

ETHNIC DISTANCE AND ETHNIC STEREOTYPES OF THE YOUNG IN BOUNDARY MUNICIPALITIES IN SOUTH SERBIA

Anđelina Marić¹

¹PhD student, Faculty of Geography, University of Belgrade

Abstract: As a multiethnic region in South Serbia, with majority of Albanian population, the municipalities of Preševo and Bujanovac have been the scene of frequent ethnical conflicts and intolerance. Besides Serbs and Albanians, there lives a large number of Roma people. Since Roma are the people without their own country, they are specific for their merging into autochthonous population with partially preserved cultural heritage. Unlike Roma, Albanians in South Serbia want to annex the territory where they live, claiming on their historical right. This resulted in intolerance and tensions between Serbs and Albanians, which have been constant for more than a century. Therefore, the primary aim of the paper is to present the mutual ethnic distance and ethnic stereotypes between the young population of Serbian, Albanian and Roma nationalities in the boundary municipalities in South Serbia, Vranje, Bujanovac and Preševo. The presented data are the result of the Project „Maintaining Peace and Inclusive Local Development” financed by P. BILD Joint UN Program in South Serbia. The Project included three bordering municipalities in South Serbia- Vranje, Bujanovac and Preševo, while the research was carried out in 2015.

Key words: South Serbs, ethnic relationships, stereotypes

1. Introduction

Even today, Serbia as a multiethnic and multi confessional community faces the problems of establishing the relationships based on non-discrimination in all domains, including ethnic identity as well. The results of ethnic clashes and still unsolved relationships in Kosovo and Metohija are still potentially negative factors in the establishment of ethnic relations on the basis of equality, confidence and safe coexistence. Religion as one of significant

indicators of ethnicity, as well as relationships of religious communities on the Balkans is also a stumbling block in Serbia as a multi religious community.

The conflicts in the Balkans, which broke out in the previous years and led to far-reaching consequences, had basic characteristics of ethnic and religious conflicts. The tensions, which still exist in Serbia, are not immune to this type of antagonism yet. In addition to poverty and unbalanced development in certain regions, the mentioned kind of problems still burdens social reality in Serbia. The “we-they” distinction is partly based on ethnic stereotypes which are an additional identification marker, so that a „different one” is often recognized and labeled as an enemy. The latest research on stereotypes shows the continuity of both positive and negative stereotypes of Serbs as the most numerous people in comparison to other minorities (Gavrilović et al., 2011).

According to the last census data on population, households and flats in 2011, 7 186 862 people live in the Republic of Serbia without Kosovo and Metohija. Out of the total population, 5 988 150 (83.32%) are Serbs, while national minorities and ethnic groups include 1 198 712 people (16.68%), thus the state is relatively homogenous. However, in the municipalities of Preševo and Bujanovac the Albanians boycotted census, so the number of Albanian population and consequently the total percentage of national minorities in Serbia is rather higher than given above. Their distribution is naturally not constant on the whole territory. Vojvodina is specifically composed (ethnically the most diverse) in comparison to mostly homogenous central Serbia. Sandžak is predominantly inhabited by Bosniaks, while the bordering regions are ethnically heterogeneous, therefore generalizations may offer a wrong picture. In Serbia, Hungarians are the most numerous (253 899 i.e. 3.53%), Bosniaks (145 278 i.e. 2.02%, Roma people (147 604 i.e. 2.05%) and Yugoslavs (23 303).

In some cities in Serbia, national minorities are ethnic majority at local level (Albanians in Bujanovac and Preševo, Bulgarians in Bosilegrad and Dimitrovgrad).

The municipalities of Vranje, Bujanovac and Preševo, which are the subject matter of this paper, are located in Pčinja District of Southern Serbia, with the area of 3 520 km². The seat of District is the City of Vranje; in addition to Vranje, Bujanovac and Preševo, the District includes four more municipalities: Bosilegrad, Trgovište, Surdulica and Vladičin Han. To the west is the border with Autonomous Province Kosovo, to the south is state border

with the Republic of Macedonia, while the border with the Republic of Bulgaria is on the east. Pčinja District has very favourable geographic and traffic position, because it is crossed by the internationally significant corridor E-75, which connects central Europe with the Aegean Sea, i.e. the corridor Budapest – Belgrade – Skopje- Athens. The municipalities mentioned above are on the corridor, while Preševo is also at Macedonian border crossing.

