective responsibility in the prevention of future occurrences of violence, i.e. active bystanding, ought to be addressed. Indeed, as discussed in the next section, intragroup heterogeneity, comprising perpetrators, bystanders, victims and rescuers, ought to be encouraged over the course of the current and future generations. Only then, with the participation of the "other" group's members in the prevention of future violence can denial and avoidance be reduced.

Paving the Way Toward the Prevention of Future Violence and the Black Sheep Effect

Jodi Halpern and Harvey M. Weinstein (2004) note that stereotyping and prejudicing, rather than individualizing, tend to prevail in the aftermath of atrocities. In line with Ervin Staub's work on bystandership which also refers to prosocial behavior and altruism,[10] Halpern and Weinstein (2004) contend that the dissemination of rescue narratives, such as commemorations, helps enable the rehumanization of the "other". Such endeavors would certainly encounter opposition from some such as the perpetrators or those who deny that atrocities even occurred (Hovannisian, 1992). However, disseminating stories of members from the perpetrator group who risked their lives to save victims from rape or death, for instance, would cultivate heterogeneity, individualization and rehumanization of the members of the "other" group (Hovannisian, 1992). Very few interviewees shared such stories. In one case, a man describes that the frequent visits from a Serb couple who were openly weeping during each visit, eventually led to the diminishment of the violence he was subjected to. This Bosniak survivor points out that based on his experience, he does not consider all Serbs to be responsible for the atrocities perpetrated in the 1990s. Members of the antagonist group are seen in a more heterogeneous light by a few of the interviewees who participated in this study:

> A couple, Serbs, came to visit me (in detention ... unspecified location) almost every day. They cried and cried saying they were sorry for what (beatings, tor-

> ture...) the Serbs did to me. They pleaded the guards to be nice to me. I got better treatment over time. I am very sure it's because of the couple. I don't think all Serbs are the same, that couple was different. (Interview with man in his late forties, Survivor of war in Bosnia, June 2013).

Among the interviewees who worked with members of other ethnic groups, most mentioned being increasingly aware that "others", albeit unevenly, also suffered during the war. This interviewee highlights his increased ability to see the "other" as being less threatening through positive contacts. He, along with other interviewees, also spontaneously pointed out that one's ability to take the "other's" point of view varied according to one's losses.

> I have been doing more and more business with people from the "other" group. At first, I was really worried for a while. We never discuss about the war, it's all about business. (...) Over time, I realized that nothing (negative) happened. We all suffered during the war, there were no winners, we all lost. Now, life is difficult for all sides. (...) That's my position but I know it's not the same for all. It is much more difficult to consider the others' war experience when you lost someone during the war or several members of your family. (Interview with man in his late thirties, Survivor of war in Bosnia, July 2014)

Consistent with Staub's notion of inclusive caring,[16] where caring is extended toward the "other" (Staub, 2011), a few of the interviewees who have had positive contacts with the "other", essentially through work, developed empathy which led to an increased likelihood of actions taken to help the "other". For example, the interviewee below was helped by a colleague from work in repairing his house after flooding which occurred in BiH in May 2014.[17] Since then, this relationship has developed into a friendship characterized by reciprocity.

> My friend came to help me with the repairs of my house. He is a colleague of mine at work. He's Serb (the interviewee is Bosniak). At first, we developed a good relationship at work. I have known him for many years from the workplace but I didn't expect him to offer his help after the flooding in 2014. He showed up every week, whenever he had free time. Over time, I realized that when I needed him, he was there for me. Now, it's important for me to be there for him when he has difficulties as well. (Survivor of war in Bosnia, July 2015)

Openness or a positive orientation toward the "other" encourages collective responsibility (Staub 2011; 2016). Based on a study carried out in BiH with Serbs, Čehajić and Brown (2010) contend that frequent and quality intergroup contact allowed for an acknowledgment of collective responsibility. Both the increased perspective-taking from the Serbs and their reduced perception that their group suffered more than Bosnian Muslims allowed such an acknowledgment to occur (Cehajic and Rupert Brown, 2010). Nadler and Schabel (2008: 42) indicate that reconciliation implies a process of "gradual learning" where adversarial parties increasingly accept and trust each other during social contacts and in the repetition of cooperative efforts aimed at common instrumental goals which are significant to both parties. Similarly, Pettigrew (1988) and Dovidio, Gaertner and Kawagami (2003) contend that intergroup contact increases the individual's learning about other group and improves intergroup relations. However, Allport (1954), who developed the contact hypothesis, argues that simple contact between groups is insufficient to improve relations. The author maintains that favourable conditions must be present for intergroup contact to be successful. Among these conditions we find: equal status and interdependence between groups, possibilities for personal acquaintance between members of the opposing groups, and supportive equalitarian norms promoted by the authorities. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) are in agreement, but emphasize the difficulty of realizing all conditions in a contact situation.

