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Recognition of shared past sufferings, trust and improving intergroup attitudes in Belgium

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This article examines the role of intergroup trust and recognition of past sufferings on intergroup attitudes. We conducted an experiment among Dutch-speaking students in which we manipulated the degree of importance that French-speakers gave to historical episodes of past victimizations in order to test its impact on the attitudes towards the French-speakers. Results show that intergroup attitudes were most favorable among the high-trusting Dutch-speaking participants when they were led to believe that the French-speakers judged important the events where both communities were considered as victims, compared to the conditions where only French-speaking or only Dutch-speaking sufferings were considered important. This suggests some level of intergroup trust is a condition for the positive effect of shared memories of victimization on attitudes.
Keywords: Collective memory, victimization, recognition, intergroup reconciliation, intergroup conflict.

Reconocimiento de sufrimientos pasados, confianza y mejora de actitudes intergrupales en Bélgica
Este artículo examina el rol de la confianza intergrupal y el reconocimiento del sufrimiento pasado en las relaciones intergrupales. Un experimento con estudiantes belgas flamencos manipuló la importancia que belgas francófonos otorgaban a episodios del pasado de victimización para contrastar su impacto en las actitudes hacia los francófonos. Los resultados mostraron que las actitudes intergrupales eran más favorables en los belgas flamencos con alta confianza intergrupal cuando se les presentaba información que los francófonos juzgaban como importantes los sufrimientos de ambos comunidades, en comparación cuando la información solo enfatizaba el sufrimiento de los flamencos o de los francófonos. Esto sugiere que un nivel de confianza intergrupo es necesario para que memorias compartidas de sufrimiento mejoren las actitudes.
Palabras clave: memoria colectiva, victimización, reconocimiento, reconciliación intergrupal, conflicto intergrupal.

Many scholars have highlighted the important role that collective memory can play in the outbreak, maintenance and legitimization of intergroup conflicts. This is for instance the case when the members of one group share the representation that they, or their ancestors, have been harmed by the members of another group in some distant past and consequently position themselves as victims. Such a position may in turn trigger and help justify retaliatory actions of varying levels of violence (Wohl & Branscombe, 2004). A growing body of literature investigates the mechanisms by which such noxious effects can be downplayed on the road to intergroup reconciliation (e. g. Nadler & Liviatan, 2006). In this paper, we evaluate the assumption that the recognition of the in-group's past victimization by the former victimizing group leads to more positive attitudes towards out-group members. We describe an experimental study carried out in the context of the conflict between the two main linguistic communities of Belgium, the Dutch- and the French-speaking communities.

Victimization

According to Mack (cited in Devine-Wright, 2003), representing the past of the ingroup in terms of suffering and injustice increases in-group unity and out-group distancing. When exacerbated, remembering the past can evoke unpleasant feelings of weakness, sometimes

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leading to tragic consequences. In the Serbian-Albanian conflict, for example, two different collective memories have been used to justify an exclusive sovereignty over a unique territory —Kosovo— leading to violent interactions between the two communities, massacres and ethnic cleansing. The Serbian nationalists remember the battle of Kosovo of 1389 as the beginning of their servitude and the struggle for independence. For the Albanians on the other hand, Kosovo is the land of their ancestors (see Glenny, 1992).

According to Wohl and Branscombe (2004), remembering the failings of the in-group in the past actualizes protection needs in the present, which in turn opens the way to legitimize hostile actions against current possible enemies. In a context of threat, individuals perceive information in a biased manner, by stressing the atrocities and evil character of their foe, combined with the positive perception of the in-group as good, human and just (Bar-Tal, 2000). This provides the moral justification to oppose the out-group and is often used in an instrumental manner by political leaders in order to stimulate nationalism (Mack, cited in Devine-Wright, 2003). The justice seeking rationale fuels the struggle by motivating and unifying the troops.

However, according to Barkan (2001), taking multiple points of view of history into account avoids feelings of threat of mutual identities, values and norms. Mutual recognition can be reached if the divergent collective memories are reconstructed. Discourses about the group's history are means to capture in the present what happened in the past. These discourses can address in-group, but also out-group members and therefore generate several opportunities to reconstruct their relationships in order to work on a common future (Licata, Klein & Gély, 2007). The philosopher Jean-Marc Ferry (1996) provides a useful framework for understanding how collective memories and their respective identities could be reconstructed (Licata et al., 2007). Ferry distinguishes four types of discourses: narrative, interpretative, argumentative and reconstructive. A *narrative* discourse restricts itself to telling the story from a specific point of view, as it was experienced. The discourse becomes *interpretative* when it attempts to make sense

of the experienced episode, in order to make it understandable and to integrate it into the group's cultural framework. For instance, a perpetrator can admit his past harmful actions —at the narrative level— but interpret it as justified by the circumstances. In that case, victimization would be recognized, but minimized. If this interpretation is confronted with other interpretations, the discourse becomes *argumentative*. While considering other points of view, efforts are made to find arguments justifying an interpretation of what has been experienced, in order to convince others that one's interpretation is correct. However, this does not imply that other perspectives are integrated into the discourse: awareness of other interpretations is established, but not necessarily admitted. Nevertheless the dialogue is engaged. *Reconstruction* is reached when representations of the past are challenged. In the reconstruction approach divergent interpretations of experiences are acknowledged and progressively integrated into the discourse about the past. As a result, new frames are being constructed and a new common social identity, including both groups, can be created. This perspective does not imply that collective memories of former enemy groups should converge into a single common account of history. Multiple, sometimes diverging, perspectives can coexist. If not, people may infer their version of the past is not being recognized. In that sense, maintaining the different stories related to specific identities and experiences would be the only way to build up a reconstructive memory, which recognizes the existence and legitimacy of various perspectives on the same past.

