

## FROM ONE NEST TO ANOTHER: HOW DOES ATTACHMENT STYLE RELATE TO ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS IN-GROUP ATTACHMENT FOR BOSNIAN-HERZEGOVINIAN YOUTH?

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### Abstract

This study builds on a long-standing interest in (social) psychological outcomes of adolescent attachment styles and attachment patterns with parents. One of the outcomes I explored is in-group identification and in-group attachment, which are especially salient in the divided society of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The present cross-sectional study involved a stratified convenience sample of 735 participants (51.7 % female), aged 16 to 21 years ( $M= 18.72$ ,  $SD=1.54$ ). A significant positive correlation was found between current attachment style and in-group identification ( $r=.17$ ,  $p<.01$  for ethnic, and  $r=.13$ ,  $p<.05$  for religious). The present study points to further investigations and subsequent cross-field theoretical advancements regarding the possible effects of attachment on group identification and group attachment.

**Keywords:** attachment style; in-group identification in-group attachment; identity; Bosnia and Herzegovina; youth

## Introduction

Although primarily risen from a developmental psychological perspective, the concept of attachment has been applied to other contexts as well, such as interpersonal, social, and political settings. The present study aims to examine the relevance of attachment perspectives to understand youth in-group identification and in-group attachment in a post-conflict society, Bosnia and Herzegovina, characterized by a constant reiteration of identity-based division<sup>1</sup>. Albeit identity development in adolescence is a normative process, there are important differences on an individual, group, and cultural level (Motti-Stefanidi, 2015). This article examines some individual differences that might be associated with social identification, more specifically, the correlations between both current attachment style and retrospective parental caregiving attachment styles, with the strength of ethnic and religious in-group identification and in-group attachment. My objective is therefore to explore whether an individual's level of in-group identification/in-group attachment is associated with their self-report measures of attachment style.

Originally, Bowlby (1973) proposed infants' innate behavioral system strives to maintain proximity with the primary caregiver, to provide survival and security. Such attachment behaviors activate the caregivers' complementary behaviors of protection, creating a particular relationship pattern between the two. Based on these primary attachment experiences with caregivers, an internal working model is established that includes the mental representation of the self, a significant other, as well as the infant's relationship with them. This internal model becomes a part of a developing personality, on which subsequent representations of the self, the world, and the others, are based (Bowlby, 1973; Munholland, 2008). If primary

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<sup>1</sup>Ethnic identity is explicitly mentioned in the constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which states that there are three constituent peoples: Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats. Regarding religious affiliation, Bosniaks are predominantly Muslim, Serbs are Orthodox Christian, while Croats are Catholic.

caregivers consistently provide comfort from distress, a secure attachment is fostered. On the other hand, caregivers who do not respond to children's needs and seem unreliable, tend to contribute to the development of insecure types of attachment. While securely attached infants use their primary attachment figures as a *secure base* from which to explore the environment (Ainsworth, 1985), the insecurely attached ones seem to be burdened by the relationship and lack confidence to do the same. In the following sections, I will briefly present basic tenets of attachment perspectives relevant for understanding the current study. Subsequently, I will tackle the links of attachment theory with social identification variables.

### **Attachment types**

Over several decades, extensive research on various age groups established three major attachment patterns: secure, avoidant, and anxious/ambivalent (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). However, depending on the measurement type and the age of the subjects, other patterns or styles have been proposed as well, for example, disorganized in children and infants, and avoidant/fearful in adults. More commonly, attachment has been conceptualized through two underlying dimensions, anxiety and avoidance (Fraley et al., 2011), enabling a continuous rather than categorical measurement. The secure attachment pattern includes a sense of trust in the significant other and their availability in case of distress. The avoidant (or dismissive) attachment pattern, on the other hand, is characterized by discomfort when being close to others and depending on them. Avoidantly attached infants and children ignore their primary caregiver, and are neither distressed when separated from them, nor show joy when reunited. Ambivalently attached adults exhibit hyperactive and anxious attachment behavior, they fear abandonment, but at the same time, they wish to be close with other people (Hazan & Shaver, 1990). Notwithstanding the complexity of available taxonomies in the literature on attachment, this study will use the terms secure, avoidant, and ambivalent attachment style. It seems that over time some attachment

