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Past and Present Intergroup Contact and Conflict Among Inhabitants of Former Mixed Villages of Cyprus: The Role of Individual and Collective Experiences in Predicting Attitudes and Trust

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ABSTRACT

Positive attitudes and trust towards former adversaries facilitate reconciliation and peacebuilding. Both historical and current intergroup experiences such as intergroup contact and conflict predict intergroup attitudes and trust but no previous research has investigated the joint effects of these experiences. Therefore, we study the interplay of positive intergroup contact preceding conflict, negative experiences of the conflict, and positive intergroup contact following conflict. Drawing on social representations theory and using a multilevel design, we highlight the importance of both individual and collective experiences. We examine the effects of such experiences on intergroup attitudes and trust among a large sample of Greek Cypriots ($N = 802$) and Turkish Cypriots ($N = 718$) from 54 formerly ethnically mixed villages in the context of a protracted and frozen conflict in Cyprus. Present-day individual contact related to more positive attitudes and higher trust regardless of past experiences of conflict or contact. Furthermore, past collective contact experiences predict more positive attitudes and higher trust, whereas past collective conflict experiences predicted more negative attitudes and lower trust. Finally, present-day contact closes the gap in trust between respondents with low and high past contact. Overall, both current and historical, and individual and collective experiences matter.

Keywords: intergroup contact, intergroup attitudes, intergroup trust, post-conflict societies, Cyprus conflict, multilevel analysis

Overall the number of violent intergroup conflicts is decreasing around the world, but nonviolent power struggles continue in many settings after armed hostilities cease (Strand et al., 2019). Positive attitudes and trust towards former adversaries among the general population facilitate reconciliation and peacebuilding (Alon & Bar-Tal, 2016). Such positive attitudes and trust however depend on people's historical and current individual and collective intergroup experiences such as intergroup contact and severity of conflict (Dovidio et al., 2012; Lemmer & Wagner, 2015; Liu & Hilton, 2005). Before a conflict, people may have had positive intergroup contact experiences and lived peacefully together with later adversaries in the conflict. The same people might have had violent experiences of conflict personally or been affected by violence inflicted on their near ones. As conflicts abate, people may again have positive intergroup contact experiences with the former adversaries. Though all of these experiences are jointly relevant in shaping present intergroup relations, to our knowledge, no previous studies have examined their interplay in full (Paolini et al., 2014; Rugar & Graf, 2019; Tropp et al., 2017; Voci et al., 2017). Therefore, in the current paper, we investigate these processes and ask how positive intergroup contact experiences preceding the conflict, negative experiences of the conflict itself, and positive intergroup contact experiences following the conflict relate to present intergroup attitudes and trust.

We highlight the meaning and significance of the historical intergroup context at multiple levels (Doise, 1978; Pettigrew, 2018). Drawing on social representations theory and work on collective memory, we focus not only on individual experiences but also on the importance of collective past experiences (Bar-Tal, 2014; Moscovici, 1988). These collective past experiences constitute social representations, a collective system of values, ideas and practices that orient the intergroup practices with members of the adversarial groups (Figueiredo et al., 2018; Liu & Hilton, 2005; Moscovici, 1988). Thus, we examine how past collective experiences of contact and conflict of Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot groups

who lived in mixed villages (meso-level) and their present individual contact experiences (micro-level) are related to present-day intergroup trust and attitudes (micro-level).

Furthermore, we investigate how past collective experiences of intergroup contact and conflict shape the effects of present-day contact on trust and intergroup attitudes.

Present-day positive intergroup contact and intergroup attitudes and trust in (post)conflict settings

How far can contact improve intergroup outcomes in protracted post-conflict settings? By post-conflict settings, we broadly refer to societies that are still in a fragile phase, but that have moved on from the more intense phase of violent conflict (Frère & Wilen, 2015). A large number of studies have implemented structured contact interventions in post-conflict or protracted conflict settings. These interventions entail either cooperative learning programs or explicit discussions of intergroup relations, for example bringing together Israeli and Palestinian participants to talk about the conflict in discussions moderated by a facilitator (Lemmer & Wagner, 2015; Maoz, 2011). Overall, such interventions seem to be just as effective in conflict and post-conflict settings as in more peaceful environments as confirmed by a recent meta-analysis (Lemmer & Wagner, 2015). It is a different matter though how contact outside structured interventions relates to intergroup attitudes and trust after a conflict. A number of studies have shown that casual forms of everyday contact for example in the market, neighborhood, schools or workplaces can improve intergroup attitudes in (former) conflict regions like Northern Ireland (Tropp et al., 2017), South Africa (Gibson & Claassen, 2010; Tropp et al., 2017), the Former Yugoslavia (Rupar & Graf, 2019) or Cyprus (Yucel & Psaltis, 2019). Furthermore, especially high quality intimate contact, such as friendships, is related to more positive attitudes and higher trust (Gibson & Claassen, 2010; Tropp et al., 2017).

Past intergroup contact and conflict experiences and present intergroup attitudes and trust in (post)conflict settings

Past individual experiences of intergroup contact and conflict

Besides present-day intergroup experiences, past positive intergroup contact experiences that predate the conflict have a beneficial effect on present-day intergroup outcomes. For instance, Bosnian adults who engaged in higher levels of contact before the war with Serbs reported higher trust and smaller social distance today (Voci et al., 2017). Similarly, when Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats had more positive relations with outgroup members before the conflict, they were more positive towards reconciliation after the conflict (Biro et al., 2004). Overall, as these handful of recent studies showed, when individuals recall more positive intergroup contact before the conflict, their attitudes were more positive after the conflict.

