

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Institutional acknowledgement of the chosen trauma in the background of its denial: A field experiment across conflicting groups

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Abstract

Reconciliation research revealed that the institutional acknowledgement of the group's sufferings does not always improve fractured intergroup relations. To get a better understanding of this issue, through a field experiment we explored whether its effectiveness could be dependent on the collective background against which it is provided. That is, we involved citizens ($N = 975$) from societies entrapped in recent or ongoing conflicts (i.e., Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Palestinian, Israel) and examined the effects of the institutional acknowledgement of a chosen trauma when its denial by the majority (vs. minority) of outgroup members was made salient. Results revealed that the salience of the acknowledgement was effective in increasing the trust towards outgroup representatives. Instead, such an acknowledgement was ineffective in improving people's willingness to reconcile and hope for change, which was mainly dependent on the levels of denial by outgroup members. However, for these latter variables, relevant differences emerged depending on the conflictual versus post-conflictual context. Implications of our findings for intergroup reconciliation are discussed.

KEYWORDS

acknowledgement, chosen trauma, hope for change, intergroup reconciliation, trust

1 | INTRODUCTION

The acknowledgement of group's collective experiences of victimization is a powerful means for paving the way for reconciliation (see Twali et al., 2020, for a recent review), especially when it is provided by the perpetrator group or, in ongoing conflicts, the rival group (Hakim & Adams, 2017). Inversely, the denial of victimization – its discarding or even the assertion that the collective victimization did not happen (Cohen, 2001) – has deep detrimental effects on the groups' lives and relations, as it exacerbates the victims' resentment (Kalayjian et al., 1996) and inhibits the willingness to support reparative behaviours towards the victimized group (Starzyk & Ross, 2008). So far, the acknowledgement and denial of victimization have been con-

ceptualized and analysed as two separate – and opposite – constructs. However, in most conflictual or post-conflictual contexts¹ they coexist and are simultaneously expressed or perceived. For example, a significant proportion of ingroup members may tend to acknowledge the outgroup's victimization, while other ingroup members may deny the outgroup's victimization. Even more frequently, group representatives (e.g., political leaders) may make efforts in recognizing the outgroup's victimization, while a certain portion of group members they represent are perceived to be historically inclined to deny these outgroup's suf-

¹ Throughout the paper, when using the expression 'post-conflictual contexts', we referred to those contexts in which open warfare has come to an end (e.g., Junne & Verokren, 2005). However, this does not imply that 'real' peace has been achieved, as in these societies some levels of conflict between parts are commonly still present.

ferings. This latter tendency may arise or be amplified by the victimized group, which often expects that their victimhood will be denied by the outgroup rival (see, e.g., Noor et al., 2012). Drawing from these reflections, the present research aimed to explore the intergroup effects of the acknowledgement by outgroup representatives (i.e., institutional acknowledgement) of ingroup victimization, when high (vs. low) levels of denial by outgroup members of such victimization are made salient. In doing so, we conducted a field experiment that involved citizens belonging to different groups (i.e., Serbs, Bosniaks, Israeli-Jews and Palestinians) and focused on their chosen traumas (Volkan, 2001), which are past experiences of victimization representing a core feature of their collective identity.

1.1 | Institutional acknowledgement of ingroup (chosen) traumas and intergroup reconciliation

Group members can acknowledge others' sufferings in different ways. When they are responsible for past harm-doing, they may enact tangible corrective behaviours, such as a legal prosecution of the group member perpetrators or economic compensation (Mari et al., 2020). For example, in 2008 the Italian government signed an agreement with Libya according to which Italy has paid out a great amount of money nominally to compensate it for the 'deep wounds' due to the Italian colonization during the past century. Alternatively, groups may communicate the acknowledgement of others' victimization through symbolic acts, such as memorials or museums that acknowledge the ingroup's misdeeds and testify that the ingroup has incorporated these negative acts as a fundamental part of their (negative) identity (Nadler, 2012). This is, for instance, the case of the numerous memorials that remember the Holocaust in German cities (e.g., the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin) and displays that the Germans took responsibility for perpetrating the Holocaust. Institutional acknowledgement is a further possible way of recognizing own group's misdeeds and others' victimization. It consists of apologies for the ingroup's harm-doing (e.g., Hornsey et al., 2020) or emphatic acknowledgement of the outgroup's sufferings through public messages communicated by ingroup representatives. However, the beneficial effects of this latter form of acknowledgement for intergroup reconciliation are highly debated (Wohl et al., 2011).

On the one hand, some research revealed that the institutional acknowledgement of others' sufferings positively impacts the path towards reconciliation, as it can re-establish intergroup trust (de Greiff, 2008), promote intergroup forgiveness (Brown et al., 2008) and convey respect for the disadvantaged group (Bergsieker et al., 2010). Consistently, in the Israeli-Arab context, Nadler and Liviatan (2006) revealed that the acknowledgement by a Palestinian leader for the Israeli-Jews' sufferings during the ongoing conflict increased Jews' willingness to reconcile, although only for those with high levels of intergroup trust. Integrating this evidence, the needs-based model (Nadler & Shnabel, 2008, 2015) revealed that institutional acknowledgement may be effective in promoting intergroup reconciliation, but that these positive effects largely depend on the content of the message. For exam-

ple, Shnabel and colleagues (2009) revealed that for the low-power group of Palestinians, only an outgroup representative's message that acknowledged the ingroup's sufferings in terms of empowerment and self-determination is effective in increasing their willingness to reconcile with Israeli-Jews. Instead, for the high-power group of Israeli-Jews, especially an outgroup's representative message framed in terms of empathy and acceptance for ingroup sufferings is powerful in increasing their readiness to reconcile with outgroup members.

Beyond the nature of the message, some evidence revealed that such an acknowledgement has beneficial effects also when referring to historical and collectively 'chosen' events of victimization (i.e., the 'chosen traumas'; Volkan, 2001). For example, Bangladeshis were more prone to positively interact with Pakistanis after a Pakistani leader acknowledged the mass atrocities against their group during the 1971 War of Independence (Iqbal & Bilali, 2018). Similarly, the acknowledgement of the Holocaust in German political speeches was associated with more conciliatory attitudes among present-day Jews towards Germans (Vollhardt et al., 2014). Notably, Andrighetto and colleagues (2017) extended this latter finding by showing that an institutional acknowledgement of the ingroup's chosen trauma also triggers positive effects when it is offered by the present-day rivals, rather than the historical perpetrators. More clearly, they showed that the Palestinian political representatives' acknowledgement of the Jews' sufferings during the Holocaust increased Israeli-Jews' trust towards outgroup representatives and, although only indirectly, increased their willingness to forgive Palestinians for the aggressive acts against ingroup members.

