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published in

British Journal of Social Psychology
2018

DOI (link to publisher)

[10.1111/bjso.12261](https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12261)

document version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

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citation for published version (APA)

Mashuri, A., van Leeuwen, E., & van Vugt, M. (2018). Remember your crimes: How an appeal to ingroup wrongdoings fosters reconciliation in separatist conflict. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 57(4), 815-833. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12261>

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Remember your crimes: How an appeal to ingroup wrongdoings fosters reconciliation in separatist conflict

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The aim of this study was to compare the effectiveness of appeals to ingroup wrongdoings, as opposed to ingroup rightdoings, on reconciliation between groups in a real-world conflict. We conducted an experiment in Indonesia, where separatist conflict in the province West Papua is currently unresolved. Participants were a sample of Javanese residents ($N = 502$), representing the majority group in Indonesia. Compared to ingroup rightdoings, being reminded of ingroup wrongdoings significantly increased participants' sense of perpetratorhood. These feelings of being a perpetrator in turn fostered participants' reconciliatory attitudes towards the separatist group. These findings reveal that an appeal to ingroup wrongdoings can be effective in promoting intergroup reconciliation. In addition to theoretical implications, we discuss practical implications in terms of highlighting the importance of acknowledging ingroup wrongdoings as part of an intervention programme.

Separatist conflict is characterized by mutual transgressions in which members of the parent nation and those of the separatist group alternate in their roles as perpetrator and victim (Webb, 2016). Yet despite their dual characters, both parties typically claim the victim role, casting the other party in the role of perpetrator. The goal of this research was to investigate whether an intervention among members of the majority group, aimed at acknowledging one's role as perpetrator, fosters reconciliatory attitudes in separatist conflict. To this end, we examined how reminding people of how their own group has harmed the separatist group during the conflict, as compared to reminding them of how their group has helped the separatist group, affects their feelings as perpetrator. We demonstrate that this sense of perpetratorhood in turn fostered reconciliatory attitudes towards the separatist group.

We conducted our research among members of the non-separatist parent nation (from here on referred to as 'the majority') in the Republic of Indonesia, where separatist tension in West Papua is rife. We focused on the majority because this group tends to exercise stronger military and political powers than the separatist group (in this case, West Papua), which affords it a dominant status (Harbom & Wallensteen, 2007). Dominant status

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groups are commonly expected to take the moral high ground in conflict situations (Vandello, Michniewicz, & Goldschmied, 2011), such that the majority is typically assigned a role as initiator of reconciliation (Satha-Anand, 2016). Intergroup reconciliation in the current research involves constructive cognitive orientations such as intergroup trust and positive intergroup attitudes of the dominant group towards the non-dominant group. Reconciliatory attitudes are an important prerequisite for the establishment of durable peace (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004). We therefore focused on reconciliatory attitudes as the main outcome variable in the current research, arguing that an appeal to ingroup wrongdoings as opposed to an appeal to ingroup rightdoings could ultimately contribute to the resolution of separatist conflict.

This study is the first to investigate the effect of a reminder of ingroup wrongdoings on reconciliatory tendencies within the context of separatist conflict. Reminders of ingroup wrongdoings have previously been investigated in contexts in which the distinction between the perpetrator and victim roles is relatively clear, such as historical genocide (Peetz, Gunn, & Wilson, 2010; Rees, Allpress, & Brown, 2013) or past colonization (Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 1998, 2006; Rotella & Richeson, 2013). In separatist conflict, however, both parties can be cast as perpetrators as well as victims, given their mutual transgressions (Webb, 2016). Moreover, each party tends to view itself primarily as victim (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006; Nadler & Saguy, 2003), which could make it especially hard to instil a sense of perpetratorhood. Separatist conflict is also unique in the sense that the majority and the separatist group share a superordinate, national identity (Eriksen, 2001; Martinovic, Verkuyten, & Weesie, 2011). Whereas some research (e.g., Dovidio *et al.*, 1997; Gaertner, Mann, Murrell, & Dovidio, 1989) would suggest that awareness of a shared superordinate identity could ameliorate intergroup conflict, other research has demonstrated that such a common identity can actually exacerbate conflict. Of particular relevance is work by Morton and Postmes (2011), who found that a perception of the ultimate 'we-ness', that is, the perception of shared humanity with the victim group, depressed the perpetrating group's feelings of collective guilt over their harmful actions towards the victim group. Van Leeuwen and Mashuri (2012) also showed that perceptions of a shared superordinate identity, compared to perceptions of two distinct identities, suppressed cooperative tendencies towards the outgroup. It is therefore important to examine whether members of a majority group in the context of separatist conflict are willing to accept responsibility for their harmful actions towards the separatist group, and whether this sense of perpetratorhood fosters reconciliatory attitudes.

Perpetratorhood and competitive victimhood

Wrongdoings in an intergroup context connote harmful actions that violate standard social norms and which physically (e.g., casualties, injuries, damages) or mentally (e.g., trauma) harm the other group (Čehajić-Clancy, Effron, Halperin, Liberman, & Ross, 2011; Glick & Paluck, 2013). Research has shown that a reminder of ingroup wrongdoings prompts people towards actions intended to reform rather than defend their group (Iyer, Schmader, & Lickel, 2007). However, prior research has demonstrated that a reminder of ingroup wrongdoings elicits various defensive reactions such as dehumanization of the victims, denial of ingroup responsibility, and moralizing and legitimizing historical misconducts (Castano, 2008; Rotella & Richeson, 2013). Čehajić and Brown (2010) argued that an appeal to ingroup wrongdoings can still promote reconciliation, but only when these collective misdeeds elicit a sense of perpetratorhood. A sense of perpetratorhood can be viewed as the extent to which ingroup members acknowledge their acts of

violence in intergroup conflict and the harm these acts inflicted upon the victim group (Wohl, Branscombe, & Klar, 2006). Mazziotta, Feuchte, Gausel, and Nadler (2014) found that inducing people to think of their group as perpetrator enhanced conciliatory orientations towards the victim group.

