

## TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE AND THE PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION

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*The paper present the results of the survey that was designed to examine attitudes towards reconciliation, traumatic experience, as well as some basic values, attitudes and stereotypes in two cities of the former Yugoslavia where the nationalities that were in conflict live together. The survey was conducted on 400 subjects in Vukovar (inhabited by Serbs and Croats) and 400 subjects in Prijedor (Serbs and Bosniaks). The results show that the level of traumatic experience, as a single variable, has no correlation with the readiness for reconciliation. On the other hand, in General Linear Model, best predictors of the readiness for reconciliation were attitudes and values represented by the factors "Non-Ethnocentric" and Non-Nationalistic/ Xenophobic". Also, having friends among the "opposing" nationality and having positive experiences with the members of opposing national groups is highly related to a readiness for reconciliation. Finally, a belief in war crime trials, combined with a readiness to admit the war crimes among its own nationality, was a significant predictor of readiness for reconciliation.*

**Key words:** *reconciliation, traumatic experience, former Yugoslavia*

### INTRODUCTION

*Nation is a society that shares  
common illusions about its ancestors  
and common hatred toward its neighbors.  
Ernest Renan, French philosopher*

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## **Factors which contribute to or hinder the reconciliation process**

Yugoslav wars of 1991-1995 between Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks will remain noted in history by their cruelty, ethnic cleansing and war crimes. Is reconciliation possible? What are the chances and obstacles for that process?

Before trying to answer those questions, we have to define reconciliation. In contemporary literature, there is no empirically validated definition of the process of reconciliation (Villa-Vicencio, 2002). According to the research in South Africa, the most frequent connotation of the word reconciliation is “forgiveness”, followed by “unity” (Lombard, 2003). Etymologically, the word reconciliation (“pomirenje”) in the Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian language means reconstitution of peace, but in its most common usage, it also means forgiveness and re-cooperation.

One of the best measure of the individual level of reconciliation could be the trend of multiethnic marriages, or (since those data is usually difficult to obtain) the results of the surveys on ethnic distance. It is interest to note that the research of ethnic distance in Yugoslavia on the eve of conflict - in 1989 and 1990 (Pantić, 1991), shows surprising data: in Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>2</sup> and Croatia, almost no ethnic distance among Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks had been registered! Even if there is a doubt in the results of the study, considering them a consequence of socially (and politically) desirable answers in the era of “Brotherhood and Unity” among peoples of Yugoslavia enforced by communist propaganda, there remains the fact that, according to 1991 census data, there were more than 30 per cent of mixed marriages in the parts of B&H and Croatia where the later conflict was the strongest (Petrović, 1985; Gagnon, 1994)! How can we talk about “centuries old hatred” looking at those data? Unfortunately, after the war eruption, ethnic distance among Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks dramatically increased, and by the end of the war it began to decrease, slowly, but constantly (Šiber, 1997; Biro et al., 2002). It is still, unfortunately, significantly higher than the pre-war one. To the question from Bogardus’ (1925) Social Distance Scale “Would you accept member of .... nationality to be your son or daughter in law?”, only 21 per cent of Croats from Croatia would accept it with Serbs, and 23 per cent with Bosniaks (Šiber, 1997). Bosniaks would accept such “blood” relationship with Serbs in 20.5 per cent and with Croats in 25.1 per cent (Puhalo, 2003). This readiness is somewhat higher in Serbs in Serbia - 49 per cent would accept familial relationship with Croats, and 36 per cent with Bosniaks (Biro et al., 2002), but much lower in Serbs in B&H – only 13.9 per cent would accept such a relationship with Bosniaks and 15.9 per cent with Croats (Puhalo, 2003).

The analysis of the results of research in Serbia (Biro et al., 2000; 2002) shows that ethnic distance correlates highly with (low) education level, authoritarianism and age - which is in concordance with theory and earlier results. New and unexpected data is that young people exhibit high ethnic distance towards

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<sup>2</sup> B&H in the further text.

nationalities with which there had been a conflict. One possible explanation of these data is that these young people grew up during war and were educated in the spirit of hatred. Another explanation of these results is in line with "Contact hypothesis" (Allport, 1954): these adolescents had no chance to meet their peers' - member of "enemy" people, so their perception of these nationalities is purely abstract.

