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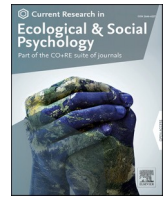
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How meta-humanization leads to conciliatory attitudes but not intergroup negotiation: The mediating roles of attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization

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ABSTRACT

Relations between groups are particularly sensitive in post-conflict societies where tensions persist, and reconciliation remains unlikely. The present research investigated whether believing or learning that an outgroup humanizes the ingroup (i.e., meta-humanization) enhances conciliatory attitudes and intergroup negotiations. In three studies conducted in the post-conflict context of Kosovo ($N = 1,407$), we investigated whether meta-humanization, in comparison to meta-dehumanization (i.e., the belief that outgroups dehumanize the ingroup) or a control condition wherein no information related to (de)humanization is provided, impacts various intergroup outcomes through the attribution of secondary emotions (i.e., the tendency to deny outgroups the capability to experience human emotions) and blatant dehumanization (i.e., the tendency to overtly or explicitly regard outgroup members as being less than fully human). Using correlational data, Study 1 revealed that blatant dehumanization, but not the attribution of secondary emotions, mediated the effect of meta-humanization on conciliatory attitudes, including support for the outgroup, openness to future contact, and feelings of peace with outgroup members. However, this pattern did not extend to intergroup negotiation, as none of the indirect effects through both the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization were significant. Using experimental data, Study 2 demonstrated that participants in the meta-humanization condition exhibited lower levels of blatant dehumanization towards the outgroup, increased support for the outgroup, greater openness to intergroup contact, and reported feeling more at peace with outgroup members compared to those in both the meta-dehumanization and control conditions. However, participants in the meta-dehumanization and control conditions showed greater support for intergroup negotiation than those in the meta-humanization condition. Moreover, Study 2 indicated that blatant dehumanization, rather than the attribution of secondary emotions, mediated the effect of meta-humanization on all these outcomes—except for intergroup negotiations. Finally, Study 3 replicated the findings observed in Study 2 regarding the effect of meta-humanization (vs. meta-dehumanization and control) on conciliatory attitudes and intergroup negotiation while controlling for meta-prejudice. Furthermore, Study 3 revealed that both blatant dehumanization and the attribution of secondary emotions mediated the effects of meta-humanization on all these outcomes. In sum, this set of studies shows that meta-humanization promotes reconciliation, especially via reduced blatant dehumanization, but these beneficial effects do not extend to support for intergroup negotiation.

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“They [Kosovo Albanians] are people who have come from the jungle/mountains.”

– Ana Bernabić, Serbian Prime Minister (2019)

“All Serbs hate Kosovo Albanians.”

– Granit Kurti, Kosovo-Albanian journalist (2022)

In post-conflict societies, intergroup relations are shaped profoundly by societal beliefs, group-based emotions, and episodes of violence between groups (Bar-Tal, 2007a, 2007b). The enduring impact of past conflicts, including war and human loss, fosters widespread dehumanization, where people are motivated to consider outgroup members (i.e., former opponents) as inferior human beings—a process known as blatant dehumanization (Borinca et al., 2024; Borinca et al., 2023; Haslam, 2015)—and deny their capability to experience emotions unique to humans—a process known as infrahumanization (Čehajić et al., 2009; Castano and Giner-Sorrolla, 2006; Leyens et al., 2000). Therefore, social psychological interventions such as meta-humanization—the belief that outgroup members humanize one’s ingroup (Borinca, Tropp, and Ofosu, 2021; Kteily, et al., 2016; Pavetich and Stathi, 2021)—are necessary to reduce infrahumanization and blatant dehumanization in order to enhance conciliatory attitudes and intergroup negotiations. To delve into the specific processes underlying these effects, we conducted three studies in the post-conflict context of Kosovo to examine the relationship between Kosovo-Albanians as the victim group and Serbs as the perpetrator group.

The mediating role of the attribution of secondary emotions and outgroup dehumanization

The harrowing experiences of war often lead the victim group to believe that their former opponents dehumanize them (Kteily et al., 2016; Landry et al., 2022), motivating them to engage in the dehumanization of the outgroup through two processes. The first process, known as the denial of attribution of secondary emotions (i.e., infrahumanization), involves the victim group denying the capability of their former opponents to experience human emotions and rejecting their fundamental qualities or basic humanity (Čehajić et al., 2009; Castano and Giner-Sorrolla, 2006; Paladino et al., 2004). The second process, blatant dehumanization, requires intentionally regarding the former opponents as less than fully human beings and treating them as inferior or subhuman in an overt or explicit manner (Borinca, Falomir-Pichastor, et al., 2021, 2023; Kteily and Landry, 2022; Martínez and Leongómez, 2024). As an illustration, research in post-conflict societies has indicated that members of victim groups anticipate blatant dehumanization from their former opponents as a default outcome of their conflicts (Borinca, Tropp, and Ofosu, 2021). Indeed, meta-dehumanization amplifies intergroup conflict and hostility via the mechanisms of *blatant dehumanization* (Kteily et al., 2016; Landry et al., 2022). Illustrating that dynamic, studies conducted in the context of Israel’s prolonged Jewish–Arab conflict have shown that feeling meta-dehumanized differs from feeling disliked (i.e., meta-prejudice) and that meta-dehumanization can corrode intergroup relations by inciting blatant dehumanization, which may consequently increase aggression, reduce support for intergroup negotiation, and impede intergroup interactions (Bruneau et al., 2021; Bruneau and Kteily, 2017; Kteily et al., 2016). Furthermore, in the post-conflict context of Bosnia and Serbia, past research has indicated that reminders of war responsibility led participants to attribute fewer *secondary emotions to the outgroup*, which negatively impacted conciliatory attitudes like intergroup empathy (Čehajić et al., 2009). Such finding aligns with arguments that individuals are more inclined to deny human emotions to outgroup members in settings characterized by a history of conflict, whether it be through war, colonization, or occupation (e.g., Castano and Giner-Sorrolla, 2006).

Given those findings, we sought to break the cycle in which outgroups are perceived as being less human and treated as inferior human beings,

namely by examining whether *meta-humanization* improves intergroup relations by enhancing reconciliation and intergroup negotiations. Drawing from the literature on meta-humanization, dehumanization, and infrahumanization, we tested a model of meta-humanization mediated by the mechanisms of the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization across various intergroup outcomes in post-conflict societies. To date, no research has delved into the impact of meta-humanization on diverse intergroup outcomes through the parallel mechanisms of these two forms of dehumanization. Our research aims to address this gap by investigating the underlying mechanisms of both secondary emotion attribution and blatant dehumanization, while considering potential variations in their associations with positive and negative intergroup outcomes (Borinca, Van Assche, et al., 2023; Kteily and Landry, 2022). Such an approach will provide further insights into dehumanization measures by exploring the nature of each process in the relationship between meta-dehumanization and intergroup outcomes (Landry and Seli, 2024; Sitruk et al., 2024). That being said, considering both infrahumanization and blatant dehumanization in the same study allows for a more thorough exploration of the complexities of dehumanization and its impact on intergroup dynamics, leading to a deeper understanding and more effective strategies for addressing it.

Meta-Humanization’s effects on intergroup relations

Believing or perceiving that one’s group is humanized by another group can encourage reciprocal humanization (Kteily et al., 2016) and thus mitigate intergroup bias and hostility, fostering positive intergroup relations (Moore-Berg and Hameiri, 2024; Prati et al., 2023). In other words, when individuals understand that their group is considered fully human by the outgroup, it can evoke a desire to reciprocate that recognition and adopt reconciliatory attitudes towards the outgroup. This reciprocal humanization process can help break down barriers between groups by encouraging support for the outgroup, facilitating intergroup contact, promoting feelings of peace, and reducing perceived threat.

For example, in Canada and the United Kingdom, Pavetich and Stathi (2021) have found that meta-humanization reduces prejudice by fostering outgroup humanization among individuals with a Muslim background. Likewise, in conflict-torn settings such as the Israeli–Palestinian context, Kteily et al. (2016) have shown that meta-humanization reduces prejudice as well as the tendency to dehumanize the outgroup. Of particular relevance to our research, investigations in the Kosovo Albanian–Serbian and North Macedonian–Greek contexts have also shown that meta-humanization, coupled with outgroup assistance, increases the humanization of outgroup members, assessed via outgroup empathy, which is in turn associated with a greater willingness to interact with them (Borinca, Tropp, and Ofosu, 2021).

