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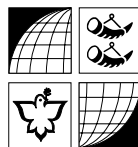
**Centre for Conflict Resolution  
Department of Peace Studies**

**Working Paper 6**

**Psychological 'Conflict Mapping' in Bosnia &  
Hercegovina: Case Study, Critique and the  
Renegotiation of Theory**

**Steve Gillard**

**October 2000**



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## **1.0 Introduction**

Conflict resolution theory claims that the exercise of ‘mapping’ the social-psychological processes of a conflict - trying to gain an understanding of the relationship between conflict and the processes of social identification - offers great insight into that conflict, and can be used as a tool to help unravel the conflict and bring it to a peaceful close. This paper examines that claim with a case study of young people living in wartime Bosnia & Hercegovina. Their accounts of the war are compared with theories of social identification, and that comparison used both to develop a map of the conflict that is more resonant with the case study context, and to suggest a critical methodological and context-based approach to more effective conflict mapping.

### **1.1 Theoretical Framework**

Conflict Resolution theory is predicated on the idea that conflict has psychological, as well as behavioural and structural dimensions (Mitchell 1981). Azar (1990) and Burton (1990) suggest that certain basic human needs lie behind every conflict, and that if people’s psychological responses to these needs can be understood and addressed, the surface issues that seem to preoccupy conflict lose their significance. Druckman (1987) and Kelman (1990) propose that examination of the way in which group attitudes and perspectives feed, escalate and perpetuate intergroup conflict can provide conceptual tools to overcome psychological barriers to peacefully resolving conflict. Sandole (1987) suggests that there is something generic about the psychological processes of conflict, and that an understanding of these processes - the ability to ‘map’ conflict in general - is key to any intervention.

As the language, taxonomy, theory and practice of conflict resolution continue to seep into the mainstream of conflict intervention, it becomes increasingly necessary to thoroughly investigate and critique this notion of ‘conflict mapping’, theoretically and empirically. It is important to consider whether or not the particular social-psychological perspective on conflict that is advocated is as informative and constructive as is assumed, or whether alternative perspectives might have as much, or more to offer. Conflict Resolution theorists (Mitchell (1981), Wedge (1986), and Fisher (1990)) cite specific bodies of identity theory - largely in the fields of cognitive social-psychology and psychodynamics - as providing conflict mapping with its theoretical frame of reference. This is not to say that other theory does not exist that can usefully inform practical peacebuilding, and indeed such theory will be cited later in the article. Rather it will be suggested that, because Conflict Resolution theory often serves as a theoretical source for practical peacebuilding, it is imperative that these discourses are put to a critical test.

### **1.2 The Case Study - Young People in Mostar, Bosnia & Hercegovina**

Empirical focus will be on the recent war in Bosnia & Hercegovina, concentrating on the town of Mostar in West Hercegovina, and in particular on young people who came into contact with the youth and reconciliation project, *Mladi Most*, during the period April 1995 to March 1996<sup>1</sup>. The project *Mladi Most* (Young Bridge) was established in Mostar in September 1994 by volunteers from the German organisation *Aktion Suhrziechen/Friedensdienste* (ASF). ASF (Action for Reconciliation/Service for Peace) was founded in 1958 “to confront the era of fascism in German history” (ASF 1994a), working with people who had suffered under German fascism. The basic philosophy behind the organisation was that, in offering recognition of, and reparation for German guilt for World War Two, reconciliation might follow. *Mladi Most* was a new type of project for ASF, dealing with a contemporary conflict, and as such its programme for reconciliation was to be worked out ‘on the ground’. The project based itself in a house situated in the Croat controlled part of the city (see below), its original aim being to run an “open house” offering activities, facilities and a place to meet - principally targeting children and young people - while promoting its objectives throughout the city. The house, in particular, would provide a space where young people of all nationalities could be free of the nationalistic pressures and antagonisms of the city outside, and could interact with each other in a ‘normal’ way, irrespective of nationality. Further objectives included the promotion of “self-organisation, autonomy and self-confidence”(ASF 1994b) among local residents, with a long term objective of seeing the project run largely by local people. It was hoped that the provision of such a space would be laying the foundations for the eventual reconciliation between the two sides of the city, and between the national communities within the city.

I collected young people’s accounts of their experiences of the war, and of their attitudes and opinions surrounding those experiences, largely through semi-formal interview, also noting conversational data. I tried to ask questions that were not too directive, or did not require answers in a particular form, in order to allow the interviewee to talk about issues that were of importance to them, as well as of interest to me. In some earlier interviews my questions were too closely derived from the theory I was attempting to investigate, and as a result some interviewees seemed unable or unwilling to relate their experiences and attitudes to the abstractions implied by my question. Where this had been the case I reinterviewed later in the fieldwork, although it is probable that the range of information that I collected was nevertheless somewhat constrained by the theoretical assumptions that I took with me to the fieldwork. My location as researcher - theoretical, personal, social, political and so on - should be considered when evaluating this study<sup>2</sup>. Further, where interviewees’ accounts were particularly dynamic this is noted and discussed in the analysis below.

Methodologically, in seeking to critique a particular body of literature, it is not by accident that this study focuses on a group of people with a prior, largely favourable interest in reconciliation. A pilot

study I had conducted in a similarly divided town - Pakrac - in Croatia in 1994 revealed that such a study would provide much data that was dissonant with the abstract understanding of the relationship between identity and conflict, advanced by the discourse under investigation (Gillard, 1999). Thus this study, while neither making use of a particularly large set of interviewees, nor comprising a representative cross-section of the society from which it was drawn, would however be productive of insight into the attitudes of individuals behaving in defiance of the conflict around them, offering both a critique and an alternative theoretical perspective. In so doing, the paper will not claim to prove that any alternative theoretical understanding represents a 'truth': rather to demonstrate that the *quality* of observable data can be productive of alternative *possible* theoretical understandings that are resonant with the study context, and therefore informative of an alternative conflict map for that context.

### **1.3 An Outline of the Paper**

The paper will begin by briefly describing the case study context in terms of the discourses that are to be investigated (section 2). However, disjunction will then be demonstrated between empirical observation - interviewee accounts - and the social-psychological processes assumed by discourse to be taking place (section 3). It will then be argued that the assumptions founding the literatures concerned place severe limits on the usefulness of that theory as a tool both for understanding the social-psychological processes of conflict, and for conceptualising ways of overcoming the psychological barriers to peacefully resolving conflict (section 4).

The main body of the paper will then re-examine the particular empirical qualities of that disjunction (sections 5 and 6), in order to see if this evidence is suggestive of alternative understandings of the social-psychological processes of conflict (section 7). Finally, on the basis of these findings, the paper will advocate an alternative methodological approach to 'conflict mapping' in general, wherein understandings of the social-psychological processes of conflict are negotiated in the conflict context itself, indicating how such understandings might better inform efforts to overcome the psychological barriers to peacefully resolving conflict (section 8).