An appeal to ingroup wrongdoings can promote conflict reconciliation by instilling a sense of perpetratorhood, provided that defensive responses can be overcome. For example, literature shows that defensive responses to ingroup wrongdoings can be tackled when the collective misdeeds are hard to deny (Brander & Hornsey, 2006; Doosje *et al.*, 2006; Hornsey & Imani, 2004; Zebel, Doosje, & Spears, 2009). Indeed, according to the needs-based model of reconciliation (NBMR; Shnabel, Nadler, Ullrich, Dovidio, & Carmi, 2009), an appeal to wrongdoings can increase acknowledgement of outgroup harm when deflecting responsibility is difficult. We reasoned that group members would find it more difficult to deny ingroup wrongdoings when they are confronted with these wrongdoings by fellow ingroup members (as opposed to outgroup members or third parties). In support of this argument, previous research (Doosje *et al.*, 2006; Hornsey & Imani, 2004; Hornsey, Oppes, & Svensson, 2002) observed that groups are more open to criticism when it is communicated by other ingroup members, as opposed to the outgroup. An appeal to ingroup wrongdoings could therefore increase a sense of perpetratorhood when it is made by the ingroup itself, as this increases the likelihood that these ingroup actions are viewed as unjust, as well as harmful to the victim group.

Whereas a reminder of ingroup wrongdoings is assumed to be beneficial for the enhancement of reconciliatory orientations, most members of the majority in separatist conflict believe either that their group has not harmed the separatist group or that any harmful actions were a justified response to aggressive actions from the separatist group (Bookman, 1996). In fact, the majority may believe that it has taken many *positive* actions directed at the separatist group. Such positive actions, or rightdoings, involve any actions ingroup members consider beneficial to the other group (Kriesberg, 2004). For example, the majority may firmly hold on to the belief that it has treated the separatist group right by granting it a special autonomy status or by instilling various affirmative action policies (Cornell, 2002), even if the separatist group itself opposes these programmes (Jenne, Saideman, & Lowe, 2007; Siroky & Cuffe, 2015). If people believe that the goals and actions of their group are right, and those of the other party are wrong, they are prone to feel as the more moral party and cast the other group in the role of violent aggressor (Schori-Eyal, Halperin, & Bar-Tal, 2014). Indeed, Leach, Bilali, and Pagliaro (2015; see also Noor, Shnabel, Halabi, & Nadler, 2012) argued that disputing parties claim a victim status because victimhood implies moral superiority. This tendency to view the own group as more victimized than the opponent group is commonly referred to as 'competitive victimhood' (Noor, James Brown, & Prentice, 2008; Noor *et al.*, 2012).

Competitive victimhood occurs as a common corollary of protracted intergroup conflict that is characterized by mutual transgressions (Noor *et al.*, 2008). The disputing parties tend to be preoccupied with their own group's victimization, which makes them vulnerable to competitive victimhood claims, regardless of the differential access each party has to wealth, power, and other resources (Nadler & Saguy, 2003; Shaw, 2003). According to Vollhardt (2015), competitive victimhood constitutes exclusive victim consciousness, which refers to people's perceived distinctiveness of their group's suffering in comparison with another group. Competitive victimhood denotes how much people feel that their group has suffered relative to the other party in the conflict (Vollhardt, 2015; Vollhardt & Bilali, 2015). Competitive victimhood stands in contrast to global exclusive victim consciousness which denotes the perceived uniqueness of the

ingroup's suffering in general, without specifying a comparison group (Vollhardt, 2012). Within the context of the current research, we operationalize competitive victimhood as the extent to which the majority perceives its group to have suffered more injustice and anguish at the hands of the separatist group than the other way around. As a focus on past rightdoings towards the outgroup is associated with feelings of moral superiority (Leach *et al.*, 2015; Noor *et al.*, 2012), a focus on rightdoings may heighten the majority's sense of competitive victimhood. Given that competitive victimhood depresses empathy and outgroup trust (Noor *et al.*, 2008), feelings of competitive victimhood would likely pose a hurdle for reconciliatory orientations among members of the majority group.

The discussion in the previous suggests that an appeal to rightdoings and an appeal to wrongdoings might have a different impact on competitive victimhood and perpetratorhood as viewed by members of the majority in separatist conflict. We examined this notion in an experiment, in which we manipulated appeals to ingroup rightdoings, and ingroup wrongdoings. We expected that participants who focused on ingroup wrongdoings, compared to those focused on ingroup rightdoings, would report lower levels of competitive victimhood (*Hypothesis 1a*). Second, we expected that participants who focused on ingroup wrongdoings, compared to those focused on ingroup rightdoings, would report higher levels of perpetratorhood (*Hypothesis 1b*).