On the other hand, because of competitiveness and mistrust that generally characterize intergroup relations (Insko et al., 2005), ingroups may respond to institutional acknowledgement offered by rival outgroups with scepticism (Hewstone et al., 2004) and perceive them as insincere, making them ineffective for the path towards intergroup reconciliation. This holds, for example, when power relations between the groups are asymmetrical. In particular, for members of low-power groups, the social reality is particularly difficult to navigate and seemingly positive actions by high-power groups, such as an acknowledgement of ingroup's sufferings, may be misinterpreted and viewed as a way to reinforce their dominant position. Further, the way an apology is received by members of a victimized group, and by minority groups more generally, may be shaped by the perceived stability of status relations between groups. Indeed, Shnabel and colleagues (2015; see also Halabi et al., 2018) found that when the status relations between Israeli-Jews and Arabs were perceived as unstable, apologies offered by outgroup political representatives for the ingroup's sufferings during the conflict were perceived by both parties as manipulative and even decreased the Arabs' willingness for reconciliation. Moreover, in a different and post-conflictual context, Borinca and colleagues (2021) revealed that the apology provided by a Serb representative on behalf of their government for the Kosovo war did not ameliorate the Kosovo-Albanian descents' perceptions and behavioural intentions towards the Serb outgroup.

Mixed results regarding the effects of institutional apologies have also surfaced in a recent study by Giner-Sorolla and colleagues (2022),

which focused on post-conflict European contexts. Specifically, the study revealed that apologies offered by the British prime minister for the Bloody Sunday incident were viewed more positively by the apologizer group (i.e., the British people) than the Irish nationalist recipients. In contrast, intergroup apologies by the Serbian president for the Srebrenica genocide generated more positive reactions among Bosniak recipients than among Serbians.

1.2 | Institutional acknowledgement against the background of its denial by outgroup members

Taken together, the above research shows apparently contradictory findings on the efficacy of the institutional acknowledgement of the ingroup's victimization, be it present or historical, in the context of intergroup reconciliation. However, most of this research examined the possible effects of this form of acknowledgement on reconciliatory attitudes without taking into account the background against which it is provided and, in particular without considering the group beliefs featuring the relation. This is an important shortcoming, especially when considering that relations between conflicting parties are commonly characterized by negative beliefs and suspicion (Insko et al., 2005), which in turn may deeply affect the meaning of such acknowledgements. More clearly, a possible explanation for this somewhat divergent evidence is that the effectiveness of outgroup representatives' acknowledgement may largely depend on whether recipients perceive the acknowledging message as accurately conveying the beliefs that the outgroup members hold, especially in terms of group tendencies to deny – or acknowledge – the ingroup's trauma.

To address this unsolved question, for the first time in literature, we examined the potential effects of institutional acknowledgement when the ingroup belief that most (vs. a few) rival outgroup members deny the ingroup trauma is made salient. Indeed, this belief is highly pervasive in conflictual contexts, especially those characterized by competitive victimhood (Noor et al., 2012). Within these settings, ingroup members commonly believe and expect that the outgroup rivals tend to deny episodes of ingroup victimhood as an attempt to invalidate the ingroup's identity as victims who have suffered as a group during the conflict. This appears particularly true when this denial belief concerns the chosen traumas, which represent a core feature of ingroup identity (Volkan, 2001). Further, beliefs about denial by outgroup members deeply shape the future of fractured relations per se. For example, through three field experimental studies, Hameiri and Nadler (2017) revealed that both Palestinians and Israeli-Jews who were made salient of low levels of denial by outgroup about their ingroup's chosen traumas (i.e., Nakba and Holocaust) were more prone to make concessions for reaching the peace and displayed increased conciliatory attitudes.

Therefore, in our work, we explored how victimized group members respond to the acknowledgement of the ingroup's chosen trauma offered by a rival outgroup representative, when high (vs. low) levels of denial are first made salient. In particular, firstly we examined people's reactions in terms of intention to reconcile with others, which

was the core outcome of our research. Besides willingness to reconcile, we also verified people's trust towards the outgroup representative who offered the acknowledgement of the ingroup's chosen trauma. In fact, intergroup trust is an important condition for resolving conflicts (Halabi et al., 2018; Nadler & Liviatan, 2006) and an essential precursor of conciliatory attitudes (Tropp, 2008) also when it is felt towards the outgroup representatives (see, e.g., Andrighetto et al., 2017). Further, we assessed whether the institutional acknowledgement of the ingroup's chosen trauma when high (vs. low) levels of outgroup denial are made salient would impact the people's hope that relations will improve between the two groups (i.e., hope for change; e.g., Leshem, 2017). A growing amount of evidence is indeed revealing that the feeling of hope is pivotal in transforming and driving attitude change within conflictual settings, even if it does not necessarily equate to willingness to reconcile. For example, hope for change is consistently associated with forgiving intentions towards outgroup members (Cohen-Chen et al., 2014, 2019; Moeschberger et al., 2005) or greater intentions to provide them with humanitarian aid (Halperin & Gross, 2011).

We put forward two alternative hypotheses for the considered outcomes, that is, willingness to reconcile, trust towards outgroup representatives and hope for change. That is, the institutional acknowledgement of the ingroup's chosen trauma would not have any impact on readiness to reconcile, people's trust and hope for change when the belief that the majority of outgroup members deny this trauma is made salient. Put differently, the background represented by high (vs. low) levels of outgroup denial would play a predominant role in driving the effects on willingness to reconcile with outgroup members, trust towards the outgroup representatives and hope for change, thus nullifying the effects of the acknowledgement offered by the outgroup representative (*Hypothesis 1a*). In fact, following previous evidence (e.g., Halabi et al., 2018; Hewstone et al., 2004; Shnabel et al., 2015) that, from the ingroup recipient's perspective, the denial of past trauma by outgroup members could represent a further confirmation of the hostility and insincerity of the outgroup, it is plausible that this perception of hostility and insincerity is projected onto the outgroup representatives, nullifying the potential benefits of the outgroup's acknowledgement of the ingroup's sufferings. This assumption is also indirectly supported by a series of empirical studies recently conducted by Wenzel and colleagues (2017). Although not directly focusing on the institutional acknowledgement of chosen traumas, they showed that members of victim groups perceive collective apologies as less sincere when they are not representative of the wider beliefs and sentiments of the offender group. This occurs, for instance, when apologies are offered by an individual member or are not endorsed by the majority of the outgroup.

