

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Examining beliefs about reconciliation and social integration in Kosovo: Testing effects of interethnic contact and differences in perspective among ethnic Albanians and Serbs

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Abstract

Across two studies, this research examined belief that reconciliation is necessary, belief that reconciliation is possible and belief in the value of social integration and willingness to integrate socially among Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs. Study 1 assessed these beliefs through a general population survey distributed via social media, whereas Study 2 assessed them before and after Kosovar youth participated in a program encouraging cross-ethnic contact. Results show that these beliefs are modestly correlated and they show significant differences across ethnic groups. As the ethnic minority in Kosovo, Serbs are less likely to believe that reconciliation is possible and less willing to integrate socially than Kosovar Albanians. Moreover, across both studies, contact experience is a significant predictor of reconciliation beliefs regardless of ethnicity. Study 2 revealed that Kosovar youth can become more likely to believe that reconciliation is possible and social integration is valuable through participating in a cross-ethnic contact program.

KEYWORDS

intergroup contact, intergroup relations, Kosovo, reconciliation beliefs

1 | INTRODUCTION

Achieving long-lasting peace following violent intergroup conflict involves socio-psychological processes beyond agreements on dividing resources between adversaries. Relationships between conflicting groups must be transformed by building trust and cooperation and by attending to the psychological responses of group members on each side (Deutsch, 1973). Social psychological perspectives on *reconciliation* describe it as the process of achieving a stable end to the conflict by transforming 'broken' intergroup relations. Aspects of this process involve shifting beliefs, narratives and emotions related to the conflict (Bar-Tal & Cehajic-Clancy, 2013; Halperin et al., 2011; Nadler et al., 2008). In divided societies with legacies of violent conflict, greater social integration of conflicting groups is often regarded as another crucial aspect of the reconciliation process that can help to transform and improve relations between former adversaries (see Al Ramiah &

Hewstone, 2013; Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2023; Nadler & Shnabel, 2008; Wagner & Hewstone, 2012).

Although many scholars have recognized the importance of reconciliation as a social psychological process (see, e.g., Nadler et al., 2008), conceptualization and measurement of reconciliation have been varied and somewhat ambiguous in the research literature. Reconciliation has typically been measured in terms of people's willingness to reconcile (e.g., Biro et al., 2004) or to engage in actions that promote reconciliation (e.g., Pham et al., 2004; Tropp et al., 2017), yet people's willingness to reconcile is likely to be shaped profoundly by their beliefs about reconciliation and what the reconciliation process might take given the many emotional and relational obstacles involved (Čehajić-Clancy & Bilewicz, 2017). Only rarely have researchers assessed people's actual beliefs about reconciliation, such as whether it is deemed to be necessary (see Halloran, 2007; Uluğ et al., 2021), or whether it is perceived to be possible (Cehajic-Clancy & Bilewicz, 2017). Relatedly, the topic

of reconciliation involves questions about whether people see greater integration of conflicting groups as a desired and valued goal worthy of being pursued (Cohen-Chen et al., 2017; Halperin & Schwartz, 2010; Leach & Williams, 1999) and the extent to which they are personally willing to engage in social relations with groups on the other side of the conflict (Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2023). Extending prior work in this area, the current research assesses people's beliefs about the necessity and possibility of reconciliation along with their beliefs about the value of and their willingness to engage in social integration.

We believe that distinguishing between beliefs in the necessity and possibility of reconciliation and examining these alongside beliefs about and willingness for social integration, is important for a number of reasons. In part, prior work offers little understanding of how beliefs about the necessity and possibility of reconciliation may relate to each other and we contend that these two reconciliation beliefs are not inherently the same. Especially when there has been violent or protracted conflict between groups, we would expect group members to be more likely to believe that reconciliation is necessary than to believe it is possible. If group members' beliefs that reconciliation is necessary are not coupled with their beliefs that reconciliation is possible, any positive inclinations they might have toward reconciliation may not translate into action. Indeed, believing in the possibility of change—whether that involves hope for a more peaceful future, or envisioning shifts in the nature of the conflict—can motivate people to have more conciliatory attitudes and to adopt greater goal-oriented behaviour towards reconciliation and positive social change (Bar-Tal, 2003; Cohen-Chen, 2022; Cohen-Chen et al., 2014; Greenaway et al., 2016). Moreover, believing that reconciliation is both possible and necessary may also correspond with a greater 'readiness' for reconciliation (see Biro et al., 2004; Stammel et al., 2012) and greater openness to new ways of relating to other groups and to envisioning a shared future (see Haider, 2011; Salomon, 2004).

1.1 | Intergroup contact and beliefs about reconciliation

Understanding how intergroup contact experiences may shape beliefs about reconciliation is thus of key importance, given the central role that interactions between former adversaries often play in transforming relations between groups and fostering reconciliation within divided societies. Many key aspects of the reconciliation process—such as recognizing different truths and offering apologies and forgiveness—emerge through dialogue between people from different groups in conflict and post-conflict settings (Dehron et al., 2021; Nikolić-Ristanović, 2015). Decades of research show that contact between groups can improve social relations and promote greater social integration in contexts of conflict (Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013; Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2023; Tropp, 2015; Wagner & Hewstone, 2012). Studies conducted across a range of post-violent-conflict contexts indicate that greater contact between conflicting groups tends to be associated with greater readiness for reconciliation (Biro et al., 2004), greater willingness to trust the outgroup (Tam et al., 2009), greater will-

ingness to forgive outgroup members (Čehajić et al., 2008) and greater active involvement in reconciliation efforts (Tropp et al., 2017). Correspondingly, peacebuilding programs around the world often advocate for greater social mixing and social integration between groups as steps along the path to reconciliation (International Organization for Migration, 2021; Martin et al., 2022). In the present research, we examine associations between intergroup contact and beliefs about reconciliation, with the expectation that greater reports of positive contact experiences will correspond with greater beliefs that reconciliation is possible and necessary. We also expect that a greater positive contact experience will correspond with stronger beliefs in the value of social integration and in greater willingness to socially integrate with the outgroup.

1.2 | Beliefs about reconciliation in the context of Kosovo

We examine these issues in the context of Kosovo, where conflict and power dynamics between ethnic Albanians and ethnic Serbs are long-standing and complicated. Territorial disputes between ethnic Albanians and ethnic Serbs over Kosovo date back to the 14th century (Daskalovski, 2004) and the two ethnic groups were embroiled in violent conflict throughout the Balkan wars and the two World Wars in the 20th century (Steiner, 2005). The 1998–1999 war between the Serbian military and the Albanian-led Kosovo Liberation Army resulted in the ethnic cleansing of Albanians (Judah, 2008). Nearly 10,000 Kosovar Albanians were killed by Serbian forces and approximately 850,000 Kosovar Albanians were forcibly displaced (Kifner, 1999; Suhrke et al., 2000). Although this violent episode ended with NATO's 78-day air campaign in Yugoslavia, against Milosevic's regime (https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_48818.htm) (NATO, 2022), tensions between Serbs and Albanians persisted. Ethnic Serbs in Kosovo became targets of arson, abduction, intimidation and murder and ultimately 200,000 Serbs were displaced from the region (Human Rights Watch, 2004; Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, 2012).

Kosovo unilaterally declared independence from Serbia in 2008 yet disputes about statehood still continue to this day. Most of the Kosovar population identifies as ethnic Albanian, such that ethnic Serbs currently exist as a minority population within Kosovo's borders. Rather than being well-integrated, ethnic Albanians and ethnic Serbs in Kosovo today live in largely segregated areas (Maloku et al., 2016, 2019). Beyond residential segregation, segregated schooling exacerbates separation between the groups due to language barriers and opposing conflict narratives, which hinders prospects for reconciliation (Gashi, 2016). Ethnic relations between the groups are still fragile and susceptible to violence, especially in Northern Kosovo where Kosovar Serbs predominantly reside (see Oghanna, 2022); Serbs in Northern Kosovo largely feel they are part of Serbia (see Vulović, 2022) and their periodic clashes with Kosovo police at protests contribute to increased tensions between Kosovo and Serbia (Bytyci, 2022). Ethnic Albanians and ethnic Serbs in Kosovo still have strong ties with the independent nations of Albania and Serbia, respectively; these outside influences

make it even more challenging for ethnic groups within Kosovo to unite under a shared national identity or have 'shared ownership of the territory', which are often regarded as important for intergroup reconciliation (Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2023; Storz et al., 2021).

