

The psychosocial need for intergroup contact: practical suggestions for reconciliation initiatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina and beyond

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Modern day Bosnia suffers from widespread ethnic segregation, solidified by the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords that ended the Bosnian war. This has resulted in a lack of intergroup contact and the deepening of ethnic divisions. Using the 'contact hypothesis' that was developed in the field of social psychology, this article highlights the need for intergroup contact as an essential element for reconciliation initiatives, and addresses challenges to intergroup contact in the Bosnian context. The author suggests three practical ways to improve meaningful intergroup contact in Bosnia and Herzegovina: 1) develop and support interethnic special interests groups that create a common ingroup identity among members of different ethnic groups in the pursuit of a common, overarching, cooperative goal; 2) increase knowledge of 'the other', for example through interethnic education for youth and young adults; and 3) the productive use of intergroup problem solving workshops for grassroots community leaders, supplemented with public communication training for participants not already in a position to have their voices heard by their communities. Initiatives, such as these, can contribute toward eventual reconciliation among the ethnic communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Keywords: Bosnia and Herzegovina, contact hypothesis, intergroup relations, psychosocial interventions, reconciliation, social psychology

Background

In recent decades, the field of social psychology has contributed positively to the study of conflict by conducting research on the psychology of intergroup¹ relations. One of the findings of this research is that positive interaction between groups is a crucial factor in the pursuit of intergroup conflict reconciliation. Unfortunately, many peace agreements require *separating* the conflicting groups, in an effort to stop violence, as was the case with the Dayton Peace Accords in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Dayton Peace Accords ended the Bosnian War in 1995 and created the framework for the future functioning of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The international community struggled for three years, in the early 1990s, to negotiate an end to the Bosnian War that would not result in the destruction of the pre-war, multi-ethnicity that had existed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, the pressure to stop the escalating brutal violence became so pressing that those drafting the Accords were forced to compromise multi-ethnicity as their bargaining chip in the pursuit of peace (Nystuen, 2005). They were able to preserve Bosnia and Herzegovina as a single, internationally recognised state with the hope that maintaining this unified status would preserve Bosnia and

Herzegovina's multi-ethnic nature and thereby refuse to condone ethnic cleansing. Unfortunately, this status could not prevent the internal segregation explicitly stated in the Accords, both through the partitioning of Bosnia into two separate entities: Republika Srpska (a predominantly ethnically Serb entity), and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (a shared Bosniak² and Croat entity), and by establishing an ethno-political power sharing structure that has permanently embedded the conflict of the 1990s into the political framework of modern day Bosnia and Herzegovina (Pajic, 1998).

The Dayton Accords have effectively given incentive to the continuing stratification of Bosnian society along ethnic lines, and blocked a return to the multi-ethnic coexistence that was the norm in pre-war Bosnia. Schools, for example, are almost exclusively segregated. In some instances, international organisations have managed to pressure districts into educating children of different ethnic groups in the same building, but they attend classes separately and even use separate doors to prevent contact between different ethnic groups. Municipalities have become increasingly ethnically homogenous, resulting in little, if any, interethnic contact during normal daily activities, such as shopping.

While the Dayton Accords ended the war outright in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995, *'the formal resolution of a conflict is often merely the first step toward peaceful coexistence...the parties involved must (also) engage in reconciliation, a psychological process that requires a change in people's often well-entrenched beliefs and feelings about the outgroup³, their ingroup, and the relationship between the two'* (Tausch et al., 2006). This article presents three practical suggestions for ways that Bosnian society can overcome the segregation

institutionalised by the Dayton Accords, and move forward towards reconciliation.

Introducing the 'Contact Hypothesis'

The '*Contact Hypothesis*' (Allport, 1954) postulates that positive intergroup contact can facilitate intergroup reconciliation. The theory was originally proposed as a potential method for improving interethnic relations in multi-ethnic communities in the United States that were struggling with racism and segregation. However, it is also a useful tool for improving intergroup relations following large scale violent conflict.

Intergroup contact allows members of different groups to get to know each other; this naturally increases awareness of the perspective of the *'other'* (Cehajic & Brown, 2010). This also thereby increases empathy, which a key factor in reconciliation (Noor, et al., 2008). There is both quantitative (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; 2008) and qualitative (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew, 1998) evidence in support of the use of intergroup contact as a tool for reconciliation, and its ability to reduce intergroup prejudice, to weaken group stereotypes, and to increase intergroup trust (Hjort & Frisen, 2006; Dovidio, et al., 2003; Cairns & Niens, 2001; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000).

