

Cognitive Dissonance in Social Media and Face-to-Face Interactions in Relation to the Legacy of War

SANJA VICO¹
University of Exeter, UK

Acknowledgment of ingroup responsibility and outgroup suffering is needed for post-conflict societies to move on. Scholars have argued that this attitude shift happens through cognitive dissonance, an unpleasant experience of inconsistency between views and behavior. Existing research on cognitive dissonance has focused on psychological triggers. By doing so, it has overlooked social triggers. This study argues that the experience of cognitive dissonance depends on a combination of the features of communicative environments that encourage dialogic exchange and actors deemed legitimate to speak about human rights violations. Evidence draws on discourse analysis of interactions on Facebook, Twitter, and in face-to-face focus groups. This study finds that cognitive dissonance occurs in engaged interactions, through lengthy negotiations of meanings that is most prevalent in face-to-face interactions among ordinary people, somewhat present on Facebook, and least observable in interactions with human rights activists on Twitter.

Keywords: cognitive dissonance, social media, face-to-face interactions, denial, acknowledgment

Acknowledgment of ingroup responsibility and outgroup suffering are deemed key to reconciliation following a conflict and to prevention of future atrocities (Cehajić & Brown, 2010). Public acknowledgments are a measure of restorative transitional justice, devised to deal with the consequences of gross human right violations and other injustices in the aftermath of conflict (David, 2017). Social media platforms have been increasingly used by human rights activists to this end. An example of public acknowledgment of the

Sanja Vico: s.vico@exeter.ac.uk

Date submitted: 2021-11-03

¹ This research is part of the project Justice Interactions and Peacebuilding: From Static to Dynamic Discourses Across National, Ethnic, Gender, and Age Groups that has been funded by the European Research Council (ERC) Consolidator Grant, No. 772354 and is based at the London School of Economics and Political Science. I hereby thank the ERC for their support and extend my gratitude to the Principal Investigator of the project, Denisa Kostovicova, for her invaluable and thoughtful guidance. I am also thankful to my team Ivor Sokolić, Venera Cocaj, and Vesna Popovski, and colleagues Shakuntala Banaji and Ellen Helsper for their suggestions, and to my research participants for their time. Finally, I am grateful to the inspirational, late journalist and activist, Dušan Mašić, for everything he has done.

Copyright © 2022 (Sanja Vico). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at <http://ijoc.org>.

crimes committed by members of one's own ethnicity was the initiative #sedamhiljada. It was launched on Twitter in April 2015 by a former Belgrade's journalist, Dušan Mašić, to pay tribute to the victims of Srebrenica genocide where more than 8,000 Bosnian men and boys were killed by the Bosnian Serb army in July 1995 during the Bosnian War. Inspired by a performance in which 147 students of the University of Zagreb in Croatia laid down for 147 seconds in solidarity with the 147 Kenyan victims of the terror attack at Garissa University College, Mašić (2015) tweeted: "imagine about 7000 of us to lay in front of the National Assembly in Serbia in July to mark 20 years of Srebrenica?" Seven-thousand signified the approximate number of Bosnian victims. His tweet went viral, leading to a campaign hash-tagged 7,000 (#sedamhiljada or #7000). A Facebook page dedicated to the initiative was created.

This initiative is a particularly relevant subject of analysis because it spontaneously emerged in one tweet that was endorsed by many shortly afterward, aiming to mobilize the public in Serbia to pay tribute to the victims of the Srebrenica genocide. The planned performance was eventually banned by the Serbian government after right-wing groups announced disruptions (Vijesti, 2015). Activists and some citizens still gathered in the main square in Belgrade to light candles for the deceased. Most post-conflict societies tend to deny war crimes committed by members of their own ethnicity (Gordy, 2013; Hermann, 2004; Milanović, 2016).

When denialism is widespread and "mainstreamed" (Milanović, 2016, p. 33), the question is how deeply entrenched attitudes and dominant discourses of war crimes can be changed. One way to address this puzzle is to look at which factors may trigger cognitive dissonance (i.e., under what conditions people may feel discomfort with holding conflicting views of denial and acknowledgment of ingroup responsibility and outgroup suffering). As Festinger (1957) has argued, people experience inconsistency as unpleasant and will thus strive to reduce dissonance by changing their views or behavior, finding new information that would reinforce existing views or dismissing facts as incorrect (p. 378). In this study, I consider two factors that, in combination, may trigger cognitive dissonance: communicative environments where interactions take place, and actors who interact at a bottom-up level. I do this by comparing interactions that take place on social media to interactions in face-to-face encounters in relation to the #sedamhiljada initiative, and interactions between human rights activists and nonactivists, and between only nonactivists.

Existing literature on post-conflict societies shows that cognitive dissonance can both promote the acknowledgment of wrongdoing (Gibson, 2004; Mazzei, 2011) and hinder this acknowledgment while hardening hostility to outgroups when people want to conform to the majority views or feel that such acknowledgment could jeopardize their self-esteem (Charnysh & Finkel, 2017; Homola, Pereira, & Tavits, 2020; Lieberman, 2006; Oberschall, 2010; Sander, 2018). However, there remains a limited understanding of social factors that induce cognitive dissonance. Most contemporary campaigns, like #sedamhiljada, take place in both online and offline environments (Castells, 2009; Costanza-Chock, 2014), while Facebook and Twitter are considered the most significant social networking sites for social and political activism (Tufekci, 2017). Each of these environments may shape dynamics of interactions in distinct ways (boyd, 2010; Papacharissi, 2012), having different consequences on the experience of cognitive dissonance about the legacy of war. Literature that considers the role of digital media in transitional justice is still scarce, often focusing specifically on online activism and digital practices (Fridman, 2018; Fridman & Ristić, 2020; Hasić

& Karabegović, 2020; Reilly, 2021), lacking a comparative dimension between different on- and offline spaces as well as between different types of actors that include nonactivists. The study addresses the central question of transitional justice that of “the actors best positioned to tackle the war legacy meaningfully and effectively” (Kostovicova, 2010, p. 288) and the need to explore actors who participate at the bottom-up level and their ability to change attitudes (Hermann, 2004; Kostovicova, 2010).

