Gorana Djoric

*Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Sociology,
University of Niš*

Biljana Prodovic Milojkovic[*]

Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš

DISTANCE OF SERBIAN, MACEDONIAN AND BULGARIAN STUDENTS TOWARDS NEIGHBORING NATIONS[**]

Summary

The paper establishes the degree of distance of the student population in Serbia, Macedonia and Bulgaria towards neighboring nations. The measured distance indicates the conflicting potential of the observed student population, as well as the possibility of mitigating this potential through common "friends". In addition to the average distance, the degree of homogeneity of the student population in relation to the measured distance is analyzed, which indicates a consolidation of ethnic identity by identifying/ constructing a common "enemy". The distance is measured by the Bogardus scale of seven (un)acceptable relations (with uneven degree of intimacy) with members of the neighboring nations. We have found that realistic conflict as perceived threat by Serbian students translates into relatively smaller distance towards ethnic out-groups than symbolic threat to national identity as perceived by Macedonian students. In all three subsamples the magnitude of

distance is associated with the field of study, in Serbian subsample with parents' education, and in neither subsample it is associated with students' sex.

The analysis was carried out on the data from the empirical research of the value orientations of students within the project "Tradition, modernization and national identity in Serbia and the Balkans in the process of European integration", realized by the Center for Sociological Research at the Faculty of Philosophy in Nis.

Keywords: Ethnic distance, students, group threat theory, realistic conflict, symbolic threat

1. THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH BACKGROUND

There is a plethora of studies aiming to describe, understand and explain (anti)out-group attitudes, in various empirical, theoretical and methodological contexts. In one of such contexts out-group attitudes are expressed and measured as intergroup distance, or in other words, as readiness of a member of one group to participate in social relations of various extent of intimacy with members of other social groups. In that context, ethnic distance is of particular interest. This paper is situated in the long tradition of describing and explaining the ethnic distance in the region of former Yugoslavia and the neighboring states. A general purpose of this line of research is to, by measuring the extent of ethnic distance, establish the extent of potential conflict or capacity for coexistence, tolerance and cooperation among the members of ethnic groups in this region in various historical circumstances.[1] One of the major findings of this series of researches is that the distance among the ethnic groups sharing the space of former Yugoslavia increases, after the dissolution of the common state,[2] and that the

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1) Jasmina Petrović, Slobodan Miladinović, „Profil etničkog distanciranja studenata Univerziteta u Nišu", u zborniku [sa trećeg Međunarodnog naučnog skupa „Nauka i savremeni univerzitet", Niš, 2013.]. [Tom 1], *Istoriografija i savremeni univerzitet* (priredila: Bojana Dimitrijević) Filozofski fakultet, Niš, 2014, str. 248–264.

2) Dragomir Pantić, *Etnička distanca u SFRJ* (Izveštaji i studije, sveska 2), Institut društvenih nauka, Beograd, 1967; Dragoljub Pantić, "Changes in ethnic stereotypes of Serbs", *Sociologija*, 1996, XXXVIII, 4.

distance increases the most between the groups in conflict in the most recent history.[3] The research of ethnic distances in the Balkan region also found that the extent of the distance is related to age, father's education, importance assigned to one's ethnic affiliation and the level of authoritarianism.[4]

The analysis presented in this paper compares ethic distances of Serbian, Macedonian and Bulgarian students (as the future most educated layer of the three societies) towards the same ethnic groups. The analysis is informed by two theoretical backgrounds. The first is an explanation of out-group attitudes by reference to *the group threat theory*. The second explores the mechanisms by the means of which a perceived threat to in-group interests is translated into a large distance from an out-group.

All versions of the group threat theory have in common a claim that (anti)out-group attitudes reflect the perceived magnitude of threat that an out-group poses to the interests of the in-group members.[5] The two streams of the theory focus on realistic and/or symbolic threats to the in-group members. Realistic threats refer to perceived harm an out-group could cause due to intergroup competition for scarce resources such as economic or political power. Symbolic threats refer to perceived harm an out-group could cause to integrity or validity of the in-group's meaning system.[6]

3)   Ljiljana Baćević, „Nacionalna svest omladine", u zborniku: *Deca krize* (priredili: Srećko Mihailović i drugi), Beograd, Institut društvenih nauka, 1990; Slobodan Miladinović, „Etnocentrizam vladajućih elita pred raspad Jugoslavije", *Nova srpska politička misao*, 1-2, 1997; Laslo Sekelj, „Etnička distanca, ksenofobija i etnonacionalistička manipulacija", *Sociologija*, br. 1, 2000.

4)   Zbornik radova: *Mi i drugi* (priredio: Dušan Janjić), Forum za etničke odnose, Beograd, 2018, str. 1–156; Jasmina Petrović, Slobodan Miladinović, „Profil etničkog distanciranja studenata Univerziteta u Nišu", op. cit., 2014, str. 248–264; Uroš Šuvaković, Jasmina Petrović, „Etnička udaljenost studenata na Severu Kosova i Metohije u longitudinalnom preseku", *Srpska politička misao*, 4/2014, god. 21, vol. 46, str. 247–265; Petre Georgijevski, „Etnička distanca u Makedoniji", u zborniku: *Kulturni i etnički odnosi na Balkanu – mogućnosti regionalne i evropske integracije* (priredili: Ljubiša Mitrović, Dragoljub B. Đorđević, Dragan Todorović), Filozofski fakultet Univerziteta u Nišu, Niš, 2006, str. 177–198.