In contrast to prior research (e.g., Doosje *et al.*, 1998, 2006; Mazziotta *et al.*, 2014; Rotella & Richeson, 2013), perpetratorhood and competitive victimhood were measured rather than manipulated in this study. People tend to rely on their own beliefs regarding the role of their group as perpetrator or victim (Vollhardt, 2015), and these subjective beliefs can be incongruent with the manipulation of both constructs in terms of either the persuasion to think of people's own group as perpetrator or victim (e.g., Mazziotta *et al.*, 2014) or the exposure of instances of the ingroup's perpetration or victimization (e.g., Doosje *et al.*, 1998, 2006; Rotella & Richeson, 2013). Measuring perpetratorhood simultaneously with competitive victimhood is also important to examine the notion that separatist conflict is a reciprocal conflict.

In the following sections, we propose how competitive victimhood and perpetratorhood affect morality threat, moral licensing, and compensatory needs, and further explain their dynamics in affecting the majority's reconciliatory attitudes towards the separatist group.

Morality threat and moral licensing

People have an ongoing concern over whether their ingroup is seen as moral by others (Ellemers & van den Bos, 2012), and these concerns are particularly pronounced among members of perpetrating groups (Shnabel, Nadler, Canetti-Nisim, & Ullrich, 2008). The NBMR proposes that perpetrating groups experience a threat to their moral identity, denoting a concern over the ingroup's tainted moral reputation resulting from prior wrongdoings committed against the victim group (a phenomenon labelled 'morality threat'; Shnabel *et al.*, 2009). Building on this rationale, Mashuri, van Leeuwen, and Hanurawan (2016) recently framed morality threat in terms of negative meta-stereotypes, referring to the extent to which the majority is concerned about the negative moral image of their group in the eyes of the separatist group. This conceptualization of morality threat echoes the concept of moral shame, which reflects perpetrators' genuine moral concern over their own group's immorality (Allpress, Brown, Giner-Sorolla, Deonna, & Teroni, 2014). Mashuri *et al.* (2016) found, across two studies, that the majority reported high

levels of morality threat, which is indicative of a strong concern about the immorality of the ingroup's actions.

The NBMR (Shnabel *et al.*, 2009) suggests that morality threat originates from a sense of perpetratorhood. This implies that an appeal to prior wrongdoings can indirectly increase morality threat through increasing a sense of perpetratorhood. Perpetratorhood was therefore expected to mediate the effect of ingroup action (i.e., rightdoings vs. wrongdoings) on morality threat (*Hypothesis 2a*).

When faced with their misconducts, perpetrating groups sometimes defend themselves by legitimizing the rightness of their actions (Staub & Pearlman, 2006) – a strategy called ‘moral licensing’ (Leach *et al.*, 2015). Moral licensing reflects the use of past moral behaviours as a licence to act immorally in the future (Monin & Jordan, 2009). Schori-Eyal, Klar, Roccas, and McNeill (2017) found that the more Jewish-Israeli participants felt victimized compared to Palestinians in the context of the Arab–Israeli conflict, the more they supported immoral actions to defend the existence of their group. Applying this insight to the context of separatist conflict, we argue that the more the majority claims that it has been victimized, relative to the separatist group, the more it will engage in moral licensing. We therefore predicted that competitive victimhood would mediate the effect of ingroup action (i.e., rightdoings vs. wrongdoings) on moral licensing (*Hypothesis 2b*).

Compensatory needs and reconciliation

The NBMR (Shnabel *et al.*, 2009) posits that in dealing with morality threat, the perpetrating group is motivated to satisfy two compensatory needs: the need for social acceptance and the need for restoration of moral image. The need for social acceptance refers to the desire for the victim outgroup to accept the perpetrating ingroup as a moral social actor, to sympathize and understand the situation that compelled the ingroup towards its actions, and to be willing to cooperate with the ingroup. The need for restoration of moral image denotes the perpetrating group's feelings regarding the importance of carrying out actions that can benefit the victim group, to restore the ingroup's moral reputation in the eyes of the victim group (Shnabel *et al.*, 2009). In support of the NBMR's proposition, Mashuri *et al.* (2016) found that the more the majority experienced morality threat in the context of separatism conflict, the more they reported a need for social acceptance and for restoration of moral image.

In contrast to morality threat, we argue that moral licensing can *decrease* the needs for social acceptance and restoration of moral image. As moral licensing involves the belief that the ingroup is more moral than the outgroup, it attenuates moral behaviours because good actions in the past could validate people's moral qualities in the present (Conway & Peetz, 2012). Moral licensing thus poses a hurdle for positive intergroup relations (Effron & Conway, 2015). Characterized as such, moral licensing is likely to attenuate compensatory needs for social acceptance and restoration of moral image, which signal the desire of the perpetrating group to build rapport or positive relations with the victim group (Shnabel *et al.*, 2009; SimanTov-Nachlieli, Shnabel, & Nadler, 2013).

Reconciliatory attitudes

Reconciliation is a complex process that requires a basis of mutual positive attitudes (Kim, Kollontai, & Hoyland, 2008). The willingness to reconcile is reflected in reconciliatory

attitudes: Reconciliatory actions are meaningless if reconciliatory attitudes are absent. It is the public's attitude towards reconciliation that ultimately drives reconciliatory actions, the latter of which are typically taken at the institutional or governmental level. In line with Kelman (2006) and Nadler (2002), we defined reconciliatory attitudes as the desire to cease intergroup conflict by changing antagonistic relations into positive relations. To enable this transformation, disputing parties should replace mistrust with trust and negative with positive intergroup perceptions.