Until 2008, the struggle for statehood largely interfered with efforts to promote interethnic reconciliation (Ferati-Sachsenmaier, 2019). After independence, several organizations were established to address violations of international humanitarian law (Andrzejczak-Świątek, 2021); new initiatives were also put forward to contribute to 'social transformation' but have not yet been realized (Haxhijaj, 2022). Due to ongoing patterns of residential and educational segregation, there are relatively few opportunities for people from different ethnic groups to engage with each other. In more recent years, however, steps have been taken to promote reconciliation in Kosovo on the community level through local and international organizations; these organizations support programs that provide contact opportunities and encourage social mixing between youth from different ethnic groups in Kosovo, with the aim of fostering greater social integration between Kosovar Albanians (K-Albanians) and Kosovar Serbs (K-Serbs) (International Organization for Migration Kosovo, 2020; United Nations Development Program, 2019).

Due to their current and historically complicated relationship, we expect that ethnic Albanians and ethnic Serbs in Kosovo will have different perspectives on interethnic relations and beliefs about reconciliation. According to the latest census,¹ 92.9% of the population is Albanian and 1.5% is Serbian while 5.6% are other minorities (United Nations Development Program, 2019). Given their minority status in Kosovo, ethnic Serbs may be especially likely to fear mistreatment, discrimination and becoming targets for revenge relative to ethnic Albanians (see, e.g., Baldwin, 2006; Luta & Draebel, 2013; UNHCR, 2003). On average, ethnic Serbs in Kosovo have been shown to express greater social distance and report more concern about their safety than ethnic Albanians; ethnic Serbs also report being more concerned about an armed conflict breaking out and about ultranationalist groups than their Albanian peers (UNDP, 2021). Moreover, envisioning a shared Kosovar national identity is likely to be more threatening for ethnic Serbs, relative to ethnic Albanians, in Kosovo (Maloku et al., 2016, 2019). As their lived experiences are likely to differ, we must consider whether there are differences in how much ethnic Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo believe that reconciliation is necessary and possible and what they believe and feel about the prospects of social integration.

Relatedly, Kosovar Albanians' and Serbs' perspectives on reconciliation are likely to correspond with their prior interethnic contact experiences in Kosovo. Research in other post-violent conflict settings shows that more positive prior contact experiences tend to be associated with more support for and active involvement in reconciliation efforts (Biro et al., 2004; Čehajić et al., 2008; Tropp et al., 2017). By contrast, negative contact experiences involving maltreatment and

discrimination can foster higher levels of psychological distance and distrust between groups (Tropp, 2007), which understandably may hinder progress towards reconciliation (Hatch, 2008). As ethnic Serbs in Kosovo tend to report greater vulnerability to maltreatment relative to ethnic Albanians (Baldwin, 2006; Luta & Draebel, 2013), we would expect ethnic Serbs to report greater experiences of negative interethnic contact and discrimination than ethnic Albanians. Furthermore, we would expect negative contact experiences like discrimination to correspond with lower beliefs that reconciliation is possible, whereas positive contact experiences should be associated with greater beliefs that reconciliation is possible.

1.3 | Present research

Past literature on reconciliation has focused mostly on people's willingness or readiness to reconcile, with little attention given to whether they believe reconciliation is necessary or possible. Prior research has also sparsely considered how people's beliefs about reconciliation correspond with their beliefs about social integration and their own willingness to integrate with other groups with whom they have been in conflict. The present research simultaneously considers all these aspects of the reconciliation process in the fragile post-war context of Kosovo. As Serbs and Albanians were the main parties to the armed conflict in Kosovo, we focus on their beliefs about reconciliation, and their beliefs and feelings about social integration, across two studies.

A key aim of this research is to extend the literature by jointly investigating varied beliefs about reconciliation and social integration among majority ethnic Albanians and minority ethnic Serbs in Kosovo. Overall, we predict that there will be a positive and significant, yet modest, association between beliefs that reconciliation is necessary and possible, suggesting that these beliefs are correlated but distinct; we also predict that there will be positive and significant associations between these beliefs about reconciliation and believing in the value of social integration and willingness to socially integrate, given that steps to encourage social integration have been an integral part of efforts to promote reconciliation in Kosovo. Kosovar society has long been shrouded in conflict, so we expect that our respondents would be less likely to believe that reconciliation is possible than to believe it is necessary. Considering the status differences between ethnic Albanians and Serbs in the context of Kosovo, we also expect that people from these ethnic groups would differ in their beliefs about reconciliation and social integration.

A second aim of this research is to investigate how beliefs about reconciliation and social integration are related to prior positive and negative interethnic contact experiences among Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs. Overall, we predict that those who have more positive interethnic contact experiences will be more likely to believe that reconciliation is necessary and possible, and to believe in the value of social integration and to be more willing to socially integrate. At the same time, due to status differences between Kosovar Albanians and Serbs, we predict that Kosovar Serbs will report more negative interethnic contact experiences relative to Kosovar Albanians, which

¹ This census, conducted by the Kosovo Statistics Agency, excluded the Serb-dominated region of Northern Kosovo. Due to this exclusion, there is disagreement over the accuracy of the data within Serbian communities. According to estimates based on 2010 and 2013 OSCE data, Serbs represent 7.8% of the total population of Kosovo.

could contribute to shaping their respective reconciliation beliefs. We suspect that, especially among Kosovar Serbs, those who experience more negative interethnic contact would be less likely to believe in the possibility of reconciliation.

Study 1 examined Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs' beliefs about reconciliation and their beliefs and feelings about social integration, through a general population survey distributed via social media that was representative of ethnic proportions in Kosovo. Instead, Study 2 investigated beliefs about reconciliation and social integration as part of an evaluation of an interethnic contact program that only involved youth. Study 2 aims to test for replication of Study 1 results (using pre-program survey responses) within a more ethnically balanced sample and to test whether beliefs about reconciliation and social integration can be shifted through participation in a contact-based intervention.

2 | STUDY 1

In Study 1, we investigated beliefs about reconciliation and beliefs and feelings about social integration among Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs through a general population survey distributed via Facebook. To identify patterns in respondents' beliefs that reconciliation is necessary and possible and in their beliefs about the value of social integration and their own willingness for social integration, we first calculated mean scores and examined differences across ethnic groups. Then, we examined correlations among these measures among ethnic Albanians and Serbs. Next, we investigated the extent that interethnic contact experiences and perceived discrimination among ethnic Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo might predict reconciliation beliefs and beliefs and feelings about social integration.

2.1 | Participants and procedure

As part of a larger project being conducted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), an online survey was distributed via Facebook by the IOM country office in Kosovo. Data were collected between December 2021 and March 2022. Relevant to the present study, a total of 574 Kosovar Albanian respondents (298 men, 266 women, 10 did not report gender; 15–75 years, $M_{\text{age}} = 40.93$) and 128 Kosovar Serb respondents (65 men, 59 women, four did not report gender; 15–73 years, $M_{\text{age}} = 40.88$) completed the online survey.² Of these individuals, four were excluded from further analysis due to not responding to most of the survey questions. The final sample for Study 1 therefore consisted of 698 respondents, 571 of whom identified as K-Albanian and 127 as K-Serb. Although representations of these ethnic groups are not balanced in the present sample, it should be noted that K-Serbs are somewhat overrepresented in this sample considering the

proportions of K-Albanians and K-Serbs within the broader Kosovar population (United Nations Development Program, 2019).

2.1.1 | Measures of dependent variables

Belief that reconciliation is necessary. One item assessed beliefs about whether reconciliation in Kosovo is necessary (*'In your opinion, is reconciliation necessary in Kosovo?'*). Response options for these items were No (0) and Yes (1).

Belief that reconciliation is possible. One item assessed beliefs about whether reconciliation in Kosovo is possible (*'Do you think reconciliation is possible in Kosovo?'*). Response options for these items were No (0) and Yes (1).

Belief in the value of social integration. One item asked respondents about their beliefs regarding the value of social integration adapted from Breugelmans and Van De Vijver (2004) *'The mix of people from different ethnic groups in Kosovo makes the society better'*. Response options were Disagree (1), Neutral (2) and Agree (3) for this item (K-Albanians: $M = 2.72$, $SD = 0.56$; K-Serbs: $M = 2.74$, $SD = 0.54$).

Willingness for social integration. Four items assessed respondents' willingness for social integration adapted from Bogardus (1933). Specific items included *'I am happy to share public spaces (e.g., parks, hospitals, market places) with other ethnic groups in Kosovo'*, *'I would be happy to share my apartment building with other ethnic groups in Kosovo'*, *'I would be happy to work/study side by side with other ethnic groups in Kosovo'* and *'I would like to have (more) friends from other ethnic groups in Kosovo'*. Response options for these items were Disagree (1), Neutral (2) and Agree (3). Responses were averaged to create a composite measure (K-Albanians; $\alpha = .71$, $M = 2.56$, $SD = 0.45$; K-Serbs; $\alpha = .82$, $M = 2.46$, $SD = 0.56$).