5)   Walter G. Stephan, Lausanne C. Renfro, "The Role of Threats in Intergroup Relations", in: *From Prejudice to Intergroup Emotions* (eds. Diane M. Mackie, Eliot R. Smith), NY: Psychology Press, New York, 2002; Blake M. Riek, Eric W. Mania, Samuel L. Gaertner, "Intergroup Threat and Outgroup Attitudes: A Meta-Analytic Review", *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 2006, 10, pp. 336–353.

6)   Walter G. Stephan, Cookie W. Stephan, "An Integrated Threat Theory of Prejudice", in: *Reducing Prejudice and Discrimination*, (ed. Stuart Oskamp), 2000, Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp. 23–46.

Symbolic threats derive from conflicting group interests in regards to language, religion, cultural values or *the general social order of the group.*[7] Examples of sources of perceived intergroup conflict of interests include: group position, political and/or economic power, realistic group conflict, split labor market, language, religion, cultural values, and the general social order of the group.

The list of ethnic groups analyzed in this paper was compiled by research design so to represent various threats in kind and in intensity (the list of ethnic groups is given in Tables 1-3). It is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze in detail the type of threat which each of the listed ethnic groups my pose to Serbian, Macedonian and Bulgarian students. However, in the discussion of the recorded distances, an attempt will be made to account for both the differences in distances towards various out-groups in each subsample of students and the subsamples' differences in distances towards the same out-groups, by reference to the types of threats various out-groups may perceivably pose to the subsamples of students.

The second line of theorizing, on which we base a part of our analysis, explores the mechanisms by the means of which a perceived threat to in-group interests is translated into an anti-out-group attitude. As early as 1954, Allport concluded that although "clashes of interest and values do occur" they "are not in themselves instances of prejudice".[8] Stephan and Stephan[9] also emphasized that although perceived group threat and out-group derogation are closely related, the latter does not automatically follow from the former. Empirical evidence suggests that in some instances perceived group threat translates into an anti-out-group attitude, but in other instances does not.[10]

Among various factors which mediate between perceived threat and anti-out-group attitude, frequently considered is education. According to Evelyn Hello, Peer Scheepers and Peter Slee-

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7)   Gordon W, Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*. Cambridge, MA, Addison-Wesley, 1954; Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflicts*, The Free Press, New York, 1956.

8)   Gordon W, Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice,* op. cit., 1954, p. 229.

9)   Walter G. Stephan, Cookie W., Stephan, "An Integrated Threat Theory of Prejudice", op. cit.

10)   Walter G. Stephan, Lausanne C. Renfro, "The Role of Threats in Intergroup Relations", op. cit., p. 202.

gers,[11] a higher level of education reduces ethnic distance because the higher educated, are equipped with more and better resources for a direct competition with members of ethnic out-groups. Secondly, the higher educated have better ability to understand abstract principles in general, and the principle of equality regardless of ethnic background, in particular. Thirdly, higher education broadens people's social perspective, which reduces their 'unconditional' faith in authorities, stereotypes and prejudices. Finally, since the higher educated learn more about different aspects of the world they presumably have greater open-mindedness, which, in turn, reduces fear of the unknown or strangeness, and renders them more open to new experiences.

Another factor which may mediate between perceived threat and anti-out-group attitude of students is their field of study. In an early review of research in ideological outlook of students, Feldman and Newcomb (1970),[12] found that students enrolled in social sciences most often fall into the most liberal category with respect to "Politico-economic and Social Liberalism", those in natural or biological sciences most often fell into the medium category, while students of engineering were overrepresented in the lowest category. A possible explanation suggested is that, beyond developing cognitive skills and cognitive sophistication which increases the capacity to detect and reject prejudice, racism and ethnocentrism of all students, social science education, in particular, reduces prejudice and social conservatism by providing knowledge about minorities and out-groups, and by teaching students how to detect and understand prejudices. However, an alternative explanation may also be that liberal attitudes of social sciences students are not developed by their education, but that students with more liberal attitudes consciously chose to study social sciences.[13]

This paper has three aims: 1) To measure distances of Serbian, Macedonian and Bulgarian students towards the same ethnic groups. 2) To account for these distances by reference to the types

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11) Evelyn Hello, Peer Scheepers, Peter Sleegers, "Why the more educated are less inclined to keep ethnic distance: An empirical test of four explanations", *Ethnic And Racial Studies*, 2006, 29(5), p. 959.

12) As cited in Bo Ekehammar, Ingrid Nilsson, Jim Sidanius, "Education and Ideology: Basic Aspects of Education Related to Adolescents' Sociopolitical Attitudes", *Political Psychology*, 1987, Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 395–410.

13) Ibid, 1987.

of threats various out-groups may perceivably pose to the subsamples of students. 3) To explore whether the recorded differences in distances are related to students' sex, the field of their study and the education level of their parents.

2. METHOD

The analysis is conducted on data collected by the research of value orientations of students within the project *Tradition, modernization and national identities in Serbia and in Balkans, in the process of European integration*, which carried on the Centre for sociological research, Faculty of Philosophy, Niš, in cooperation with Universities of Veliko Trnovo and Bitola. Analysis is conducted on three subsamples of Serbian (N=818), Macedonian (N=804) and Bulgarian students (N=586).