Recognition seems to witness the validation and the respect of the victim's memory and identity. It allows the victimized group to bear and understand the past in order to reconstruct itself and be able to move forward (Digeser, 1998). In the same vein, Bar-On and Kassem (2004) confronted the point of views of Jewish and Palestinian students by a storytelling method to induce a "micro" reconciliation process. After several sessions of sharing specific family stories reflecting the Palestinian and Jewish pains, some students started to identify with out-group members. Through hearing and discussing

these stories, they came to perceiving their emotional experiences as shared. Storytelling brought awareness of the out-group's perspective on episodes interpreted differently by the in-group. Knowledge of both collective memories was accumulated.

The status of the ingroup within the historical narrative —being the victim versus being the perpetrator of past harm-doing— conditions its relationship to the collective memory of the historical event or period at stake (Licata et al., 2007). In some situations, both groups agree on the roles they played in certain past events, so that the statuses are unambiguously defined. For example, most post-WWII Germans did not deny the invasion of other European countries or the Holocaust that the Nazis perpetrated in the name of their country. However, collective memories of in-group transgressions of moral norms can be threatening for the social identities of the concerned groups. To the extent that individuals usually try to enhance a positive image of their in-group to protect self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), endorsing an immoral representation of the in-group is difficult, so that these memories are often distorted, legitimized, minimized, or simply omitted from the in-groups' collective memory (Baumeister & Hastings, 1997). For instance, certain genocides (e. g. Armenian, Rwandese, Bosnian) still fail to be recognized by all the perpetrator groups' members. Mellor and Bretherton (2003) studied the Australian collective memory about colonization. The official version of the story is that the British populated an "empty" territory where they brought technology and culture. Aborigines transmit another version of the story to their descendents: one of dispossessions, genocide and cultural oppression until the end of the sixties (see also Augoustinos & Lee Penny, 2001).

The Belgian linguistic communities facing their history

Belgium is a good example of how group membership influences the interpretation and importance of a common history. A parliamentary monarchy, Belgium is a federal state with more than 10 million inhabitants divided over three regions: the Flemish region (58%), the Walloon region (32,6%) and Brussels (9,4%) and three linguistic communities: the Dutch-speakers (56%), the French-speakers (43,5%) and the German-speakers (0,5%; figures taken from Hooghe, 2004). Though rarely violent, intense conflicts of a predominantly linguistic and territorial nature have regularly pitted Dutch-speakers —who live for the most part in the Flemish region - against French-speakers— who live for the most part in the Walloon region - and have profoundly shaped the country ever since its establishment in 1831 (Covell, 1981). Havaux (2008) compared Belgian French-speaking and Dutch-speaking history schoolbooks and he noted important differences in what is taught. While Dutch-speaking pupils already study historical facts linked to the history and culture of their linguistic community from the age of 12 on, their French-speaking counterpart do not learn much about Belgian history until they are 14 or 15, and they do not learn anything specific about their linguistic community before the very end of secondary school, when intergroup conflicts between the Dutch- and the French speakers are broadly covered. In contrast, in the Dutch-speaking schools, Belgian history is taught by stressing the linguistic intergroup conflicts and the actions of the Flemish (Dutch-speaking) movement. History schoolbooks recount the struggle that was led by the Dutch speakers (Flemings) to obtain equal cultural rights in a Belgium then dominated by the French-speaking bourgeoisie since its birth in 1830. This clearly illustrates that the two main linguistic communities of Belgium do not share the same collective memory of their common nation. As opposed to the Dutch-speaking community, events representing the Dutch speakers as the past victims of the French speakers are not very well known by the current French-speaking community (see Havaux, 2008).