Ervin Staub (2011a: 352) notes that "learning in childhood to accept and positively value human beings in general is probably the most powerful root of inclusive caring". All the interviewees who participated in the current study pointed out the need to educate children about what happened during the 1992-1995 war and its aftermath in order to break the cycle of violence. They also deplored the teaching of different "truth" to each ethnic group. They stated that the "two schools under one roof" system feeds further antagonism between the three official ethnic groups. The "two schools under one roof system" was initially meant to be a temporary measure (Čustović, 2014). Despite a number of initiatives, such as projects (Hromadžić, 2015; Tolomelli, 2015) and laws (Tolomelli, 2015), aimed at developing an holistic and inclusive education system, the segregative and discriminative educational system still prevails and reinforces prejudices in childrens' and teenagers' minds (Dzidic, 2015). Most interviewees not only deplore the consolidation of division and fear of the "other" between ethnic groups but how negative attitudes and emotions toward the "other" are being cultivated within the younger generation.

Moreover, in line with most interviewees who participated in the current study, one interviewee explained that the "us" versus "them" has become a norm since the war and that violation of that norm leads to stigmatization from within the ingroup. Another interviewee referred to a reversal of morality which occurred during the war and allowed the killings of the members of the "other" group as "the right thing to do." Both interviewees indicated that long term peace will only become possible once the norms, which were considered acceptable in times of war, change and that such beneficial societal changes are reinforced. More precisely, the interviewees who shared this, or similar concerns, indicated that social control serves to maintain a variety of factors, such as fear of the "other", which further feed the cycle of violence.

> Everything changed with the war. Old friendships stopped... if it is not because of death, torture or other crimes... it is because that relationship cannot be kept because of stigmatization. The "us versus them" norm leads to stigmatization. I don't see how war will not occur again without changing that. (Man in his forties, Survivor of the war in Bosnia, June 2014)

> During the war, people changed. Actions that would not have been acceptable before the war became normal and justifiable during the war. It was ok and justified to kill others that belonged to enemy groups. It has never been the same since. There is a distance that ought to be kept with the "other". That distance you want to keep because of safety. There is also an indifference among members of the same group which was not there before the war. Before the war everyone knew each other. Everything changed. (Woman in her fifties, Survivor of the war in Bosnia, June 2015)

Indeed, as noted by Moreen and Kleber (2001: 6), the war in Bosnia destroyed "the social and cultural infrastructure." The authors add that the war 1992-1995 demonstrated the capacity or the ability to commit atrocities, at both individual and collective levels:

> War has shown that a neighbor, a friend, a fellow citizen, or even a husband or wife can inflict the most violent acts upon a person. At a societal level, mutual

> enemies have been created by the use of propaganda and the subsequent atrocities people have been capable of committing (Moreen and Kleber, 2001: 7).

Based on interviews carried out for this study, the notion of openness toward the "other" should be cultivated so that the necessary reorientation toward the "other" may develop as a social norm. Such a transformation could begin and grow via education, notably, via descriptions of instances of altruism between the antagonist groups during the war. More research and better dissemination of information linked to Court cases, laying the groundwork to expectations that are closer to reality and bridging the gap between the Court and the communities, could also contribute positively in the education of individuals of all ages (Nettlefield, 2010). The ingroup's social norms are maintained via social control (Chekroun, 2008). Social norms such as humanization, inclusive caring and active bystanding could be fostered and strengthened via the black sheep effect in order to break the cycle of violence.

As mentioned previously, the black sheep effect facilitates our understanding of how openness toward the "other" could be reinforced: via one's conformity to his or her ingroup's social norm. A deviant behavior which threatens the social identity of the group can cause embarrassment, shame or guilt to all members of the group (Chekroun, 2008). Group members are strongly motivated to maintain norms contributing to the groups' positive identity (van Prooijen, 2006; Pinto et al., 2010). As a consequence of such motives, they will negatively perceive deviant behavior by fellow ingroup members as threatening and react accordingly. Few interviewees shared experiences where Serbs acknowledged their group members' misdeeds and mostly were not directly war-related. One such example involved a Bosniak who had to exchange his family's house with that of a Serb for safety concerns. During the Bosniak's first visit to their previous home, he and his family were insulted by the Serbian's neighbors. Fortunately, the Serbian family made sure that our interviewee and his family would not have to experience this again during future visits.