figures' functions diversify and may come to include romantic partners, friends, coworkers, etc. Moreover, it is proposed that over the lifespan, even other entities like God, leaders, and different social structures and groups may hold similar functions to that of a secure base (see Mayseless & Popper, 2007). Therefore, people may rely on these entities for protection and security, social order, predictability, and fulfillment of their basic needs (Mayseless & Popper, 2007). Bowlby (1982) argued that "a school or college, a workgroup, religious group, or a political group can come to constitute for many people a subordinate attachment 'figure' and for some people a principal attachment "figure" (p. 207). Therefore, the attachment pattern developed with caregivers seems to be relevant not only for interpersonal but also for sociopolitical contexts. In that sense, a bulk of studies have shown that the attachment style affects not only interpersonal relationships and processes but also political and ideological orientation (Gaziano, 2017; Koleva & Rip, 2009). Most correlational studies have linked secure attachment to conservatism or its covariants and, on the other hand, insecure attachment with liberalism or its covariants (see Koleva & Rip, 2009).

### **Application of attachment theory to social psychology**

An internal working model of the self and others might be considered a general concept, and therefore applicable in many contexts. However, although it is not unprecedented to apply a theory or a concept from one area to another, the expansion of a primarily developmental attachment theory in the social-psychological realm has not generated "convincing theoretical integration" (Boccatto & Capozza, 2011, p. 26) so far. Likewise, there has been criticism of attempts to use Bowlby's (1982) and Ainsworth's (1985) perspectives as a general framework for understanding human security or personality, arguing that the attachment concept refers to very specific phenomena within the relationship context (Waters & Cummings, 2000). Still, the interest of social psychologists in this application remains evident in the past two decades (Boccatto & Capozza, 2011; Koleva & Rip, 2009; May-

seless & Popper, 2007). Regardless of that, studies specifically addressing attachment style and in-group identification have been less common. One of the rare studies explicitly tackling this is a study by Milanov et al. (2013), which found participants with a secure attachment style to have a significantly higher social identification compared to participants with a dismissive-avoidant attachment.

### **Group belonging, identification, and attachment pattern**

The present study seeks to explore how attachment relates to one of the key psychosocial variables, social identity, more specifically, ethnic, and religious identity. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) proposes that by categorizing the self into social units an individual satisfies basic psychological needs, among which is the achievement of a positive self-concept. Studies of adolescents have indeed found correlations between social identity and numerous variables relevant to their development (Sani, 2012). Regarding attachment, group belonging seems to be fundamental for survival in the same way as closeness to a caregiver (Boccatto & Capozza, 2011). Group membership may satisfy the definitional criteria for attachment, namely, (a) a group can be the target of searching for proximity, especially in times of need; (b) a group can satisfy the needs for support, (c) a group can facilitate exploration and the practice of social and emotional skills (Rom & Mikulincer, 2003). There is empirical evidence that attachment style affects individuals' perceptions of similarity with others (Mikulincer et al., 1998), which is at the core of in-group identification.

The *correspondence hypothesis* posits that securely attached individuals tend to form secure attachment ties with groups, applying internal models accordingly, i.e., considering themselves as valuable members and others as trustworthy fellow members of the group. When threatened individually, they rely on other group members for support. Lower attachment anxiety is indeed associated with higher identification with groups (Crisp et

al., 2008). In a pioneer experimental study, Smith et al. (1999) empirically established that anxiety and avoidance emerge as underlying dimensions in group attachment. Individuals who scored higher in anxiety showed over-preoccupation with acceptance by valued groups, and therefore tried to conform to their prototypes. On the contrary, individuals scoring high in avoidance considered closeness to groups undesirable, and avoided ties or dependence, focusing their efforts on acting independently. Securely attached individuals, i.e., those scoring low on both anxiety and avoidance, perceived group membership as valuable and expected acceptance. The same research showed that insecure attachment was negatively correlated with group identification. Security is also associated with harmonious relations with outgroups (Koleva & Rip, 2009). Experimental activation of a secure attachment scheme triggers fewer negative reactions to other groups (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2001). In sum, although groups lack a clear attachment figure per se, similar background attachment dynamics are suggested (Mayselless & Popper, 2007).