Nevertheless the individual level of reconciliation is the most important one and the easiest to measure, there is no doubt that the group influence, the perception of other groups and the influence of that perception (so well described in the social psychology literature - i.e. Hardin, 1995), are important concepts to understand and study the process of reconciliation.

Following the ecological paradigm (Kelly et al., 2000) and the model of social reconstruction offered by Fletcher and Weinstein (2002), we look at reconciliation as part of the wider process of social reconstruction.

Messages from media and political elite are of great significance for perception (and fear) of "enemy" group and for orientation towards reconciliation.

Wast number of various data show crucial role of media in "creation" a war and hatred in Yugoslav conflict (Biro, 1994; Glenny, 1996; Thomson, 1999). One interesting example how media can also influence the process of reconciliation is the relation to the war crimes. Right after the fall of Milošević, the main state TV station started broadcasting a serial on Serbian crimes in Srebrenica, but after "great pressure from the public" stopped this broadcast after the first episode. Similarly, after the broadcast of popular talk show "Latinica" on Croatian TV, which treated the subject of Croatian war crimes, there were "so many public reactions" that Croatian TV after a few days broadcast a short film on Serbian war crimes in Croatia in order to establish "balance" again. At the same time, public opinion polls showed that even then, more than 70 per cent of the population (maybe we could also say: *only* 70 per cent) had been aware of existence of war crimes (Biro et al., 2000). It is obvious that, to have a sense of "public attitudes", it suffices for minority to be louder. But, when this (minority) attitude with the help of media is shown as the majority one, then to confronted peoples it sends the message "they *all* hate us".

Similarly, the unpreparedness of Serbian and Croatian authorities to deliver their war criminals is a good example of how behavior of the political elite can influence the reconciliation process. Justifying this by saying "there is no public opinion support for this", they send their people the message that "the majority thinks there are no criminals in our nationality" and, at the same time, to the nationality with whom the conflict existed they send the message about unpreparedness to apologize for crimes committed - which is one of the fundamental preconditions for reconciliation.

One of the interesting theoretical questions is how significant is the gesture of apology of a "head of the state" in the name of his nation for crimes committed by individuals from those nation? Did Willie Brandt's kneeling down in Aushwitz contribute to "taking the guilt off" of German people for the crimes of the Second World War? For individuals with liberal value determinants, this certainly did not mean anything, since even before and after that act they had been able to

differentiate individual from collective and to individualize guilt. But for majority of those others, who succumbed to national homogenization, this act has symbolic value and head of the state is perceived as personification of nation, and his apology is undoubtedly seen as apology of the nation itself. According to our data, the apology of national leader has such symbolic meaning for the majority of people in the former Yugoslavia (Biro et al., 2002).

In the case of post-Yugoslav states, the level of reconciliation process can also be viewed through public performances. Here, the possible conclusions are quite contradictory: while at rock concerts we note total neglect of ethnic origins, at sports events nationalistic incidents still dominate. The most striking example of “negative message” form a public gathering was an incident at the capital of Serb entity in B&H (“Republika Srpska”), in Banja Luka. During the ceremony of laying down of foundation stone for reconstruction of destroyed mosque “Ferhadija”, there were some rough nationalistic incidents. In Sarajevo media, these incidents were presented as clear proof of the continuity of Serbian chauvinism - and the consequence was temporarily slowing down of the process of return of Bosniaks refugees to their homes in the Serb entity.