According to the NBMR, compensatory needs for social acceptance and restoration of moral image heighten the perpetrating group's support for reconciliation with the victim group (Shnabel *et al.*, 2009). In support, Bilewicz and Jaworska (2013) found that Polish participants' need for social acceptance was a positive predictor of their reconciliatory attitudes towards the historically wronged Jewish people in Poland. Moreover, recent research conducted in Australia (Barlow *et al.*, 2015) revealed how restoration of moral image, which stemmed from the victim group's (i.e., Aboriginal Australians) acceptance of the perpetrating group's (i.e., non-Aboriginal Australians) apology, resulted in increased support for reconciliation with the victim group. Mashuri *et al.* (2016) also observed that the needs for social acceptance and restoration of moral image among members of the Javanese majority in Indonesia were positively linked to their reconciliatory attitudes towards separatist groups in Aceh and West Papua.

The NBMR posits that morality threat contributes to the promotion of reconciliatory attitudes because of its effect on compensatory needs. Indeed, prior research on separatist conflict found that the relationship between morality threat and reconciliatory attitudes was mediated by compensatory needs (Mashuri *et al.*, 2016). In contrast, moral licensing may obstruct positive intergroup relations by decreasing the compensatory needs for social acceptance and restoration of moral image. We therefore predicted that morality threat would be positively associated with the majority's compensatory needs for social acceptance and restoration of moral image (*Hypothesis 3a*), that moral licensing would be negatively associated with these compensatory needs (*Hypothesis 3b*), and that the majority's compensatory needs would mediate the role of morality threat and moral licensing in predicting reconciliatory attitudes (*Hypothesis 3c*).

Wohl *et al.* (2006) argued that self-categorizing as part of a perpetrator group bears within it an acknowledgement of ingroup wrongdoings, which reduces negative perceptions of the victim group. Prior research showed that ingroup members who are willing to acknowledge their wrongful actions against another group (e.g., Čehajić-Clancy *et al.*, 2011) are more supportive of reparative actions. As such, perpetratorhood has been hailed as one of the pivotal pillars of intergroup reconciliation (Gilbert, 2001). Mazziotta *et al.* (2014) found that the need for social acceptance mediated the effect of perpetratorhood on reconciliatory stances (i.e., empathy and willingness to engage in intergroup contact). Extending this finding, we posit that the effect of perpetratorhood on reconciliatory attitudes passes via morality threat and compensatory needs for social acceptance and restoration of moral image. We base our argument on the NBMR (Shnabel *et al.*, 2009), which suggests that morality threat originates from past wrongdoings and that it is associated with greater reconciliatory stances by fostering the compensatory needs. We thus predicted that perpetratorhood would be a positive predictor of reconciliatory attitudes (*Hypothesis 4a*), but this direct relationship would be mediated by morality threat and compensatory needs for social acceptance and restoration of moral image (*Hypothesis 4b*).

Method

Participants and design

Participants were 502 Javanese undergraduate students from universities in Central Java, Yogyakarta, and East Java, Indonesia (343 women, 157 men, two participants did not self-report their gender; $M_{\text{age}} = 20.06$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 1.58$). Taking part in the study in return for a small fee, participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: wrongdoings ($n = 256$) or rightdoings ($n = 246$).¹

Procedure and measures

A questionnaire comprising the study's materials and questions was handed to participants in a classroom. On each of these questions, unless otherwise indicated, participants were asked to indicate their agreement with a statement on a 5-point answering scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *very much*).

Following informed consent, the questionnaire began with a table that listed the operational definition of important terminologies. This table was included to ensure that participants comprehended the meaning of the terminologies used in the questionnaire, such as 'Indonesia' and 'separatist conflict or separatism'. The next part was to manipulate *ingroup action* in which participants were presented with a list of five wrongful actions (wrongdoings condition) or five rightful actions (rightdoings condition) committed by their majority group in the treatment of the separatist group and were informed that these actions were generated by Javanese students in an earlier survey. Existing literature (Doosje *et al.*, 2006; Hornsey & Imani, 2004; Hornsey *et al.*, 2002) suggests that negative ingroup information is more readily accepted when it is believed to originate from an ingroup source. We selected these five wrongful and rightful actions on the basis of the results from a pilot study.² Participants were asked to indicate which two of these five actions were the most harmful (wrongdoings condition) or the most beneficial (rightdoings condition) to indigenous West Papuans. To assess the effectiveness of the manipulation, we presented participants with a single item of perceived harmfulness of the government's treatment of indigenous West Papuans (i.e., 'The actions listed in the previous section are harmful to indigenous Papuans'), and two items of perceived harmfulness of the government's actions to the reputation of the majority group (for ease of interpretation, referred to here as 'non-Papuans'; i.e., 'The actions listed in the previous section harm the image of the Indonesian government'; 'The actions listed in the previous section taint the positive image of non-Papuans'; $r = .84$).

The next part of the questionnaire contained six items to assess *competitive victimhood* (e.g., 'The separatist conflict makes other Indonesians more than West Papuans in West Papua suffer from physical violence'; $\alpha = .88$) adapted from Andrighetto, Mari, Volpato, and Behluli (2012), as well as Shnabel, Halabi, and Noor (2013). *Moral licensing* was assessed with five items (e.g., 'The Indonesian government has done enough to improve the indigenous West Papuans' social and economic conditions, and

¹ We eliminated four participants from the analyses for not complying with instructions to list wrongful actions or rightful actions.