In contrast, negative individual experiences of conflict might or might not be related to negative intergroup outcomes. On the one hand, experiences of conflict are often related to negative intergroup outcomes, especially during ongoing conflict (Canetti-Nisim, Halperin, Sharvit, & Hobfoll, 2009; Halperin, Canetti, Hobfoll, & Johnson, 2009; Lavi, Canetti, Sharvit, Bar-Tal, & Hobfoll, 2012). On the other hand, there is much less evidence that past conflict experiences after the cessation of armed hostilities relate to negative intergroup outcomes. For instance, Croatians' individual-level exposure to violence during the conflict was unrelated to their prejudice levels towards their former enemies (Strabac & Ringdal, 2008). In similar vein, past experiences of violence and being forced to leave their homes as a result of the inter-communal conflict were unrelated to Greek Cypriot refugees' attitudes towards Turkish Cypriots (Psaltis et al., 2019).

Past collective intergroup experiences of contact and conflict

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Perhaps even more than individual past intergroup experiences, collective intergroup experiences in the past could play an important role in the formation of outgroup attitudes and trust (Dovidio et al., 2012; Psaltis et al., 2019; Strabac & Ringdal, 2008). Representations of past collective experiences and present-day attitudes are recursively constituting each other (Bar-Tal, 2014; Liu & Hilton, 2005). For example, current intergroup relations between Black and White Americans in the United States are informed by the history of chattel slavery (Adams, 2012; Dittmann et al., 2017). In contrast, positive past collective experiences could be related to more positive present-day intergroup outcomes. For instance, interviews with Cypriots who used to live in mixed villages where Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots had positive contact suggest that more positive past collective experiences would predict more favorable present-day intergroup attitudes (Psaltis, 2016).

In (post)conflict societies, collective intergroup experiences are often narrated at the level of the adversarial communities through deeply divided educational systems and mass media (Figueiredo et al., 2018; Liu & Hilton, 2005). In addition to societal-level hegemonic social representations that are widely produced and reproduced, more specific knowledge structures exist that are only shared by smaller subgroups (Abreu Lopes & Gaskell, 2015; Doise, 1978; Elcheroth et al., 2011; Moscovici, 1988; Wagner & Hayes, 2005). For example, while Belgians generally acknowledge Belgium's colonial past, younger Belgians are more likely than older Belgians to condemn it (Licata & Klein, 2010). In a (post)conflict setting, we expect that there could be also local representations that would impact intergroup attitudes and trust besides the adversarial hegemonic social representations. To take the example of Cyprus, both Turkish and Greek Cypriot representations of the conflict focus on the wrongdoings of the outgroup and the victimization of the ingroup (Psaltis, 2016). At the same time, many mixed villages were sites of collective experiences of both peaceful co-existence before the conflict and victimization during the conflict. Having lived in these mixed villages,

many Greek and Turkish Cypriots adapt a more critical perspective of these adversarial master narratives (Psaltis, 2016). Therefore, a more contextually sensitive approach to collective experiences would be to explore the quality of intergroup relations at the village level.

In the present research, we focus on past collective experiences in formerly mixed villages in Cyprus. We add to previous studies on past individual experiences of contact and conflict in (post)conflict settings (at the micro-level) by investigating how past collective experiences of contact and conflict (at the meso-level) are related to present-day intergroup outcomes (at the micro-level). We draw on research on present-day collective intergroup experiences showing that higher amounts of positive contact collectively in a neighborhood, district or region are related to more positive intergroup attitudes (Christ et al., 2014; Hewstone, 2015). We extend these studies on present-day collective intergroup contact in peaceful settings by investigating how past collective intergroup contact and conflict in the context of protracted societal conflict are related to present-day intergroup attitudes and trust. Following previous studies and theorizing on capturing collective experiences and representations in a given social and political context, we operationalize collective experiences as the mean of individual experiences in a local context (Fischer, 2009; Kende et al., 2021; Van Assche et al., 2017). In our study, the local context for past collective experiences is the mixed villages where Turkish and Greek Cypriots used to reside together before the conflict.

The interplay of past contact and conflict experiences and present-day contact in (post)conflict settings

Do memories of previous positive contact and conflict experiences change the meaning and consequences of present-day contact? Does it matter whether people lived together peacefully before the conflict or how much violence they suffered during the

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conflict? There is growing evidence that the socio-political context of contact moderates contact effects. More specifically, in societies with more egalitarian norms, values, and policies, contact improves attitudes more than it does so in less egalitarian societies (Green et al., 2019; Kende et al., 2018; Pettigrew, 2018). Therefore, past collective intergroup experiences such as more peaceful co-existence or higher levels of conflict could also moderate present-day contact effects at the meso-level of villages.

Some evidence specifically from post-conflict settings also suggests that the socio-political context would moderate contact effects, but the little existing evidence is mixed. First, one study investigated whether positive contact experiences before the conflict moderate the impact of present-day contact. Voci and colleagues (2017) found that in Bosnia, the effect of post-war contact was shaped by pre-war contact: present-day contact was only related to higher trust and lower social distance among Bosnians with high levels of contact before the war. Second, a handful of studies have explicitly measured how much violence participants suffered and tested whether these experiences of violence moderated contact effects. One study found that contact had less impact among those South Africans who were exposed to more violence (Tropp et al., 2017). In contrast, another survey among Bosnian participants described how contact was unrelated to trust and social distance, among those who experienced more conflict personally (Voci et al., 2017).

