POSTWAR DEVELOPMENTS

In the middle of the 1992-5 war, Willi Butollo visited Bosnia & Herzegovina (B&H) in the effort to support local psychotherapists and counsellors who were working there. This was the beginning of a relationship between Willi’s Lehrstuhl in Munich and the various Departments of Psychology in former Yugoslavia, a relationship which blossomed for the best part of ten years across several countries. The fruit of that intervention and that relationship are still with us.

In this contribution I would like firstly to give a brief overview of some of these cooperation and research activities. In the second part of this contribution I will then present one interesting but previously unpublished result from the research conducted during that decade. This comes from a strand of investigation which we had begun in order to complement the more classical approach to research on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) which we had adopted in the published papers, which is more focused on problems associated with the post-war situation and which puts those published results in a different perspective. The concept in question we named “ethno-political distress”. It covers aspects of the post-war situation which we believe to make a contribution to mental health and distress but which have not to date received sufficient attention.

So the title of this contribution, “postwar developments”, refers both to the development of clinical psychology in the countries of former Yugoslavia to which we tried to contribute, and to some problematic aspects of post-war development at the individual level.

OVERVIEW OF OUR INTERVENTIONS

Our intervention in the region had twin aims. On the one hand, following the rise of public and specialist interest in and knowledge about PTSD, particularly in the decades following the Vietnam war, there was a serious concern that these new Balkan wars would affect not only soldiers but also vast numbers of psychologically unprepared citizens, including children, with post-traumatic stress disorders. So while a large number of projects were designed with the aim of preventing and treating PTSD, there was a corresponding need to further adapt treatment and prevention approaches and to train personnel. For a critical summary of this concern, see Summerfield (1996, 1999, 2002). This is where Willi and his team, supported throughout by UNICEF, the Volkswagen Stiftung and DAAD, were invited to intervene. And while these technical and training interventions were also aimed at many different providers of psychosocial services including small NGOs and individuals, the most sustainable form of support was felt to be in University psychology departments, where the support of a respected peer, namely a German psychology department, was likely to be particularly welcome.

At the same time, Willi knew that our presence in the region was a good opportunity to conduct much-needed research on the psychosocial consequences of war, especially with civilian populations for whom the literature at the time was relatively sparse. So conducting research became a second aim of the intervention. Priority was given to epidemiological research but Willi was personally most interested in intervention research and how therapeutic approaches could be adapted and scaled-up to be most effective in this difficult situation.
To my person: I was lucky enough to be finishing my studies in Munich at the same time as Willi was looking for someone to manage a new, quite large project in Bosnia-Herzegovina supported by the Volkswagen-Stiftung, with these twin aims of supporting clinical psychology and also conducting research. Thus I was lucky enough to be involved in nearly all of the cooperation projects and nearly all of the research projects. Although the original idea was that I would spend most of my time in Munich, it quickly became clear that we needed a more or less permanent presence in-country, and so I ended up moving to Sarajevo, which is where I still live.

**FIRST PART: CAPACITY BUILDING IN AND SUPPORT TO CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY**

**DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH AND TEACHING IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF PSYCHOLOGY IN SARAJEVO AND BANJA LUKA**

This was the main project which supported our continuous presence in B&H from 1997 to 2002 and was funded by the Volkswagen-Stiftung¹ (Volkswagen Foundation) with the title "Verbesserung der wissenschaftlichen Kompetenz für die psychologische Bewältigung von Traumatisierungen in Bosnien-Herzegovina: Aufbau von Forschung und Lehre in den Abteilungen für Psychologie an den Universitäten Sarajevo und Banja Luka". It covered many activities including introducing new technology, support for final theses, library donations, regular lectures and guest professorships as well as several research projects, which I will summarize here.

1) Epidemiological studies

This was our largest research project which was led from Munich by, alongside Willi, Dr². Rita Rosner and which was partly co-funded by the gtz. Eight different samples of citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina were assessed using house-to-house surveys in 1998 and 1999, two to four years after the end of the 1992-5 war, covering a wide range of variables including traumatic and stressful experiences and various measures of psychosocial adaptation including PTSD. The results, which cover issues of epidemiology of PTSD, assessment issues, the impact of refuge and return, and post-traumatic growth, were published in a series of journal articles and book chapters³.