Institutional solutions and administrative acts can have either helping or hindering role in the reconciliation process in two ways - as objective factors, but also as messages that “the state” of one people sends to the members of another people. In the case of the former Yugoslavia it is of special importance, since the nationalities that were in conflict created “their” states. Such an example is the extremely restrictive visa regime preventing contacts between citizens of the former Yugoslavia introduced by several new states. Quite the contrary example is B&H. One of the acts of genius of the Office of High Representative for B&H was equalization of registration plates for cars<sup>3</sup>, by which they put a stop to geographic, and, indirectly, ethnic identification<sup>4</sup> and so enabled all inhabitants unhindered travel all over B&H. Similar move of disabling identification was made by government in Rwanda, which officially forbade checking and declaring one's ethnic background.

Since the concept of reconciliation is obviously complex, for the purposes of this study, we defined reconciliation operationally by three variables:

1. Readiness to accept the presence of members of the “opposing” nationalities in eight different situations (stores, parks, sporting events, sport teams, concerts, parties, schools/offices and non-governmental organizations).
2. Readiness to reconcile with the conflicted nationalities.
3. Readiness to accept inter-state cooperation.

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<sup>3</sup> Only the letters identical both to Cyrillic and Latin alphabet remained.

<sup>4</sup> The language of Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks in B&H is identical and cannot be the basis for ethnic identification.

## **Traumatic experience and reconciliation process**

A significant factor of reconciliation process, usually neglected in existing socio-psychological literature, could be the degree of trauma experienced, which causes are associated with the members of the out-group. To what extent, if at all, is the memory of experienced trauma hindrance to reconciliation process?

During Yugoslav wars, 200,000 people were killed, and over two million displaced. The war itself, besides terrifying destruction, had been characterized by outrageous suffering of civilians and violation of Geneva Convention, as well as by torture in collective camps, which is now the matter before ICTY.

In the successor states of Yugoslavia, epidemiological data on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are to this day vague or unreliable. It needs to be said, though, that studies of PTSD in other war infested areas have been very varied (incidences range from 3.5 per cent to 65 per cent of population - Silove, 1999; De Jong et al., 2001).

With the exception of the study of Pham et al. (2004) in Rwanda, which registered correlation between the presence of PTSD symptoms and unpreparedness for reconciliation, other studies so far have not looked for connection between PTSD and reconciliation.

Even though the diagnosis of PTSD is relatively clearly defined in psychiatric classification systems, the question remains how much is the incidence of PTSD objective and exact marker of the degree of trauma experienced by some population. According to Transactional Stress Theory of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), intensity of stress is only partly responsible for the genesis of PTSD. The *perception* of trauma by the person experiencing it, as well as his/her coping strategies, is of great significance for the appearance of PTSD. Zotović (2002), for example, studied the consequences of NATO campaign in Yugoslavia in 1999, and compared presence of PTSD symptoms in children from two cities greatly differing in exposure to bombing. To her and our surprise, she found that the children from Vrbas (where no single bomb fell), showed significantly more symptoms than the children from Novi Sad (which had been intensively bombed for 78 days). Her conclusion was that the inhabitants of Novi Sad (children also) became habituated to the war situation very quickly, while the children from Vrbas expected and feared bombs and had various irrational notions of that danger, without a chance to experience it, adopt to the situation and relieve the anxiety.

Other factors can also contribute to the unreliability of data on PTSD incidence. In Croatia, for example, after passing of the law which provided various privileges to war participants, including special conditions for disability pension, the number of PTSD diagnoses rose suddenly<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Data presented on the Conference "Dani Ramira Bujasa", Zagreb, 2003.

In an extensive study<sup>6</sup> (2000-2002) in cities which experienced large war destruction and ethnic cleansing, and where today former war enemies live together again (Vukovar in Croatia, with Serbs and Croats, Mostar in B&H, with Croats and Bosniaks and Prijedor in B&H, with Serbs and Bosniaks), we have studied the relation of traumatic experience and attitudes towards reconciliation. The results presented in this paper are the extension of that study.

## **METHOD**

### **Sample and procedure**

The total sample consisted of 800 participants: 400 subjects from Vukovar and 400 from Prijedor divided equally among national groups in each city. The survey sample was randomly selected using a three-stage cluster procedure: the first stage unit was the part of the city inhabited predominantly by one of the nationalities, the second stage unit were households (using "Random Walk Technique") and the third stage unit were members of the households (whose birthday was closest to the date of the interview). The sample in each cities was representative for the town population concerning age, gender and education level.