Nevertheless, additional research is needed to investigate, for the first time, whether the impact of meta-humanization on intergroup outcomes is mediated simultaneously through the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization, particularly in post-conflict contexts. In one such context, Kosovo, given the potential pervasiveness of dehumanization, infrahumanization, and perceived meta-dehumanization stemming from past wars and current tensions, it is crucial to investigate how meta-humanization contributes to various intergroup outcomes. Therefore, we aimed to examine how meta-humanization, through the attribution of secondary emotions and outgroup dehumanization, is associated with four positive intergroup outcomes (i.e., support for the outgroup, openness to intergroup contact, feeling at peace with the outgroup, and support for intergroup negotiation), as well as one negative outcome (i.e., perceived intergroup threat), in post-conflict societies.

The post-conflict context of Kosovo

In 1998 and 1999, Kosovo Albanians experienced an armed conflict with Serbia, known as the Kosovo War, resulting in the deaths of more than 10,000 Kosovo Albanians. This conflict prompted the intervention of the north atlantic treaty organization (NATO) to halt the violence and ethnic cleansing orchestrated by Serbia's government. Subsequently, in 2008, less than a decade later, Kosovo declared independence, a move that has garnered recognition from over 100 countries. However, Serbia continues to intensely oppose Kosovo's statehood, persistently lobbying against it in international politics (Borinca, Moreno-Bella, et al., 2023; McCourt, 2013). At present, the European Union encourages and mediates dialogue between the two nations with the objective of achieving peace and eventually having both countries join the European Union as independent nations (Gashi and Musliu, 2017). Nevertheless, recent tensions between Serbia and Kosovo have escalated from threats to Serbian preparations for a new armed conflict (Bechev, 2023). Thus, understanding the impact of meta-humanization, via the attribution of secondary emotions and dehumanization, on enhancing conciliatory attitudes in the Kosovo–Serbia post-conflict context is imperative for several reasons. For one, the transitional nature of such post-conflict societies provides insights into processes of reconciliation, the potential for lasting peace, and the effectiveness of interventions. By concentrating on Kosovo, we will gain valuable insights into intergroup relations and conflict resolution, broadly speaking, and illuminate the nuanced dynamics of a society grappling with the aftermath of conflict.

Accordingly, we examined how meta-humanization, mediated by the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization, relates to several intergroup outcomes (i.e., support of the outgroup, openness to intergroup contact, feeling at peace with the outgroup, and support of ingroup-outgroup negotiation). In Studies 2 and 3, we also observed how meta-humanization, via the attribution of secondary emotions and outgroup dehumanization, relates to perceptions of intergroup threat.

Research framework

In three studies—one cross-sectional and two experimental—we investigated intergroup relations in the post-conflict context of Kosovo. In Study 1, we examined whether the association between perceived meta-humanization and various intergroup outcomes—support of the outgroup, openness to future intergroup contact, a sense of peace with the outgroup, and support of intergroup negotiation—is mediated by the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant humanization. In order to investigate causality and enhance our current understanding of these processes, we experimentally manipulated meta-humanization and meta-dehumanization in Studies 2 and 3. Considering past findings that indicated Kosovo Albanians' expectations to be dehumanized by Serbs (Borinca, Tropp, and Oforu, 2021), we also included a control condition without information about meta-humanization or dehumanization in both studies. Subsequently, we decided to incorporate a measure of intergroup threat based on current research indicating that outgroup dehumanization correlates with an increased perception of threat (Paskuj and Orosz, 2022). Last, in Study 3, we controlled for meta-prejudice, which involves perceiving or believing that an outgroup holds prejudiced attitudes or stereotypes towards one's ingroup, along with anticipating negative biases or discriminatory views as a result (Landry et al., 2023). The importance of controlling for meta-prejudice in our research stems from its crucial role in isolating and understanding the distinct impact of the predictor variables under investigation.

Study 1

In Study 1, we examined whether meta-humanization's effect on intergroup outcomes (e.g., support of the outgroup, openness to future intergroup contact, feeling at peace with the outgroup, and support of intergroup negotiation) is mediated by reduced outgroup

dehumanization and the attribution of secondary emotions.

Method

Participants

We recruited 217 Albanian citizens ($M_{age} = 31.53$, $SD_{age} = 8.07$; 145 women) living in Kosovo from Facebook groups; most were student groups, but we recruited from groups for movie and book enthusiasts as well. Using shinyapps.io, we conducted a Monte Carlo power analysis for indirect effects that incorporated standardized effects for each path of the mediators. The results indicated that our study had a power of 0.83, signifying a high likelihood of detecting significant indirect effects among those variables (Schoemann et al., 2017).

Procedure

Study 1 was conducted online using Qualtrics and introduced to participants as having a focus on individuals' experiences with other group members in society (i.e., outgroups). Participants first provided their sociodemographic data, including gender, age, and nationality. Second, in a randomized manner, they rated their opinions on measures encompassing meta-humanization, dehumanization, the attribution of secondary emotions, support of the outgroup, openness to future intergroup contact, feeling at peace with the outgroup, and support of intergroup negotiation. After completing the questionnaire, participants were debriefed and thanked for participating in the study.

Measures

Unless otherwise indicated, all responses were given on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).¹

Meta-Humanization. We measured perceived meta-humanization with a five-item scale adapted from Kteily et al. (2016) and Borinca, Tropp and Oforu (2021). Participants were asked to rate the extent to which Serbs (de)humanize Kosovan Albanians in response to items such as “Serbs perceive Albanians to be subhuman (reverse-scored)” and “Serbs think of Albanians as being animal-like (reverse-scored).” We averaged the responses to those items to compute a score for perceived meta-humanization ($\alpha = 0.73$; $M = 2.83$, $SD = 1.29$). Higher scores indicated greater perceived meta-humanization.

Attribution of Secondary Emotions. We assessed the attribution of secondary emotions to the outgroup with a six-item scale adapted from Čehajić et al. (2009) and Kteily et al. (2015). Because secondary emotions occur independently of valence (e.g., Haslam and Loughnan, 2014; Leyens et al., 2000), we asked participants to indicate only the extent to which they associate various secondary emotions with the outgroup in general (e.g., Čehajić et al., 2009; Castano and Giner-Sorrola, 2006). We presented them with six secondary emotions balanced by valence: three positive emotions (i.e., compassion, tenderness, hope; $\alpha = 0.89$; $M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.96$) and three negative ones (bitterness, contempt, and guilt; $\alpha = 0.79$; $M = 4.78$, $SD = 1.70$). Lower scores indicated lower attribution of secondary emotions (i.e., infrahumanization; $\alpha = 0.77$; $M = 4.31$, $SD = 1.14$).

Blatant Dehumanization. We measured blatant dehumanization according to Kteily et al.'s (2016) adaptation of Bastian et al.'s (2013) scale, on which participants indicated the extent to which a series of human traits apply to the outgroup in general (e.g., backward and primitive; savage and aggressive; lacking in morals; barbaric and cold-hearted). Higher scores indicated greater blatant dehumanization ($\alpha = 0.62$; $M = 4.82$, $SD = 0.88$).

Support of the Outgroup. We assessed participants' overall support of the outgroup with a six-item scale adapted from Kteily et al. (2016)

¹ An additional measure for exploratory purposes included a nine-item scale to assess collective narcissism during the pretest. However, because that measure was not included in Studies 2 and 3, the description of the analyses for those variables is beyond the scope of this article.

and Borinca et al. (2022) including items such as “The Kosovan government should set up programs to help Serbs integrate into Kosovan society” and “I support affirmative action to increase the representation of Serbs on college campuses in Kosovo” ($\alpha = 0.83$; $M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.34$).

Openness to Future Intergroup Contact. To assess openness to future intergroup contact, we used a single item adapted from Borinca, Tropp and Ofosu (2021): “In general, are you willing to have contact with Serbs in the future?” ($M = 5.55$, $SD = 2.06$).

Feeling at Peace with the Outgroup. To measure participants’ feeling at peace with the outgroup, we used a single item adapted from Borinca, Falomir-Pichastor, et al. (2021): “Do you feel at peace with Serbs?” ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 2.06$).

Support of Intergroup Negotiation. Last, we assessed participants’ support for their nation to negotiate with their former adversaries to reach a solution using two items adapted from Kalisi (2021)—“How willing would you be for Kosovo to enter into direct negotiations with Serbia?” and “Do you think that Kosovo should make a concerted effort to negotiate resolutions with Serbia?”—on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*absolutely*). We combined these two items into a single measure; $r = 0.15$; $M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.36$).