2) Evaluation of integration groups for returnee children in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

This project ran from 1998-2000 and was led by Dr. Gavranidou from the LMU and the late Prof. Čehić from the NGO “Wings of Hope” and the University of Sarajevo. It resulted in a report to the Bavarian Interior Ministry and a book contribution (Gavranidou, Čehić, Powell, & Pašić, 2000).

3) Dialogical Exposure for Ethno-Political Distress

This program is covered later in the present chapter.

4) Dialogical interventions for women with missing or killed husbands

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¹ VW II / 73301: Lebensqualität nach dem Krieg

² Now Prof. Dr.

³ An overview of the empirical research papers we published is given in Powell (2011). More are listed at [http://www.psy.lmu.de/pbi/personen/professoren/rosner_rita/publikationen/index.html](http://www.psy.lmu.de/pbi/personen/professoren/rosner_rita/publikationen/index.html) and [http://www.butollo.de/index_publikationen.html](http://www.butollo.de/index_publikationen.html)
This project, which was led by Dr. Zvizdić, included a pilot phase with NGO HealthNet and the University of Sarajevo and a research phase on the effects of Dialogical Intervention with 120 women who survived traumatic death or disappearance of their husbands. Pre-test, post-test and follow-up data were collected for the women and their children. A journal article is still in preparation.

**Postgraduate Study in Trauma Psychotherapy 1997-9, University of Sarajevo, Funded by UNICEF**
The aim of this course was providing psychologists and “psychopaedagogs” working with children and adults with consolidation and extension of their existing knowledge of trauma psychotherapy. It was conducted in partnership with UNICEF and ran for the academic year 1997-8.

**Postgraduate Supervision Course 2000, Funded by UNICEF**
This course was attended by 22 professionals working with traumatized children and adults ran from April-July 2000 and is covered by Dr. Roeppe, who led the course, elsewhere in this volume.

**CLIPSEE - Clinical Psychology at South-East European Universities - Capacity Building Network. Funded by DAAD.**
The main goals of CLIPSEE were more and better clinical psychology education at Universities in SE Europe and to contribute to stabilisation and reorientation in South East Europe. The intended beneficiaries of the program were the Departments of Psychology in Prishtine, Rijeka, Zagreb, Banja Luka, Sarajevo, Belgrade, and Novi Sad. It began (not yet under the name of CLIPSEE) with a round table meeting in Sarajevo 1999 which was the foundation of all the subsequent co-operation and was quickly followed by “Symposium 2000” in Sarajevo which had the subtitle of “Psychosocial consequences of war: Results of empirical research from the territory of former Yugoslavia” and which was held in July 2000 at the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo. About 200 people from all over the region attended including a large number of colleagues from Serbia, which was at the time diplomatically isolated; their presence caused quite a stir at the Department in Sarajevo. During and after the Symposium, meetings and workshops were held with colleagues from the above-mentioned psychology Departments, and CLIPSEE was established with the support of the DAAD. The University of Pristina was later included in the network.

Perhaps the most important motivator for the academics who agreed to get involved was just the opportunity to meet new and old colleagues from faculties in what had just become neighbouring countries, to (re-)establish academic and personal relationships in this new political situation.

Highlight of the first phase was a program of stipendia for student theses on coping amongst young people in winter 2000 - 2001, following on from earlier DAAD Stipendia given in the context of the BiHSP program in the academic year 1999-2000. Some of the students went on to become assistants at their respective departments of Psychology; the Stipendia therefore had particular importance for academic capacity building in the region. They gave most of the upcoming generation of lecturers in psychology (clinical and related subjects) what was for most their first insight into what psychology could be like away from a war-torn background.

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4 The contributions were later published in book form (Powell & Duraković-Belko, 2002)
Other activities included collaboratively writing a new textbook in clinical psychology in Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian and struggling with the problem of what to do with translations of standard clinical questionnaires and checklists as the emerging new republics settled on their own variant of what had once been a common language.

But by far the most successful phase of CLIPSEE, judged in terms of feedback and concrete results, was the last phase, in which approximately 15 crossborder "microprojects" were funded which were entirely the initiative of small groups of psychologists (students, lecturers and professors) in the region. Each project was an activity which involved at least two departments in neighbouring countries and thus helped to accelerate the process of normalising academic contacts in the same discipline after the conflict.

