



1 Social Representations of the Past
2 in Post-conflict Societies: Adherence
3 to Official Historical Narratives
4 and Distrust Through Heightened Threats

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INTRODUCTION

It is by now well recognized that one of the major obstacles in the cultivation of historical thinking (Seixas 2004) in the formal educational system of post-conflict societies is the collective memory and narratives of the conflict itself (Carretero 2011; Ferro 1984; Makriyianni and Psaltis 2007; McCully 2012; Carretero and Van Alphen 2014; Psaltis et al. 2017).¹ This is because many of the actors involved in the educational process, teachers, students, parents and policy makers often share social representations of the past, and the conflict in particular, that closely align with the official master narratives characteristic for their conflict ethos, monoperspectival, selective view of history and naïve epistemology (Bar-Tal and Salomon 2006; Psaltis 2016).

In this chapter, we argue based on empirical evidence from three post-conflict settings (Cyprus, Serbia and Croatia) that such representations of the past and their uncritical internalization that leads to adherence to master narratives of conflict construct a threatened self and generate distrust towards the outgroup. A threatened self and intergroup distrust are in our opinion obstacles to conflict transformation (Galtung 2000) and to a peaceful settlement of intergroup conflicts.

REPRESENTATIONS BASED ON BELIEF VS REPRESENTATIONS
BASED ON KNOWLEDGE

The main tension in post-conflict societies around history teaching is well captured by the classic distinction by David Lowenthal between *Heritage* vs *History* or by Wertsch (2007) as *collective memory* vs *history*, or Seixas (2004) as *collective memory* vs *disciplinary approach* to teaching history. This is not a claim of course that academic history is in any way objective and that collective memory is necessarily false. What we are claiming, however, is that there are two basic orientations that capture two distinct epistemological orientations. History teaching can be oriented towards the one or the other orientation depending on curriculum aims (Perikleous 2010), textbook content and structure and the ideological orientations and training of the educators (Psaltis et al. 2011; Makriyianni et al. 2011). The consequences of taking the one or the other orientation for the representations of the past formed in the classroom will be important, not only for the communication in the classroom (Goldberg 2013, this volume; Goldberg et al. 2011),



43 the cognitive and moral development of the students (Makriyianni and
44 Psaltis 2007) and their historical consciousness (Rüsen 2004), but also
45 for conflict transformation in the wider societal context. In the field of
46 social psychology, Moscovici (1998) makes an important distinction
47 between *social representations based on belief* and *social representations*
48 *based on knowledge* (Psaltis 2016) which captures the epistemological
49 intention that we are implying here. The distinction is premised on the
50 idea that characteristics of beliefs are homogeneous, affective and imper-
51 meable to experience or contradiction that leave little scope for individ-
52 ual variation. They are thus similar to the “dogma” characteristics that
53 Lowenthal attributes to approaching the past as an essentialist *heritage*.
54 By contrast, social representations founded on knowledge are similar to
55 Lowenthal’s approach to the past as *history* since they are more fluid,
56 pragmatic and amenable to the proof of success or failure and leave cer-
57 tain latitude to language, experience and even to the critical features of
58 individuals.

59 THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION

60 The social developmental and social psychological literature stands in a
61 privileged position to render intelligible the reasons behind the resiliency
62 of representations of the past based on beliefs, but at the same time it
63 can critically evaluate the consequences of this approach for intergroup
64 relations in their local context. According to Hammack (2010), the ten-
65 sions around “history wars” is one between theories that present devel-
66 opment and the construction of identity in the youth as a *benefit* and
67 theories that present the development and the construction of identity in
68 the youth as a *burden*. Identity can be viewed as a burden to the extent
69 that young people come to uncritically appropriate, reproduce and reify
70 the narrative basis of conflict. The view of identity as a *burden* that char-
71 acterizes the narrative identity development of youth is derived from a
72 critical account of the hegemonic nature of identity as a *received* social
73 taxonomy. Such internalization of a reified and polarized narrative of col-
74 lective identity would curtail the agency the young people might other-
75 wise possess to make meaning of the social world. In this approach, the
76 nonsense of conflict gains meaning by situating oneself in a community
77 whose collective trauma is anchored in a common narrative (Bekerman
78 and Zembylas 2011) as well as a feeling of perceived collective victimiza-
79 tion (Bar-Tal et al. 2009).



80 On the contrary, the set of theories that view identity as a *benefit* stress
81 the liberating potential of identities in the context of a collective struggle
82 for recognition by a weak and marginalized group that is forced to face a
83 dominant, more powerful and suppressive group. This position is largely
84 drawing on writings on national liberation, civil rights movement and
85 collective action. From this position, “national liberation struggles have
86 and continue to embrace the strategic use of reified identities to mobilize
87 and motivate individuals for collective action against an oppressive con-
88 figuration of intergroup relations” (Hammack 2010). The assumption
89 here is that the internalization of national master narratives of collective
90 victimization can become a valuable symbolic resource (Zittoun et al.
91 2003) for the construction of a patriotic, proud, self and a society that
92 is homogeneous and socially cohesive. The use of a symbolic resource
93 can both enable and constrain certain actions, and in the case of master
94 narratives, it is worth exploring how their structure and content canalizes
95 the past, present and future of the person.

