

# War Exposure, Attachment Style, and Moral Reasoning

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This study extends the investigation of the effects of war exposure beyond those previously documented (e.g., increased stress and aggression and various types of psychopathology) to include moral reasoning. Three groups from two cultures with different levels of exposure to the 1998-1999 war in Kosovo were compared using Rest's Defining Issues Test. Possible effects of attachment style alone and in interaction with war exposure were also investigated. The results showed that exposure to war has (a) a very strong negative effect on moral reasoning with (b) no moderation by attachment style. However, the evidence suggests that war exposure may change the individual's attachment style from secure to insecure by inducing a more negative model of the other.

**Keywords:** *war exposure; moral reasoning; attachment style; individualism; collectivism*

## Introduction

Following the 1998-1999 war in Kosovo, while working for a relief nongovernmental organization (NGO) on a school reconstruction program, the first author observed what seemed to him a steep decline in cooperation, community interest, and other forms of prosocial behavior in the population of Kosovo. Specifically, he observed that people were much less cooperative and showed much less interest in community needs than they had before the war, in some cases even being aggressive toward relief workers. As one of the relief workers noted,

The same people who had built their own schools and maintained a parallel education system for more than 10 years during the Milosevic regime were not cooperative with an NGO which was helping them to rebuild their own community school. Moreover, there were frequent cases of obstructing the work in rebuilding and stealing the construction materials. (Outreach officer of international NGO, personal communication, October 1999)

This observation led to the hypothesis that is at the heart of the study reported here: that the experience of war may have a negative effect on moral reasoning.

To investigate the possible effects of exposure to war, three groups differing in their degree of exposure to war were compared: (a) university students resident in Kosovo during the 1998-1999 war there, (b) Kosovar students attending Turkish universities during

that period (and continuing their studies during the data collection period), and (c) Turkish university students with no exposure to the war except through news reports. The data were collected during the year following the end of war.

To obtain a sample with no war exposure, it was necessary to use a non-Kosovar sample (in such a small area as Kosovo, in wartime all residents must be considered to be exposed to the war, whether or not they were directly engaged in combat). In this case Turkish university students were used as the comparison group. There are many parallels between the cultures of Kosovo and Turkey, as detailed in the following. Nevertheless, to control for the effect of culture, participants' individualism–collectivism (I-C) orientations were assessed.

A second important factor that could affect response to war exposure is the individual's pattern of attachment (Bowlby, 1969, 1973/1975, 1980). Because moral reasoning is often hypothesized to depend strongly on concern for the distress of others (empathy) and role-taking skills (Hoffman, 2000; Maccoby, 1980), internal representations of self and the other could be highly relevant in influencing abilities such as empathy, role taking, or balancing of interests. To test this possibility, respondents' attachment styles were assessed.

Other factors in moral development, such as the influences of age, education, and cognitive development, are well documented in numerous studies (Kohlberg, 1981; Snarey, 1985; Walker, 1989). In this study, age and educational level were held constant by selecting only university students into the sample.

## Moral Reasoning

In a situation of moral conflict, a person has to resolve the conflict between self-interest and the interests of others (Kohlberg & Diessner, 1991). In various ways, exposure to war may diminish a person's ability to achieve such a balance.

Kohlberg's (1981) cognitive-developmental theory of moral reasoning has generated numerous studies and has gained substantial cross-cultural support (Snarey, 1985). In this theory, hierarchical stages of moral reasoning are held to develop in a universal and fixed order and to be governed by qualitatively different mechanisms. Stages of moral reasoning are defined by the structure of moral judgments as based on social perspective taking, reasoning about what is right, and reasons for doing right, not according to their content. This feature renders the theory suitable for cross-cultural research because in a situation of moral dilemma the alternative chosen is not important in defining one's stage of reasoning; rather, the reasoning behind the choice defines the moral stage (Rich & DeVitis, 1985).