The survey was conducted by trained interviewers, using a standardized interview procedure. The interviewers were of the same nationality as the subjects.

### **Variables and Instruments**

The questionnaire consisted of three scales (Ethnic Distance Scale, Stereotype Scale and Authoritarian Scale) and questions about attitudes towards nationalism and xenophobia, other national groups, reconciliation, the ICTY and war crimes, as well as questions about prior experience with members of other national groups, traumatic experiences during the war, and demographic data (the list of variables are given in Table 1).

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<sup>6</sup> The survey was a part of the project "Justice, Accountability and Social Reconstruction in Rwanda and the Former Yugoslavia", funded by the John D., and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Complete results of the project are published in the book (Stover & Weinstein, 2004).

Table 1: List of variables

VARIABLE	Instruments	Alpha	Mean	S. D.	Range
<b>Readiness for Reconciliation</b>	Set of 3 items (Z – score)	.61	.15	.84	-2.04 – 1.64
<b>Authoritarianism</b>	Authoritarian Scale (13 items)	.78	8.62	2.86	0 – 13
<b>Nationalism / Xenophobia</b>	Set of 3 items	.62	1.3	0.98	0 – 3
<b>Attitude toward the ICTY</b>	One question		2.68	1.42	1 – 5
<b>Admittance of war crimes in one’s own nationality</b>	One question		.714	.44	0 – 1
<b>Importance of punishment of war crimes for the process of reconciliation</b>	One question		.84	.37	0 – 1
<b>Positive experiences with the “opposing” nationality before the war</b>	One question		.84	.36	0 – 1
<b>Having friends among the “opposing” nationality before the war</b>	One question		.78	.42	0 – 1
<b>Broken friendships</b>	One question		.50	.50	0 – 1
<b>Feeling insecure</b>	One question		.26	.41	0 – 1
<b>Discriminated before the war</b>	Set of 6 items	.79	.50	1.04	0 – 6
<b>Ethnocentrism (Average score for 4 “neutral” nations)</b>	Ethnic Distance Scale (5 items)	.77	2.01	1.17	0 – 5
<b>Stereotypes (Average score for “opposing” nationalities)</b>	Stereotype Scale (11 items)	.94	3.21	.87	1 – 5
<b>Traumatic war experience</b>	Open question		2.63	.72	1 – 3

Readiness for Reconciliation was composite variable made of sum of Z scores of the three mentioned questions.

Authoritarianism was measured by adopted and shortened version of F scale (Adorno et al., 1950), psychometrically developed on the population of the former Yugoslavia.

Ethnocentrism was the average score on Ethnic Distance Scale (readiness to accept different nationalities, as: citizens of “my” state, neighbors, friends, collaborators or close relatives) for “neutral” nationalities - Hungarians, Macedonians, Slovenians and Romas. In our previous studies (Biro et al., 2002) the score toward “neutral” nations showed high reliability – contrary to the score for nationalities in conflict, which is radically changeable.

The variable “Nationalism/Xenophobia” represents results on the three questions on nationalistic and xenophobic attitudes: 1. “One should be cautious with other nations, even when they are our friends”; 2. “Our nationality should have greater rights than other nationalities in our state”; 3. “All our problems would be

solved if one nationality lived in one country”. Since those questions have high mutual correlation and in factor analysis form a unique factor, we created a composite variable out of those three items.

The variable “Discriminated before the war” contains experience of discrimination in six different fields: court, police, employment, health service, housing or school.

Traumatic experience was classified into three categories based on our earlier experience about correlation of a certain type of trauma and incidence of PTSD. In “Extreme traumatic experience” we included: loss of someone close, separation from a minor child, having gone through a situation where life was endangered, survived torture, permanent loss of home/house and being wounded. “Severe traumatic experience” included: seeing someone's death, seeing torture, separation from major family members, major financial loss, being close to war actions, the unknown fate of close persons, capture (without torture) and longer period of starvation. “Mild traumatic experience” included all other traumatic experiences. The distribution of categories is shown in Table 2.