2.1.2 | Measures of independent variables

Prior interethnic contact. One item asked respondents about the quality of their prior interethnic contact in Kosovo, adapted from Barlow et al. (2012) (*'Overall, how would you describe your experiences interacting with other ethnic groups in Kosovo?'*). Response options were Negative (1), Neutral (2) and Positive (3) for this item (K-Albanians: $M = 2.77$, $SD = 0.45$; K-Serbs; $M = 2.61$, $SD = 0.52$).

Perceived discrimination. One item adapted from Taylor et al. (1990) asked respondents about how much they perceive discrimination against their ethnic group in Kosovo (*'I feel that members of my ethnic community in Kosovo are discriminated against'*). Response options were Disagree (1), Neutral (2) and Agree (3) for this item (K-Albanians: $M = 1.48$, $SD = 0.74$; K-Serbs; $M = 2.61$, $SD = 0.64$).

2.2 | Data analysis approach

All statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS statistical software. We conducted some preliminary analyses to interpret general

² One hundred other respondents also identified as members of other ethnic communities in Kosovo, and six did not specify their ethnic background. Given that the present research focuses on prospects for reconciliation between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo, these respondents were excluded from further analysis.

TABLE 1 Correlations among dependent measures for K-Albanians and K-Serbs (Study 1).

K-Albanians K-Serbs	1	2	3	4
1. Belief that reconciliation is necessary	–	0.16	0.22*	0.15
2. Belief that reconciliation is possible	0.24***	–	0.31***	0.39***
3. Belief in value of social integration	0.18***	0.18***	–	0.56***
4. Willingness for social integration	0.16***	0.24***	0.53***	–

Note: Below the diagonal are correlations of scores for K-Albanians, and above the diagonal are correlations of scores for K-Serbs.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$.

patterns of responses to the dependent measures across ethnic groups. First, we conducted a cross-tabulation analysis with respondent ethnic group as a grouping variable to test whether beliefs that reconciliation is necessary and possible differ significantly among K-Albanians and K-Serbs. Next, we conducted between-subject *t*-tests comparing mean responses of K-Albanians and K-Serbs on measures assessing beliefs in the value of social integration and willingness for social integration.

As a next step in our analysis, we examined correlations between scores on items assessing reconciliation beliefs and those assessing beliefs and feelings about social integration. These analyses were conducted separately for K-Albanians and K-Serbs and we explored whether patterns of associations between these items meaningfully varied among K-Albanians and K-Serbs. Bivariate correlations by ethnic group are provided in Table 1.

We then conducted regression analyses to test how respondents' prior interethnic experiences in Kosovo might predict their reconciliation beliefs and beliefs and feelings about social integration. We performed logistic regression when examining prior interethnic experiences (contact experience and perceived discrimination) as predictors for reconciliation beliefs, because the response options for the reconciliation belief measures were binary. We performed ordinary least squares (OLS) linear regression when examining prior interethnic experiences as predictors for beliefs about and willingness for social integration because there were at least three response options for each of these dependent measures.

In the first step of each regression model, we entered respondent ethnic group, contact experience and perceived discrimination as potential predictors of the dependent variable in question. In the second step of each regression model, we added two two-way interaction terms (ethnic group \times contact experience and ethnic group \times perceived discrimination) as potential predictors, to see whether the contributions of contact experience and perceived discrimination to predicting beliefs about reconciliation and social integration depended on respondents' ethnic group membership.

3 | RESULTS

Overall, 80.92% of participants believed that reconciliation is necessary and 82.60% of participants believed that reconciliation is possible, indicating that the vast majority of survey respondents believed that

reconciliation is both necessary and possible. When looking at reconciliation beliefs by ethnic group, the results showed that K-Serb respondents were significantly more likely to report that reconciliation is necessary (91%) relative to K-Albanian respondents (79%), $\chi^2(1) = 10.43, p = .001$. At the same time, K-Serbs were significantly less likely to believe that reconciliation is possible (66%) relative to K-Albanians (86%), $\chi^2(1) = 29.96, p < .001$.

With respect to the social integration measures, we found overall that respondents agree that social integration of different ethnic groups in Kosovo is valuable ($M = 2.72, SD = 0.55$) and K-Albanians ($M = 2.72, SD = 0.56$) and K-Serbs ($M = 2.74, SD = 0.54$) did not differ significantly in their responses, $t = -0.42, p = .67$. At the same time, K-Serbs reported being significantly less willing to socially integrate ($M = 2.46, SD = 0.56$) than K-Albanians ($M = 2.56, SD = 0.45$), $t = 2.11, p = .04$.

In addition to these four variables, we examined whether K-Albanians and K-Serbs differed in their interethnic experiences, which could lead to observed differences in reconciliation beliefs. Mean comparisons revealed that K-Serbs reported significantly less positive contact experiences with other ethnic groups in Kosovo ($M = 2.61, SD = 0.52$) than did K-Albanians ($M = 2.77, SD = 0.45$), $t = 3.34, p < .001$. K-Serbs also perceived significantly more discrimination against their ethnic group ($M = 2.61, SD = 0.64$) than did K-Albanians ($M = 1.48, SD = 0.74$), $t = -15.93, p < .001$.

3.1 | Correlations among dependent measures

Correlations among the four dependent measures were conducted separately for K-Albanians and K-Serbs (see Table 1). Beliefs that reconciliation is necessary and possible were significantly yet modestly associated among K-Albanians but these reconciliation beliefs were not significantly associated among K-Serbs. Both reconciliation beliefs correlated significantly with beliefs in the value of social integration among both ethnic groups. Both reconciliation beliefs also correlated significantly with greater willingness for social integration among K-Albanians whereas only the belief that reconciliation is possible correlated significantly with willingness for social integration among K-Serbs. Across both ethnic groups, belief in the value of social integration and willingness for social integration were significantly and strongly correlated.

TABLE 2 Summary of logistic regression analysis predicting belief that reconciliation is necessary (Study 1).

Predictor variables	Reconciliation is necessary									
	Step 1					Step 2				
	B	SE	OR	95% CI for OR		B	SE	OR	95% CI for OR	
Lower				Upper	Lower				Upper	
Respondent ethnic group	1.11	0.40	3.03**	1.37	6.67	0.83	1.53	2.30	0.11	46.50
Contact experience	0.79	0.24	2.20**	1.37	3.53	0.84	0.26	2.32**	1.39	3.89
Perceived discrimination	0.02	0.16	1.02	0.74	1.41	-0.03	0.17	0.98	0.70	1.36
Contact experience × ethnic group						-0.26	0.69	0.77	0.20	2.99
Discrimination × ethnic group						0.45	0.52	1.56	0.56	4.37
Nagelkerke R ²			0.06					0.06		

Note: B = raw regression coefficient; SE = standard error; OR = odds ratio; 95% CI = confidence intervals for the odds ratio.

K-Albanians = 0, K-Serbs = 1; if the confidence interval does not contain a 1 in it, the p-value is less than .050

* $p < .05$;

** $p < .01$;

*** $p < .001$.

3.2 | Regression analyses

Next, we performed regression analyses to test respondent ethnic group and prior interethnic experiences as predictors for beliefs about reconciliation and social integration. The first logistic regression model with respondent ethnic group, contact experience and perceived discrimination entered as predictors accounted for a significant portion of variance in beliefs that reconciliation is necessary (Nagelkerke $R^2 = 6\%$, $\chi^2(3) = 19.56$, $p < .001$). Respondent ethnic group and contact experience emerged as significant predictors of beliefs in the necessity of reconciliation (OR = 3.03, 95% CI [1.37, 6.67]; OR = 2.20, 95% CI [1.37, 3.53]) whereas perceived discrimination did not emerge as a significant predictor (OR = 1.02, 95% CI [0.74, 1.41]). At the second step of analysis, neither interaction term emerged as a significant predictor, whereas contact experience remained significant as a predictor of beliefs that reconciliation is necessary (see Table 2).

The second logistic regression model with respondent ethnic group, contact experience and perceived discrimination entered as predictors accounted for a significant amount of variance in beliefs that reconciliation is possible (Nagelkerke $R^2 = 18\%$, $\chi^2(3) = 61.03$, $p < .001$). Respondent ethnic group and contact experience once again emerged as significant predictors (OR = 0.42, 95% CI [0.23, 0.77]; OR = 3.47, 95% CI [2.16, 5.60]), while perceived discrimination did not emerge as a significant predictor (OR = 0.75, 95% CI [0.54, 1.05]). At the second step of analysis, neither interaction term emerged as a significant predictor, while contact experience remained significant as a predictor of beliefs that reconciliation is possible (see Table 3).