Despite numerous critiques of Kohlberg's (1981) theory (e.g., Gilligan, 1982; Turiel & Davidson, 1986), several aspects of the theory have been shown to be robust in reviews of a large variety of studies. In an early, extensive review of 45 empirical studies of moral judgment development carried out in 27 countries, Snarey (1985) concluded that stage skipping and stage regression were rare, lending support to some of Kohlberg's basic hypotheses, such as the existence of stages, hierarchical order, and invariant sequence of stages, although he also noted lack of evidence for the universality of the postconventional stages. More recently, Dawson (2002) once again found evidence for the hypotheses of stage and sequence, and Thoma (2002) concluded also that extensive research supports Kohlberg's position that "moral judgments are both cognitive and developmental" (p. 225).

Assessment of moral reasoning in the present study was done under the Kohlbergian paradigm, using Rest's (1986) Defining Issues Test (DIT). This instrument does not focus directly on the stage aspect of the theory but rather assesses the individual's use of "principled" reasoning, which is assumed to vary to some extent across cultures but to embody similar themes (Thoma, 2002).

## Effect of War Exposure

The effects of war on aggression and psychopathology (e.g., posttraumatic stress disorder; PTSD) are well documented in the literature. Research in this area has found increases in aggression (Garbarino & Kostelny, 1996; Mrkaljevic, 1999; Mrsevic & Hughes, 1999) as well as stress and psychopathology (Cardozo, Vergara, Agani, & Gotway, 2000; Macksoud & Aber, 1996; O'Brien, 1994) during periods of war and its aftermath. After World War II, there were 40,000 veterans with psychiatric problems in the United States (Schultz & Schultz, 1996).

In an assessment conducted by the Kosovo Statistical Office, International Organization for Migration and United Nations Population Fund (Vinogradov, 2000), it was estimated that 1.4 million people were displaced from their homes during the Kosovo conflict in 1998-1999; of those, 1.15 million were displaced outside of Kosovo for a period of more than 1 month, whereas others were internally displaced. Overall, according to the report, more than 60% of the population experienced displacement.

A survey conducted at the end of 1999 in Kosovo by Cardozo et al. (2000) in 558 households with 1,358 participants to assess the prevalence of mental health problems can help to shed some light on the psychosocial effects of these events. According to the study, the estimated prevalence of PTSD symptoms according to *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* criteria was about 20%. Somatic symptoms and anxiety associated with war trauma were common, together with social dysfunction and depression. Another important finding was that approximately 90% of the respondents reported feelings of hatred, and 37% of men and 24% of women thought that they would act on their vengeful feelings. A similar study (Saloma, Spiegel, Van Dyke, Phelps, & Wilkinson, 2000) was conducted with 200 Kosovan Serbs using the same measurement tools and methodology. The results were similar to the previous study, pointing to a high incidence of somatic symptoms, anxiety, depression, and social dysfunction.

Concern for one's own and loved ones' lives combined with serious uncertainty about the future may have a negative effect on role-taking abilities or concern for the distress of others. In-group identification during war, with the accompanying derogation and hatred of the enemy and vengeful feelings, may also have a negative effect on perspective-taking skills and empathy, impairing the ability to balance self-interest and the interest of others in situations of moral dilemma and resulting in use of less advanced forms of moral reasoning. Taken together, anxiety, feelings of hatred and revenge, and in-group identification may promote a concrete individual perspective (preconventional reasoning). Thus, people who have experienced war are predicted to have significantly lower moral reasoning scores than those who have not experienced war, with a greater degree of war exposure related to a greater deficit in moral reasoning.