2. Basic demographic characteristics of the region

As a bordering region, Pčinja District is ethnically very heterogeneous. According to the census data on population, households and flats in 2011, Pčinja District had 159 081 people, including 96 085 (60.4%) Serbs, 42 156 (26.5%) Albanians, 9 068 (5.7%) Roma and 6 999 (4.4%) Bulgarians. However, Albanian community seems to be larger; the boycott of census by Albanians in Preševo and Bujanovac resulted in a reduced number of census units.

Roma are the population without their own country; they are characterized by integration with the representatives of major population and partial preservation of own identity (language, customs). Since, in addition to Serbs, about 5% of Roma and 0.3% of Albanians live in Vranje, a lower distance between Roma people and Serbs and less negative characterization is presumed, while higher towards Albanians. The population of Preševo consists of 88% of Albanians, 9% of Serbs and 2.4% of Roma people, hence more positive perception and less distance towards Albanians than towards Serbs is expected. The percentage ratio of the three communities is the most proportional in Bujanovac; therefore the most balanced distance between Roma and other two people is expected.

The relationships between Serbs and Albanians have been one of the crucial social issues on the Balkans for more than a century. Serbs and Albanians are two people with very rich history of mutual contacts, close relations and associations together with animosity which goes back to the middle ages. However, the separation which took place during Ottoman period and final break up, followed by the occurrence of nationalism in the twentieth century resulted in their taking opposite sides in recent history.

After the end of NATO intervention on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia) in 1999, the ethnic intolerance increased in the South of Serbia as a region with high percentage of Albanian population. The

intolerance between Serbs and Albanians has been long present, resulting in territorial pretensions, and claim on their historical rights. This led to threats, pressures, poor communication, doubts and antagonistic behavior. Differences in lifestyle, religion, customs and interests were observed, and that resulted in increase of nationalism. Given that in this conflict was not possible for both sides to achieve positive outcome, it prolonged, including new issues thereby multiplying negative interactions. Both Serbian and Albanian side had own aims, similar but incompatible; both sides pretended to the same positions (social and political), each trying to prevent the other side from their realization; both claimed to have been threatened by the other side. Due to their involvement in conflict, both sides believed that the other side is to be blamed for the current situation, both distanced from each other, and the members of „*the other*” ethnic group are still considered less valuable and are negatively described.

Apart from a great number of Albanians and Roma people in Pčinja District, they are not equally distributed, which shows that these three ethnic groups have had various cultural-historical and economic influence, therefore their mutual experience has been different.

There have been many projects aimed to moderate tensions and promote coexistence as a solution, since coexistence includes partnership without restrictions. The whole situation is additionally important considering the fact that all previous investigations of mutual ethnical relationships, stereotypes and distance in Serbia revealed that in comparison to other ethnic groups, Albanians were the most rejected, most negatively described followed by Roma as the top second (Šaćirović et al., 2013).

In addition, this region is extraordinary patriarchal, and the position of women in all three communities (Serbian, Albanian and Roma) is especially difficult and very similar. A woman is mostly concentrated on her home and family, she hardly takes part in any public and political life. The situation is somewhat more favorable in Vranje as a city, while it is drastically different in Bujanovac and Preševo.

3. Defining basic concepts

Ethnic distance is a measure of closeness or distance of an individual in a relation to certain ethnic group. The greater the distance is, the stronger are its effects on the behavior in the community, i.e. impossibility of social

communication and participation in mutual projects aimed at improvement of widespread life conditions. The concept of ethnic or social distance was first used by R. Park, sociologist, but today the notion is mostly connected with E. Bogardus who created a specific scale for measurement of this phenomenon. For Bogardus, social distance is a degree of understanding and psychological closeness (i.e. distance) between diverse groups or members of those groups. Social distance is in fact tested as willingness to participate in social contacts of varying degrees of closeness. For testing, it should be defined through characteristic social relationships which can represent various degrees of closeness or distance.

The concept of ethnic stereotypes was scientifically introduced by Walter Lippmann in 1922. In stereotypes he saw a kind of notion or attitudes which allowed an individual to adapt and to manage more easily in the complex world. Unlike Lippmann and his followers, another attitude has been created in psychological literature, by which stereotypes are the irrational presentation of existing prejudices related to ethnic groups. This attitude was supported by Gordon Allport and Hans Jürgen Eysenck (Milošević, 2004).