However, besides this main hypothesis, we put forward an alternative one, which was grounded on the expectancy violations theory (Burgoon, 2015). This theoretical approach posits that, during interpersonal and intergroup (see, e.g., Nicholls & Rice, 2017) communicative exchanges, perceiving someone violating the expected social norms of their group triggers people's polarized reactions, which are positive or negative depending on the direction of the violation. In line

with this theory, the acknowledgement of chosen trauma by an outgroup representative when ingroup members believe that the majority of outgroup members deny it could constitute a relevant case of positive deviation from a negative expectancy of an outgroup social norm. Thus, this acknowledgement would have even more beneficial effects when it is provided against the background of high (vs. low) levels of denial by outgroup members, both in terms of enhanced trust towards the deviant outgroup member (i.e., the outgroup representative) and, more broadly, in terms of increased people's intentions to reconcile and the hope that things between the two groups could indeed change (*Hypothesis 1b*).

1.3 | The present research: Ingroups and related chosen traumas

We compared these alternative hypotheses through a field experiment that first manipulated the levels of denial by outgroup members and then the salience of institutional acknowledgement. In our study, among the different forms of institutional acknowledgement, we elected to focus on the empathic one, as it arguably reflects the opposite of denial better than other forms of institutional acknowledgement. In fact, through an empathic acknowledgement, the others' sufferings are recognized and validated, both cognitively and emotionally (see Twali et al, 2020).

Notably, unlike most research in this field, we enlarged our investigation beyond a single context and considered populations belonging to different conflicting backgrounds. In fact, we were mainly interested in verifying the combined role of denial by outgroup members and institutional acknowledgement treating them as general mechanisms that may operate regardless of the unique characteristics of a specific setting. Thus, we considered a large sample of citizens belonging to four different groups (i.e., Serbs, Bosniaks, Israeli-Jews and Palestinians), who have been entrapped in ongoing conflicts (i.e., the Middle-Eastern one) or recent ones (i.e., the Balkan wars). Despite this crucial difference that was taken into account in our analyses, these groups share a fundamental similarity: their group history is marked by experiences of victimization, which, although they are substantially different across the groups and belong to a distant or a more recent past, still represents a key component of group identity and affect the present-day relations. In particular, in our research, we considered for each group a specific 'chosen trauma', which is considered the most traumatic event in the history of that group. That is, the Jasenovac massacre was made salient for Serb participants: between 1941 and 1945, in the largest of the concentration camps run by the Croatian Ustaša regime, around 50,000 Serbs were killed (different sources give different numbers; for a debate around the number of victims, see, e.g., Kolstø, 2011). For Bosniaks, we focused on the Srebrenica genocide, in which around 8000 Bosnian Muslims were killed by Bosnian Serb forces in July 1995. For Israeli-Jews, we referred to the Holocaust, which is the persecution and murder of around six million Jews between 1941 and 1945 perpetrated by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. Finally, for Palestinians, we considered the Nakba (i.e., catastrophe), in which an estimated

700,000 Palestinians either fled or were expelled from towns and villages during the 1948 Palestine War.

As outgroup targets and relative representatives, we considered groups that were highly salient in today's given context and that were – or were not – the perpetrators of the ingroup chosen trauma. That is, for Serbs, Bosniaks and Palestinians, we considered the group perpetrators of the chosen trauma, which correspond also to their most relevant outgroup rivals in today's relations. Instead, for Israeli-Jews we elected to focus on Palestinians instead of Germans, as they are nowadays a most salient outgroup. Further, previous research (Andrighetto et al., 2017) revealed that the acknowledgement of ingroup-chosen trauma has similar effects also when offered by the present-day rival outgroup rather than the past perpetrators. Finally, whereas for Serbs and Bosniaks the outgroup representatives were the Presidents of the respective countries (i.e., Croatia and Serbia, respectively) for Israeli-Jews and Palestinians we considered outgroup opinion leaders (see Table 1 for a summary). For these latter two groups, we elected to focus on opinion leaders rather than political representatives because the high degree of scepticism characterizing the relationship between these two groups may have enhanced the risk that the acknowledgement message would have been perceived as lacking in credibility, over and above the degree of denial by outgroup members.

2 | METHOD

2.1 | Sample size, participants and experimental design

One-thousand and seventy-two citizens were initially recruited across the two contexts through different sources (e.g., private agencies or snowball sampling strategy) and compensated for their participation. Of these, 97 were not considered because they did not complete the survey. Thus, the final sample was composed of 975 participants (550 females; $M_{\text{age}} = 32.44$; $SD = 13.15$). In both contexts, we aimed to sample from the general population, such that our sample included participants from different age groups and only a small proportion of undergraduate students. Within the total sample, there were 425 Bosniaks (43.6%; 219 females; $M_{\text{age}} = 31.74$; $SD = 11.87$), 224 Serbs (23.0%; 165 females; $M_{\text{age}} = 26.11$; $SD = 10.74$), 163 Israeli-Jews (16.7%; 86 females; $M_{\text{age}} = 42.07$; $SD = 14.29$), 163 Palestinians (16.7%; 86 females; $M_{\text{age}} = 34.49$; $SD = 12.85$).

We employed a 2 (levels of denial by outgroup: high vs. low) \times 2 (institutional acknowledgement: salient vs. non-salient) between-subjects design, with participants of each group randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions and considering their group of belonging as the covariate.² The field nature of our experiment and the

² We considered the group of belonging as a covariate – rather than a main factor – mainly because we did not have specific hypotheses about possible interactive effects for each group of belonging, the different levels of denial by outgroup and the salience of institutional acknowledgement. Further, a possible 2 (levels of denial by outgroup: high vs. low) \times 2 (institutional acknowledgement: salient vs. non-salient) \times 4 (group of belonging: Bosniak vs. Serb vs. Israeli-Jews vs. Palestinian) significant interaction would be difficult to interpret and not

TABLE 1 The considered ingroups, related outgroups, representatives and chosen traumas that we considered in our experiment.

Ingroups	Chosen traumas	Outgroups	Outgroup representatives
Serbs	Jasenovac extermination camp (1941-1945)	Croats	Zoran Milanovic - <i>President of the Republic of Croatia</i> (2020-)
Bosniaks	Srebrenica genocide (1995)	Serbs	Aleksandar Vučić <i>President of the Republic of Serbia</i> (2017-)
Israeli-Jews	Holocaust (1941-1945)	Palestinians	Hammad Zaroubi <i>Palestinian opinion leader</i>
Palestinians	Nakba (1948)	Israeli-Jews	Ronen Levi <i>Israeli-Jews opinion leader</i>

related logistical constraints did not allow us to a priori calculate the sample size. However, a sensitivity analysis conducted with G*Power (v. 3.1.9.2; Faul et al., 2007) revealed that a sample size of 975 participants was large enough to detect a small effect size ($f = .010$), assuming power = 0.80 and alpha level = .05 for a 2×2 analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with the main effects of the main factors, their interactions and the considered covariate.