It is not just the *quantity*, but also the *quality* of intergroup contact that makes it effective (Cehajic & Brown, 2010; Binder, et al., 2009). Foreseeing this reality, Allport (1954) identified, from the beginning, four conditions for positive contact that, when met, increase the ability for contact to result in the reduction of prejudice. Allport explains that equal status contact between groups, in pursuit of common goals, can reduce prejudice. This effect is enhanced if it is *'sanctioned by institutional supports (i.e. by law,*

custom, or local atmosphere)', and if it is the sort of contact that results in the *perception of common interests and common humanity*' between members of two opposing groups (Allport, 1954). Modern psychologists have assembled a list (below) of elements that can help produce positive contact (Fitzduff, 2006):

- 1) Equal status between groups;
- 2) Institutional support;
- 3) Collaboration on shared goals of cooperation;
- 4) Development of meaningful relationships between members of the different groups.

Intergroup contact is more effective if it is cooperative, rather than competitive (Gaertner, et al., 1994). This demonstrates the need for skilled third-party mediators who can help set cooperative ground rules for contact. Additionally, intimate contact (i.e., shared place of employment), rather than casual contact, has been found to be more successful in reducing intergroup conflict. To achieve this necessary intimacy, individuals should participate in interethnic social groups, such as women's groups, youth groups, arts groups and other special interest groups, whose membership inherently focuses on shared interests and a shared identity. Specific strategies, however, can only be devised within the context of individual conflicts. This paper, therefore, aims to provide an analysis of the opportunities for positive contact within the context of present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina. First, it discusses the practical challenges to positive intergroup contact in the Bosnian context; second, it describes how, despite these challenges, intergroup contact could assist reconciliation in Bosnian society. Finally, it provides specific suggestions and examples of promising methods for cultivating intergroup contact.

Challenges to positive intergroup contact in Bosnia and Herzegovina

There is evidence from Bosnia and Herzegovina itself supporting the argument that intergroup contact increases intergroup tolerance. In fact, surveys conducted both before the war (Massey, Hodson, & Sekuli, 1999) and afterwards (United States Information Agency (USIA), 1998) have revealed that minorities, integrated into multiethnic communities, are more tolerant of members of other ethnic groups than those isolated in ethnic majority enclaves. Those living in multi-ethnic communities tend to view ethnic diversity as a fact of life (Pickering, 2007). Despite proven evidence of the effectiveness of contact, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina today presents practical obstacles attaining the suggested conditions for positive contact discussed above.

The high level of *'intergroup anxiety'* (Stephan & Stephan, 1985) in Bosnia and Herzegovina creates many problems for creating positive contact. Intergroup anxiety stems from negative expectations of intergroup conflict, and can be caused or aggravated by: 1) minimal previous contact; 2) negative outgroup stereotypes; 3) history of intergroup conflict; 4) large status differences between groups, or a high ratio of ingroup to outgroup members (Tausch et al., 2006). Unfortunately, after 20 years of intolerant and divisive ethno-nationalist policies, all of these elements are present in Bosnia and Herzegovina today. This raises the obstacles to achieving desirable conditions for positive contact, outlined above and discussed in detail below.

Obstacles to maintaining equal status between groups

Ensuring equal status between groups is very important in intergroup contact because members of high and low status groups

experience intergroup contact differently (Tausch et al., 2006). Low status group members are less likely to cooperate with members of high status groups. This is a major problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as there are (generally) clear majority ethnic groups in each municipality, and each entity, leading to power inequalities throughout the country.

Obstacles to securing institutional supports

Intergroup contact is enhanced through the support of institutions within the country (Tausch et al., 2006). If a society is institutionally discriminatory, the positive effects of contact are severely constrained. If a society embraces intergroup peace and harmony as the norm, intergroup contact is likely to be far more capable of improving intergroup attitudes. While Bosnia and Herzegovina's constitution pays lip service to the concept of a multi-ethnic state, making the country appear to fit the description, the practical reality is that the country is extremely discriminatory, making the institutions' contributory roles negative, rather than positive.