Using linear regression, respondent ethnic group, contact experience and perceived discrimination were entered at the first step of analysis as predictors of belief in the value of social integration. This model explained 11% of the variance, $R^2 = 0.11$, $F(3, 534) = 22.61$, $p < .001$, with only contact experience emerging as a significant predictor of belief in the value of social integration ($\beta = .34$, $p < .001$).

At the second step of analysis, neither interaction term emerged as a significant predictor, while contact experience remained significant as a predictor of belief in the value of social integration (see Table 4).

In the next linear regression model, respondent ethnic group, contact experience and perceived discrimination were entered as predictors of willingness for social integration. This model explained 27% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.27$, $F(3, 537) = 67.27$, $p < .001$) and only contact experience emerged as a significant predictor of willingness to integrate socially ($\beta = .50$, $p < .001$). At the second step of analysis, neither interaction term emerged as a significant predictor, while contact experience remained significant as a predictor of willingness for social integration (see Table 5).

4 | DISCUSSION

Using a general population survey, Study 1 showed that, overall, most survey respondents believed that reconciliation is both necessary and possible. However, given that the survey was intended to be representative of the Kosovar population and the great majority of respondents were K-Albanian, reports of overall findings could inadvertently mask significant differences in responses across ethnic groups. In particular, K-Serb respondents were more likely to believe that reconciliation is necessary while they were less likely to believe that reconciliation is possible. K-Serb respondents also showed less willingness to integrate socially than K-Albanian respondents. Future studies of reconciliation and social integration in Kosovo should continue to distinguish between responses from K-Albanians and K-Serbs, with more ethnically balanced samples, to allow for further investigation of similarities and differences in patterns of responses across these ethnic groups.

For the most part, correlations among measures of reconciliation and social integration also revealed significant associations between

them, yet these correlations varied considerably in magnitude from being modest to fairly robust. These patterns suggest that different aspects of beliefs about the process of reconciliation—such as believing it is necessary and believing it is possible—are related, but distinct. We also found some ethnic group differences in the correlations between beliefs that reconciliation is necessary and possible: scores on these two measures were modestly and positively associated across both groups, yet the correlation between the two measures was significant for K-Albanians but not significant for K-Serbs. We suspect this difference in statistical significance may be due, at least in part, to the smaller size of the K-Serb sample, relative to the size of the K-Albanian sample available for analysis; we also note that 91% of the K-Serb sample reported that reconciliation is necessary, in comparison with 79% of K-Albanian respondents, thereby offering little variability with which to achieve statistical significance in relation to any observed associations.

Of particular importance, regression analyses consistently showed that contact experience significantly and uniquely predicted beliefs about reconciliation, as well as beliefs and feelings about social integration. The predictive effects of contact experience persisted even when taking into account perceptions of ethnic discrimination and they were not moderated by respondents' ethnic group membership. Although these results provide some initial compelling evidence to suggest a possible association between interethnic contact experience and beliefs about reconciliation and social integration, it remains difficult to infer causation based on the cross-sectional survey data analyzed in Study 1. To more confidently test for the impact of interethnic contact, these beliefs should be assessed before and after a contact intervention to determine if or how direct contact experience may shift K-Serbs' and K-Albanians' beliefs about reconciliation and social integration over time.

5 | STUDY 2

Whereas Study 1 investigated reconciliation beliefs in a general population survey in Kosovo, Study 2 examined reconciliation beliefs through an evaluation study of a contact-based program in Kosovo focused on youth. In part, Study 2 aimed to replicate general trends from Study 1 with a more ethnically balanced sample that included comparable numbers of K-Albanian and K-Serb respondents. Having comparable numbers of responses from K-Albanian and K-Serb respondents prior to program implementation (i.e., pre-program responses) provided an opportunity to test with more confidence whether the ethnic differences in beliefs about reconciliation and social integration observed in Study 1 would replicate.

Importantly, Study 2 also extended the research by testing how K-Albanians' and K-Serbs' reconciliation beliefs may change through participation in a contact-based program. Although there have been limited community-level efforts to promote reconciliation in Kosovo in recent years, programs sponsored by local non-governmental organizations like Community Building Mitrovica (<http://www.cbmitrovica.org/>), and by international organizations such as USAID (<https://www.usaid.gov/kosovo/news-information/factsheets/reconciliation-and-conflict-transformation>), have sought to bring Kosovar youth from different ethnic groups together for social

mixing activities to identify common interests, change conflict narratives and build more positive interethnic relations. To test whether social mixing programs like these may help to shift beliefs about reconciliation and social integration, we assessed K-Albanian and K-Serb youth's beliefs about reconciliation and social integration both before and after the contact-based program. The research design also allows us to compare responses of K-Albanian and K-Serb youth from the same geographic regions who participated in the contact-based program (intervention group) with those of K-Albanian and K-Serb youth who did not participate in the contact-based program (control group).

5.1 | Participants and procedure

The International Organization for Migration Country Office in Kosovo (IOM-Kosovo) partnered with Alpine Club Pristina to organize outdoor camps for youth. In the 3-day camps, participating youth were required to attend four modules of outdoor activities—mountaineering, Alpinism, orienteering and theoretical learning. The program followed the basic principles of the 'leave no trace' concept, through which youth learned about their impact on the environment. All activities included a mix of K-Albanian and K-Serb youth. Program participants engaged in a variety of outdoor activities such as cycling, skiing and climbing, as well as group activities that explicitly required interdependence such as construction of mountain shelters. Camping together also aimed to enhance feelings of mutual responsibility and interdependence. As evidenced by its design, this program sought to enhance social mixing and positive contact among Kosovar youth from different ethnic backgrounds using collaborative and engaging activities, while developing their skills and feelings of being close to nature.

A total of 104 youth (aged 11–19 years) attended 3-day winter camps in five camp sessions on different weekends from February to March 2022. Pre-program survey responses were collected at the beginning of the camps for campers in each session and post-program survey responses were collected between May and July 2022 due to some issues with survey completion. All survey responses were gathered online with the assistance of staff from Alpine Club Pristina. It should be noted that some youth did not have or provide email addresses and some experienced problems gaining reliable Internet access; some youth also completed only one of the surveys administered (either before or after the program) and other youth did not accurately enter or recall their personal code to allow for matching of their pre- and post-program survey responses. After extensive efforts, we were confidently able to match pre-program and post-program survey responses from a total of 50 youth participants, including 25 K-Albanian youth (12 male and 13 female; 11–19 years, $M_{\text{age}} = 15.02$) and 25 K-Serb youth (10 male and 15 female; 12–19 years, $M_{\text{age}} = 16.29$).

In addition, with further assistance from International Organization for Migration and Alpine Club Pristina staff, initial and final surveys were administered online to a control group of Kosovar youth around the same times as the surveys were administered to Kosovar youth participating in the contact-based program; these youth were given small

gifts to show appreciation for their time completing the surveys. Youth comprising the control group were recruited to be similar to program participants in terms of age, ethnic group and municipality of residence (Mitrovice Jugor, Mitrovice Verior, Leposavic, Zubin Potoku and Zvečan, all located in Northern Kosovo), so that youth participating in the program (intervention group) and youth in the control group would have similar demographic backgrounds and characteristics. Altogether, we were able to obtain matched survey responses from a total of 88 control youth, including 47 K-Albanian youth (13 male and 34 female; 15–19 years, $M_{\text{age}} = 16.94$) and 41 K-Serb youth (17 male and 24 female; 13–19 years, $M_{\text{age}} = 16.00$).

5.2 | Measures

Youth in the intervention and control groups all completed the same measures used in Study 1. Like in Study 1, we focussed on respondents' beliefs about reconciliation—that it is necessary and possible (single items)—as well their belief in the value of social integration (single item) and their willingness to engage in social integration (4 items, $\alpha = .75$). As in Study 1, we also considered how reported experiences of interethnic contact (single item) and perceived discrimination against one's ethnic group (single item) might contribute to predicting beliefs about reconciliation and social integration.

5.3 | Data analysis approach

Following a similar analytic approach to that used in Study 1, we analyzed pre-program survey responses in a number of ways to test whether the patterns of results observed in Study 1 would be replicated. As an initial step, using pre-program survey responses, we compared proportions of K-Albanian and K-Serb youth in the intervention and control groups who believed that reconciliation is necessary and that it is possible. We also compared mean scores on the social integration measures among K-Albanian and K-Serb youth in the intervention and control groups. Using pre-program survey responses, we also looked at patterns of correlations among the reconciliation and social integration measures, conducting separate analyses for K-Albanian and K-Serb youth. Then, we examined youth's ethnic group membership and prior interethnic experiences in Kosovo (contact experience and discrimination) jointly as predictors for beliefs about reconciliation and social integration by conducting logistic and multiple regression analyses in the same way as in Study 1.