It is worth mentioning that a number of studies have provided evidence for some positive effects of war experience on psychosocial functioning of individuals. Macksoud and Aber (1996), for example, found an increase in prosocial behavior in Lebanese children 10 to 16 years of age who have had overwhelming experiences with violence. Similarly, literature on posttraumatic growth shows that experience of traumatic events in late adolescence and adulthood may lead to positive changes in some individuals (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Although most of the evidence for posttraumatic growth has been found with respect to an individual trauma such as heart attack, cancer, or loss of one's child, there is at least one study in which the effect of trauma caused by war was investigated. Powell, Rosner, Butollo, Tedeschi, and Calhoun (2003) reported that posttraumatic growth scores obtained 3.5 years after the end of war were very low in comparison with other studies. They suggested that the reason for these results may partly be due to the fact that "the individuals themselves as well as the micro- and macrosystems surrounding them were shaken, changed, or destroyed" (p. 82). It must be mentioned that they studied former refugees and displaced people in Sarajevo, Bosnia, and Herzegovina (another region of the former Yugoslavia). Thus, it is likely that the circumstances faced by their participants and the Kosovars in our sample are comparable, at least with respect to the ambiguity of the definition of enemy (a potential moderator of effects of war on the individual): "In former Yugoslavia, a former friend or neighbor could turn out to be an enemy more or less without warning" (Rosner, 2003, p. 4). Because we obtained the participants' responses within 1 year after the end of war, it seems very unlikely that there would have been any evidence for posttraumatic growth. For these reasons, we do not expect to find in this study that war experience leads to an increase in level of moral reasoning.

## Attachment Style

At the core of the attachment theory developed by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth lies the secure base construct (Waters & Cummings, 2000). Ainsworth (1989) defined attachment as a special kind of affectional bond marked not only by relatively long duration, non-replaceability of the attachment figure, and desire to maintain closeness to the attachment figure but also by the ability of the individual "to move off from the secure base provided by the partner, with confidence to engage in other activities" (Ainsworth, 1989, p. 711). Because not all attachments are secure, Ainsworth suggested modifying this requirement into "a seeking of the closeness that, if found, would result in feeling secure and comfortable in relation to the partner" (p. 711). By implication, inability to find closeness is associated with negative feelings and reduced confidence when engaged in other activities. Bowlby (1969, 1973/1975, 1977, 1980, 1988) discussed in detail a number of undesirable consequences of the lack of a secure base to the individual.

Bowlby (1973/1975) suggested further that with advances in cognitive development, the child soon begins to construct internal working models of the self, the caregiver, and the relationship itself and these models are updated continuously up until adulthood. In the context of this relationship, which typically involves strong emotions (e.g., Bowlby, 1977), the child acquires role-taking and perspective-taking skills and learns to negotiate with others. Children who have established a secure attachment develop the ability to strike a balance between their own and their attachment figure's wishes and goals, but when the quality of attachment is insecure, either the child's own wishes and goals or those of the attachment

figure are overemphasized at the expense of the other. As a result, insecure children are presumed to be disadvantaged in acquiring truly reciprocal role-taking and perspective-taking skills (see van IJzendoorn & Zwart-Woudstra, 1995).

Attachment theory predicts continuity or discontinuity in the internal working models from infancy to adulthood depending on the stability of the individual's environment. Longitudinal studies have shown evidence of discontinuity in the cases of individuals who have experienced negative life events, such as loss of a parent, parental divorce, and life-threatening illness of parent or child, and continuity in other instances (Hamilton, 2000; Waters, Merrick, Treboux, Crowell, & Albersheim, 2000; Weinfield, Sroufe, & Egeland, 2000).

Using the Strange Situation procedure, which involves brief separations from and reunions with the attachment figure, the infant's quality of attachment to its caregiver can be classified as early as 12 months of age into one of three main categories: secure, avoidant, and ambivalent/resistant (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978).

Patterns that correspond to the three attachment categories have also been identified in investigations of attachment in childhood beyond infancy. One of the best established measures is the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI; see Hesse, 1999), which classifies individuals into autonomous, dismissing, and preoccupied categories, corresponding to the infant categories of secure, avoidant, and ambivalent/resistant, respectively. Solomon and George (1999) discussed various assessment techniques appropriate to different age levels, including adulthood, and subtle differences among classification systems.

Other measures of attachment have been developed in the context of romantic relationships. Following Hazan and Shaver's (1987) work, a large number of studies have employed various self-report inventories to assess attachment patterns in adolescents or adults (see Crowell, Fraley, & Shaver, 1999, for an overview).