Obstacles to ensuring the cooperative pursuit of a common goal

Participants in interethnic civil society groups often work together to achieve shared goals as a result of their group interaction. Strategies capitalising on the use of a shared goal have been effectively applied in many societies suffering from intergroup conflicts. For example, the creation of cooperative 'Community Conferences' or 'Block Committees' succeeded in reducing prejudice in US cities such as Chicago, where neighbours from different ethnic groups worked together (through conferences or committees) to improve their shared community. In pursuit of common goals and activities, *'animosities*

wane and tolerance grows' (Allport, 1954). However, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) in Bosnia and Herzegovina are primarily ethnically homogeneous, with the result that they are ineffective in reducing intergroup conflict. Furthermore, the geographic segregation in Bosnia means that bringing people together to improve their communities, which are also primarily homogeneous, generally results in fragmentation, rather than integration (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (OSCE BiH), 2010).

Obstacles to developing meaningful relationships

Despite the obstacles posed by Bosnia and Herzegovina's volatile reality, the history of close community relationships leaves Bosnians naturally open to developing close relations with people they deem as members of their ingroup. This leaves the fewest inherent obstacles to the attainment of positive contact. In contact scenarios, *'the deeper and more genuine the association, the greater its effect'* (Allport, 1954). Intergroup contact with high *'acquaintance potential'* (Cook, 1962), that results in the development of outgroup friendships, has been shown to be a stronger predictor of reduced prejudice than general intergroup contact alone (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005; 2006). To successfully build meaningful interethnic relationships, contact scenarios simply need to draw attention to the fact that individual members of different groups share common interests, opinions, values, etc., thereby introducing a common ingroup identity.

Why suggest intergroup contact in Bosnia and Herzegovina?

Despite the considerable obstacles to reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there

are positive developments and reasons for optimism. Perceptions of security have gradually improved, as the war has become a more distant memory. This has resulted in increased positive intergroup attitudes, and openness to contact (Pickering, 2007). Diminished perceived threat has led to a small increase in support for refugee return. Even modest security based support, such as this, leads to more integration and, therefore, cooperation. The relationship between contact and prejudice reduction is cumulative: contact reduces prejudice, which then allows for greater contact (Tausch et al., 2006). This cumulative relationship creates an environment where even marginal improvement, in either tolerance or contact, leads to a reciprocal improvement.

In a meta-analysis of the validity of Allport's Contact Hypothesis, Pettigrew and Tropp found that even informal and unstructured contact has a small, positive effect on intergroup attitudes (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005). In deeply divided societies like Bosnia and Herzegovina, where meaningful formal intergroup contact is extremely rare and difficult to arrange, even seemingly negligible contact can have a positive effect on intergroup relations. This improvement, when incorporated into the cumulative cycle of tolerance and contact, is an indication that, even if it is only possible in Bosnia and Herzegovina to achieve minor contact for limited periods of time, some gradual positive change can still occur.

In extreme post conflict settings, where direct intergroup contact may be improbable or even impossible, *extended contact* may still exist and can reduce intergroup prejudice (Wright et al., 1997). Extended contact has proven to successfully reduce intergroup prejudice in even the most divided societies (Wright, et al., 1997). Extended contact occurs when an individual observes a fellow

ingroup member maintain a friendship with an outgroup member. This has recently been found to be very effective at reducing intergroup prejudice for a variety of reasons, discussed below. First, social categories are often more clearly identified by observers, than by those directly involved, therefore changes in behaviour can be more easily generalised by an observer. Furthermore, this type of contact helps overcome the problem of intergroup anxiety, since the observer is not directly involved and can, therefore, witness a successful intergroup relationship without the stress of direct involvement. Witnessing others engage with outgroup members helps reduce an individual's apprehension about doing so themselves in the future, in turn, this may increase the likelihood of voluntary contact. Moreover, extended contact can change perceived ingroup norms, especially when the ingroup member, participating in the intergroup friendship, is a respected representative of the group. There is substantial research demonstrating the positive effect of this strategy (Tausch et al., 2006). This is especially promising for highly divided societies like those in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where intergroup contact is both rare and stigmatised.