2.2 | Procedure, experimental materials and measures

Data were collected through online surveys between June and November 2020. The first author in collaboration with the coauthors prepared the materials and measures for the experimental survey in English (see the Supporting Information). Then, the coauthors with their collaborators translated and adjusted them when necessary for their language and cultural context.

For all the participants, the research was introduced as a study aiming to investigate people's responses to public messages conveyed by different media channels. Similar to previous works (e.g., Andrighetto et al., 2017; Shnabel et al., 2009), to bolster the cover story, in the preliminary part of the survey they were asked to answer a set of items investigating their media consumption and their attitudes towards popular media. Then, participants were asked *the extent to which the chosen trauma* (e.g., the Holocaust) *was important to their group* (e.g., Israeli-Jews) identity (from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*).

Levels of denial by outgroup members were manipulated by exposing participants to web content news ostensibly taken from a famous national online newspaper, reporting the findings that emerged from an international survey conducted by Harvard University (for a similar procedure, see Halabi et al., 2022, Study 3; Hameiri & Nadler, 2017). In the *condition of high levels of denial by the outgroup*, the content of the news made salient to the participants the fact that the majority of outgroup members deny the ingroup's chosen trauma (see Figure 1 for an example, Bosniak participants). Instead, in the *condition of low levels of denial by the outgroup*, the same web content news made salient to participants that only a minority of outgroup members deny the ingroup's

chosen trauma (see the Supporting Information for the English and translated versions of the web news manipulating the denial by outgroup). Afterwards to reinforce the impact of the manipulation, they were asked to summarize the article in some sentences.

Then, participants were introduced to the second phase of the survey in which they were exposed to a tweet ostensibly extracted from the social media platform, Twitter. They were told that the tweet was recently posted by an outgroup political representative and then aired by some TV channels and broadcasts. In the *condition of the salience of institutional acknowledgement*, the political representative acknowledged the physical and psychological sufferings experienced by the ingroup members during the chosen trauma (see Figure 2 for an example for Serb participants). In the *no-salience condition*, the outgroup representative tweeted about a neutral topic, that is, the different eating habits of ingroup and outgroup members.

After this message, the three outcome variables were assessed. Participants' *willingness to reconcile* was measured using three items (for similar items, see, e.g., Hameiri & Nadler, 2017) that captured the extent to which they were prone to 'work for a future of peace and prosperity between [ingroup] and [outgroup] people', 'sign online petitions that promote peaceful relations between [ingroup] and [outgroup]', 'support for peaceful relations between [ingroup] and [outgroup] in the near future' (each scaled from 1 = *not at all*; 7 = *very much*; Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$; $M = 5.08$; $SD = 1.81$).

Trust towards political representatives was measured using three items (adapted from Andrighetto et al., 2017). Participants were asked to respond to the following statements: 'In general, I have faith in what the [outgroup] institutional representatives say'; 'Generally speaking, the [outgroup] institutional representatives can be trusted'; '[Outgroup] institutional representatives are reliable' (each scaled from 1 = *not at all*; 7 = *very much*; Cronbach's $\alpha = .95$; $M = 2.44$; $SD = 1.39$).

Hope for change was measured employing five items borrowed from the previous literature (see Cohen-Chen et al., 2014, 2019). Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with statements such as 'I am hopeful that the relations between [ingroup] and [outgroup] will be peacefully resolved in the future'; 'When I think about the future of the relations between us and [outgroup], I feel hope'; 'We should stop trying to improve the relations between [ingroup] and [outgroup] because it will never happen [R]' (scaled from 1 = *absolutely disagree*; 7 = *absolutely agree*, Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$; $M = 4.84$; $SD = 1.47$).

Finally, participants were asked to provide sociodemographic information, including age, gender and nationality. Following the completion of the survey, participants were fully debriefed, especially about the

particularly reliable, given the number of participants within each group. Explorative analyses that considered the three-way $2 \times 2 \times 4$ interaction are reported in the Supporting Information. In short, the three-way interaction emerged as significant only when considering the hope for change as the outcome variable. However, the pairwise comparisons revealed no significant differences across conditions when considering the group of belonging separately.



A survey from the population of Serbia:

Srebrenica was indeed a terrible crime committed against the Bosniak people?

A survey conducted by American researchers to commemorate International day of Srebrenica remembrance showed 85% of Serbs don't think that the /Srebrenica was indeed a terrible crime committed against the Bosniak people.

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Most of the Serbian population denies that the Srebrenica was a terrible crime committed against the Bosniak people.

This has emerged in a new study conducted by American researchers from Harvard University in the United States, examining knowledge and attitudes toward mass war crimes around the world. The comprehensive survey was conducted in many countries around the world, including Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia, to mark the International day of victim remembrance. From the survey findings, which were presented at a special event held at the Srebrenica Victims Museum, it becomes clear that a majority of the population in Serbia (about 85%) have heard about the Srebrenica massacre, of which about 60% heard about the Srebrenica for the first time at school and around 27% from the media. The findings also state that the majority of the respondents think that it is useless to teach Srebrenica massacre in school. This percentage goes up among young respondents (respondents up to age 24) – the vast majority of them think that the Srebrenica topic should not be taught in school.

Director of Museum of Genocide in Bosnia commented by saying: "The relatively high percentage of the Serbian population who have heard about the Srebrenica and the fact that the absolute majority of them deny that the Srebrenica was a crime committed against the Bosniaks people reinforces the need to develop accessible information in Serbia on the matter, in addition to the importance of increasing the amount of time devoted to the Srebrenica in schools. Another discouraging finding is that the level of interest and the desire to learn about the Srebrenica is especially low among young adults in Serbia."

FIGURE 1 An example of the news content web created ad hoc to manipulate the levels of denial by outgroup members. Bosniak participants, condition of high levels of denial by the outgroup.

true purposes of the research and the fictitiousness of the media messages.

suggesting that the past collective traumas that we made salient to participants were relevant for their group identity.

