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**My Narrative, Their Narrative: Transformation of Individual Memories as a  
Peacebuilding Strategy**

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**Introduction**

The main characteristic of societies involved in prolonged conflicts is their resistance to peaceful resolution. Reasons for that can be traced back to the intense socio-psychological infrastructure (Nets-Zehngut, Bar-Tal, 2013) that plays an important role in the emergence and maintenance of conflict. Hence the intervention strategies should be directed towards the understanding of its structure which is mainly based on the collective memories, and towards the methods for its transformation. One of the main problems in contemporary, post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina is the existence of memories of war that are positively biased towards the members of the in-group, but negatively biased towards members of the out-group. These memories can prolong conflict if not recognized and defined, therefore development of solutions and peace management strategies are necessary. However, the process of socio-emotional reconciliation has been quite neglected in social psychology so far and it concentrated mostly on empathy towards the perpetrator (McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997), personality traits (McCullough et al., 1998), and the profitability of maintaining the relationship (Rusbult, 1983; Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996; Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991). While these studies focused mostly on one side of the

conflict (either victim or perpetrator), the current study presents an attempt to analyse both groups when their members move from the position of victim to the position of perpetrator. Based on the author's extensive research conducted in Bosnia-Herzegovina, narratives obtained through 240 interviews will be used to analyze memories for four significant events (Vase Miskina street, Markale bazaar, Kazani and NATO air strike) from 1992-1995 war as remembered by two different generational and ethnic groups from Sarajevo and East Sarajevo (those born after the end of the war and those who were 18 at the beginning of the war; equal number of Bosniaks and Serbs in each generational cohort). While in two events Sarajevo inhabitants were victims and East Sarajevo inhabitants were perpetrators, in the other two events the situation was opposite. The rationale for the inclusion of those events were the manifestation and influence characteristics of a major event proposed by Nets-Zehngut (2015), and the number of commemorations organised each year. The phenomenological analysis of narratives was performed in order to analyse the processes through which biased individual memories have been grouped to form several different collective narratives, and to propose new model for reconciliation that is based on the transformations in the individual memories. Hence this paper is divided into following sections: theoretical foundations of needs-based model in studies of peacebuilding, brief history of Sarajevo and 1992-1995 war, bias in memories and narrative analysis, and the importance of emotional needs of both sides in conflict for the establishment of strategies for reconciliation.

### **Needs-based Model of Reconciliation: Theoretical Concept and Implications**

Socio-psychological theories of reconciliation stress that an end to a conflict cannot be achieved by satisfying the instrumental motivations of opponents (Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996), but by satisfying the emotional needs of the parties (Frijda, 1994). According to Staub et al. (2005, p.301), reconciliation “must include a changed psychological orientation towards

the other”, which in turn means that it may occur only once the parties have resolved the emotional issues that may have left them estranged (Nadler, 2002; Nadler & Liviatan, 2006). Unsatisfied emotional needs block the possibilities for reconciliation, which has also been elaborated by theoreticians of negotiation stress (Zubek, Pruitt, Peirce, McGillicuddy, & Syna, 1992).

The process of satisfying these emotional needs that impede reconciliation was termed by Nadler. Nadler was the first psychologist who analysed the relation between emotional needs and reconciliation, and also the first one to coin the term *socio-emotional route to reconciliation*. These emotional barriers towards reconciliation can be removed through the apology–forgiveness cycle (Tavuchis, 1991), which underlies the importance of perpetrators’ apology and the victims’ willingness to reciprocate and grant forgiveness. Based on the above, Shnabel and Nadler (2008) proposed the elements of the needs-based model of reconciliation which is established on the idea that following an episode in which one side has been victimized by another, both the victim and the perpetrator are deprived of certain unique psychological resources. As such, this deprivation elicits different emotional needs in victims and in perpetrators. Such needs have to be satisfied in order to build the solid ground for reconciliation. Based on Shnabel and Nadler’s model (2008), different actions can satisfy the differential needs of victims and perpetrators (granting forgiveness or offering an apology), and can further facilitate the recovery of the parties’ impaired psychological resources and thus promote their willingness to reconcile. Hence Shnabel and Nadler (2008) framed socio-emotional reconciliation as an act of social exchange that corresponds to the following processes: victims feel inferior regarding their power (Foster & Rusbult, 1999), honor (Scheff, 1994), self-esteem (Scobie & Scobie, 1998), and perceived control (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994) and may experience feelings of victimization or anger (McCullough et al., 1998); while perpetrators suffer from moral inferiority (Exline & Baumeister, 2000;

Zechmeister & Romero, 2002) and may feel guilt (Baumeister et al., 1994), shame (Exline & Baumeister, 2000), or repentance (North, 1998). Hence empathy and understanding of needs and perspectives of both victim and perpetrator's side play a major role in paving the path to reconciliation. According to Enright et al. (1998), empathy and understanding for the perpetrator's perspective are a kind of "gift" that victims give to those who have offended them. Such reaction from victims' perspective has the role to enhance the moral values of the perpetrators (such as forgiveness and/or regret). However, very often victims and perpetrators have different memories and perspectives of the same past wrongdoings, which are usually guided by their unwillingness to destroy their own and their ingroup's moral image. Hence perpetrators very often avoid feelings of guilt and do everything possible to minimize the moral implications of their actions or to deny either their or in-group's responsibility for them (Mikula, 2002). At the same time, victims are seeking justice and acknowledgement of wrongdoings committed towards them and their in-group. It is expected that a successful social exchange will satisfy victims' emotional needs and help them not to feel weaker than or morally inferior to their perpetrator which in turn leads to the process of symbolic erasure of the roles of victim and perpetrator (North, 1998) and thus contributes to a greater willingness to reconcile with one's opponent (Nadler & Shnabel, 2008).