96 According to Carretero et al. (2012), master narratives have six com-
97 mon features: (a) exclusion–inclusion as a logical operation contribut-
98 ing to establish the historical subject; (b) identification processes that
99 function as both cognitive and affective anchors; (c) frequent presence
100 of mythical and heroic characters and motives; (d) search for freedom
101 or territory as a main and common narrative theme; (e) inclusion of a
102 moral orientation; and (f) A romantic and essentialist concept of both
103 the nation and the nationals. Van Alpen and Carretero (2015) showed
104 that such master narratives create a very problematic interpretation of
105 the relation between past and present which often takes three forms: (a)
106 collapsing past and present; (b) the past is idealized in a way that the
107 present is a decadent version of the past; and (c) relating the past to a
108 teleological end. All three forms of thinking were found to hinder the
109 historical thinking of 16-year-old high school students in Argentina.

110 The narratives of conflict also sustain a temporal sense of continuity
111 (Smeekes et al. 2017), and this sense of continuity is closely related to
112 self-identification processes. Groups generally tend to have an under-
113 standing of their ethnic and national identities as entities that possess
114 a past, present and future (Sani et al. 2008). During the last few years,
115 social psychological researchers started to examine the importance
116 of a sense of continuity between the past, present and future for col-
117 lective identities. A series of studies by Sani et al. (2008) revealed that
118 the perception that one’s group has temporal endurance over time (i.e.



perceived collective continuity) is associated with stronger attachment to one's ingroup and it bolsters social connectedness with the ingroup. Importantly, however, recent studies found that ingroup members tend to oppose social developments and outgroups that undermine group continuity (Jetten and Hutchison 2011; Jetten and Wohl 2012).

Moreover, an emerging body of research started to address the underlying psychological mechanisms that drive these relationships by examining the role of feelings of collective self-continuity (for an overview, see Smeekes and Verkuyten 2015). Self-continuity refers to having a sense of connection between one's past, present and future self. Following the social identity perspective (Turner and Reynolds 2001), people should be able to derive a sense of self-continuity from their memberships in social groups. Thus, collective self-continuity refers to the feeling that the part of the self that is derived from group membership has temporal endurance.

There are various groups that can provide people with a sense of self-continuity, but this is particularly likely for national groups. The reason is that nations are mainly defined and understood as communities that live together through time (e.g. Anderson 1983; Bhaba 1990), and are often perceived as having a shared culture and identity that is passed on from generation to generation (Bar-Tal and Teichman 2005). This identity, according to Anderson, is imagined, but people perceive it as real. From this point of view, continuity is also imagined but perceived as real. In intergroup conflicts, both groups may develop historical narratives that help them to maintain a sense of collective self-continuity. Previous studies indicate that individuals tend to identify with groups that they see as temporally enduring, because this satisfies their need for self-continuity (e.g. Smeekes and Verkuyten 2013, 2014a, b). This is particularly the case when these groups are seen to possess essentialist continuity, which refers to the perception that core features of the group's culture and identity are stable and continuous even for centuries.

Continuity is not the only way in which group members draw on time to understand their group identity. Lowenthal (1985) proposes that the collective past is used to validate national identity in the present in two ways: by *preservation* and by *restoration*. Preservation connects to the concept of collective continuity as discussed within social psychological work (e.g. Sani et al. 2008) and refers to the notion that people find comfort in the belief that their social identities have temporal endurance and are therefore likely to believe that "we" are (and should be) the



158 way we have always been. This means that most people want to preserve
159 their collective ways of life, symbols and practices in order to maintain
160 a sense of collective continuity. In times of social change and transition,
161 groups may get the feeling that they are losing their connection to “who
162 we were” in the past, and this is likely to result in attempts to restore
163 a sense of collective continuity. Attempting to restore a national culture
164 and identity that is perceived to be lost or undermined is another way in
165 which the past validates the present. That is, people often refer back to
166 the way things were done in the past, such as customs and traditions, in
167 order to legitimize how things should be done in the present. Lowenthal
168 (1985) suggests that preservation and restoration often exist simultane-
169 ously. People are likely to preserve their group identity by affirming its
170 continuity over time, and this is alternated with attempts to restore tradi-
171 tions and ways of life that are seen to be undermined by foreign flavours.
172 One manifestation of this alternation between preservation and restora-
173 tion is feelings of *national nostalgia*. National nostalgia is understood as
174 a sentimental longing for the good old days of the country. It is a group-
175 based emotion that can be experienced on the basis of one’s social iden-
176 tity. Scholars have proposed that national nostalgia emerges in times of
177 social change and transition, because it has a restorative function (Boym
178 2001; Lowenthal 1985). The reason is that in longing for those good
179 old days of the national past, group members become more aware of the
180 importance of their original national culture and traditions as a basis for
181 preserving their national identity. In other words, national nostalgia can
182 help group members to restore a sense of collective continuity. At the
183 same time, national nostalgia is often an expression of the mourning and
184 regret over these changes that have taken place (Duyvendak 2011). A
185 fond remembrance of the national past can serve as a painful reminder
186 of the good things that are lost, and this is likely to result in attempts to
187 restore “the way we were”. Recent work has shown that national nos-
188 talgia is related to feelings of threat to the continuity of group identity
189 (Smeekes and Verkuyten 2015) and results in negative attitudes towards
190 immigrant outgroups (e.g. Smeekes et al. 2015).