Ethnic distance is measured by somewhat modified *Social Distance Scale* (SDS) developed and used by Emory Bogardus in a series of surveys between 1926 and 1966. In addition to Bogardus' research of racial relations in the USA, the scale (in various forms and modifications) was used worldwide during the last century.[14] In the version used in this paper interviewees were asked: "What kind of relationship would you accepted toward a member of listed nations, minorities or ethnic groups?" and the following answers were offered:

1. To live in my country	5. To work as a professor/teaching assistant at my school
2. To live in my town	
3. To live in my neighborhood	6. To be my friend
4. To study in the same school	7. To date/marry her/him

For each of the 12 nations/ethnic groups (for the list of ethnic groups see Tables 1–3), all seven answers were offered and

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14) In only five years (1990–1995) *Sociological abstracts* registered over 300 studies of social distance (Philip J. Ethington, "The Intellectual Construction of "Social Distance": Toward a Recovery of Georg Simmel's Social Geometry", *Cybergeo: European Journal of Geography* [Online], Epistemology, History, Teaching, document 30, Online since 16 September 1997, 16/12/2018).

interviewees choose 'accept' or 'not accept' for each answer. This procedure is standard for social distance measurement. The scale has seven scores (eight, if neither of the relationship was accepted) and the relationships are ordered from the most distant (To live in my country) to the most intimate (To date/marry her/him).[15]

Two dominant approaches to the way in which a score on the SDS is calculated are (1) treating the closest relation accepted as a measure of social distance, and (2) determining score on a scale by number of accepted or denied relationships. In our analyses the scores obtained by the number of denied relationships are used (ranging from 0 – no relationship refused to 7 no relationship accepted).[16] After determining a distance toward each nation/ethnic group for each subject, *the Coefficient of Ethnic Distance* (QED) was calculated as a mean score of distances toward all listed ethnic groups. Variables analyzed in this study are: *QED*, as a measure of general inclination towards "others" of individual subjects and *distance towards specific ethnic group* as an indicator of more complex relations between nations/ethnic groups. These variables were subsequently related to other students' characteristics such as *sex*, the *field of study* and *parents' education*.

3. RESULTS

Detailed presentation of all measured distances for the three groups of students is given in Tables 1–3.

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15) The original scale is constructed under the assumption that acceptance of any relationship entails acceptance of all more distant relationships as well.

16) Advantage of this approach is that it does not depend on ordinality of scale's items. But it cannot be computed unless all seven answers are available, it demands more calculation than the previous approach and it is less restrictive to introduction of various items and alternative wording what may compromise both validity and reliability of the scale.

Table 1: Serbian students: Mean distance measured by the number of refused relationships
(min=0; max = 7)

Ethnic group	Mean distance	SD	Mod	% mod	% acceptance
Albanians	4,42	2,87	7	45,5	36,0
Croats	3,29	3,02	0* 7	32,8 31,1	51,8
Muslims	3,02	2,90	0* 7	29,7 26.7	54,5
Roma	2,95	2,80	0* 7	25,7 24,7	55,7
Romanians	2,25	2,68	0	41,3	66,0
Bulgarians	2,23	2,62	0	38,9	66,9
Hungarians	2,21	2,65	0	41.5	67,2
Slovenes	1,55	2,35	0	55,1	76,0
Montenegrins	1,45	2,28	0	56,9	77,9
Macedonians	1,11	1,99	0	62,5	82,6
Greeks	0,81	1,68	0	70,0	86,9
Serbs	0,09	0,53	0	95,4	97,3

*Test of equality of proportions for two most frequent distances for bimodal categories:
Croats p= 0,483; Muslims p= 0,201; Roma p= 0,660

The closest to Serbian students are Greeks, whereas the most distant are Albanians. Following Albanians, the largest average distance is recorded from Croats, Muslims and Roma people. Although large relative to the average distance from all listed ethnic groups, the distance from Roma people recorded for Serbian students is the least when compared with Macedonian and Bulgarian students. Following the Greeks, the smallest distance is recorded from Macedonians, Montenegrins, and Slovenes. The middle average distance recorded is from Romanians, Bulgarians and Hungarians. The most frequent distance from the nations with small and middle average distances, is 0 – no relation refused. The most frequent distance from Albanians, is 7 – no relation accepted

(almost half of the students select this distance). Despite the relatively high average distances, a peculiarity of the distributions of distances from Croats, Muslims and Roma people is that they are actually bimodal – there are two equally most frequent distances, expressing the fact that a majority of students selected either all or none of the offered relations with the members of these nations, and that the number of students with the two extreme distances is equal (no significant difference in respective proportions of students was found).

Table 2: Macedonian students: Mean distance measured by the number of refused relationships (min=0; max = 7)

Ethnic group					
	Mean distance	SD	Mod	% mod	% acceptance
Greeks	4,82	2,83	7	54,4	31,4
Albanians	3,98	2,89	7	37,2	43,5
Roma	3,85	2,86	7	35,3	44,8
Muslims	3,63	2,92	7	34,1	48,0
Bulgarians	3,45	2,92	7	30,4	50,7
Romanians	3,28	2,95	7^* 0^*	30,5 29,4	52,5
Hungarians	2,95	2,94	0	34,0	56,7
Slovenes	2,47	2,77	0	39,4	62,9
Montenegrins	2,34	2,76	0	42,9	65,2
Croats	2,10	2,67	0	46,4	68,3
Serbs	1,73	2,55	0	54,5	73,0
Macedonians	0,55	1,63	0	84,9	89,7

*Test of equality of proportions for two most frequent distances for bimodal categories: Romanians p= 0.647

For Macedonian students, Serbs are the closest, whereas Greeks are the most remote ethnic group. Following the Greeks, the next largest average distance is recorded from Albanians, Roma people and Muslims. Following the Serbs, the next smallest distance is recorded from Croats, Montenegrins, and Slovenes. The middle average distance recorded is from Bulgarians, Romanians, and Hungarians. By difference from Serbian students, for Macedonian students, 0 distance is the most frequently recorded only from the nations with small average distances, 7 step distance is the most frequently recorded from all other nations. Bimodal distribution is registered in the case of Romanians – a majority of students equally selected either all or none of the offered relations with the members of this nation.