3 | RESULTS

3.1 | Preliminary analyses

3.1.1 | The importance of the chosen trauma for the ingroup's identity

The mean rating on this item was above the neutral point of the scale (4), both when considering the entire sample ($M = 5.56$, $SD = 1.84$; $t(973) = 26.4$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.85$) and each group ($6.13 \leq M_s \leq 4.65$, $2.09 \leq SD_s \leq 1.33$; $t_s \geq 4.93$, $p_s < .001$, Cohen's $d \geq 0.32$), thus

3.2 | Main analyses

To verify whether the (high vs. low) levels of denial by outgroup and the salience (vs. no salience) of institutional acknowledgement would affect the examined outcome variables (see the [Supporting Information](#) for bivariate correlations of all variables for the entire sample and each subsample), we conducted a series of a 2×2 ANCOVAs that considered the group of belonging as the covariate.

Means and standard deviations for each variable and experimental conditions are reported in Table 2.

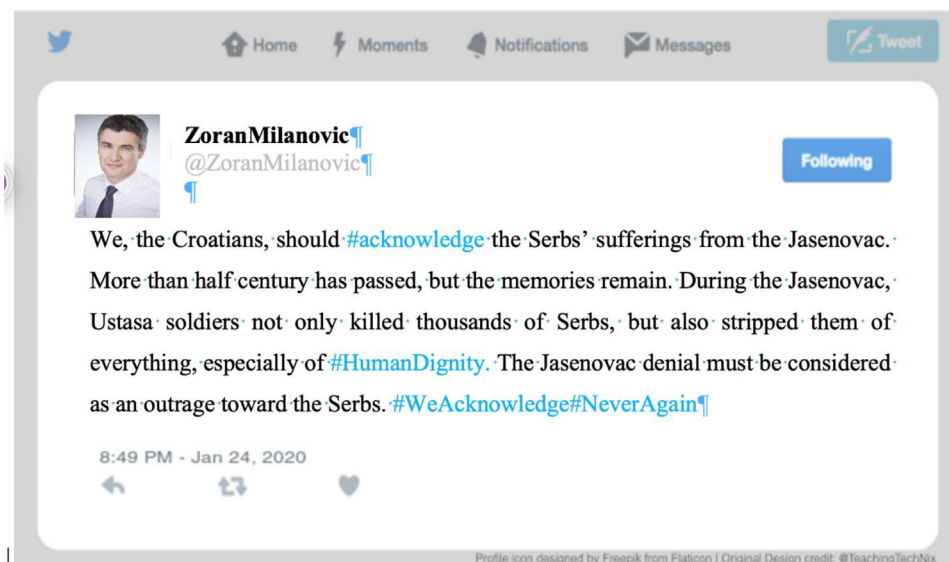


FIGURE 2 An example of the Twitter message created ad hoc to manipulate the salience of institutional acknowledgement. Serb participants, condition of the salience of institutional acknowledgement.

TABLE 2 Means and standard deviations for each outcome variable depending on the levels of denial by outgroup and the salience of institutional acknowledgement.

Institutional acknowledgement	Trust towards outgroup representatives					
	Willingness to reconcile		Trust towards outgroup representatives		Hope for change	
	Levels of denial by outgroup		High	Low	High	Low
Salient	5.02 (1.76)	5.24 (1.72)	2.53 (1.41)	2.93 (1.41)	4.64 (1.40)	5.06 (1.45)
Non-salient	4.97 (1.88)	5.12 (1.88)	2.05 (1.27)	2.28 (1.34)	4.70 (1.59)	5.00 (1.37)

3.2.1 | Willingness to reconcile

Results of the 2×2 ANCOVA revealed that participants' willingness to reconcile was not affected by the salience (vs. no salience) of institutional acknowledgement, $F(1,968) = 0.46$, $p = .496$. Further, the (high vs. low) levels of outgroup denial had a significant impact on these positive behavioural intentions, $F(1,968) = 3.95$, $p = .047$, $\eta^2_p = .004$: participants who were first exposed to the web message reporting that the majority of outgroup members denied the ingroup chosen trauma (i.e., condition of high levels of denial by outgroup) expressed less willingness to reconcile ($M = 4.99$; $SD = 1.82$) than those who read the message in which only a minority of outgroup members denied it ($M = 5.18$; $SD = 1.80$). This main effect held true also when taking into account for the group of belonging, which was significant, $F(3,968) = 37.20$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .104$ (see Table 3): Bosniak participants displayed higher tendencies to reconcile than Serbs ($t(966) = 6.38$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.53$, Israeli-Jews, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.92$) and Palestinians ($t(966) = 4.36$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.40$). Also, Israeli-Jews expressed less willingness to reconcile than Serbs ($t(966) = -3.80$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.39$) and Palestinians ($t(966) = -4.66$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.52$).

TABLE 3 Means and standard deviations for each outcome variable depending on the participants' group of belonging.

	Willingness to reconcile	Trust towards outgroup representatives	Hope for change
Bosniaks	5.67 (1.60) _a	2.14 (1.33) _a	4.91 (1.51) _a
Serbs	4.77 (1.82) _b	2.78 (1.32) _b	4.93 (1.42) _a
Israeli-Jews	4.09 (1.82) _c	2.39 (1.41) _a	4.41 (1.54) _b
Palestinians	4.99 (1.78) _b	2.83 (1.47) _b	4.98 (1.30) _a

Note: For each variable, mean values with different subscripts in the given column are significantly different at $p \leq .10$.

The two-way interaction levels of denial by outgroup \times institutional acknowledgement did not impact the participants' willingness to reconcile, $F(1,968) = 0.04$, $p = .834$.

3.2.2 | Trust towards outgroup representatives

We conducted a similar 2×2 ANCOVA by considering trust towards outgroup representatives as the outcome variable. Unlike willingness