In short, educating each group on the heterogeneity of "other" via individual responsibility opens the door to not only a reorientation toward the "other", reinforced via the black sheep effect, but also to an increased likelihood of inclusive caring and active bystanding. The findings discussed in the current paper are in line with other studies on prejudice reduction where good quality contacts, involving positive images of the "other", cooperation, common goals, equal status, were found to increase the likelihood of acknowledgement of responsibility for the ingroup's violence inflicted on others and on intergroup reconciliation (Binder et al., 2009). Without the ingroup's acknowledgement of responsibility for past atrocities, there is no basis for an emotional or moral response, i.e. the ingroup's members will remain unmoved by the outgroup's suffering, e.g. absence of empathy (Branscombe and Doosje, 2004). As noted by Čehajić, Brown and González (2009), such absence of empathy allowed the commission of atrocities in the first place and therefore it is imperative that empathy be redeveloped and nurtured so as to prevent future occurrences of ethnic violence.

Conclusion

Being inclined to perceive the ingroup in a positive light and to hinder negative emotions, the acknowledgement of one's group atrocities is thus impeded by a sense of collective guilt or shame. Group members who are responsible for atrocities perpetrated during the war can avoid acknowledging ingroup responsibility via psychological defense mechanisms such as dehumanization and denial. However, we know that silencing the past will serve to reinforce the cycle of violence. After more than twenty years of a "no war no peace situation"[18] in BiH and where future socio-economic and political conditions are worsening, a sense of openness toward the "other" ought to be initiated. Placing more emphasis on individual responsibility and less on collective guilt has become imperative to diminish or stop further deterioration of intergroup relations in BiH. A large body of literature in political psychology supports the need to emphasize collective guilt in cases where mass atrocities occurred. However, in BiH, further reinforcing collective guilt and shame, at this point also means further strengthening intergroup generalizations, demonization and an increase in the potential for future violence. When only the offending individuals are found to be responsible, rather than the whole group, the rest of the members of the group can be freed from the guilt and shame associated with the atrocities committed, freed from further victimization and victimhood. As the "other" group ceases to be seen as an homogeneous group of perpetrators, an openness towards the "other" group's members is made possible and, in turn, a reorientation toward the "other" becomes more likely. The onset and development of collective responsibility then becomes possible, among bystanders and perpetrators, at all levels of society.

Healing from such experiences requires an understanding of what happened as well as the ensuing consequences, and addressing norms and values which allowed or normalized the perpetration of mass atrocities. A reorientation toward the "other" is only possible through education. Social norms are sustained through social control. Social norms such as humanization, inclusive caring and active bystanding, which cannot be externally imposed, could be strengthened via the black sheep effect deployed in a positive context. The argument that an "other-oriented social orientation"[19] becomes possible through education is not new, but such awareness throughout Bosnian society is essential and urgently needed according to the interviewees who participated in this study and who felt this ought to be taken into consideration for proposed peacebuilding initiatives. However, for a reorientation toward the "other" to endure as a social norm, top-down changes must occur as well. A transformation of this nature goes beyond the educational system as well as the mere dissemination of information through the judiciary system. The political structure of BiH, reinforcing divisions along ethnic lines, hinders the development of "inclusive caring" and "upstanding". The difficult socioeconomic conditions which further fuel the increasing intergroup gap must be addressed as well. As the nationalist political leaders take advantage of the context to revive negative post-conflict emotions and feed chosen traumas against the "other", empathy toward the "other" diminishes and justifications for "necessary" negative actions against the "other" strengthen. Without a categorical change at the micro level, i.e. political, social and economic dimensions, as well at the meso and macro levels, the future is likely to look even worse than the past.

Notes

1. A few interviewees mentioned observing an improvement of intergroup relationship between (approximately) 1999 and 2008. Some authors, such as Berdal, Collante-Celador and Buzadzic (2012), highlight that overt violence still occurred in post-war Bosnia between 1995 and 1998. See Berdal, Mats, Collantes-Celador, Gemma and Zupcevic Buzadzic, Merima. 2012. "**Post-War Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina**." In Berdal, Mats. and Suhrke, Astri, eds., *The Peace in Between: Post-War Violence and Peacebuilding. New York, NY:* Routledge.