I expect that attachment style will affect in-group identification and in-group attachment since these social-psychological concepts represent an extension of the self-concept to include the group (Roccas et al., 2006). This is based on the correspondence hypothesis, according to which individual differences in in-group identification and in-group attachment parallel those in attachment style (Mayselless & Popper, 2007) and the theoretical concept of the internal working model of the self and others,

### **The present study**

Building on the attachment-fulfilling functions of groups, the present study seeks to expand the scope by including larger social formations and identification with them. In-group identification is defined as the degree to which people's membership in a social group is psychologically affecting and socially consequential (Ellemers et al., 2002). If interaction with primary

caregivers experienced in childhood affects trust beliefs later on, my rationale is that it also affects the relationship with groups that are lower in entitativity, even if it is only in terms of identification strength. Although in this case close emotional bonds are made only with a limited number of members of such social groups, young people nevertheless develop strong symbolic relationships with them, since they are becoming a part of one's identity. Therefore, the strength of in-group identification/attachment may reflect differences in attachment.

Consequently, by making this “leap” and examining the role of attachment in in-group identification and in-group attachment, the current study presents a cross-breed between developmental psychology, social psychology, and sociology. So far, a convincing theoretical integration of attachment theory with group psychology is lacking (Boccatto & Capozza, 2011). Therefore, this study adds to current efforts to understand the attachment basis of in-group identification, especially considering the scarcity of studies addressing this issue. Furthermore, exploration of attachment impact on in-group identification seems to be an especially relevant endeavor in a socio-politically fragile and complex context that is Bosnia and Herzegovina, marked by chronic ethnic and/or religious identity salience. Involving conceptually and empirically different constructs, this study seeks to explore how both current attachment style and retrospective parental caregiving attachment styles, affect levels of ethnic/religious in-group identification. No similar studies exploring the association of attachment style with in-group identification have been conducted with a sample including Bosnian-Herzegovinian youth. I expect that this study will shed light on potential determinants of young people's ties to the group.

## Methods

### *Sample*

A stratified convenience sample of 735 adolescents was recruited in junior high, senior high, and university freshman classes. Strata were created based on official data of the most recent census (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2016) socio-demographic characteristics of age group 16 to 20 (involvement in education, type of education, urban/rural area). The main part of the sample recruited through public educational institutions was supplemented through exponential snowball sampling in case of underrepresentation of some strata. The sample included 735 adolescents, 380 (51.7 %) of which were female. The age of the participants ranged from 16 to 21 years ( $M= 18.72$ ,  $SD=1.54$ ). 62.7 % of the sample were secondary school students, 32.9 % university students, and the rest 4.4% were neither. 53.3% of the participants resided in rural areas. Most of the participants come from two-parent families (88.2%), 10.9% from single-parent families, and 1% of them lived with guardians.

### *Procedure*

The questionnaire was administered in accordance with ethical principles of psychological research from December 2017 to May 2018, following the approval of the ethical committee from the International University of Sarajevo. Participants were informed about the research objective and no coercion to participate was used. It was made clear that anyone could quit participation at any point of the survey administration. Participants were guaranteed anonymity as well as safeguarding the materials. The questionnaire was administered during regular class time.

### *Instruments*

1. Socio-demographic/family questionnaire including personal and familial variables: age, gender, year of study, GPA, place of residence, family composition (two-parent, single-parent, or guardian family), number of



family members, level of parents' education, parental employment status, subjective assessment of family's financial situation, family composition history, data about adverse experiences (separation from parents, loss of home, loss of a family member or a loved one, domestic violence targeted at other family members, domestic violence targeted at oneself, serious illness).

2. Collective Identification Scale is aimed at measuring in-group identification and in-group attachment, i.e., one's positive feelings about the group. It combines a nominal group identity question for assessing primary group identification (*"People see themselves in many different ways. Using this list, which one best describes you?"*) (a) Bosniak, Croat, Serb, Roma, Jew, or some other ethnic group; (b) Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic, or some other religious group; (c) I do not see myself as a part of a particular group, with Likert-type items assessing strength of these associations i.e. in-group attachment. Two items from Doosje et al. (1995) were adapted to the Bosnian-Herzegovinian context with two additional items included to tap religious identification equivalently: (a) "My ethnic/religious background is very important to me." (b) "I am proud of my ethnic/religious background." Participants were asked to indicate the level of agreement with these statements on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The study yielded a high internal consistency of the instrument (0.85 Cronbach Alpha).