Along with testing for replication of findings from Study 1 using pre-program survey responses, Study 2 tested whether participating in a contact-based program could help to shift youth's beliefs about reconciliation and social integration over time. Here, we conducted mixed 2 (group: intervention vs control) \times 2 (respondent ethnic group: K-Albanian vs K-Serb) \times 2 (time: pre vs post) General Linear Model (GLM) Two separate models tested for the effects of group (intervention vs control), respondent ethnic group (K-Albanian vs K-Serb) and time (pre vs post) on beliefs that reconciliation is necessary (Model 1) and possible (Model 2). Two additional models tested for the same

effects of group, respondent ethnic group and time on beliefs in the value of social integration (Model 3) and on their willingness for social integration (Model 4).

6 | RESULTS

6.1 | Testing for replication: Initial analysis of pre-program surveys

Initial χ^2 analyses showed that, overall, youth in the intervention and control groups did not significantly differ in their pre-program beliefs that reconciliation is necessary, $\chi^2(1) = 1.49$, $p = .22$, or that it is possible, $\chi^2(1) = 0.07$, $p = .79$. Across all pre-program surveys, 88.4% of the youth reported that reconciliation is necessary and 67.4% reported that reconciliation is possible. Unlike in Study 1, there was not a significant difference in the proportions of K-Albanian and K-Serb youth who reported that reconciliation is necessary, $\chi^2(1) = 3.18$, $p = .08$. However, consistent with Study 1, K-Serb youth were significantly less likely to believe that reconciliation is possible (50%) relative to K-Albanian youth (83%), $\chi^2(1) = 17.41$, $p < .001$.

Looking at social integration measures, we found, overall, that youth respondents agreed that social integration of different ethnic groups is valuable for Kosovo ($M = 2.51$, $SD = 0.65$) and K-Albanian youth ($M = 2.57$, $SD = 0.62$) and K-Serb youth ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 0.68$) did not differ significantly in their responses, $t = 1.03$, $p = .30$. At the same time, we observed a significant difference between youth in the intervention and control groups with respect to their beliefs about the value of social integration: somewhat surprisingly, youth in the intervention group ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 0.68$) reported lower valuing of social integration relative to youth in the control group ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 0.61$), $t = 2.99$, $p = .003$. Youth in the intervention and control groups did not differ significantly in their willingness to integrate socially, $t = 0.43$, $p = .67$; however, paralleling findings from Study 1, K-Serb youth reported being significantly less willing to integrate socially ($M = 2.22$, $SD = 0.56$) than K-Albanians ($M = 2.61$, $SD = 0.47$, $t = 4.40$, $p < .001$).

Similar to Study 1, we also examined whether K-Albanians and K-Serbs differ in their interethnic experiences as a possible explanation for the observed differences in reconciliation and social integration measures. Replicating trends in Study 1, mean comparisons revealed that K-Serbs reported significantly less positive contact experiences with other ethnic groups in Kosovo ($M = 2.29$, $SD = 0.65$) than did K-Albanians ($M = 2.72$, $SD = 0.45$), $t = 4.59$, $p < .001$. K-Serbs also perceived significantly more discrimination against their ethnic group ($M = 2.59$, $SD = 0.63$) than did K-Albanians ($M = 1.86$, $SD = 0.88$), $t = -5.56$, $p < .001$.

6.2 | Testing for replication: Correlations among dependent measures

Pre-program survey responses from youth in the intervention and control groups did not significantly differ on three of the four dependent

TABLE 3 Summary of logistic regression analysis predicting belief that reconciliation is possible (Study 1).

Predictor variables	Reconciliation is possible									
	Step 1					Step 2				
	B	SE	OR	95% CI for OR		B	SE	OR	95% CI for OR	
Lower				Upper	Lower				Upper	
Respondent ethnic group	−0.87	0.31	0.42*	0.23	0.77	−0.39	1.13	0.68	0.08	6.20
Contact experience	1.25	0.24	3.47***	2.16	5.60	1.34	0.30	3.80***	2.10	6.89
Perceived discrimination	−0.29	0.17	0.75	0.54	1.05	−0.28	0.20	0.76	0.52	1.11
Contact experience × ethnic group						−0.26	0.51	0.77	0.29	2.09
Discrimination × ethnic group						−0.06	0.41	0.94	0.42	2.09
Nagelkerke R ²				0.18					0.18	

Note: B = raw regression coefficient; SE = standard error; OR = odds ratio; 95% CI = confidence intervals for the odds ratio.

K-Albanians = 0, K-Serbs = 1; if the confidence interval does not contain a 1 in it, the p-value is less than .050

* $p < .05$;

** $p < .01$;

*** $p < .001$.

TABLE 4 Summary of linear regression analysis predicting belief in value of social integration (Study 1).

Predictor variables	Belief in value of social integration									
	Step 1					Step 2				
	B	SE	β	95% CI for B		B	SE	β	95% CI for B	
Lower				Upper	Lower				Upper	
Respondent ethnic group	0.01	0.06	.01	−0.11	0.13	0.14	0.23	.12	−0.31	0.59
Contact experience	0.38***	0.05	.34***	0.29	0.47	0.42***	0.06	.38***	0.32	0.53
Perceived discrimination	0.03	0.03	.04	−0.03	0.08	0.01	0.03	.02	−0.05	0.08
Contact experience × ethnic group						−0.14	0.10	−.19	−0.34	0.07
Discrimination × ethnic group						0.07	0.08	.10	−0.09	0.22
R ² _{change}				0.11					.01	
F _{change}				22.61***					1.60	
Cohen's f				0.13					.13	

Note: B = raw regression coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardized regression coefficient.

K-Albanians = 0, K-Serbs = 1; if the confidence interval includes 0, $p > .05$; $f^2 > 0.35$ = large effect, $0.15 > f^2 > 0.35$ = medium effect, $0.02 > f^2 > 0.15$ = small effect (Cohen, 1988).

* $p < .05$;

** $p < .01$;

*** $p < .001$.

measures, so we proceeded to combine their responses to test whether patterns of correlations among dependent measures observed in Study 1 would replicate (see Table 6). Showing similar trends to Study 1, beliefs that reconciliation is necessary and possible were significantly and moderately associated among K-Albanian youth; however, unlike patterns observed in Study 1, these reconciliation beliefs were positively and also significantly correlated among K-Serb youth.

As in Study 1, both reconciliation beliefs correlated significantly with greater belief in the value of social integration among K-Serb youth, but unlike in Study 1, neither the belief that reconciliation is necessary, nor the belief that reconciliation is possible, correlated significantly with belief in the value of social integration among

K-Albanian youth. At the same time, both reconciliation beliefs correlated significantly with greater willingness for social integration among both ethnic groups. Moreover, among youth from both ethnic groups, belief in the value for social integration and willingness for social integration correlated positively and significantly.

6.3 | Testing for replication: regression analyses

Next, we performed logistic and multiple regression analyses to test respondent ethnic group and prior interethnic experiences as predictors for beliefs about reconciliation and social integration. The first

TABLE 5 Summary of linear regression analysis predicting willingness for social integration (Study 1).

Predictor variables	Willingness for social integration									
	Step 1					Step 2				
	B	SE	β	95% CI for B		B	SE	β	95% CI for B	
Lower				Upper	Lower				Upper	
Respondent ethnic group	-0.05	0.05	-.05	-0.15	0.04	-0.18	0.19	-.17	-0.54	0.19
Contact experience	0.49***	0.04	.50***	0.42	0.56	0.47***	0.04	.48***	0.38	0.55
Perceived discrimination	-0.02	0.02	-.04	-0.07	0.03	-0.02	0.03	-.04	-0.07	0.03
Contact experience \times ethnic group						0.08	0.08	.12	-0.09	0.24
Discrimination \times ethnic group						-0.00	0.06	-.00	-0.12	0.12
R^2_{change}				0.27					<0.01	
F_{change}				67.27***					0.46	
Cohen's f^2				0.38					0.38	

Note: B = raw regression coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardized regression coefficient.

K-Albanians = 0, K-Serbs = 1; if the confidence interval includes 0, $p > .05$; $f^2 > 0.35$ = large effect, $0.15 > f^2 > 0.35$ = medium effect, $0.02 > f^2 > 0.15$ = small effect (Cohen, 1988).

* $p < .05$;

** $p < .01$;

*** $p < .001$

TABLE 6 Correlations among dependent measures for K-Albanians and K-Serb youth (Study 2).