With the aim of analyzing the possible ways to integrate survivors' memory distortions, further formation of difficult memories, and complex social exchange towards reconciliation, I will provide empirical research on bias in memories for in-group wrongdoings among two generational groups of Sarajevans and East Sarajevans, starting with a brief overview of the position and role of memory and remembrance in conflict, the role of the transgenerational transmission of trauma, and ending with the history-teaching practice in contemporary Bosnia-Herzegovina. The main objective is to explore how social exchange between victims

and perpetrators can be analysed through bias in memories, and how such analysis contributes to better understanding of reconciliation.

### **Short History of Sarajevo**

Sarajevo's history has been determined by its geography, the presence of different foreign powers (Ottomans and Austro-Hungarians), different ethnic groups and complicated relationships between them. Also, it has been the site of three important historical events: the beginning of World War I, the XXII Olympic Games and the longest siege in the history of Europe (the 1992–1995 war). Over the past six centuries, six different regimes have governed the city, as many as five of them in the twentieth century (Donia, 2009). Contemporary Sarajevo was mostly built up during three major periods of expansion: the first 140 years of Ottoman rule (up to 1600), the Austro-Hungarian rule (from 1883 to 1914) and the formative period of the socialist government (from 1945 to the 1984 Olympic Games).

Modern Sarajevo and Bosnia-Herzegovina are predominantly inhabited by members of the three largest ethnic groups: Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs. The members of each particular group maintain a secular identity that has developed over time, but also refer to a specific religious tradition from earlier times. Today more than ever, Bosnian Croats feel their Catholic heritage; Bosnian Serbs are calling for their Orthodox origins; while Bosniaks consider Islam and Muslim culture as their most significant heritage. Today's Serbs were formerly called Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox and even Greek Orthodox; Croats were called Catholics, or, very rarely, Latin. Until the end of the twentieth century the Bosniaks were known as Bosnian Muslims, or simply Muslims. In addition, the Jews had become a significant group after their arrival in the sixteenth century; however, very few groups inhabit contemporary Sarajevo. Also, there are groups that refuse to consider themselves as either

Bosniaks, Serbs or Croats but only Bosnians, and those are usually children from mixed religious marriages or simply people who decided to embrace what is left of the Yugoslav “brotherhood and unity”. The question of identity is always tough; however, it seems especially complicated in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Not all citizens of Sarajevo expressed primary loyalty towards any of the ethnic groups; therefore, some decided to declare themselves Yugoslavs, especially in the socialist period. About 5 percent of Bosniaks identified as Yugoslavs in the 1991 census, but in Sarajevo and several other cities, about ten percent selected this type of identity (Donia, 2009). This group included many children from mixed marriages and others for whom that identity represented a refuge from all national identities, as well as those who considered themselves primarily citizens of Yugoslavia (Donia, 2009). Bosnia-Herzegovina as a country represents a meeting place of different peoples, customs and religions. It is inhabited by three major ethnic and religious groups: the Roman Catholic Croats, the Muslim Bosniaks and the Eastern Orthodox Serbs. However, during its history Bosnia experienced several changes related to the visibility of these different religious practices, customs and symbols due to the different political regimes. For instance, religion was neither publicly expressed nor practised during communism, while the country underwent a period of increased religiosity after the fall of communism in the 1990s, which was also accompanied by the 1992–1995 war. During the war the engaged parties defined themselves mostly in terms of their religious identities. However, there have been no strong indicators that could explain why people have become more openly religious since the signing of the Dayton agreement, or whether this increase in religiosity is mostly a result of the conflict or the fall of communism (Hacic-Vlahovic, 2008). It is difficult to conclude with certainty how and why the religious revival occurred at the beginning of the 1990s in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and to what extent the complicated jigsaw puzzle has started to shape both the political and everyday life of ordinary Bosnians. It is also unclear whether people have become more

openly religious due to nationalist sentiments, opportunism, their economic standard or intrinsic belief. The data collected during the communist period leave some degree of reasonable doubt as to whether society had actually truly secularized in the first place, or whether people simply pretended to be less religious in order to protect themselves (Hacic-Vlahovic, 2008). However, the event that largely shaped the current intergroup relations and dynamic was 1992-1995 war which represents the largest bloodshed in Europe after the World War II. It ended up by the ratification of Dayton Peace Agreement, however, its consequences have been felt ever since.

The Dayton Peace Agreement was reached on 21 November 1995 by the presidents of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia with the major aim to end the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Besides that, it outlined a General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which kept Bosnia as a single state made up of two parts, the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Bosniak-Croat majority) and the Republic of Srpska (Serb majority). Sarajevo remained the capital city. The Dayton Peace Agreement was cheered in 1995 because it stopped the shooting; however, very soon it was understood as an official and international formalization of the division of the country and people into three political and territorial entities, based on the different ethno-religious backgrounds of people in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Macek, 2009, p. 40). At the very beginning people felt a sense of relief as they were able to walk freely in the streets knowing that there were no snipers aiming at them (Macek, 2009, p. 202). However, in 1996 new graffiti appeared saying, “kad se saberemoduzmem se” (when I pull myself together- I fall apart). It can be understood as a sign of despair that appeared after people faced the real consequences of the war. A deeply divided country, scarce resources, lack of job opportunities and destroyed architecture were some of the triggers of this despair. There was hope that the international community would help to rebuild the city of Sarajevo and the country in general. Regardless of the lack of