² Javanese students were randomly assigned to either a wrongdoings condition ($n = 32$) or a rightdoings condition ($n = 34$) and were asked to list at least five actions by the Indonesian government they considered harmful (wrongdoings condition) or beneficial (rightdoings condition) to indigenous West Papuans. Based on the results from this pilot, we selected five harmful actions (economic underdevelopment, sociocultural and political injustice, militaristic approach, exploitation of natural resources, and human resource underdevelopment) and five beneficial actions (modernization, special autonomy, sociopolitical stability, affirmative programmes, and tourism) for our study materials.

does not need to continue helping the West Papuans in the future'; $\alpha = .83$) developed by the authors.

Participants were then presented with five items assessing perceived distributive justice (e.g., 'The wages of indigenous West Papuans are as valuable as the wages of other Indonesians in other parts of Indonesia'; $\alpha = .90$), and five items assessing perceived procedural justice (e.g., 'The Indonesian government treats West Papua the same as other regions in Indonesia'; $\alpha = .84$), both adapted from Mashuri and van Leeuwen (2018). These two subscales of perceived justice of ingroup actions serve as the secondary check of the effectiveness of the manipulation.

Perpetratorhood was assessed with four items (e.g., 'In the course of history, the Indonesian government has been the main perpetrator in harming indigenous Papuans'; $\alpha = .84$), based on Zimmermann, Abrams, Doosje, and Manstead (2011). *Morality threat* was assessed with four items (e.g., 'I fear that harmdoings by the Indonesian military against the indigenous West Papuans in West Papua impair the public image of other Indonesians as cordial, friendly, and helpful people'; $\alpha = .86$) adopted from Mashuri et al. (2016). Need for social acceptance (e.g., 'It is important for me that the indigenous West Papuans are willing to open their door for other Indonesians to befriend them'; $\alpha = .85$) and need for restoration of moral image (e.g., 'I would like to show indigenous West Papuans that other Indonesians are caring and considerate people'; $\alpha = .86$) were each assessed with four items adopted from Mashuri et al. (2016). We combined both scales into a latent construct of *compensatory needs*. Intergroup trust was assessed with seven items (e.g., 'Indigenous West Papuans generally have good intentions'; $\alpha = .86$). *Positive attitudes* towards the separatist group were assessed with four items (e.g., 'I enjoy interacting with indigenous West Papuans'; $\alpha = .83$), as were positive stereotypes about this group (e.g., 'Indigenous West Papuans are generous'; $\alpha = .90$). Adapted from Mashuri and van Leeuwen (2018), these three measures were combined into a latent construct of *reconciliatory attitudes*. After assessing participants' age, gender, and current domicile, they were paid, debriefed, and thanked.³

Results

Manipulation checks

Confirming the effectiveness of the manipulation, the perception that ingroup actions were harmful to indigenous West Papuans was significantly higher among participants in the wrongdoings condition ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.04$) than among those in the rightdoings condition ($M = 1.94$, $SD = 1.01$), $t(500) = 21.943$, $p < .001$, power = 1.00. In a similar vein, participants in the wrongdoings condition perceived that the ingroup actions were harmful to the image of the majority ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.03$) more than those in the rightdoings condition ($M = 1.97$, $SD = .92$), $t(500) = 20.448$, $p < .001$, power = 1.00. Moreover, participants in the wrongdoings condition reported significantly lower levels of both perceived distributive justice ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.10$) and procedural justice ($M = 3.35$, $SD = .90$) than those in the rightdoings condition (perceived distributive justice: $M = 3.12$, $SD = 1.03$, $t[500] = -3.30$, $p = .001$, power = .95; perceived procedural justice: $M = 3.55$, $SD = .81$, $t[500] = -2.63$, $p = .009$, power = .83). These

³ We also assessed perceived separatism legitimacy (six items; $\alpha = .84$), perceived integration legitimacy (six items; $\alpha = .89$), national attachment (eight items; $\alpha = .89$), national glorification (eight items; $\alpha = .73$), ethnic attachment (eight items; $\alpha = .93$), and ethnic glorification (eight items; $\alpha = .84$). The data are available upon request.

findings indicate that participants in the wrongdoings condition, more than those in the rightdoings condition, viewed their ingroup's actions as harmful and unjust.⁴

Hypothesis testing

The effect of the experimental manipulation 'ingroup action' on the dependent variables was examined through a series of independent-samples *t*-tests, presented in Table 1. The results demonstrate that ingroup action significantly affected perpetratorhood and morality threat, but did not significantly affect competitive victimhood, moral licensing, compensatory needs, and reconciliatory attitudes. Contrary to Hypothesis 1a, reported competitive victimhood in the wrongdoings condition was not significantly higher than in the rightdoings condition. However, in line with Hypothesis 1b, reported perpetratorhood in the wrongdoings condition was significantly higher than in the rightdoings condition.