Results

We first examined the relationship between meta-humanization, dehumanization, the attribution of secondary emotions, and our primary outcomes. Pearson correlations (see Table 1) revealed that meta-humanization was negatively associated with blatant dehumanization, $r(217) = -0.29$, $p < .001$, and positively associated with support of the outgroup, $r(217) = 0.22$, $p < .001$; openness to future intergroup contact, $r(217) = 0.16$, $p = .005$; feeling at peace with the outgroup, $r(217) = 0.35$, $p < .001$; and support of intergroup negotiation, $r(217) = 0.13$, $p = .005$. However, meta-humanization was not significantly associated with the attribution of secondary emotions, $r(217) = 0.09$, $p = .177$.

To test our model (see Fig. 1), we ran parallel mediation analyses to determine whether the effects of perceived meta-humanization predicted the primary dependent outcomes (i.e., support of the outgroup, support of intergroup negotiation, openness to future intergroup contact, and feeling at peace with the outgroup) via both the attribution of secondary emotions and outgroup dehumanization. The mediation analyses were conducted using Model 4 in the PROCESS Macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2018) with 5,000 bootstrapped samples.

The direct and indirect effects revealed by our analyses appear in Table 2. In terms of support of the outgroup, the results revealed a significant indirect effect of meta-humanization mediated by blatant dehumanization, but not by the attribution of secondary emotions. Similarly, concerning openness to future contact with outgroups, the findings indicated a significant indirect effect of meta-humanization mediated by blatant dehumanization, but not by the attribution of secondary emotions.

Regarding the experience of feeling at peace, the results demonstrated a significant indirect effect of meta-humanization mediated by blatant dehumanization, whereas no such effect was observed due to the attribution of secondary emotions. Furthermore, neither outgroup dehumanization nor the attribution of secondary emotions mediated the impact of meta-dehumanization on intergroup negotiation.²

Alternative models

We also ran alternative mediation models to examine the attribution of secondary emotions as a predictor and meta-humanization and outgroup dehumanization as parallel mediators. However, no significant indirect effects on the investigated outcomes emerged. When blatant

outgroup dehumanization was a predictor and meta-humanization and the attribution of secondary emotions were mediators, the models revealed significant indirect effects only for feelings of being at peace and support of intergroup negotiation via meta-humanization but not via the attribution of secondary emotions (see Supplementary Material).

Discussion

In Study 1, we investigated the effects of perceived meta-humanization on intergroup relations and reconciliation in a post-conflict society. We observed that perceived meta-humanization was associated with reduced blatant dehumanization. In turn, reduced blatant dehumanization was associated with higher levels of support for the outgroup, increased openness to future intergroup contact, and a greater feeling of peace with the outgroup. While the indirect link of meta-humanization via blatant dehumanization was non-significant for support of intergroup negotiation, the indirect link of meta-humanization via the attribution of secondary emotions was non-significant for any of the intergroup outcomes.

To examine the causal relationship between meta-dehumanization and the investigated outcomes, we employed an experimental design in Study 2 that considered perceived intergroup threat as an additional outcome crucial for understanding the dynamics of intergroup relations.

Study 2

Again in the post-conflict context of Kosovo, we experimentally tested the effect of meta-humanization (vs. meta-dehumanization condition and control condition) via the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization on several intergroup outcomes (i.e., support of the outgroup, support of intergroup negotiation, feeling at peace with the outgroup, and openness to future contact with the outgroup). To investigate whether meta-humanization reduced perceived threat, we included an additional outcome focused on intergroup threat perceptions.

Method

Participants

As in Study 1, we recruited 200 Kosovan Albanian participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 30.31$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 6.65$), 109 of whom were women, via Facebook groups. A sensitivity analysis conducted with G*Power (ver. 3.1.9.2) for a fixed-effects, omnibus, one-way ANOVA revealed that our final sample was powered enough to detect an effect size of $d = 0.44$, which conventionally indicates a medium effect size assuming an α value of 0.05 and a power estimate of 0.80 (Faul et al., 2009). The means for the dependent measures, with standard deviations in parentheses, appear in Table 3, while correlations between the continuous measures used in Study 2 can be found in Table 4

Experimental manipulation

After providing their basic demographic information, each participant was randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions—meta-humanization, meta-dehumanization, or the control—depending on the questionnaire they received. Participants were informed that the findings were the results of international research to reduce potential demands on social desirability.

Although participants in the control condition ($n = 66$) did not receive any supplemental information in their packets, the ones in the meta-humanization ($n = 66$) and meta-dehumanization conditions ($n = 68$) read a brief excerpt from a scientific article describing that, on a scale from 0 to 100, Serbs always rated Serbs as being highly developed and civilized (i.e., 96 out of 100 points). Next, depending on the experimental condition, participants were randomly assigned to learn either that Serbs rated Kosovo Albanians as being equally evolved and civilized (i.e., 96 out of 100; meta-humanization condition) or as being

² The same findings were observed when using the two items of this measure separated in the mediation model.

Table 1
Correlations among continuous variables (Study 1).

Study 1 (N = 217)	Meta-humanization	Attribution of secondary emotions	Blatant Dehumanization	Outgroup Support	Willingness for Contact	Feeling at Peace	Intergroup Negotiation
Meta-humanization	-						
Attribution of secondary emotions	.092	-					
Blatant Dehumanization	-.297**	-.082	-				
Outgroup Support	.224**	.384**	-.334**	-			
Willingness for Contact	.166*	.433**	-.351**	.679**	-		
Feeling at Peace	.355**	.303**	-.453**	.487**	.623**	-	
Intergroup Negotiation	.136*	-.289**	-.103	-.328**	-.278**	-.083	-

Note: ** Correlation is significant either at the 0.001 level (2-tailed) or at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

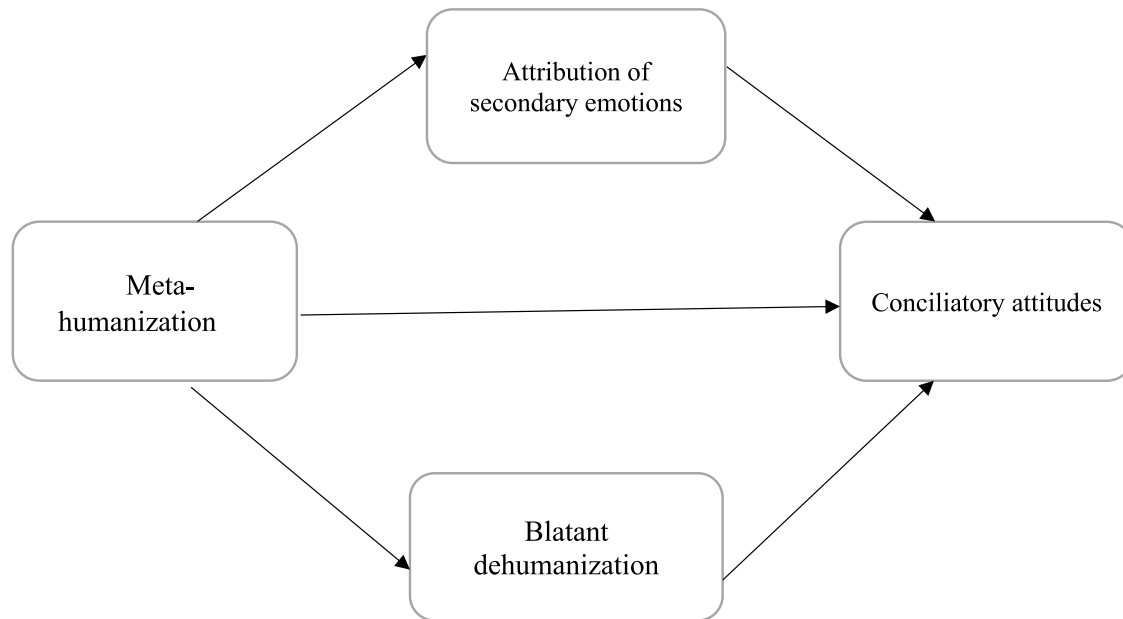


Fig. 1. The conceptual path model tested in all studies. Note: Meta-humanization was assessed as an individual difference in Study 1 and experimentally manipulated in Studies 2 and 3.

Table 2
Standardized direct and unstandardized indirect effects (with standard errors and confidence intervals) of meta-humanization via attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization on intergroup outcomes (Study 1).