Related to particular ethnic groups, the major difference between Serbian and Macedonian students is the distance from Croats and Greeks. Croats are second distant ethnic group to Serbian students, but second closest to Macedonian students. Greeks are the closest ethnic group to Serbian students, but the most distant to Macedonian students. More generally speaking, distances of Macedonian students from all other ethnic groups are on average 1 point larger than for the Serbian students, so that the largest distances from ethnic groups recorded among Serbian students are as large (or small) as the middle distances recorded among Macedonian students.

Table 3: Bulgarian students: Mean distance measured by the number of refused relationships
(min=0; max = 7)

Ethnic group	Mean distance	STD	Mod	% mod	% acceptance
Roma	4,49	2,75	7	42,3	29,9
Turks	3,28	2,80	7* 0	25,4 23,1	44,7
Pomaks	3,11	2,77	0* 7	24,2 23,8	46,5
Vlachs	3,09	2,78	0* 7	25,6 23,7	46,6
Jews	2,77	2,16	0	29,1	49,9
Romanians	2,30	2,57	0	34,5	55,4
Albanians	2,28	2,50	0	31,4	56,9
Macedonians	2,13	2,54	0	40,9	58,1
Greeks	1,99	2,41	0	39,7	59,5
Serbs	1,76	2,29	0	42,1	62,2
Russians	1,45	2,14	0	50,6	66,8
Bulgarians	0,16	0,83	0	93,2	86,4

*Test of equality of proportions for two most frequent distances for bimodal categories:
Pomaks p=0,88076; Turks p=0,40654; Vlachs p=0,4965

In the research which provided the data for our analysis, Bulgarian students selected the relationships from a slightly different list of nations. Ethnic groups from former Yugoslav republics were replaced with ethnic groups living in Bulgaria (Pomaks, Vlachs and Jews), as well as with a "traditional enemy" – Turks, and "traditional ally" and the "liberator" – Russians.[17] The remaining seven ethnic groups in the list are the same as in the subsample of Serbian and Macedonian students.

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17) These groups were considered more relevant for a study of ethnic distance of Bulgarian students.

For Bulgarian students the closest are Russians, while the most remote are the Roma people. The next largest distance is from Turks, Pomaks and Vlachs. On the other side of the distance, following the Russians, the next smallest distance is recorded from Serbs, Greeks, and Macedonians. The middle average distance recorded is from Jews, Romanians, and Albanians. Bulgarian students have the least distance from Albanians compared to Serbian and Macedonian students. Similarly to the Serbian students, among Bulgarian students, 0 distance is the most frequently recorded for the nations with small and middle average distances. Another similarity with Serbian students is that, despite the relatively high averages, distances from Turks, Pomaks and Vlachs are bimodal – there are two equally most frequent distances. For the most distant group – Roma people, the most frequent distance is 7 – no relation accepted (selected by more than 40% of the students).

Related to particular ethnic groups, the major difference between Bulgarian students, on the one side and Serbian and Macedonian students, on the other, is that for the latter the distance from Albanians is among the largest, whereas for the former it is in the middle range, bordering the groups with smallest distances. Comparing the extent of distances regardless of particular groups, larger and middle distances recorded for Bulgarian students resemble those for Serbian students, whereas the smallest distances are around a half of distance point larger than for the Serbian students (yet sill smaller than for the Macedonian students).

Overall, the least mean distance from all examined nations is recorded for Serbian students (2,3 relations refused on average, 65,6% of all offered relations accepted). The largest overall mean distance from all examined nations is recorded for Macedonian students (3,0 relations refused on average, 54,3% of all offered relations accepted). In respect to each other, Serbs are the closest of all listed nations to Macedonian students, and second close to Bulgarian students. Macedonians are second close to Serbian students, and below average distance from all listed nations for Bulgarian students. Bulgarians are below average distance for all listed nations for Serbian students, but further than the average distance from all listed nations for Macedonian students.[18]

18) Bulgaria is a neighboring state involving symbolic conflict over national identity exacerbated with similarity of language.

The following analysis attempts to profile the students in respect to their general inclination towards other ethnic groups, and establish whether this inclination differs with students' sex, field of study and the parents' education. The general inclination towards "others" is measured by the Coefficient of Ethnic Distance (QED) which is calculated as the average distance from all listed ethnic groups for each student. Based on this coefficient we differentiate five profiles of students. The values of QED for each profile and the share of students classified in different profiles for the three subsamples is presented in Table 4. On the one extreme, we labeled as "xenophiles" the group of students who on average reject fewer than one relation with members of other nations. On the other extreme, we labeled as "xenophobes" the group of students who on average reject 5 and more relations with members of other nations. In between the two extremes, we differentiate "moderate xenophiles", the group of students with the average distance to other nations, and "moderate xenophobes".