4. Research procedure

Two hundred and twenty four young Serbs, Albanians and Roma, 17-18 years of age, from three municipalities in South Serbia – Vranje, Preševo and Bujanovac participated in the research.

According to their places of residence, 84 examinees, Serbs and Roma (37%) were from Vranje; 73 examinees, Serbs, Albanians and Roma (33%) were from Bujanovac, while 67 Albanians, Serbs and Roma (30%) were from Preševo.

The sample consisted of 112 males and 112 females, so it was balanced in gender as follows: 42 males and 42 females from Vranje, 36 males and 37 females from Bujanovac and 34 males and 33 females from Preševo.

The sample was balanced in ethnicity, too. It consisted of 34% Serbs, 31 % Albanians and 35 % Roma people; in Vranje, 42 Serbs and 42 Roma (50%); in Bujanovac 21 Serbs (29%), 29 Albanians (40%) and 23 Roma (31%), while in Preševo 41 Albanians (60%), 13 Serbs (20%) and 13 Roma (20%).

The data were obtained by using modified Bogardus scale¹ which contained seven types of social relations. The relationships were arranged beginning with the least degree of distance (the highest closeness) to the highest degree of distance (the least closeness). They were articulated in the form of statements. In order to identify ethnic distance of the young population of Serbian, Albanian and Roma ethnic groups, the examinees were asked to circle the answer „Yes”, „No” or „Neutral”. They were offered the following relationships related to other ethnic groups: 1. I would marry him / her, 2. I would have him / her as a friend, 3. I would live in the same neighborhood, 4. I would work at the same company as them, 5. I would go out to the same places, 6. I would live in the same country and 7. I would like the member of other ethnic group to lead my country. The scale ranged from 0 points (complete distance, which does not necessarily mean complete acceptance or complete refusal, since the examinees may have answered „Neutral”, which should be borne in mind during the analysis) to 7 points (because 7 relationships were defined), which denoted no distance. The results of total distance were obtained by summing up all points provided by the answers of all examinees to the offered questions.

Likert scale² examined the characteristics ascribed to specific people, national minority or ethnic group, i.e. how Serbs, Albanians and Roma see each other. The following attributes were given: laborious, courageous, clever, sensitive, sincere, honest, cultural, clean, kind, hospitable, peaceful, unselfish, civilized, love other people, proud. By circling one of the five-level scale items (Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree), the examinees showed to which degree the typical representatives of these people, national minorities or ethnic groups showed each of the given attributes.

5. Results of the previous research

The research conducted by D. Pantić showed the increase of ethnic distance in the mid-1980s. According to the results in 1985, D. Pantić concluded that 30% of Albanians accepted Serbs as spouses, while 44% of

¹ More detailed of Bogardus scale in: David Krech, Richard S. Crutchfield, Egerton L. Ballachey (1972): Individual in Society translated by Dobrivoje Uštević] *Pojedinac u društvu*, Belgrade: Zavod za udzbenike i nastavna sredstva.

² More details on Likert scale in the literature marked as Footnote 1.

Serbs would marry Albanians. In 1986, while examining national hetero-stereotypes of the young, the same author obtained the following results: the young Serbs from Serbia mainly negatively evaluated Albanians: do not like other people (54%), stagnant (51%), insidious (34%), closed (33%), rude (20%), hot tempered (16%), lazy (14%), selfish (8%), and courageous (5%). The research on ethnic distance in 1990 and 1993 showed even greater increase of ethnic distance, especially towards Albanians, Moslems and Croats (Mihajlović, 1996: 423; Kuzmanović 1994: 233).

From 1992-2002, D. B. Đorđević and D. Todorović socio-empirically examined ethnic-religious distance between the majority people (Serbs), other national minorities (Albanians and Bulgarians) and Roma people. The obtained data confirmed continually strong intensity, either in the relationship „Serbs-Roma” or „members of other minorities – Roma” (Đorđević, Todorović, 2000: 153-178; 2002: 175-186).