I applied a 2 by 3 factorial design to study the combination between the two factors, and discourse analysis to studying textual data of interactions collected through face-to-face focus groups and a search of key words on Facebook and Twitter such as #sedamhiljada, #7000, and Srebrenica. I find that cognitive dissonance is a result of a nonlinear process in which people negotiate their understanding of the war legacy. Cognitive dissonance emerges during engaged interactions wherein people move back and forth between acknowledgment and denial rather than when people are exposed to new information. This process is facilitated by type of environment and type of actors, showing that face-to-face interactions among nonactivists lead most often to the experience of cognitive dissonance, while interactions with activists on Twitter lead the least. I explain these differences by drawing on literature that argues that social media are self-centered and that critiques the NGO-ization of civil society and its inability to appeal to most of the population. In what follows, I first discuss key debates and arguments on cognitive dissonance and how they have been applied in post-conflict contexts to studying attitudes on war crimes. I then elaborate on theoretical underpinnings of the two factors—communicative environments and actors. I finally present the research design and analyze the findings. The conclusion outlines the theoretical contributions of this study to the field of media and communications, transitional justice, and the scholarship on cognitive dissonance.

The Assumptions of Cognitive Dissonance

Festinger (1957) has developed the concept of cognitive dissonance to argue that most people experience inconsistency between views and behavior as being unpleasant and will tend to reduce the discrepancy by changing the least strongly held opinion or by adding new information to reinforce existing beliefs, or by dismissing the information altogether (p. 378). People also tend to avoid dissonance by avoiding attitude-incongruent information (Brannon, Tagler, & Eagly, 2007). Subsequent theories of cognitive dissonance, such as the new look model (Cooper & Fazio, 1984) or choice paradigm (Linder, Cooper, & Jones, 1967), have challenged the premise of inconsistency, arguing that it is either an insufficient or unnecessary condition of dissonance arousal. The new look model posits that foreseeable aversive consequences can lead to dissonance arousal, whereas the choice paradigm suggests that dissonance arises only when people are free to choose; otherwise, they can justify their inconsistency and it will not lead to dissonance. Not all oppositional beliefs and behaviors would lead to dissonance arousal, as Cooper (2012) contends; what matters is that people believe their behavior and beliefs are inconsistent. In other words, dissonance is a matter of perception.

Applied to post-conflict contexts, these strategies of reducing or avoiding cognitive dissonance can be identified in denials of ingroup responsibility for war crimes committed by an ingroup by saying “we did not know” or “we did not have choice.” Arendt (1963) distinguishes between guilt and political responsibility to claim that while only a perpetrator can be found guilty, the whole nation carries political responsibility to

prevent injustices or to take actions to remember. Hence, denying responsibility to remember can be deemed as avoidance of cognitive dissonance. Some scholars who employ the concept of cognitive dissonance in the context of (post-) conflict societies contend that it leads to denial because people conform with the majority norm (Homola et al., 2020), or they may feel the acknowledgment will undermine their self-esteem especially when their ethnic or national identity is salient (Charnysh & Finkel, 2017; Oberschall, 2010). Other scholars argue that it can lead to the acknowledgment of wrongdoings (Gibson, 2004; Mazzei, 2011). However, this literature has remained largely speculative, either because this concept has not been empirically investigated, or because of limitations with methodology. As Homola, Pereira, and Tavits (2020) explain, “a direct test of it [cognitive dissonance] would require a careful microlevel analysis of individuals who witnessed this period” (p. 583).

Denial broadly means a nonrecognition of injustice or wrongdoing. Denial can be made in good faith—when a person did not personally do anything wrong or did not know of others’ misconduct, but it may also signify knowledge avoidance (Benoit & Hanczor, 1994; Cohen, 2001; Hearit & Robertson, 2010). Denial is used both as a conscious strategy of reputation management and image restoration (Benoit & Hanczor, 1994; Hearit & Robertson, 2010), and as a semiconscious strategy for coping with the unease and discomfort that undesirable information may provoke (Cohen, 2001). Denial not only involves deliberate lying, but people are not always entirely aware of their evading strategies (Cohen, 2001, p. 5). Denial is reliant on shared cultural vocabularies that aim to make sense of events in a more favorable light or to deceive oneself into not knowing (Cohen, 2001, p. 5). Denial does not only or necessarily refer to a rejection of wrongdoing or facts, as reputation management scholars point out (e.g., Benoit & Hanczor, 1994, p. 419; Hearit & Robertson, 2010, p. 548), but can also include many subtle attempts to downplay and mystify the meanings, scale, or intent of events (Cohen, 2001, p. 6), which is what Benoit and Hanczor (1994) call evasion of responsibility. A common strategy of denial is also a claim of victimhood—it is used to justify atrocities, presenting them as revenge or self-defense. It serves to make denial more socially acceptable, especially when moral norms and/or laws are strong (van Dijk, 1992). By drawing on Festinger’s (1957) concept of cognitive dissonance, I treat expressed discomfort among these research participants when faced with conflictual facts or information in support of ingroup responsibility for war crimes that leads the recognition that is inconsistent with previously expressed views as evidence of dissonance confirmation, while expressions of the discourses of denial and victimhood are treated as dissonance avoidance.

Cognitive dissonance has been traditionally studied in experiments, but I argue that a qualitative approach that analyses interactions between people enables us to study micro-workings of the process in which people may experience discomfort with holding inconsistent views. As Mazzei (2011) argues, cognitive dissonance may not simply occur when people are faced with new information; it may rather happen “when the public engages in negotiation and contestation over meanings” (p. 439). This is because new ideas are processed within a series of existing beliefs that are mutually reinforcing and sustaining (Converse, 2006). In line with this, Koudenburg, Greijdanus, and Scheepers (2019) find in their experimental study on the attitudes of Dutch people to immigrants that social norms and discourses about outgroups at a societal and individual level are negotiated and created in small group interactions characterized by direct communication. Every communicative environment can be viewed as a distinct small group interaction where social norms are negotiated, validated, and challenged. This invites us to consider characteristics of

communicative environments as one of the two factors that may trigger dissonance confirmation in relation to war-time atrocities and war legacy.

Communicative Environments

Every environment has specific affordances that enable some interactions and constrain others (boyd, 2010; Papacharissi, 2012). I argue that a key attribute or affordance of environments for understanding their role in promoting dissonance confirmation and dissonance avoidance is to what extent they harbor an orientation to the self and to the other. I draw on Castells' (2009) concept of "mass self-communication" (p. xx) to contend that most social networking sites foster self-communication (Barassi, 2015; Marwick & boyd, 2010; van Dijck, 2013), rather than a dialogue (i.e., more an orientation to the self than to the other). Castells (2009) coins this concept to refer to interactive horizontal communication characterized by the multimodal exchange of messages from many to many, both synchronous and asynchronous on a global level, that has arisen with the spread of the Internet, wireless communication, and the proliferation of digital media (p. 55). It is "self-communication" because "it is self-generated in terms of content, self-directed in emission, and self-selected in reception" (Castells, 2009, pp. 89–90).