Table 4: Distribution of students in respect to general inclination towards "others"

QED range	Profile	Serbian students, %	Bulgarian students, %	Macedonian students, %
0,0-0,9	Xenophiles	31,3	26,9	22,6
1,0-1,9	Moderate xenophiles	17,7	18,1	13,5
2,0-3,0	Average distance	15,1	14,8	14,2
3,1-4,9	Moderate xenophobes	21,1	23,6	23,6
5,0-7,0	Xenophobes	14,8	16,6	25,9
0,0-7.0	All students	100,0	100,0	100,0

"Xenophiles" and "Moderate xenophiles" together make roughly half of all Serbian students, 45% of all Bulgarian students, and 36,1% of all Macedonian students. "Xenophobes" and "Moderate xenophobes" together make 35,9% of all Serbian students, 40,2% of all Bulgarian students, and almost a half of all Macedonian students. To sum up, Serbian students seem to be the most acceptable, and Macedonian students the least acceptable of "others", among studied subsamples of students.

Our attempt to account for the observed differences by reference to students' sex, field of study, and parents' education came up with the following results. An equal share of male and female students belong to different profiles (with exception of Macedonian students, where male students are somewhat more "xenophobic" than female). We have also found that parents' education does not differentiate students belonging to different profiles. Statistically significant differences in respect to students' inclination towards other ethnic groups is found for the field of study, for all three subsamples of students. Results of this analysis are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: General inclination towards "others" by field of study
Grey shadow marks faculties common two the three subsamples.
Bold marks above average shares, italic marks bellow average shares of students.

	Xenophiles			Average distance			Xenophobes		
	S	B	M	S	B	M	S	B	M
Philosophy/ Pedagogy	**62,4**	**53,6**	**40,2**	15,2	*12,3*	*12,0*	*22,4*	*34,1*	47,8
Technical	**68,4**	*33,3*	*28,6*	**18,4**	*8,3*	*12,6*	*13,1*	**58,3**	58,8
Low/ Public administration	*46,4*	46,4	**41,8**	*13,0*	**16,7**	**17,1**	**40,6**	*37,2*	*41,1*
Economics	*47,0*	*36,9*	**39,7**	**19,3**	**17,0**	14,5	*33,7*	**46,1**	*45,8*
Construction Architecture	*44,4*			**18,3**			**37,3**		
Math and science	*41,8*			*10,3*			**47,9**		
Medicine/ Veterinary			35,0			14,2			50,8
Totals	48,9	45,1	36,1	15,2	14,6	14,1	35,9	40,4	49,7

For the purpose of presentation five profile categories are collapsed to three. Chi-Square is calculated for tables with five profile categories times the number of study programs for each subsample.

Serbia (S): χ^2=59,89 df=20 p=0,000
Bulgaria (B): χ^2=34,07 df=12 p=0,001
Macedonia (M): χ^2=29,94 df=16 p=0,018

The most unequivocal result of this analysis is that in the all three subsamples students enrolled in programs studded at faculties of philosophy fall into the category of "xenophiles" more frequently than the subsamples' averages. Distributions of students enrolled in other study programs among different profiles, although significantly different, do not show a trend which would hold for all three subsamples. For example, students of Electronic faculty in the Serbian subsample are overly "xenophiles", whereas students of Technical faculties in the Macedonian and Bulgarian subsamples are overly "xenophobic". Fewer "xenophiles" and more "xenophobes" than is on average in the Serbian subsample is recorded for students of Math and Sciences, and to a lesser degree for students of Constructive Engineering and Architecture. Macedonian students of Law, Public administration, and Economics are overly "xenophiles", in sharp contrast with the students of Technical faculty. Serbian students of Law are overly "xenophobes" (relative to the Serbian subsample averages), while Bulgarian students of Law fall in the category with average distance from other ethnic groups. Bulgarian students of Economics are overly "xenophobes", while Serbian Economics students' more than on average fall in the category with average distance from other ethnic groups.

The last piece of analysis reported in this paper addresses possible correlates to the extent of students' distances from particular ethnic groups, specifically those for which we recorded the largest distances, and those with bimodal distribution of distances. It is of interest what might differentiate students with 0 and 7 steps distance from the same ethnic group. This has been attempted to establish with reference to students' sex, field of study and parents' education. The presented results refer to the subsample of Serbian students exclusively.

Table 6: Extreme distances by sex and parents education; Serbian students

	Distance	Sex		Father's education		Mother's education		Total
		Male	Female	High school	University	High school	University	
Albanians	0	26,0	27,3	20,9	34,0	23,8	32,4	≈26,7
	7	74,0	72,7	79,1	66,0	76,2	67,6	≈73,3
Croats	0	50,7	51,9	46,0	57,6	48,8	56,0	≈51,4
	7	49,3	48,1	54,0	42,4	51,2	44,0	≈48,6
Bosnian Muslims	0	53,1	52,2	48,2	58,2	50,7	57,3	≈52,6
	7	46,9	47,8	51,8	41,8	49,3	42,7	≈47,4
Roma people	0	50,5	51,2	48,6	53,7	49,8	52,7	50,9
	7	49,5	48,8	51,4	46,3	50,2	47,3	49,1

Statistical information

	Sex			Father's education			Mother's education		
Albanians	χ^2=0,10	df=1	p=0,756	χ^2=10,26	df=1	p=0,001	χ^2=4,22	df=1	p=0,040
Croats	χ^2=0,08	df=1	p=0,775	χ^2=6,63	df=1	p=0,010	χ^2=2,41	df=1	p=0,120
Bosn. Muslims	χ^2=0,39	df=1	p=0,844	χ^2=4,47	df=1	p=0,034	χ^2=1,83	df=1	p=0,176
Roma people	χ^2=0,02	df=1	p=0,895	χ^2=0,99	df=1	p=0,319	χ^2=0,31	df=1	p=0,579