By examining ethnic auto-stereotypes and hetero-stereotypes in Kosovo³, Srećko Mihailović (1998: 411) found that both Serbs and Albanians had high opinion of themselves (hospitable, courageous, peaceful, clean...). Albanians primarily thought that Serbs were insidious, selfish, rude and that they hated other nations. When describing Serbs, Albanians used only 7% positive and even 93% negative characteristics. Serbs thought that Albanians were stagnant, rude, laborious and hated other nations. They ascribed 32% positive and 68% negative characteristics.

6. The results of empirical research in Vranje, Bujanovac and Preševo

The results of ethnic distance will be shown through acceptance of specific relationships separately, i.e. each relationship with other ethnic group will be presented separately.

The results for the first offered relationship: „I would marry him / her“ are presented in the Table 1.

³ This refers to the research of public opinion in Kosovo and Metohija in 1997, realized by the Forum for Ethnic relations from Belgrade in cooperation with the Institute for Philosophy and Sociology in Prishtina ((Dušan Janjić, Đerđ Rapi, Srećko Mihailović et al.).

Table 1 - Acceptance by the criterion „I would marry him / her“

I would marry him / her	Vranje		Bujanovac		Preševo	
	Distance	%	Distance	%	Distance	%
Serbs	52	48	31	38	26	30
Albanians	17	16	33	41	45	52
Roma people	39	36	17	21	15	18
Total	108	100	81	100	86	100

From the Table 1 it can be seen that the examinees accept Serbs to the greatest percentage, even as spouses, then Albanians and Roma people. The Albanians are accepted as spouses in the highest percentage in Preševo (52%), while 48% of Serbs and 36% of Roma are accepted in Vranje, which is in accordance with the proportional ratio of total population.

The greatest refusal was recorded in the readiness of young people from Vranje to marry Albanians (only 16%), while this acceptance of Serbs was logically the highest (48%). In Bujanovac, the greatest refusal was towards Roma people (21%), then Serbs 28%, while Albanians achieved the highest percentage of acceptance as spouses in this municipality (even 41%).

The refusal of getting into marriage is probably the result of long lasting ethnic conflicts of these two ethnic groups. Other influential factors may have certainly led to this attitude; this general unwillingness for such a direct contact with the members of other ethnic groups is due to the fact that marriage is the closest relationship, which includes other interactions with the group whose member is to be married. War, suffering, historical heritage, noticeable hostility, differences in religion and culture are certainly the factors which made those peoples distant. The intention to preserve both identities (individual and national) due to the feeling of national threat, led to sticking to own ethnic group.

Table 2 shows the results based on criterion of being fiends with the members of other ethnic group.

Table 2 - Acceptance by the criterion „I would have him / her as a friend“

„I would have him / her as a friend“	Vranje		Bujanovac		Preševo	
	Distance	%	Distance	%	Distance	%
Serbs	70	41	33	37	41	33
Albanians	37	22	25	28	53	43
Roma people	62	37	31	35	30	24
Total	169	100	89	100	124	100

The obtained results show that the highest percentage of acceptance of friendship is related to Serbs, then Roma and finally Albanians. These results may not be surprising providing the number of mutual interactions of the people in this region.

The examinees from Vranje refused the offered relationship with Albanians to smaller extent than the previous one (marriage), but in higher percentage in comparison to the residents of Bujanovac and Preševo, while the offered relationship towards Roma people was accepted more willingly than in other two municipalities.

Roma people are most accepted as fiends in Vranje, 37%, then in Bujanovac 35%, while they are the least accepted in Preševo (24%). It seems that such result depends on the percentage of population and everyday interactions. However, Serbs are the least willing to enter into those relationships. Only 33% of Serbs would be friends with other two ethnic groups. It may show that in this region Serbs are „afraid of“disturbing personal and national (psychological) boundaries.

The Albanians are most accepted in Preševo (43%), which is in accordance with their proportional participation in total population.

The criterion of living in neighborhood is presented in the next Table.

Table 3 - Acceptance bythe criterion „I would live in the same neighborhood“

I would live in the same neighborhood	Vranje		Bujanovac		Preševo	
	Distance	%	Distance	%	Distance	%
Serbs	68	41	37	42	45	36
Albanians	36	22	20	22	48	39
Roma people	61	37	32	36	31	25
Total	165	100	89	100	124	100

These results show that the order of acceptance is similar to the previous criteria. Again, Serbs are accepted most, then Roma people and Albanians. The most frequent acceptance of Albanians was recorded in Preševo (39%), where they were majority of population; in that municipality, Roma people were the least accepted (only 25%), while the acceptance of Serbs was 36%.