The focal point of my analysis is the argument that social media are primarily "self-directed" and that this is their main obstacle in encouraging dissonance confirmation. A survey of the Pew Internet and American Life Project (2006, as cited in Castells, 2009) finds that 52% of bloggers mostly post for themselves, while only 32% do so for their audiences, leading Castells (2009) to conclude that, it is largely "closer to 'electronic autism' than to actual communication" (p. 66). Scholars who praise social media's ability to bring about "discourse shifts" by disseminating alternative views and raising awareness of social issues (Castells, 2009, 2015; Costanza-Chock, 2014; Jackson, & Foucault, 2020; Mundt, Ross, & Burnett, 2018; Papacharissi, 2014; Tufekci, 2017) somewhat overlook that there may be a preexisting critical mass that is attuned to the cause and struggles of a group, such as the U.S. President Barack Obama siding with the Black Lives Matter movement. In post-conflict societies where most of the public and traditional media fail to recognize injustices and war crimes, a greater awareness is a prerequisite, but a critical mass is rather created through dialogic communication.

While social media have a conversational character (Costanza-Chock, 2014), they fundamentally lack a dialogical character (Ellis & Maoz, 2007; Kent & Taylor, 2021). Dialogue is not simply talk. Dialogue is an engaged interaction characterized by involved exchange of arguments, which shows commitment to conversation, wherein one takes counterarguments into account with an intent to contribute to the negotiation of meanings or revelation of facts (cf. Kent & Taylor, 2021). Dialogue is essentially *an orientation to other*, as Kent and Taylor (2021) point out (p. 4) and, I would add, is defined by an *intent*. Key attributes include commitment to conversation, understanding of the other as a collaborator and not an adversary, seeking opinions of others in the conversation, trust, and authenticity. It is enacted through an acknowledgment of others' views as valid, perspective taking, politeness, and truthfulness (Kent & Taylor, 2021). Following this, I empirically investigate whether and to what extent Facebook, Twitter, and face-to-face interactions have outlined dialogical attributes and

what this means for their role in encouraging dissonance confirmation and dissonance avoidance, dependent on who interacts.

Actors

In post-conflict societies, formal mechanisms of transitional justice are often ineffective because of state unwillingness or insufficient action to deal with war crimes and human rights violations. As a result, civil society, defined as nonstate and noncommercial actors who voluntarily engage in collective public action and debate (Kaldor, 2003), has been deemed a chief promoter of the transitional justice process (Kaldor, Kostovicova, & Said, 2006). Therefore, this study explores the role of actors at a bottom-up level in furthering transitional justice process—civil society, often understood as human rights activists, and so-called ordinary people. The NGO-ization of civil society that results from Western donors' priorities, is believed to have led to civil society's estrangement from ordinary people, thereby failing to promote reconciliation and lacking legitimacy in transitional justice (Kostovicova, 2017). People in post-conflict societies are understood to be suspicious of civil society actors' motives because of their external funding (Richmond & Franks, 2009), and their agenda of addressing war-related injustices through truth-seeking is seen as ineffective because it does not resonate with most people (Obradović-Wochnik, 2013), thereby aggravating nationalist discourses of self-victimization and denial (Ostojić, 2013).

It is only when people take ownership of the process as active agents rather than targets of transitional justice (Mac Ginty, 2014) that they are more willing to cooperate and contribute to the transitional justice process, rendering it more legitimate and democratic (Belloni, 2001). Consequently, some scholars argue that ordinary people (i.e., nonactivists and people uninvolved in human rights NGOs) can be active and effective agents of transitional justice. People often intuitively employ sophisticated mechanisms of maintaining peaceful relationships with other ethnic groups in (post-)conflict contexts (Mac Ginty, 2014, p. 554). Dialogic interactions, wherein people shared their experiences and narratives, have proved to have transformative effects in this context by ameliorating perceptions of other groups (Maoz, 2000). Following these insights, this study distinguishes between two types of actors at the bottom-up level—human rights activists and ordinary people (nonactivists)—to explore the conjoined effects of who speaks and in which environments on dissonance confirmation and dissonance avoidance (i.e., how people respond to activists as opposed to nonactivists in the three environments).

Research Design and Methodology

Factorial Design

This study employs a 3×2 factorial design to examine the main effects of two independent variables (factors)—environment (factor 1) and actors (factor 2)—and the relationship between them (Elman, 2005, p. 296; also see Applegate, Wright, Cullen, & Wooldredge, 1993; Pattnaik & Mishra, 2014). This means that effects of interactions on Twitter, Facebook, and face-to-face will vary depending on whether this interaction is conducted only among nonactivists or between nonactivists and activists. In Table 1, each cell represents identified values of relationship between dependent variables (Elman, 2005, pp. 296–

298). Data for face-to-face interactions was collected in focus groups and discourse analysis was applied to interpreting online and focus group interactions.

Focus Groups

Focus groups (FGs) are best suited to study interactions in relation to a specific event that happened in the past wherein social norms are negotiated (see Agar & MacDonald, 1995; Cyr, 2016). Six semistructured FGs were conducted in Belgrade, Serbia, in September 2020, with a total of 39 participants (equal number of men and women), recruited through the snowball technique (i.e., on the basis of various networks; Goodman, 1961). There were nine human rights activists and 30 nonactivists. Human rights activists refer to individuals and organizations that participated in the organization of the #sedamhijda initiative between April and August 2015. There were three mixed groups of human rights activists and nonactivists to test the factor of actor (i.e., to understand how people respond when activists speak), and three groups with only nonactivists to understand how people respond when nonactivists speak. Participants were aged between 21 and 81 and were from diverse backgrounds in terms of their education, professions, and places of birth. Following the discussed theoretical framework of this study, key organizational criterion of focus groups was whether an individual was a human rights activist or not. Other variables, such as their age, gender, or occupation, were taken into account when analyzing the data, but it was not possible to have focus groups homogenized based on these other variables because that would lead to having too many factors to analyze, and it would not be possible draw any meaningful conclusions about the triggers of cognitive dissonance (see Applegate et al., 1993; Elman, 2005; Pattnaik & Mishra, 2014). The same questions and their sequence were applied to all focus groups to have comparable data. These interactions were recorded and transcribed.

Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis was applied to interpreting textual data of focus groups, and of interactions on Twitter and Facebook. Interactions on Twitter and Facebook were sampled by using keywords #sedamhijada, #7000, and Srebrenica for the period between April and August 2015. All posts were collected, which amounted to more than 600. Public opinion reports show that attitudes in Serbia toward the war crimes in Srebrenica have not changed significantly in the period between 2015 and 2020 (Ipsos Public Affairs, 2011, p. 85; Mihajlović & Lazarević, 2017, p. 41), which makes focus groups and social media data comparable.