Willi himself was personally involved in many of these activities. Perhaps the most memorable ingredient which he brought to these endeavours was his own particular style and charisma: challenging, personal, warm, engaged, and unmittelbar. His approach meant a relative disregard for hierarchy and paper qualifications. So for instance he encouraged learners to practice their clinical skills (under supervision) with real, personal material early on in their studies. This approach was somewhat subversive at the time in the educationally conservative lands of former Yugoslavia and especially in Bosnia & Herzegovina. Sometimes he seemed to be appealing to the students to take learning into their own hands rather than wait for the authorities. But his personal engagement with university staff coupled with their respect for his status as an honoured guest professor won them over. As it happens, Willi’s approach met with perhaps the least resistance in Pristina, the capital of the emerging Kosovo, where there was a stronger feeling of starting from scratch and the overwhelming numbers of each new student generation brought a spirit of optimism.

Willi always encouraged the local teams to explore their own ideas, and in the true spirit of Gestalt therapy encouraged experimentation over prevarication. Of course, this didn't change the educational system in the country overnight, but it gave it another push on the road to modernisation and it made clinical psychology seem a lot more exciting than it had done; and this breath of fresh air has touched, directly or indirectly, dozens of staff and several generations of students.

SECOND PART: ETHNO-POLITICAL DISTRESS

In the psychological research on the psycho-social consequences of the war in former Yugoslavia, at least amongst studies in the quantitative tradition, there was a marked absence of variables related to what makes war different from natural disasters: the deliberate use of massive and murderous violence by groups and individuals on one another. Unfortunately, these variables are also largely absent from the research we published ourselves. This was not our intention. Indeed, Willi was particularly interested in these variables and explicitly encouraged us to explore the interpersonal aspects of traumatic events and traumatic symptoms and to develop concepts which we could include in quantitative and qualitative research, as well as potentially in treatment, which we did. The sad fact is, however, that it is easier and quicker to design research, conduct analyses and write papers (and get them published) when one sticks to the best-known constructs. So although the datasets we generated include, alongside hundreds of variables which are standard for PTSD research, many more
variables which cover the interpersonal aspects of trauma, few of them were ever included in published results.

The remainder of this contribution will report on just one such variable, which we named "ethno-political distress".

We conceived of ethno-political distress as psychological distress which has ethno-political issues as its content or is attributed to such issues, where by "ethno-political issues" we mean issues of ethnic and national identity and conflict as they play out at the individual and political level. Ethno-political distress is understood as a negative outcome in its own right which may also play a secondary role in contributing to general distress. It is not conceived of as a pathological response but a dimension of normal distress which is an understandable response to a difficult situation.

In clinical training sessions in which students and trainees were to discuss their own experiences, we had observed that the issues which were bothering them the most were not traumatic war experiences as such but tensions connected to the post-war situation, manifested as the kind of concrete problems which took up the majority of time on television news every day. The following are a few examples:

- issues of personal identity (what nationality am I in this new republic, is this important to me);
- people returning to, or being prevented from returning to, the places from which they were driven by ethnic cleansing;
- other people being forced to leave temporary accommodation in order to make room for returnees;
- the slow pace of reforms and the apparently irreconcilable differences between the dominant (ethno-political) forces in the country;
- representatives of the "international community" unilaterally implementing new laws;
- ethno-politically motivated violence;
- problems at work due to the presence of positive or negative discrimination with respect to nationality;
- public disputes about whether individuals charged with war crimes should be handed over to the International court at the Hague by the countries of former Yugoslavia;
- last but certainly not least, disputes within families, peer groups and at work about these issues.

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5 The original idea of "ethno-political distress" was developed by Elma Pašić, Rita Rosner, Willi Butollo and Regina Thierbach also contributed to the development of the idea and the design of the research. Some of these results were presented at scientific conferences (Bilalic, Pasic, Koso, Powell, & Butollo, 2001; Pašić, Powell, & Butollo, 2001; Steve Powell, Pašić, & Butollo, 2002) but have never been published.

6 Sadly, these issues continue to dominate television and print media in B&H at the time of writing. 2012.
For many, intruding thoughts on these themes were associated with significant distress and frustration.