K-Albanians K-Serbs	1	2	3	4
1. Belief that reconciliation is necessary	–	0.37**	0.60***	0.45***
2. Belief that reconciliation is possible	0.32**	–	0.36**	0.50***
3. Belief in value of social integration	-0.10	0.11	–	0.51***
4. Willingness for social integration	0.38***	0.26*	0.29*	–

Note: Below the diagonal are correlations of scores for K-Albanian youth, and above the diagonal are correlations of scores for K-Serb youth.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$.

logistic regression model with respondent ethnic group membership, contact experience and perceived discrimination entered as predictors accounted for a significant portion of variance in beliefs that reconciliation is necessary (Nagelkerke $R^2 = 20\%$, $\chi^2(3) = 14.70$, $p = .002$). Contact experience emerged as a significant predictor of beliefs in the necessity of reconciliation (OR = 4.55, 95% CI [1.71, 12.12]) whereas respondent ethnic group and perceived discrimination did not emerge as significant predictors (OR_{ethnic group} = 0.42, 95% CI [0.09, 1.88], OR_{discrimination} = 1.84, 95% CI [0.78, 4.30]). Neither interaction term contributed significantly to predicting beliefs in the necessity of reconciliation, beyond what could be accounted for at the first step of analysis (see Table 7).

The second logistic regression model with respondent ethnic group membership, contact experience and perceived discrimination entered as predictors accounted for a significant portion of variance in beliefs that reconciliation is possible (Nagelkerke $R^2 = 38\%$, $\chi^2(3) = 43.27$, $p < .001$). Contact experience emerged as a significant predictor of beliefs in the possibility of reconciliation (OR = 6.15, 95% CI [2.73, 13.87]) whereas respondent ethnic group and perceived discrimina-

tion did not emerge as significant predictors (OR_{ethnic group} = 0.46, 95% CI [0.17, 1.21], OR_{discrimination} = 0.68, 95% CI [0.38, 1.23]). Neither interaction term contributed significantly to predicting beliefs in the possibility of reconciliation, beyond what could be accounted for at the first step of analysis (see Table 8).

Using linear regression, respondent ethnic group, contact experience and perceived discrimination were entered at the first step of analysis as predictors of belief in the value of social integration. This model explained 8% of the variance, $R^2 = 0.08$, $F(3, 134) = 3.81$, $p = .01$. with only contact experience emerging as a significant predictor of belief in the value of social integration ($\beta = .26$, $p = .005$). Neither interaction term contributed significantly to predicting beliefs in the value of social integration, beyond what could be accounted for at the first step of analysis (see Table 9).

In the next linear regression model, respondent ethnic group, contact experience and perceived discrimination were entered as predictors of willingness for social integration. This model explained 43% of the variance, $R^2 = 0.43$, $F(3, 134) = 33.64$, $p < .001$. Both ethnic group membership ($\beta = -.18$, $p = .02$) and contact

TABLE 7 Summary of logistic regression analysis predicting belief that reconciliation is necessary (Study 2).

Predictor variables	Reconciliation is necessary									
	Step 1					Step 2				
	B	SE	OR	95% C.I. for OR		B	SE	OR	95% C.I. for OR	
Lower				Upper	Lower				Upper	
Respondent ethnic group	-0.87	0.77	0.42	0.09	1.88	-1.25	1.97	0.29	0.01	13.52
Contact experience	1.51	0.50	4.55**	1.71	12.12	1.31	0.97	3.69	0.55	24.80
Perceived discrimination	0.61	0.44	1.84	0.78	4.30	0.64	0.68	1.90	0.50	7.23
Contact experience × ethnic group						0.28	1.15	1.33	0.14	12.70
Discrimination × ethnic group						-0.02	0.91	0.98	0.17	5.80
Nagelkerke R ²			0.20					0.20		

Note: B = raw regression coefficient; SE = standard error; OR = odds ratio; 95% CI = confidence intervals for the odds ratio.

K-Albanians = 0, K-Serbs = 1; if the confidence interval does not contain a 1 in it, the p-value is less than .050

* $p < .05$;

** $p < .01$;

*** $p < .001$.

TABLE 8 Summary of logistic regression analysis predicting belief that reconciliation is possible (Study 2).

Predictor variables	Reconciliation is possible									
	Step 1					Step 2				
	B	SE	OR	95% CI for OR		B	SE	OR	95% CI for OR	
Lower				Upper	Lower				Upper	
Respondent ethnic group	-0.78	0.50	0.46	0.17	1.21	0.28	1.57	1.32	0.06	28.40
Contact experience	1.82	0.42	6.15***	2.73	13.87	1.62	0.68	5.06*	1.34	19.16
Perceived discrimination	-0.38	0.30	0.68	0.38	1.23	0.00	0.40	1.00	0.46	2.18
Contact experience × ethnic group						0.19	0.87	1.21	0.22	6.65
Discrimination × ethnic group						-1.01	0.67	0.37	0.10	1.37
Nagelkerke R ²				0.38				0.39		

Note: B = raw regression coefficient; SE = standard error; OR = odds ratio; 95% CI = confidence intervals for the odds ratio.

K-Albanians = 0, K-Serbs = 1; if the confidence interval does not contain a 1 in it, the p-value is less than .050

* $p < .05$;

** $p < .01$;

*** $p < .001$.

experience emerged as significant predictors of willingness for social integration ($\beta = .59, p < .001$). Neither interaction term contributed significantly to predicting willingness for social integration beyond what could be accounted for at the first step of analysis (see Table 10).

6.4 | Testing for effects of participation in contact program

To test whether participating in a contact-based program would shift young people's beliefs about reconciliation and social integration, we conducted Mixed 2 (group: intervention vs control) × 2 (respondent ethnic group: K-Albanian vs K-Serb) × 2 (time: pre vs post) GLM models. Each model tested the potential effects of group, respondent ethnic

group and time as independent predictors and in two-way and three-way interactions with each other. Of particular interest is the two-way group × time interaction, testing whether beliefs about reconciliation and social integration would change over time among youth who participated in the contact program (intervention group) as compared to what would be observed among youth who did not participate in the contact program (control group). Also of particular interest is the three-way group × time × respondent ethnic group interaction, testing whether any effects observed over time among youth participating in the contact program would depend on whether those youth constituted part of the K-Albanian majority in Kosovo or part of the K-Serb minority in Kosovo.

Model 1 tested for the effects of group, respondent ethnic group and time on youth's beliefs that reconciliation is necessary. Only the main effect of respondent ethnic group was significant, such that K-Serb

TABLE 9 Summary of linear regression analysis predicting belief in value of social integration (Study 2).

Predictor variables	Belief in value of social integration									
	Step 1					Step 2				
	B	SE	β	95% CI for B		B	SE	β	95% CI for B	
Lower				Upper	Lower				Upper	
Respondent ethnic group	-0.07	0.13	-.05	-0.32	0.18	-0.48	0.42	-.37	-1.32	0.35
Contact experience	0.28**	0.10	.26**	0.09	0.48	0.21	0.17	.19	-0.13	0.55
Perceived discrimination	0.10	0.07	.13	-0.04	0.24	0.07	0.09	.09	-0.11	0.24
Contact experience \times ethnic group						0.14	0.21	.17	-0.28	0.56
Discrimination \times ethnic group						0.15	0.16	.20	-0.16	0.45
R^2_{change}			.08					.01		
F_{change}			3.81*					.64		
Cohen's f^2			.09					.10		

Note: B = raw regression coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardized regression coefficient.

K-Albanians = 0, K-Serbs = 1; if the confidence interval includes 0, $p > .05$; $f^2 > 0.35$ = large effect, $0.15 > f^2 > 0.35$ = medium effect, $0.02 > f^2 > 0.15$ = small effect (Cohen, 1988).

* $p < .05$;

** $p < .01$;

*** $p < .001$

TABLE 10 Summary of linear regression analysis predicting belief in willingness for social integration (Study 2).

Predictor variables	Willingness for social integration									
	Step 1					Step 2				
	B	SE	β	95% CI for B		B	SE	β	95% CI for B	
Lower				Upper	Lower				Upper	
Respondent ethnic group	-0.20*	0.08	-.18*	-0.37	-0.04	-0.00	0.28	-.00	-0.56	0.55
Contact experience	0.54***	0.07	.59***	0.42	0.67	0.57***	0.11	.61***	0.34	0.79
Perceived discrimination	0.07	0.05	.11	-0.02	0.16	0.09	0.06	.15	-0.02	0.21
Contact experience \times ethnic group						-0.05	0.14	-.08	-0.33	0.23
Discrimination \times ethnic group						-0.09	0.10	-.15	-0.29	0.12
R^2_{change}		0.43				<0.01				
F_{change}		33.64***				0.43				
Cohen's f^2		0.75				0.75				

Note: B = raw regression coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardized regression coefficient.