Collective memory and need for recognition

According to the historian Elazar Barkan (2001), the need for recognition of individuals is insatiable. Reparation for past wrongdoings (material or symbolic) cannot be considered a final solution. It is rather part of a process. Reparations are negotiated and imply an agreement between the representatives of the two parties. The multiple points of view can be negotiated again and again, endlessly, but the reparation process and dialogue is engaged (Barkan, 2001). The case of Belgium is, again, an interesting example of this process. After the national elections of 2007, Belgium went through an important institutional crisis and remained more than 6 months without a government. The obvious sticking point was the failure to reach an agreement on the Dutch-speaking political parties' demand of obtaining the exclusive electoral power over the Dutch-speaking territories around Brussels for the national and European elections. Indeed, Brussels, the capital, is an officially bilingual region, whereas the other regions are monolingual (Dutch in the Flanders region, French in the Walloon region, and German in the German-speaking region). But, in Brussels, the majority speak French and less than 20% Dutch (Janssens, 2001). Large numbers of French-speakers also live in the Flemish territories surrounding the Brussels region. In two cities of these Dutch-speaking territories, people can also vote for electoral lists of Brussels, where the French speakers are more represented. The Dutch-speaking perceive this situation as a continuation of the past, a history of expansion of the French language (and power) over their territories, that the Dutch-speaking politicians commonly call *olievlek* or "oil stain", using the metaphor of a liquid spreading. For the French speakers, the present electoral rules are the outcome of previous negotiations. For them, questioning this situation demands a revision of delicate past agreements between the two communities that resulted in the current Belgian federal system and distribution rules. The Dutch-speaking politicians interpret these past negotiations as a temporary transition in a general process that should grant them exclusive decisional power over the Dutch-speaking

territories. While we are writing this article, this issue is still far from being solved. The different interpretations of past negotiations according to the two parties are not easily reconcilable: for the French speakers, the results of previous negotiations are considered as an end in itself, not as the first step of a process through which the Dutch speakers gain more power (Govaert, 2007).

Trust and inter-group reconciliation

To consider reconciliation between the two communities, it is important that "… victims and perpetrators, or members of hostile groups, do not see the past as defining the future, as simply a continuation of the past" (Staub, 2006, p. 868). According to Nadler and Liviatan (2004), the perception of previous humiliations and unfair treatments conducts to negative emotions that yield the erection of socio-emotional barriers and distrust hindering harmonious relations. Research on public apologies shows that the victim group can overcome the distance created by these barriers when the perpetrator group acknowledges its responsibility (Lastrego & Licata, in press). However, another barrier to overcome is distrust. To restore trust, the two groups must create a new dynamic in their current relations, without focusing on the past. Studies by Nadler and Liviatan (2004) demonstrated that distrust can bias the victims' perception of the adversary and of his attempts at socio-emotional reconciliation. Israelis' attitudes towards Palestinians were more positive if they read that a Palestinian leader admitted that Israelis suffered as much as Palestinians, but only if trust towards the Palestinians was already present. If the Israeli distrusted the Palestinians, the same discourse from the Palestinian leader brought less favourable attitudes towards his people.

This demonstrates the importance of trust as moderating the impact of recognition. Nadler and Liviatan (2004, 2006) envisioned three interpretations of these results: low-trusting participants could see this positive action by the out-group leader as manipulative; it

could elicit stronger victimization feelings among in-group members; or it could elicit the need to defend the in-group's morally superior position by refusing the morality displayed by the out-group. In Nadler and Liviatan's design, the reconciliation efforts were expressed by a Palestinian leader. Yet, politicians could be perceived as insincere. In our study, we tried to assess the moderating role of intergroup trust on reconciliation attempts stemming from lay out-group members on in-groups' attitudes towards the out-group.

We expect that efforts made by out-group members to acknowledge the in-group's perspective of their common past functions as a means to encourage intergroup reconciliation. In order to test this assumption, we constructed an experimental design through which we manipulated the degree of importance given to the in-group's historical suffering by out-group members. Basing ourselves on Vandecasteele (2005), we presented to Dutch-speaking participants a fictitious journal article describing the results of a —also fictitious— representative survey conducted among French-speaking youths. In this survey, they had to rate the importance of historical events to appear in a common history schoolbook, reflecting Dutch- and/or French-speaking peoples' sufferings. We predicted that:

1. If the Dutch-speaking participants perceive that the French speakers evaluate their sufferings *as important as* their own sufferings (Mixed Victimization condition), this should create the conditions for a *reconstructive* type of collective memory (Licata et al., 2007). Consequently, intergroup attitudes should be the most favourable in this situation. However, in line with Nadler and Liviatan (2004), we predict that these positive effects will only be obtained for participants who tend to trust the French-speaking Belgians.
2. When confronted to the French-speaking discourse that considers their own sufferings as *more important* than the Dutch-speaking sufferings (French-speaking Victimization condition), the *narrative* type of discourse that fails to integrate the Dutch-speaking

perspective will provoke less favourable intergroup attitudes than in the Mixed Victimization condition.

3. In case the French speakers judge Dutch-speaking sufferings *as more important than their own* (Dutch-speaking Victimization condition), two outcomes are possible:
    a. Dutch-speaking participants do not believe that the French speakers would give more importance to the episodes describing the Dutch speakers as victims from the French speakers. Awakening a sense of suspicion and distrust, intergroup attitudes will be even less positive than in the French-speaking Victimization condition.
    b. Dutch-speaking participants do believe that the Dutch-speaking perspective has been considered over the French-speaking perspective. In that case, intergroup attitudes will be the most positive compared to the other three conditions.
4. A feeling of recognition of the ingroup's past sufferings will mediate the relationship between the importance given to the different historical episodes by the perpetrator out-group and the attitudes towards the latter.