Study 1 (N = 217)	Meta-humanization (direct effects)	Attribution of secondary emotions (direct effects)	Blatant dehumanization (direct effects)	Indirect effects (via attribution of secondary emotions)	Indirect effects (via blatant dehumanization)
	Effect	Effect	Effect	Effect (SE) [95 % CI]	Effect (SE) [95 % CI]
Attribution of secondary emotions	0.09, <i>p</i> = .176				
Blatant dehumanization	-0.29, <i>p</i> < .001				
Outgroup support	0.11, <i>p</i> = .075	0.35, <i>p</i> < .001	-0.27, <i>p</i> < .001	.03 (0.04) [-0.01, 0.07]	.08 (0.03) [.02, 0.14]
Willingness for Contact	0.03, <i>p</i> = .534	0.40, <i>p</i> < .001	-0.30, <i>p</i> < .001	.03 (0.02) [-0.01, 0.08]	.09 (0.03) [.03, 0.16]
Feeling at peace	0.22, <i>p</i> = .002	0.25, <i>p</i> < .001	-0.36, <i>p</i> = .001	.02 (0.01) [-0.01, 0.05]	.10 (0.03) [.04, 0.19]
Intergroup Negotiation	-0.16, <i>p</i> = .017	-0.28, <i>p</i> < .001	-0.17, <i>p</i> = .010	-0.02 (0.02) [-0.06, 0.01]	.05 (0.03) [-0.01, 0.13]

Note: Significant indirect effects are in bold.

less evolved and civilized than themselves (i.e., 67 out of 100; meta-dehumanization condition). Similar procedures have previously been implemented by Kteily et al. (2016) and Borinca, Tropp and Ofsu (2021).

Dependent measures

Using the same scales as in Study 1, we measured the attribution of secondary emotions ($\alpha = 0.79$; $M = 3.99$, $SD = 1.09$), blatant dehumanization ($\alpha = 0.78$; $M = 4.52$, $SD = 1.28$), support of the outgroup ($\alpha = 0.85$; $M = 3.93$, $SD = 1.50$), openness to future intergroup contact ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.92$), feeling at peace with the outgroup ($M = 3.26$, $SD =$

Table 3

Means (standard deviations in parentheses) for all investigated variables (Studies 2 and 3, grouped per experimental condition).

Study 2 (N = 200)	Meta-humanization	Meta-dehumanization	Control
Attribution of secondary emotions	4.43 (1.15) ^a	3.76 (1.01) ^b	3.77 (1.00) ^b
Blatant Dehumanization	3.88 (1.17) ^a	4.86 (1.14) ^b	4.84 (1.28) ^b
Outgroup Support	4.33 (1.49) ^a	3.76 (1.37) ^b	3.67 (1.57) ^b
Willingness for Contact	3.84 (1.85) ^a	2.73 (1.69) ^b	3.08 (2.00) ^b
Feeling at Peace	3.88 (2.29) ^a	2.85 (1.75) ^b	3.03 (1.99) ^b
Threat	4.42 (1.44) ^a	5.16 (1.39) ^b	5.15 (1.73) ^b
Intergroup Negotiation	4.69 (1.71) ^a	5.30 (1.32) ^b	5.28 (1.31) ^b
Study 3 (N = 990)	Meta-humanization	Meta-dehumanization	Control
Attribution of secondary emotions	4.01 (0.92) ^a	3.97 (1.00) ^a	4.20 (0.88) ^b
Blatant Dehumanization	3.70 (0.86) ^a	5.24 (0.75) ^b	5.20 (0.70) ^b
Outgroup Support	4.10 (1.08) ^a	2.85 (0.77) ^b	2.93 (0.65) ^b
Willingness for Contact	4.09 (1.65) ^a	2.76 (1.11) ^b	2.84 (0.93) ^b
Feeling at Peace	3.92 (1.71) ^a	2.78 (1.09) ^b	2.88 (0.91) ^b
Threat	3.68 (0.96) ^a	5.30 (1.59) ^b	5.32 (1.56) ^b
Intergroup Negotiation	3.70 (1.30) ^a	5.39 (1.86) ^b	5.56 (1.80) ^b

Note. Means with a different letter differ at least at $p < .05$.

Table 4

Correlations among continuous variables (Study 2).

Study 2 (N = 200)	Meta-humanization	Attribution of secondary emotions	Blatant Dehumanization	Outgroup Support	Willingness for Contact	Feeling at Peace	Threat	Intergroup Negotiation
Meta-humanization	-							
Attribution of secondary emotions	.103	-						
Blatant Dehumanization	-.301**	-.145*	-					
Outgroup Support	.125	.300**	-.629**	-				
Willingness for Contact	.206**	.048	-.399**	.356**	-			
Feeling at Peace	.236**	.001	-.393**	.338**	.843**	-		
Threat	-.408**	.133	.414**	-.205**	-.195**	-.196**	-	
Intergroup Negotiation	-.471**	.121	.183**	.024	-.026	-.073	.300**	-

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), while * correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). The meta-humanization variable represents the manipulation check scores in Study 2.

2.07), and support of intergroup negotiation ($r = 0.51$; $M = 5.08$, $SD = 1.48$). Also as in Study 1, we assessed the five items for perceived meta-humanization to check the effectiveness of our experimental manipulation ($\alpha = 0.93$; $M = 3.19$, $SD = 1.90$).

Intergroup Threat. To assess the perceived intergroup threat posed by their former adversary, participants responded to five items specially created to measure the degree of threat that they perceive from the outgroup (e.g., “I think that Serbia is always ready to start a new war” and “I think that Serbia is waiting for the right moment to attack Kosovo again”; $\alpha = 0.87$; $M = 4.91$, $SD = 1.55$).

Results

We conducted a full factorial ANOVA that compared the meta-humanization (-1), meta-dehumanization (+1), and control (2) conditions across all dependent variables. Table 3 displays the means and standard deviations. LSD comparisons were also employed as a post-hoc test to discern differences between the experimental conditions.

Manipulation checks

The ANOVA performed on perceived meta-humanization revealed that the main effect of our experimental manipulation was significant, $F(2, 197) = 10.58$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = 0.09$. LSD comparisons showed that participants perceived that the outgroup humanizes their ingroup more in the meta-humanization condition ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.82$) than in the meta-dehumanization condition ($M = 2.66$, $SD = 1.83$), $p < .001$, 95 % CI [.72, 1.96]³ and control condition ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 1.78$), $p < .001$, 95

% CI [.49, 1.73]. However, no significant differences emerged between meta-dehumanization and the control conditions, $p = .473$, 95 % CI [-.85, 0.39].

Attribution of Secondary Emotions. We found a significant effect of our experimental manipulation on attribution of secondary emotions to the outgroup, $F(2, 197) = 8.72$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = 0.08$. That is, participants attributed more secondary emotions to outgroup members in the meta-humanization condition ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 1.15$) than in the meta-dehumanization condition ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.00$), $p < .001$, 95 % CI [.30, 1.02] and control condition ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.01$), $p < .001$, 95 % CI [.29, 1.01]. Again, the meta-dehumanization and control conditions did not differ significantly, $p = .956$, 95 % CI [-.37, 0.35], with both conditions exhibiting infrahumanization of the outgroups.

Blatant Dehumanization. The ANOVA showed a significant effect of our experimental manipulation on blatant dehumanization, $F(2, 197) = 14.49$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = 0.12$. In particular, participants displayed less blatant dehumanization toward outgroup members in the meta-humanization condition ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 1.17$) than in the meta-dehumanization condition ($M = 4.86$, $SD = 1.14$), $p < .001$, 95 % CI [-1.38, -.56] and control condition ($M = 4.84$, $SD = 1.28$), $p < .001$, 95 % CI [-1.36, -.54]. Once again, the meta-dehumanization and control conditions did not differ significantly, $p = .923$, 95 % CI [-.39, 0.43].

Support of the Outgroup. The analysis showed a significant effect of our experimental manipulation on support of the outgroup, $F(2, 197) = 3.95$, $p = .021$, $\eta^2_p = 0.03$. Participants were more willing to support outgroup members (i.e., former opponents) in the meta-humanization condition ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.49$) than in the meta-dehumanization condition ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.37$), $p = .027$, 95 % CI [.06, 0.107] and the control condition ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.57$), $p = .010$, 95 % CI [.15, 1.16], and the meta-dehumanization and control conditions did not differ significantly, $p = .718$, 95 % CI [-.41, 0.60].

³ Please note that all 95% CIs pertain to the mean difference between the two conditions under comparison in Studies 2 and 3.

Openness to Future Intergroup Contact. The analysis showed a significant effect of our experimental manipulation on participants' openness to future intergroup contact, $F(2, 197) = 4.58, p = .011, \eta^2_p = 0.04$. On that count, participants' willingness for future intergroup contact was greater in the meta-humanization condition ($M = 3.84, SD = 1.95$) than in the meta-dehumanization condition ($M = 2.73, SD = 1.69$), $p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [.47, 1.75]$ and the control condition ($M = 3.08, SD = 2.00$), $p = .020, 95\% \text{ CI } [.12, 1.41]$. Once again, the meta-dehumanization and control conditions did not differ significantly, $p = .291, 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.00, 0.30]$.