Discourse analysis is the study of language use that seeks to deconstruct the ideological underpinnings of linguistic and nonlinguistic social practices (van Dijk, 1993). It studies discourse (i.e., all forms of talks, texts and silences too; Gill, 1996, p. 145). It searches for patterns in the data but also for what is not said (Gill, 1996, p. 145). Discourse analysis understands language as constructive of reality, rather than reflecting an underlying reality, because discourses "do things" (Gill, 1996, pp. 141, 145). It is important to consider social, cultural, and political contexts of those texts or talks as these contexts endow them with meanings (Gill, 1996).

By drawing on Cohen (2001) and van Dijk (1992), I have looked at the following rhetorical devices that constitute the discourse of denial and victimhood as evidence of DA: (1) Literal denial or denial of facts;

(2) denial of responsibility—claiming the acts were beyond one’s control; (3) denial of injury—minimizing the scale of injury; (4) redistribution of responsibility—stating everyone committed crimes; (5) “but” disclaimer, (6) reversal strategy—putting the blame on the victim; (7) denial as condemnation of the condemners—denouncing the morality of critics; (8) moral blackmail—claims they are silenced; (9) subtle denial disguised in words like “claim” or “allege”; (10) positive self-presentation; (11) appeal to higher loyalties; and (12) denial of the need to change (Cohen, 2001). These strategies are complementary to some image restoration strategies, such as counterattack; differentiation that emphasizes particularity of a situation; bolstering, which reminds of a favorable image before the accusation; victimage; and minimization (Hearit & Robertson, 2010).

Research Ethics

This study has undergone research ethics review and has been approved (REC ref. 630b). Focus group participants were asked for an informed written consent. They were asked for their permission to analyze their activities on Facebook and Twitter in relation to #sedamhiljada. This permission did not condition their participation in focus groups. All data has been anonymized and quoted under pseudonyms.

Results and Analysis

Findings show that face-to-face interactions among nonactivists led most often to dissonance confirmation. There was less evidence of dissonance confirmation in interactions with human rights activists, especially on Twitter and Facebook. Interactions on Twitter led the most to dissonance avoidance. Table 1 shows the frequency of dissonance confirmation for each of the six combinations of two variables, as “no, low, some,” and “high.” These measures were not based on a simple count of instances of dissonance confirmation because most people did not move from denial to acknowledgment in a linear way, but this involved several backward and forward steps. However, a simple count of such instances showed the process of negotiation of meanings and willingness to reconsider one’s starting position, or a lack of thereof. The data shows that it is dialogical communication (Kent & Taylor, 2021) and the moral judgement of the interlocutor that primarily contribute to dissonance confirmation. Activists were often perceived as “morally corrupt” (cf. Kostovicova, 2017), but the implications of this were more ambivalent and more complex than the literature has suggested. This meant that dialogic communication not only depended on a type of environment but also on a type of actor, which scholars have not considered (Kent & Taylor, 2021), as the unfolding discussion reveals.

Table 1. The Instances of Dissonance Confirmation by a Combination of Two Factors—Communicative Environments and Actors.

Environment	Actors	
	Nonactivists in response to human rights activists	Nonactivists in response to nonactivists
Face-to-face	Some	High
Facebook	Low	Some
Twitter	No	Low

Twitter: Self-Centered Environment

There was no evidence of dissonance confirmation on Twitter in interactions with activists and only little with nonactivists. Twitter interactions were particularly hostile and aggressive compared with Facebook and face-to-face interactions. They abounded with derogatory terms addressed to activists and some nonactivists who endorsed the discourse of responsibility to notice and address war-related injustices (Arendt, 1963; Young, 1990/2011), labeling them as traitors and foreign mercenaries. The following conversation in response to a tweet by a member of an NGO in Serbia illustrates this point.

Vladimir: OK, they light candles for the victims of Srebrenica, but have these nice people lit any candle for the Serbian victims?

Dragan: They did not get funds for that.

Sandra: They left early; it is not paid for overtime.

Comments such as “they did not get the funds” or “it [their activism] is not paid for overtime” allude to dishonest motives and the hidden agenda of people supporting the initiative. This is a common strategy of denial called condemnation of the condemners (van Dijk, 1992) and evidence of dissonance avoidance. By delegitimizing critics, people avoid experiencing cognitive dissonance when exposed to arguments about war atrocities committed by their ethnic group. This strategy is part of dominant public discourse in Serbia (Gordy, 2013; Kostovicova, 2010, 2017) and in many post-conflict societies (Hermann, 2004). It can be also defined as a counterattack strategy of image restoration (Benoit & Hanczor, 1994; Hearit & Robertson, 2010).

Vladimir replies to the original tweet from the NGO member, asking if they lit candles for the Serbian victims, an example of redistribution of responsibility strategy of denial (Cohen, 2001) and the discourse of victimhood, both of which are prime examples of DA in interactions on war legacy. While the Serbs were also victims in the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, invoking self-victimization in the context of commemorating victims of other ethnicities is employed to downplay the ingroup wrongdoing. While this strategy of denial is drawn on in all three types of environments and in response to both types of actors, what is specific to Twitter interactions is that people do not add substantively to the conversation: They seldom seek opinions or acknowledge other people’s views as valid. This insight resonates with studies of online interactions in other (post-)conflict regions (Ellis & Maoz, 2007). Their interactions serve merely to dismiss the message by denigrating the messenger or to reinforce the message as seen in Sandra’s comment to Dragan. Twitter thus primarily becomes a stage for voicing one’s viewpoint. As Kent and Taylor (2021) note, social media architecture favors more speaking than listening—an “open-minded consideration of comments” (p. 6). Activists on Twitter seldom engaged with comments, if at all. Nonactivists were more likely to reply and engage with comments on Twitter, proving how communication dynamics are not only shaped by an environment but also by a type of actor, as the following example demonstrates.

Nikola: Every victim is important, regardless of nationality or ethnicity.

Vladimir: Do you not think it is unjust that the Croats celebrate the Storm,² or that Oric³ was not punished?

Nikola: It was wrong that Oric was not punished, and the Storm was a bad thing.

Vladimir: So, you agree that there are double standards? That is what I mind, not Muslim victims.

Nikola: No, what I mean is that not all war offenders have been prosecuted.

Vladimir: Have you paid tribute to the Serbian victims?

Nikola: Members of my family were killed in the war by all three sides [ethnic groups].

Vladimir: My condolences, I am sorry for your loss, but I am also sorry that no one mentions Serbian victims.