3. Attachment Style Questionnaire (Hazan & Shaver, 1990) is a straightforward categorical instrument, that includes brief prototypical descriptions of each attachment style (secure, avoidant, and ambivalent), with participants selecting the style that best describes their feelings about relationships with peers/partners ("close persons"). Secure, which describes their relationships as friendly, trusting, and happy. They accept their partners regardless of faults and tend to have long and fulfilling relationships. Anxious/Avoidant is characterized as being afraid of intimacy, experiencing emotional highs and lows during relationships, along with much jealousy. Anxious/Ambivalent refers to the strong need for constant reciprocation and validation in interpersonal relationships, along with emotional highs and lows.

4. Parental Caregiving Style Questionnaire (Hazan & Shaver, 1986) taps the characteristic features of parenting through a choice of three categories depicting avoidant, secure, and ambivalent history with each parent. The three descriptions are as follows: (1) “She was fairly cold, distant, and rejecting, and not very responsive; I often felt that her concerns were elsewhere; I frequently had the feeling that she just as soon would not have had me.” (2) “She was generally warm and responsive; she was good at knowing when to be supportive and when to let me operate on my own; our relationship was almost always comfortable, and I have no major reservations or complaints about it.” (3) “She was noticeably inconsistent in her reactions to me, sometimes warm and sometimes not; she had her own needs and agendas which sometimes got in the way of her receptiveness and responsiveness to my needs; she definitely loved me but didn’t always show it in the best way.” Corresponding paragraphs were used to assess Paternal Avoidance, Paternal Security, and Paternal Ambivalence.

## Results

An overview of the sample characteristics regarding gender, place of residence, and schooling level is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1.  
Sample characteristics regarding gender, place of residence, and type of educational institution

	Male	Female	Total
<i>Place of residence</i>			
Urban	168 (49.3%)	173 (50.7%)	341(46.5%)
Rural	186 (47.4%)	206 (52.6%)	392(53.5%)
<i>Educational Institution</i>			
Vocational second.sc.	76(80.9%)	18(19.1%)	94(12.8%)
Technical second.sc.	126(51.4%)	119(48.6%)	245(33.4%)
Grammar school	31(25.6%)	90(74.4%)	121(16.5%)
University	107(44.2%)	135(55.8%)	242(33.0%)
Not in school	15(46.9%)	17(53.1%)	32(4.4%)

Note: Due to 1.77% of randomly missing data total N might defer.

Before attending to the study's main research question, I will consider the basic descriptive statistics of the key variables and their correlates.

### *In-group identification and in-group attachment*

Regarding in-group identification and in-group attachment, most of the participants declared identification with both an ethnic and a religious group (40.95%), 26.8% with religious, 20.41% with ethnic, while 10.07% chose no collective identification. Furthermore, the strength of the collective identification was high as well. There was a notable tendency toward agreement and strong agreement with statements regarding the importance of one's ethnic/religious background and the sense of ethnic/religious pride, i.e., in-group attachment (see Table 2 below). This tendency was especially prominent regarding religious identification.

Table 2: Percentages of responses to items indicating the strength of collective identification

	<i>strongly disagree</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>somewhat disagree</i>	<i>neither agree or disagree</i>	<i>some-what agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>strongly agree</i>
My ethnic background is very important to me.	5.9	2.7	4.4	11.6	10.6	25.5	39.3
I am proud of my ethnic background.	3	1.8	2.8	11.5	8.5	22.5	49.5
My religious background is very important to me.	4.3	1.1	2.4	3.8	6.8	16.9	64.7
I am proud of my religious background	2.8	1.1	1.1	5.5	3.3	12.5	73.6

Distributions of both in-group identifications were negatively asymmetric, significantly differing from normal, as indicated by Shapiro-Wilk's test statistics of .82 for ethnic, and .6 for religious identification (both  $p < .001$ ).