Feeling at Peace. The ANOVA also showed a significant effect of our experimental manipulation on feelings of being at peace, $F(2, 197) = 4.96, p = .008, \eta^2_p = 0.04$. That is, participants felt more at peace with outgroup members in the meta-humanization condition ($M = 3.88, SD = 2.29$) than in the meta-dehumanization condition ($M = 2.85, SD = 1.75$), $p = .004, 95\% \text{ CI } [.34, 1.73]$ and the control condition ($M = 3.03, SD = 1.92$), $p = .016, 95\% \text{ CI } [.16, 1.54]$, and the meta-dehumanization and control conditions did not differ significantly, $p = .607, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.88, 0.51]$.

Intergroup Threat. The ANOVA also showed a significant effect of our experimental manipulation on perceived intergroup threat, $F(2, 197) = 5.10, p = .007, \eta^2_p = 0.04$. That is, participants perceived less threat in the meta-humanization condition ($M = 4.42, SD = 1.44$) than in the meta-dehumanization condition ($M = 5.16, SD = 1.39$), $p = .006, 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.21, -.21]$ and the control condition ($M = 5.15, SD = 1.73$), $p = .007, 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.24, -.20]$, and the meta-dehumanization and control conditions did not differ significantly, $p = .964, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.51, 0.53]$.

Support of Intergroup Negotiation. The analysis showed a significant effect of our experimental manipulation on support of intergroup negotiation, $F(2, 197) = 3.95, p = .029, \eta^2_p = 0.03$. In particular, participants supported negotiation with outgroup members less in the meta-humanization condition ($M = 4.69, SD = 1.71$) than in the meta-dehumanization condition ($M = 5.30, SD = 1.32$), $p = .020, 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.09, -.09]$ and the control condition ($M = 5.28, SD = 1.31$), $p = .023, 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.08, -.08]$. Once again, the meta-dehumanization and control conditions did not differ significantly, $p = .953, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.48, 0.51]$.

Mediation analyses

We ran mediation analyses to check whether the effects of the experimental manipulation (i.e., meta-humanization vs. meta-dehumanization vs. control) predicted the key dependent measures (i.e., support of the outgroup, openness to future intergroup contact, feeling at peace with the outgroup, perceived intergroup threat, and support of intergroup negotiation) via the mechanisms of the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization. Those mediation analyses were conducted using Model 4 in the PROCESS Macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2018) with 5000 bootstrapped samples. Process dummy-coding indicated that X1 would test the effect of the meta-humanization condition (i.e., coded as -1) versus the meta-dehumanization condition (i.e., coded as 1) on our primary dependent variables and that X2 would test its effect versus the control condition (i.e., coded as 0) on the same variables. The direct and indirect effects revealed by our analyses appear in Table 5.

For support of the outgroup, significant indirect effects were observed for both X1 and X2, mediated by both the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization. Regarding openness to future contact with outgroup members, a significant indirect effect of X1 was mediated by blatant dehumanization but not by the attribution of secondary emotions. Similarly, a significant indirect effect of X2 was mediated by blatant dehumanization but not by the attribution of secondary emotions.

Concerning feelings of peace, a significant indirect effect of X1 was mediated by blatant dehumanization but not by the attribution of secondary emotions. Similarly, a significant indirect effect of X2 was

Table 5 Standardized direct and unstandardized indirect effects of meta-humanization (vs. other conditions) via attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization (Study 2). Process dummy-coding indicated that X1 would test the effect of the meta-humanization condition (i.e., coded as -1) versus the meta-dehumanization condition (i.e., coded as 1) on our primary dependent variables and that X2 would test its effect versus the control condition (i.e., coded as 0) on the same variables.

	Study 2 (N = 200)		X1 (direct effects)		X2 (direct effects)		Attribution of secondary emotions (direct effects)		Blatant dehumanization (direct effects)		X1 (indirect effects via attribution of secondary emotions)		X2 (indirect effects via attribution of secondary emotions)		X1 (indirect effects via blatant dehumanization)		X2 (indirect effects via blatant dehumanization)	
	Effect (meta-humanization vs. meta-dehumanization)	Effect (meta-dehumanization vs. control)	Effect (meta-humanization vs. meta-dehumanization)	Effect (meta-dehumanization vs. control)	Effect (meta-humanization vs. meta-dehumanization)	Effect (meta-dehumanization vs. control)	Effect (SE)	95% CI	Effect (SE)	95% CI	Effect (SE)	95% CI	Effect (SE)	95% CI	Effect (SE)	95% CI	Effect (SE)	95% CI
Attribution of secondary emotions	-0.60, p = .001	-0.59, p = .001																
Blatant Dehumanization	0.76, p = .001	0.74, p < .001																
Outgroup Support	0.24, p = .083	0.16, p = .226	0.23, p < .001	0.23, p < .001	-0.63, p = .001	-0.63, p = .001	-0.14 (SE = 0.10)	[-0.25, -0.05]	-0.14 (SE = 0.10)	[-0.25, -0.05]	-0.48 (SE = 0.10)	[-0.69, -0.29]	-0.48 (SE = 0.10)	[-0.69, -0.29]	-0.47 (SE = 0.10)	[-0.68, -0.26]	-0.47 (SE = 0.10)	[-0.68, -0.26]
Willingness for Contact	-0.31, p = .065	-0.14, p = .404	-0.03, p = .597	-0.03, p = .597	-0.36, p < .001	-0.36, p < .001	.02 (SE = 0.05)	[-0.08, 0.13]	.02 (SE = 0.05)	[-0.08, 0.13]	-0.27 (SE = 0.07)	[-0.44, -0.14]	-0.27 (SE = 0.07)	[-0.44, -0.14]	-0.27 (SE = 0.07)	[-0.43, -0.12]	-0.27 (SE = 0.07)	[-0.43, -0.12]
Feeling at Peace	-0.27, p = .117	-0.18, p = .274	-0.08, p = .221	-0.08, p = .221	-0.36, p < .001	-0.36, p < .001	.04 (SE = 0.05)	[-0.03, .16]	.04 (SE = 0.05)	[-0.03, .16]	-0.27 (SE = 0.07)	[-0.44, -0.14]	-0.27 (SE = 0.07)	[-0.44, -0.14]	-0.27 (SE = 0.07)	[-0.44, -0.13]	-0.27 (SE = 0.07)	[-0.44, -0.13]
Threat	0.31, p = .063	0.30, p = .065	0.23, p = .001	0.23, p = .001	0.39, p < .001	0.39, p < .001	-0.13 (SE = 0.06)	[-0.28, -0.03]	-0.13 (SE = 0.06)	[-0.28, -0.03]	.30 (SE = 0.10)	[.13, 0.53]	.30 (SE = 0.10)	[.13, 0.53]	.29 (SE = 0.10)	[.12, 0.52]	.29 (SE = 0.10)	[.12, 0.52]
Intergroup Negotiation	-0.41, p = .023	0.40, p = .026	0.19, p = .006	0.19, p = .006	0.14, p = .053	0.14, p = .053	-0.11 (SE = 0.05)	[-0.24, -0.02]	-0.11 (SE = 0.05)	[-0.24, -0.02]	-0.10 (SE = 0.06)	[-0.24, -0.02]	-0.10 (SE = 0.06)	[-0.24, -0.02]	-0.10 (SE = 0.06)	[-0.24, -0.02]	-0.10 (SE = 0.06)	[-0.24, -0.02]

Note: Significant indirect effects are in bold.

mediated by blatant dehumanization but not by the attribution of secondary emotions. Regarding perceived intergroup threat, significant indirect effects of both X1 and X2 were observed via the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization.

Interestingly, and in contrast to Study 1, results for support of intergroup negotiation revealed a significant indirect effect of both X1 and X2 via the attribution of secondary emotions but not via blatant dehumanization.⁴

Alternative models

We ran alternative parallel mediation models wherein the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization served as outcomes, and support of the outgroup, support of intergroup negotiation, feeling at peace with the outgroup, openness to future contact with the outgroup, and intergroup threat served as mediators. Regarding both the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization, the results demonstrated a significant indirect effect of both X1 and X2 via only intergroup support and intergroup threat (see Supplementary Material). To replicate the results of Study 2 in a larger sample as a means to detect a small effect size, we conducted Study 3.