*Table 2: Distribution of traumatic experience*

Level of traumatic experience	Serbs-Vukovar	Croats-Vukovar	Serbs-Prijedor	Bosniaks-Prijedor
Extreme	86%	95%	61%	53.5%
Severe	5.5%	3%	12.5%	20.5%
Mild	8.5%	2%	26.5%	26%

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*Table 3: Multivariate test of significance*

Dependent Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>Adj.</sub>	F	p
Readiness for Reconciliation	0.690	0.476	0.466	45.666	0.000

Test for the overall model (Table 3) showed that statistically significant proportion of the variance of the criterion-variable – *Readiness for Reconciliation*, is explained by the set of predictor-variables. Simply stated, approximately half of the variability (48%) in the criterion should be attributed to the variance in the set of predictors, while other half is left unexplained.



Table 4: Univariate Tests of Significance

Effect	BETA	F	p
Authoritarianism	0.049	3.269	0.071
Nationalism / Xenophobia	-0.249	67.008	0.000
How do you judge the role of the Hague Tribunal for War Crimes in the former Yugoslavia?	-0.055	3.466	0.063
Are there war criminals among Croats/Serbs/Bosniaks (our nationality), according to your opinion?	0.219	49.259	0.000
For the purpose of cohabitation between Croats and Bosniaks and Serbs, is it important to justly punish war criminals from both sides?	-0.053	2.831	0.093
Have you, as a Croat/Bosniak/Serb, had any positive experience with other nation before the war?	0.087	8.162	0.004
Have you had close friends of other nationality before the war?	0.106	9.140	0.003
Are your relations with the close friends of other nationality disturbed now?	-0.057	4.109	0.043
Do you feel insecure in Vukovar/Mostar/Prijedor?	-0.059	5.591	0.018
Discriminated before the war	-0.111	18.885	0.000
Ethnocentrism	0.096	8.038	0.005
Average hetero-stereotype	0.127	9.582	0.002
Traumatic war experience	0.001	0.001	0.975

The significant predictors of the Readiness for Reconciliation are the variables (in order of significance): Nationalism/Xenophobia (absence of such an attitudes), readiness to admit the existence of war crimes among it's own nationality, feeling of (not) being discriminated by the members of the "opposing" nationality, (positive) stereotypes about the "opposing" nationality, having friends among the members of the "opposing" nationality, having positive experience with the members of the "opposing nationality, (absence of) Ethnocentrism and feeling of being secure in the neighborhood.

The results also showed drastic differences between attitudes and manifested values in Serbs in Vukovar and Bosniaks in Prijedor (they are minorities in "foreign" country, i.e. entity) in relation to other groups. Croats from Vukovar and Serbs from Prijedor show extremely high authoritarianism, ethnocentrism and xenophobia and low readiness for reconciliation, while the above mentioned minority groups are very positively oriented towards reconciliation and, at the same time, very non-nationalistic. Of course, core question is whether these characteristics of minority populations are the consequence of the fact that only individuals with such value orientations were ready to accept the status of minority nationality, or the fact that these subjects feel insecure because they are minority nationality in "enemy surroundings" contributed that they give socially desirable answers and present themselves as "non-ethnocentric" and "reconciliation ready".

Our next step in analyzing the data was to see what complex of variables (factors) predicts readiness for reconciliation. For that purpose, we tested the

General Linear Model, using four extracted factors, as predictors, and the variable “Readiness for Reconciliation”, as the criterion (dependent) variable.

Using Principal Component Analysis with the Varimax - normalized rotation, we have extracted four factors that explain 55.86% of total variance.

A Best-Subset Regression Analysis resulted in a highly significant model.

Arrows from factors to criteria in Figure 1, represent regression relationships, with statistically significant beta coefficients.