Therefore, further analyses were based on non-parametric statistics.

To explore categorical differences, I used the Mann-Whitney U test. Males displayed statistically significantly higher ethnic identification than females ( $U=56889.500$ ,  $Z=-2.00$ ,  $p<.05$ ), while no gender difference was found regarding religious identification ( $U=58641.000$ ,  $Z=-1.430$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Both ethnic and religious identification were significantly higher in males residing in rural than in urban areas ( $U=11812.500$ ,  $Z=-2.66$  and  $U=11745.500$ ,  $Z=-2.99$  respectively, both  $p<.01$ ). In females residing in rural areas, there was a significantly stronger religious ( $U=15039$ ,  $Z=-1.98$ ,  $p<.05$ ), but not ethnic in-group identification ( $U=16379$ ,  $Z=-.48$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Levels of ethnic and religious identification have been found to correlate negatively with socio-economic status (SES- operationalized as a combination of family income, parents' educational level, employment, and subjective assessment). This correlation was much stronger for religious ( $r_s(683)=-.22$ ,  $p<.001$ ) than for ethnic identification ( $r(683)=-.10$ ,  $p<.01$ ) controlled for gender. Age was not significantly correlated with neither ethnic, nor religious identification (both  $r_s(701)=.01$ ,  $p>.05$ ), controlled for gender. Also, religious identification was significantly lower among those with divorced parents, compared to others (Table 3).

Table 3: Religious identification with regard to parental divorce

Gender	Parental divorce	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Males	No	322	171.03	55071.50	1761.500	-1.999	.046
	Yes	15	125.43	1881.50			
	Total	337					
Females	No	350	187.19	65516.50	2208.500	-2.498	.013
	Yes	18	132.19	2379.50			
	Total	368					

When controlled for gender, age and SES, the correlation between divorce and in-group attachment remained significant, with  $r_{pb}(690)=-.12, p<.01$  for ethnic, and  $r_{pb}(690)=-.19, p<.001$  for religious identification. A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed that there was no statistically significant difference in in-group identification levels based on the reported number of adverse experiences ( $H=1.91$  for ethnic, and  $H=4.63$  for religious identification, both  $p>.05$ ). However, among participants choosing not to identify with an ethnic/religious group, there was more of those with domestic violence exposure, but only among females ( $\chi^2(1, N=374)=16.35, p<.001$ ). The two in-group identifications were strongly positively correlated, in both males ( $r_s(N=337)=.62, p<.001$ ) and females ( $r_s(N=369)=.52, p<.001$ ), indicating a more general factor of social identification.

### *Attachment*

Regarding their current attachment style, most participants chose a secure attachment style (59.5%), 30.6% chose avoidant, and 7.9% ambivalent<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, the secure attachment style was more frequent in males, while the ambivalent one was more frequent in females ( $\chi^2(2, N=720)=29.32, p<.001$ ). When the avoidant and ambivalent attachment style were combined into one category (insecure attachment style), a secure attachment was found more frequently in males, and insecure in females ( $\chi^2(1, N=720)=28.48, p<.001$ ). Furthermore, when measures of current attachment style were combined with parental caregiving style thus yielding an overall attachment security score, the same conclusion followed. The Mann-Whitney test indicated that attachment security was higher in males ( $U=53026.500, Z=-3.810, p<.001$ ).

Regarding parenting caregiving style, mothers were evidently perceived as providers of secure attachment with 82.5 % of participants describing them as such. On the other hand, fathers have been identified as such by 66.4% of participants. Adolescents with divorced parents were significantly more

<sup>2</sup> 2% missing data

frequent in the category of insecure attachment, compared to those with nondivorced parents ( $\chi^2(1, N=720)=8.58, p<.05$ ). Interestingly, perceived parenting caregiving maternal style did not differ between those with divorced parents and others ( $\chi^2(2, N=731)=4.16, p>.05$ ), contrary to the paternal caregiving style which was more frequently qualified as insecure in adolescents with divorced parents ( $\chi^2(2, N=724)=42.22, p<.001$ ).