## **2.0 Conflict in Bosnia: A Theoretical Perspective**

From spring until early autumn of 1995 the war in Bosnia & Hercegovina seemed as intense as ever: Sarajevo remained deadlocked; the Bosnian Serb Army overran most of the remaining Muslim-controlled enclaves in Eastern Bosnia; massive military operations by Croat and Muslim forces led to the biggest enforced movements of population of the whole war. International efforts to find a negotiated solution to the conflict seemed stalled. Mostar had suffered greatly in terms of bitter fighting, destruction, loss and deprivation, and was at the time of study divided physically, socially and



politically. 1994 had seen a ceasefire between Croat and Muslim forces fighting one another within Mostar. However, in spite of the presence of United Nations peacekeepers, and European Union administration of the town, progress was minimal. Croat and Muslim authorities - controlling, respectively, roughly the western and eastern banks of the river that split the town - clung to their *de facto* authority, whilst engaging in a rhetorical war that sometimes spilled over as further outbreaks of armed violence. Thus tension, and the fear of a return to large scale fighting, characterised the environment at the time. In addition, a massive mistrust had resulted from the betrayals and traumas of war, particularly between the Croat majority in west Mostar - many of whom had descended on the town from surrounding rural areas - and the sizeable Muslim and Serb minorities who remained. East Mostar was, in comparison, predominantly Muslim, but continued to suffer a higher level of deprivation than the West, due to its own problem of a massive influx of rural refugees, and the effects - physical and psychological - of a devastating siege that had preceded the ceasefire (see Figure 1 on facing page- Graphic of Mostar).

Conflict Resolution theory would interpret the situation in Mostar in terms of conflict that is deep-rooted (Burton, 1984) or intractable (Kriesberg *et al*, 1989), wherein the behaviour of each party to achieve its goals is perceived/experienced as threatening/damaging by the other. Communications break down, the other party is rigidly stereotyped in negative, hostile ways, and no possible solution to the conflict seems mutually acceptable (Fisher, 1990). Theories of cognitive social-psychology assume that the individual finds psychological security and self-esteem through identifying self with positively valued groups, *in comparison* to perceiving self as *not-like* certain negatively valued groups. Thus during intense, damaging conflict, as much psychological distance as possible has to be maintained between in- and outgroups (Turner, 1987). All potential outgroup members are stereotyped (Tajfel, 1981) in the most hostile, derogatory terms, while the self is closely identified with an ingroup whose actions are necessarily just and honourable. Alternative identification of self and outgroup members as in any way similar is therefore threatening to that sense of self, and any sources of such identification are psychologically and bodily rejected (Hewstone, 1989). Psychodynamic theory similarly describes a 'psychological gap' between 'good' self and 'bad' other, founded on a developmental projection of good and bad images of self onto suitable group targets. Thus, during conflict, any perception of self in the 'enemy' other, or of the other in the self, threatens that gap and a regressive, childlike crisis of identity ensues. Consequently the enemy is 'dehumanised' in order to both account for the enemy's hostility, and to justifying the worst excesses of the ingroup's behaviour towards that enemy. However, that the ingroup and outgroup are somehow alike in the way they behave towards each other - that the self and inhuman other are similar - cannot be escaped, and this continual threat to the self drives a dynamic of enmity (Wedge, 1986; Kriesberg *et al*, 1989; Volkan *et al*, 1990).

Thus a social-psychological mapping of the conflict in Bosnia in general, and in Mostar in particular, could be carried out in these terms, and employed as a guide on the route to conflict resolution. For the 'typical Bosnian', members of any of the other constituent nations (*i.e.* Serbs, Muslims or Croats) are described as terrorist, extremist, evil, greedy, treacherous and so on, while the attitudes and behaviours of one's own nation are articulated in terms of historic rights to land, moral rights to self-defence and the exercising of traditional, civilised European values. It is sufficient to note that such accounts are articulated in detail elsewhere, more or less critically (*e.g.* Gow, 1991; Glenny, 1992; Kaplan, 1993; Vuillamy, 1994), and the process need not be replicated here.

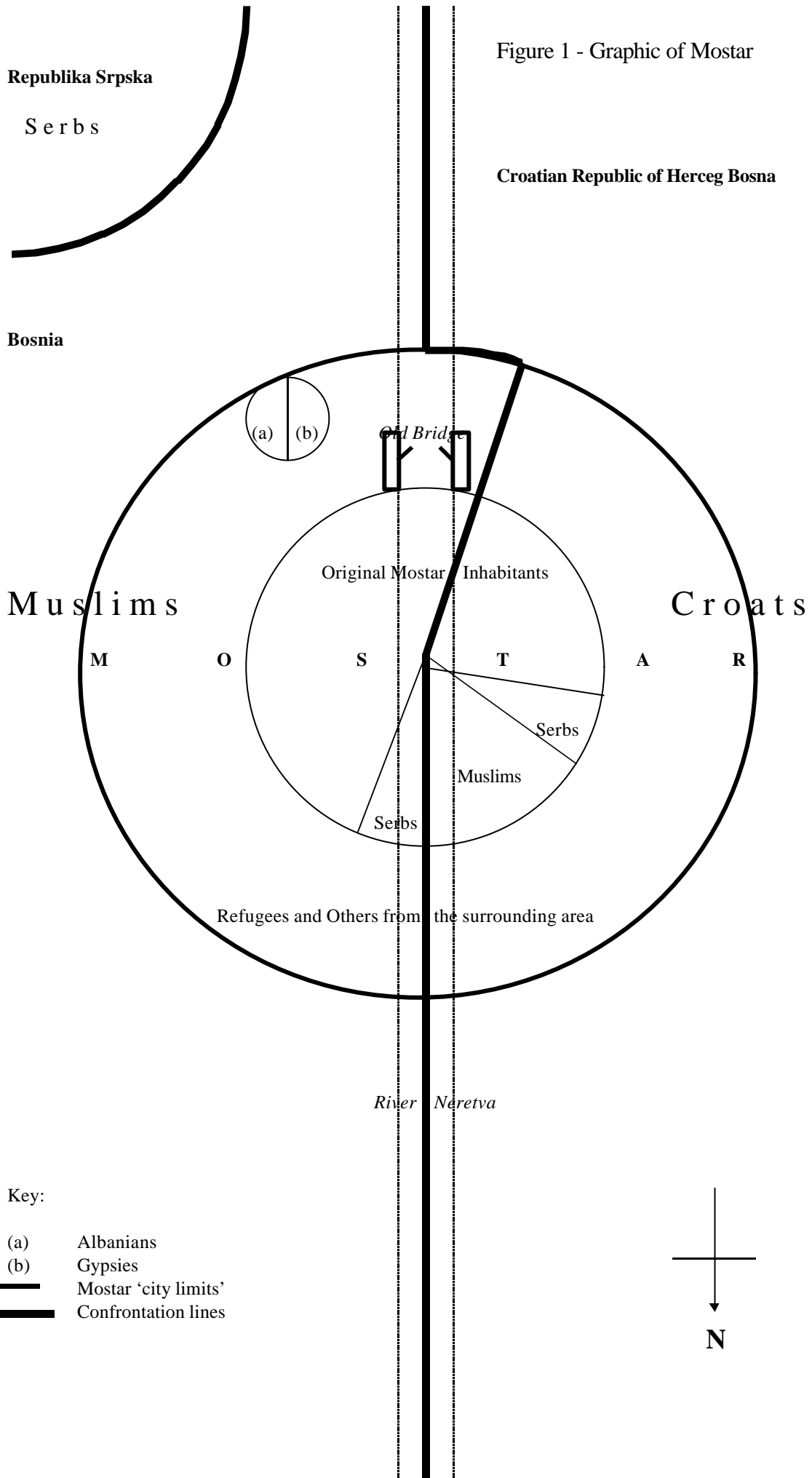
*Summary: Theoretical discourse - advocated by Conflict Resolution theory as offering a conceptual map to conflict - provides an account of the situation in Mostar, Bosnia & Hercegovina. This account is familiar and well rehearsed, but paints a bleak picture of the situation in the town, while seeming to offer little hope for the resolution of conflicts there.*