191 The focus on group history observed in public discourses over inter-
192 group conflict in various European countries explicitly frames the collec-
193 tive past as the rooted basis for group identity. However, within these
194 discourses there are different representations of what this collective past
195 looks like. This means that people are both capable of understanding



196 their group identity as a temporal entity, and to attribute *content* to its
197 temporality. This latter aspect is relevant for the study of intergroup rela-
198 tions, because depending on the particular historical narratives that are
199 endorsed, people may position themselves favourably or unfavourably
200 towards the presence of others. These historical narratives are socially
201 shared as they are expressed in public and political discourses (Ashmore
202 et al. 2004; Psaltis 2012, 2016). In these discourses, the collective past
203 is often reconstructed and used flexibly to fit the interests of the pre-
204 sent (Lowenthal 1985, 1996). That is, strategic representations of group
205 history are often employed in politics to justify present arrangements
206 (Reicher and Hopkins 2001).

207 The historical perspective to group dynamics has been integrated
208 to social psychological research. There is, for instance, a considerable
209 body of research on how representations of historical wrongdoings of
210 ingroups, such as slavery, colonialism and genocide, impact current
211 intergroup relations via group-based emotions (Branscombe and Doosje
212 2004; Doosje et al. 1998). Group-based emotions refer to the emotions
213 that people can feel on account of their ingroup's behaviour towards
214 others, such as guilt or shame, even when not personally involved in this
215 intergroup conflict. Most studies within this line of research have exam-
216 ined whether experiencing group-based emotions for historical wrong-
217 doings impacts attitudes towards the harmed outgroup. Several studies
218 show that feelings of group-based guilt for past ingroup atrocities are
219 related to reparation and compensation intentions towards the harmed
220 outgroup in the present (e.g. Brown and Cehajic 2008). A related body
221 of research has examined how group members, despite not being directly
222 harmed, regard themselves as victims of past group conflict (i.e. collec-
223 tive victimhood), and how this impacts intergroup relations (Bar-Tal
224 et al. 2009). Furthermore, studies by Liu and colleagues (e.g. Liu and
225 Hilton 2005; Liu and László 2007; Sibley et al. 2008) examined how
226 representations of national history guide current sociopolitical attitudes,
227 such as support for military action, and legitimation of social inequality
228 (Sibley et al. 2008). Importantly, these social representations also hinder
229 the development and attainment of some central historical thinking skills
230 (Seixas 2004) like historical significance, change and continuity, cause
231 and effect and historical empathy (Páez et al. 2016).

232 We contend that something that is missing from the above line of
233 research is the study of historical narratives of intergroup conflict in rela-
234 tion to a basic ingredient of reconciliation which is trust given that trust



235 is not only a prerequisite for reaching a political settlement, an organ-
236 nizing principle of identity positions in the representational field of con-
237 flict, but also an essential element of the viability of any peace settlement
238 (Psaltis 2012a).

239 THE PRESENT STUDY

240 Our aim in this study was to further our understanding of the way adher-
241 ence to master narratives of conflict relates to feelings of intergroup
242 threat and distrust. We put into test the hypothesis that adherence to
243 master narratives is associated with intergroup distrust and feelings
244 of threat. We more specifically propose that the positive relationship
245 between (greater) adherence to ingroup's master narratives and (greater)
246 outgroup distrust is mediated by (increased) feelings of threat.

247 We test this hypothesis in three post-conflict contexts (Cyprus, Serbia
248 and Croatia), all of which are characterized by violent conflicts between
249 ethnic groups. As is explained next, the adversarial ethnic groups in
250 each of these settings have developed their own accounts of the history
251 of their conflict thus resulting in differing and opposing historical nar-
252 ratives. Despite this major similarity, Cyprus, Serbia and Croatia remain
253 to be three qualitatively distinct contexts. Of interest to us was to assess
254 whether the proposed course of relationships between adherence to the
255 ingroup's master narrative and intergroup distrust via feelings of threat
256 could be validated in all three contexts.

257 The studied "ingroup" in Cyprus was Greek Cypriots, in Serbia it
258 was Serbs and in Croatia it was Croats. The respective outgroups were
259 Turkish Cypriots in Cyprus, Kosovar Albanians in Serbia and Serbs in
260 Croatia. A brief description of the three contexts follows.