A brief digression may on the ethnic and political situation in B&H at the time may help the reader to understand why these issues were so quite so salient in the country at the time. Broadly speaking there has been a tradition of mutual ethnic, national and religious tolerance in the region particularly in Bosnia & Herzegovina itself. The cultures in Yugoslavia were particularly close in the period under Tito, especially in the cities. Before 1991, approx. 20% of people in Bosnia-Herzegovina described themselves consciously as “Yugoslav” rather than as belonging to one of the three main religious/ethnic groups (Kasapović, Šiber, & Zakošek, 1998). The ethnic distance between the three main cultures of Bosnia-Herzegovina was very low before the war and 20% of marriages in Bosnia were mixed; more than 36% in Sarajevo (Pantić, 1996). This large overlap between the cultures and the tradition of tolerance was a very important part of the “official” Yugoslav identity and many people still adhere to it.

Many people had mixed allegiances due mainly to cross-cultural ties of kinship or friendship and/or presented the whole idea of having to choose an explicitly ethnic identity. Ethnic identity is defined as part of an individual’s self-concept that derives from knowledge of social group membership and the emotional response to that membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Ethnic identity is not a categorical construct such as “Serb, Croat, Bosnjak or other”. Rather, it is a complex of many different psychological factors (Phinney & Chavira, 1992): cognitive (e.g. attitudes), emotional (e.g. the feelings associated with group membership) behavioural (e.g. participating in customs) and systemic (e.g. experiences associated with minority status). On the other hand, others were only too ready to adopt an explicitly ethnically based nationalistic identity and world-view and welcomed the strong mutual solidarity which clear group membership typically affords and the warmth, trust and security associated with it.

The war ended where and how it did mainly due to the influence of the international community, particularly the United States, culminating in the Dayton Agreement. There was no clear winner or loser of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the peace would probably not have survived if it had not been for the massive presence of the international community. Ethno-political tensions and resentments in this enforced peace remained high, though outbreaks of actual violence were very rare. Overlaid on this background of war - and perhaps now replacing, inheriting or obscuring it – were the problems of a so-called "transition" society, exacerbated by the fact that the kind of institutional and economic development which that is supposed to entail are very severely hampered by the lack of a consensus on the identity or future of the state itself.

The way that these themes kept recurring in the thoughts of many of our trainees, and the way that the trainees tended to return to them mentally again and again without really resolving them, reminded us of Horowitz’s original formulation of the mechanisms of post-traumatic stress (M. J. Horowitz, 1986), in which the phenomenon of reexperiencing and avoidance interact. So this formulation was taken as a initial model for ethno-political distress. In the present case, reexperiencing takes the form of involuntary thoughts or images connected with ethno-political issues. Parallel to Horowitz’s model, it can also be hypothesised that avoiding confrontation with ethno-political issues (avoiding thinking about them, avoiding discussions about them, etc.) could contribute to their maintenance (Butollo, 2000).
The basic hypothesis was put forward that this kind of distress was present at significant levels in B&H at the time and presented significant challenges to the individual’s well-being.

Başoğlu (2005) has investigated the role of perceptions of impunity in the region and found that the level of emotional reaction to perceived impunity has a stronger connection to general psychological symptoms amongst victims when compared with controls. Our hypothesis is rather different: that holding ones own nation responsible is likely to lead to higher distress, perhaps because such an attribution would be in stark conflict with models prevalent in the person’s social environment - possibly inside the person’s family, which in this region has a particularly strong influence on adjustment. Perhaps also the ability to “own” the differing thoughts and feelings which arise in this kind of environment without “splitting off” and disowning parts of oneself (for instance, identifying exclusively with a victim group) plays a role in salutogenic coping with this kind of distress (Butollo, 2000). Specifically, it is assumed here that a troubled identification with ones own nation is associated with both higher general psychological symptoms and with ethno-political distress.

**SAMPLE SELECTION AND DESCRIPTION**

The study described here specifically addressed students, the majority of whom were approaching puberty at the start of the war (mean age 21 years at the time of the study), and who were likely to be particularly sensitive to issues of identity and national orientation (Phinney, 1993).