In sum, growing evidence shows that the socio-political context changes the meaning and consequences of contact in peaceful settings, but little is known about how the context moderates the effects of contact in post-conflict settings. Our study is the first to explore whether past collective intergroup experiences moderate the effects of present-day intergroup contact. We focus on past collective experiences of contact as a measure of peaceful co-existence and on past collective experiences of conflict as its opposite pole.

The historical context of the Cyprus conflict and co-habitation in mixed villages

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The intercommunal strife between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities in Cyprus is often described as one of the longest frozen conflicts in current-day Europe (Kizilyürek, 1999; Papadakis, 2006). The conflict goes back to clashes in 1957-58, 1963-1964 and 1974. It is estimated that 350 Turkish Cypriots and 200 Greek Cypriots were killed between December 1963 and August 1964 (Patrick, 1976). As such, this intercommunal strife directly impacted individual life experiences in the 114 mixed villages that existed in 1960 in Cyprus. Consequently, during the short period between 1963 and 1964 the number of mixed villages abruptly dropped from 135 to 65 (Packard, 2008). By 1970, the number of mixed villages was reduced to 48. In these remaining mixed villages, the relations between the members of the two communities were no longer actually mixed. Most of these originally mixed villages had been divided into distinct ethnic quarters with little social or economic contact between them. In fact, relations between the ethnic quarters of most mixed villages at that time were characterized by “outright hostility” (Patrick, 1976, p. 8).

At present, the island of Cyprus is divided into two halves by a UN patrolled buffer zone. The north (37% of the island) is occupied by 30,000-40,000 Turkish troops who intervened in/invaded Cyprus in 1974. The intervention/invasion followed a short-lived coup engineered by the junta in Greece that aimed at union (enosis) of Cyprus with Greece and lead to complete geographical separation of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities through mass internal displacements. In 1983, the Turkish Cypriot leadership and Turkey declared an independent state that is recognized until today only by Turkey and condemned by the international community, as demonstrated by UN resolutions. The rest of Cyprus is controlled by the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus and governed by Greek Cypriots. In 2003, travel restrictions between the two sides were lifted and contact between members of the two communities became possible.

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Research that explored the role of intercommunal contact after 2003 as a prejudice reduction and trust building measure shows, unambiguously, that intergroup contact in Cyprus does indeed reduce prejudice in both communities. However, the number of people crossing to the other side and having contact relative to the overall population of both communities is still rather low (Yucel & Psaltis, 2019). The only mixed village existing today in Cyprus is Pyla which is situated in the UN Buffer Zone (Papadakis, 2006). Nevertheless, if the current negotiations succeed, internally displaced persons could voluntarily return and there will be opportunities for renewed co-existence among Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Therefore, it is especially important for the future of Cyprus to study former life in mixed villages and the current views of former inhabitants of mixed villages.

The current research

We add to previous studies by examining the interplay of past and present-day intergroup experiences such as intergroup contact and conflict among former inhabitants of mixed villages in Cyprus. Besides investigating individual-level intergroup contact and conflict, we highlight the importance of collective experiences of contact and conflict and focus on the predictive power of past intergroup experiences at the village level.

In line with previous results, we expect that more present-day contact and intergroup friendship will be related to more positive attitudes and higher trust (Hypothesis 1).

Furthermore, we expect that past collective intergroup experiences in a village will inform present-day attitudes and trust (Hypothesis 2). We operationalize collective intergroup experiences in a village as the average level of contact prior to the conflict and severity of conflict reported among Greek or Turkish Cypriot respondents who used to live in that village. More specifically, we expect that more past village-level contact before the conflict will be related to more positive attitudes and higher trust (Hypothesis 2a). We also expect that

more severe past village-level conflict will be related to more negative attitudes and lower trust (Hypothesis 2b).

As current evidence is modest and mixed, we do not put forward specific hypothesis but explore whether past village level contact moderates present-day contact effects and whether past village level severity of conflict moderates present-day contact effects.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Data were collected among large samples of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots as part of an extensive survey on intergroup relations. We purposely sampled individuals who had lived in formerly mixed villages between 1955 and 1974 (BLINDED)¹. This period was selected because it coincided with the inter-communal conflict's peak. Samples were drawn using random stratified sampling from a total of 97 formerly mixed villages. Greek Cypriot participants currently residing in the same formerly mixed villages south of the divide and Turkish Cypriot participants currently residing in the same formerly mixed villages north of the divide were recruited through a combination of random selection of households and central locations such as village coffee shops or cultural clubs. Participants who used to live on the other side of the divide— i.e. Greek Cypriots who used to live in the north and Turkish Cypriots who used to live in the south – were more difficult to locate. In such cases purposive sampling through a combination of methods (e.g., visiting refugee compounds in the South, finding information regarding the re-location of refugees to specific villages, contacting community leaders, centers and organizations, snowballing and referral techniques with each respondent providing a maximum of two more contacts) was used. Questionnaires were

¹ Please see technical report and supplemental materials for more details on the sampling and the questionnaire. Data are available at the following address: .

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administered in the native language of the participants i.e. either in Greek or Turkish. To have reliable estimates of the village-level measures, we excluded participants who came from villages where we could not achieve a minimum of five participants. The resulting sample sizes were $N = 718$ (55 % male, $M(\text{age}) = 68$ years) for Greek Cypriots and $N = 802$ (55 % male, $M(\text{age}) = 61$ years) for Turkish Cypriots from 54 villages. Participants were at least 45 years old at the time of the data collection in 2010 to ensure that they have personal experiences from the mixed villages.

Measures

Dependent variables

Present-day individual-level trust and intergroup attitudes were used as dependent variables.