There are some elements of dialogic communication in these exchanges between nonactivists. Vladimir asks Nikola at least two questions seeking Nikola's opinion, while Nikola takes Vladimir's comments into account when providing an answer. The conversation took several turns until Vladimir expressed regret by saying, "I am sorry for your loss." While not all apologies are sincere and can, in fact, serve as a strategy of image restoration (Hearit & Robertson, 2010), apologies are also understood to be a precondition of breaking with the past following a war (see Teitel, 2006). Vladimir may not have changed his core views that the Serbs are victims as manifested in the "but" disclaimer, but he eventually shows recognition of outgroup suffering. This exchange shows, as Cohen (2001) observes, that acknowledgment, as a signal of dissonance confirmation, can be partial, and how cognitive dissonance is brought about in the process of dialogic interactions wherein people negotiate their understanding of the war (p. 113). It finally illustrates how nonactivists can adopt a proactive role aimed at changing discourses.

Facebook: Semidialogical Environment

There was little evidence of dissonance confirmation when ordinary people interacted with activists, and more evidence in interactions with nonactivists on Facebook. Offensive remarks addressed to the organizers and supporters of #sedamhiljada were common, but the two types of actors were perceived differently. This was seen in a comment to a picture post of people who were lighting candles for Srebrenica's victims. One man said, "a few are paid [referring to activists], and the rest [nonactivists] are just brainwashed marionettes." Despite the negative meanings of the term "brainwashed marionettes," he expressed some sympathies for the nonactivists who supported the initiative. It meant they were not morally corrupt as activists, but that they were too pliable to understand that they were duped. Activists were somewhat more engaged in interactions on Facebook compared with Twitter, but also much less so than nonactivists.

² Operation Storm was carried out by the Croatian armed forces during the Yugoslav wars in 1995, which led to the displacement of over 200,000 and the killing of about 400 Serbian civilians ("Operacija Oluja," 2018).

³ Naser Oric was a commander of Bosnian Muslims' armed forces.

In response to the activists, one woman first questioned the intentions of killing the Muslim population in Srebrenica by asking, "Does anyone really think that the Serbs wanted to exterminate Muslims?" This question may have been asked in good faith, but it often represents a denial of injury strategy aimed at scaling down the severity of the crime. The activist only briefly commented, "International Court of Justice said what they had to say [that crimes committed in Srebrenica constituted genocide], so I do not have anything to add to [dismantle] persistent and desperate denial of facts." The woman, faced with discomfort, goes on to add, "Some Serbs committed war crimes and they should be prosecuted for that. People should light candles to pay tribute [to the victims]." Interactions between nonactivists exhibited some dialogic attributes.

Andrea: I can see that many people here [on Facebook] have an issue with paying tribute to other people's victims, so I have a few questions for you: when and where Serbian victims were denied in Serbia? Is the WWII memorial in Jasenovac⁴ a reality or illusion? Do you know that even HDZ's Kolinda⁵ visited Jasenovac memorial and paid tribute to Serbian victims there?

Vera: There are victims on all sides, and they all should be paid tribute to.

Milica: False and partial information. Celebration of Storm as a national holiday is an example of this.

Andrea considers denialist arguments while attempting to dismantle misperceptions. She asks, "when Serbian victims were denied in Serbia" and refers to the Croatian president at the time who visited to Jasenovac. Rather than dismissing other's views as invalid, Andrea directly engages with the discourse of victimhood to challenge it. This shows an orientation to other, a key attribute of dialogic communication and an example of engaged interaction. It also suggests how dissonance confirmation seldom takes place as an immediate response to new information. It is often generated in a long process of exchanging opinions and sharing experiences, which can explain why synchronous face-to-face interactions are better suited to encourage it.

Face-to-Face Encounters: Dialogical Environments

As Cammearts (2008) observes, social media are more conflictual than consensual. Face-to-face interactions were not conflictual, but they tended to be confrontational, and the more confrontational they were, the more they led to dissonance confirmation. Confrontational, unlike conflictual, meant there were disagreements, and participants were passionately confronted with counterarguments, but the atmosphere remained convivial. Most participants in focus groups were actively listening to one another, nodding, supplementing one another's statements, or simultaneously making the same observations, asking questions, and referring to what others had said. This demonstrates an orientation to the other and perceiving the other as a collaborator (Kent & Taylor, 2021), which encouraged dissonance confirmation, as the following example of an interaction among nonactivists illustrates.

⁴ A Nazi concentration camp run by the Independent State of Croatia during the Second World War where hundreds of thousands of Serbian, Jewish, and Roma civilians were killed.

⁵ Former president of Croatia (2015–2020).

Stefan: If political leadership does not want to accept it [war crimes in Srebrenica], then it must come from below [referring to #sedamhiljda initiative].

Petar: How do they not when the president went there [to Srebrenica] to apologise?

Stefan: That is a good practice, but one cannot deny the qualification brought by the ICTY [that it constituted genocide].

Petar: but the key is apology about what happened to those people.

Dana: but it is very important how the message those mothers [of victims] will perceive it.

Petar: from the perspective of how they will understand it, yes, you will calm them down when you say it was a genocide.

Dana: exactly!

Petar: but what do they have from that [being termed as] genocide . . .

Slobo: I think it is still important. Even if someone said it was a genocide without an apology, it would have greater weight than apology.

...

Petar: Was it not a genocide in Jasenovac, did Croats recognise it?

Stefan: The term was not established at the time . . .

Petar: Do not take me wrong, when I mention Jasenovac, I do not justify if someone does not recognise genocide in Srebrenica.

Petar initially adopts the strategy of positive self-representation by saying the president of Serbia went to Srebrenica to apologize. The aim is to state that one has no ascribed negative characteristics of living in denial (Cohen, 2001), which can be described as identity protective cognition, which refers to subconscious rejection of factual information that is contrary to dominant beliefs of their group (Kahan, Braman, Gastil, Slovic, & Mertz, 2007). Petar implicitly avoids characterizing the nature of crimes committed in Srebrenica as genocide by responding to Stefan's comment that it is the apology that matters, not the qualification brought by the ICTY, or to Dana's comment by saying "what do they have from that [being termed as] genocide." Both examples represent denial of injury strategy (Cohen, 2001). Petar then employs self-victimization discourse by referring to crimes committed in Jasenovac to make a claim that "Serbs were first victims." Competitive victimhood, the claim that one's group has suffered more compared with the outgroup, is very common in post-conflict societies—it is used to restore ingroup moral identity (Sullivan, Landau, Branscombe, & Rothchild, 2012, p. 778).