Based on Bowlby's (1973/1975) discussion of the working models of self and other, Bartholomew (1990) proposed a distinction between two different kinds of avoidance: dismissing and fearful. In this model, both avoidant types have a negative other model, as opposed to the secure and preoccupied (ambivalent) types who have a positive other model, whereas for the dismissing type the self-model is positive (similar to the secure style), but for the fearful type the self-model is negative (similar to the preoccupied type). In recent years this four-category model has been rapidly replacing the three-category model in studies that employ self-report inventories to assess attachment style.

*Attachment and moral reasoning.* The relation between attachment and moral reasoning was investigated by van IJzendoorn and Zwart-Woudstra (1995). In their study, although attachment classification was not related to the overall scores on the Socio-Moral Reflection Measure–Short Form, secure participants showed more Type B (principled) moral reasoning than Type A moral reasoning (which emphasizes social conventions or social arrangements), giving some support to the theoretical prediction. In the present study, we also hypothesized that secure respondents would show more principled moral reasoning. Attachment style was assessed using a self-report inventory, the Relationship Questionnaire (RQ; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

*Attachment and war exposure.* Mikulincer, Florian, and Weller (1993) tested the hypothesis that the negative effects of war exposure on psychological well-being may be moderated by the person's attachment style. They found theoretically predicted patterns of

differences among secure, avoidant, and ambivalent groups on measures of both distress and coping. For example, the ambivalent group reported higher levels of distress than the secure on all measures of distress, whereas the avoidant group did so only on hostility and somatization problems. With regard to coping, the secure group reported having used the support-seeking strategy more frequently than both insecure groups. Interestingly from the point of view of the current study, group differences were attenuated for participants residing in nondangerous areas during the war.

Exposure to war may pose a serious threat to one's security because of imminent threat to one's own and loved ones' lives, not to mention serious uncertainty about the future. No prospective study has been carried out so far to investigate the possibility that war experience might affect the quality of attachment, although indirect evidence from the study by Mikulincer et al. (1993) speaks against it. As they pointed out, the distributions of attachment styles assessed after war exposure were similar (a) for people living in the dangerous and nondangerous areas in their study and (b) to those obtained in earlier studies carried out in Israel and other countries.

In view of the findings reported earlier, we hypothesized that negative effects of war exposure on moral reasoning may be moderated by attachment style. Secure attachment has been found to facilitate resilience in the face of adversity, including war (e.g., Husain, 2005; Svanberg, 1998), and resilience in turn implies reduced vulnerability for negative outcomes under adverse conditions. Because they employ support-seeking strategies more often (and perhaps more effectively) and experience less distress than the insecure and because they may have greater capacity and skill in perspective taking, the moral reasoning of secure individuals may be less affected than others by war exposure. Thus, we predicted an interaction between war exposure and attachment style in moral reasoning scores: Negative effect of war on moral reasoning would be attenuated in the case of secure individuals.

Again, an alternative hypothesis might be derived with respect to the effects of war exposure on the moral reasoning of secure individuals. Evidence for positive effects of war on psychosocial functioning might suggest that posttraumatic growth could result in higher levels of moral reasoning by secure individuals who have been exposed to war compared to secure individuals with no such exposure. For the same reasons given earlier, however, in this study we expect attenuation in moral reasoning scores rather than positive gain under conditions of war exposure.

## **Individualism and Collectivism**

One aspect of culture that varies from society to society and that may constitute an important independent variable is the dimension of I-C, first suggested by Hofstede (1980) to describe, respectively, "societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family" in contrast to "societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty" (p. 2).

In the years following Hofstede's (1980) original study, a large literature has emerged, relating the I-C dimension with different variables, such as intergroup relations, distributive justice, social loafing, and social striving (Segall, Dasen, Berry, & Poortinga, 1999; Triandis, 1994).