We measured *trust* with three items, e.g., “I just do NOT trust Greek/Turkish Cypriots”, reverse coded, $\alpha = .83 / .86$ (Greek Cypriots /Turkish Cypriots). Answers were given on a five-point Likert scale, coded from 1 (*absolutely disagree*) to 5 (*absolutely agree*).

Intergroup attitudes were measured with a single-item measure “How do you feel towards Greek/Turkish Cypriots in general?” on a thermometer-scale from 0 (*very cold or negative*) to 10 (*very hot or positive*).

Independent variables: Present-day individual intergroup experiences

Individual-level quantity of present-day intergroup contact and intergroup friendship, were used as individual-level independent variables. Because present-day contact involves voluntary contact, but the current division of Cyprus into two parts restricts contact possibilities, we refer to locations that allow for encountering outgroup members today.

Quantity of present-day intergroup contact referred to intergroup contact during various everyday situations in the present and was measured by six items answering the question “Thinking of social contacts (communicating, talking, not just seeing the other) --

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whether at home, or at work, or somewhere else, irrespective of whether you crossed to the other side (the south) or not -- how often do you have contact these days with Greek/Turkish-Cypriots under the following conditions? “. Possible answers included “when I go shopping”, “in bi-communal meetings” “in the village where you live” “generally in the South” “generally in the North” “at work”, $\alpha = .79 / .90$ (Greek Cypriots /Turkish Cypriots; 1 *not at all* 5 *very often*) (BLINDED).

Intergroup friendships was measured with one item: “With how many Greek/Turkish-Cypriots do you keep now some kind of friendship? (1 *none* 5 *more than 10*).

Independent variables: past village-level collective experiences

Village-level quantity of past contact and severity of past conflict were used as village-level independent variables. The village-level predictors were assessed on the individual level, but aggregated across all respondents within each village to capture past collective experiences. Past contact involved interactions in a wide array of social settings, assessed with items designed to capture the most common forms of interactions.

Quantity of past intergroup contact was measured with six items (“How often did you chat to people who are (outgroup) at work?”, “In your village, how often did you greet people who are (outgroup) (e.g., when you saw them in the street)?”, “How often did you chat to people who are (outgroup) in your village?”, “How often did you do something social together with your (outgroup) co-villagers (e.g. weddings, parties, going out, name days, funerals)?”, “How often did you visit (outgroup)’s shops in the village?”, “How often did you visit (outgroup)’s coffee shops in the village?”), scale $\alpha = .73 / .90$ (Greek Cypriots /Turkish Cypriots); 1 *never* 5 *very often*. Participants were asked about “contact with Greek Cypriots/Turkish Cypriots in the mixed villages before 1974.

Severity of past conflict was the count of three types of direct (“I was injured due to these events”, “I lost my home/property (became refugee) or had to move away from my

house because of intimidation” and “I was captured by members of the other community”) and four types of indirect incidents (“A member of my family or a close friend has been missing or killed”, “a member of my family or a close friend in my community had to move house or became a refugee because of intimidation “, “a member of my family or a close friend in my community lost his/her home (became refugee)” and “a member of my family or a close friend in my community lost a member of his/her family’s or a close friend”) reported during the conflicts of 1955 – 1959, 1963 – 1964, and 1974. The sum of affirmative answers was calculated individually and in a subsequent step aggregated by village.

Analytic strategy

Using Mplus 7 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012), a series of separate two-level regression analyses were conducted. Multi-level analysis was required for testing the hypotheses on the two outcome variables because of the nested data structure of participants (individual level) within former villages of residence (village level).² We opted to test the two predictors and two outcome variables separately, running a set of models with either contact or friendship as the predictor and testing either trust or intergroup attitudes as the outcome variable. We tested the predictors and outcomes separately because the variables were highly correlated (around .5 in both pairs of variables, see Table 1) and in multilevel models high correlations bias the estimates, especially for the variance estimates (Shieh & Fouladi, 2003). We were interested in random effects and cross-level interactions, therefore we specified separate models to gain more reliable estimates.³ Eight sets of multilevel regression analyses were thus run in consecutive steps (Hays, 1983; Hox et al., 2010). First, we tested the null model. Second, we included one of the level-1 predictors, i.e. present-day

² The breakdown of the variance also suggested that a meaningful proportion of the variance lies at the village level: 11% of the variance in both trust and intergroup attitudes.

³ As a stringent robustness test of our results, we also replicated the main analysis with both predictors and outcome variables in the same models. This replication showed that contact and friendship as predictors independently contribute to predicting both of the dependent variables. More specifically, effects of contact and friendship on our dependent variables are robustly independent of each other.

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contact or intergroup friendships – first with fixed, then random effects (i.e. allowing the effect of contact or friendship to vary among villages) – while controlling for age, gender and community affiliation (i.e. Greek or Turkish Cypriot). We interpreted the level-1 main effects from these models to test the expected associations of present-day individual contact or intergroup friendships as predictors with intergroup attitudes or trust as dependent measures (Hypotheses 1). Significant positive associations between the level-1 predictors (present-day contact or intergroup friendships) and outcomes (positive outgroup attitudes or trust) would be required to support Hypothesis 1. Third, we included one of the level-2 variables, i.e. past collective intergroup contact or severity of past conflict (“main effects” model) and interpreted the main effect of these level-2 variables to investigate Hypothesis 2. To support Hypothesis 2, significant positive relations would be required between higher past village-level contact and the outcome variables (positive attitudes and trust) (H2a), while significant negative relations would be required between more severe past conflict in the village and the outcome variables (H2b). Finally, in a fourth step, we added the interaction between the level-1 and level-2 variables (“interaction” model) to explore whether present-day contact effects on the outcomes are moderated by past collective intergroup experiences, past village-level contact or severity of conflict.