2. This concern was even more intense amongst our interviewees in 2017.

3. From (Risse, Ropp and Sikkink, 1999:15).

4. From (Risse, Ropp and Sikkink, 1999:15).

5. Many authors such as Jelena Subotić indicate that individual responsibility aims for retributive justice. See Jelena Subotić. 2011. "Expanding the scope of post-conflict justice: Individual, state and societal responsibility for mass atrocity." *Peace Research*, Vol. 48, No. 2, pp. 157-169.

6. For more details regarding groupthink see Irving Janis. 1972. *Victims of groupthink*. Boston: Houghton Mills. See also Irving Janis. 1982. *Groupthink* (2nd Edition). Boston: Houghton Mills.

7. Páez, Marques, Valencia and Vincze (2006: 68) see national identity as "a source of collective self-concept, self-esteem and collective emotions".

8. From Natalia Ojewska. 2016. "Bosnia: Karadzic guilty but will reconciliation follow?" *Al Jazeera*, 31 March. http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/03/bosnia-karadzic-guilty-reconciliation-follow-160330130614655.html
Accessed June 16, 2016.

9. From Emily Ponder. 2010. "Bosnian courts face witness problem," *Institute for War & Peace Reporting*. 16 April. http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/137209/250457_de.html
Accessed June 18, 2016.

10. For further details, consult Eric Gordy. 2013. *Guilt, responsibility, and denial: The past at stake in Post-Milosević Serbia*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press.

11. It is important to note that the Women in Black in Belgrade are part of a wider network throughout the world which began in 1988 in Jerusalem when a group of women protested in silence in the center of Jerusalem. Each woman held a sign "Stop the Occupation." For further details regarding the Women in Black in general, see for instance Ivana Bzganovic. 2012. "Women in Black: The voice of peace in Serbia," *Yahoo News*, April 5. https://www.yahoo.com/news/women-black-voice-peace-serbia-134102015.html
Accessed July 12, 2016
See also Women in Black International Network. 2016. *Women in Black. For Justice. Against war*. http://www.womeninblack.org/old/en/about Accessed July 12, 2016

For more details regarding Women in Black in Serbia commemorating the Srebrenica genocide, for instance, see Valerie Hopkins. 2015. “The Women in Black remember Srebrenica.” *Open democracy*, July 11. https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/valerie-hopkins/women-in-black-remember-srebrenica Accessed July 12, 2016

12. See http://democratic-youth.net/yihr/about-us/
Accessed July 12, 2017

13. See http://orgs.tigweb.org/centre-for-antiwar-action
Accessed July 12, 2017

14. For more examples, see for instance, Jasmin Ramović. 2016. Peace in the Balkans: (En)countering the European Other”. In Oliver Richmon, Sandra Pogodda and Jamin Ramović eds, *The Palgrave Handbook of Disciplinary and Regional Approaches to Peace*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.424-437; Dora Komnenović. 2014. “(Out)living the war: Antiwar activism in Croatia in the early 1990’s and beyond.” *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, Vol.13, No.4, pp.111-128; Bojan Bilić. 2013. “Between Fragmenting and multiplying: Scale-shift processes in Serbian and Croatian antiwar activism.” *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.41, No.5, pp.801-804; Bojan Bilić. 2012. *Resisting the evil: (Post)-Yugoslav anti-war contentions*. Germany: Nomos; Bojan Bilić. 2012. *We were gasping for air: (Post)-Yugoslav anti-war activism and its legacy*. Germany: Nomos; Heleen Touquet. 2012. “The Republika Srpska as a strong nationalizing state and the consequences for postethnic activism.” *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.40, No.2, pp. 203-220.

15. See Moscovici (1973), for instance, for further explanations.

16. Staub considers inclusive caring as one of the most influential factor impeding group violence. For more details see Ervin Staub. 2011. “Beyond “Us” and “Them”.” In Ervin Staub, ed., *Overcoming evil*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 327-361.

17. For more details regarding the floods see the following link:
http://www.osce.org/secretariat/118734

18. Expression often used by the interviewees.

19. Term borrowed from Sabina Čehajić and Rupert Brown, 2010, “Silencing the Past: Effects of Intergroup Contact on Acknowledgment of In-Group Responsibility”, *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, Vol.1, No.2, pp.190-196

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