to reconcile, results revealed that the salience (vs. no salience) of institutional acknowledgement positively affected the participants' trust towards outgroup political representatives, $F(1,968) = 45.41, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .045$: after being exposed to the web news manipulating the levels of denial by outgroup, participants who read the institutional acknowledgement tweet displayed more trust towards outgroup representatives ($M = 2.73; SD = 1.43$) than participants who were exposed to the control message ($M = 2.16; SD = 1.30$). Importantly, the effects of the institutional acknowledgement remained significant regardless of the (high vs. low) levels of denial by outgroup, which significantly impacted the trust towards outgroup representatives, $F(1,968) = 11.72, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .012$: similar to willingness to reconcile, participants who were made salient that the majority of outgroup members denied the ingroup chosen trauma displayed less trust towards outgroup representatives ($M = 2.30; SD = 1.36$) than participants who were led to believe that only the minority of outgroup members denied their chosen trauma ($M = 2.60; SD = 1.41$). These main effects hold true also when controlling for the participants' group of belonging, which significantly affected the outcome variable, $F(3,968) = 16.21, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .048$: Bonferroni-corrected post hoc comparisons (see Table 3) revealed that, overall, Bosniak participants had less trust towards the outgroup representatives than both the Serb, ($t(968) = -5.71, p < .001, \text{Cohen's } d = 0.47$) and Palestinian participants ($t(968) = -5.54, p < .001, \text{Cohen's } d = 0.51$). However, the Bosniak participants displayed similar levels of trust towards the outgroup representatives when compared to the Israeli-Jew participants ($t(968) = -2.06, p = .236$). The Israeli-Jews participants reported less trust in the outgroup representatives than both the Serb, ($t(968) = -2.79, p = .029, \text{Cohen's } d = 0.29$) and Palestinian participants ($t(968) = -2.94, p = .020, \text{Cohen's } d = 0.33$). Finally, the Palestinian participants reported similar levels of trust in the outgroup representatives compared to the Serb participants ($t(968) = -0.37, p = 1.00$).

Similar to willingness to reconcile, the two-way interaction levels of denial by outgroup \times institutional acknowledgement did not significantly affect the outcome variable, $F(1,968) = 1.05, p = .305$.

3.2.3 | Hope for change

When considering hope for change, a similar pattern of results was observed to that which emerged when considering willingness to reconcile. The 2×2 ANCOVA revealed that the institutional acknowledgement did not have any effect on this appraisal, $F(1,967) = 0.0001, p = .99$: after reading the web news manipulating the levels of denial by outgroup, participants who were exposed to the acknowledging message by the outgroup representative displayed similar levels of hope for change ($M = 4.85; SD = 1.44$) to those who were exposed to the neutral message ($M = 4.85; SD = 1.50$). Further, the levels of denial by the outgroup had a significant main effect, $F(1,967) = 15.23, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .016$: participants who read the web news stressing that the majority of outgroup members denied the ingroup chosen trauma expressed less hope that things will change between the two groups ($M = 4.67;$

$SD = 1.50$) than those who were made salient that only a minority of outgroup members denied it ($M = 5.03; SD = 1.41$).

The main effect of outgroup denial also remained significant despite the significant role of the participants' group of belonging: $F(3,967) = 5.96, p < .001$: pairwise comparisons (see Table 3) revealed that Israeli-Jews expressed less hope for change than Bosniaks ($t(967) = -3.86, p < .001, \text{Cohen's } d = 0.36$) and also Palestinians ($t(967) = -3.47, p = .003, \text{Cohen's } d = 0.36$). The remaining comparisons were non-significant ($t_s \leq 0.31, p_s = 1.00$) suggesting that Bosniaks, Serbs and Palestinians reported similar levels of hope for change. Finally, the two-way levels of denial by outgroup \times institutional acknowledgement interaction were non-significant, $F(1,967) = 0.35, p = .555$.

3.3 | Exploratory analyses: Splitting the sample into participants' context of origin

As mentioned above, our sample was composed of different subgroups that encompassed different settings. For this main reason, we decided to conduct further exploratory analyses that better examined whether our pattern of findings would be confirmed regardless of the participants' contexts of origin. More specifically, we ran the same analyses conducted above by splitting the sample into participants coming from a post-conflictual (i.e., Bosniak and Serbs) or a conflictual setting (i.e., Israeli-Jews and Palestinians). Sensitivity power analyses revealed that both subsamples were large enough to detect small effect sizes ($f = .016$ for the subsample from the conflictual setting, $f = .011$ for the subsample from the post-conflictual one), assuming power = 0.80 and alpha level = .05 for a 2×2 ANCOVA with the main effects of the main factors, their interactions and the considered covariate.

When considering the willingness to reconcile as the outcome variable, a different pattern of findings emerged for participants from the two contexts of origin (see Table 4). That is, when considering the subsample from the post-conflictual setting of the Balkans, the findings were similar to that observed for the entire sample. While the institutional acknowledgement was ineffective in ameliorating Balkan participants' willingness to reconcile, the levels of denial by outgroup members significantly affected this behavioural intention: the participants who read the web news assuming that most of outgroup members denied the ingroup chosen trauma were less prone to reconcile with rivals ($M = 5.24; SD = 1.76$) than participants who were exposed to the web news showing that only a minority of outgroup members denied the ingroup chosen trauma ($M = 5.48; SD = 1.69$). Further, the covariate of a group of belonging had a significant effect on willingness to reconcile, while the two-way interaction levels of denial by outgroup \times institutional acknowledgement did not. When considering the participants from the Middle-Eastern context, the institutional acknowledgement was once again ineffective in improving citizens' willingness to reconcile. However, for this subsample of participants, neither the level of denial (high vs. low) nor the levels of denial by outgroup \times institutional acknowledgement interaction had a significant effect on the willingness to reconcile.

TABLE 4 Main and interactive effects of institutional acknowledgement and levels of denial by outgroup members depending on participants' context of origin.

	Participants' context of origin																	
	Post-conflictual					Conflictual												
	Willingness to reconcile		Trust towards outgroup political representatives			Hope for change		Willingness to reconcile		Trust towards outgroup political representatives								
	F (1,644)	p	η^2_p	F (1,319)	p	η^2_p	F (1,644)	p	η^2_p	F (1,319)	p	η^2_p	F (1,321)	p	η^2_p	F (1,320)	p	η^2_p
Institutional acknowledgement (salient vs. no-salient)	0.28	.598	.000	0.22	.641	.001	0.05	.831	.000	0.22	.641	.001	4.70	.031	.014	0.07	.786	.000
Levels of denial by outgroup members (high vs. low)	4.31	.038	.007	0.29	.593	.001	12.73	<.001	.019	0.29	.593	.001	5.65	.018	.017	2.85	.093	.009
Group of belonging	42.82	<.001	.062	19.97	<.001	.059	0.003	.986	.000	19.97	<.001	.059	7.41	.007	.023	12.76	<.001	.038
Institutional acknowledgement × Levels of denial by outgroup	0.22	.637	.000	0.09	.769	.000	0.744	.388	.001	0.09	.769	.000	0.07	.785	.000	0.05	.830	.000

Note: Participants' group of belonging was entered as a covariate.