The model suggests that certain attitudes and values represented by the factors “Non-Ethnocentric”, “Non-Nationalistic/Xenophobic” and “Non-Authoritarian” are the best predictors of Readiness for Reconciliation.

Also, a belief in war crimes trials, combined with a readiness to admit the existence of war crimes among its own nationality is highly related to readiness for reconciliation. Surprisingly, positive attitudes toward the ICTY have negative correlation with this factor!

The third significant predictor of readiness for reconciliation is the existence of friends among the “opposing” nationality, combined with the positive experiences with the members of opposing national groups.

The factor combining feeling of being discriminated by the opposing nationality, actual feeling of insecurity and experiences of war trauma is also a significant predictor, but against reconciliation.

As shown in Table 2, all the groups tested have very high traumatization, but weighted sum of traumatic experience has relatively small (and statistically insignificant) negative correlation with readiness for reconciliation (-.13). Moreover, as the results of the multivariate model show, traumatic experience has no independent contribution to the prediction of readiness for reconciliation, but in combination with subjective experience of being discriminated by the “enemy” nationality, this becomes a predictor on the edge of significance (Beta = -.18) in the negative direction (i.e. it appears as hindrance to reconciliation).

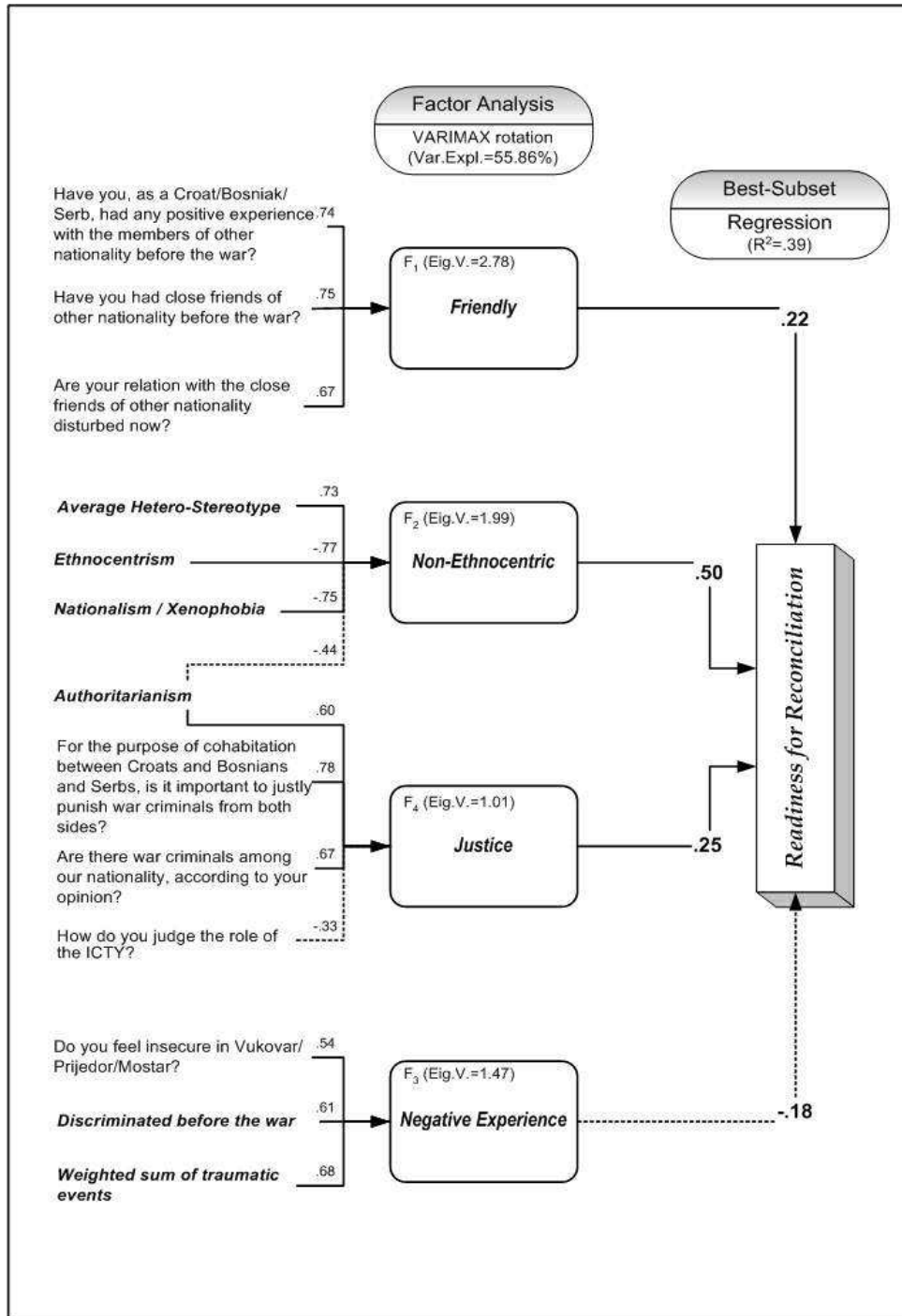


Figure 1: Predictors of Readiness for Reconciliation

Our results are very similar to the results of the study on the Holocaust survivors (Cherfas, 2003) where the attitudes toward Germans were related to the personality characteristics, but not at all with the experienced trauma.

In this study, the presence of PTSD was not an observation item. Since Pham et al. (2004) in their study in Rwanda found correlation between PTSD and readiness for reconciliation, and considering that in our study combination of traumatic experience and feeling of discrimination was also predictive of (un)readiness for reconciliation, the *perception* of trauma imposed itself as possible common explanation. In other words, if objective traumatization does not show relation to reconciliation, the subjective experience of trauma could be the factor connecting both incidence of PTSD (which agrees with Lazarus' and Folkman's theory) and the factor confirming preexisting perception of hostile behavior of the out-group. Therefore, our hypothesis is that traumatic experience alone does not influence readiness for reconciliation, but if there already exists experience of discrimination or unpleasant experience with particular social group, then the (war) trauma will be taken as another proof of hostile behavior of that group and will be a hindrance to reconciliation process.