Results presented in Table 6 suggest that, in the Serbian subsample, equal share of male and female students have both extremely small and extremely large distances from Albanians, Croats, Bosnian Muslims and Roma people. Since, in the Serbian subsample, similar result is obtained in respect to general inclination towards "others", we may conclude that among Serbian students sex does not matter for the extent of their ethnic distance. Father's education does have an effect in case of distances from Albanians, Croats and Bosnian Muslims and mother's education influences to some extent the distance from Albanians. There are more parents with university level education among students with 0 distance from listed ethnic groups, and fewer parents with university level education among students with 7 steps distance. Neither father's nor mother's education matter for the recorded distance from Roma people.

In Table 7 we present the results of analysis of association between extreme ethnic distances (from Albanians, Croats, Bosnian Muslims and Roma people) and the field of study of Serbian students. As in the case of general inclination towards "others", the field of study significantly differentiates students with extreme distances from all listed ethnic groups analyzed separately.

Table 7: Extreme distances by field of study
Bold marks above average shares, italic marks bellow average shares of students.

Ethnic group		Phi-loso-phy	Elec-tronics	Con-struc-tion Archi-tecture	Eco-nom-ics	Math and sci-ence	Law	Total
Alba-nians	0	**46,8**	**37,5**	*21,8*	*24,3*	*19,7*	*23,1*	26,7
	7	*53,2*	*62,5*	**78,2**	**75,7**	**80,3**	**76,9**	73,3
Croats	0	**71,3**	**83,3**	*47,6*	*44,3*	*45,0*	40,7	51,3
	7	*28,7*	*16,7*	**52,4**	**55,7**	**55,0**	**59,3**	48,7
Bosnian Mus-lims	0	**75,3**	**77,3**	*48,8*	*49,4*	*43.0*	*42,3*	52,5
	7	24,7	22,7	**51,2**	**50,6**	**57,0**	**57,7**	47,5
Roma people	0	**73,7**	**64,7**	**52,1**	*48,0*	*38,2*	*41,8*	50,7
	7	*26,3*	*35,3*	*47,9*	**52,0**	**61,8**	**58,2**	49,3

Statistical information

Albanians	χ^2=22,89	df=5	p=0,000
Croats	χ^2=32,97	df=5	p=0,000
Bosnian Muslims	χ^2=30,23	df=5	p=0,000
Roma people	χ^2=26,14	df=5	p=0,000

There are more students enrolled in Philosophy and Electronics among students with 0 distance from listed ethnic groups, than on average, and fewer students enrolled in Philosophy and Electronics among students with 7 steps distance, than on average. In the case of ethnic distance from Roma people, the share of students enrolled in Construction/Architecture among students with 0 distance is also larger than on average and smaller than on average among students with 7 steps distance.

4. SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. The perceived threat and the extent of distance

The largest average distance for Serbian students is recorded towards Albanians, Croats, Bosnian Muslims and Roma people. From the point of view of the group threat theory, Serbian students may perceive Albanians as a multiple threat.[19] On the one hand, they may see them as "intruders" into the "holy Serbian land", and as a threat to national homogeneity. On the other hand, there is a history of realistic conflict between Serbs and Albanians following the liberation from Ottoman empire, and in the most recent history the conflict related to the Albanian claims for independent Kosovo. Distrust of the subsample of Serbian students towards Croats may be a result of both realistic and symbolic conflicts lasting since the constitution of common states.[20] Relationships are particularly poisoned following the turbulent dissolution of SFRJ and expulsion of Serbs from Croatia during military operations "Oluja" and "Bljesak". A symbolic conflict is based on language, religion and culture in general. Bosnian Muslims have been traditionally reproached for converting into Islam and thus renouncing their "original ethnic and religious affiliation". This symbolic threat has transformed into a realistic conflict during the turbulent dissolution of SFRJ. In terms of the group threat theory, Roma ethnic group falls into a particular kind of a symbolic threat which has been referred to as *general social order of the group*. In that order, Roma

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19) This account of the recorded distances should be taken with caution, since it is author's interpretation of the perceived threat the listed ethnic groups my pose to the studied subpopulation of students (in terms of the group threat theory).

20) Presumably, for Serbs, Yugoslavia was a way of uniting all Serbs in one state, whereas for Croats it was a frame for a constitution of an independent state.

are perceived as "inferior", so that the distance does not express a reaction to a threat, rather an inclination to avoid contact with a generally stigmatized group.[21]

The closest to Serbian students are Greeks, Macedonians, Montenegrins, and Slovenes. In our tentative interpretation, small distance towards Montenegrins and Macedonians is recorded because Serbs do not really perceive them as "others" in many symbolic terms. Slovenes, on the other hand, although symbolically and realistically different (language, culture, the extent of economic development), are spatially remote enough not to pose a threat. In addition, the history of peaceful coexistence and mutual respect in former Yugoslav state contributed to a degree of closeness. Greeks are traditional Serbian friends (on the same side in the big wars), sharing Orthodox religious affiliation. There are no unresolved issues – no realistic threats. Intense contacts (Serbs spending summer holidays in Greece and in one period many Greeks studying in Serbia) contributed to continuous friendship.