### **3.0 Theory and Empirical Observation: A Disjunction**

However, empirical fieldstudy undertaken in Mostar reveals a significant disjunction between these theoretical abstractions (along with their assumed substantive counterparts), and observations made of a group of 25 young people, interviewed in great depth during the study period<sup>3</sup>. These young people were of a variety of nationalities (Serb, Muslim and Croat) - and about a quarter of them of mixed parentage - living on both sides of the city, and had had a great variety of experiences of the war. Some lived as minorities within hostile majority communities, about half the group being non-Croats living in Croat West Mostar (who, along with a smaller number of Croats, typified the project house visitors). Some had been expelled from homes or imprisoned, others had lost loved ones or seen combat from an early age. All had suffered to varying degrees the physical and psychological deprivations and dangers of war, and experienced extended separation from close friends and family.

The most striking finding was that of the 25, only 14 made *any* identification with a nationality - including 3 who described different forms of a multi-ethnic *Bosnian* nationality, rather than calling themselves Serb, Muslim or Croat - and for only 10 was this their most important self-identification. For only 4 was there any identification with a wider national community that transcended Bosnia's geographical borders, and for only 8 was religion an intrinsic element of national identification. Conversely, 10 stated either that they did not identify self with nationality *at all*, or that they did not feel that their nationality was of any importance to them. Accordingly, interviewees spoke of a range of other important self identifications, 17 identifying self with some form of multi-national Bosnian

Figure 1 - Graphic of Mostar



citizenship and 16 making one or more other important identification - with Mostar, place/region of birth, former-Yugoslavia, their culture, religion - which they did not associate, personally, with nationality. 11 stated that it was such a non-national self-identification that was most important to them.

Similarly, *all* interviewees' descriptions of *other* nationalities were complex. That is to say, all interviewees differentiated between different members, or groups of members, within the other nationality. Most specifically associated their more negative identifications of national others *only* with those elements of the other nationality that they held in some way to be culpable for the war, rather than with the nationality as a whole. For example, only 6 interviewees attributed responsibility for events in the war to religious differences between nationalities, and only 7 to cultural differences. These are attributions that might identify other nationalities as a whole as responsible for the war or for certain significant events. In contrast, *all* interviewees made attributions for responsibility to extremist nationalist elements within national communities, 19 to political (elite) factions, and 15 to specifically rural elements within national communities. Lastly, those individuals who reported suffering many, frequent and repeated traumatic experiences, did *not* describe more conflictual identifications than those who acknowledged that their traumatic experiences of the war were few.

The discourses cited above offer no explanation for these observations, and this lack seems significant when it is considered that these 25 young people were all, in some way, associated with a peace and reconciliation project - *Mladi Most* - active on both sides of the city. Here were people interested in building peace in a conflict situation, yet the theory advocated as providing a conceptual guide has nothing to offer. The disjunction between theory and empirical observation seems all the more critical in the light of early project reports, which note that "when it becomes clear that at the moment meetings inside the house can only happen between people from the Western part of the city ... efforts are taken to create *parallels* and contacts that can grow into a direct connection through parallel work in West and East Mostar" (ASF, 1995). In the absence of potential for direct reconciliation between divided communities within Mostar, running 'parallel activities' on the two sides of the city - as well as trips outside the country for young people from both sides of the city - was resorted to as the main focus for the project. Yet while a number of international project volunteers had experience of the conflict resolution literature and workshops, there was a shared feeling that Conflict Resolution had little to offer *Mladi Most* as a theoretical resource when faced with this dilemma. (Similarly, the *Pakrac Social Reconstruction Project* in Croatia suffered equivalent problems in facilitating reconciliation in a divided town, resorting to parallel programmes of 'normalisation' as an alternative. Again, it was specifically stated that the theory of Conflict Resolution could not be practically applied in such a context (see Gillard, 1999)).

It is in cases such as these that existing theoretical discourse - while offering a social-psychological map of the processes of conflict - is silent when called on to inform an actual peacebuilding potential, wasting, as it were, the opportunities evidenced by groups of people who seem so well disposed towards peacebuilding. In fact, it is notable that, while all these theories have much to say about the way in which intercommunal relationships break down during conflict, they have relatively little to offer on the processes whereby those relationships might be rebuilt. Conflict Resolution theorists have noted this conceptual lack, and have called for theory to be pushed forward in this area, while seemingly unable to devise a strategy for so doing (Mitchell, 1981; Fisher, 1990).

*Summary: An initial overview of interviewee accounts painted a strikingly different picture than that anticipated by the theory introduced in the preceding section. Therefore, as well as failing to offer explanations for the situation, this theory can also be seen to be failing to provide a conceptual resource for peacebuilding projects.*

#### **4.0 Theory and Empirical Observation: Disjunction Explored**

The empirical quality of the disjunction observed in this particular study context prompts questions to be asked about the assumptions upon which these theories are founded, and in so doing impasse is revealed in their potential for conceptualising social-psychological process of peacebuilding. That is to say, these theories are founded on the assumption that the self can only be secured and valued in autonomy from an essentially different other: in function, that the self and other are mutually exclusive qualities (Keller, 1985). Any like-self perceived of the other, or *vice versa*, is threatening to the very boundaries of the self, and must be denied, (Turner, 1987 p.49) acknowledging that the process of social identification, as understood by the cognitive social-psychologist, is essentially 'functionally antagonistic'. Thus the experience of conflict is shaped, for the individual, by highly polarised categorisations of the self/ingroup and the enemy/outgroup, these categories in turn becoming increasingly essentialised as conflict progresses. As a result, any attempt to nurture alternative identifications that transcend the divisions between communities divided by conflict is to threaten the very self of those individuals involved. It is this impasse that is the source of barriers to conceptualising processes whereby intercommunal relationships, severely damaged by war, might be rebuilt.

While these represent the substantive assumptions underlying the theoretical accounts in question, it is possible to consider the epistemology that underpins these fields of social science in general as the initial source of any impasse, and as productive of these particular substantive understandings.

Harding (1991) and Welling Hall (1994) argue that objectivist epistemology can result in an alienation of theory from actual case study context, as has been observed in this case. Indeed it can be argued that much social-psychological theory - often generated from observation under experimental conditions - is founded on the assumption that the researcher can objectively observe psychological processes as they take place, and so explain them, provided s/he can remove subjective contamination from the research process, through processes ensuring 'reliability' and 'validity' (Silverman, 1993).