As we tested a large number of models (eight set of models with the two different Level 1 predictors and two different Level 2 predictors with two different outcomes, testing five stepwise models for each set), in the main text of the manuscript we only report the full models for the significant final interaction models and the estimates. We refer readers to the supplementary materials for complete details of all eight sets of models (Tables S1 to S8).

Results

Preliminary analysis

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Initially, we examined bivariate correlations between all variables included in the analyses for Greek and Turkish Cypriots separately, as displayed in Table 1.

Table 1 about here

Firstly, we found that higher levels of present-day individual contact and friendship were related to more positive intergroup attitudes and higher trust for both Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Secondly, past collective experiences of intergroup contact were related to more positive intergroup attitudes and higher levels of trust among Greek Cypriots and to higher levels of trust among Turkish Cypriots. Thirdly, among Greek Cypriots more severe collective experiences of past conflict were related to less positive intergroup attitudes and among Turkish Cypriots more severe collective experiences of past conflict were related to less positive intergroup attitudes and lower levels of trust. Greek Cypriots also had more conflict in the past in villages with lower levels of collective contact. In addition, Turkish Cypriots collectively experienced more conflict when there was less intergroup contact in the village.

We also examined whether there were significant differences between the Turkish and Greek Cypriot subsamples in our variables of interest via separate t-tests. We found that Turkish Cypriots reported more present intergroup contact ($t = -4.72, p < .001$), whereas Greek Cypriots reported higher intergroup trust ($t = 20.34, p < .001$) and more positive intergroup attitudes ($t = 29.48, p < .001$). There were no significant differences between the groups on the other individual-level measures. Regarding past intergroup experiences, Greek Cypriots reported more past intergroup contact ($t = 14.46, p < .001$), while Turkish Cypriots reported more past experiences of conflict ($t = -9.20, p < .001$).⁴

⁴ We report here t-tests comparing the past experiences at the individual level, but in the main analysis, we used these measures aggregated at the village level.

Associations between present-day contact and present-day intergroup attitudes and trust

We first tested the main effects of individual-level present intergroup contact and intergroup friendship on outgroup trust and outgroup attitudes (see Tables S1 to S4 in Supplementary Materials). In all four sets of models, adding present contact or intergroup friendship (as well as age, gender and group controls) resulted in a significant improvement in model fit over the null model for both outcome measures of outgroup trust and attitudes. In support of Hypothesis 1, intergroup contact was related with trust ($b=0.28$, $SE=0.06$, $p<.001$) and positive outgroup attitudes ($b=0.65$, $SE = 0.11$, $p<.001$) (see “individual-level fixed main effects model” in Tables S1 and S2). Similarly, intergroup friendship was linked to trust ($b=0.26$, $SE=0.03$, $p<.001$) and positive outgroup attitudes ($b=0.69$, $SE=0.07$, $p<.001$) (see “individual-level fixed main effects model” in Tables S3 and S4).

Associations between past collective intergroup contact and conflict and present-day intergroup attitudes and trust

Next, we tested the effects of the two measures of past collective intergroup experiences in the villages: we looked at the associations between past village-level contact and severity of past conflict as predictors and present-day individual attitudes and trust as outcomes. Past village-level contact was related to more trust ($b=0.35$, $SE=0.07$, $p<.001$) and positive outgroup attitudes ($b=0.55$, $SE=0.18$, $p=.003$), supporting Hypothesis 2a (see “village-level main effects” models in Tables S1 and S2 in Supplementary Materials). More severe past conflict in a village, in turn, was related to more negative attitudes ($b=-0.29$, $SE=0.12$, $p=.016$) and less trust ($b=-0.10$, $SE=0.05$, $p=.052$) (see “village-level main effects” models in Tables S5 and S6 in Supplementary Materials) offering support for Hypothesis 2b.⁵

⁵ To ensure that collective intergroup experiences matter over individual experiences, we replicated our analysis with aggregated village-level measures of past collective contact and conflict experiences while also including the same measures of past contact and conflict experiences at the individual level in the model.

Interaction between past collective intergroup contact and conflict and present-day intergroup attitudes and trust

Finally, we explored whether past collective intergroup experiences moderate the effects of present-day contact and friendship on attitudes and trust. When predicting trust, the interaction between past contact at the village level and present-day contact at the individual level was significant ($b=-.22$, $SE=.09$, $p=.015$, see Table 2 and Table S2). Plotting the interaction (Figure 1) showed that at low levels of present-day contact, outgroup trust was higher among those who come from villages with higher levels of contact in the past, $p<.001$. For those Cypriots who currently had high levels of contact with outgroup members, levels of trust were the same for participants from villages with low and high levels of past contact, $p=.118$. Furthermore, present-day contact was related to outgroup trust for both those who came from villages with low ($p<.001$) and high ($p=.001$) levels of contact in the past. In sum, higher levels of present-day contact closed the trust gap between participants from villages with low or high levels of past contact.

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

We also found that, the effect of present-day intergroup friendships on trust was moderated by past contact in the village ($b=-.17$, $SE=.07$, $p=.013$, see Table 2 and Table S2, Figure 1). Present-day intergroup friendships were related to higher levels of trust, at both lower ($p<.001$) and higher levels of past contact ($p<.001$). Additionally, when the amount of present-day intergroup friendships was low, participants from high past contact villages reported higher levels of intergroup trust than participants from low past contact villages ($p<.001$); when the amount of intergroup friendships was high, however, there was no significant difference ($p=.088$). In other words, trust was higher among those Cypriots who came from villages with more contact in the past, but higher levels of present-day intergroup

friendship closed the trust gap between participants from villages with low or high levels of past contact.