261 *Cyprus:* The conflict in Cyprus originates in the 1950s when Cyprus
262 was a British colony. Greek Cypriots (82% of the population) sought for
263 political union with Greece, which elicited the reaction of the Turkish
264 Cypriot minority (18%) who embarked on a struggle for the partition of
265 Cyprus between Greece and Turkey. In 1960, Cyprus gained its inde-
266 pendence and a power sharing partnership between Greek Cypriots and
267 Turkish Cypriots was established along with the Republic of Cyprus. A
268 coup against the Greek Cypriot president in 1974 engineered by the
269 Greek military junta prompted a military intervention by Turkey that led
270 to the division of the island into two ethnically homogeneous areas.



271 According to Papadakis (2008), the central nationalistic historical nar-
272 rative in the Greek Cypriot community (henceforth GC) as represented
273 in history textbooks is one that begins with the arrival of Greeks (14th
274 century BC) in Cyprus that leads to its Hellenization. The moral centre
275 is Greeks (of Cyprus), and the major enemy is Turks. The plot concerns
276 a struggle for survival of the Cypriot Hellenism against foreign conquer-
277 ors. The “tragic end” of this struggle is the “Barbaric Turkish Invasion”
278 (military intervention of Turkey) and occupation of 37% of the island’s
279 territory.

280 The corresponding Turkish Cypriot (henceforth TC) narrative is
281 one that begins with the arrival of Turks in Cyprus (in 1571 AD), the
282 moral self is Turks (of Cyprus) and the major enemy are Rums (Greek
283 Cypriots). The plot concerns a struggle for survival by the Turks of
284 Cyprus against Greek Cypriot domination. The military intervention of
285 1974 marks a happy ending of their struggle for survival. For this reason,
286 it is regarded as the “Happy peace operation” by Turkey in Cyprus
287 which saved Turkish Cypriots from a pending union of Cyprus with
288 Greece.

289 *Serbia:* Kosovo is a territory located between Albania, Montenegro,
290 Macedonia and Serbia. The region is burdened by history of long-term
291 ethnic tensions between Albanian and Serb population. Following the
292 violent breakdown of former Yugoslavia during the 1990s, an armed
293 conflict erupted in Kosovo in 1998. Between 1998 and 1999, more
294 than 10,000 people were killed and about 3000 were abducted, whilst
295 approximately 800,000 people fled to neighbouring countries (O’Neill
296 2002). The conflict ended by NATO intervention, after which a UN
297 protectorate secured by international peacekeeping force was estab-
298 lished. Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence in 2008, and its sta-
299 tus is still disputed by Serbia. Kosovo and Serbian officials are currently
300 engaged in EU-facilitated dialogue aimed at normalizing their relations.

301 Kosovar Albanians and Serbs have very different narratives explain-
302 ing the origin and course of the conflict: Kosovar Albanians consider
303 Kosovo’s independence reflecting their large majority status, whilst Serbs
304 view the territory as historically belonging to Serbia. Above a territorial
305 claim, Kosovo is a vital national idea for each group (Bieber 2002).

306 *Croatia:* Within the context of collapse of communism in Eastern
307 Europe, significant political and historical changes occurred in the
308 Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The political leaderships of
309 Slovenia and Croatia (two out of six Yugoslav republics) elected on



310 the first multi-party elections proposed a new confederal agreement
311 (October 1990) to other Yugoslav republics, proposing each republic's
312 right to free self-determination. After the Yugoslav state presidency
313 rejected this proposal, in Croatia a referendum for independence was
314 held in May 1991, whereas 93% of voters (with 83.6% turnout) voted for
315 independence from Yugoslavia (Jović 2007). However, the ethnic Serbs
316 in parts of Croatia with ethnic Serb majorities boycotted this referendum
317 wanted Croatia to remain a part of Yugoslavia. Croatian independence
318 from Yugoslavia was declared in June 1991, followed by international
319 recognition in January 1992.

320 The tensions with Serbs minority who opposed Croatian independ-
321 ence escalated in August 1991, and grew into 1991–1995 war between
322 Croatian forces and the Croatian Serbs rebelled forces with the help
323 of the JNA and Serbia (UN-ICTY). Around 54% of Croatian territory
324 inhabited by 36% of the Croatian population was directly affected by
325 war, and around 26% of Croatian territory was occupied for several years
326 (Perković and Puljiz 2001). Direct demographic losses counted 22,192
327 people; out of them, 36.7% were members of Croatian military forces,
328 29.8% civilians, 5.5% missing Croatian forces and civilians and 28% miss-
329 ing and killed members of the army of the so-called Republic of Serbian
330 Krajina and Serbian civilians from the same territory (Živić and Pokos
331 2004).

332 Dominant narratives about the war 1991–1995 between the two sides
333 are still very different. According to dominant Croatian historical narra-
334 tive, the 1991–1995 war in Croatia or Homeland war is legitimate inter-
335 national war by which Croatia established its independence and defended
336 itself from Serbian and Slobodan Milošević's aggression and aspirations
337 for so-called Great Serbia (Banjeglav 2013). Such narrative is promoted
338 also by Declaration about Homeland war adopted by Croatian parlia-
339 ment in 2000 (Narodne novine 2000). On the other side, according to
340 dominant Serbs narrative the 1991–1995 war is primarily internal con-
341 flict or civil war with emphasis on Serb's suffering (Mirkovic 2000, p.
342 364; Subotić 2013).