The psychodynamic analyst likewise assumes that s/he can account for her/his subjective response to the analytical relationship, and for the patient's subjective response to the analyst's input, through an understanding of the processes of 'transference' and 'countertransference' (see: Brown & Pedder, 1979). The analyst is then able to 'empathise' with the patient (Rogers, 1980): to have objective knowledge of the psychological processes that the patient is experiencing. However, it can be convincingly argued that such an epistemological position - that (social) reality can be objectively observed and known - is flawed: that such 'objectivity' stems from, and is a product of the particular subjective - social, cultural, political, personal - location of the observer. As such, this objectivist approach, far from removing subjectivity from the research process, allows subjectivity to shape research findings, while denying its impact and passing off those findings as describing some absolute, 'natural', scientifically proven reality (Morgan, 1983; Harding, 1987; Harvey, 1990).

Accordingly, where the cognitive social-psychology discourse in particular makes an attempt to explore the psychological processes of overcoming intergroup barriers - through observing cooperative, 'cross-category' interaction and identification - the epistemological basis for impasse can be noted. From the early group dynamics work of Sherif (1966) to more recent experimental social-psychology (see, for example among many, Marcus-Newhall *et al*, 1993) such studies, as well as work on the 'Contact Hypothesis' by Hewstone and others (*e.g.* Hewstone, 1989), predicated as they are on an understanding of social identification as an antagonistic and objectifying process, rely on the manipulation of experimental variables to show that 'cross-categorisation' or 'atypical outgroup behaviour' can 'reduce intergroup bias'. It is shown (Gillard, 1999) that these particular sources are among the *most* disjunctive with the actual, empirical context upon which this study is based.

Thus, while far from suggesting that such intergroup cooperation cannot facilitate peacebuilding, it is maintained here that these sources are conceptually flawed. In attempting to 'objectively' observe social-psychological process they generate theory that is shaped by the assumptions that inform both experimental design and observation. As a result, this theory seems alien when applied to an actual empirical context. It is as though the understanding of the relationship between identity and conflict expressed in that theory has been objectified - in the same way that the theory itself assumes that identifications become objectified during conflict - from the location of the theorist, and hence

alienated from the case study context. Indeed, it was noted during the fieldwork for this study that, if questions were asked of interviewees that were closely derived from this theory, and/or answers anticipated that 'fit' with theoretical expectations, then interviewees often could not comprehend the questions as meaningful in terms of their individual experiences, or gave answers that seemed anathema from the theoretical perspective.

Such disjunction - between theoretical discourse and empirical observation - is particularly uninformative of efforts to resolve intercommunal conflict in a context such as the war in Bosnia & Hercegovina, where the conflict and communal identities were predominantly articulated in terms of nationalism and national identity. The nationalist assumes that the nation is a manifestation of some natural and immutable quality of social and cultural reality, merely discovered and realised, rather than constructed, through the process of conflict and war (Smith, 1991; Kedourie, 1993/1966). Likewise, much theory of nationalism - while rejecting the idea that nations pre-exist in some objectively knowable form - nonetheless describes an objectively observable ethnic basis for nationality (Deutsch, 1953), or functional need for national identity (Gellner, 1983). As such, objectivist theories of identity and conflict - as represented here by the cognitive social-psychological and psychodynamic discourses - are entirely inappropriate as conceptual tools to provide insight into conflicts that are predominantly described in terms of a (nationalist) discourse founded on similar epistemological bases. Such theories can only map the conflict in Bosnia & Hercegovina in terms that are consonant with the dominant, nationalist account of that conflict, rather than providing a conceptual route around psychological barriers to resolving the conflict. Indeed, social-psychological and psychodynamic interpretations of the war can be shown to conform closely to, and hence offer tacit social scientific support for, accounts of the conflict offered by the various national political and military elites that prosecuted the war in Bosnia & Hercegovina (Gillard, 1999).

*Summary: It is suggested that the social-psychological discourse is inappropriate as a conceptual tool for mapping conflict in Bosnia & Hercegovina, not only because it is founded on assumptions about social identification that have been shown to be alien to the case study context, but also because those assumptions are seen to be, in effect, held in common by nationalists as they justify their prosecution of the war there. Through failing to investigate the assumptions behind this social-psychological discourse, Conflict Resolution theory has advocated theory that has proved totally ineffective in challenging the nationalist logic to the war, hence failing to suggest a conceptual route out of the conflict.*

## **5.0 Empirical Qualities of Disjunction: How Identities Were Negotiated in Mostar**

Given, on the one hand this theoretical impasse, and on the other, empirical evidence that suggests that opportunities for transcending barriers to peacebuilding *do* exist - *i.e.* that, in spite of impasse, some form of ‘conflict mapping’ might remain useful - there is an imperative to explore conceptual means to understand these observations: to discover what is special about the quality of identifications observed among young people that has led to the survival of those identifications under conditions of war. It is almost as if it is not the conflict *per se* that needs to be mapped, but the observable alternatives to the assumed ‘normal’ social-psychological process of conflict that must be understood. If it can *also* be understood how those young people’s associations with the *Mladi Most* project might have impacted on the identifications they reported, then alternative mapping might additionally provide insight into the means by which peacebuilding projects such as *Mladi Most* could be theoretically informed in devising programmes to implement meaningful peacebuilding. Given the detailed quality of the data collected, it was possible to analyse the particular qualities of identifications made by interviewees, in relation to the context in which they were made. This analysis suggested alternative *possible* understandings of identity and conflict - an alternative ‘map’ of the conflict - that might usefully inform practicable peacebuilding. A number of key identifications of self and others are reviewed below, as described to me by the interviewees themselves.

### **5.1 Identification with Mostar**

There was a great sense, among the 25 interviewees and many other young people that I spoke to in Mostar, that there is something special about coming from Mostar. References were made to Mostar’s multi-cultural tradition, and the cultural life experienced before the war. From the perspective of these young people, this was symbolised both by the *lack* of importance, for them as Mostarians, of nationality and religion - in specific comparison with nationality’s assumed importance in the surrounding rural areas of Hercegovina - and by the type of youth association that characterised their everyday lives (see below). Although most interviewees reported an increased awareness of nationality - their own, and that others were of different nationality - through the war, it seems that being Mostarian was special almost *because* people were different, rather than in spite of those differences. Their commonality was their shared experience of living with people who were generally considered to be in some way different, celebrating the fact that those differences were not important, not relevant to their relationships as friends and fellow Mostarians. Therefore, on one hand, the received theoretical understanding of identity and conflict, cited above, assumes that such a commonality, embracing communal (national) differences that are central to the conflict itself, should be psychologically threatening to the individual and consequently rejected. Yet the increased importance and polarisation of national identifications actually seemed to strengthen the Mostar identification for some interviewees, precisely because this meant that that identification embraced



*more*, rather than less difference. It is as if characteristic of being Mostarian is to identify self *with* those differences, when others *not* from Mostar were rejecting different others.

It was also noted that urban and rural identifications of self and others seemed to parallel this Mostar/not-Mostar identification, with urban/rural characterisations of self and others preoccupying many accounts. It would seem that the urban/rural identification is in effect part of the Mostar/not-Mostar identification of self and others noted above. The special qualities of Mostar and its cultural life and tradition are enmeshed with it being a town, while those characteristics that are associated with a threat to Mostar and the Mostarian sense of self are most frequently identified with rural - specifically Hercegovinan - values and way of life.