The largest average distance for Macedonian students is toward Greeks, Albanians, Roma and Muslims. The main issue with other (surrounding) ethnic groups for Macedonians is the question of ethnic/national identity. In the most recent history the groups perceived as endangering this identity are Greeks (the symbolic conflicts related to the state name) and Albanians (Albanians make a large share of Macedonian state population, and may be perceived as a threat to national homogenization). Similarly to the Serbian subsample, Roma may be perceived as a generally stigmatized group with whose members all unnecessary contacts should be avoided. The closest to Macedonian students are Serbs, Croats, Montenegrins, and Slovenes. In the more recent history Serbs are perceived as a major allay and friend (supporting Macedonian claim to identity and name). For Macedonian students (as for the Serbian) Slovenes are spatially remote enough not to pose a threat and the history of mutual respect may have contributed to a recorded degree of closeness. The difference between Serbian and Macedonian students in their distances towards Croats and Greeks

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21) Dragan, Todorović, *Društvena udaljenost od Roma – etničko-religijski okvir*, Filozofski fakultet, Univerziteta u Nišu, Niš; STYLOS, Novi Sad, 2007; Jasmina Petrović, „Između tradicionalnog nasleđa i težnje ka modernim obrascima života: brak, porodica i porodični odnosi Roma u Srbiji", u: *Društveni i kulturni potencijali Roma u Srbiji* (priredila: Valentina Sokolovska), Filozofski fakultet u Novom Sadu, Odsek za sociologiju, Centar za sociološka istraživanja, Novi Sad, 2014, pp. 29–53.

may be interpreted, from the group threat theory, as an expression of the different extent to which Croats and Greeks are perceived as threats to Serbian and Macedonian interests.

The largest average distance for Bulgarian students is from Roma, Turks, Pomaks and Vlachs may be interpreted as a threat these ethnic minorities perceivable pose by resisting Bulgarian national assimilation policy in the public sphere (imposing the language, church and national identity).[22] The closest to Bulgarian students are Russians, Serbs. Greeks and Macedonians. Without a particular realistic conflict in the most recent history, Bulgarian students feel particularly close to Slavic and Orthodox ethnic out-groups. In addition, Russians are perceived as traditional friends and liberators in the big wars, whereas Greeks are perceived as Bulgarians' new alleys in confronting "the spread of Muslim fundamentalism" in Europe.[23]

4.2. The distribution of distances and relative extent of the distances (the three subsamples compared)

The least overall mean distance from all examined nations is recorded for Serbian students whereas the largest overall mean distance from all examined nations is recorded for Macedonian students. Among Serbian and Bulgarian students, the largest distance of 7 is the most frequent for only one ethnic group (Albanians and Roma, respectively). The smallest distance of 0 is most frequently recorded for seven out of eleven ethnic groups. Among Macedonian students the largest distance of 7 is the most frequent for as many as 5 ethnic groups. 0 distance is the most frequently recorded for 5 ethnic groups as well.

The distribution of distances among students in all three subsamples (as summarized above) contradicts the assumption of the original Bogardus' scale of distance, according to which acceptance of any relationship entails acceptance of all more distant relationships. Our analysis came up with a result that an ethnic group is either accepted in all offered relations or entirely reject-

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22) Gerald W. Creed, "The Bases of Bulgaria's Ethnic Policies", *The Anthropology of East Europe Review*, Vol. 9, No 2, 1990.

23) Ibid; Paul Anastasi, "Greece and Bulgaria Plan Anti-Turkey Strategies", *New York Times*, February 7, 1990; p. A9.

ed. This suggests a rather affectionate, en bloc, students' response to out-groups, and inability to graduate relationships of presumably different intimacy. The most exclusionary, in this respect, are Macedonian students. Even more interesting is the "all or nothing" divide within the same subsample, in the attitudes towards the same ethnic groups (Croats, Muslims and Roma in the Serbian sample, and Turks, Pomaks and Vlachs in the Bulgarian sample). This suggests a very serious division of Serbian and Bulgarian students among themselves, since they cannot unite around a "common enemy".[24] We can conclude that Macedonian students are the most exclusionary in respect to out-groups, but the most united among themselves in their out-groups' attitudes.

4.3. Correlates of the extent of distances within each subsample of students

The only significant association of *the students' general inclination towards "others"* is with *their field of study*. This association is found in all three subsamples, but the pattern of association is not unequivocal for the three subsamples. Common to all three subsamples is only that students enrolled in programs studied at Faculties of Philosophy belong, above average, to the categories of "xenophiles" and below average to the categories of "xenophobes". Common to Macedonian and Bulgarian subsamples is that the Technical Faculty students are more numerous than on average among the "xenophobes". These findings corroborate the results of the previous research showing higher level of politico-economic and social liberalism among the social sciences' students and the lower level among the technical sciences' students. In terms of the theoretical frameworks which we presented at the beginning, social science education reduces prejudice and social conservatism by providing knowledge about minorities and out-groups, and by teaching students how to detect and understand prejudices.

The analysis of possible correlates of the extreme distances of Serbian students towards the most distant ethnic groups found that, in addition to the field of study, parents' (father's) education differs between the students with the smallest and the largest dis-

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24) Which, in turn, according to the Coser's theory of social conflict, contributes to a group homogenization.

tances. In accordance with theoretical framework of the analysis, we may presume that more educated parents feel less threatened by the members of other ethnic groups, and consequently have lower ethnic distance, which they subsequently pass to their children. Furthermore, less authoritarian style of children's upbringing of more educated parents reduces children's 'unconditional' faith in authorities, prejudices and stereotypes and subsequently lessens ethnic distance.