343

METHODS

344

Participants

345 Our sample consisted of a total of 478 university students, study-
346 ing in the capital cities of the three countries under study: Cyprus,
347 Nicosia ($N = 145$); Serbia, Belgrade ($N = 173$); and Croatia, Zagreb
348 ($N = 160$).¹ The mean age of the total sample was 21.2 ($SD = 2.47$),
349 and this was comparable across countries, Cyprus: $M = 21.2$
350 ($SD = 2.82$), Serbia: $M = 21.3$ ($SD = 2.32$) and Croatia: $M = 21.25$
351 ($SD = 2.34$). Of the participants who indicated their gender (9% was
352 missing), the vast majority were females (82%), and males made up
353 18%. The gender distribution was similar across countries, Cyprus: 77%
354 females, Serbia: 81% females and Croatia: 87% females.

355

Procedure

356 Participants were recruited from university classes using opportunity
357 sampling. The participation was voluntary and anonymous. Upon agree-
358 ing to take part, participants were asked to fill in the questionnaire either
359 electronically or via paper and pencil as truthfully as they could. The
360 master questionnaire was developed in English, and it was translated
361 into the mother tongue of the participants in each country by two inde-
362 pendent native speakers. Local research coordinators compared the two
363 versions against one another and corrected minor discrepancies. As this
364 study was part of a larger cross-cultural survey, we are only reporting the
365 variables relevant to the purposes of this paper.

366

Measures

367 *Adherence to ingroup's historical narratives* was measured by a three-item
368 scale in Serbia and Croatia, and a two-item scale in Cyprus. The items
369 comprising the scale were designed to convey the ingroup's mainstream
370 narrative of the conflict (as it can be found in textbooks and mainstream
371 media) which is typically placing the blame for the eruption or/and the
372 continuation of the conflict on the outgroup (Turkish Cypriots for Greek
373 Cypriots, Albanians for Serbs and Serbs for Croatians). The items dif-
374 fered (in content) by country. Examples of items for each country are the
375 following: Cyprus: (1) "In 1974 Turkey invaded Cyprus with the aim



376 of partitioning the country” and (2) “The declaration of the “Turkish
377 Republic of Northern Cyprus’ prevents the solution of the Cyprus prob-
378 lem”; Serbia: (1) “the Kosovo conflict erupted primarily because Kosovo
379 Albanians wished for Greater Albania” and (2) “Throughout their his-
380 tory, Serbs have been repeatedly forcefully displaced from Kosovo”; and
381 Croatia: (1) “The war in Croatia was entirely a consequence of Serbian
382 aggressive politics” and (2) “War in Croatia happened because the
383 Serbs refused to accept the creation of Croatia as an independent state”.
384 Participants assessed their agreement with each statement on a 7-point
385 Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.
386 Cronbach’s α for this scale was 0.76 in Serbia and 0.80 in Croatia,
387 whereas the correlation coefficient in Cyprus where this construct was
388 measured by two items was 0.33, $p < 0.001$.

389 *Realistic threat* was measured by four items which participants had to
390 assess by declaring their agreement or disagreement on a 7-point scale
391 (e.g. in Cyprus: (1) The more power Turkish Cypriots gain in Cyprus, the
392 more difficult it will become for Greek Cypriots; (2) I am afraid that allow-
393 ing Turkish Cypriots to decide on political issues would mean that Greek
394 Cypriots will have less to say in how this country is run). Cronbach’s α
395 for this scale was 0.86 (Cyprus: 0.88, Serbia: 0.86, Croatia: 0.77).

396 *Symbolic threat* was measured by a four-item scale. Participants had to
397 declare their agreement or disagreement with each of the four statements
398 on a 7-point scale (e.g. in Serbia: (1) Some of the customs and traditions
399 of Albanians undermine the traditional way of life of Serbs; (2) Albanians
400 are beginning to project their identity in a way that I find threatening).
401 The Cronbach’s α for this scale was 0.78 (Cyprus: 0.73, Serbia: 0.80,
402 Croatia: 0.80).

403 *Group-esteem threat* was measured by four items (e.g. Croatia: (1)
404 Serbs have little respect for Croatians; (2) Serbs think positively about
405 Croatians (reverse-coded)). Cronbach’s α was 0.86 (Cyprus, 0.92;
406 Serbia: 0.85, Croatia: 0.82).

407 *Outgroup trust* was measured via three items to which participants
408 had to respond on a 4-point scale. The three items were the following
409 (e.g. Cyprus): (1) Do you think most Turkish Cypriots would try to take
410 advantage of you if they got a chance, or would they try to be fair? (1,
411 *definitely try to take advantage*; 4, *definitely try to be fair*), (2) Would you
412 say that most Turkish Cypriots can be trusted or that you can’t be too
413 trusting of them? (1, *definitely can’t be too trusting*; 4, *definitely can be*
414 *trusted*) and (3) Would you say that most of the time Turkish Cypriots
415 try to be helpful or that mainly they are interested only in themselves?