Practical steps towards positive intergroup contact in Bosnia

Clearly contact offers the potential to improve intergroup relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and foster positive peace, even if the first steps toward the goal of eventual integration seem miniscule. Unfortunately, as highlighted in the introduction, the Dayton Peace Accords have cemented, and in some ways exacerbated, the intergroup segregation that has resulted from the war. Keeping in mind practical limitations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the

recommended conditions for good contact, are there effective actions that can be taken to increase intergroup contact in this region? The answer is yes. The remainder of this article examines three options for effective action and how they can best be applied in modern day Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are many promising, contact based, reconciliation projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A few are discussed below to help illustrate some of the ways that these principles can be applied in practice.

Develop and support special interest groups

'Small informal groups are an important venue in which individuals refine who they are and where they fit in society' (Pickering, 2007). These groups are, therefore, an effective method for developing and amending an individual's social identity. Through these groups, individuals express their commonality with one another. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, urban neighbourhoods were traditionally primary sites for creating interethnic contact because, during communism, employers generally allocated residences to their employees. This resulted in highly mixed neighbourhoods that shared the typical Bosnian close-knit characteristics. *'Because there is no such thing as a self-sufficient communist household, you depend fatally on your neighbour for all kinds of favours, from borrowing coffee...or cursing politics...to getting your child enrolled in a better school'* (Drakulic, 1992). Of course, post war Bosnia and Herzegovina is a very different situation because communities are predominantly ethnically homogeneous, forcing peace builders to look beyond community boundaries to foster intergroup contact.

Varshney conducted a study in 2003 examining the effect of contact between groups in India on the macro level. He found that a rich variety of civic contacts, between communities in cities, promote a durable

positive relationship between these groups that is sufficient to prevent riots (and other inter-community conflicts elsewhere in India) from spreading into their cities (Varshney, 2003). Seeking contact *between*, rather than *within*, ethnic communities in pursuit of a common, overarching goal opens possibilities for positive contact within segregated societies like Bosnia and India. Civil society groups, such as those studied by Varshney in India, are not comparably strong in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Despite some international support, the communist legacy has weakened civic engagement and the ethnic divisions have left most civil society groups ethnically homogeneous (Poggi et al., 2002). There are, however, notable exceptions to this trend, including organisations, such as the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), that create a common ingroup identity among members of different ethnic groups in the pursuit of a common and cooperative goal.

Example: International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP)

ICMP works with the families of missing persons across the ethnic divide, uniting them with the common goal of finding their loved ones who disappeared during the war. The severe grief suffered by each of these families has become a common shared identity and has resulted in the development of cross-group relationships and cooperation. In addition to discovering and excavating mass graves in efforts to find missing persons, ICMP staff members, with the help of trained psychologists, conducted a series of therapeutic workshops entitled 'Dealing with the Past' to facilitate equal status, interethnic dialogue among families of missing persons. The result of their combined work with this demographic is the conscious decision of participants to put

aside their feelings of resentment and desire for revenge, recognising that they each share these feelings, regardless of their ethnic background, and that by working together they are better able to lobby the government and demand support in uncovering the mass graves that might hold the remains of their loved ones (ICMP, 2010).

In addition to facilitating intergroup cooperation in pursuit of a common goal, interethnic civil society groups such as ICMP also satisfy the condition that contact should have the potential to develop meaningful relationships. Through facilitating the sharing of personal information between members of different groups, ICMP helps them see each other as individuals, rather than as group stereotypes, thereby creating a common ingroup identity (Cook, 1978).

Other special interest groups that possess this potential to create a common ingroup identity include organisations such as: 1) women's groups and youth groups bringing members together on the basis of shared life experiences; 2) music and dance groups in which participants participate in an intergroup ensemble creating the feeling of teamwork; and 3) sports groups, although teams must be ethnically mixed in order for team sport to foster intergroup cooperation, instead of competition.

The role of creativity in facilitating conflict resolution has also been the subject of some psychosocial research. It appears that participation in activities that promote creative thinking can open the mind to new perspectives on conflict analysis, increase individual autonomy and critical thinking, and thereby facilitate the development of increased complexity of social identity. These are especially effective (but have proven the most difficult to apply) in post communist societies like Bosnia and

Herzegovina, where critical thinking and individual creative expression were often suppressed in the interest of group cohesiveness, and where children were encouraged to learn by following their teachers' example, rather than through individual experimentation.

However, organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina such as ICMP are successfully implementing positive contact techniques among conflicting ethnic groups, providing evidence that these processes can be applied in this society. Given the theoretical basis for, and practical effectiveness of, special interest groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the author suggests that: 1) more projects should be developed employing the successful methods used by organisations such as ICMP; and 2) international institutions, in particular, should help develop and support these organisations, as the inherent interethnic nature of their work makes them unpopular with local politicians.

Increase knowledge of the 'other'

In *The Nature of Prejudice*, Allport stated that *'self-acquired knowledge (of the outgroup), gained through first-hand experience, is more effective (at reducing prejudice and hostility) than information sprayed upon us by lectures, textbooks, or publicity campaigns'* (Allport, 1954). Without intergroup contact, members of conflicting societies do not have the opportunity to gain this first-hand experience. The loss of shared experience results in a loss of common ground for communication, and a growing ignorance of the 'other'. Familiarity provides the possibility for understanding and respect, but frequently familiarity is replaced by suspicion, hostility, and the inability to cooperate (Papadopoulos, 2000). The segregation in Bosnia and Herzegovina's communities and schools prevents

interpersonal interaction. The negative effect of this segregation is then exacerbated by the conflicting nationalist curricula, which teaches children to fear and hate members of those ethnic groups that were at war with them in the 1990s. Further damage to tolerance occurs as education permeates the intrapsychic of children, influencing the development of their social identity and resulting in a general sense of prejudice toward all outgroups (Donia & Fine, 1995).

School integration and curriculum standardisation are highly volatile and contentious subjects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, due to competing versions of history and residual ethnic tensions (Valenta, 2009). However, there are programmes that can address these issues gradually, and in a less controversial manner. It is possible to introduce the *generic* idea of multicultural appreciation and tolerance education, in order to begin to counteract the negative effect on the intrapsychic that would otherwise lead to prejudiced views of the world as a whole. Trager and Radke-Yarrow conducted a study of school children in Philadelphia in the 1950s in which they divided students into three groups that each received different curricula for 14 weeks. One group's curriculum focused its special period on studying other cultures and learning to appreciate diversity. The second group addressed the *status quo* of segregation in the United States as an acceptable system, while the third (the control group) participated in crafts during the specialised curriculum period. The results were that students in the first group exhibited an increase in tolerance and a decrease in stereotyping members of the outgroup, while those in the second group showed the exact opposite. The control group exhibited no change whatsoever (Trager & Radke-Yarrow, 1952).

Educational programmes that focus on tolerance training and appreciation for multiculturalism should be pursued in Bosnia and Herzegovina because of their ability to increase individual awareness of different perspectives and similarities between (presumed) outgroup members. The OSCE's Education Department in Bosnia and Herzegovina has begun pursuing education reform in this fashion, teaching children about national minorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to expose them to different cultures in a positive fashion (Valenta, 2008; Valenta, 2009, OSCE BiH, 2010). This process increases the complexity of social identity, which improves outgroup attitudes, even if the groups in conflict are not explicitly discussed (Weigel, et al., 1975; Duffy, 2000).³

Example: the Youth Initiative for Human Rights

One NGO in Bosnia and Herzegovina that is successfully facilitating the development of meaningful intergroup relationships, through interethnic education, is the Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR). YIHR has offices throughout the former Yugoslavia and works to develop interethnic friendships among young adults in the region not, as with the ICMP approach, through therapeutic discussions of the past, but with ethnic exchanges that increase participants' knowledge and understanding of the outgroup. YIHR then facilitates continued contact, utilising new media outlets, such as social networking sites and online campaigns, for greater interethnic dialogue. Unlike ICMP, YIHR does not emphasise the war and past grievances, rather, its primary objective is to facilitate interethnic communication and the building of intergroup friendships that inevitably lead to discussion of the past, once trust is established (YIHR, 2009; YIHR, 2010).

Facilitate interethnic problem solving workshops and public communication training

A final suggestion is the use of interactive, problem solving workshops as venues for positive intergroup contact. These workshops create deliberate and formal contact situations where members of different conflicting groups are brought together, ensuring equal status among groups, to discuss a problem. Like intercultural education, the local conflict does not need to be directly addressed if doing so would be counterproductive. The mere act of cooperatively working to solve a common concern with members of the outgroup has the potential to reduce conflict (Fitzduff, 2006).