Absolute non-acceptance of „neighbors“, mostly between Serbs and Albanians is the result of multiculturalism without interculturalism (coexistence without interaction), as those people live in different parts of the town. The greatest acceptance of Serbs as neighbors is in Vranje (41%), which

is understandable since they are the major population; the acceptance of Roma people is 37%, while Albanians are the least favorable as neighbors in the same municipality (22%). This ratio is more balanced in Bujanovac in relation to other municipalities, but here, Serbs are again most acceptable as neighbors (42%), then Roma people (36%) and finally Albanians (22%).

Living in neighborhood implies higher distance than friendship, therefore, it was expected that higher percentages of examinees would rather accept this relationship in comparison to the previous ones, which was not the case. This could be explained by the fact that living in neighborhood includes coexistence on the same territory, which generates the feeling of threat. This explains the fact why such a low percentage of Albanians (22%) is accepted as neighbors. However, friendship is possible to make without being a neighbor, which could be the reason of difference in these two criteria. Another reason may be that in the former case (when thinking of a friend), the examinees thought of individuals with their personal characteristics, while in the latter case the individuals were taken as representatives of specific ethnic group.

The next Table shows the acceptance i.e. refusal of members of other group to be employed at the same company.

Table 4 - Acceptance by the criterion „I would work at the same company as them”

I would work at the same company as them	Vranje		Bujanovac		Preševo	
	Distance	%	Distance	%	Distance	%
Serbs	73	41	68	38	47	35
Albanians	42	24	52	29	53	39
Roma people	63	35	58	33	35	26
Total	178	100	178	100	135	100

Serbs are most widely accepted as colleagues in Vranje (41%) and Bujanovac (38%), while in Preševo this percentage is somewhat lower. In Preševo, Albanians are mostly accepted as colleagues to work at the same company (39%); in Bujanovac this percentage is lowered to 29%, while the least readiness to work with Albanians at the same company is found in Vranje (24%). The Roma people are the most accepted as colleagues in Vranje (35%), then in Bujanovac (33%) and finally in Preševo (26%).

This criterion is characterized by the highest acceptance of other ethnic groups. Marriage, friendship and work are classified as vital priorities; therefore success in these domains is the measure of happiness and fulfillment of fundamental needs. In the current situation, when the relationship between

nations is weakened, satisfaction of all needs is directed mainly towards the members of the same ethnic group. This is the reason why the result obtained is slightly surprising or encouraging. However, bearing in mind that the members of different ethnic groups traditionally work (or worked) together in this region, this result could have been expected.

Table 5 shows the data obtained by the criterion of acceptance of other ethnic groups for going out to the same places in the city.

Table 5 - Acceptance by the criterion „I would go out to the same places”

I would go out to the same places	Vranje		Bujanovac		Preševo	
	Distance	%	Distance	%	Distance	%
Serbs	68	44	32	44	22	24
Albanians	30	20	18	25	44	48
Roma people	55	36	22	31	26	28
Total	153	100	72	100	92	100

The previously established order of acceptance is also found in this criterion as well. In total, Serbs are most accepted, then Roma people and Albanians with the exception of Preševo where Albanians are accepted most, then Roma people and finally Serbs. In Vranje and Bujanovac Serbs are accepted in equal percentage (44%), while in Preševo this percentage drastically decreases to only 24%, which is by 20% lower in comparison to other two municipalities. Considering going out to the same places, Roma people are accepted by 36%, while in Bujanovac by 31%. The percentage is much lower for Albanians; in Vranje it is only 20% and in Bujanovac 25%. In Preševo, Albanians are accepted most (48%), followed by Roma people (28%).

The acceptance of Roma people in Vranje is somewhat surprising, because there is no place in this town where it really happens. Considering the obtained percentages, it seems possible to influence decrease of distance between these groups, but the question remains whether this is a real wish, or just a formal answer; nevertheless, a „new” era may have come.