416 (1, *definitely interested only in themselves*, 4, *definitely try to be helpful*).
 417 Cronbach's alpha was 0.81 for the whole sample (Cyprus: 0.87; Serbia:
 418 0.87; Croatia: 0.75).

419 RESULTS

420 *Descriptive Statistics*

421 Tables 1, 2 and 3 show the means (*M*) and standard deviations (*SD*) for
 422 all variables, as well as the correlations between variables, in all three
 423 contexts. As can be seen in these tables, the mean levels of adherence to
 424 ingroup narratives were above the mid-point level (4.0) in all countries
 425 suggesting a tendency to overall agree with the ingroup's narrative of the
 426 conflict. The means of realistic, symbolic and group-esteem threats were
 427 above mid-point (4.0) for Serbia, close to mid-point for Cyprus and
 428 slightly below mid-point for Croatia, thus showing that the nature of the

Table 1 Means, SDs and correlations between variables, Cyprus

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean (SD)
Adherence to ingroup's historical narrative	1	0.25**	0.39**	0.16*	-0.21*	4.69 (1.19)
Group-esteem threat		1	0.64**	0.71**	-0.73**	3.84 (1.26)
Realistic threat			1	0.77**	-0.60**	4.74 (1.26)
Symbolic threat				1	-0.66**	3.55 (1.18)
Trust towards outgroup					1	2.34 (0.67)

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 2 Means, SDs and correlations between variables, Serbia

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean (SD)
Adherence to ingroup's historical narrative	1	0.54**	0.67**	0.59**	-0.33**	4.56 (1.24)
Group-esteem threat		1	0.67**	0.66**	-0.39**	4.59 (1.13)
Realistic threat			1	0.68**	-0.31**	5.09 (1.32)
Symbolic threat				1	-0.48**	4.28 (1.32)
Trust towards outgroup					1	2.73 (0.56)

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

**Table 3** Means, SDs and correlations between variables, Croatia

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean (SD)
Adherence to ingroup's historical narrative	1	0.54**	0.67**	0.59**	-0.33**	5.33 (1.08)
Group-esteem threat		1	0.67**	0.66**	-0.39**	3.30 (1.12)
Realistic threat			1	0.68**	-0.31**	3.44 (1.32)
Symbolic threat				1	-0.48**	2.51 (1.32)
Trust towards outgroup					1	2.10 (1.50)

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

429 conflict, or the nature of intergroup relations rather, varies somewhat in
 430 the three countries. Finally, the levels of outgroup trust were moderate in
 431 the three countries (just above 2 at a 4-point scale).

432 The correlations between variables were the expected direction across
 433 contexts, and they were all significant. Adherence to ingroup narratives
 434 was found to be positively correlated with all types of threat and negatively
 435 correlated with outgroup trust. Greater adherence to ingroup narratives
 436 was associated with feeling greater levels of realistic, symbolic and group-
 437 esteem threat and being less trusting of the outgroup. Furthermore, all
 438 types of threats were found to be negatively correlated with trust: experi-
 439 encing more realistic, symbolic and group-esteem threat for the outgroup
 440 was associated with lower levels of trust towards the outgroup.

441 We proceeded to test the hypothesized relationships between adher-
 442 ence to ingroup narratives, threats and trust with a path model, using
 443 AMOS. We first tested the model with the whole sample and then on
 444 each context separately. In this model, adherence to ingroup narratives
 445 was inserted as the predicting variable, outgroup trust as the outcome
 446 variable and the three types of threats as mediators. The proposed rela-
 447 tionships between these variables were that adherence to ingroup nar-
 448 ratives would be negatively associated with outgroup trust and that this
 449 relationship would be mediated by the three types of threat.

450 The results of the proposed model on the whole sample mostly sup-
 451 ported our hypothesized relationships between variables. Adherence to
 452 ingroup narratives was found to be associated with higher realistic threat,
 453 $\beta = 0.325$, $p < 0.001$, higher symbolic threat, $\beta = 0.167$, $p < 0.01$,
 454 and higher group-esteem threat, $\beta = 0.228$, $p < 0.001$. Higher sym-
 455 bolic and higher group-esteem threat were related to less outgroup trust
 456 ($\beta = -0.085$, $p < 0.01$, $\beta = -0.159$, $p < 0.001$, respectively), but there



457 was no significant association between realistic threats and trust. In order
 458 to identify the mediators accounting for the indirect effects, we then
 459 applied a bootstrapping procedure using 95% confidence intervals based
 460 on 5,000 bootstrap resamples with the use of PROCESS (Preacher and
 461 Hayes 2008). In general, adherence to ingroup narratives had a nega-
 462 tive total indirect effect on trust, TIE = -0.055 [$-0.086, -0.026$]. Two
 463 of the three specific indirect effects of adherence to ingroup narrative on
 464 trust were significant. The first involved the mediation of symbolic threat,
 465 IE = -0.014 [$-0.034, -0.003$], and the second involved the mediation of
 466 group-esteem threat, IE = -0.035 [$-0.061, -0.017$]. The indirect effect
 467 of realistic threat was not significant, IE = -0.004 [$-0.026, 0.015$].