Discussion

In Study 2, we adopted an experimental approach, comparing meta-humanization conditions with meta-dehumanization and control conditions. We observed that participants in the meta-humanization condition, compared to those in other conditions, attributed more secondary emotions to the outgroup, displayed lower levels of blatant dehumanization, and reported increased support toward outgroup members, greater openness to intergroup contact, and lower perceived threat. However, this pattern did not hold true for intergroup negotiation; participants demonstrated more support for ingroup-outgroup negotiation in the meta-dehumanization and control conditions than in the meta-humanization condition.

In addition, parallel mediation analyses showed that the effect of meta-humanization on conciliatory attitudes, such as support for the outgroup and reduced perceived threat, was mediated by both the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization. However, the effect of meta-humanization on other conciliatory attitudes, such as openness to future contact with outgroup members and feelings of peace, was mediated solely by blatant dehumanization and not by the attribution of secondary emotions. Interestingly, the effect of meta-humanization on intergroup negotiation was mediated by the attribution of secondary emotions but not by blatant dehumanization. To further replicate these findings, account for meta-prejudice, and utilize a much larger sample size to test our model, we conducted Study 3.

⁴ While conducting mediation analyses with two items measuring support for intergroup negotiation, we observed that item 1 ("How willing would you be for Kosovo to enter into direct negotiations with Serbia?") produced similar results to those obtained using the composite score with these two items. However, item 2 ("Do you think that Kosovo should make a concerted effort to negotiate resolutions with Serbia?") did not yield comparable outcomes as the indirect effect was not significant via both mediators. However, it's noteworthy that these items still correlated with one another ($r = .51$). Moreover, consistent patterns of results were observed across Studies 1 and 3 when analyzing these items individually or together. Given these considerations, we decided to analyze them as a single composite score in Study 2, aligning with the approach taken in Studies 1 and 3. This approach allows us to account for the shared variance between the items while also providing a more comprehensive assessment of participants' attitudes toward negotiation between Kosovo and Serbia. Additionally, the consistency of results across multiple studies strengthens our confidence in the validity of this approach.

Study 3

As in Study 2, in Study 3, we experimentally tested the effect of meta-humanization (vs. the meta-dehumanization condition and control condition) mediated by the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization on support of the outgroup, feeling at peace with the outgroup, openness to future contact with the outgroup, support of intergroup negotiation, and perceived intergroup threat.⁵ In Study 3, we controlled for meta-prejudice, which was not considered in previous studies.

Method

Participants and procedure

A priori G-power analyses for a fixed-effects, omnibus, one-way ANOVA, assuming an α value of 0.05 and a power estimate of 0.80, indicated that we need to recruit approximately 969 participants for Study 3. Therefore, we recruited 990 Kosovan Albanian participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 30.31$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 6.65$) in person in public places (i.e., squares and cafeterias) in several cities in Kosovo. We also conducted a sensitivity analysis using G*Power (version 3.1.9.2) for the same ANOVA, which revealed that our final sample was powered enough to detect an effect size of $d = 0.18$, which conventionally indicates a small effect size (Faul et al., 2009) assuming an α value of 0.05 and a power estimate of 0.80. Correlations between the continuous measures used in Study 3 appear in Table 6, whereas means for the dependent measures, with standard deviations in parentheses, appear in Table 3.

Experimental manipulation and measures

As in Study 2, participants in Study 3 were first exposed to experimental manipulation in a meta-humanization ($n = 330$), meta-dehumanization ($n = 330$), or control ($n = 330$) condition, after which they completed a measure of the attribution of secondary emotions ($\alpha = 0.76$; $M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.94$), blatant dehumanization ($\alpha = 0.82$; $M = 4.72$, $SD = 1.05$), support for the outgroup ($\alpha = 0.74$; $M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.03$), openness to future intergroup contact ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.40$), feeling at peace with the outgroup ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 1.38$), support of intergroup negotiation ($r = 0.75$; $M = 4.88$, $SD = 1.87$), and perceived intergroup threat ($\alpha = 0.91$; $M = 4.77$, $SD = 1.60$). Perceived meta-humanization was also assessed as in Studies 1 and 2 ($\alpha = 0.88$; $M = 3.08$, $SD = 1.49$), and we additionally measured meta-prejudice using two items (i.e., "Serbs feel cold toward Kosovo Albanians" and "Serbs do not have positive attitudes toward Kosovo Albanians"; $r = 0.74$; $M = 4.80$, $SD = 1.35$).

Results

Manipulation checks

The ANOVA performed on perceived meta-humanization revealed that the main effect of our experimental manipulation was significant, $F(2987) = 184.37$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = 0.27$. LSD comparisons showed that participants perceived that they were humanized more by the outgroup in the meta-humanization condition ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 1.10$) than in the meta-dehumanization condition ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 1.36$), $p < .001$, 95 % CI [1.46, 1.85] and the control condition ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 1.34$), $p < .001$, 95 % CI [1.44, 1.83]. However, no significant differences emerged between the meta-dehumanization and control conditions, $p = .841$, 95 % CI [-.21, 0.17].

The ANOVA performed on perceived meta-prejudice indicated the main effect of our experimental manipulation was significant, $F(2987) = 128.05$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = 0.20$. Participants reported less meta-prejudice in the meta-humanization condition ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.23$) than in the meta-dehumanization condition ($M = 5.41$, $SD = 1.58$), $p < .001$, 95

⁵ Study 3 was pre-registered (<https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/53CR7>).

Table 6
Correlations among continuous variables (Study 3).

Study 3 (N = 990)	Meta- humanization	Attribution of secondary emotions	Blatant Dehumanization	Outgroup Support	Willingness for Contact	Feeling at Peace	Threat	Intergroup Negotiation	Meta- Prejudice
Meta-Humanization	-								
Attribution of secondary emotions	-.307**	-							
Blatant Dehumanization	-.660**	.159**	-						
Outgroup Support	.406**	.033	-.600**	-					
Willingness for Contact	.176**	.153**	-.384**	.531**	-				
Feeling at Peace	.126**	.159**	-.339**	.447**	.683**	-			
Threat	-.734**	.382**	.653**	-.339**	-.111**	-.078*	-		
Intergroup Negotiation	-.687**	.379**	.614**	-.304**	-.007	.021	.733**	-	
Meta-Prejudice	-.654**	.349**	.643**	-.417**	-.153**	-.136**	.758**	.716**	-

Note: Correlation is significant at either the 0.01 level (2-tailed) or the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
The meta-humanization variable represents the manipulation check scores in Study 3.

% CI [-1.95, -1.48] and the control condition ($M = 5.30$, $SD = 1.76$), $p < .001$, 95 % CI [-1.84, -1.37]. However, no significant differences surfaced between meta-dehumanization and control conditions, $p = .352$, 95 % CI [-.12, 0.34].

Attribution of secondary emotions. The analysis showed a significant effect of our experimental manipulation on the attribution of secondary emotions, $F(2987) = 5.60$, $p = .004$, $\eta^2_p = 0.01$, namely that participants attributed a similar level of secondary emotions to outgroup members in both the meta-humanization ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.92$) and meta-dehumanization conditions ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.00$), $p = .530$, 95 % CI [-.09, .18]. However, they attributed more secondary emotions to outgroup members in the control condition ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.88$) than in the meta-humanization condition, $p = .011$, 95 % CI [-.32, -.04], and meta-dehumanization condition, $p = .002$, 95 % CI [-.37, -.08].

Blatant Dehumanization. The analysis also revealed a significant effect of our experimental manipulation on blatant dehumanization, $F(2987) = 418.40$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = 0.45$: participants displayed less blatant dehumanization toward outgroup members in the meta-humanization condition ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.86$) than in the meta-dehumanization condition ($M = 5.24$, $SD = 0.75$), $p < .001$, 95 % CI [-1.65, -1.42]. They also displayed less blatant dehumanization in the meta-humanization condition than in the control condition ($M = 5.20$, $SD = 0.70$), $p < .001$, 95 % CI [-1.61, -1.38]. The meta-dehumanization and control conditions did not differ significantly, $p = .516$, 95 % CI [-.07, 0.15].

Support of the Outgroup. The analysis showed a significant effect of our experimental manipulation, $F(2987) = 219.06$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = 0.30$. In particular, participants were more willing to support outgroup members in the meta-humanization condition ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 1.08$) than in the meta-dehumanization condition ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 0.77$), $p < .001$, 95 % CI [1.11, 1.37] and the control condition ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 0.65$), $p < .001$, 95 % CI [1.04, 1.30]. Moreover, the meta-dehumanization and control conditions did not differ significantly, $p = .260$, 95 % CI [-.20, 0.05].