Table 6 - Acceptance by the criterion „I would live in the same country”

I would live in the same country	Vranje		Bujanovac		Preševo	
	Distance	%	Distance	%	Distance	%
Serbs	69	45	56	41	38	32
Albanians	28	18	39	29	49	42
Roma people	56	37	40	30	30	26
Total	153	100	135	100	117	100

The residents of Vranje are most willing to coexist in the same country, but only with Roma people, which points out that they are not ready for such an issue. The members of multiethnic regions are more willing, in this case in Bujanovac and Preševo.

By this criterion, Serbs are most accepted in Vranje (45%) and Bujanovac (41%), while the least in Preševo (32%). Roma are most accepted in Vranje (37%), then Bujanovac (30%), while in Preševo only 26%. The acceptance for coexistence is quite opposite with Albanians; they are most accepted in Preševo (42%), then Bujanovac (29%), while the percentage of acceptance strongly decreases in Vranje (only 18%).

Table 7 - Acceptance by the criterion „I would like the member of other ethnic group to lead my country”

To lead my country	Vranje		Bujanovac		Preševo	
	Distance	%	Distance	%	Distance	%
Serbs	66	43	42	42	39	34
Albanians	28	18	35	35	48	41
Roma people	58	38	23	23	29	25
Total	153	100	100	100	116	100

The results in the Table 7 show that the examinees, similarly, do not accept the participation of other ethnic groups either in local administration or at the state level. Each nation tends to have its own state, i.e. country which personifies the nation. Allowing the members of other ethnic group to lead the state would mean to breach into their national domain, threatening the feeling of safety, therefore full confidence and support is given to the member of their own nation. Thus in Vranje, Serbs are logically most accepted as leaders (43%), then Roma people (38%) and Albanians (18%). In Bujanovac the percentage is relatively balanced; again, Serbs are predominant (42%), which is only 1% less in comparison to Vranje, but Albanians are considerably more accepted (35%) than in the former municipality, followed by 23% of Roma people; Albanians are most accepted as leaders in Preševo (41%), then Serbs (34%) and Roma people (25%)

In accordance with the second task in this research, which is to define ethnic stereotypes of Serbs, Albanians and Roma, among themselves, the characteristics ascribed to other people, national minorities and ethnic groups and their mutual judgments were analyzed by using Likert scale. The results of the research showed that the stereotypes about Roma people and Albanians

were the most negative, which could have been expected, considering the results obtained by using Bogardus scale.

The prejudices of the members of one ethnic group related to those belonging to other groups are presented as percentages of the total number of examinees.

According to Serbs, Albanians are aggressive (66%), arrogant (61%), mean (54%), insidious (46), hate other people (65%) and like to rule (59%); Roma people think that Albanians are aggressive (40%), arrogant (37%), ugly (22%), primitive (21%), dishonest (19%).

Albanians think that Serbs are aggressive (56%), cultural (49%), friendly (41%), intelligent (40) laborious (31%), progressive (29%), %, hate others (33%), and like to rule (28%). Roma people think that Serbs are beautiful (59%), courageous (54%), intelligent (51%), friendly (47%), pugnacious (44%), good natured (4%), clean (40%), sincere (8%).

Serbs think that Roma people are cheerful (47%), dirty (42%), solidary (38%), uncultivated (36%), good hearted (35%), stupid (33%), quarrelsome, ugly, underdeveloped lazy (3%). Albanians think that Roma people are good natured (36%), stupid (33%), uncultivated (30%), aggressive (29%), cheerful (28%), cowards (26%), sincere (24%), dirty (23%).

Roma people have rather negative image of Albanians, while rather positive of Serbs. Albanians and Serbs do not have very negative opinion of Roma; however, the characteristics, which describe them as good natured but stupid and uncultivated, prevail.

Albanian description of Roma people does not include those characteristics which would describe them as people who threaten them, which can be found in the description of Serbs.

On the other hand, that is exactly how Serbs see Albanians – the people who tend to threaten other ethnic groups; hence they are not willing to see Albanian positive characteristics. However, Albanians, in spite of seeing Serbs in negative context, often ascribe some positive characteristics to them (cultivated, friendly, intelligent...). They both describe the other ethnic group as aggressive, and people who love to rule and hate others.

7. Conclusion

The result of the empirical research, done in South Serbia in 2014 showed that the degree of ethnic distance was high, and the stereotype images between the young population of Serbs, Albanians and Roma people were mainly full of negative attributes. Distrust and ethnic distance can be partly explained by actual socio-political situation. Great distance towards Albanian national minority is a result of political atmosphere, i.e. unsolved problem and status of Kosovo and Metohija. The establishing of peace, opening of borders and normalization of economic relations between these people is a significant step towards the decrease of distance.