resources, the signs of war trauma were present; however, there was no adequate psychological and psychiatric assistance in that period. The post-war period has been characterized by the wish to “bottle things up” and behave as if nothing had happened. Both the lack of a desire to talk and the inability to talk in the first place contributed to even deeper divisions between the ethnic groups because of the constant feeling of fear and instability. Dayton brought an atmosphere of artificial peace that helped people become more obsessed with the divisions and differences than with the possibilities for reconciliation and economic awakening. Unfortunately, such consequences deeply affected people in both entities, and their influence is still present. Sarajevo and East Sarajevo two decades later Two decades later Sarajevo and East Sarajevo are two cities very close to each other geographically, but very distant in terms of political cooperation. Even though it is called the “Jerusalem of Europe”, Sarajevo still suffers from a lack of resources, low salaries and a serious brain-drain. However, East Sarajevo, which consists of the suburban municipalities of pre-war Sarajevo, is not in a better position in terms of economic progress and job opportunities. It seems that 22 years after the war the new battle has started: the battle for survival and economic prosperity. The connections between the two cities are pretty bad. While it takes around 25 minutes to get from Sarajevo to East Sarajevo by car, there are few buses operating between the two. Besides that, taxi drivers are not allowed to drive between the two entities; therefore, they usually remove their sign and pretend to drive in a private mode. Also, the animosity between Sarajevo as an urban place and East Sarajevo as being formed of suburban municipalities is present and influences their further willingness to cooperate. In the following chapters this difference will be emphasized especially in terms of the readiness to reconcile between the two sides. Reconciliation exists mostly in research or political speeches. However, it is hard to talk about reconciliation when we consider that the two sides have been experiencing serious poverty and lack of opportunities for the younger population. Also, so much war trauma has



been repressed but transmitted to the next generation, which makes it hard to talk about the war events and to open up the real discussion about it. Inability to talk goes in line with political speeches that in most cases produce more hatred and fear from the other side (and such speeches are happening in both Sarajevo and East Sarajevo). Therefore, the current situation, more than 20 years after the war, can be understood as an atmosphere of fear combined with occasional expressions of misunderstanding and impulsive aggression.

### **Bias in Memories for In-group Wrongdoings: The Theoretical and Methodological Foundations of the Present Study**

Societies involved in intractable conflicts form a conflict-supporting narrative that provides justification for and explanation of the conflict as a whole as well as narratives about its specific events and relevant people (Oren et al., 2015). Until now a large amount of research has been done in the area of conflicting narratives, memories of the past and its contribution to reconciliation, not only in the area of psychology, but also in sociology, political science and history (White, 1987; Zerubavel, E., 2003; Zerubavel, Y., 1994; Elkins, 2005; Wertsch, 2002). Dominant specific and metanarratives about the past present the collective memory of the society, defined as representations of the past that are collectively adopted by the group members (Kansteiner, 2002). While analyzing the Israel-Palestine conflict, Bar-Tal (2013) came to the conclusion that conflicting narratives include several main themes: the justness of one's own group's goals, security, delegitimization, positive collective self-image, collective self-victimhood, patriotism, unity and peace. One of the aims of this research is to analyze to what extent the mentioned themes are present in conflicting narratives provided by the participants from Sarajevo and East Sarajevo, and if (and how) is it possible to move towards reconciliation.

The research included a total of 240 participants, divided into two groups: 1 the “old” generation: participants who were between 18 and 70 years old at the beginning of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992) and who lived in Sarajevo and contemporary East Sarajevo during the war and who still live in the same area (120 participants); 2 the “young” generation: high school students from Sarajevo and East Sarajevo who were between 15 and 19 years old when the research was conducted (2016–2017) (120 participants). An equal number of female and male participants were ensured in both groups. However, equal numbers of Bosniak and Serb participants from Sarajevo, and Serbs only (Bosniaks do not live in East Sarajevo in a certain number) from East Sarajevo, could not be ensured after coding of narratives was performed. The narratives obtained through structured interviews were later coded by two independent evaluators; therefore, data that were incomplete were not taken into consideration (unanswered questions or answers that did not correspond to the question). In order to ensure representativeness of the sample, the first group of participants for both cohorts was recruited through specific organizations/ associations/groups to which the majority of them belonged: high schools in both entities (only students born in Sarajevo and East Sarajevo were chosen, and only Serbs from both places and Bosniaks from Sarajevo) and the Orthodox Church and mosque. The first stratum was used to reach more participants who had the basic demographic characteristics (snow-ball sampling method). However, social networks such as Facebook were used in order to recruit participants more easily. It is worth mentioning that only those participants who had never left Sarajevo/East Sarajevo before, during and after the war were chosen (for the first generational group), while for the second generational group only those who were born in Sarajevo/East Sarajevo and who had been living there since then were chosen. That caused a certain reduction in sample size, because most of the people actually left one or the other city either before or during the war (and some of them even after the war or by the time this research was conducted). Therefore, data

obtained through this sample have to be understood in line with the mentioned restriction. Also, very few Bosniaks live in the area of East Sarajevo (in most cases they simply own summer houses there but do not live there permanently); therefore, they were omitted from the East Sarajevo group (only Serbs were chosen there).

All participants reported on their memories of four specific war events. A short description of the events as well as their significance and reason for inclusion in the questionnaire are provided here:

- The massacre in “Vase Miskina” street, also known as the Sarajevo massacre in the bread queue, was the first artillery attack during the siege of Sarajevo carried out by Bosnian Serb forces on 27 May 1992. It is considered one of the most horrific crimes, and it has been commemorated ever since.
- The Markale massacres were two bombardments carried out by the Army of the Republic of Srpska targeting civilians at the Markale marketplace, located in the historic core of Sarajevo (the first one occurred in 1994, and the second one in 1995). The latter attack was the stated reason for NATO air strikes against Bosnian Serb forces, which were supposed to lead to the Dayton Peace Agreement and the end of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Commemorations of both massacres have been organized on a yearly basis in Sarajevo.
- Killings of Serbs in Kazani–Trebevic: between 1992 and 1993 Serbs from Sarajevo were taken against their will to Trebevic, the mountain above Sarajevo, by Bosniak members of the Bosnian Army and killed. The exact number of the victims has been under discussion, and “Kazani” is the only documented case of the suffering of Serbs from Sarajevo until now.