CONCLUSION

On the background of the predominant type of threat to which the students have perceivably been exposed, we may advance an argument that different types of perceived threats imply different extent of distances from respective out-groups. Consequently, the differences in average distances recorded for the three samples of students result from different types of threats they have experienced from the out-groups. If our application of the group threat theory is adequate, the most distant out-groups for Serbian students are the ones with which there is experience of real conflicts (in some cases mixed with symbolic conflicts). The most distant "others" for Macedonian students are the ones perceivably posing multiple threats to national identity. The most distant "others" for Bulgarian students are in fact the in-groups resisting national assimilation policy. Threats to identity seem to be perceived as the strongest, since they result in relatively larger ethnic distances, and higher "xenophobia" (as in the Macedonian subsample), than threats to national homogenization policies from within (Bulgarian subsample), and the real conflicts with out-groups, in the recent past (the Serbian subsample).

While the extent of largest distances towards out-groups differs among the students' subsamples, based on the perceived threats, the smallest distances seem to be related to very similar circumstances. In the all three subsamples the ethnic distance is small if an out-group is perceived as being 1) similar in some respect, 2) traditional friend or allay, 3) if there is a good experience of close contacts, or a kind of exchange, and 4) if there are no unresolved issues or realistic conflicts.

Related to the factors which mediate between perceived threat and anti-out-group attitude, liberal attitudes, presumably associated with studding programs at Faculties of Philosophy, reduce average ethnic distance from "others", regardless of the type of perceived threat (since this was recorded for all three subsamples of students). University level education of parents (fathers') reduces ethnic distance from the out-groups with which there is an experience of real conflict (as in the of Serbian subsample), but not from the out-groups which perceivable pose a threat to national identity (experienced by Macedonian students) or resist national assimilation policy (a type of threat perceived by Bulgarian students).

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Горана Ђорић, Биљана Продовић Милојковић

ДИСТАНЦА СРПСКИХ, МАКЕДОНСКИХ И БУГАРСКИХ СТУДЕНАТА ПРЕМА СУСЕДНИМ НАРОДИМА

Резиме

У раду се установљава степен дистанце студентске популације у Србији, Македонији и Бугарској према истим (суседним) етничким групама. Анализа је изведена на подацима из емпиријског истраживања у оквиру пројекта „Традиција, модернизација и национални идентитет у Србији и на Балкану у процесу европских интеграција”, у реализацији Центра за социолошка истраживања Филозофског факултета у Нишу. Измерена дистанца указује на конфликтни потенцијал посматране студентске популације. Осим просечне дистанце анализира се и степен хомогености студентске популације у односу на измерену дистанцу. Дистанца се мери Богардусовом скалом од седам (не)прихватљивих релација са припадницима суседних народа.

Међу српским студентима највећа дистанца је измерена према Албанцима, Хрватима, Муслиманима и Ромима. Из перспективе *теорије групне претње* са прва три народа српски студенти имају искуство реалног конфликта (комбинованог са симболичком претњом националном идентитету). Међу македонским студентима највећа дистанца је измерена према Грцима, Албанцима, Ромима и Муслиманима. Основни извор претње коју перципирају македонски студенти је (симболичко) угрожавање националног идентитета. Међу бугарским студентима највећа дистанца је измерена према Ромима, Турцима, Помацима и Власима. Сугерисали смо, на трагу анализа бугарске националне политике, да је (осим према Ромима) извор претње коју перципирају бугарски студенти отпор ових етничких група бугарској националној асимилационој политици. Велику дистанцу према Ромима смо, у терминима *теорије групне претње* окарактерисали као резултат *генералног социјалног позиционирања групе*, у коме се Роми симболички налазе на најнижим позицијама, тако да

дистанца не изражава претњу већ инклинацију да се избегава сваки контакт са генерално стигматизованом групом.

Измерене дистанце према „најудаљенијим" етничким групама за три студентска подузорка се разликују с обзиром на врсту доживљене претње од највеће – када је претња доживљена као угрожавање националног идентитета до релативно најмање – када је претња реални конфликт. Најмање дистанце су у сва три подузорка измерене у сличним околностима – када је етничка група доживљена као слична, као традиционални пријатељ и савезник, ако је искуство блиских контаката повољно и ако нема неразрешених проблема или реалних конфликата.

Најмање просечне дистанце према свим етничким групама у анализи су измерене међу српским, а највеће међу македонским студентима. Притом је најучесталија дистанца од 7 степени (неприхватање ниједног односа) за српске и бугарске студенте регистрована само према једној етничкој групи, а најучесталија дистанца од 0 степени (прихватање свих односа) према седам од једанаест етничких група. Међу македонским студентима најучесталија дистанца од 7 степени је регистрована према чак пет етничких група, као и најучесталија дистанца од 0 степени.

У односу на просечно измерену дистанцу према свим групама заједно, статистички значајна асоција је пронађена само са врстом студијског програма. У сва три подузорка студенти Филозофских факултета су више него у просеку заступљени у категорији „ксенофила", а мање него у просеку у категорији „ксенофоба". Коначно, анализа екстремних дистанци српских студената (0 и 7) према појединим етничким групама пронашла је асоцијацију величине дистанце и са образовањем родитеља, тако да су најмање дистанце више него у просеку, а највеће дистанце мање него у просеку заступљене међу студентима чији родитељи имају високо образовање.

Кључне речи: етничка дистанца, студенти, теорија групне претње, реални конфликт, симболичка претња