The conversation takes several turns, during which Petar expresses dissonance avoidance as evident in the discourses of denial and victimhood. Petar first agrees with Dana that it is important to acknowledge the suffering of the mothers of victims of Srebrenica, which is one instance of dissonance confirmation, before refusing again to recognize the nature of the event. Eventually, when repeatedly countered with arguments of other group participants, he expressed again dissonance confirmation, a reluctant recognition of ingroup responsibility and outgroup suffering, incongruent with previously expressed views, when he says, "When I mention Jasenovac, I do not justify if someone does not recognize genocide in Srebrenica." He also expresses discomfort by saying "do not take me wrong." This example further provides insights into how dissonance confirmation is a result of negotiation of meanings and understanding of an event through a dialogue; it is not a linear process from denial to acknowledgment but involves both forward and backward steps. While a simple count of instances of dissonance confirmation in this example

shows two such instances, the count without back-and-forth steps shows one instance, as the first instance was annulled by the subsequent interaction where the participant readopted denialist arguments.

Focus group participants, like social media users, expressed their distrust of NGOs involved in the transitional justice process in Serbia because of, as they report, untransparent funding and agenda, and detachment from reality, invoking dominant narratives in Serbia (cf. Gordy, 2013; Kostovicova, 2017). Nevertheless, in mixed groups where nonactivists were interacting face-to-face with human rights activists, I found that some activists played an effective role in encouraging dissonance confirmation, suggesting they enjoyed legitimacy among nonactivists, a point also made by Puljek-Shank (2018). This proves that the heterogeneity of civil society is overlooked in the existing literature. What leads to this difference can be explained by their approach to interaction, which is best described as "an engaged interaction." Engaged interaction is not only a passive acknowledgment but an active engagement with others' views with an intent to seek truth and persuade, as the following example demonstrates.

Tatijana (OP): It must be seen that all parties accept their share of responsibility. If the responsibility is imposed only on one party, that constantly brings us back to the beginning.

Aleksandar (CS): Regardless of whether I agreed to the identity of a Serb or not, I have influence only in the society in which I live, where I can act politically. I cannot act in another society.

Tatijana (OP): I think everyone should have an obligation to be responsible for their part. It would be great to hear views of activists of both Srebrenica and the Storm.

...

Aleksandar (CS): I am responsible because these people killed in the name of Serbs; they did not kill because they [victims] thought differently, but because they were not Serbs.

Tatijana (OP): I do not think that any crime committed against their people should be justified, but I cannot accept that only this side is guilty, and the other is not.

...

Alexander (CS): There is no collective guilt but that is why there is collective responsibility, because I am part of this political community.

Tatijana (OP): Yes, that is right, of course.

Aleksandar (CS): If we want to correct these evils, it is our responsibility. The point is that some people suffer from violence because I say it is not my responsibility.

Tatijana (OP): That is right. I do not mean that. I am interested in that. The responsibility to say that it was not good and that I do not want it to happen again, and that I do not justify it . . .

In this long discussion, Tatjana, a nonactivist, persistently expressed dissonance confirmation manifested in the distribution of responsibility strategy when she states that all parties, referring to ethnic groups involved in the conflict, should be responsible, and when she invokes the self-victimhood discourse by referring to the Storm. She was being countered by Aleksandar, an activist, who assertively engaged in the conversation by repeatedly referring to political responsibility when saying, "I have influence only in the society in which I live" or "I am responsible because these people killed in the name of Serbs." Tjana eventually expresses dissonance confirmation when she shows discomfort by saying, "I do not mean that,"

referring to avoiding taking responsibility, followed by, "I am interested in that," referring to a willingness of taking responsibility. Those activists who were more successful in triggering DC also tended to have a lower media profile. Existing literature does not sufficiently consider how systematically negative media portrayals (Kostovicova, 2010, p. 28) of activists and anyone endorsing the discourse of responsibility may have undermined trust, having direct implications on the transitional justice process. These insights proved the importance of who speaks, but also that its effects are dependent on affordances of communicative environments.

Conclusion

Acknowledgment of ingroup responsibility for war crimes and outgroup suffering has been deemed key for reconciliation following violent conflicts (Cehajić & Brown, 2010). Yet, denialism of responsibility tends to be prevalent in post-conflict societies (Hermann, 2004; Milanović, 2016). This study has sought to understand how people move from denial to acknowledgment. Scholars have argued these attitude shifts take place through cognitive dissonance—when people experience inconstancy between their views and behavior. Existing literature on cognitive dissonance in post-conflict contexts has often lacked empirical evidence (Lieberman, 2006) or has focused on psychological triggers (Homola et al., 2020). It has overlooked social factors of cognitive dissonance which may lead to acknowledgment.

This study contributes to the theory on cognitive dissonance by showing that the experience of cognitive dissonance in post-conflict societies, in the study also termed dissonance confirmation, is the result of the combined effects of two factors—the affordances of communicative environments and the credibility of actors who speak. Dissonance confirmation was observed in attitude changes from denial toward acknowledgment and expressions of discomfort when repeatedly faced with conflictual arguments. Attitudes and behavior are only insights into what people think (Maio, Haddock, & Verplanken, 2019). The study advances the scholarship of cognitive dissonance, showing how it is seldom experienced when people are presented with new information (Cooper, 1974) but is rather an outcome of a nonlinear process of back-and-forth communication in which people move from denial to acknowledgment of war crimes. Through discourse analysis applied to focus group and social media data, I find that dissonance confirmation is a result of lengthy dialogic interactions in which meanings and understandings are negotiated. This was most dominant in face-to-face interactions with nonactivists, to a lesser extent present on Facebook, especially in interactions between nonactivists and activists, and least observable on Twitter with activists. Qualitative methods are a useful tool for obtaining deeper insights into the dynamics of engaged interaction that shape this process, as opposed to experimental research design that does not take account of the process.

This study positions media and communications as constitutive of cognitive dissonance. Positive outcomes of interactions were contingent on communicative environments that supported dialogic communication. Self-oriented characteristic of most social networking sites (Barassi, 2015; Castells, 2009; Marwick & boyd, 2010; van Dijck, 2013) hindered dialogic communication (Kent & Taylor, 2021), having negative consequences on the transitional justice process. The study has also pointed at the nuances between different SNSs and has shown that Facebook embeds some dialogic characteristics, what previous research on dialogic potential of social media has not considered (Kent & Taylor, 2021). It has also pointed at the importance of accounting for actors who engage in these interactions, showing that a reaction to civil

society activists is not uniform, as others have suggested (Obradović-Wochnik, 2013). Some activists engage with citizens in meaningful ways, and citizens take active roles in the transitional justice process. Hence, to fully understand social and political consequences of social media, it should be considered how people engage with these media.