Past village-level contact did not moderate the link between present-day contact and intergroup attitudes ($p=.584$, see Table 2), nor the link between intergroup friendships and intergroup attitudes ($p=.331$, see Table S4).

Finally, past severity of conflict on the village level did not moderate present-day contact effects on trust ($b=0.07$, $SE=0.06$, $p=.265$) nor intergroup attitudes ($b=0.13$, $SE=0.13$, $p=.339$) (see Tables S5 and S6 in Supplementary Materials). Nor did it moderate the effect of friendship on intergroup trust ($b=-.01$, $SE=.03$, $p=.854$) and on outgroup attitudes ($b=.07$, $SE=.08$, $p=.342$) or (see Tables S7 and S8 in Supplementary Materials).⁶

Discussion

Protracted conflicts persist around the world, and deeply divided societies have unique characteristics. The current study took a historical and political approach to intergroup relations and investigated how past and present individual and collective intergroup experiences such as contact and conflict relate to intergroup attitudes and trust among Greek and Turkish Cypriots in the context of a protracted and frozen conflict in Cyprus. We investigated how present-day positive individual intergroup contact (at the micro-level) related to present-day intergroup attitudes and trust, as the largely divided public spheres nevertheless offer the opportunity for contact through various open checkpoints. Furthermore, building on social representations theory (Liu & Hilton, 2005; Moscovici, 1988), we highlighted the importance of past collective experiences tapped with the average level of contact and conflict among inhabitants of formerly mixed villages in Cyprus. We examined

⁶ We also tested a modified version of these models including perceived severity of conflict as an individual level-1- rather than a contextual level-2-variable; there were no significant interaction effects with present-day intergroup contact in these models either, neither on trust ($b=0.02$, $SE=0.01$, $p=.119$) nor on intergroup attitudes ($b=0.01$, $SE=0.06$, $p=.879$). There were also no significant interactions with friendship-effects, neither on trust ($b=.01$, $SE=.01$, $p=.499$) nor on attitudes ($b=.08$, $SE=.04$, $p=.061$) (see Table S9 for models).

whether past collective experiences of peaceful co-existence or experiences of conflict in formerly mixed villages (at the meso-level) are related to present-day intergroup attitudes and trust. Drawing on theoretical work on the multilevel nature of intergroup contexts, we investigated whether such past collective experiences in formerly mixed villages (at the meso-level) in a deeply divided society (at the macro-level) contribute to present-day intergroup outcomes such as intergroup attitudes and trust (at the micro-level) (Abreu Lopes & Gaskell, 2015; Doise, 1978; Elcheroth et al., 2011; Wagner & Hayes, 2005). Finally, we examined whether past collective experiences of contact and conflict would change the consequences of present-day contact. We complement and go beyond previous research by investigating the interplay of past and present intergroup experiences and by emphasizing the importance of collective experiences.

An interesting, albeit unsurprising preliminary finding is that Turkish Cypriots, compared to Greek Cypriots scored lower on trust and higher on prejudice. This is an expected finding given the context of mixed villages of this study. According to the Turkish Cypriot narrative of the conflict, those Turkish Cypriots who lived in mixed villages before 1974, and constituted the numerical minority, did not interact a lot with majority Greek Cypriots in the past. In addition, Turkish Cypriots experienced more violence in mixed villages (Psaltis, 2016).

Besides these intercommunal differences, we found that when intergroup contact happens in a deeply divided (post)conflict society, it is related to more positive intergroup attitudes and trust. More specifically, supporting Hypothesis 1, both present-day everyday casual contact and present-day friendships predicted higher levels of intergroup trust and more positive intergroup attitudes. These results replicate findings from previous studies on individual experiences of contact in conflict settings (Gibson & Claassen, 2010; Tropp et al., 2017).

Furthermore, our results showed that past collective experiences of contact and conflict inform present-day intergroup attitudes and trust. In line with Hypothesis 2, when Greek or Turkish Cypriots used to live in villages where inhabitants overall had more intergroup contact in the past, they reported higher intergroup trust and more positive intergroup attitudes. These findings are in line with a handful of papers reporting similar results with individual experiences of positive intergroup contact in the past from the context of Former Yugoslavia (Biro et al., 2004; Cakal & Petrović, 2017; Voci et al., 2017). In addition, we found that when Greek or Turkish Cypriots came from villages where inhabitants collectively experienced more severe conflict, they reported lower levels of trust and more negative attitudes in the present. We replicated the results including individual-level past contact or conflict in the models, thus showing that the collective experiences matters over and above individual experience. Therefore, these findings extend the above-mentioned previous studies by investigating past experiences at the collective level as opposed to only looking at individual intergroup experiences. We captured collective experiences as the village-level mean of individual experiences following previous studies in social, cultural, political and developmental psychology (Fischer, 2009; Kende et al., 2021; Poteat et al., 2007; Van Assche et al., 2017). As such, the findings call for drawing on a social representations approach when investigating intergroup relations: collective experiences afford more or less positive intergroup orientations towards members of the adversarial groups (Moscovici, 1988). Similarly, the results are aligned with a normative approach to intergroup contact showing that the average levels of contact in a neighbourhood, district or region are related to more positive intergroup attitudes (Christ et al., 2014; Hewstone, 2015). Furthermore, the results suggest that social representations matter at multiple levels (Abreu Lopes & Gaskell, 2015; Doise, 1978; Elcheroth et al., 2011; Wagner & Hayes, 2005). More concretely, despite the tensions between the adversarial groups in

broader society (at the macro-level), when people had peaceful intergroup experiences (high levels of contact and/or low levels of conflict) in the past at the local village levels (meso-level), they had more positive intergroup orientations today.