I also examined if the current attachment style depended on the reported number of adverse experiences. The greater the number of adverse experiences, the greater the frequency of insecure attachment styles in the sample ( $\chi^2(4, N=718)=21.05, p<.001$ ). Furthermore, the perception of parental caregiving style with both mother ( $\chi^2(4, N=729)=36.85, p<.001$ ) and father ( $\chi^2(4, N=721)=43.75, p<.001$ ) showed a similar pattern, i.e., those reporting more adverse experiences in childhood significantly more often reporting insecure attachments as well.

#### *Attachment and in-group identification/in-group attachment*

Point-biserial correlation coefficients were calculated controlling for gender, age, socio-economic status, and schooling level. Strong positive correlations between both current attachment style and parental caregiving style with ethnic and religious identifications are evident (Table 4). Security of current attachment style and both parents' caregiving style is associated with stronger in-group identification. Moreover, if I look at identification per se (operationalized as ethnic or religious identification, or both), among those who chose no in-group identification there was significantly more of those with insecure maternal ( $\chi^2(1, N=718)=9.43, p<.001$ ), as well as paternal caregiving style ( $\chi^2(2, N=711)=7.05, p<.05$ ). However, current attachment style did not differ between identified and unidentified participants.

Table 4: Spearman's correlations between in-group identifications and attachment variables

	Current attachment	Caregiving Style (M)	Caregiving Style (F)	Ethnic identific	Religious identific
Current attachment	-				
Caregiving style (M)	.23***	-			
Caregiving style (F)	.15*	.23***	-		
Ethnic identification	.17**	.20***	.14*	-	
Religious identification	.13*	.22***	.14*	.50***	-

*Note.* Attachment variables were coded as 0-insecure and 1-secure; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*  $p < .05$

To explore this intriguing finding further, the Jonckheere-Terpstra test for ordered alternatives was employed. I dichotomised attachment security as “insecure-secure” on all three attachment measures (current attachment style, maternal caregiving style, and paternal caregiving style) and combined it into a single ordinal measure, spanning from 0 to 3 (0-insecure, 1-predominantly insecure, 2- predominantly secure, and 3- secure). There was a statistically significant trend of higher median ethnic and religious identification scores with higher levels of attachment security (Table 5).

Table 5: Results of Jonckheere-Terpstra Test for ordered alternatives with levels of attachment security as the grouping variable

	Ethnic Identification	Religious Identification
Number of Levels in Attachment Security	4	4
N	684	683
Observed J-T Statistic	93528.500	85212.500
Mean J-T Statistic	78957.000	78746.500
Std. Deviation of J-T Statistic	2738.477	2448.581
Std. J-T Statistic	5.321	2.641
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.008

## Discussion

The present study aimed to explore a rarely studied question, whether adolescent attachment correlates with their in-group identification and in-group attachment (ethnic and religious). I posited a correspondence hypothesis, expecting that the attachment style (both current one and retrospective parental caregiving style) will reflect on social-psychological domain, i.e. the security of attachment will positively correlate with in-group identification and in-group attachment.

Firstly, the majority of participants identified themselves with ethnic/religious groups (88%), and showed high levels of in-group identification regardless of their age and gender. Considering that adolescence is a time of identity exploration followed by identification, a lower percentage of collective identification would be expected, as well as a weaker attachment to ethnic/religious identities. However, this finding is not surprising for Bosnian-Herzegovinian society characterized by ethnic and religious identity salience, that presumably catalyses the process of identity achievement, notwithstanding the complexity of other social and situational factors. An immediate Bosnian-Herzegovinian context marked by diversity



likely makes the process of identity development more complicated. A high positive correlation between ethnic and religious identification is understandable considering their overlap in Bosnian-Herzegovinian context, and indicates a higher-order dimension of social identification. In addition, both identities are of particular importance in a diverse and often conflicted setting, that reinforces a narrative of “us” and “them.” The results are in line with comprehensive research that involved all three dominant ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina, showing a high degree of agreement with items referring to national attachment in youth (Majstorović & Turjačanin, 2013).