## **5.2 Peer Group Identifications**

Interviewee accounts referred to two distinctive levels of peer association - the 'company' and the *raja* - which, as well as interpersonal friendships, had in different cases either survived, been strained or been destroyed by the war. There were clear indications that many interviewees believed the particular qualities of all these associations to be in some way special to Mostar, again in comparison to surrounding rural Hercegovina. The term *raja* is derived from the name Sarajevo, and also describes a similar peer association there, although young people in Mostar insisted that the *raja* in Mostar was completely distinct from that of Sarajevo. *Raja* was explained to me by many as referring to all young people of Mostar, whether or not they were acquainted, who shared similar attitudes and understandings. These included the rejection of nationality as a determinant of peer associations, in combination with the positive construction of national differences discussed above as typically Mostarian. *Raja* implies mutual trust and expectations between the *raja* themselves, even if not previously acquainted, on the basis that they have all had the same shared experience of growing up in Mostar, and in particular of the street culture that characterises the youth experience of Mostar. It is as though *raja* is the youth dimension of Mostar, as an identity, and that young people recognise and appreciate each other as such. The *raja* survived the war, albeit greatly pressured and diminished as a result of the exodus of people from Mostar, the large numbers of people who had moved in from outside, dispersing and diluting the *raja* within the town, and because some Mostarians had been changed by the war - had 'gone on another way' - adopting nationalistic attitudes uncharacteristic of being *raja*.

The 'company' was described to me as an extended group of 'best friends', perhaps numbering twenty to thirty before the war but generally numbering less than half that since. Again, nationality placed no restriction on the company, which was characterised by mutual trust and support. While some companies were more or less comprised of the remaining members of pre-war companies,

others had developed from shared experiences of the war, out of the necessity for trust and support that those experiences demanded. The erosion of trust in Mostar, that characterised many interviewees' accounts of the war, seemed key to the smaller size of company. However, where interviewees still felt they belonged to a company, the assumption that all its members felt the same way about certain things, and could speak freely about those things, was important to them.

### **5.3 Identification with *Mladi Most***

Identification with the *Mladi Most* project was strongest among the young people of West Mostar who regularly visited the project house, situated in West Mostar. The attitudes towards the project of young people from East Mostar, who were physically unable to visit the house because of the situation in the town, will be considered below. Most interviewees variously described the project as a space where it was possible for all nationalities to be together; to talk freely about issues that it was politically dangerous to discuss elsewhere in Mostar; to associate with people who felt the same way about nationality, Mostar and so on; to be together with other people as had been possible throughout Mostar before the war; where something of the 'old Mostar/Yugoslavia' remained; to do 'normal', creative or fun things that were no longer available elsewhere in West Mostar; 'to stay sane/normal', and to stand up to the pressures to behave as they were expected to behave because of their nationality; to escape the alienation of West Mostar (especially for non-Croats but also for Croats who rejected the dominant Croat nationalism around them); to try and build something for the future in spite of normal opportunities to do so having been denied to them by the war. In other words the project provided, for West Mostar interviewees, the closest thing available to them of 'normal' life, that normalcy being defined in terms of what it was like in Mostar before the war.

It might be said that the project provided a space where young people could identify with each other on the basis that all felt the same way about nationality and about Mostar. Experiences of adversity were shared, as well as the positive experiences of involvement in the project. A sense of mutual strength, trust and support developed. As the provider of this experience, identification with the project itself grew, in some way seeming to become a parallel or surrogate identification for Mostar, or young Mostar, or even the *raja* identity that had been so disrupted by the war. Identification with the project seemed to enable, to a certain extent, the pre-war sense of self to survive, and with it the complex and non-conflictual identifications of self and others described by many interviewees. As such, the project was aptly named. *Mladi Most* means 'young bridge', not only symbolising a bridge between rifts caused by the war, but symbolising - for many project participants - young Mostar. The name of the town is derived from the word bridge, and from the 'old bridge' which gave the town its

name and was a symbol of the town for so many of the interviewees. They saw themselves as the youth that kept 'old' Mostar alive.

*Summary: Individuals are seen making common identifications of themselves and others of different nationalities - non-conflictual and non-nationalistic identifications - on the basis of some shared and importantly meaningful interaction. It was noted in section 3 how interviewees did identify negatively with those members of other nationalities that they felt responsible for their conflictual experiences, but this does not seem to preclude positive identification with others of that nationality with whom the individual shares important common experiences.*

## **6.0 Alienation and the Renegotiation of Identity**

Equally illuminating of the qualities of these identifications was, however, observation of the processes whereby some young people became alienated from these sources of identification - multi-national Mostar, their peer groups, and the *Mladi Most* project - during the course of the year. Detailed accounts of the changes experienced by those individuals during this time, and how those changes impacted on the way they identified themselves and others, shed light on the particular qualities of those identifications. Broadly, these observations suggested that it was the *quality of interaction* with particular others - and that this interaction was consistently meaningful in some significant way - that dominated the process of identification with those others. If the quality of that interaction was changed or denied to the individual - because of the situation in the town, or because of some dynamic within the interaction situation itself - then identification changed as a result.

### **6.1 From 'Mostar'**

For example, it was noted how some, mainly East Mostar, mainly Muslim interviewees, while identifying self closely with Mostar, seemed also at times to express an almost 'anti-Croat' attitude, in contrast with the multi-national inclusiveness they otherwise expressed. However, closer examination of the actual language and context in which this attitude was expressed suggested that these seemingly more nationalistic feelings did not associate Croats with the individual's suffering as a Muslim or Serb: rather with their suffering as *Mostarians*. Those Croats - often described as 'villagers' or 'extremists' - were explicitly held responsible for, not only the physical destruction of Mostar, but more importantly for the destruction of the pre-war Mostar culture and sense of community that was so special: for betraying what it meant to be Mostarian if those Croats were also themselves from Mostar. In addition it is also noted that the 'Croats' who are characterised in these more conflictual terms are also described as being 'not from Mostar', 'not understanding Mostar', of 'having changed because they did not suffer in the war', and so on. It is almost as though this conflict

'other' is *not-Mostar* as much as it is Croat. The 'not-Mostar Croat' is characterised by a rejection of Mostar's multi-national/multi-cultural tradition and way of life - by a negative attitude towards difference - in contrast with interviewees' Mostarian identification with that tradition and way of life: their positive construction of those differences. An inclusive, anational identification could not be maintained of these 'not-Mostar Croats' because interviewees had no meaningful interaction with them in these terms: they identified them in terms of their experiences of their destruction of Mostar, and what that meant to the individual interviewee.

## **6.2 From Peer Groups**

Similarly, very clear dynamics emerged in relation to two particular peer groupings among interviewees, as I met with them repeatedly over the year of the case study. In the case of the first, a tendency towards increasingly nationalistic attitudes that they expressed over that year were paralleled both by their ongoing experiences of hostility and threat living as (mainly) members of minority communities in Croat majority West Mostar, and by an increasing sense of alienation that they expressed from the *Mladi Most* project. As long term local participants in the project, they suggested that international project workers showed a lack of respect for their contribution and commitment to the project, and complained of a lack of openness in project planning and decision making. As a result of this alienation, interaction in the context of the project ceased to be such a positive experience, meaningful in terms of the values and attitudes associable with pre-war Mostar noted above. That interaction therefore no longer consistently functioned as a meaningful source of identification, in contrast to the more hostile interaction experienced daily in nationalistic West Mostar outside of the project. Dynamics within their group only seemed to exacerbate these changing attitudes.