The data comes from a screening survey which was part of the first phase in a project with the aim of exploring ways of reducing ethno-political and general distress amongst young people in Bosnia-Herzegovina with the tools of clinical and social psychology based on our integrative approach in psychotherapy (Butollo, 2000). The survey was conducted amongst psychology first-year students at the Universities of Sarajevo and Banja Luka in summer 20017. Sarajevo and Banja Luka are the largest cities in the two Entities which make up Bosnia & Herzegovina, namely the predominantly Muslim and Catholic Federation of B&H and the predominantly Serbian Orthodox Republika Srpska. The students were informed of the purposes of the survey and gave their written consent to take part.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Sarajevo</th>
<th>Banja Luka</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>76</td>
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<td>132</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatian</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 Coincidentally, just three days before the survey was carried out there was severe ethnic violence in Banja Luka as Serb radicals disrupted the work to rebuild the Ferhadija mosque which had been deliberately razed to the ground during the war. One Moslem man later died as a result of the violence. This may have intensified some of the answers to some of the questions.
"Bosnjak"  56  0  56
"Bosanac"  20  6  26
other  4  1  4
missing  0  1  1
Table Total  88  62  150

Table 1: Sample description
The participants were predominantly female, which is typical for psychology students in the region.

INSTRUMENTS

CHECKLIST OF TRAUMATIC WAR EVENTS
War-related traumatic experiences were measured with a checklist consisting of 31 items describing
traumatic and stressful events occurring during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Each item is answered
yes or no. A scale total was formed by summing the number of yes answers from the remaining 28
items, with a mean of 7.28 and an SD of 3.82.

GENERAL PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS (BOSNIAN SYMPTOM CHECK-LIST)
This instrument is a close adaptation of the Symptom-Checklist, SCL-90-R (Derogatis, 1977). A
checklist of 90 common psychological symptoms is presented, and the respondent is asked "How
much that problem has distressed or bothered you during the past 7 days including today." The
respondent answers on a five-point Likert scale from "not at all" to "extremely", scored 0 to 4.
As the separate subscales of the instrument were of no special interest in this study, and the reliability
of the whole scale is good in this sample (Standardized item alpha .98), only the mean score of all the
items on the whole scale was analyzed here. The mean was 0.80 and the SD was 0.57.

POST-TRAUMATIC SYMPTOMS (IES)
This Bosnian translation of Horowitz's IES (Impact of Event Scale) (M. Horowitz, Wilner, & Alvarez,
1979) was primarily included to allow an assessment of post-traumatic as opposed to general
symptoms. The questionnaire was given after the checklist of traumatic war events. The respondent
was asked to choose the worst event which had happened to them and to ask how much the following
items applied to them in the last seven days with respect of that item. Fifteen items were then listed
and the respondent replied by choosing one of four categories ("not at all" to "frequently", scored 0,1,3
and 5 respectively). As the separate subscales of the instrument were of no special interest in this
study, and the reliability of the scale is good in this sample (Standardized item alpha = .86), just the
mean score of all the items on the whole scale were analyzed here (mean = 1.51).

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8 The term "Bosnjak" implies a Muslim religious and cultural background. Someone who says they are a
"Bosanac" is also most likely to have such a background but stresses an affiliation with the State of Bosnia &
Herzegovina (Dipa, 1996).
QUESTIONNAIRE ON ETHNO-POLITICAL DISTRESS
This questionnaire was developed especially for this study.

The instruction was as follows: “The following sentences are about reactions, thoughts and attitudes which people may have when they are faced with different ethnic, national and religions issues (hate, discrimination, living together, multietnicity, etc.). Please answer the questions only in relation to those issues. For each question, please mark just one field according to how often that has happened to you in the last 6 months.” The first fifteen items were modelled loosely on the items of the Impact of Event Scale, adapted to assess the kind of recurrent worrying and distress associated with ethno-political issues. A typical item example is: “Did you have distressing thoughts in relation to national questions which came even when you didn’t want them to?” The items were tested for comprehensibility and subsequently modified accordingly in a series of pilot surveys.

The final four items were based on additional items suggested by students in a pilot phase. They suggest a general sense of frustration and disillusionment. A typical item is: “did you keep discussing or thinking about this problem as if it had no solution?”