As the results of research have shown, the policy of isolation and disregard of other ethnic groups creates barriers and increases stereotypes. Stereotypes, both positive and negative are the result of disregard and the fear of the unknown and the different. It is necessary to continue the initiated process of overcoming speech of hatred and ethnic intolerance through educational, social and political programs. Distrust should be reduced and fears should be eliminated. In that process, media have a significant role, since in every society, either with developed or developing democracy, the influence of media is great.

References

- Bašić G. Nacionalne manjine u Srbiji, u: Dragan Žunić (ur.). Prava manjina. Niš: Odbor za građansku inicijativu, 2005; 4:79–116.
- Bašić G. Prava nacionalnih manjina u Srbiji u procesu razvoja prekogranične i regionalne saradnje u jugoistočnoj Evropi, u: Jovan Živković (ur.). Regionalizam – novi društveni okvir. Niš: Centar za regionalnu politiku, 2007;3:172–174.
- Gavrilović D, Petrušić N. Međunacionalni odnosi i zaštita manjinskih prava u Srbiji, Migracijske i etničke teme 27, 2011., 3: 419–439
- Đorđević B. Religijska većina o religijskoj manjini: Stavovi Srba o Romima kao vernicima, u: Vukomanović, M. i M. Vučinić (ed.), Interreligijski dijalog kao vid pomirenja u jugoistočnoj Evropi, Beograd: BOŠ, 2000; 2:153-178.
- Đorđević B, Todorović, D. Burying of Roma: A Test of Ethnic and Religious Tolerance, u: Kulturni i etnički identiteti u procesu globalizacije i regionalizacije Balkana, Niš: CBS/JUNIR/Punta, 2002; 3:209-217.
- Kuzmanović B. Socijalna distanca prema pojedinim nacijama (etnička distanca), u: Lazić, M. (ur.): Razaranje društva: jugoslovensko društvo u krizi 90-tih, Beograd: „Filip Višnjić“, 1994; 6:233-240.
- Milošević L. Srbi o drugima, društvena udaljenost Srba od pripadnika drugih naroda, nacionalnih manjina i etničkih grupa u jugoistočnoj Srbiji, u: Ljubiša Mitrović,

- Dragoljub B. Đorđević i Dragan Todorović (ur.). Kvalitet međuetničkih odnosa, svest o regionalnom identitetu i mogućnosti saradnje i integracije na Balkanu. Niš: Sven, 2004; 4: 95–112.
- Mihailović S. Predstave o nacionalnim manjinama u javnom mnjenju Srbije, u: Položaj manjina u Saveznoj Republici Jugoslaviji, Beograd: SANU -Odeljenje društvenih nauka, 1996;3: 423-441.
- Mihailović S. Etnički stereotipi i heterostereotipi na Kosovu, Sociologija, 1998., LX, 3:411-428.
- Pantić D. Nacionalna svest mladih u SR Srbiji bez SAP, Beograd: IIC SSO Srbije, 1987.
- Pantić D. Changes in ethnic stereotypes of Serbs, Sociologija, 199; 4: 561–583.
- Popadić D, Biro M. Autostereotipi i heterostereotipi Srba u Srbiji, Nova srpska politička misao, 1999; 1-2: 89–109.
- Popadić D. Put iz bratstva i jedinstva – etnička distanca građana Srbije, u: Kako građani Srbije vide tranziciju: istraživanje javnog mnjenja tranzicije. Beograd: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2010; 1: 106–120.
- RZS Popis stanovništva, domaćinstva i stanova u Republici Srbiji 2011, prva popisna knjiga-nacionalna pripadnost, Beograd: Republički zavod za statistiku Srbije, 2011.
- Rot N. Osnovi socijalne psihologije, Beograd: Zavod za udzbenike i nastavna sredstva. 1994.
- Sekelj L. Etnička distanca, ksenofobija i etnonacionalistička manipulacija, Sociologija, 2000., XLII, 1.
- Šacirović S, Đekić, T, Stefanović, V. Menadžment prirodnih resursa pograničnih opština istočne i jugostočne Srbije, Prirodno- matematičkifakultet, Niš, 2013.