In accord with the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tajfel & Forgas, 2000), the process of social categorization contributes to negative evaluation of out-group members, and characteristic cognitive process – “ultimate attribution error” (Pettigrew, 1979) equalizes all out-group members in their “guilt” and their “bad traits”. The logical consequence of such generalization is, of course, resistance to any idea of reconciliation. Reasoning behind given facts is: how can we talk about reconciliation with a group which is, without exception, “worthless” and “hostile” and, which is, even more important, experienced as *unchangeable* in these traits of theirs? The stronger the social identity is, the less will it allow recognition of individual differences; it will not permit the possibility that a part of “us” can be war criminals, nor will it permit the possibility that a part of “them” can be worthy of our respect or sympathy. In this mechanism we can recognize simple psychological explanation why fans of their own nation cannot grasp notorious truth that sanctioning one's own war crimes will enable individualization of guilt for these crimes, by which removal of collective guilt will be achieved, and, along with that, improvement of the image of the whole nation<sup>7</sup>.

It is interesting that authoritarianism has no independent contribution to reconciliation process. It is obvious that it functions as an obstacle only when associated with (or producing) ethnic prejudices and negative stereotypes, as we showed in our previous research (Biro et al., 2004) and as it was shown in several experiments (i.e. Duckitt, 1989; Perreault & Bourhis, 1999).

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<sup>7</sup> The tendency to deny the existence of war crimes committed by the members of its own nation is not typical only of the people of the Balkans. After Lieutenant Calley was sentenced for war crimes for his actions in the Vietnam village of My Lai, according to a Gallup poll, some 79% of American citizens were against that sentence and rejected the idea that there were war crimes caused by American soldiers at all (Kelman & Hamilton, 1989)!