Also our study, in contrast to Nadler and Liviatans' study, aims to test these hypotheses on a far less harsh intergroup conflict situation than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Even though the linguistic conflict is enduring and has negative consequences, coexistence between the two main Belgian linguistic communities is not violent.

Method

Participants

Eighty-five Dutch-speaking (M_{age} = 21.96, *SD* = 5.02) undergraduate students from the VUB (Dutch-speaking university of Brussels) participated to the study on a voluntary basis during a course break.

Five of them were excluded from analyses because they were not Belgian (*N* = 2) or did not complete the questionnaire (*N* = 3). The remaining participants (63 women and 17 men) were randomly assigned to 4 experimental conditions.

Material

We created 6 descriptions of historical events (briefly explained below). Two explained past injustices towards the Dutch-speaking community:

1. The official language in newly established Belgium was French, which made it difficult for the Dutch speakers to occupy important public positions, namely as judges, teachers or military officers. Moreover, the Dutch speakers prosecuted in French could not defend themselves in their own language and were often victim of justice miscarriages.
2. For more than a century, the ruling class was almost exclusively French-speaking. The Dutch speakers represented the working class and were exploited by the French speakers. The workers lived in extreme poverty. In the factories, men and women worked 13 hours a day in difficult conditions. Workers unions were prohibited.
3. Two excerpts described injustices committed against the French speakers:
4. End of the sixties, the bilingual Catholic University of Leuven was in Dutch-speaking territory and the Dutch-speaking students claimed the departure of the French speakers shouting *"Walloons out"*. After several incidents, the government decided to separate the two universities and Louvain-la-Neuve (the "new one") was created and reconstructed in French-speaking territory.
5. Although the majority of the habitants of Brussels are French speakers, the Dutch speakers succeeded in generalizing bilingualism French-Dutch in administrations and impose a Dutch-speaking principal county magistrate in all the municipalities of Brussels.

This infringement to the universal suffrage is highly felt by most of the French speakers.

The two last excerpts described important historical events in Belgium that were unrelated to the linguistic conflict:

1. On May 29th 1985, the Heysel stadium received the European Cup Final. A wall of the stadium collapsed provoking a disaster where 39 people died and 600 were injured.
2. The hero of the comic strip Tintin wrote by Hergé became a Belgian myth. The strip contains Belgian history and Tintin is chosen to represent Belgium around the world.

Procedure, measures and design

Participants received a booklet and were told that it contained two different parts: one was an opinion poll on Belgian history schoolbooks conducted by a (fictitious) independent organism; the other was a survey on intergroup attitudes between the Dutch- and the French-speaking communities of Belgium, conducted by the Dutch-speaking Free University of Brussels. There was no mention of the real affiliation of the investigators, namely the French-speaking University of Brussels, so that participants were led to believe that they addressed an in-group audience. Participants were thanked after completion and debriefed via e-mail when requested.

The first page of the introduction with the explanation mentioned above contained the Dutch-speaking university logo and measures of trust (adapted from Nadler & Liviatan, 2006). All variables were measured with 7 points scales ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*). The trust scale contained 4 items (e. g. I trust the French-speaking community in their relations with the Dutch-speaking community) and proved highly reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .84$).

After the first page, three other pages comprising the logo of a fictitious independent organism presented the results of an opinion

poll about history schoolbooks, through which the experimental manipulation was introduced. In the three experimental conditions, it was explained that a research concerning Belgian history schoolbooks was in progress and that the participants would have to read the first results of this study, corresponding to the out-group's responses to the survey. The fictitious results contained the six historical episodes, each associated with a percentage representing the degree of importance given by the French-speaking out-group participants. We had four experimental conditions: a) the French-speaking victimization condition (FVC), where higher percentages were associated with historical episodes describing the French speakers as victims; b) the Dutch-speaking victimization condition (DVC), where the French speakers rated episodes where the Dutch speakers were described as victims as the most important; c) the Mixed Victimization condition (MVC), where the French-speaking participants considered both types of episodes as equally important. After this manipulation, and following the 6 historical episodes, a fictitious conclusion of an expert summarized and interpreted the results; d) in the control condition (CC), no results were presented to the participants, thus only the 6 episodes appeared without percentages of importance according to French-speaking youths and without the expert's conclusions.

Participants were then asked to complete their part of the study, by rating the same historical episodes on a scale ranging from 1 (*not important at all*) to 7 (*extremely important*) and these items ended the opinion poll part of the booklet with the logo of the fictitious independent organism.

The rest of the booklet was headed with the logo of the university again. Three questions were used as manipulation checks in the experimental conditions: "They [French-speaking respondents] tended to give a lot of importance to the parts where the French-speaking community was represented as the victim of the Dutch-speaking community"; "They tended to give a lot of importance to the parts in which the Dutch-speaking community was represented as the victim of the French-speaking community"; "They tended to give a lot of

importance to the parts in which the French-speaking community was represented as the victim of the Dutch-speaking community, but also to the parts in which the Dutch-speaking community was represented as the victim of the French-speaking community". In the control condition, we asked the participants which will be, according to them, the tendency of the —fictitious— questioned French-speaking participants (e. g. "They will tend to give a lot of importance to the parts in which the French-speaking community is represented as the victim of the Dutch-speaking community").