Secondly, regarding the distribution of attachment styles, these results fit into the general consensus that secure attachment is a strong majority, avoidant attachment is a strong minority, and anxious attachment is a smaller minority (Ainsworth et al, 1978). Using self-reported measures (Attachment Style Questionnaire and Parental Caregiving Style Questionnaire) I have been able to categorize the participants as either securely or insecurely attached (avoidant and ambivalent) and explore how these individual differences relate to their social identifications. Controlled for important background variables (gender, age, socio-economic status, and schooling level) attachment security (current attachment style combined with parental caregiving style) was associated with stronger in-group identification. Likewise, among participants who chose no collective identification per se, there were more of those with insecure parental caregiving styles. Confirming the correspondence hypothesis, securely attached individuals seem to form secure attachments with groups as well, therefore expressing their belonging, and perceiving themselves as valuable members, and others as trustworthy. This might indicate that interpersonal security “spills over” even to a more general type of groups, high in identity salience. This finding is in line with some empirical studies demonstrating that higher levels of identification with the dominant culture were related to lower anxiety, and higher levels of identification with any culture with lower avoidance

(Agishtein & Brumbaugh, 2013), implying that a strong identification corresponds to more secure attachment in intimate relationships. Milanov et al. (2013) found that participants with a secure attachment style had significantly higher social identification compared to participants with a dismissive-avoidant attachment. Similarly, it seems that adolescents who identified their attachment style as secure, and who perceived their attachment pattern with parents as such, as well, have also more frequently expressed belonging to their ethnic/religious group, thus projecting relationship trust onto a more general social entity. On the other hand, adolescents with an insecure attachment style seem to “avoid” or are “ambivalent” regarding in-group identification, as well as an appreciation of their in-group identity. This might reflect their reluctance to perceive themselves as similar to others, as well as a lack of trust in them. Therefore, these findings reintroduce a wider perspective on in-group identification, calling for a more thorough examination of its link with attachment and developmental history in general. For instance, correlations I found between adverse experiences (especially domestic violence in females) with attachment and in-group identification call for a genuinely individualized approach to understanding how young people come to (strongly) identify with dominant social groups, and to grasp the complex interplay of a wide range of factors more fully, some of which are, as I have seen, profoundly marked by individual experiences. To give an illustration, I found weaker religious identification in adolescents with divorced parents. It seems that stability and strength of religious identification are associated with the stability and strength of family bonds, which are potentially weakened by divorce. When controlled for gender, age, and socio-economic status, correlation between divorce and in-group identification remained significant and negative, indicating possible long-term effects of family structure on social identification. Studies have shown links between attachment insecurities and religious instability, i.e., sudden-intense religious conversion occurring in life contexts of turmoil (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2004) which can be roughly considered the

opposite of strong religious identification. Weakening bonds with parent(s) induce questioning of society's values as well, as parents are usually representatives of a wider social group as holders of its values. In that sense, these results confirm existing ones. Family composition, as rough as it is as a measure, seems to be an important factor in the development of adolescent social identification in general. Lack of the stability of the parental marriage institution reflects on the long-term perception of society as an institution, that should take over the secure base role. In its simplest form, this finding confirms lay views of family as the "basic cell of the society." It seems that the number of adverse experiences, especially those reflecting distressed family life (like domestic violence), plays a role, not only in the development of attachment style but also in the development of in-group identification and in-group attachment. More research is needed to further examine the gender differences in the effects of domestic violence exposure and in-group identification, since this link is established only in females. To summarize, adolescent social identification seems to be influenced, among other factors, by family stability as such.

This study has potential limitations. As mentioned, self-report measures were used, one of which referred to the assessment of parental caregiving style. This retrospective assessment might have been biased for several reasons. Moreover, the attachment instruments I used due to their brevity and straightforwardness, were categorical, and therefore only a rough indicator of the variable itself, therefore limiting statistical procedures. However, these results were significant despite this. A relatively large sample that reflects the structure of the population, and the fact that the link has been established despite such rough measures of attachment, speak for the plausibility and robustness of the finding. Nevertheless, future studies may extend this work by employing continuous (dimensional) measures of attachment to set the ground for fine-grained analyses of the posited link and enable more sophisticated theoretical advancements in this thrilling cross-field issue. Also, including additional variables would enable a more

thorough understanding of their interplay in determining the factors behind youth social identification.

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