Openness to Future Intergroup Contact. The analysis showed a significant effect of our experimental manipulation on openness to future intergroup contact, $F(2987) = 113.69$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = 0.18$. On that count, participants' willingness for future intergroup contact was greater in the meta-humanization condition ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 1.65$) than in the meta-dehumanization condition ($M = 2.76$, $SD = 1.11$), $p < .001$, 95 % CI [1.13, 1.52] and the control condition ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 0.93$), $p < .001$, 95 % CI [1.06, 1.45]. Again, the meta-dehumanization and control conditions did not differ significantly, $p = .444$, 95 % CI [-.27, 0.12].

Feeling at Peace. The analysis additionally showed a significant effect of our experimental manipulation on feelings of being at peace, $F(2987) = 79.06$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = 0.13$. In particular, participants felt more at peace with outgroup members in the meta-humanization condition ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 1.71$) than in the meta-dehumanization condition ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.09$), $p < .001$, 95 % CI [0.94, 1.34] and the

control condition ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 0.91$), $p < .001$, 95 % CI [.85, 1.24]. The meta-dehumanization and control conditions also did not differ significantly, $p = .335$, 95 % CI [-.29, 0.10].

Intergroup Threat. The analysis showed a significant effect of our experimental manipulation on perceived intergroup threat, $F(2987) = 147.43$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = 0.23$. Participants perceived less threat in the meta-humanization condition ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.96$) than in the meta-dehumanization condition ($M = 5.30$, $SD = 1.59$), $p < .001$, 95 % CI [-1.82, -1.39] and the control condition ($M = 5.32$, $SD = 1.56$), $p < .001$, 95 % CI [-1.85, -1.42]. Beyond that, the meta-dehumanization and control conditions did not differ significantly, $p = .791$, 95 % CI [-.24, 0.18].

Support of Intergroup Negotiation. The analysis showed a significant effect of our experimental manipulation on support of intergroup negotiation, $F(2987) = 123.98$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = 0.20$. In that regard, participants supported negotiations with outgroup members less in the meta-humanization condition ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.30$) than in the meta-dehumanization condition ($M = 5.39$, $SD = 1.86$), $p < .001$, 95 % CI [-1.94, -1.43] and the control condition ($M = 5.56$, $SD = 1.80$), $p < .001$, 95 % CI [-2.11, -1.60]. Once again, the meta-dehumanization and control conditions did not differ significantly, $p = .206$, 95 % CI [-.42, 0.91].

Mediation analyses

As in Study 2, we ran mediation analyses in Study 3 to check whether the effects of the experimental manipulation (i.e., meta-humanization vs. meta-dehumanization vs. control) predicted the key dependent measures (i.e., support of the outgroup, openness to future intergroup contact, feeling at peace with the outgroup, perceived intergroup threat, and support of intergroup negotiation) via the mechanisms of the attribution of secondary emotions and dehumanization while controlling for meta-prejudice. Process dummy-coding indicated that X1 would test the effect of the meta-humanization condition (i.e., coded as -1) versus the meta-dehumanization condition (i.e., coded as 1) on our primary dependent variables and that X2 would test the effect of the meta-humanization condition versus control condition (i.e., coded as 0) on those same variables. The direct and indirect effects revealed by our analyses appear in Table 7.

In terms of support for the outgroup, the results showed a significant indirect effect of X1 through the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization. Similarly, the effect of X2 was also mediated by the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization.

Regarding openness to future contact with outgroup members, the results revealed significant indirect effects of both X1 and X2 via the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization. Concerning feelings of peace, the results showed significant indirect effects of both X1 and X2 via the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization.

Consistent with Study 2, the results regarding perceived intergroup threat demonstrated significant indirect effects of both X1 and X2 via the

Table 7

Standardized direct and unstandardized indirect effects of meta-humanization (vs. other conditions) via attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization (Study 3). Process dummy-coding indicated that X1 would test the effect of the meta-humanization condition (i.e., coded as -1) versus the meta-dehumanization condition (i.e., coded as 1) on our primary dependent variables and that X2 would test its effect versus the control condition (i.e., coded as 0) on the same variables.

Study 3 (N = 990)	X1 (direct effects)	X2 (direct effects)	Meta-prejudice (Covariate)	Attribution of secondary emotions (direct effects)	Blatant dehumanization (direct effects)	X1 (indirect effects via attribution of secondary emotions)	X2 (indirect effects via attribution of secondary emotions)	X1 (indirect effects via blatant dehumanization)	X2 (indirect effects via blatant dehumanization)
	Effect (meta- humanization vs. meta- dehumanization)	Effect (meta- humanization vs. control)	Effect	Effect	Effect	Effect (SE) [95 % CI]	Effect (SE) [95 % CI]	Effect (SE) [95 % CI]	Effect (SE) [95 % CI]
Attribution of secondary emotions	-0.46, $p < .001$	-0.19, $p = .012$	0.42, $p < .001$						
Blatant Dehumanization	1.03, $p < .001$	1.02, $p < .001$	0.42, $p < .001$						
Outgroup Support	-0.53, $p < .001$	-0.52, $p < .001$	-0.10, $p = .002$	0.13, $p < .001$	-0.38, $p < .001$	-0.06 (SE = 0.02) [-0.11, -0.02]	-0.02 (SE = 0.01) [-0.06, -0.01]	-0.39 (SE = 0.05) [-0.51, -0.29]	-0.39 (SE = 0.05) [-0.50, -0.28]
Willingness for Contact	-0.63, $p < .001$	-0.62, $p < .001$	0.09, $p = .011$	0.17, $p < .001$	-0.27, $p < .001$	-0.08 (SE = 0.02) [-0.13, -0.03]	-0.03 (SE = 0.01) [-0.07, -0.01]	-0.28 (SE = 0.06) [-0.40, -0.16]	-0.27 (SE = 0.06) [-0.39, -0.15]
Feeling at Peace	-0.51, $p < .001$	-0.49, $p < .001$	0.07, $p = .071$	0.18, $p < .001$	-0.25, $p < .001$	-0.08 (SE = 0.02) [-0.14, -0.03]	-0.03 (SE = 0.01) [-0.07, -0.01]	-0.26 (SE = 0.06) [-0.38, -0.13]	-0.25 (SE = 0.06) [-0.37, -0.13]
Threat	0.14, $p = .014$	0.16, $p = .004$	0.50, $p < .001$	0.16, $p < .001$	0.25, $p < .001$	-0.07 (SE = 0.02) [-0.12, -0.03]	-0.03 (SE = 0.01) [-0.06, -0.01]	.26 (SE = 0.04) [.16, .36]	.25 (SE = 0.04) [.16, 0.35]
Intergroup Negotiation	0.09, $p = .164$	0.17, $p = .006$	0.47, $p < .001$	0.17, $p < .001$	0.23, $p < .001$	-0.07 (SE = 0.02) [-0.13, -0.03]	-0.03 (SE = 0.01) [-0.07, -0.01]	.24 (SE = 0.05) [.15, .35]	.24 (SE = 0.04) [.15, 0.34]

Note: Significant indirect effects are in bold.

attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization. Lastly, regarding support for intergroup negotiation, the results revealed significant indirect effects of both X1 and X2 via the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization.

Alternative models

Also, as in Study 2, we ran alternative parallel mediation models wherein the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization served as outcomes, and support of the outgroup, support of intergroup negotiation, feeling at peace with the outgroup, openness to future contact with the outgroup, and intergroup threat served as mediators.

Regarding both the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization, the results demonstrated a significant indirect effect of both X1 and X2 via all these variables (see Supplementary Material).

Discussion

Study 3 compared the meta-humanization conditions to meta-dehumanization and a control condition while controlling for meta-prejudice. Unlike Study 2, participants in the control condition attributed more secondary emotions to the outgroup than those in the meta-humanization and meta-dehumanization conditions. Consistent with Study 2, participants in the meta-humanization condition exhibited lower levels of blatant dehumanization compared to both other conditions. They also reported increased support for outgroup members, greater openness to intergroup contact, and lower perceived threat. However, as observed in Study 2, this pattern did not hold true for intergroup negotiation, as participants demonstrated more support for ingroup-outgroup negotiation in the meta-dehumanization and control conditions than in the meta-humanization condition.

Parallel mediation analyses in Study 3 replicated the findings of Study 2, showing that the effect of meta-humanization on conciliatory attitudes, such as support for the outgroup and reduced perceived threat, was mediated by both the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization. Additionally, in Study 3, this mediation effect was also observed for openness to future contact with outgroup members and feelings of peace. Furthermore, consistent with Study 2, the effect of meta-humanization on intergroup negotiation was mediated by the attribution of secondary emotions and, in Study 3, also by blatant dehumanization.