In order to measure feelings of recognition for past victimization by out-group members, we introduced the following question: "Do you have the feeling that the French speakers recognized the past injustices towards the Dutch speakers?" on which they had to answer on a 7 point scale going from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*totally*).

Attitudes towards the out-group were measured through 5 items (adapted from Klein, Licata, Azzi & Durala, 2003), for example: "I have negative feelings towards the French speakers" (Cronbach's α = .60).

In order to verify the Dutch-speaking view on their historical position —as a victim rather than a perpetrator— we measured collective guilt (e. g. "I feel guilty about the negative things the Dutch speakers did to the French speakers") and collective guilt assignment (e. g. "The French speakers should feel guilty about the negative things they did to the Dutch speakers") with 4 items each (see Branscombe, Slugoski & Kappen, 2004). Both scales proved reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha \geq .86$).

To check Nadler and Liviatan's (2006) assumptions that participants could perceive the out-group's message as manipulative or suspicious, we introduced a statement testing perceived sincerity in the three experimental conditions: "Do you think that the questioned French-speaking participants answered sincerely to the opinion poll?"

In the final part of the booklet, we collected participants' biographic information as well as their e-mail address if they wanted to be debriefed.

Results

Manipulation check

We conducted three one-way ANOVA with the experimental conditions (Importance to Victimization) as independent variable and each of our three manipulation check questions set as dependent variables to verify that participants perceived the relative importance given by the French speakers to their past sufferings. We used SNK post-hoc tests to check which means differed significantly from each other. Results confirmed that our manipulation generally worked in our three experimental conditions:

1. Participants of the DVC perceived more that the French speakers considered the episodes where the Dutch speakers were represented as victims ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.43$) than the participants of the FVC ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.28$) and the MVC ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 1.54$), $F(2, 57) = 4.20$, $p < 0.05$.
2. Participants in the FVC perceived significantly more that the French speakers gave more importance to the episodes of French-speaking victimization ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 1.33$) than the participants of the MVC ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 1.78$), $F(2,55) = 3.03$, $p = .05$. However FVC was not significantly higher than the DVC ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 1.78$), even if the means go in the expected direction.
3. Participants in the MVC perceived more that the French speakers gave an equal importance to Dutch- and French-speaking victimizations ($M = 5.42$, $SD = 1.54$), than the participants in the DVC ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 1.63$) and FVC ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.05$), $F(2, 55) = 5.66$, $p < 0.01$.

Expected opinion from the French speakers

We used within-subjects contrasts tests (Howell, 1999) to check the expectations of participants in the Control condition towards the

French-speaking opinions. Participants expected the French speakers to give more importance to the fragments where only the French speakers were victimized (M = 4.91, SD = 1.15) than to the fragments where only the Dutch speakers were victimized (M = 3.05, SD = 1.09) or the parts where both groups are victimized (M = 4.32, SD = 1.17), $F(1,22) = 11.25$, $p < .01$. They also estimated the last scenario as more probable than the second one, $F(1,22) = 26.39$, $p < .001$. This provides us with valuable information about what Dutch-speaking participants expect from the French speakers, independently of any influence.

Attitudes

As explained above, we have two alternative hypotheses regarding the effect of the importance given to the different episodes by the French speakers on the intergroup attitudes of the Dutch speakers:

1. If the Dutch-speaking participants *do not believe* that the French speakers give more importance to the Dutch-speaking victimization over their own French-speaking victimization (DV condition), their attitudes will be the most negative comparing to the other conditions, regardless of the initial level of trust. Comparing to the participants of the DV, FC and C condition, the participants of the MV condition should have the most favorable attitudes towards the French speakers, but only if they already trust the latter.
2. If the Dutch speakers *do believe* the scenario of the DV condition, their attitudes should be the most favorable comparing to the participants of the MV, FV and C conditions. Moreover, these intergroup attitudes should follow a similar pattern of results to those of the MV condition, that is more favorable attitudes towards the French speakers comparing to the participants of the FV and C condition, but only if they already trust the French speakers.

To test our predictions, participants were divided in function of their level of trust towards the French speakers through a median-split (*Mdn* = 4.13). Participants scoring above the median (*M* = 5.31, *SD* = .75) were classified as High-trusting and differed significantly from the participants scoring below the median (*M* = 3.45, *SD* = .67), classified as Low-trusting, $t(77) = 11.68$, $p < .001$. We then ran a 4 (Importance to Victimization: Dutch-speaking, French-speaking, Mixed, and Control) X 2 (Trust: Low or High) between-subjects factorial ANOVA with the Attitude measure set as dependent variable. We obtained main effects of Trust, $F(1,70) = 28.26$, $p < .001$, Victimization, $F(3,70) = 3.74$, $p < .05$, and an interaction effect $F(3,70) = 3.07$, $p = .05$.