Thirdly, we investigated the interplay of past collective contact and conflict and present-day intergroup contact. First, we found that both past collective contact and present-day contact matter. Both past collective and present-day individual contact predicted more positive intergroup outcomes, and high levels of present-day contact closed the gap between those with higher and lower amounts of past collective contact. From a social representations perspective, we might have expected that those who come from villages with high levels of contact would more likely take a pro-reconciliation position (Psaltis, 2016). Past positive representations of the outgroup could have enhanced contact effects today. Such findings would have also resonated with multilevel findings from a recent meta-analysis of intergroup contact where contact was more effective when the immediate contact situation was more equal (at the micro-level) and also when contact situations were embedded in more egalitarian societal contexts (at the macro-level) (Kende et al., 2018). It is possible we did not find this moderation because of ceiling effects: trust and attitudes are very high among those participants who had both collective past and individual-level present contact and also among those participants who come from villages with high levels of contact (see Figure 1). Therefore, future research should also investigate these links with other measures which are less prone to ceiling effects, for example with measures beyond self-report measures used in the current study. Future research could also draw on historical archives describing the geographical layout of the villages to capture opportunities for contact. Such measures, however, would be biased too as they would only capture opportunities for contact and not actual contact. In addition, we find that neither individual nor collective experiences of conflict moderate the effect of present-day contact. As such, our results differ from a previous

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study implemented in post-conflict Bosnia where only those Bosniak participants who had not experienced severe conflict reported more positive attitudes with more contact (Voci et al., 2017). The current findings are more aligned with a recent study from South Africa showing that contact was still related to more positive attitudes among also those who experienced more conflict (Tropp et al., 2017). Similarly, our results are aligned with another recent paper showing that negative extended contact in the past was not related to attitudes towards reconciliation among Bosniaks and Croats from Bosnia (Rupar & Graf, 2019). Our findings might be due to the fact that we only sampled participants from previously mixed villages. As most participants had some contact with outgroup members and these past positive experiences were related to more positive present-day intergroup outcomes, it could be that having lived in a mixed village mitigated the effects of conflict.

These findings also point towards potential limitations of our study. The present study draws on a special sample, purposefully sampling Greek and Turkish Cypriot who used to live in mixed villages. This unique sample gave us the opportunity to investigate the effect of past experiences of both peaceful co-existence and conflict. At the same time, we do not know whether the current results would also generalize to people who did not live in mixed villages before the conflict but nevertheless experienced conflict and/or contact. Therefore, future research should explore how the same processes play out among those who have no previous experience of living in mixed villages but only rely on societal master narratives and their individual experiences for orientation. Furthermore, the current study only sampled participants from Cyprus, future research should clarify whether our results also generalize to other (post)conflict settings. Cyprus is not the typical example of a post-conflict society given the secessionist nature of the problem and its complete geographical division. Violence has ended but it is in a state of a frozen conflict since no peace agreement has been reached yet. In addition, participants' recollections of the past might be colored by their current intergroup

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experiences and orientation (Bar-Tal, 2014; Graf et al., 2014; Liu & Hilton, 2005). Moreover, the present research draws on cross-sectional survey data; therefore, we cannot draw firm causal conclusions based on our results. Participants' recollection of past contact and conflict reflect current narratives of past cohabitation and conflict in the two communities besides their actual past experiences. This is due to the reconstructive nature of collective memories where a cyclical relationship between individual and collective memories exists (Bar-Tal, 2014; Liu & Hilton, 2005). Previous research has indeed found that reports of past quality of contact (not included in this paper) are influenced by current narratives and biased along ethnic lines in Cyprus (Papadakis, 1998). In line with this, we find slightly higher reports of contact among Greek Cypriots and higher reports of conflict among Turkish Cypriots. We could partly mitigate these final two limitations by using collective measures of past experiences. These collective measures are less prone to individual biases in recall and reporting because they are aggregated from responses from a large number of individuals across both communities thus weakening communal biases. At the same time, the issue at stake in collective memories as social representations is not veracity in itself (Bar-Tal, 2014; Figueiredo et al., 2018; Liu & Hilton, 2005). Finally, we focused on intergroup attitudes and trust as outcome measures, but recent research from Palestine that focused on the minority Palestinian perspective found sedative effects of contact with Israelis in the form of reduced support for resistance (Albzour et al., 2019). More research would be necessary to examine such potential sedative effects of contact alongside more positive intergroup orientations.

The main implication of our results is that present-day positive contact is related to higher trust and more positive attitudes even in the context of protracted conflict or after personal or collective experiences of conflict. Furthermore, the findings suggest that people who used to inhabit less segregated environments before the conflict would still have more positive intergroup orientations today, even if they are currently less involved in intergroup

contact. In other words, the effects of past and present intergroup experiences were additive. Therefore, policymakers or other political actors can draw on both types of experiences to advance reconciliation. Given that negotiations to resolve the Cyprus problem are still ongoing and the possibility for renewed cohabitation is salient, the present findings offer some hope that older people who had experienced frequent and sustained bi-communal contact in their village will be an asset for successful reintegration. In short, theorizing about (post)conflict societies and peacebuilding efforts should consider the entirety of present-day and historical experiences both at the individual and at the collective level.