K-Albanians = 0, K-Serbs = 1; if the confidence interval includes 0, $p > .05$; $f^2 > 0.35$ = large effect, $0.15 > f^2 > 0.35$ = medium effect, $0.02 > f^2 > 0.15$ = small effect (Cohen, 1988).

* $p < .05$;

** $p < .01$;

*** $p < .001$

youth were generally less likely to believe reconciliation is necessary than K-Albanian youth (see Table 11).

Model 2 tested for the effects of group, respondent ethnic group and time on young people's beliefs that reconciliation is possible. Once again, the main effect of respondent ethnic group was significant, such that K-Serb youth were generally less likely to believe reconciliation is possible as than K-Albanian youth (see Table 12). The main effect of time was significant, but this was qualified by a significant group \times time interaction, as depicted in Figure 1; whereas no significant change

over time was observed among youth in the control group, youth in the intervention group were significantly more likely to believe that reconciliation was possible after participating in the contact program than before the program. The three-way group \times time \times respondent ethnic group interaction was not significant, suggesting that the contact program had similar effects in shifting beliefs about the possibility of reconciliation among both K-Albanian and K-Serb youth.

Model 3 tested for the effects of group, respondent ethnic group and time on youth's beliefs in the value of social integration (see Table 13).

TABLE 11 General Linear Model results of mixed 2 (time: pre vs post) × 2 (group: intervention vs control) × 2 (respondent ethnic group: K-Albanian vs Serb) for beliefs that reconciliation is necessary (Study 2).

Predictors	F	p-value	Partial eta squared (η^2)
Time	2.35	.13	0.02
Group	0.31	.58	<0.01
Respondent ethnic group	5.85	.02*	0.04
Time × group	2.35	.13	0.02
Time × respondent ethnic group	0.59	.44	<0.01
Group × respondent ethnic group	0.03	.86	<0.01
Time × group × respondent ethnic group	0.59	.44	<0.01

Note: $\eta^2 = 0.01$ indicates a small effect, $\eta^2 = 0.06$ indicates a medium effect, $\eta^2 = 0.14$ indicates a large effect.

* $p < .05$;

** $p < .01$;

*** $p < .001$.

TABLE 12 General Linear Model results of mixed 2 (time: pre vs post) × 2 (group: intervention vs control) × 2 (respondent ethnic group: K-Albanian vs Serb) for beliefs that reconciliation is possible (Study 2).

Predictors	F	p-value	Partial eta squared (η^2)
Time	9.05	.003**	0.06
Group	2.08	.15	0.02
Respondent ethnic group	22.34	<.001***	0.14
Time × group	11.20	.001**	0.08
Time × respondent ethnic group	0.22	.64	<0.01
Group × respondent ethnic group	1.37	.24	0.01
Time × group × respondent ethnic group	0.65	.42	0.01

Note: $\eta^2 = 0.01$ indicates a small effect, $\eta^2 = 0.06$ indicates a medium effect, $\eta^2 = 0.14$ indicates a large effect.

* $p < .05$;

** $p < .01$;

*** $p < .001$.

TABLE 13 General Linear Model results of mixed 2 (time: pre vs post) × 2 (group: intervention vs control) × 2 (respondent ethnic group: K-Albanian vs Serb) for beliefs in the value of social integration (Study 2).

Predictors	F	p-value	Partial eta squared (η^2)
Time	4.42	.04*	0.03
Group	0.55	.46	<0.01
Respondent ethnic group	1.67	.20	0.01
Time × group	16.65	<.001***	0.11
Time × respondent ethnic group	0.41	.52	<0.01
Group × respondent ethnic group	1.67	.20	0.01
Time × group × respondent ethnic group	0.00	.98	0.00

Note: $\eta^2 = 0.01$ indicates a small effect, $\eta^2 = 0.06$ indicates a medium effect, $\eta^2 = 0.14$ indicates a large effect.

* $p < .05$;

** $p < .01$;

*** $p < .001$.

The significant main effect of time was qualified by a significant group × time interaction. As shown in Figure 2, whereas no significant change over time was observed among youth in the control group, youth in the intervention group were significantly more likely to believe in the

value of social integration after participating in the contact program than before the program. Moreover, the three-way group × time × respondent ethnic group interaction was not significant, suggesting that similar effects of the contact program were observed among both

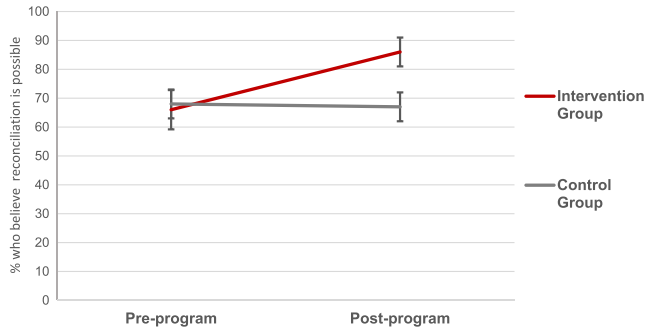


FIGURE 1 Pre-program and post-program beliefs that reconciliation is possible among youth in the intervention group and the control group (study 2).

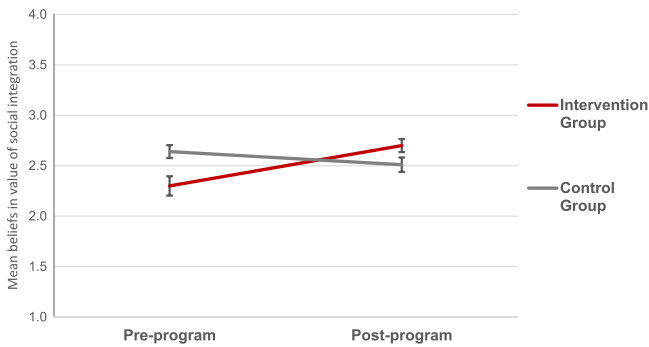


FIGURE 2 Pre-program and post-program beliefs in the value of social integration among youth in the intervention group and the control group (study 2).

K-Albanian and K-Serb youth with respect to shifting beliefs in the value of social integration.

Model 4 tested for the effects of group, respondent ethnic group and time on youth’s willingness for social integration. The main effect of respondent ethnic group was significant, such that K-Serb youth were generally less willing to engage in social integration relative to K-Albanian youth (see Table 14). The two-way group × respondent ethnic group interaction term was also significant, where K-Albanians

TABLE 14 General Linear Model results of mixed 2 (time: pre vs post) × 2 (group: intervention vs control) × 2 (respondent ethnic group: K-Albanian vs Serb) for willingness for social integration (Study 2).

Predictors	F	p-value	Partial eta squared (η^2)
Time	2.53	.11	0.02
Group	0.00	.99	0.00
Respondent ethnic group	15.67	<.001***	0.11
Time × group	0.36	.55	<0.01
Time × respondent ethnic group	0.98	.32	<0.01
Group × respondent ethnic group	5.65	.02*	0.04
Time × group × respondent ethnic group	3.13	.08	0.02

Note: $\eta^2 = 0.01$ indicates a small effect, $\eta^2 = 0.06$ indicates a medium effect, $\eta^2 = 0.14$ indicates a large effect.

* $p < .05$;

** $p < .01$;

*** $p < .001$.

were more willing to socially integrate than K-Serbs in the control group; however, the two ethnic groups did not differ significantly in the intervention group.

7 | DISCUSSION

One goal of Study 2 was to test whether trends observed in Study 1 would replicate in a separate, more ethnically balanced sample of K-Albanian and K-Serb youth. As in Study 1, we observed that respondents from both groups were generally more likely to believe that reconciliation is necessary than to believe that it is possible. Also similar to Study 1, we observed that K-Serb youth were less likely to believe in the possibility of reconciliation relative to K-Albanian youth and K-Serb youth were significantly less willing to integrate socially than K-Albanian youth. These results are in line with our predictions, given the Serbs’ experiences of mistreatment and higher perceptions of threat as a minority in Kosovo (see, e.g., Baldwin, 2006; Luta & Draebel, 2013; UNDP, 2021).

Paralleling the results of Study 1, Study 2 showed significant correlations between beliefs about reconciliation and social integration, suggesting that the varied beliefs about reconciliation and social integration measured in this study are related. Nevertheless, as in Study 1, in general, correlations between these beliefs were not high among both ethnic groups, indicating that they are distinct concepts as we have expected. That being said, different from Study 1 we observed less consistent correlations for K-Albanians relative to what we observed for K-Serbs. This finding is also in line with our expectations that the associations could differ across ethnic groups.