Two sets of contrast verified each of our alternative hypotheses and estimated the simple effects between the 4 conditions for high- and low-trusting participants[5]. We did not obtain significant results for hypothesis 2. In the MVC, High-trusting participants expressed more favorable attitudes towards the French speakers than in the other three conditions, $t(70) = 3.16$, $p < .01$, while Low-trusting participants exhibited the opposite pattern, $t(70) = .47$, $p = .64$. The most negative attitudes towards the French speakers were expressed in the DVC (*M* = 3.99, *SD* = 1.01) compared to the MVC (*M* = 5.08, *SD* = 1.38), FVC (*M* = 4.71, *SD* = 1.03) and CC (*M* = 4.92, *SD* = 1.12), among high- and low-trusting participants. High-trusting participants showed more favorable attitudes towards the French speakers (*M* = 5.29, *SD* = .94) than low-trusting participants (*M* = 4.10, *SD* = 1.14). These results tend to confirm hypothesis 1 (see Figure 1).

[5] That is for hypotheses 1: MV (coded 3) versus FV (-1), C (-1), DV (-1); DV (2) versus FV (-1) and C (-1), MV (0); FV (-1) versus C (1), MV (0), DV (0). For hypothesis 2: DV (3) versus MV (-1) versus FV (-1) and C (-1); MV (2) versus FV (-1) and C (-1), DV (0); FV (-1) versus C (1), MV (0), DV (0).

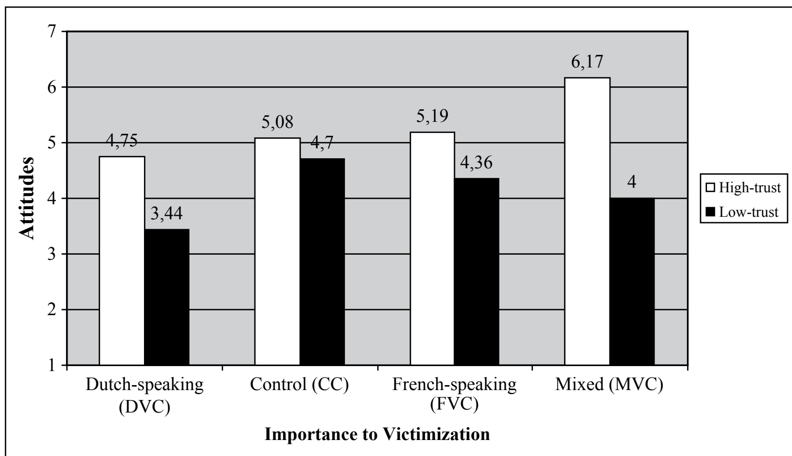


Figure 1. Mean attitudes towards the French speakers as a function of the importance given to victimization and intergroup trust.

Victimization

Globally, participants rated historical episodes of Dutch-speaking victimization as more important (*M* = 5.64, *SD* = 1.02) than French-speaking victimization ones (*M* = 4.94, *SD* = 1.11), $t(79) = 7.35$, $p < .001$. Neither our manipulations nor level of Trust towards the French speakers had an effect on the importance given to the different episodes. Participants also assigned more guilt to the French speakers for the injustices they inflicted to their in-group (*M* = 3.21, *SD* = 1.24) than they endorse collective guilt for the injustices their in-group inflicted to the French speakers (*M* = 2.50, *SD* = 1.18), $t(77) = 4.31$, $p < .001$. We can say that the Dutch-speaking participants' point of view on their historical position is close to a collective memory of victimization, as expected. No significant effects were obtained between experimental conditions on guilt assignment and collective guilt measures, contrary to what we expected. We obtained a marginally significant effect of Trust on Guilt assignment: Low-trusting participants tend to assign more Guilt to the French speakers for the injustices they inflicted to

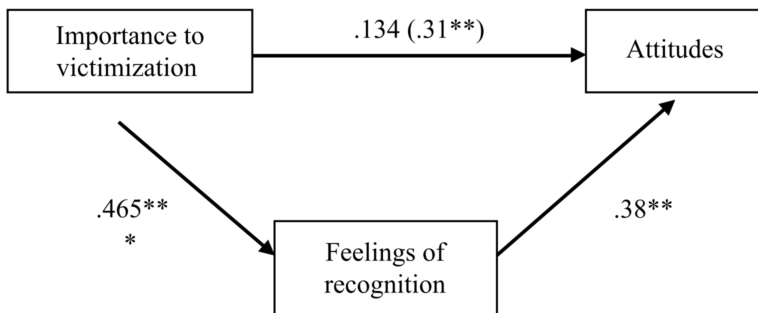
their in-group (M = 3.45, SD = 1.32) than High-trusting participants (M = 2.93, SD = 1.11), $F(1,78) = 3.75$, $p = .06$.