The second group represented remnants of a pre-war group of friends. Of a mixture of nationalities and backgrounds, they had had vastly different experiences of the war, and found their interpersonal relationships increasingly strained during the year under study. This was both because the group was divided by the physical division of the town, and in relation to disputes over the terms of local involvement in the *Mladi Most* project. Employed as local project workers, some of this group felt that their contribution to the project was not being valued, that they were being denied responsibility and access to decision making, and that international workers were not being open and genuine with them. Differences in attitudes towards the conflicts within *Mladi Most* directly contributed to strains on the relationships involved. Here alienation within the peer group, along with alienation from *Mladi Most*, was paralleled for some of those involved by a weakening of, or an apathy towards, the attitudes of multi-national tolerance and respect that had characterised their accounts earlier in the year. As both interactions ceased to be positive experiences, their meaningfulness as sources of identification diminished in contrast to the conflictual interactive experiences of everyday life.

### **6.3 From Mladi Most**

Further, young people who attended the *Mladi Most* project faced harassment just because of their involvement with it. The project was harassed by the West Mostar police, the project house being raided and arrests made. Young people associated with *Mladi Most* were picked up off the streets of West Mostar, verbally abused in derogatory language referring to their nationality or religion, threatened with physical violence and fire arms, manhandled into vehicles, sometimes struck, and so on. Those who were of Croat nationality were advised not to continue visiting the house, told that 'it might not be good for them' if they did. The project was also harassed by private individuals in West Mostar. Visitors regularly reported facing verbal abuse and physical threats, based on the assumption that they were of non-Croat nationality, just because they were seen entering or leaving the project house. Certain locals with military or paramilitary connections, often drunk and generally armed, would regularly threaten the project and its visitors with extreme violence. The local visitors were terrified of these people, knowing that they were capable of carrying out their threats, and could do so more or less with impunity.

During the worst periods of harassment - in August and November of 1995 - international project workers took the decision to close the project house in the interests of the safety of those involved in the project, local and international. Young people associated with the project responded both to the harassment and the closing of the project in different ways, reflecting the qualities of their identification with it. There remained a group of the most dedicated visitors to the house who insisted on coming regularly throughout the period of the police raids, even when the house was officially closed. They were aware of the dangers of so doing, but seemed unwilling to succumb to the pressure not to attend. They expressed the feeling that the house was under siege because of the alternative vision of Mostar that it represented and the threat that posed to some in the West, and an equal feeling that this should not be allowed to happen. When crisis meetings concerning the project took place in November 1995 many of those spoke of feeling let down at the closure of the house, and by the suggestion made by some international workers that the project might move to East Mostar. Some stated that they had a lot to lose by the project leaving, and that some internationals did not understand that. The depth of the crisis in the project at this point revealed the extent to which those close to the project had bonded together as a group, and the strength of identification with the project. The project could be said to have given form to an identification that was otherwise, in the political climate of West Mostar at the time, extremely difficult to express, and that as such it was too valuable for some to lose.

In contrast, during and after closures of the house, the experience or fear of being arrested kept many away, some permanently while others visited much less frequently. Other people reported being pressurised by their parents into not visiting the house. The environment of hostility that surrounded the project removed from many the option of choosing to attend, and increasingly so as conflicts within Mostar reintensified as prospects of a negotiated settlement to the war approached. Many of the young Croats who had visited the project stopped coming during this time. Other visitors suggested that, because they were Croat they felt that if they were to have any future in Mostar - higher education, employment and so on - they needed to be seen as 'good Croats', and not to be identified with as 'Yugoslav sympathisers', and so on. Many were told by their teachers at school that it was known that they attended the house, and if they did not stop doing so then their marks at school would suffer. It is as though the experiences of these individuals outside of the project were more meaningful to them than their experiences within the project, and so given the negative impact on their outside lives of their involvement with the project, they were unable to continue to make the association.

It might be said that, while the project provided some people with an alternative source of identification and the strength to resist the climate of nationalism around them, when the project came under pressure others were weakened. It was at the point when harassment was highest that the project became ambivalent for some of the people who used it. At that time the project's resources, both in terms of the physical/social space it offered and the human resource of the international volunteers, were at their most depleted. It is probable that the project failed some people during this period. The various dangers of association with the project could no longer be justified if it was felt that international volunteers had undermined the significance and value of the project, and/or had devalued the role of local people in it, or if the project's values simply did not resonate with their outside life. For some, the project ceased to function as a source of meaningful interaction in terms of the 'Mostarian/*raja*' attitudes expressed above.

It is interesting to note that, for young people who lived in East Mostar and were involved with the project, *Mladi Most* did not fulfil the role of providing them with experience of non-conflictual, international interaction, and as such at no point really functioned as a source of alternative, non-nationalistic identification. The project's thesis of reconciliation was acknowledged and many people in East Mostar stressed that they too wanted to see a reconciliation in the town and a return to its multi-cultural past. Yet *Mladi Most* seemed to be viewed essentially as an humanitarian organisation, providing cultural, educational and sports resources denied by the war. Many people would ask: 'why do you live in West Mostar?'; 'why do you work so much in West Mostar when they treat you so badly there?'; 'why not come and live in East Mostar? we are much nicer here?'. There did not seem to be any appreciation of the role played by the project in providing a space free from many of

the national tensions found in West Mostar, particularly for members of the minority communities. These same tensions were not experienced by the Muslim majority of East Mostar, even though they were virtually trapped there because of their nationality. As such the reconciliation aspect of the project was not really embraced with any enthusiasm. Contribution to the project's parallel activities were less enthusiastic in East Mostar, and tended to tail off much sooner than they did in the West. When larger, better resourced humanitarian organisations - with a primary interest in East Mostar because it was more deprived than the West - began to make generous donations of material and cultural resources to the East Mostar participants in the project, they proceeded to establish their autonomy from *Mladi Most* and maintained only nominal connections with it. It was as if young people in East Mostar could not identify in the same way with the core nationally inclusive, pan-Mostar values of the project, as they did not have the opportunity to share the same experiences that in West Mostar were the source of that identification.