To test the remainder of the hypotheses (i.e., Hypotheses 2 to 6b), we analysed the data by means of structural equation modelling (SEM) using *Mplus* version 7.4. The goodness of fit of the hypothesized structural model and its relevant hypotheses was assessed with MLM, which is suitable to complete data that violate the assumption of multivariate normality (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2015). We derived the structural model from item parcelling, given that we were more interested in the relations among the latent constructs within the model than in the relations among the items within the constructs (Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002). Following Little *et al.* (2002), item parcelling was to generate indicators of the latent constructs in the structural model. We created the item parcelling based on the dimensionality of the factor structure of each latent construct, which was produced from exploratory factor analysis using oblique rotation (Little *et al.*, 2002). The item-to-construct balance was used for creating parcels of unidimensional constructs where the item with the highest factor loading was joined with the item with the lowest factor loading, the item with the second highest factor loading was joined with the item with the second lowest factor loading, and so forth (Little *et al.*, 2002). The domain-representative technique was used for creating parcels of

Table 1. Effect of ingroup action (wrongdoings vs. rightdoings) on the dependent variables

	Wrongdoings		Rightdoings		Significance	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Competitive victimhood	3.04	.83	3.05	.79	-1.44	.886
Perpetratorhood	3.15	.83	2.69	.77	6.43	< .001
Moral licensing	2.09	.80	2.17	.84	-1.163	.245
Morality threat	3.86	.81	3.64	.86	2.887	.004
Compensatory needs	4.16	.59	4.17	.57	-.319	.750
Reconciliatory attitudes	3.68	.62	3.70	.56	-.533	.594

Note. *M* = mean. *SD* = standard deviation. Compensatory needs and reconciliatory attitudes were calculated by averaging the items of their composite measures.

⁴ In these *t*-test analyses, we used *G*Power 3* (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) to calculate power. In the structural model, power was derived from Monte Carlo simulation using *Mplus* version 7.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2015), with 10,000 replications.

multidimensional constructs where the first parcel consisted of the first item of all subscales, the second parcel consisted of the second item of all subscales, and so forth (Kishton & Widaman, 1994).⁵

As shown in Figure 1, the hypothesized structural model resulted in good fits to the data, RMSEA = .037, 90% CI [.026, .046], CFI = .98, TLI = .98 (for the criteria of the goodness of fit, see Hu & Bentler, 1999). Ingroup action did not significantly affect competitive victimhood, $\beta = -.01$, $SE = .04$, $p = .794$, 95% CI [-.093, .071], but it did significantly increase a sense of perpetratorhood, $\beta = .20$, $SE = .04$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.116, .284], power = .99. These findings are consistent with the *t*-test analyses presented in the previous.

Confirming Hypothesis 2a, perpetratorhood was a significant mediator of the relationship between ingroup action and morality threat, indirect effect: $\beta = .08$, $SE = .02$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.041, .119], power = .99. However, contradictory to Hypothesis 2b, competitive victimhood did not significantly mediate the effect of ingroup action on moral licensing, indirect effect: $\beta = -.004$, $SE = .01$, $p = .794$, 95% CI [-.030, .023]. Morality threat positively predicted compensatory needs for social acceptance and restoration of moral image, $\beta = .39$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.287, .491], power = 1.00, in line with Hypothesis 3a, whereas moral licensing was negatively related to the compensatory needs, $\beta = -.25$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-.348, -.159], power = 1.00, corroborating Hypothesis 3b. Confirming Hypothesis 3c, the relationship between morality threat and reconciliatory attitudes was significantly mediated by compensatory needs for social acceptance and restoration of moral image, indirect effect: $\beta = .18$, $SE = .03$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.125, .241], power = 1.00, as was the relationship between moral licensing and reconciliatory attitudes, indirect effect: $\beta = -.12$, $SE = .03$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-.169, -.070], power = 1.00.

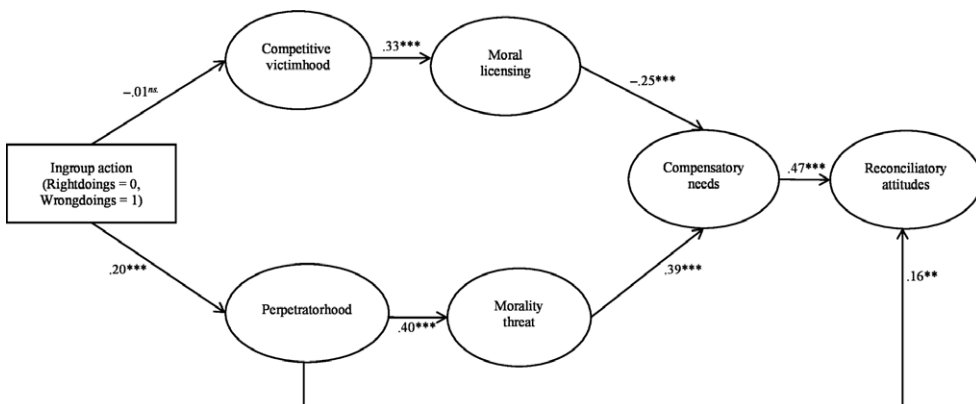


Figure 1. Results of the hypothesized structural model. Numbers in the model are standardized path coefficients. All variables within the model were analysed in terms of their latent scores, except for ingroup action that was analysed in terms of its observed scores. Note. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. ns = not significant.

⁵ Following Sterba and MacCallum (2010), we compared our parcelling models with eight alternative parcelling models. Our parcelling models (see the label 'Model 1' under Table S3 in the supporting information) were consistent with the other eight parcelling models and, more importantly, with the average models assessing the structural parameters (see Table S3 in the supporting information).

Corroborating Hypothesis 4a, perpetratorhood was a positive predictor of reconciliatory attitudes, $\beta = .16$, $SE = .05$, $p = .001$, 95% CI [.067, .246], power = .95. However, in support of Hypothesis 4b, this direct effect passed through morality threat and compensatory needs for social acceptance and restoration of moral image; indirect effect $\beta = .07$, $SE = .02$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.044, .102], power = .94.