- NATO air strikes against Bosnian Serb forces happened after the second Markale massacre (1995) and were intended to lead to the end of the siege of Sarajevo and the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The above-mentioned events were chosen in accordance with the manifestation and influence characteristics of a major event (Nets-Zehngut, 2015), and the number of commemorations organized each year. However, the last two events are the only two documented cases in which Bosnian Serbs were victims (in this region); therefore, these two were the only two to be chosen for the purpose of this research. It is important to mention that participants from Sarajevo (mostly Bosniaks and some Croats and Serbs) were victims in the first two events while participants from East Sarajevo were perpetrators, and vice versa for the other events. Even though the air strikes were conducted by NATO, the main reason for the attack was the Markale massacre; therefore, in the dominant narrative both Bosniaks and NATO were blamed. Also, two generational cohorts of participants were recruited in order to explore transgenerational transmission of traumatic memories.

Transgenerational transmission of trauma has been explored previously, especially in children of Holocaust survivors (Fossion, Rejas, Servais, Pelc, & Hirsch, 2003; Kellermann, 2013). However, this research will not explore the direct transgenerational transmission (parent-child), but the slightly indirect transmission (two generational cohorts that represent groups of people of different ages but born in the same area, such that one group survived the war and the other was born after the war). The point is to analyze how the social context and media together influence the memories of the younger generation, as well as to establish the foundations for the “remembrance for peace” project.

The semi-structured interview consisted of the same seven questions for each of the four events, and was specially designed for the purpose of this research. It was designed to measure the readiness of the participant to recall the event, his/her first association to the

event, the ways through which he/she heard about the event, what happened during the event (in his/her opinion), and his/her opinion on whether or not that event should be commemorated and marked.

The interviews were not time-limited, and participants were allowed time to think and provide the most accurate answer, to their knowledge. All participants were informed that there were no true and false answers and that their privacy was guaranteed. The phenomenological analysis of narratives was performed in order to interpret the meanings of experiences.<sup>1</sup>Ten relevant dimensions of phenomenological characteristics of autobiographical memories proposed by Sutin and Robins (2006) were used as a theoretical background: vividness, coherence, accessibility, time perspective, sensory details, visual perspective, emotional intensity, sharing, distancing and valence. Since the current research does not deal with autobiographical memories per se, but with the traumatic narratives of a difficult past, this list was modified such that only time perspective, sensory details, visual perspective, emotional intensity and valence and distancing were used while analyzing narratives.

### **From (In)Coherent Narratives to the Logic of Needs-based Model**

Traumatic narratives are characterized by incoherence; however, in this research that incoherence corresponds to participants' inability to produce a consistent story with a general framework (where, when, how did the event happen). On the contrary, their stories were mostly related to where they were and what they were doing (and how they felt) when the event happened. The closer (geographically speaking) they were to the place, the less coherent their story was, but at the same time, it was very emotionally saturated. Also, the more

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<sup>1</sup> The detailed quantitative analysis based on Schacter's theory on sins of memory, and Bar-tal's theory on the construction of conflict narratives is presented in author's book: *Social Aspects of Memory. Stories of Victims and Perpetrators from Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Routledge, 2019). The present article includes more detailed qualitative analysis of narratives and larger sample size (240 participants, compared by 150 analysed in book).

attached they felt towards a particular event (in most cases either they or someone close to them was involved in the event), the less structured narratives they produced; for example:

Serb, 59, East Sarajevo: A lot of people were killed at Markale bazaar. I remember it well. My friend was there . . . He survived, but lost both of his legs. I went to the hospital to visit him . . . I still remember that scene, seeing him in his hospital bed, covered completely by a white blanket. He saw me, smiled, and asked: "Did you bring me socks?"

However, these incoherent stories range from emotionally saturated narratives to factual and reserved narratives:

Serb, 63, East Sarajevo: I think the NATO bombing of the Republic of Srpska was planned and financed by someone. Those who paid were really rich and well informed. The only reason was to put the blame on Serbs. Nothing else. Markale . . . Grenade was there . . . Or maybe it was not. What can someone like me, an ordinary man, tell about it? I can only say that I feel sorry for the victims.

Serb, 59, East Sarajevo: I am not interested to talk about Markale. There are people out there who should think about it. Our politicians. I can only feel sorry for the victims and their families.

Bosniak, 60, Sarajevo: Commemorations should not be organized for any event. Whenever they organize it they spread hatred.

Bosniak, 45, Sarajevo: I blame Serbs for this war. I blame them for most of the things related to the war. They always had aspirations to occupy huge territory, and they did not have a problem with killing people in order to achieve their goal.

Serb, 47, Sarajevo: I was so happy when I heard about the NATO bombing of the Republic of Srpska. I wanted to see that, wanted to sing and dance . . . They kept me under siege for four years. That was the end of that terror.

Narrative accounts are not told in a vacuum, but are shaped and encouraged by a specific context (Murray, 2003, p. 116). There is usually a large layer outside the story that represents the socio-political context in which that story is told, which influences what, how and why elements within the story are seen as important and relevant (Murray, 2003). It is important to emphasize that this field research did not occur in a laboratory setting, and participants were neither deprived of media sources nor kept in a specific type of isolation. Therefore, the political context before the field research took place, as well as the ongoing political debate (Hague tribunal cases, trial of Naser Orić, a former Bosnian Army officer who was accused of mistreatment of Bosnian Serb detainees in the region of Srebrenica in late 1992 and early 1993) and the regular commemorations of these and other events, has influenced and shaped the responses of participants (for instance, during Naser Orić's trial they were more likely to include it in each narrative regardless of it not being directly related to the question). In such circumstances a narrator is regarded as a complex psychosocial subject who is an active agent in a social world, and it is through the narrative analyses that we can understand both narrators and their worlds (Murray, 2003, p. 116). Analysis of narratives in this research reveals the great impact of social context on the formation of memories and also the fact that individual memories formed under the influence of such contact in one group can be combined to make a collective narrative. In saying that, one does not think of a pure collection of individual narratives, but of the process of extracting one dominant narrative for each group. Such a narrative is usually the most frequently mentioned, retold and/or emphasized story among all or the majority of members of one group. That can also be

supported through the analysis of the first associations of participants for each of the four events. The associations in the following tables represent the first words and/or sentences participants said when each of the four events was mentioned.