The respondents answered using a four-point Likert scale scored 0,1,3,5 as in the original IES. A preliminary version of the instrument was piloted with a small sample of students in order to check that the instructions and item formulations were clear; this pilot phase resulted in some adjustments to the wording of some items and the instructions.

Since the questionnaire on ethno-political distress was, as mentioned above, closely based on the Impact of Event Scale, the possibility arises that the respondents did not really understand this new construct and instead answered with respect to distress related to the impact of traumatic events. To exclude this possibility, the correlation between this Bosnian translation of the original Impact of Event Scale and the new instrument was subsequently examined. A correlation of around 0.40 or more would indicate that the instruments were possibly measuring the same construct, casting doubt on the divergent validity of the new construct “ethno-political distress”. One more variable was added to the study following the observation which we made in the training sessions that ethno-political distress was higher with those who had a problematic relation to their “own” nation and in particular held them responsible for current difficulties.

QUESTIONNAIRE ON BLAMING OWN NATION FOR CURRENT LIFE PROBLEMS
Following some questions on current concrete life problems (not analyzed in this study), the respondents were asked to whom, if anyone, they apportion blame for those problems, as follows.

They were given a 3x5 table with the column headings "Serbian", "Bosnjak" and "Croatian" and the row headings "officers", "soldiers", "political leaders", "the whole nation (ordinary people)" and "all of the above without exception". They were requested to put one number in each of the resulting 15 boxes on a scale of 0 ("not responsible for what happened to me") to 3 ("completely responsible for what happened to me"). The score corresponding to the respondent’s own nation was totalled. The resulting scale had a mean of 3.43 and a SD of 2.60.

HYPOTHESES
Hypothesis 1: The questionnaire on ethno-political distress is reliable in the sense that its total score and subscales have internal consistency > .80.
Hypothesis 2: the correlation between the instrument on ethno-political distress and the IES is less than 0.40 (divergent validity).

Hypothesis 3: Ethno-political distress is positively correlated with general psychological symptoms, with a correlation greater than 0.40 (convergent validity).

Hypothesis 4: blaming ones own nation for post-war problems has a significant total correlation with both general psychological symptoms and ethno-political distress.

DATA ANALYSIS

MISSINGS
A handful of missing values on the symptom, distress and traumatic event subscale scores were imputed using the impute function of the Hmisc package for R. The number of missing values was less than 3% of the total data on these variables.

COMPUTER PROGRAMS
All analyses were carried out using the statistical program R (R Development Core Team, 2009).

RESULTS

<table>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<td>1 Total war traumatic events</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2 IES</td>
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<td>3 ethno-political distress</td>
<td>0.27***</td>
<td>0.35***</td>
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<td>4 SCL</td>
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<td>0.46***</td>
<td>0.42***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blaming own nation for current 5 problems</td>
<td>0.15*</td>
<td>0.2**</td>
<td>0.43***</td>
<td>0.31***</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Pearson Correlations between the study variables.0 ‘***’ 0.01 ‘**’ 0.05 ‘*’

Hypothesis 1: The questionnaire on ethno-political distress is reliable in the sense that its total score and subscales have internal consistency > .80. This hypothesis was confirmed: standardized item alpha was a satisfactory .92. However, the overall scale mean was only .86 (SD = .82) which was substantially lower than that for the IES (mean = 1.51).

Hypothesis 2: the correlation between the instrument on ethno-political distress and the IES is less than 0.40 (divergent validity). This hypothesis was also confirmed: the correlation was .349.
Hypothesis 3: Ethno-political distress is positively correlated with general psychological symptoms, with a correlation greater than 0.40 (convergent validity). This hypothesis was only just confirmed: the correlation was .422. The convergent and divergent validity for ethno-political distress leave something to be desired.