Discussion

Within the context of separatist conflict, this study is the first to make a distinction between the effects of an appeal to ingroup wrongdoings versus ingroup rightdoings in the investigation of conflict reconciliation. In separatist conflict, both parties tend to view themselves as victim rather than as perpetrator (Bookman, 1996). The problem with a mindset that is focused on the own group's rightdoings rather than wrongdoings in intergroup conflict is that one tends to view the own group as the more moral party and the other group as violent aggressor, which obstructs any attempts at conflict resolution (Schori-Eyal *et al.*, 2014). Tapping into an active separatist conflict in Indonesia, we conducted a large study among members of the non-separatist majority group and found that a focus on ingroup wrongdoings, rather than rightdoings, ultimately generated more favourable attitudes towards reconciliation with the separatist region of West Papua through the promotion of a sense of perpetratorhood.

We found that participants in the wrongdoings condition reported more perpetratorhood, but not less competitive victimhood, than those in the rightdoings condition. We expected our manipulation to affect competitive victimhood because we implicitly assumed that perpetratorhood and victimhood are constructs that are negatively related. However, this may not be the case. Despite its dominance over the separatist group in terms of economic, political, and military powers (Harbom & Wallensteen, 2007), the majority may still feel more victimized than the separatist group (Staub, 2006). As a result, the majority can simultaneously feel perpetrator and victim, as was evidenced by our data where the two constructs were positively and significantly correlated (see Tables S1 and S2 in the supporting information). Shnabel *et al.* (2008, 2009) argued that victim groups and perpetrating groups are similarly vulnerable to threat perceptions of the other. Threat perceptions are strongly associated with perceptions of intergroup conflict (Corenblum & Stephan, 2001). It thus makes sense to observe a positive association between perpetratorhood and competitive victimhood, as both constructs reflect the perception of intergroup conflict.

Theoretical implications

Perpetratorhood in the current research directly predicted reconciliatory attitudes towards the separatist group. This finding resonates with literature on moral cleansing (Zhong & Liljenquist, 2006). The concept of moral cleansing describes how good deeds could be a medium through which people regain their morality (Monin & Miller, 2001). In support of this rationale, Harkrider *et al.* (2013) found that prior transgressions motivated participants to act prosocially in order to repair negative feelings of moral self-worth.

Whereas an appeal to ingroup wrongdoings could result in a general motivation to repair inflicted harm and restore intergroup relations (Iyer *et al.*, 2007), people are exceedingly defensive when confronted with wrongful actions committed by their group (Rotella & Richeson, 2013). The challenge in such complicated situations of long-lasting

intergroup conflict therefore is to overcome defensive barriers and ensure a genuine acknowledgement of ingroup wrongdoings. To this end, in the current research participants were reminded of ingroup wrongdoings by members of their own ingroup, as opposed to members of the outgroup (see Doosje *et al.*, 2006; Zebel *et al.*, 2009). As evidenced by the observation that participants in the wrongdoings condition judged their ingroup's actions as more harmful and less justified than participants in the rightdoings condition, participants in the current research indeed acknowledge these wrongdoings rather than deny or refute them. The acknowledgement of ingroup wrongdoings is an important precondition for the road to conflict reconciliation (Čehajić & Brown, 2010).

Limitations and suggestions for future research

The current study is not without limitations. First, the design did not include a neutral control condition. As a consequence, we do not know to what extent the effect of our experimental manipulation was driven by a focus on wrongdoings, or a focus on rightdoings. The correlational findings as presented in the path model do inform us of the separate roles that perpetratorhood and competitive victimhood, as well as morality threat, moral licensing, and compensatory needs, play in predicting reconciliatory attitudes. However, to empirically ascertain whether these processes were triggered by a focus on ingroup wrongdoings, a focus on ingroup rightdoings, or both, future research should include a neutral control condition.

A control condition is also important to uncover possible distinct mechanisms by which a reminder of ingroup wrongdoings or a reminder of ingroup rightdoings affects competitive victimhood. A reminder of ingroup wrongdoings can motivate people to defend their group's moral identity, which should increase their claims on competitive victimhood (Sullivan, Landau, Branscombe, & Rothschild, 2012). A reminder of ingroup rightdoings, on the other hand, can instil a sense of power loss because it reminds group members of the compromises their ingroup was willing to make for the sake of the outgroup (Lowery, Unzueta, Knowles, & Goff, 2006). Both mechanisms may operate simultaneously, increasing participants' competitive victimhood through distinct processes. This could also explain why we did not observe a difference in competitive victimhood between the two experimental conditions. In addition to a control condition, future research could include a measure of participants' need for power to shed more light on the possible mechanisms affecting competitive victimhood.

Previous research (e.g., Schori-Eyal, Tagar, Saguy, & Halperin, 2015; SimanTov-Nachlieli, Shnabel, Aydin, & Ullrich, 2018) has shown that a type of group affirmation can effectively buffer defensive reactions to information about the ingroup wrongdoings, particularly among people who have a high tendency to oppose reconciliation with the adversary outgroup. Future research could utilize this knowledge by, for example, first allowing participants to focus on the various positive actions of their ingroup before focusing them on their group's wrongdoings towards the separatist group. This could also contribute to the reduction of a potential bias in the form of 'preaching to the converted', which denotes how the effect of an appeal to ingroup wrongdoings is limited to the group members that already harbour reasonably positive attitudes towards the separatist group.