Even though they were asked to say up to three words, most participants either were unable to do so (so they said one or two words) or reacted with a full sentence (a shorter one). It is evident that these associations are also grouped in a way that can result in a “collective association” for each of the three groups while at the same time such collective associations correspond to the three collective narratives extracted from participants’ stories. While Bosniaks and Serbs from Sarajevo mostly used words such as “blood”, “pain”, “bread”, “innocent civilians” and “death”, the dominant associations among Serbs from East Sarajevo were “unclear”, “unknown”, “construct” and “constructed”. However, one can notice that Serbs from Sarajevo in their associations emphasize the words “fear”, “death” and “innocent”, while some of them use the fact that “I was 100 metres farther”. In terms of the phenomenological characteristics of these associations, one can notice that some participants referred to colours, such as red (instead of saying blood), and some of them said that they “can still smell the grenade”. One of the very frequent words was “čemer”, which, when translated into English, corresponds to a combination of several emotions and feelings: sadness, sorrow, bitterness, despondency and grief. That word is often used in Bosnian poetry and literature in general, as it corresponds to the specific type of emptiness, sadness and bitterness that result from a traumatic event. Therefore, its presence here gives a much better picture of how participants understood the world around them during the specific war events. It is also interesting to notice that only one participant (a Bosniak from Sarajevo while telling her/his associations with the event in Vase Miskina street) said: “Walks when I was young”. It seems as though some people are still trying to embrace the old, pre-war picture of areas (streets) largely affected by the war later. This can also give some space to the formation of



reconciliation models and also healing, all of which will be analyzed in the last two chapters. The greater elaboration of critical details and the focus being put on the boundaries, as well as the superior recognition and recall of central, emotion-arousing details in a traumatic event, is a special phenomenon in cognitive psychology called tunnel memories (Safer, Christianson, Autry, & Osterlund, 1998). Such emotion-loaded narratives (as well as first associations with the events) are characteristic of the stories given by participants in this research, and this also helps us understand their incoherence and inability to follow a particular structure. Even though the interview questions were very structured, participants simply avoided providing a coherent, well-organized narrative and “describing” the event in the way they think or know it happened. In most of the cases they were reacting in line with their first associations, either starting to blame the other side, or trying to emphasize their in-group victimization, or their in-group suffering. While this is in line with present theories of the formation of traumatic narrative, incoherence should be analyzed within the social context in which it occurs, but also within cognitive theories of memory association with trauma. Traumatic narratives are characterized by incoherence, defragmentation and sensory experiences. Janet (1909) was among the first scientists analyzing dissociated and fragmented narrative as well as threatening vivid flashbacks in traumatic memory. Until now, his research has been strongly appreciated in neuroscience. Brewin, Dalgleish, and Joseph (1996) suggested two types of memory that are associated with trauma, and they described them as verbally accessible memory (VAM), responsible for the narrative aspect of the traumatic memory and partially integrated into autobiographical memory, while it partially gives rise to a fragmented and dissociated narrative that can be accessed deliberately when required. Situationally accessible memory (SAM) is responsible for flashbacks, which are vivid memories that are triggered automatically and involuntarily and result in emotionally threatening but richly detailed memories (Burnell, Coleman, & Hunt, 2010, p. 59). Integration of traumatic memories into a

coherent narrative is one of the preconditions for their reconciliation (Brewin et al., 1996). However, over time traumatic narrative can become an explicit and integrated personal narrative (van der Kolk & Fisler, 1995), which was proved in this research on Sarajevo and East Sarajevo as well. Most of the narratives were recalled in the form of dissociated mental imprints of sensory and affective elements of the traumatic experience (as visual, affective, auditory and kinaesthetic experience), after which a personal narrative appears (van der Kolk & Fisler, 1995). In the present research all participants struggled to form coherent and structured narratives of what happened, while those who were either geographically closer to the event or somehow involved (either they were there, or a family member or close friend was there) started describing the events by explaining what they were doing, where they were or how they felt at that point of time. However, none of the participants in this research actually specifically pointed out the ways through which he/she tried to cope with such incoherent traumatic narratives of the past. Most of what I as a researcher was able to get was associated with the reluctance to talk and fear of being judged; one Serb from East Sarajevo (older generation) said he/she was “afraid of being labelled as nationalist”. Hunt and Robbins (2001) identified two coping strategies that influence how war veterans cope with traumatic narratives: avoidance and processing. Avoidance can be defined as staying out of situations or away from people that can trigger traumatic memories, while processing involves actively seeking people who can support the recall of traumatic memories and who can provide the opportunity to both narrate and make sense of the traumatic past (Burnell et al., 2010, p. 60). In their research conducted on British World War II and Korean War veterans Hunt and Robbins (2001) found that the veterans processed their memories at veterans’ associations with comrades of the same war or with others who served with them, while family members were used as a safe space where they were not supposed to talk about war and traumatic experiences at all. It is assumed that war veterans (as well as other survivors of traumatic

experiences) will try to find meaning in their memories of those events. In order to explore the coherence of narratives and representations of “my-their” memories of a second generation, a qualitative narrative analysis was conducted in the present research. A definition of coherent narrative was taken from Burnell et al.’s (2010, p. 62) research on World War II veterans’ experiences of social support in relation to the narrative coherence of war memories; therefore, the coherent narrative was defined as “one that is structured, affectually consistent, and is fully integrated”. It was really hard to determine that type of coherence in narratives obtained from the first generation of Sarajevans and East Sarajevans. However, the narratives of the second generation mostly resembled history textbooks (even though they did not learn about the 1992–1995 war in school). This can be explained by the fact that the second generation did not hear a lot about these events from their parents directly, but they found and read some facts on Internet forums or heard about them on television. The fact that they did not show their own emotions but a so-called learnt emotional response that was highly dependent on their in-group belonging explains why their narratives were characterized by factuality. However, it was interesting to see how that factuality developed into a “collective factuality” that embraced the major grand narrative of their in-group:

PARTICIPANT (BOSNIAK, SARAJEVO, 19 YEARS OLD): You are asking me about the event that happened in Vase Miskina street? Where is that street in Sarajevo? I never heard of it.