References

- Agar, M., & MacDonald, J. (1995). Focus groups and ethnography. *Human Organization*, 54(1), 78–86. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44126575>
- Applegate, B. K., Wright, J. O., Cullen, F. T., & Wooldredge, J. D. (1993). Victim-offender race and support for capital punishment: A factorial design approach. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 18(1), 95–115. doi:10.1007/BF02887641
- Arendt, H. (1963). *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the banality of evil*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Barassi, V. (2015). *Activism on the web: Everyday struggles against digital capitalism*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Belloni, R. (2001). Civil society and peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Journal of Peace Research*, 38(2), 163–180. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/425493>
- Benoit, W. L., & Hanczor, R. S. (1994). The Tonya Harding controversy: An analysis of image restoration strategies. *Communication Quarterly*, 42(4), 416–433. doi:10.1080/01463379409369947
- boyd, d. (2010). Social network sites as networked publics: Affordances, dynamics, and implications. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *Networked self: Identity, community, and culture on social network sites* (pp. 39–58). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Brannon, L. A., Tagler, M. J., & Eagly, A. H. (2007). The moderating role of attitude strength in selective exposure to information. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 43(4), 611–617. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2006.05.001
- Cammearts, B. (2008). Critiques on the participatory potentials of web 2.0. *Communication, Culture and Critique*, 1(4), 358–377. doi:10.1111/j.1753-9137.2008.00028.x
- Castells, M. (2009). *Communication power*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Castells, M. (2015). *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the digital age* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, MA: Polity.

- Cehajić, S., & Brown, R. (2010). Silencing the past: Effects of intergroup contact on acknowledgment of in-group responsibility. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 1(2), 190–196. doi:10.1177/1948550609359088
- Charnysh, V., & Finkel, E. (2017). The death camp Eldorado: Political and economic effects of mass violence. *American Political Science Review*, 111(4), 801–818. doi:10.1017/S0003055417000296
- Cohen, S. (2001). *States of denial: Knowing about atrocities and suffering*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Converse, P. E. (2006). The nature of belief systems in mass publics. *Critical Review*, 18(1–3), 1–74. doi:10.1080/08913810608443650. (Original work published 1974)
- Cooper, J. (2012). Cognitive dissonance theory. In P. A. M. Van Lange, A. Kruglanski, & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of theories of social psychology* (pp. 377–394). London, UK: SAGE Publications.
- Cooper, J., & Fazio, R. H. (1984). A new look at dissonance theory. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 17, 229–266. doi:10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60121-5
- Costanza-Chock, S. (2014). *Out of the shadows, into the streets!: Transmedia organizing and the immigrant rights movement*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Cyr, J. (2016). The pitfalls and promise of focus groups as a data collection method. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 45(2), 231–259. doi:10.1177/0049124115570065
- David, R. (2017). What we know about transitional justice: Survey and experimental evidence. *Advances in Political Psychology*, 38(S1), 151–177. doi:10.1111/pops.12395
- Ellis, D. G., & Maoz, I. (2007). Online argument between Israeli Jews and Palestinians. *Human Communication Research*, 33(3), 291–309. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.2007.00300.x
- Elman, C. (2005). Explanatory typologies in qualitative studies of international politics. *International Organization*, 59(2), 293–326. doi:10.1017/S0020818305050101
- Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Fridman, O. (2018). Too young to remember determined not to forget: Memory activists engaging with returning ICTY convicts. *International Criminal Justice Review*, 28(4), 423–437. doi:10.1177/1057567718766233
- Fridman, O., & Ristić, K. (2020). Online transnational memory activism and commemoration: The case of the white armband day. In A. Sierp & J. Wüstenberg (Eds.), *Agency in transnational memory politics* (pp. 68–91). New York, NY: Berghahn Books.

- Gibson, J. E. (2004). Overcoming apartheid: Can truth reconcile a divided nation? *Politikon*, 603(1), 129–155. doi:10.1177/0002716205282895
- Gill, R. (1996). Discourse analysis: Practical implementation. In J. T. E. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research methods for psychology and the social sciences* (pp. 141–158). Leicester, UK: British Psychological Society.
- Goodman, L. A. (1961). Snowball sampling. *Annals of Mathematical Statistics*, 32(1), 148–170. doi:10.1214/aoms/1177705148
- Gordy, E. (2013). *Guilt, responsibility, and denial: The past at stake in post-Milosevic Serbia*. Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Hasić, J., & Karabegović, D. (2020). Diaspora as digital diplomatic agents: 'BOSNET' and wartime foreign affairs. *Migration Letters*, 17(1), 103–113. doi:10.33182/ml.v17i1.832
- Hearit, K. M., & Roberson, K. M. (2010). Denial, differentiation, and apology: On the use of apologia in crisis management. In R. L. Heath, & D. H. O'Hair (Eds.), *Handbook of risk and crisis communication* (pp. 542–559). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hermann, T. (2004). Reconciliation: Reflections on the theoretical and practical utility of the term. In Y. Bar-Siman-Tov (Ed.), *From conflict resolution to reconciliation* (pp. 39–60). Oxford, UK: Oxford Scholarship Online.
- Homola, J., Pereira, M. M., & Tavits, M. (2020). Legacies of the Third Reich: Concentration camps and out-group intolerance. *American Political Science Review*, 114(2), 573–590. doi:10.1017/S0003055419000832
- Ipsos Public Affairs. (2011). Attitudes towards war crimes issues, ICTY and the national judiciary. Belgrade, Serbia: Ipsos.
- Jackson, B., & Foucault, W. (2020). *#HashtagActivism: Networks of race and gender justice*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Kahan, D. M., Braman, D., Gastil, J., Slovic, P., & Mertz, C. K. (2007). Culture and identity-protective cognition: Explaining the white male effect in risk perception. *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies*, 4(3), 465–505. doi:10.1111/j.1740-1461.2007.00097.x
- Kaldor, M. (2003). The idea of global civil society. *Royal Institute of International Affairs*, 79(3), 583–593. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3569364>