When considering the trust towards outgroup representatives, the 2×2 ANCOVA conducted on the participants from the post-conflictual setting of the Balkans (see Table 4) revealed a similar pattern of findings that emerged when considering the whole sample: the institutional acknowledgement by the outgroup representative significantly affected the trust towards the outgroup representatives, so that participants exposed to the tweet acknowledging ingroup chosen trauma displayed more trust ($M = 2.70$; $SD = 1.45$) than participants exposed to the neutral tweet ($M = 2.02$; $SD = 1.17$). This main effect holds also when the manipulated levels of denial by the outgroup and the covariate of the belonging group significantly impacted the trust. Finally, the two-way interaction levels of denial by outgroup \times institutional acknowledgement did not emerge as significant.

Similar results were observed for participants from the Middle-Eastern conflictual context (see Table 4): the participants who read the acknowledging message by the outgroup political representative then expressed more trust ($M = 2.79$; $SD = 1.38$) than participants who read the control message ($M = 2.43$; $SD = 1.50$). Also, the manipulated levels of denial by the outgroup significantly impacted the outcome variable in the expected direction, and the covariate of the group of belonging had a significant effect on it as well, while the two-way interaction did not.

When considering the hope for change as the dependent variable, for participants coming from the post-conflictual Balkan context, only the main effect of the levels of denial by outgroup members significantly affected this appraisal: participants who were assigned to the condition of high levels of denial by outgroup reported having less hope for change ($M = 4.73$; $SD = 1.52$) than those who were assigned to the condition of low levels of denial by outgroup ($M = 5.14$; $SD = 1.40$). The salience (vs. no salience) of institutional acknowledgement,

the group of belonging, and the two-way interaction levels of denial by outgroup \times institutional acknowledgement did not significantly impact hope for change. When considering the subsample coming from the Middle-Eastern context, both the institutional acknowledgement and the levels of denial by the outgroup did not significantly impact this crucial outcome variable. For the levels of denial by outgroup, we only observed a trend so that participants in the condition of high levels ($M = 4.55$; $SD = 1.46$) displayed less hope for change than those in the condition of low levels ($M = 4.83$; $SD = 1.42$), but this effect did not reach the conventional levels of significance. Finally, the two-way interaction levels of denial by outgroup \times institutional acknowledgement were once again not significant, whereas the group of belonging emerged once again as a significant covariate.

4 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

In the present study, we aimed to explore the effects of the institutional acknowledgement of the ingroup's chosen trauma in the background of its denial by outgroup members. In doing so, we designed a large-scale field experiment that considered participants belonging to four different ethnic groups (Bosniaks, Serbs, Israeli-Jews and Palestinians) characterized by past experiences of victimization that are still particularly salient in their group memories and feature their social identity.

Results displayed a pattern of findings that partially supported one of the alternative hypotheses that we put forward (i.e., *Hypothesis 1a*). More clearly, the institutional acknowledgement maintained a positive effect in terms of the intergroup trust, which was nevertheless confined to the source of this acknowledgement (i.e., the outgroup

representatives). Importantly, this effect remained significant regardless of the different levels of trust towards outgroup representatives displayed by the different ethnic groups, and even if they were first made salient the belief that most – or a few – of the outgroup members denied the ingroup chosen trauma.

By confirming *Hypothesis 1a*, the institutional acknowledgement did not have any effect when considering attitudes that more broadly involved intergroup relations. In fact, we found similar and clear evidence both when considering our main outcome variable, that is, participants' intentions to reconcile with the opponents, and their hope that something will change between ingroup and outgroup members. For these variables, the levels of denial by the outgroup had a main and unique impact: sampled citizens who were made salient the belief that most outgroup members denied ingroup chosen trauma displayed less readiness to reconcile and more pessimistic feelings towards the future than those in the opposite experimental condition. However, the additional and explorative analyses that split the sample into Balkan and Middle-Eastern participants suggested that the obtained effects had a different magnitude depending on the participants' context of origin, where significant effects in relation to willingness to reconcile and hope for change were only observed in the post-conflictual Balkan context (among Bosniak and Serb participants). In the Middle-Eastern conflictual context (among Israeli and Palestinian participants), these effects were weaker and did not reach statistical significance.

No evidence emerged for *Hypothesis 1b*: the absence of significant effects for the two-way interaction levels of denial by outgroup \times institutional acknowledgement on the considered outcome variables and also when splitting the sample into the participants' context of origin, led us to reject the hypothesis based on the expectancy violations theory (Burgoon, 2015), that assumed that institutional acknowledgement would have an amplified effect, emerging especially when most outgroup members deny the ingroup chosen trauma.

Overall, we believe that our study makes an important contribution to the existing literature on intergroup reconciliation. First, it sheds important light on the boundary conditions regulating the effectiveness of institutional acknowledgement as a means for restoring fractured intergroup relations, by considering for the first time a meaningful sample of participants coming from existential conflictual and post-conflictual contexts. Our findings suggest that institutional acknowledgement may improve the image that ingroup members have towards the outgroup representatives per se, at least in terms of enhanced trust. However, its broader impact on intergroup relations is largely dependent on how the ingroup perceives the outgroup members in terms of their tendency to deny ingroup victimization. More clearly, the institutional acknowledgement seems to lose its strength in a general improvement of intergroup relations when group members are made salient the fact that most outgroup members deny their trauma, both in terms of enhanced reconciliatory attitudes and a perception of better future for the relations between the two groups. Thus, the beliefs that outgroup members deny – or acknowledge – the ingroup's traumas play a more prominent role in improving conflictual relations than the acknowledgement of these traumas by outgroup political representatives. Put differently, our findings may indicate that

the essential ingredient that leads ingroup members to reconcile and hope that something will change is the recognition by the entire outgroup of the ingroup's trauma, rather than the acknowledgement by a single person representing the institution. This main result is also in line with previous research supporting the idea that victimized group members place great emphasis on the offender group's beliefs and feelings about their trauma. For example, Wenzel and colleagues (2017) revealed that victimized group members perceive a collective apology as sincere – and are more prone to forgive – only when this apology is representative of the broader sentiment of the offender group. If, instead, the apology is offered by a single outgroup member and is perceived as not reflecting the beliefs of the whole group, it is likely to be perceived as insincere and illegitimate (see also Miller et al., 1987). Unlike this previous research, it is noteworthy that we did not find evidence of possible interactive effects between the acknowledgement by the outgroup representative and the broader belief regarding whether the entire outgroup denies or recognizes the trauma. Specifically, at least when considering reconciliatory attitudes, we observed that this broader belief predominantly affected participants' attitudes, above and beyond the salience – or not salience – of the institutional acknowledgement. The first possible explanation for this main effect could be attributed to the specific form of victimization that we considered. When compared with other group sufferings, the chosen trauma holds a peculiar meaning, that is, intrinsically linked to group identity (Volkan, 2001). Thus, it is plausible to imagine that, when considering the chosen trauma, intergroup processes play an even more prominent role than in other forms of victimization. Therefore, for ingroup members, the primary and essential need may be to see that others, as a whole group, recognize it.