One of the goals for this research was to investigate the relationship between intergroup contact and reconciliation beliefs. First, like Study 1, different reconciliation beliefs were positively associated with greater willingness for interethnic contact, among both K-Albanian and Serb youth. Moreover, similar to Study 1, Study 2 showed that contact experience is a significant predictor for all reconciliation beliefs and attitudes, regardless of ethnic group whereas perceived discrimination did not predict any of the reconciliation and social integration DVs. As

we have seen consistently the association between contact experience and reconciliation beliefs across two studies, we wanted to test the causality in a field study. Study 2 also extended the findings of Study 1 by showing that participation in an interethnic contact-based program can promote stronger beliefs that reconciliation is possible and that social integration is valuable among both ethnic groups. These findings support our prediction that intergroup contact influences beliefs about reconciliation and social integration.

8 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

This research aims to address a gap in the literature by jointly examining people's beliefs about the necessity, possibility and value of reconciliation in addition to their willingness for reconciliation, in the post-war context of Kosovo. Whereas previous literature has mainly focussed on assessing readiness or willingness for reconciliation (e.g., Biro et al., 2004; Biro & Milin, 2005; Stammel et al., 2012), we focus on people's beliefs about reconciliation—namely, how much they believe reconciliation is necessary and possible—and their corresponding beliefs and feelings about social integration with groups of people on the other side of the conflict (Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2023; Cohen-Chen et al., 2017; Halperin & Schwartz, 2010).

Across two studies, we investigated general trends in beliefs about reconciliation and social integration among Kosovar Albanian and Kosovar Serb youth, how their beliefs about reconciliation and social integration may be associated with each other and how prior positive and negative interethnic experiences may contribute to shaping their beliefs about reconciliation and social integration. K-Albanians and K-Serbs are the main parties to ethnic conflict in Kosovo, we focussed on our analysis on these two ethnic groups across two studies, including a general survey of the Kosovar population (Study 1) and an evaluation study of a contact-based program (Study 2). Considering existing status differences between Kosovar Albanians (ethnic majority) and Kosovar Serbs (ethnic minority), we were especially interested in examining if and how beliefs about reconciliation and social integration and their associations with interethnic experiences might vary across ethnic groups.

In line with our expectations, and across both studies, Kosovar Serb respondents were significantly less likely to believe that reconciliation is possible, and reported less willingness to integrate socially, relative to Kosovar Albanian respondents. It is understandable that Kosovar Serbs would be more pessimistic about the possibility of reconciliation, likely due to fear of mistreatment and becoming targets for revenge as they are currently a small minority in the newly established state of Kosovo (see, e.g., Baldwin, 2006; Luta & Draebel, 2013; UNDP, 2021). Relatedly, in both studies, we found that Kosovar Serbs reported significantly more negative interethnic contact experience and greater ethnic discrimination than Kosovar Albanians. Thus, it might be that, although they may think reconciliation is necessary, Kosovar Serbs may not believe that reconciliation, social integration or improved interethnic relations are possible in light of their own lived experiences.

Consistent with expectations, and across both studies, regression results showed that prior contact experience significantly predicted each dependent measure assessing beliefs about reconciliation and social integration. Overall, the more prior positive interethnic contact respondents reported, the more likely they were to believe that reconciliation is necessary, that it is possible, to believe in the value of social integration and to report greater personally willingness to engage in social integration. Moreover, respondents' ethnic group membership did not moderate these contact effects, such that positive interethnic contact experience consistently predicted these salutary reconciliation and social integration outcomes among both groups in both studies. Evaluation data from Study 2 also revealed that both K-Albanian and K-Serb youth who participated in the social mixing intervention held significantly stronger beliefs in the possibility of reconciliation and in the value of social integration following the program, while beliefs of youth in the control group did not change over time. Considering past studies showing weaker effects of intergroup contact on members of minority status groups compared members of majority status groups (Binder et al., 2009; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005; Tropp, 2007; Tropp et al., 2016), the evidence for the significant effect of contact on reconciliation and social integration beliefs regardless of ethnic group membership is especially impressive.

Past literature has showed evidence for association between intergroup contact and readiness for reconciliation or behaviours related to reconciliation (Biro et al., 2004; Čehajić et al., 2008; Tropp et al., 2017); however, this research shows consistent evidence specifically for association between intergroup contact and reconciliation beliefs. Moreover, testing this association through a controlled field study with an ethnically balanced sample, in an understudied context is an important contribution to the contact and reconciliation literature.

Moreover, it is important to reiterate that the intervention included enjoyable collaborative activities in the outdoors, rather than dialogue sessions where K-Albanian and K-Serb youth talk about the conflict and understand or change each other's perspective. Engaging in intergroup contact without emphasizing group differences and identities first might therefore prepare people better to address key aspects of reconciliation like changing conflict narratives and competitive victimhood beliefs that would highlight their group memberships (see Pettigrew, 1998). This would be helpful to consider when designing interventions related to reconciliation.

8.1 | Limitations and future directions

Although this research moves the literature forward by examining beliefs about the necessity and possibility of reconciliation along with beliefs in the value of social integration in the conflict setting of Kosovo, the studies presented in this paper are not without limitations. One major limitation is that the measures of reconciliation beliefs available for analysis were dichotomous, which limited our capacity to examine variability in these beliefs. As we consider that beliefs in reconciliation are more nuanced than those that may be captured using dichotomous

measures, we recommend that different measures—including broader ranges of response options—be used in future studies. Moreover, in lieu of using single-item indicators of beliefs about reconciliation, we believe that future studies should employ multiple items to assess each concept, to better capture nuances in people's beliefs about reconciliation and social integration.

Another limitation is the lack of measures assessing behavioural intentions and actual behaviours associated with reconciliation. We suspect that believing in the possibility of reconciliation would be more strongly associated with behavioural intentions towards and active involvement in reconciliation efforts. As related research on hope would suggest, believing in the possibility of positive change—such as in improving 'broken' group relations—can induce more goal-oriented behaviours, increase a sense of efficacy and encourage people to envision new paths towards reaching the desired goal of peace (Bar-Tal, 2003; Cohen-Chen, 2022; Greenaway et al., 2016). Experiencing hope can also motivate people to have conciliatory attitudes, including increasing their willingness to forgive the outgroup and to support policies that promote peace (Cohen-Chen et al., 2014; Moeschberger et al., 2005). Furthermore, Cehajic-Clancy and Bilewicz (2017) regard belief in the possibility of reconciliation as necessary for achieving sustainable reconciliation in conflict settings. Future research should therefore test more directly how believing in the possibility of reconciliation shapes both intentions to engage and active involvement in reconciliation efforts, along with clarifying how these concepts relate to hope and behavioural outcomes.

Another limitation is that perceptions of outgroup intentions were not included among the measures distributed to ethnic Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo in the present studies. Beyond assessing respondents' own beliefs about interethnic reconciliation, we believe it would be instructive to assess respondents' views of ethnic outgroup members' beliefs about reconciliation. Indeed, believing that reconciliation is possible involves inferences about intentions of the other party to the conflict, as reconciliation can only be achieved if both parties are willing to reconcile. In a similar vein, prior work shows that when people perceive outgroup members to be supportive of peace, they are often more willing to compromise, to hold more positive attitudes about reconciliation, to actively engage in reconciliation efforts and to accept peace agreements (Bar-Tal, 2013; Cohen-Chen et al., 2017; Telhami & Kull, 2013; Tropp et al., 2017). Thus, future research and evaluation studies should seek to address both group members' own beliefs about reconciliation, and their perceptions of outgroup members' beliefs and intentions related to reconciliation, to capture more comprehensively the extent to which reconciliation between the groups may be regarded as not only necessary but as a real possibility.

To conclude, we present these studies as a starting point for investigating how believing that reconciliation is necessary and possible and that social integration is valuable can add to our understanding of conflict dynamics between groups. Along with examining possible antecedents and consequences of these beliefs, we also recommend that future studies examine these beliefs in varied contexts of conflict between different ethnic groups, beyond the context of ethnic conflict between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo. Our hope is that by

understanding better people's beliefs about reconciliation and social integration we can more effectively inform interventions designed to motivate groups in conflict to actively engage in reconciliation and social integration efforts for a long-lasting peace.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Restrictions apply to the availability of the data that support the findings of this study. The data could be available with the permission of the International Organization for Migration Kosovo.

ETHICS STATEMENT

International Organization for Migration's (IOM's) internal review board granted permission for the study. All individuals gave their informed consent prior to their inclusion in the study.

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