- Kaldor, M., Kostovicova, D., & Said, Y. (2006). War and peace: The role of global civil society. In H. K. Anheier, M. Kaldor, & M. Glasius (Eds.), *Global civil society 2006/7* (pp. 94–119). London, UK: SAGE Publications.
- Kent, M. L., & Taylor, M. (2021). Fostering dialogic engagement: Toward an architecture of social media for social change. *Social Media and Society, 7*(1), 1–10. doi:10.1177/2056305120984462
- Kostovicova, D. (2010). Civil society in the Western Balkans: Vehicle for or obstacle to transitional justice? In W. Petritsch & V. Dzihic (Eds.), *Conflict and memory: Bridging past and future in (Southeast) Europe* (pp. 287–294). Baden-Baden, Germany: Nomos.
- Kostovicova, D. (2017). Seeking justice in a divided region: Text analysis of regional civil society deliberations in the Balkans. *International Journal of Transitional Justice, 11*(1), 154–175. doi:10.1093/ijtj/ijw023
- Koudenburg, N., Greijdanus, H., & Scheepers, D. (2019). The polarizing effects of group discussion in a negative normative context: Integrating societal-, group-, and individual-level factors. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 58*(1), 150–174. doi:10.1111/bjso.12282
- Lieberman, B. (2006). Nationalist narratives, violence between neighbours and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina: A case of cognitive dissonance? *Journal of Genocide Research, 8*(3), 295–309. doi:10.1080/14623520600950013
- Linder, D. E., Cooper, J., & Jones, E. E. (1967). Decision freedom as a determinant of the role of incentive magnitude in attitude change. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 6*(3), 245–254. doi:10.1037/h0021220
- Mac Ginty, R. (2014). Everyday peace: Bottom-up and local agency in conflict-affected societies. *Security Dialogue, 45*(6), 548–564. doi:10.1177/0967010614550899
- Maoz, I. (2000). An experiment in peace: Reconciliation-aimed workshops of Jewish-Israeli and Palestinian youth. *Journal of Peace Research, 37*(6), 721–736. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/424756>
- Marwick, A., & boyd, d. (2010). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media and Society, 13*(1), 114–133. doi:10.1177/1461444810365313
- Masić, D. [dusanmasic]. (2015, April 17). *A zamisli jedno 7000 nas legne ispred Skupstine Srbije u julu i obelezi 20 godina Srebrenice?* [And imagine 7,000 of us lying down in front of the Serbian Parliament in July and marking 20 years of Srebrenica?] [Tweet]. Retrieved from <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/opinions/2015/5/1/zamisli-da-nas-7000-legne-pred-skupstinom-srbije-11-jula>

- Maio, G., Haddock, G., & Verplanken, B (2019). *The psychology of attitudes and attitude change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Mazzei, J. M. (2011). Finding shame in truth: The importance of public engagement in truth commission. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 33(2), 431–452. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23016021>
- Mihajlović, S., & Lazarević, S. (2017). *Obaveštenost građana Srbije o ratovima '90-ih godina, ratnim zločinima i suđenjima optuženima za ratne zločine* [How informed the citizens of Serbia are about the wars of the 1990s, war crimes and trials for the accused of war crimes]. Belgrade, Serbia: Demostat.
- Milanović, M. (2016). The impact of ICTY on the former Yugoslavia: An anticipatory post-mortem. *American Journal of International Law*, 110(2), 233–259. doi:10.5305/amerjintelaw.110.2.0233
- Mundt, M., Ross, K., & Burnett, C. M. (2018). Scaling social movements through social media: The case of Black Lives Matter. *Social Media and Society*, 4(4), 1–14. doi:10.1177/2056305118807911
- Oberschall, A. (2010). Memory, historical responsibility, truth and justice: The Balkan wars. *Corvinus Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 1(1), 31–60. doi:10.14267/cjssp.2010.01.02
- Obradović-Wochnik, J. (2013). Serbian civil society as an exclusionary space: NGOs, the public and 'coming to terms with the past.' In J. Ker-Lindsay, V. Bojovic-Dzelilovic, M. Kaldor, & D. Kostovicova (Eds.), *Civil society and transitions in the Western Balkans* (pp. 210–229). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Operacija Oluja—26 godina bez pravde za žrtve [Operation Storm—26 years without justice for the victims]. (2018). *Fund for Humanitarian Law*. Retrieved from <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/?p=38098>
- Ostojčić, M. (2013). Facing the past while disregarding the present? Human rights NGOs and truth-telling in post-Milosevic Serbia. In J. Ker-Lindsay, V. Bojovic-Dzelilovic, & D. Kostovicova (Eds.), *Civil society and transitions in the Western Balkans* (pp. 230–247). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Papacharissi, Z. (2012). Without you, I'm nothing: Performances of the self on Twitter. *International Journal of Communication*, 6, 1989–2006. Retrieved from <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/1484>
- Papacharissi, Z. (2014). *Affective publics: Sentiments, technology and politics*. Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Pattnaik, B. K., & Mishra, S. (2014). Communication style of managers: A comparative study on public and private sector. *Social Science International*, 30(1), 177–187.

- Puljek-Shank, R. (2018). Civic agency in governance: The role of legitimacy with citizens vs. donors. *Voluntas*, 29, 870–883. Retrieved from <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs11266-018-0020-0>
- Reilly, P. (2021). *Digital contention in a divided society: Social media, parades and protests in Northern Ireland*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.
- Richmond, O. P., & Franks, J. (2009). *Liberal peace transitions: Between statebuilding and peacebuilding*. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press.
- Sander, B. (2018). History on trials: Historical narrative pluralism within and beyond international criminal courts. *International & Comparative Law Quarterly*, 67(3), 547–576. doi:10.1017/S0020589318000027
- Sullivan, D., Landau, M. J., Branscombe, N. R., & Rothchild, Z. K. (2012). Competitive victimhood as a resource to accusations of ingroup hard doing. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102(4), 778–795. doi:10.1037/a0026573
- Teitel, R. (2006). The transitional apology. In E. Barkan & A. Karn (Eds.), *Taking wrongs seriously: Apologies and reconciliation* (pp. 101–114). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Tufekci, Z. (2017). *Twitter and tear gas: The power and fragility of networked protest*. London, UK: Yale University Press.
- van Dijk, T. A. (1992). Discourse and the denial of racism. *Discourse and Society*, 3(1), 87–118. doi:10.1177%2F0957926592003001005
- van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of discourse analysis. *Discourse and Society*, 4(2), 249–283. doi:10.1177%2F0957926593004002006
- van Dijck, J. (2013). 'You have one identity': Performing the self on Facebook and LinkedIn. *Media, Culture, and Society*, 35(2), 199–215. doi:10.1177/0163443712468605
- Srbija: Zabranjena okupljanja 11. jula, radikali bi da dođu s četničkim zastavama [Serbia: Prohibited gatherings on July 11, radicals wanted to come with Chetnik flags]. (2015, July 10). *Vijesti*. Retrieved from <https://www.vijesti.me/svijet/balkan/172987/srbija-zabranjena-okupljanja-11-jula-radikali-bi-da-dodu-s-cetnickim-zastavama>
- Young, I. (2011). *Justice and the politics of difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Original work published 1990)