Feelings of recognition for past harm-doing

Again, we conducted a 4 (Importance to Victimization) x 2 (Trust) inter-subjects factorial ANOVA on the feelings that the French speakers did recognize past harm-doings towards the Dutch speakers. The interaction was not significant. Main effects of Trust, $F(1,79) = 13.83$, $p < .001$ and of Importance to Victimization, $F(3,79) = 10.61$, $p < .001$ were significant. High-trusting participants perceived more recognition stemming from the French speakers (M = 4.38, SD = 1.29) than Low-trusting ones (M = 3.43, SD = 1.36). Feelings of recognition were also higher in the MV condition (M = 5.17, SD = 1.51) than in the other three conditions, regardless of the level of Trust (all M's < 3.74 and all SD's between 1 and 1.23).

Following our theoretical reasoning, the impact of the perceived importance given by the French speakers to the different historical episodes on Dutch-speakers' attitudes towards them could be attributed to the impression of being recognized (or not) as a past victimized group. In order to test this hypothesis, we carried out two mediation analysis (Baron & Kenny's method, 1986) testing the assumption that the Feeling of Recognition (mediator) would mediate the effect of Importance to Victimization (predictor) in predicting the Attitude (outcome variable). In line with hypothesis 1, Importance to Victimization was coded "3 for MVC; "1" for the CC; -1 for the FVC; and -3 for the DVC. In line with hypothesis 2, the second mediation analysis coded the predictor as "3" for DVC; "1" for MVC; "-1" for CC and "-3" for FVC. The Feeling of recognition as well as the Attitude were centered. We obtained significant results for the first analysis: Victimization (coded -3 for DV, -1 for C, 1 for FV and 3 for MV) predicted attitudes towards the French speakers, $\beta = .31$, $t(77) = 2.88$, $p < .01$, as well as Feelings of recognition for past harm-doing, $\beta = .47$, $t(78) = 4.64$, $p < .001$. When controlling

for Importance to Victimization, the Feelings of recognition variable remained a good predictor of attitudes, $\beta = .38$, $t(76) = 3.26$, $p < .001$ whereas the initial effect of Importance to Victimization on Attitudes ceased being significant, $\beta = .13$, $t(76) = 1.16$, $p = .250$ (Sobel test $z = 3.43$, $p < .001$).



** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Figure 2. Mediation of feelings of recognition in the relation between the importance to victimization and attitudes.

Perceived sincerity

We tested one of Nadler and Liviatan's (2004) hypotheses regarding the negative effects of reparation attempts among low-trusting participants, which they attributed to perceived lack of sincerity. We ran an Oneway ANOVA among our low-trusting participants with Importance to Victimization (Dutch-speaking, French-speaking and Mixed) as independent variable and perceived sincerity set as dependent variable. No significant effect was found. Indeed, the low-trusting participants of the MVC ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 1.01$) did not differ from the participants of the other conditions concerning the perceived sincerity of the French speakers.

Discussion

Our study shows that reconciliation attempts through a reconstructive discourse on collective memories can have opposite consequences on intergroup attitudes as a function of intergroup trust. This replicates Nadler and Liviatan's findings (2004) in another setting and tends to confirm their explanation of two types of barriers: one related to the past (socio-emotional), the other reflecting the present intergroup relations (trust). However, Nadler and Liviatan saw in these results the possible consequence of distrust regarding the out-group's discourse as sincere. Our data could not corroborate this view: the Low-trusting Dutch-speaking participants did not perceive the survey results of the Mixed Victimization condition (reconstructive discourse) as significantly less sincere than those presented in the other conditions. Moreover, High- and Low-trusting participants felt the highest level of recognition for the past injustices they endured as a group in this Mixed Victimization condition.

The other explanation given by Nadler and Liviatan (2004) for these contradictory results is the need to defend the in-group's morally superior position. According to the optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1999), in a context of distrust, the needs for positive distinctiveness from the out-group are stronger. In-group favouritism and out-group derogation serve the function of maintaining in-group's protection, privileges and superiority (Leyens et al., 2003). Research on infra-humanization show that expressing secondary emotions such as compassion or shame —perceived as typically human— can lead to rejection if stemming from out-group members, whereas it stimulates pro-social behaviours if expressed by in-group members (Demoulin, Leyens, Vaes, Paladino & Cortes, 2005). In that case, the negative attitudes towards the French speakers could be a manifestation of infra-humanization where the low-trusting Dutch speakers, in need for distinctiveness, could not accept that the French speakers demonstrate moral behaviours.

Vollhardt (2009a) argues that victimization does not always lead to violent and inextricable intergroup conflict situations and even suggests that victimization under certain circumstances can raise prosocial behaviors toward other victimized out-groups. If the victimization is inclusive —that is when the victimized in-group members do not consider their sufferings as unique and exclusive— the shared experience of harm triggers empathy and solidarity with other victimized groups. In that perspective, inclusive victimization is not a problem for harmonious intergroup relations, but exclusive victimization is. Transformation from exclusive to inclusive victimization is possible if the victimized in-group members feel recognition for what they have been through, but also if they become aware that the out-group suffered too (Vollhardt, 2009b). Indeed, building up a common collective memory where the divergent identities and perspectives are integrated and respected opens the possibility for creating a superordinate common in-group identity (Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman & Rust, 1993) without threatening the specific identities of each group. Consequently, intergroup attitudes should be improved. Both High- and Low-trusting Dutch-speaking participants showed less favourable attitudes towards the French speakers in the Dutch-speaking victimization condition. This condition could probably be the one actualizing the most a state of exclusive victimization among the Dutch speakers. However, our victimization measures failed to corroborate this assumption. Guilt assignment for example, was not higher in this condition than in the others. We only note that this condition elicited fewer feelings of recognition for past injustices among the Dutch speakers than the Mixed Victimization condition. More precise measures of exclusive and inclusive victimization should be taken in order to better understand these differences. The impact of our manipulation on identification at the in-group (Dutch-speaking) and super-ordinate level (Belgian) could also be relevant.

