

Abstract

This doctoral thesis deals with the problem of post-conflict socialization of young Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs into the pre-conflict and conflict narratives and images about each other, which are reflected in expressed ethnic distance between the groups; in expressed relative importance of different aspects of identity; in their assumptions about their own and in their mutual projections about the other's markers of adulthood. Also, we look into personal values as expression of what does not differ between the groups.

In the theoretical part we first examine the constructs of citizenship, nationalism, and socialization; we provide a historical overview of the development of citizen identity in Kosovo which allows for an understanding of the context of our study. We continue with an overview of important studies and theories describing developmental specifics – including identity development - of growing up in conflict and/or post-conflict areas; with our main focus on adolescents. We pay special attention to processes of reconciliation from a psychological point of view: the role of intergenerational and possibly transgenerational transmission of trauma, image theory, duplex theory of hatred, contact hypothesis.

The study itself is a comparative study based on 499 respondents from the two main ethnic groups of Kosovo, which were adversaries in past conflicts, Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs, high school students from both, monoethnic regions of Kosovo, as well as what we define as multiethnic – enclaves and the surrounding areas. As far as we are aware, this is the first time since the beginning of the latest conflict fourteen years ago that data for a psychological study were collected from both ethnic groups.

Our results show a very high level of ethnic/social distance between young Serbs and Albanians, a tendency to cognitively devalue the “other”, further, differences between monoethnic and multiethnic areas in relative importance of various aspects of identity, and similarities in personal values orientation. Our findings clearly demonstrate that growing up in post conflict areas all by itself does not prevent the transmission of past fears and negative images of the “other” to the next generations; in fact socialization into past narratives has been observed by us, which hinders any attempts of a reconciliatory process.

The thesis will hopefully be useful as a basis for development of reconciliation programme for the youth from both sides of the conflict and different ethnicities. By default the thesis contributes to the so far limited knowledge of consequences of past and/or present exposure to war and/or protracted political conflict in different developmental stages of the individual and in individual's role as a member of society.