On the other hand, the largest independent contribution to prediction of readiness for reconciliation, have facts that individual had friends among members of "enemy" nationality, as well as readiness to admit own-nationality war crimes. The fact that pre-war associating with members of the other nation contributes to readiness for reconciliation is consistent with the original "Contact Hypothesis" (Allport, 1954) and with the later Pettigrew's (1998) findings that earlier intergroup friendships are important facilitator for the later intergroup relationships. Pre-war contacts with members of other nationality contribute to individualization of perception of nationality, and, thus, contribute to absence of ethnic prejudices and stereotypes.

## **CONCLUSION REMARKS**

The results of our studies undoubtedly show that traumatic experience is not serious hindrance to reconciliation process at individual level. This, certainly, does not mean that punishment for war crimes and material destruction, as well as some form of symbolic apology of national leaders for the suffering induced to the other nation, are not important. Punishment of the war criminals will have great significance for guilt individualization, while "apology" will influence the change of perception of opposing group. But, at individual level, the greatest obstacle to reconciliation process is value orientations, and not the experienced war trauma.

Education for democracy, tolerance for minorities, human rights (meaning absolute equality of members of all social groups) is a long, but the only way of change of value systems, which will enable complete readiness for reconciliation, and enable members of conflicting nationalities of former Yugoslavia to cooperate in joint home-European community. This process must include media, educational system, and political elite as well. The role of political authorities gets particular significance in the context of outstanding spread of authoritarian characteristics in members of all nationalities of ex-Yugoslavia.

One of the most interesting and the most significant findings of our study is the fact that friendly relations with members of other ethnic groups represents one of the major predictors of readiness for reconciliation. Even though contacts among successor states of Yugoslavia are greatly decreased and made difficult by erecting borders among them, the common language of Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks is the warranty that there will be much more of these contacts in future. After all, Internet communication shows this even today. But, our results suggest that (media) promotion of positive experiences in contacts among members of conflicting nations could significantly contribute to the change of picture of the other ethnic group. As Hewstone & Brown (1986) suggested, the main limitations of the positive effects of inter-group contacts are the absence of generalization and promotion of positive attitudes appeared as the result of contact experience. Listing positive examples, particularly during war, when very often neighbors of different nationalities helped

each other, could be a form of "indirect" positive experience. This would influence the decrease in prejudices and negative stereotypes about other nationalities and would certainly contribute towards reconciliation process.

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## REZIME

# TRAUMATSKO ISKUSTVO I PROCES POMIRENJA

*Mikloš Biro i Petar Milin*

U uvodnom delu, rad se bavi definicijom pomirenja i razmatra ga sa tri aspekta – individualnog, grupnog i državnog, koristeći primere iz procesa pomirenja između jugoslovenskih naroda. Sledi prikaz rezultata istraživanja na 400 ispitanika u Vukovaru (200 Srba i 200 Hrvata) i 400 ispitanika u Prijedoru (200 Srba i 200 Bošnjaka) usmerenog da ispita stavove prema pomirenju, preživljeno traumatsko iskustvo, te neke bazične vrednosti, stavove i stereotipe prema narodima sa kojima je postojao konflikt. Posmatrano kao samostalna variabla, stepen traumatskog iskustva nije imao značajne korelacije sa spremnošću za pomirenjem. Primenom Generalnog linearnog modela, kao najbolji prediktori spremnosti za pomirenjem pokazali su se sledeći faktori: faktor koji je okupljao varijable (niskog) etnocentrizma, ksenofobije i nacionalizma; faktor koji je ukazivao na značaj prethodnih prijateljstava i pozitivnih iskustava sa pripadnicima suprotstavljenog naroda; te faktor koji je kombinovao poverenje u suđenja za ratne zločine sa spremnošću da se priznaju ratni zločini sopstvene nacije. Sa druge strane, prediktor ne-spremnosti za pomirenje bio je faktor koji je kombinovao negativna prethodna iskustva sa pripadnicima suprotstavljene nacije i traumatsko ratno iskustvo.

**Ključne reči:** *pomirenje, traumatsko iskustvo, bivša Jugoslavija*