468 The results for the proposed model for each of the three countries
 469 are shown in Fig. 1. As can be seen, adherence to ingroup narratives was
 470 indeed found to strongly and significantly correlate with every type of
 471 threat in all contexts. The only exception to this was a solely marginal
 472 effect between adherence to ingroup narrative and symbolic threat in
 473 Cyprus. The relationships between threat and outgroup trust were less
 474 conclusive, however. In all three contexts, group-esteem threat was
 475 found to significantly correlate with outgroup trust in the expected

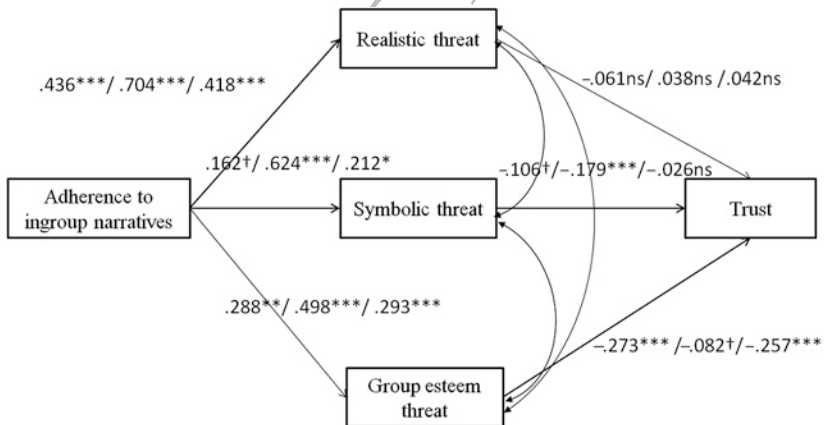


Fig. 1 Effects of adherence to ingroup narratives on outgroup trust, mediated by perceived realistic, symbolic and group-esteem threat. *Note* Standardized coefficients presented and separated by a slash (Cyprus/Serbia/Croatia); the correlation between the two mediators was accounted for. † $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$



476 direction: higher perceived group-esteem threat associated with lower
477 trust. The effect was only marginal for Cyprus nevertheless. Realistic
478 threat was not found to be significantly related to outgroup trust in any
479 of the three countries. Symbolic threat was found to be associated with
480 outgroup trust only for Serbia, and marginally for Cyprus.

481 In particular, for Serbia adherence to ingroup narratives had a negative
482 total indirect effect on trust, TIE = -0.107 [$-0.179, -0.041$]. One of the
483 three specific indirect effects of adherence to ingroup narrative on trust was
484 significant. This involved the mediation of symbolic threat, IE = -0.107
485 [$-0.180, -0.052$]. The mediation of group-esteem threat, IE = -0.038
486 [$-0.092, 0.004$], and the indirect effect of realistic threat, IE = 0.038
487 [$-0.035, 0.117$], were not significant. For Cyprus, adherence to ingroup
488 narratives also had a negative total indirect effect on trust, TIE = -0.122
489 [$-0.216, -0.028$]. One of the three specific indirect effects of adherence
490 to ingroup narrative on trust was significant. This involved the mediation of
491 group-esteem threat, IE = -0.078 [$-0.154, -0.020$]. The mediation of
492 symbolic threat, IE = -0.017 [$-0.057, 0.001$], and the indirect effect of
493 realistic threat, IE = 0.027 [$-0.091, 0.020$], were not significant. Similarly,
494 for Croatia adherence to ingroup narratives also had a negative total indirect
495 effect on trust, TIE = -0.063 [$-0.118, -0.021$]. One of the three
496 specific indirect effects of adherence to ingroup narrative on trust was sig-
497 nificant. This involved the mediation of group-esteem threat, IE = -0.075
498 [$-0.128, -0.035$]. The mediation of symbolic threat, IE = -0.005
499 [$-0.035, 0.013$], and the indirect effect of realistic threat, IE = 0.017 [$-$
500 $0.011, 0.053$], were not significant.

501

DISCUSSION

502 Our research showed that internalizing the ingroup's account of historical
503 events related to the conflict leads to viewing the outgroup as a threat
504 to the ingroup and, as such, a group that should not be trusted. More
505 specifically, the results replicate our hypothesis that adherence to ingroup
506 narratives would be related to more distrust towards the outgroup via
507 heightened feelings of threat coming from the outgroup.

508 The course of relationships as was tested via the path models (i.e.
509 adherence to ingroup narrative leading to greater perceived threats, lead-
510 ing to outgroup distrust) is in line with the ontogenetic perspective of
511 social representations according to which children find out about their
512 past victimization (Bar-Tal and Teichman 2005) by an outgroup at a



513 very early age (see Psaltis 2015; Psaltis et al. 2015) and then internalize
514 master narratives of collective victimization. This internalization gradu-
515 ally leads to a more coherent and abstract notion of realistic, symbolic
516 and group-esteem threats which are rather more abstract concepts in
517 nature and mostly future oriented (Stephan et al. 2009).