Bar-On and Kassem (2004) pointed the difficulties they had with the storytelling method in maintaining intergroup trust between the Israeli and Palestinian participants to focus on and work through the

past in the workshop, while new intergroup conflicts broke out in the external life. A longer time-span of confronting different perspectives is probably needed to understand the out-group's opinion and reach a common reconstructive discourse on what happened in the past and to better understand the current situation. When the Dutch-speaking media or political discourse depict current relations with the French speakers as unequal and threatening for the Dutch speakers, it becomes difficult for low-trusting Dutch speakers to acknowledge and understand the French-speaking discourses and perspectives at once. This might explain the failure of our manipulations in provoking changes in the importance given to the different historical episodes by our participants: the Dutch-speaking point of view remained the more important to consider overall. Barkan (2001) sustains that recognition opens the way to discussions, negotiations of certain rights for the victims. In the beginning, discussions seem polarized, the multiple points of view irreconcilable. Some claims are answered, others not, but once the reparation principle is admitted, the process is engaged. The victimized group progressively changes his perceptions of being aggressed in perceptions of being in dialogue. Mutual respectful agreement between the parties takes time.

According to Vollhardt (2009b), reconciliation is facilitated by the recognition of the specific subgroup's historical experiences but only if it's implemented cautiously: a "competition of victims" is a tangible risk. If the groups compare the intensity of their suffering, with each claiming a higher level than the other, they jeopardize the reconciliation process (Noor, Brown & Prentice, 2008). Noor and his colleagues found a significant negative relation between competitive victimhood and trust. The Mixed Victimization condition where in- and out-group's sufferings are considered as equally important by out-group members, could threaten the idea that the in-group suffered more than the out-group among low-trusting participants. Unfortunately, we did not measure competitive victimhood in our study, so we are not able to check this possibility.

We must remind that our manipulation check showed that the Dutch-speaking participants failed to perceive the exclusive importance given to the Dutch-speaking victimizations by the French speakers in the corresponding condition. Even if, as results on the anticipation variables obtained in the Control condition showed, they considered this scenario as the least probable, participants did not perceive it as less sincere than the other experimental conditions. It may be important to check in next studies if the participants perceive such discourse but do not report it or if they simply do not perceive the out-group's message because it is considered as highly improbable.

Nevertheless, an explanation for the less favourable attitudes in the Dutch-speaking victimization condition might be that participants, perceiving the exclusive compassion and acceptance of past in-group's victimization, consider it as incoherent with the present situation. Indeed, if the French speakers give foremost importance to past injustices towards the Dutch speakers, they should be motivated to rectify earlier and current wrongness too. For example, the Dutch speakers recently claimed more bilingual competence from the hospitals' employees in the capital (mostly French-speaking but legally bilingual). If the French speakers considered unjust that the Dutch speakers could not express themselves in their own language for important matters in the past, why would they accept that this happens in the present? In that sense, acknowledging exclusively the Dutch-speaking perspective on the past, without linking it with the current intergroup situation can be considered as incomprehensible for the Dutch speakers and outraging.

A limitation in our study is that we used different historical episodes to illustrate Dutch- and French-speaking victimization. We operationalized a reconstructive type of discourse by integrating both communities' perspectives, but of different events. Indeed, we only had one perspective on each historical event, either a Dutch-speaking point of view, or a French-speaking one. Thus some historical events did not take the in-group's perspective into account and cannot be fully considered as a "reconstructive discourse" in Ferry's sense. Other episodes were only depicted from a Dutch-speaking perspective and

did not confront the participants to the logic of the adversary on the subject. Confronting the different interpretations of a same event would probably be a better mean to increase the willingness to justify the divergent positions, reach an "argumentative discourse" and a dialogue. We did not ask participants if they agreed with the interpretation of the presented historical episodes. By only asking the importance they attribute to a specific perspective on a historical extract, we could not check what type of discourse they resort to when confronted with the out-group's responses. Expressions of their opinions were limited and thus did not favour a reconstructive discourse on their collective memories. Nevertheless, although still imperfect, this study represents an attempt at operationalizing the reconstructive memory and mutual recognition concepts in an experimental setting. As results tended to confirm the relevance of that line of research, more effort should now be devoted to develop creative methodologies and better assess their interest within the social psychology of intergroup reconciliation processes.

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