Hypothesis 4: blaming ones own nation for post-war problems has a significant total correlation with both general psychological symptoms and ethno-political distress. Again, this hypothesis is confirmed: blaming one’s own nation correlates significantly with general psychological symptoms (r=.309) and ethno-political distress (r=.428).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Ethnic identity is emerging as a key phenomenon in the human sciences alongside and in parallel to globalisation. Unresolved ethnic identity issues at macro and meso levels can be a cause of violent conflict. An enforced peace like that in Bosnia & Herzegovina may make it more difficult to resolve these issues. This small piece of research provides some evidence that ethno-political tensions at the macro level are associated with distress at the individual level, at least for some people – at average levels of distress around half those associated with individual traumatic events such having experienced the violent loss of a family member or a threat to one’s own life. Now is this distress only due to the objective consequences of these tensions such as competition for employment or real threats to one’s safety? The view of the self (Buber, 1923; Polster, 1973; Butollo, 2000) elaborated in dialogical approaches to psychotherapy suggests a framework to explore the inner, personal side of this distress. Inside this framework, the self is constantly defined as a set of internalised dialogs with the world (Butollo, 2000): an active internal representation of external forces and principles in the world in which the subject is engaged. The thesis is put forward here that the subject forms internal representations of the “own” and “other” ethno-political identit(ies), initiated by the experience of the self/other difference, engaging in conscious and possibly subconscious dialogs with one another, and that these dialogs are actually in turn constitutive of ethno-political identity. These internalised dialogs constantly influence and are influenced by dialogs in the life world of the subject in a feedback loop, whether first-hand or transmitted socially. It is assumed that the formation of a secure ethno-political identity as described by Phinney & Kohatsu (1997) presupposes that these dialogs have evolved so that they are well adapted to reality and so allow successful functioning in the world in which the subject lives.

However, engaging in these dialogs presupposes being able to internally take on the role of the other, a kind of temporary identification. If this is process is painful, either because of personal experience or because of family or group discourse, and which is often the case after a war, the subject understandably often goes to great lengths to avoid being confronted with the associated thoughts and feelings. The “other” is cut off internally and externally and neither internal nor external dialog can take place. Ethno-political identity formation can not be completed. In an enforced peace, such as the case in Bosnia-Herzegovina, subjects are permanently surrounded by the potential and need for contact with other groups and subgroups, this state can be particularly frustrating and debilitating.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, as in most parts of the world, it is difficult or impossible to choose not to have an ethno-political identity. The question of which identity to adopt is however often fraught with difficulty, especially for young people and young adults. Even for those whose ethnic background is
completely clear, ethnic identity involves many components (Phinney, 1990) and there is much leeway in the way in which one identifies with any or all of those components. In other cases the difficulties with ethno-political identity formation are not so much the primary conflict (one ethno-political group versus another) as secondary conflicts (e.g. what a loved family member says or thinks about one’s own or another ethnic group, for instance forbidding a friendship with someone from the other group). At stake may be not only readiness to dialog with the representatives of the "other side" but also about them. Here the details are more complicated but the principle is the same: aversive feelings lead to a reduction in the ability to temporarily identify with another (in this case more differentiated) ethno-political stance and this difficulty can hinder the development of a secure ethno-political identity.

As both ethnic identity and adjustment are complex constructs, and as any relationship between them is likely to be highly dependent on the cultural context (e.g. second-generation minorities vs. refugees vs. groups in violent conflict), it is unlikely that there is any globally replicable constant connection between the two. Stage of ethnic identity (in the context of ethnic identity formation theory according to Phinney) as sketched out above is more likely than sheer strength of identification to have a context-independent relation to adjustment. The ego-identity literature hypothesises better adjustment for those with achieved identity (Marcia, 1980). There is strong research support for this (overview in Waterman, 1984). Analogous to this, achieved ethnic identity can be expected to be associated with better adjustment or at least with measures associated with adjustment such as self-esteem. This seems indeed to be the case (overview in Phinney & Kohatsu, 1997). So without falling into the trap of suggesting that there is exactly one normative answer to every individual’s question of which ethnic identity is the right one for them, it is suggested that it can be difficult to form a secure ethnic identity in a tense and unresolved ethno-political situation and that this can be one cause of the very real individual distress associated with and attributed to that situation. Encouraging individuals to embark on real and/or imagined dialogues with different manifestations of “the other”, and also switching roles, at least in the imagination, to take on the part of the other, could be an effective way to reduce that distress; an idea very much in the spirit of Willi Butollo’s personal interest in and contribution to both the development of clinical psychology in the region and to efforts to increase the well-being of those effected by the war.

BOOK, BOOK CHAPTERS AND JOURNAL ARTICLES BY BUTOLLO AND CO-WORKERS RELATED TO THE RESEARCH IN BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA


REFERENCES