#### **6.4 Other Alienations**

Other weak or inconsistently expressed identifications can likewise be explained on the basis that they too had no consistently meaningful experience as their source: for example, identification with Yugoslavia or Bosnia. Before the war, for many interviewees, Yugoslav as a citizenship represented identification with the ideals of 'Unity and Brotherhood' and a rejection of nationality. Some interviewees seemed to express regret that they felt no longer able to identify themselves as Yugoslav. The key factor mitigating against continued identification with Yugoslavia seems to be that, by the time of the year of study, Yugoslavia no longer existed in its pre-war form. While at the very beginning of the war Yugoslavia might have remained a contested concept - either representing multi-nationality or Serb hegemony - by the year of study Bosnia & Hercegovina was no longer part of Yugoslavia and 'rump-Yugoslavia' had become a separate state dominated by Serbia. Identification with Yugoslavia was therefore no longer an option for any of the interviewees, and any identifications to be made with multi-nationality had been transferred - as observed above - onto strong identifications with, for example, Mostar. Identification with Bosnia (& Hercegovina) was somewhat more complex. Interviewees described being Bosnian in various terms: a citizenship; the geographical region or country of their origin; a nationality. Some were comfortable describing Bosnia as a multi-national entity, while others felt unable or uncomfortable about this multi-national quality because they felt that Bosnia had in some form become a Muslim hegemony. Other interviewees were happy to suggest a synonymy between Bosnia and Muslim, or state that other nationalities were welcome to be included in Bosnia but only on Bosnian Muslim terms. Such is the variety of identification with Bosnia, that it does not seem to represent a source of common identification or of common experience among

interviewees in the same way that, for example, identification with Mostar does. Therefore it can be seen that there was no continuity of identification with Bosnia from before the war. Where identification with Bosnia is made - at the time of the year of study - it seems in many cases to be an attempt to find a substitute identification for Yugoslav. This seems to have been a confused process, resulting in a variety of disparate, often self-styled identifications. In any case, identifications with Mostar and the other alternative sources of identification discussed above - with which there is a continuity of meaning from before the war - seem to be a lot more important to many interviewees than identification with Bosnia.

*Summary: If the quality of interaction with particular others changes - becomes more conflictual, or is denied to the individual - then it seems that the quality of the identification with those others is 'renegotiated' in terms of changes in the nature of the interaction. Interviewee accounts also suggested that other, more conflictual, interactive experiences might become increasingly meaningful to the individual where positive interactive experiences are denied, and identification of self and (national) others change accordingly.*

## **7.0 Impasse Transcended: (Re)Negotiation of Identities and the Renegotiation of Identity Theory**

This evidence - including that of identifications tending towards the more conflictual, more nationalistic - refutes the theoretical discourses discussed in Sections 2-4 above. Individuals are seen negotiating their identifications of self and others, on a case by case basis, in terms of meaningful interaction with those others - *i.e.* intersubjectively - rather than responding to objectified, national categories.

This 'intersubjective' understanding of the process of identification assumes as its basis that something/someone can only be known as a product of the knower's (subjective) social location. As such, the subject status of that which is to be known is acknowledged - it is not objectified by the knower - and therefore impacts itself on the way in which it is known. In other words, far from existing in a fixed form, waiting to be observed or known, (social) reality is constructed and negotiated *intersubjectively* (Cornell & Thurschwell, 1987; Stanley & Wise, 1993). Thus the notion of the subjective *self* knowing the object *other* is replaced by the idea that different *selves* interdependently negotiate knowledge of one another. The autonomy of the self from the other is replaced by a continuity between selves. In conventional epistemological terms - as represented by the theories of identity examined at the beginning of the paper - this loss of autonomy is threatening to the self. However, Keller (1985) proposes an alternative understanding of 'dynamic autonomy', suggesting that the fear of a loss of boundaries of the self is balanced by a fear of separation and alienation: *i.e.* a



sense of self secure enough to tolerate both difference and continuity. Stanley and Wise (1993, p.191) elucidate this position when they state that “epistemology must be ontologically grounded”. They explain that, for example, to whatever extent the differences between masculine and feminine are social constructions, rather than biological givens, the fact remains that men and women do experience being differently<sup>4</sup>. It follows then that an autonomy of the self can be felt in as far as the individual *experiences* ‘being’ differently from the way in which other selves do, both in as far as the individual is aware that s/he is separate from other selves (even though s/he knows that they are all selves), and in as far as s/he is also aware that her/his substantive experiences of being - in terms of gender, nationality and so on - can be very different from those of other selves. The security achieved through this autonomy allows the individual, at the same time, to acknowledge continuity between the self and other selves without feeling that the self is threatened. Self and other selves are not objectified as different or similar in *categorical* terms, but are negotiated in terms of differing or similar *experiences* of being. Broome (1993) articulates the process by which individuals can negotiate new ‘third culture’ identifications of themselves and ‘other selves’, which neither objectify the other in terms of the subjective location of the self, nor jeopardise boundaries of the individual self. As such the impasse that blocked the whole project of conceptualising the removal of psychological barriers to conflict resolution is transcended (Sklair, 1988).

The observations above are productive of a similar possible explanation - an ‘alternative conflict map’ - strongly suggesting that identities are only meaningful in terms of the interaction that is their source. Individuals maintained conflictual attitudes towards some members of a nationality, and non-conflictual attitudes towards other members of the same nationality, yet did not feel a crisis of identity, and this was because those identifications were negotiated in terms of these specific, interactive experiences with particular others. However, where the quality of those interactions changed, or where experience of non-conflictual interaction was denied to the individual, then identification of self and others was renegotiated.

There is also a sense that these sources of non-conflictual, non-nationalistic identification are strongly related: Mostar and urbanity; *raja*/company and Mostar; *Mladi Most* and the *raja*; *Mladi Most* as ‘young Mostar’. Young Mostarians maintained a network of complementary, non-nationalistic interactions as a source of a range of non-nationalistic identifications. As such they described their identifications of self and others in a diversity and complexity that defied both the nationalistic norms that dominated Mostar at the time, and the essentialised, conflictual identifications anticipated by much theory of identity. Yet where one or more of the interactions that were the source of those identifications were denied by the conflictual environment, or where individuals were alienated from them for one reason or another, faith seemed to be lost in non-nationalistic identification in general.

This suggests that it was possible that non-nationalistic identifications of self and others survived precisely where *networks* of those complementary alternative identifications were made, supported by a range of complementary, meaningful interactions. If those interactions became less consistently meaningful to the individual in these non-conflictual terms, the more hostile, conflictual experiences of interaction with national others that dominated Mostar at the time became more meaningful. As a result, identifications gradually became renegotiated in more hostile, conflictual, nationalistic terms.

That identification with *Mladi Most* seemed significant to many of these individuals as part of this network obviously raises questions of the significance - theoretical and practical - of a project such as *Mladi Most* for peacebuilding as a whole. The 'intersubjective' understanding of the identity/conflict relationship, suggested by this data, might usefully inform a process of peacebuilding within which such projects could play a role. The observations made above suggest that an intervention such as *Mladi Most* can impact upon:

- (1) the quality of interaction possible in a conflict situation;
- (2) the opportunities for intersubjective, experientially dominated identification, rather than objectifying, categorically dominated processes, in a context where such opportunities are otherwise denied or dangerous; and,
- (3) consequently the maintenance and development of alternative, non-conflictual identifications, and of networks of such complementary and mutually reinforcing identifications.

Further analysis of the evidence detailed above is suggestive of conditions of interaction that such a project must facilitate and provide if it is to fulfil this role: *i.e.* that an alternative conceptualisation of the social-psychological processes of grassroots peacebuilding, and of their practicable application, is possible. While there is no space to do so here, see Gillard (forthcoming) for further articulation of these particular findings.