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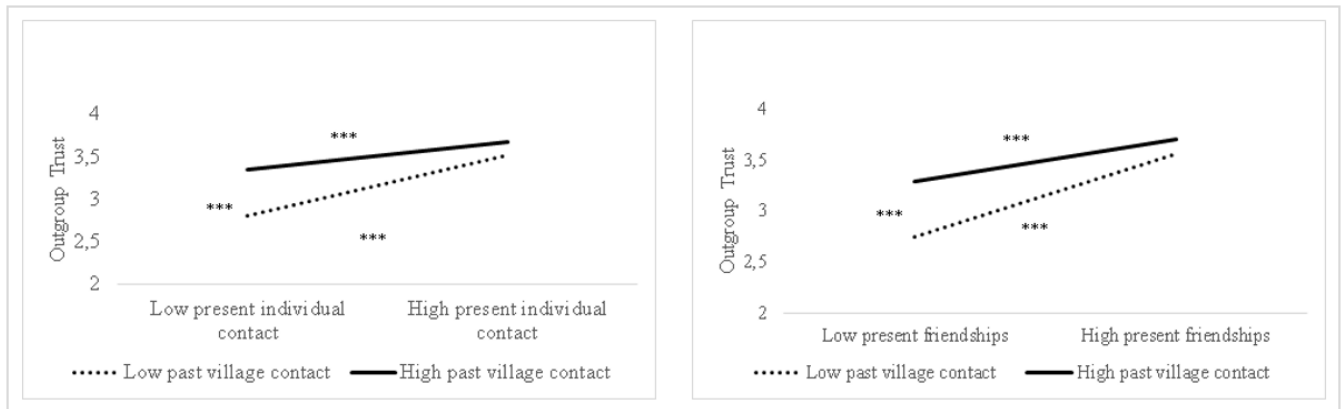


Figure 1. Moderation of present-day contact effects on trust by past village-level contact (left) and of present-day friendship effects on trust by past village-level contact (right)

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Table 1. *Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations.*

	M(SD) GC	M(SD) TC	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
(1) Gender	-	-	1	-.02	-.14**	-.11**	-.04	-.09*	.00	-.09*	-.02
(2) Age	68.9(10.30)	60.68(10.71)	-.11**	1	-.09*	-.08*	-.12**	-.13**	.01	.02	.11**
(3) Friendship	1.63(.33)	1.61(.28)	-.16**	.01	1	.54**	.28**	.32**	.09*	-.02	-.08*
(4) Present Contact	1.70(.29)	1.72(.26)	-.13**	-.14**	.48**	1	.20**	.25**	.16**	-.09*	-.19**
(5) Trust	2.95(.44)	2.56(.44)	-.23**	.04	.30**	.27**	1	.43**	.12**	.10**	-.11**
(6) Attitudes	4.99(1.34)	3.60(1.28)	-.18**	.16**	.26**	.16**	.52**	1	.07	-.06	-.09*
(7) Past Contact	2.92(.42)	2.60(.45)	-.07	.00	.14**	.09**	.18**	.16**	1	-.20*	-.38**
(8) Past TC Proportion	.24(.17)	.37(.18)	.03	-.16**	.04	.08*	-.06	-.08*	-.20**	1	.24**
(9) Perceived Severity of Conflict	2.62(1.02)	4.09(1.40)	.04	-.02	-.07*	.06	-.06	-.10**	-.29**	.23**	1

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed). Gender: 0=male, 1=female

GC denotes Greek Cypriot and TC denotes Turkish Cypriot. Correlations for GC below the diagonal, for TC above the diagonal. Correlations for village level variables are calculated at the village level.

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Table 2. Final cross-level interaction models predicting trust and intergroup attitudes from present-day individual intergroup contact or friendship and past collective contact experiences

	Trust		Attitudes	
INDIVIDUAL LEVEL				
Present-day contact	0.30 (0.05)***		0.64 (0.13)***	
Present-day friendship		0.27 (0.03)***		0.68 (0.08)***
Control variables				
Gender	-0.25 (0.07)***	-0.22 (0.07)***	-0.68 (0.16)***	-0.46 (0.15)**
Age	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Community	-1.19 (0.09)***	-1.14 (0.09)***	-4.18 (0.18)***	-3.77 (0.18)***
VILLAGE LEVEL				
Past contact	0.35 (0.07)***	0.34 (0.08)***	0.56 (0.19)**	0.53 (0.18)**
Present day contact * Past contact	-0.22 (0.09)*		-0.14 (0.26)	
Present day friendship * Past contact		-0.17 (0.07)**		-0.16 (0.17)
Residual variances				
Individual level	1.13 (0.05)***	1.12 (0.05)***	7.27 (0.33)***	6.85 (0.30)***
Village level	0.04 (0.02)	0.01 (0.01)	0.31 (0.20)	0.08 (0.06)
<u>Model fit</u>				
Number of parameters	10	10	10	10
Deviance (-2LL)	4531.49	4494.09	7383.82	6698.61
Akaike (AIC)	4551.49	4514.09	7403.82	6718.62
Bayesian (BIC)	4604.70	4567.29	7457.09	6771.04
<u>Sample-Size Adjusted BIC</u>	4572.93	4535.53	7425.32	6739.28
Change in df	1	1	1.00	1
X2	4.29	7.77	0.294	0.93
Likelihood ratio test	p=0.038	p=0.01	p=0.59	p=0.33

Note: Entries represent unstandardized coefficients (SE). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (2-tailed). Gender: 0=male, 1=female