RESEARCHER: It is called Ferhadija street now. Before it was Vase Miskina street.

PARTICIPANT (BOSNIAK, SARAJEVO, 19 YEARS OLD): Oh, yes . . . I remember it now. Or, let’s say, I cannot recall it in a way a survivor can. I was born after the war . . . I do not have that type of memory . . . As survivors have . . . You know, they can tell it more accurately, I guess. But I saw the plaque. I realized that people were killed there while waiting

in a bread queue . . . But it happened because Serbs wanted to cleanse Sarajevo of all Muslims. That was the only reason.

What is seen in the previous excerpt from an interview with a 19-year-old Bosniak from Sarajevo is that, at the very beginning, he seemed to be pretty unaware of the change in street name (the names of the streets were changed after the war, mostly in cases when some of them reflected previous regimes, either World War II or the 1992–1995 war); however, when reminded, he was not able to produce a coherent narrative and describe what happened, but instead tried to explain that his recall is not the same as the recall of the survivors. Nevertheless, he did not describe the event by itself, but gave some sort of opinion on what happened (which, at the same time, included both putting guilt and blame on one group, and using it as a reason for the event occurrence – without clearly describing it and letting us know if he has some knowledge about it, if not memory). We can say that memory for traumatic events has two poles: on one side there are the autobiographical memories of the direct victims, while on the other side there are the collective memories of second, third and many new generations. Between these two poles are so-called “my-their” memory images, which lie somewhere between personal memories and images younger generations could not have. They differ from collective memories in that they are experienced by the person as very personal and they elicit highly emotional feelings (Hirsch, 2008; Landsberg, 2004). That is significantly more likely to occur in situations that have certain indications of traumatic events from the past (e.g., when a person needs to visit a concentration camp in Poland) (Chaitin & Steinberg, 2014). According to Tulving (1993), the person can mentally travel to the traumatic event. According to Chaitin and Steinberg (2014) “my-their” memories differ from the individual memories in several aspects: 1 the person senses that she/he possesses individual memories, although she/he could not possibly have experienced those events or it

is very unlikely that a person actually survived and remembered those events; 2 it is a reconstructed memory, based on interpretations of the memories of older generations and longer exposure to collective memories; 3 such memories lack the vivid details of long episodic memories and are therefore more generic; 4 memories oscillate between the perspective of the first and third persons; 5 memories are “learned”, implanted from the outside by the older generation. Some of the mentioned characteristics were found in the narratives of younger generations of Sarajevans and East Sarajevans, especially when they were trying to describe when and how certain events happened. For instance, when asked about the event in Vase Miskina street, a 19-year-old Serb from East Sarajevo said: “I heard about that event from my professor of political economy and EU integration. He told us that the Serbs were unfairly accused and that Bosniaks were supposed to be blamed for that”. However, when asked about the NATO bombing, he responded: “Bosniaks are responsible for that event as well. Do not ask me why, because I do not really know. I probably think this way because I am a patriot”. What is obvious here is the presence and incorporation of the elements of emotions (according to Hirsch, 2008; Landsberg, 2004), collective identity, and issues of intergenerational transmission of massive social trauma, all of which are part of the content of “my-their” memories. The elements of transgenerational transmission of social trauma as well as the influence of collective identity on “my-their” memories are seen in the following excerpts as well:

Bosniak, 19, Sarajevo: Somebody’s hatred towards Muslims caused all these war events, including the one in Vase Miskina street . . . The most responsible person for Kazani is the late president Alija. He ordered those terrible crimes. I would not know why. There is no response to that, besides hatred. NATO is responsible for

bombing of the Republic of Srpska. It happened as some sort of revenge for Markale . . .

Serb, 19, East Sarajevo: Bosniaks set up all those events. They victimized their own people, their own civilians, in order to accuse the Serbs. We should not commemorate Markale . . . Why would we? It was all constructed. The NATO bombing was a terror. They were attacking us with no reason.

Serb, 17, Sarajevo: I do not know a lot about war in general, as that is something we do not learn in school. However, I heard about Markale, it was a terrible attack. So many innocent people killed. It should never happen again to anyone.

Bosniak, 19, Sarajevo: What happened in Vase Miskina street is the result of Serbs' desire to exterminate Muslims and take over Sarajevo . . . The NATO bombing represents freedom . . . Because Serbs would not have stopped the war anyway.

Serb, 18, East Sarajevo: I think Bosniaks are to be held responsible for Markale. Serbs could not have done this. I have never heard of Kazani. Vase Miskina was set up as well. Bosniaks did it.

Bosniak, 18, Sarajevo: People keep retelling different stories from wartime. Also, history classes contribute to it . . . In my opinion, Markale happened because Serbs wanted to kill all Muslims, which is a very immoral and unethical act. Their desire to kill exceeded all expectations . . .

Serb, 17, East Sarajevo: There are a lot of stories about the event in Miskina street. One of them says that it was constructed by Bosniaks. However, I am not sure that I can believe that one . . .

Serb, 16, Sarajevo: My parents were in Sarajevo when that (Markale) happened. They told me it was a horrible event. My mum also told me they felt relief during and after the NATO bombing. Because they knew that the war was over.