*Summary: Further analysis of the interview data collected is suggestive of an alternative conceptual map of the conflict in Mostar, as experienced by the interviewees. Principally it suggests that, rather than responding to essentialised national identifications of themselves and others, individuals actively negotiate and renegotiate those identifications in terms of the changing quality of interactions, with particular others, that are meaningful to them. Such a map represents a genuine alternative in as far as it suggests that where interaction is experienced with (national) others, most meaningfully, in non-conflictual terms, then non-nationalistic complexes of identification can survive and develop. Therefore, this alternative*

*conflict map offers a conceptual tool for peacebuilding in as far as it is suggestive of theoretical and practical conditions for facilitating meaningful, non-conflictual interaction.*

## **8.0 Applying the Alternative Social-psychological ‘Conflict Map’**

The study explored above suggests two things. First, it offers an alternative ‘conflict map’ in the context of particular elements of a particular conflict: youth experience of the war in Mostar, Bosnia & Hercegovina. The war in Mostar is not simply articulated in terms of ethnic and national categories of identification, that inevitably polarise and become increasingly, mutually derogating, following a predetermined, essentialised process as conflict worsens, until psychological barriers to rebuilding intercommunal relationships become insurmountable. Such a map, by its own admission, is at a loss to provide a route around those barriers. Rather, this alternative map focuses on people’s particular, and dynamic experiences of the war, in relation to specific groups of others, and how these interactions have led to renegotiations of identification, again, in these very specific terms. While many identifications of self and others have been renegotiated in more conflictual terms, other ‘positive’ and inclusive identifications have survived through, or been created during the war. Many of these identifications defy the essential polarisation of national identifications, and it is analysis of the *quality* of these identifications, and of the experiences that are at their source, that provides a potential conceptual route around barriers to rebuilding damaged relationships. This map is largely derived from observable alternatives to the assumed ‘normal’ social-psychological process of conflict.

The alternative understanding of the relationship between identity and conflict developed above, on the basis of analysis of these processes of identification, could be used as a theoretical tool for supporting and nurturing peacebuilding in Bosnia & Hercegovina, at least at the level of the type of community based project work described above. Theory could inform the practical support and development of networks of complementary sources of identification, together challenging the experience of conflict and the objectifications of identity that are assumed to result.

Second - noting both that these findings are made on the basis of the study of a single peacebuilding project, and the very empirical nature of this study - conclusions are also suggestive of a more urgent methodological approach to conflict mapping in general. That is to say, *any* attempt to map a conflict should base its assessment of the conflict environment, and of the content and processes of group/community identification that have taken place in that environment, not solely on a theoretical abstraction of the relationship between identity and conflict. This study took a body of discourse into a case study context, and found it disjunctive with that empirical context. Those qualities of disjunction

were used to analysis and critique the assumptions on which the discourse was founded, and to look for alternative theoretical understandings of the identity/conflict relationship.

It is recognised, however, that any conclusions drawn are, as such, very much a product of the observation and research process. Findings were negotiated between my subjective location as researcher - loaded as it was with the assumptive baggage of the discourse I took with me (among other baggages) - and the subjective locations of those I interviewed, within a complex context in which all those subjectivities were exercised to the full. Thus rather than claiming to have revealed any 'truth', this study has negotiated a new 'starting point' in understanding the particular dilemmas in question.

Such a methodological approach could be effectively applied as integral to a conflict mapping process. For example, in reapplying the understanding of identity and conflict developed here in the (Bosnian/Mostar) context in which it was negotiated - where the dynamics of any particular conflicts would have moved on over time - disjunction should once again be sought, explored and used as a source of critique, and understandings so refined. Notably, it was apparent from this study that accounts of the war were not adequately collected or explored from a gendered perspective, and that effective understandings of the relationships between gender, ethnicity, nationality and conflict were not developed as a result (Eisenstein, 1996). Any subsequent empirical study could attempt to further broaden the findings of this study in these terms.

In applying this understanding to a completely different context, care should be taken to ensure that the frame of reference arrived at here does not so thoroughly shape the processes of data collection and analysis in the new context that important relationships falling outside this frame of reference are missed or discounted. And theory, as it is applied, should be continually renegotiated in response to the dynamics of context, and its own impact on that context. Theory that is alien to a particular context is not of use to those it is called upon to help.

Thus a conflict mapping exercise might seek out, as this one did, potential sources of identification that challenge the assumptions - substantive and epistemological - of the theory that is the abstract conflict map: the observable alternatives to the assumed 'normal' social-psychological process of conflict. Such sources of identification - manifesting either as self-consciously organised groups and projects, or as some less tangible sense of community or belonging - exist wherever people are resisting the conflict around them. They may or may not have the support of outside intervention, may have pre-existed the war/conflict, have persisted through it or been destroyed by it, or have come into being in spite/because of the environment of conflict, in defiance both of actual barriers and dangers, and of

theoretical expectations. The qualities of these experiences and identifications are observed, and the abstract map is then critiqued and reconstructed in the 'concrete' terms of those observations. This new conceptual map can then be used to inform, support and build actual resistance to the conflict, hopefully in ways that find resonance when applied in context, and not the disjunction encountered here. In other words, only where theoretical understandings of the relationship between identity and conflict are negotiated in context - on the basis of actual qualities of experience and identification reported by those that the theory is aimed to serve - can the process of conflict mapping effectively inform the goal of building peace.

## Notes

1. While it is understood that the study of young people and the psychological effects of conflict is important, no specific attempt has been made here to theorise the relationship between *youth*, the development of *identity*, and *conflict*. With the exception of the growing discourse on child soldiering - as part of, for example, the ongoing *United Nations Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children* - there is little work done on this particular relationship. It is hoped that this paper makes at least an empirical contribution, while its theoretical focus is on more general issues of identity and conflict.
2. The location of the observer must be considered as productive of research findings (*i.e.* I take a 'reflexive' approach to research, see Morgan (1983), Harding (1987), Harvey (1990)): in this case, primarily in terms of my dual role as researcher and international volunteer for the *Mladi Most*. For example, the responses given to me by interviewees might have been shaped through their relationships to me as an international project worker/researcher/friend *etc.*. As an international working for a reconciliation project, responses might have been given to me that were assumed to be 'reconciliation friendly'. Other interviewees expressed a desire to provide 'good' information: things that would be 'good' to write about. At times therefore some data verged on being anecdotal, or possibly even apocryphal. However, where the interviewee identified me more as a friend than as a project worker, there seemed to be less desire to express opinions to me that were reconciliation friendly. Some expressed attitudes that were inimical to the multi-national ethos of the project - which I never heard them express openly in front of others within the project - stating that they were telling me things they would not tell others, even though they were aware that I was conducting research that might be published. In addition, those relationships would have influenced the way in which I analysed data and drew conclusions: that I developed interpersonal friendships with many people in Mostar, I believe, resulted in an unwillingness on my part to make objectifications of the situation, and further encouraged me to develop the intersubjective critique that I explore below. While it might be argued that such personal intrusion into the research process 'contaminates' findings, it is suggested here that the particular interactions between myself and the research environment were 'productive' of particular *possible* results, on the proviso that such interaction should be considered when evaluating the study's findings. For a full account of the methodology behind this research project, see Gillard (1999).
3. As well as the interviews, many running into thousands of words, the study was also informed by observation and conversation with many other people, of various ages and nationalities, living throughout Mostar, during the year of study.
4. It is, at the same time, recognised that 'man' and 'woman' are far from universal categories/experiences, and as well as incorporating a multitude of diversities, are also inseparable from equally complex relations of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality and so on (Baca Zinn; Thornton Dill, 1999).

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