In a process referred to as ‘*Track Two Diplomacy*’, grassroots community leaders are brought together (in a situation with ideal group contact conditions) for a process that promotes mutual understanding (Fabick, 2006). The advantage of working with community leaders is that they already have their respective community’s attention, and can more easily turn any personal changes in attitudes (gained from the workshops) into behavioural changes within their community. Unfortunately, in some highly volatile and divided societies, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, it may not be possible to bring community leaders together. This does not, however, negate the effectiveness of these types of workshops. Less powerful members of conflicting communities, who may be more willing to meet with the ‘*other*’, can also become successful participants in problem solving workshops. However, these participants must be given the tools to share the lessons they learn. These skills can be acquired through training in campaigning and grassroots advocacy development, which should be an integral part of any problem solving workshop involving less powerful members of the

communities. Through using these skills, participants are then able to disseminate public information about intergroup conflict resolution, and pressure the government to change.

Conducting these workshops with average citizens could be even more useful than working with those in power positions in post communist countries, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition to the conflict resolution element of the workshop, the advocacy development aspect simultaneously increases civic engagement, a particular problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina already discussed in this paper. Finally, teaching participants to organise and express their opinions through these types of programmes also increases their individual autonomy and capacity for critical thinking, thereby furthering the cumulative development of tolerance (Brewer & Pierce, 2005).

Example: The League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF) launched an innovative project in 1998 entitled ‘Votes for Women – Forces for Change: Building Peace in the Bosnian Community’ which was designed to engage women in peace building and reconciliation initiatives. This project, one of the first of its kind in post war Bosnia and Herzegovina, had a number of diverse objectives including to strengthen grassroots efforts to promote dialogue and reconciliation among the different ethnic communities in Bosnia, and to improve the leadership and networking skills of women who are involved in political and civic activism. The project resulted in the creation of a League of Women Voters in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Liga Žena Glasaca (LŽG) which then conducted trainings with women from throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, bringing them together, across the ethnic divide, to discuss challenges to

reconciliation in their communities and to develop skills to help them engage in nonpartisan grassroots work related to elections and political processes. The skills developed included conflict resolution and negotiation, lobbying, community organising and civic education. Trust building exercises were also a priority in the trainings to help women overcome their feelings of anger, fear and guilt. The bridges of trust, combined with the skills and confidence that were gained by each participant, made these trainings (and others like them) highly effective and efficient at improving intergroup relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Tamches Blum, 1999).

Conclusions

This article provides an overview of the requirements for successful, conflict reducing contact in different contexts, as well as a discussion of the inherent obstacles to the realisation of these conditions, specifically in post war Bosnia and Herzegovina. After establishing the complications of the Bosnian situation, three basic suggestions were proposed as areas of focus for a successful reconciliation programme: 1) the need to develop and support more interethnic special interests groups with examples of ways to achieve this; 2) the importance of increasing knowledge of the 'other' with methods to pursue this in a volatile political situation; and 3) the productive use of intergroup problem solving workshops that can be supplemented with public communication training for participants not already in a position to have their voices heard by their communities.

While the war has effectively ended in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the conflict is not resolved and reconciliation is far from complete. This article proposes that this is due to the lack of intergroup contact between

members of conflicting ethnic groups. There is a rich body of social psychology research that can be applied to the practical pursuit of peace, conflict resolution and reconciliation. These tools can be applied, not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also in the many other identity based conflicts that have resulted in intergroup segregation.

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¹ Within social psychology the term ‘*intergroup*’ is used as an adjective – for example in ‘*intergroup*

relations’ or ‘*intergroup contact*’ – to describe relations or contact involving members of different social or ethnic groups.

² The term ‘*Bosniak*’ refers to members of an ethnic group in Bosnia and Herzegovina that is typically characterised by their ties to the region of Bosnia, and traditional adherence to Islam, since the 15th and 16th centuries.

³ The terms ‘*ingroup*’ and ‘*outgroup*’ are used in social psychology to indicate social groups to which an individual feels as though he or she belongs as a member (‘*ingroup*’), or to which they feel contempt, opposition, or a desire to compete (‘*outgroup*’).

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