518 We are, of course, aware that claims for causality cannot really be
519 made given the cross-sectional type of our data, and we therefore
520 encourage longitudinal and/or developmental research which would
521 back up with evidence the proposed sequential order, i.e. one extend-
522 ing from adherence to narratives to perceived threat and distrust.
523 Furthermore, we do not claim that this sequential order represents
524 the only course of relationships between adherence to ingroup histor-
525 ical narratives and intergroup relations. Smeekes et al. (2017) have, for
526 instance, demonstrated in one study that when people feel threatened in
527 times of social change or transition, they could find a symbolic “shelter”
528 through further adherence to narratives of continuity. This direction of
529 causality is opposite to the one that was tested in the study presented
530 in this chapter even though the nature of the associations remains con-
531 stant (a positive relationship between perceived threat and adherence to
532 ingroup’s narrative).

533 A second finding of this study is that the mediated relationship
534 between adherence to ingroup narratives and distrust was replicated in
535 all three contexts. The only difference across contexts regarded the type
536 of threat that significantly mediated the relationship. Symbolic threat
537 emerged as a significant mediator in Serbia, and group-esteem threat in
538 Cyprus and Croatia. A more in-depth analysis of probably the content of
539 the narrative and the representation of the enemy would possibly explain
540 the aforementioned differences. Such analysis forms a possible avenue of
541 future research on the topic. Interestingly, realistic threat did not medi-
542 ate the relationship between adherence to ingroup narratives and out-
543 group distrust in any of the contexts. We contend that this is because
544 the interethnic conflicts in the three contexts are not characterized by
545 violence at this point in time.

546 An extrapolation of the present findings is that the uncritical inter-
547 nalization of the historical narrative of the ingroup is counterproduc-
548 tive to the aim of conflict transformation in conflict societies. If the
549 communities involved in post-conflict societies decided to resolve their
550 differences through dialogue and negotiation, then the role of master
551 narratives becomes destructive as it reinforces division, sectarianism and



552 competition by escalating conflict and distrust. Contrary to what is often
553 argued by the heritage, nationalist or romantic approach to nation build-
554 ing, the sense of self created is not one of security but one of a threat-
555 ened and fragile self which is what Bar-Tal and Teichman (2005) called a
556 “siege mentality”. Identity construction on the basis of conflict narratives
557 is thus not liberating as it might be argued by theoretical approaches
558 or politicians who support the heritage approach. On the contrary, it is
559 about constructing a fragile and threatened self which is distrustful of
560 those with whom they need to co-operate to end violence, division or
561 conflict.

562 Thinking about the ramifications of the present findings for history
563 teaching, what could in fact be liberating is reflection on the structure
564 and function of historical conflict narratives as social representations by
565 both teachers and students. In this way, children, youth and adults can
566 understand the consequences of the internalization of master narratives
567 for conflict transformation.

568 The heritage or the romantic identity building approach can thus
569 be undermined on all four grounds: pedagogical, epistemological,
570 moral and political. Pedagogically, it is based on an outdated model of
571 a transmission metaphor given that it is mostly delivered by educators
572 as a communication type that Moscovici described as propaganda (Kello
573 et al. 2007). Epistemologically, it is based on naïve realism since it pro-
574 motes the single truth of the nation, which is an outdated epistemologi-
575 cal stance. Morally, the idea of manipulating, silencing or hiding parts of
576 the past from students is unacceptable. Politically, it reinforces conflict
577 instead of resolving it.

578 As Barton and Levstik (2004) argue, students have to examine the
579 impact of telling any particular narrative, or any set of narratives, as well
580 as the consequences of students’ narrative simplifications. For the dis-
581 ciplinary approach, there is an important take-home message from the
582 present findings: history teachers need to familiarize themselves with rel-
583 evant social psychological research and have in their “toolbox” the main
584 findings of research such as the present one. Given the well-established
585 findings that master narratives pose a threat to the cultivation of the his-
586 torical thinking of students (Carretero 2011; Carretero et al. 2012), the
587 present should be read as adding support to the idea of moving from
588 the disciplinary to an interdisciplinary approach (see Psaltis et al. 2017)
589 to the study of historical culture and consciousness in the history class-
590 room. The cultivation of a critical historical and reflective consciousness



591 that recognizes the socially constructed nature of master narratives and
592 their pernicious effects for conflict transformation is an essential element
593 of such an approach. Finally, the second-order concepts of history teach-
594 ing could be enriched by a better understanding of concepts that come
595 directly from the social psychological field such as “threats”, “social iden-
596 tity”, “prejudice”, “distrust”, “conflict transformation” and “reconcilia-
597 tion” and above all “master narratives”.

NOTES

598

- 599 1. There were missing cases on some variables. Participants who had a miss-
600 ing value on any one variable tested were excluded from the sample. This
601 led to a sample of $N = 427$ (Cyprus: $N = 112$; Serbia: $N = 161$; Croatia:
602 $N = 154$). Results reported in this chapter are based on this sample.

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