In the present work, we conceptualized competitive victimhood as a construct that stems from a focus on ingroup rightdoings. At first glance, this seems incongruent with previous work, which described competitive victimhood as something that is associated with innocent suffering (Gray & Wegner, 2009; Sullivan *et al.*, 2012). However, a reminder of ingroup rightdoings can make the majority feel that it has helped, and not

harmed the separatist group. As a result, when reminded of its rightdoings, the majority is likely to feel innocent of the separatist group's sufferings. A sense of innocence is strongly associated with claimed competitive victimhood (Gray & Wegner, 2009; Shnabel *et al.*, 2009). The impact of ingroup rightdoings on competitive victimhood may thus pass through feelings of innocence – a notion that can be examined in future studies.

Reconciliatory attitudes, as assessed in the present research, are a pivotal antecedent of durable and stable peace (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004), but they are not the sole basis for intergroup reconciliation. Conflict reconciliation also involves specific emotions such as collective guilt or shame that reflect the disputing parties' acceptance of responsibility for their wrongdoings (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2008). Reconciliation further requires action through the removal of structural barriers that maintain unequal treatment of the victim group (Rouhana, 2011), for example, through affirmative action policies (Pratkanis & Turner, 1996), or an official apology (Kelman, 2004). However, these reparative actions are commonly executed by the government and other formal institutions, rather than by separate individuals. Moreover, literature (Dixon, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2005) suggests that advantaged group members' positive feelings towards a disadvantaged outgroup do not automatically translate to support for structural improvement to the conditions of the disadvantaged group. It is therefore important for future studies to assess the extent to which the majority supports governmental programmes or policies aimed at promoting equality and empowerment of the separatist group.

Perpetratorhood connotes an acknowledgement that ingroup actions have harmed another group (Wohl *et al.*, 2006). In that sense, perpetratorhood bears resemblance to collective guilt, which has also been described as signifying acceptance of ingroup wrongdoings (for a review, see Ferguson & Branscombe, 2014). However, we argue that perpetratorhood as assessed in the current research is conceptually distinct from collective guilt. A sense of perpetratorhood can exist without feelings of guilt, shame, or regret. Indeed, existing literature (Hartmann, Toz, & Brandon, 2010; Wohl *et al.*, 2006) suggests that perpetratorhood is distinct from collective guilt to the extent that perpetrators view their wrongdoings as justifiable. This implies that, particularly when the ingroup views its actions as legitimate, perpetratorhood is unrelated to collective guilt. Future studies could examine the relationship between perpetratorhood and collective guilt in the context of separatist conflict in more detail.

The current research focused on the perspective of the majority group in separatist conflict. We did so because the majority, as the more powerful party, is commonly expected to initiate reconciliation (Satha-Anand, 2016). However, to fully understand conciliation in separatist conflict, we need to have a thorough understanding not only of the perspective of the majority but also of that of the separatist group. Attempts at reconciliation can backfire and exacerbate the conflict, unless specific needs of the perpetrating group and the victim group are properly addressed (Shnabel *et al.*, 2009). As specified within the NBMR (Shnabel *et al.*, 2009), the perpetrating group expects that its wrongdoings are forgiven by the victim group (Wohl, Hornsey, & Bennett, 2012). The victim group expects that the perpetrating group acknowledges its wrongdoings (e.g., Nadler & Liviatan, 2006). The NBMR posits that an acknowledgement of wrongdoings by the perpetrating group is instrumental in helping the victim group regain a sense of empowerment. Once its need for empowerment is satisfied, the victim group is more willing to reconcile with the perpetrating group (Shnabel, Nadler, & Dovidio, 2014; Shnabel *et al.*, 2009). Future research among the separatist group could investigate to what extent empowerment of its needs fosters this group's support for reconciliation.

Practical implications

Considering the effect of being reminded of ingroup wrongdoings on reconciliatory attitudes, we focus our discussion of the practical implications on how to devise an intervention programme that can effectively increase the majority's awareness and acknowledgement of their harmful actions against the separatist group, without raising defensive barriers. This acknowledgement, in line with a key preposition of the NBMR (Shnabel *et al.*, 2009), could meet the victim group's need to restore its threatened sense of empowerment. We therefore propose intervention programmes that zoom in on how to persuade the majority to acknowledge its past transgressions against the separatist group. This acceptance of ingroup harm may increase the extent to which the majority feels morally inferior to the separatist group. This perceived threat to ingroup morality was previously found to significantly contribute to the majority's support for reconciling with the separatist group (Mashuri *et al.*, 2016). In doing so, we suggest that intervention programmes adopt a combination of a top-down and bottom-up approach (Staub, 2006, 2008), also known as a 'hybrid approach' (Mac Ginty, 2010). The goal of this approach is to promote reconciliation within society at large – not just among specific parties involved in politics or the negotiation process. In the lens of such an approach, people should be made aware of, and ultimately acknowledge their group's wrongdoings through multifarious channels, which could include mass media such as radio, television, or film. These channels may also take the form of training programmes, and of academic disseminations such as lectures, seminars, and conferences. Importantly, these messages should be communicated by the ingroup rather than the outgroup or third party, to enhance acceptance of the message and, ultimately, increase the effectiveness of the intervention programme.

Acknowledgements

This research was funded by The Netherlands Fellowship Programmes (NFP; Grant Number CF8784/2013), which was awarded to the first author.

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Received 18 November 2017

Supporting Information

The following supporting information may be found in the online edition of the article:

Table S1. Correlation among Observed Variables of the Current Study.

Table S2. Correlations among Latent Variables of the Current Study.

Table S3. Empirical Results of Structural Parameters Across-Parcelling Models (continued on the next page).