General discussion

In three studies, we investigated whether the effect of meta-humanization, whether assessed as an individual difference (Study 1) or experimentally manipulated (Studies 2 & 3), on support for the outgroup, openness to future intergroup contact, peace with the outgroup, and support for intergroup negotiation, was mediated by mechanisms involving the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization. In Studies 2 and 3, we also examined the impact of meta-humanization (versus meta-dehumanization and control conditions) on perceived intergroup threat via both the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization and, in Study 3, while controlling for meta-prejudice.

While Study 1, employing a correlational design, revealed a negative association between meta-humanization and blatant dehumanization, it also demonstrated positive associations with other variables, such as support for the outgroup, openness to future intergroup contact, feeling at peace with the outgroup, and support for intergroup negotiation. However, no significant relationship was found between meta-humanization and the attribution of secondary emotions. In Studies 2 and 3, the meta-humanization condition was experimentally manipulated and compared to both meta-dehumanization and the control condition. Results indicated that participants in the meta-humanization condition exhibited lower levels of blatant dehumanization toward the

outgroup. Additionally, they demonstrated increased support for the outgroup, greater openness to intergroup contact, and reported feeling more at peace with outgroup members compared to those in both the meta-dehumanization and control conditions.

Findings regarding the attribution of secondary emotions were inconsistent across these studies. In Study 2, meta-humanization (vs. other conditions) predicted a greater attribution of human emotions. This contrasted with Study 3, where a similar pattern was observed for the control condition. Moreover, in both Studies 2 and 3, meta-humanization (vs. other conditions) resulted in less support for intergroup negotiations. Finally, in both studies, meta-humanization (vs. other conditions) resulted in less perceived threat.

Regarding the underlying mechanisms, we observed that the effect of meta-humanization on support for outgroup members was mediated via blatant dehumanization (i.e., in all studies) and the attribution of secondary emotions (i.e., in Study 2 and partly in Study 3). The same was true for greater openness to future contact and a feeling of peace with outgroup members; however, the mechanism via the attribution of secondary emotions was observed only in Study 3. Furthermore, meta-humanization mediated via both blatant dehumanization and the attribution of secondary emotions predicted intergroup threat in both studies, despite the lack of a total effect of meta-humanization on the attribution of secondary emotions observed in Study 3. Relatedly, meta-humanization mediated via both blatant dehumanization (only in Study 2) and the attribution of secondary emotions (Studies 2 & 3) predicted support for intergroup negotiation.

Our findings have implications for theories in various areas of research. Previous studies have demonstrated that meta-humanization enhances intergroup relations by reducing prejudice and dehumanization while also enhancing humanization (Borinca, Tropp, and Ofosu, 2021; Kteily et al., 2016; Pavetich and Stathi, 2021). Our research extends that work by revealing that, compared with meta-dehumanization and control conditions, meta-humanization increases support of the outgroup and fosters a greater willingness for intergroup contact and feelings of peace. Moreover, in contrast to other conditions, meta-humanization decreased perceived intergroup threat.

Using a parallel mediation model, our findings clarified for which specific outgroup outcomes dehumanization and the attribution of secondary emotions mediate the effect of meta-humanization (Borinca, Van Assche, et al., 2023; Kteily and Landry, 2022). While blatant dehumanization was a stronger and more consistent mediator for the effect of meta-humanization on support for outgroup members, openness to future contact, and a feeling of peace with outgroup members, the attribution of secondary emotions was a stronger and more consistent mediator for the effect of meta-humanization on intergroup threat and negotiation. The differential effects of these mediators should be taken into account in future research.

Notably, our research additionally revealed that the meta-humanization condition, compared to both the meta-dehumanization and control conditions, failed to enhance support for negotiations with outgroup members. On that count, participants exhibited a reduced willingness to support negotiations with outgroup members when exposed to the meta-humanization condition in contrast to the meta-dehumanization and control conditions. The possible reasons for that effect are multifaceted. Meta-dehumanization, whether occurring inherently (i.e., as in the control condition) or induced experimentally, may activate a collective motivation within the victim group to ameliorate the overall group's condition (Tajfel et al., 1979; Tausch et al., 2015). Such activation may have translated into increased support for ingroup actions at the group level, as seen in the greater support for dialogue between Kosovans and their former perpetrator.

By contrast, the meta-humanization condition might have triggered the so-called irony of harmony principle. In that light, if the outgroup is perceived as humanizing the ingroup, then individuals may interpret it as affirming that everything is already harmonious and no further discussion or negotiation is needed (Greenland et al., 2020). Another factor

contributing to reduced support for negotiations in the meta-humanization condition could relate to the perception of a diminished threat or diminished urgency. Unlike meta-dehumanization, which may heighten a sense of urgency in the victim group to address and improve their overall condition, meta-humanization may create a perception of an already harmonious environment. Consequently, participants might have felt less compelled to actively support negotiations due to perceiving the ingroup–outgroup dynamics as being less contentious or pressing. That complex dynamic adds depth to current understandings of the effects of meta-humanization (vs. meta-dehumanization) on support for intergroup negotiation and the responses at play, including greater support for ingroup actions at the group level. Qualitative studies could further shed light on the specific motivations behind (not) supporting intergroup negotiation.

At a practical level, our findings emphasize the importance of conflict resolution between Kosovo and Serbia as a means to foster peace worldwide. Its significance becomes even more evident in the context of current global conflicts (e.g., Russia vs. Ukraine and Israel vs. Palestine), which illustrates the imperative for all nations to cooperate in countering threats to humanity and world peace (Gardner, 2022; Mier y Teran, 2024).

Future research has the potential to build upon our contributions by addressing the limitations identified in our studies. First, although Study 1 demonstrated acceptable reliability for blatant dehumanization ($\alpha = 0.62$), it is important to note that reliability estimates can vary across different studies due to various factors. Despite this limitation, the consistent and robust findings of blatant dehumanization across Studies 2 and 3, with higher reliability estimates ($\alpha = 0.78$ and $\alpha = 0.82$, respectively), contribute to our measure's overall reliability and validity. The convergence of results across multiple studies strengthens our confidence in the reliability of the measure and underscores its consistency in capturing blatant dehumanization. Second, we investigated parallel mediation with both the attribution of secondary emotions and outgroup dehumanization as mediators in our model. It is important to approach conclusions cautiously regarding cross-sectional mediations, as there may be further explanations for the relationship between meta-humanization and the investigated intergroup outcomes (Fiedler et al., 2011). Third, while we used two items to assess intergroup negotiation, which produced different patterns of results compared to conciliatory attitudes, future research should focus on establishing more specific measures for intergroup negotiation, as it is one of the most relevant aspects of the conflict resolution and reconciliation process. Also, our findings stem from a correlational–experimental design within a specific post-conflict context. Hence, researchers should replicate and build upon our results through diverse research designs and across various intergroup settings.

Fourth, our examination was restricted to the perspective of the victim group, focusing solely on Kosovo-Albanians, who are recognized as the victim group in the Kosovo war (Judah, 2008). Future studies should endeavor to incorporate perspectives from both the victim and perpetrator groups to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics involved. Last, although we controlled for meta-prejudice in Study 3, we did not account for prejudice (i.e., bias against the outgroup) or outgroup liking (i.e., positive feelings toward the outgroup) in our analysis (Borinca, Falomir-Pichastor, Andrighetto et al., 2021; Borinca, Tropp, and Ofofu, 2021). Therefore, future research should seek to replicate these findings while controlling for these relevant factors.

Conclusion

Our findings across the three studies provide valuable insights into the impact of meta-humanization on intergroup relations, particularly in the post-conflict context of Kosovo. The results consistently demonstrate that fostering a sense of meta-humanization, wherein both the ingroup and outgroup are perceived as being equally evolved and civilized, improves intergroup relations and reconciliation but does not necessarily enhance

intergroup negotiation. Those positive outcomes include heightened support of the outgroup, increased openness to future intergroup contact, and a diminished perceived intergroup threat. Furthermore, our findings clarify the positive and negative intergroup outcomes predicted by meta-humanization via the underlying mechanisms of the attribution of secondary emotions and blatant dehumanization.

Ethics

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. The ethics approval was issued by the first author's second affiliation.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors have declared no conflicts of interest.

Data availability

Data are available on OSF (<https://www.osf.io/q378g/>).

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Supplementary materials

Supplementary material associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at [doi:10.1016/j.cresp.2024.100198](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cresp.2024.100198).

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