In addition to this explanation, we cannot exclude the possibility that the null effects on intergroup reconciliation by the institutional acknowledgement could also depend on specific characteristics of the outgroup representative. For instance, messages of acknowledgement from outgroup representatives perceived as charismatic or having a high influence on outgroup opinions could have a significant impact on a broader level.

Further, data analyses on the two subsamples suggest that the efficacy of the acknowledgement of the ingroup's traumas by the entire outgroup cannot be examined in isolation from the given intergroup setting. That is, in a present-day conflictual context such as the Middle-Eastern one considered in the present study, ingroup members are presumably less inclined to believe that the outgroup recognizes the suffering attributed to the ingroup's chosen trauma, because the tendency for groups to compete over their victim status remains so salient in such conflictual contexts (Noor et al., 2012). Therefore, it is plausible to imagine that in these contexts the beneficial effects due to the shared belief that the outgroup members indeed recognize historical ingroup sufferings are more difficult to achieve than in post-conflictual contexts, such as the Balkan one. By taking a closer look at the findings for this context (see also the additional analyses in the [Supporting Information](#)), it is also noteworthy that the institutional acknowledgement did not have any positive impact on willingness to reconcile and hope for change, neither for Israeli-Jews nor for Palestinians. For the

Palestinians, these findings are rather consistent with Hornsey and colleagues' work (2015), who found that victimized groups were aware of the context and changes in the status quo that may have persuaded the perpetrator group to offer such an apology. Instead, these null effects are somewhat surprising when considering the Israeli-Jews. In fact, according to the needs-based model (Nadler & Shnabel, 2008, 2015), we should expect greater effects of the acknowledging message, especially for this group, as the empathetic nature of the message would specifically fit with the acceptance need of this high-power group. However, it is also noteworthy that findings by Hameiri and Nadler (2017) partially disconfirm this assumption and our findings. Considering the Middle-Eastern context and employing a similar manipulation of denial by the outgroup to that of our study, they consistently found that when the outgroup's acknowledgement of the ingroup's chosen trauma is made salient, both Israeli-Jews and Palestinians displayed more positive feelings and behavioural intentions towards the rival group.

We also think that our study meaningfully extends some recent works (Alarcón-Henríquez et al., 2010; Andrighetto et al., 2017; Hameiri & Nadler, 2017) that showed the possible beneficial effects of chosen traumas on the ongoing intergroup relations. Commonly, these traumas have been conceived as a fundamental part of the ingroup's social identity, but a possible negative predictor for peaceful intergroup relations. In fact, these collective memories of past sufferings often lead ingroup members to assume the status of victim and, consequently, justify negative and aggressive behaviours towards the rival outgroup, as these acts are more easily seen as self-defensive and aimed at defending the existence of the one's group (e.g., Bar-Tal et al., 2009; Wohl & Branscombe, 2004). Similar to recent works, here we demonstrated that these traumas may have positive implications for present-day relations when they are acknowledged by the entire outgroup or its representatives, although with the important boundary conditions outlined above.

4.1 | Limitations and future directions

The main limitations of our work are due to the field nature of our experiment. First, it is noteworthy that the entire sample was not well balanced for citizens' groups of belonging: participants from the Balkans (i.e., Bosniaks and Serbs) were considerably more than those from the Middle-Eastern context. However, sensitivity analyses revealed that for both the subsamples the power was enough to detect small effect sizes. Instead, this unbalanced sample did not allow us to conduct reliable analyses by considering each group, as for Israeli-Jews and Palestinians (especially) the sample size was too small to detect the effects of our 2×2 between-subjects design.

Second and partially related to the above issue, we decided to exploratively split our heterogeneous sample into the context of origin (conflictual vs. post-conflictual). We reasoned that this distinction allowed us to better detail and comprehend our main effects than other possible criterion variables. However, future studies should more systematically consider further crucial differences characterizing the

considered groups, such as the power or status position that they occupy within the given context and about the rival group.

Third, if the chosen traumas that we selected were all perceived by the respective groups as highly salient for their social identity, we cannot exclude that their importance and influence on present-day relations and how people perceive rival group members are largely different depending on the specific group and trauma. In particular, although our analyses revealed that each considered trauma was salient for the ingroup's identity, the Holocaust for Israeli-Jews and the Srebrenica genocide for Bosniaks were more salient for the respective groups than the other considered traumas. For Bosniaks, this higher salience could also be explained by the temporality of the trauma, which is more recent than the other traumas. Thus, we encourage future studies to validate our hypotheses and the effects we observed by better investigating the variability for each group and respective trauma.

Fourth, it is noteworthy that our research did not fully investigate the participants' perceived credibility of acknowledging messages and their source (i.e., the outgroup representative). For example, it is possible that the credibility of the acknowledging message would be dependent on the positive or negative opinions that ingroup members had towards the outgroup representative and his political reliability. Thus, future works should attempt to replicate our pattern of findings by also considering the perceived credibility of the messages and their sources as control or moderator variables. More broadly, the field nature of our experiment led us to consider a restricted number of measures after the experimental manipulations. Thus, our research missed a systematic check about our manipulations, which should be better verified in future works.

5 | CONCLUSIONS

As shown by the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war, building peace is still one of the most important challenges facing today's worldwide societies, but one of the most complicated. The acknowledgement of outgroup members' sufferings for past or present traumas is an important means of moving forward towards a path of peace. However, the forms of acknowledgement are several as well as the background against which it is provided. Our findings indicate that the effects of institutional acknowledgement on the path towards a better future largely depend on the extent to which denialism amongst members of the outgroup characterizes the background against which their representatives offer such acknowledgement. We hope that this relevant finding could guide institutions and political leaders in planning and providing empathic or symbolic acknowledgement of rivals' victimization.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author(s) declared that there were no conflicts of interest concerning the authorship or the publication of this article.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in OSF at https://osf.io/sepr7/?view_only=0d4f370f12414435a68c740a3fbbd1e1.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The study was carried out in accordance with the APA ethical guidelines and after receiving ethical approval from the local committees of each Department involved in the study. All participants gave written informed consent in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki.

TRANSPARENCY STATEMENT

This research adheres to the principles of transparency and openness in scientific research. We strive to provide a comprehensive and accurate account of our study, its procedure and experimental material, ensuring that readers can assess the reliability and reproducibility of our findings.

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