Bosniak, 19, Sarajevo: I saw the massacre in Vase Miskina street on TV. I do not wish something like that on even my worst enemy. However, I do not wish to judge. I am not here to judge. God is the only judge, and he will evaluate all their bad intentions.

Serb, 16, East Sarajevo: Members of one group (Bosniaks) committed wrongdoings towards their own group and then accused the other group (Serbs) of committing it. Everything was constructed.

Serb, 15, Sarajevo: I read about these events on the Internet. So many things can be found on portals. I know that there are a lot of different interpretations of what has happened; however, that does not justify the level of hatred towards the other group. Reading comments full of hatred makes me feel anxious about my future here.

Bosniak, 19, Sarajevo: Serbs were not happy with the fact that Bosniaks wanted to have their own country.

Serb, 17, Sarajevo: What happened in Vase Miskina street happened due to the wrong ideology. It happened because of the hatred of one group (Serbs) towards the other group (Bosniaks). Serbia had a desperate desire to become a huge country while at the same time it was destroying the other country (Bosnia) and Bosnians. I do not think we should mark or commemorate the NATO bombing of the Republic of Srpska. Maybe they can write about it in history textbooks, but just in the form of a historical fact, nothing else.

The presented excerpts from narratives reveal the ways in which these memories were formed, and that includes both transgenerational transmission and also the influence of in-group identity and the collective memories of the in-group. We can say that individual memories and collective memories are mutually very connected, and this connection is very noticeable when we consider the traumatic events of the past relevant to one group (wars, violence, genocide, etc.). However, it looks as if “my-their” memories can also be connected to and influenced by the other types of memories, which, according to Chaitin (2014), are not fixed, but are strong when they arise in the moment. They have three main functions: intrapersonal, interpersonal and directive (Bluck et al., 2005). Chaitin and Stenberg (2014) in their study of descendants of survivors of Holocaust victims and descendants of Palestinians who survived al Naqba come to the conclusion that the younger generation (which did not experience the traumatic events) adopts and internalizes the narratives of the older generation, which causes them to become imprisoned in those memories and traumas. The authors did not specify in what way these memories would help or hinder a reconciliation process, but emphasized that even those who possess “my-their” memories can demonstrate a high willingness for reconciliation if they are in situations that require cooperation and dialogue with members of the other (“enemy”) group. Albeck et al. (2002) in their research showed that personal narratives can help Germans and Jews as well as Israelis and Palestinians to move closer to reconciliation, especially when they take place in a “safe” environment that encourages active listening, dialogue and reflection. If we apply that to the Bosnian context and the results of this research, we can say that the younger generation has developed “my-their” memories in such a way that they embrace both the narratives of the older generation and the narratives of their surroundings (peers, professors, friends, media/ Internet). Even though there were no statistically significant differences in readiness to reconcile among the three groups (in the younger generation), while going through all the narratives (and also first



associations) we can notice the formation of three grand or major narratives that somehow flow above all lower, single-individual narratives. If we take into consideration that there are different approaches to collective memories as well as different definitions, we can say that those “floating” narratives can be understood not as a pure most frequent word or a sentence each group member used, but as a combination of similar/same constructs used while describing events. It is also interesting to understand how these constructs were acquired and later shared among members of the same group, and also transgenerationally transmitted. Even though media are mentioned as the most frequent source of information, it should be taken into consideration that the lack of electricity during the 1992–1995 war in Bosnia-Herzegovina deprived almost all people of television and radio (the Internet was not a source at that time in this region). Therefore, in most of the cases when a participant mentioned media he/she added: “It was in those rare situations when we got electricity for two hours per night, and then you turned on the TV and watched whatever could be watched”. However, participants were exposed to different TV programmes depending on where they were, but the fact that electricity was scarce meant they were mostly deprived of it. Most of the information was retold in the form of stories among family members, neighbours and friends.

Speakers and listeners often influence each other’s memories during conversation and, in doing so, promote the formation of a shared, or collective, memory (Coman & Hirst, 2015). That process or a moment during which such mnemonic consensus occurs is called socially shared retrieval-induced forgetting (SSRIF). In situations when listeners attend to speakers’ selective retrieval of previously encountered events, they forget unmentioned but related information more than they forget unrelated, unmentioned previously studied information (Coman & Hirst, 2015). Due to such a process, both of them remember and forget the event in a similar way. In their study of SSRIF, Coman and Hirst (2015) concluded that group membership plays a role in SSRIF, because Princeton students listening to a speaker

selectively recall previously studied material showed SSRIF when the speaker was identified as a fellow Princeton student, but not when he or she was identified as a Yale student. Also, similar patterns of selective forgetting are more likely to occur between speakers and listeners if they belong to the same social group. In other research on memories of the 11 September terrorist attack, Coman, Manier, and Hirst (2009) concluded that conversations can alter the memories of speakers and listeners in similar ways, even when the memories differ, which implies that SSRIF could be one of the mechanisms for the formation of collective memories. Following the SSRIF theory, we can conclude that the basic mnemonic mechanisms are adapted to promote the emergence of shared mnemonic representations that preserve group membership and group identity in a way that we could see in the present research. The fact that memories are not formed in a vacuum, and that members of the same group interact with each other more than they interact with members of the other group, contributes to the formation of three “floating” narratives in these three groups. While responding to the question related to the sources of information some members of the younger generation mentioned their family members, teachers and peers. Even though in this research two generational groups were interviewed, there was no connection between them; therefore, it is impossible to draw conclusions on the basis of transgenerational transmission of memories and trauma. However, it is possible to speak about indirect transmission, while keeping in mind that members of the younger generation were under the influence of the memories of their parents, grandparents and other older relatives. According to Volkan (2001), a large group “chooses” to dwell on a past traumatic event and make it a major design to be stitched on the canvas of a large-group tent. While doing so, the same group also chooses the trauma which can further be transmitted to their children. Such chosen trauma can be reactivated through ideology, enhancement of leader-follower interaction, time, feelings of victimization, prejudice and conflict, which all leads to irrational decision making and destructive large-

group activities (Volkan, 2001). Transmission of different chosen traumas and difficult memories is still taking place in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina (Mušić, Jeftić, & Draganović, 2014). Kalina Yordanova (2015) argues that memories of war violence are being preserved not only in narratives, but also in acts and objects, such as developing an illness, producing war-related art or visiting places that link back to the war. According to her findings, the war generation from Bosnia-Herzegovina is not able to recall coherent war narratives due to four reasons: at the onset of the war people denied many of the warning signs, making the war seem an overwhelming and surreal event which is impossible to describe to someone without such experience; the ambiguity of the parents' experience of war, which originates in shifts between the positions of victim, murderer and witness, complicates transmission since there is no clear-cut narrative about the war in the first person singular; the experience of extreme violence challenges the war generation's capacity to comprehend and integrate what they have lived through; and the inability to produce a war narrative in the first person is shaped by the wider context of polarization and profanization of the issue of war (Yordanova, 2015). The fact that the younger generation does not receive a coherent narrative from their parents could be one of the reasons why they were not able to produce their own story. However, one should take into consideration that most parents do not talk to their children about the war that openly, and even those who do so do not give specific information on all four events mentioned in this research. Also, one of the most important factors to mention here is that the younger generation does not learn about the 1992–1995 war in school, because it is forbidden to talk about this until a common narrative has been established. History teaching in elementary and secondary schools in Bosnia-Herzegovina has not yet been agreed upon and has been carried out using three different curricula: the curricula of the two entities (the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Republic of Srpska) and the Croatian curriculum followed in certain parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Jeftić, 2013). The 1992–1995 war in

Bosnia-Herzegovina was not included in the official curriculum in most parts of the country, due to the recommendations of the Council of Europe to temporarily suspend teaching about the war years. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe argued for the temporary suspension of teaching of the 1992–1995 period until historians in Bosnia-Herzegovina, with the support of international experts, establish a common approach to the study of this period in schools. Hence that period has not been covered in history textbooks and during history classes yet.

### **My narrative, Your Narrative: What is the Socio-emotional Route to Reconciliation**

According to Kaplan (2005) trauma can never be healed in the sense of a return to how things were before the traumatic event took place, or before one witnessed such an event. However, its impact can be worked through both individually and collectively. This is what Zemblyas (2008) meant when he coined the term translating trauma which refers to finding new ways to make meaning out of traumatic experiences of the past. Such process can be achieved through reflection on personal narratives of the traumatic past, but only if it occurs in a safe, judgement-free environment. History-teaching projects can occur in two different formats: as an attempt to produce a shared memory, or as an initiative to have each group acknowledge the other's narrative (Bilali & Ross, 2012). The question if groups should acknowledge diverse memories or if they should strive to form one mutual narrative remains unanswered. For instance, in Israel, social psychologists have worked with Palestinian and Israeli teachers to develop a joint history textbook, which depicts both groups' historical narratives and one empty sheet which is supposed to be used for one common narrative teacher and students will write together (Albeck et al. 2002). Similar activities are underway in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where (mainly history) teachers have been undergoing training through EUROCLIO project on how to talk about sensitive and difficult events from distant and recent

past. However, both of these two projects strive at achieving one mutual narrative that will satisfy all involved sides. Assuming there are two sides in the conflict, it is hard to achieve one narrative that will be in line with both group's needs and memories. Hence one of the most influential models that are commonly used when addressing trauma and violence is needs-based model (Shnabel and Nadler, 2008). While victims need to restore their lost power and status, perpetrators need to restore their positive identity, and such combination of emotional states has been said to reflect the perpetrators' "anxiety over social exclusion" (Baumeister et. al., 1994, p. 246). When situating this theory into the results of empirical analysis in Bosnia-Herzegovina, one may assume that the resource that is threatened in victims falls into the category of status (i.e., the need for relative power), whereas the resource that is threatened for perpetrators is associated with the category of love (i.e., the need for relatedness) (Shnabel, Nadler, 2008). Once deprived, victims need to restore their need for power, which in turn provokes feelings of social exclusion in perpetrators. Victims usually want perpetrators to acknowledge responsibility for their wrongdoings which in turn may cause perpetrators to fear exclusion from the designated moral community to which they belong (Tavuchis, 1991). Hence perpetrators need people who would express understanding and empathy regarding their current circumstances (Nadler & Liviatan, 2006), but also those who are willing to show empathy for their emotional distress (McCullough et al., 1997). According to Staub (2005), the public moral image of the perpetrators can be restored only through empathy, which makes it the only way towards their "rehumanization".

## **Conclusion**

The results of this study indicate that a reconciliation initiatives should evolve around the conflicting individual narratives that (if not timely prevented), contribute to the establishment of more complicated collective narratives of conflict. These findings also support results of studies conducted in other post-conflict areas such as Rwanda and Croatia where, according

to Janine Natalya Clark (2013), the major issue is not whether the past is remembered or forgotten, as these are two symbiotic and mutually reinforcing processes. This is certainly the case because forgetting, as much as remembering, is part of the reconstruction of history; therefore, the major issue is what exactly is remembered and what exactly is forgotten. It is important to pay attention to the specific but complement emotional needs of both victim and perpetrator's group which, when expressed in a safe and secure environment, can contribute to the processes of understanding and transformation – both of which very crucial to the reconciliation. Future research should empirically test the needs-based model in Bosnia-Herzegovina in order to explore further how these needs are formed and how they complement each other. While the current study was one of the first attempts to analyse conflict narratives of victims and perpetrators through the elements of needs-based model in Bosnia-Herzegovina, future studies should try to test the connection between emotional needs and readiness for reconciliation.

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