It is also possible to rank order societies in terms of where they stand on I-C (Kagitcibasi, 1994). Higher individualism scores tend to be linked to national wealth, upward social mobility, a developed middle class, nuclear family structure, industrialization, and urbanization (Kagitcibasi, 1996). Segall et al. (1999) pointed out that although I-C is a very useful heuristic device, there are other important factors as well, such as economic forces, political ideologies, and religious and ethnic fundamentalism, which also influence behavior patterns in nearly all societies. Despite these cautions, because of its prevalence in cross-cultural research and the large number of aspects of culture with which it is related, I-C orientation could be very useful in determining similarities and differences between cultures.

### **Individualism-Collectivism and Effect of War on Moral Reasoning**

Although, as noted earlier, Snarey's (1985) review found considerable support for invariance of the stage sequences postulated by Kohlberg, it is harder to find support for postconventional stages, especially when non-Western and nonurban samples are considered. Some researchers (e.g., Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 1992) criticized this limitation and postulated the existence of alternative postconventional moralities based on conceptions of natural law and justice rather than on individualism, secularism, and social contract. For example, the work of Miller, Bersoff, and Harwood (1990) in India showed that Indians' judgments reflect a moral code that tends to give priority to social duties whereas Americans' judgments reflect a moral code that tends to give priority to individual rights. Similarly, a study of samples from Hong Kong, the People's Republic of China, and England (Ma, 1989) revealed that compared to the English sample, the two Chinese samples emphasized human affection and sentiment more than reason and rationality, and they valued filial piety, group solidarity, collectivism, and humanity.

Considering these findings, it could be interesting to look at the relationship between I-C at the individual level and moral reasoning. If Kohlberg's assumptions about universality are correct, then the I-C dimension should not predict performance on a moral reasoning test. However, if his critics who argue that the "justice" concerns of Kohlberg's postconventional stages are not emphasized in the moral reasoning of collectivistic cultures are correct, then there should be a positive correlation between individualism and moral reasoning scores based on Kohlberg's conceptualization.

Although the I-C dimension can be studied at the cultural level, individuals within a culture may also vary in their I-C orientations (Kagitcibasi, 1994). Triandis (1994) mentioned that university students tend to be more individualist compared to rest of the society, and the same tendency can be seen in individuals from higher economic status and urban areas as compared to lower socioeconomic status and rural areas. Therefore, by assessing I-C scores at the individual level we can examine the influence of these orientations on moral development at the individual level as well as the societal level.

Taking into consideration critiques stating that Kohlberg's theory favors individualistic values (Berry et al., 1992) and ignores collectivistic values (Ma, 1989; Miller et al., 1990), the relation of I-C to level of moral reasoning will be examined.

## Comparison of Turkey and Kosovo

Geographically and historically, present-day Turkey and Kosovo have been influenced by many of the same cultural influences and they share a similar historical heritage from the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, and the Ottoman Empire (Malcolm, 1999). Both lie in the same “cultural region” (Triandis, 1994). Both societies are secular, with a large majority of the population being Muslim. Both societies have a high percentage of youth, with approximately half the population younger than 25. Both have a relatively large mean family size: 5.6 members in Kosovo, 4.8 in Turkey. In Kosovo, 52% of the population live in rural areas and 48% in urban areas, whereas in Turkey 41% live in rural and 59% in urban areas; the rate of illiteracy in the population older than 10 years of age is 6% in Kosovo and 17% in Turkey (Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü [DİE], 1990; Statistical Office of Kosovo [SOK], 2001). In the rural areas of both Turkey and Kosovo, patriarchal values are upheld, special importance is given to chastity of females, and in both societies much of social life is governed by the code of honor. The population of Kosovo has a predominantly traditional family structure; marriage and extended families are valued, having children is highly desirable, and having a male child is preferred, reflecting male domination and unfavorable position of females (SOK, 2001; Vinogradov, 2000). Similar patterns are observed in Turkish society (DİE, 1990; Kagıtcıbası, 1996; Kagıtcıbası & Sunar, 1992; Özgür & Sunar, 1982; Sunar & Aral, 1999; Sunar & Fisek, 2005). According to the United Nations Development Programme (2002) both Turkey and Kosovo fell among countries with medium human development, globally ranked at 82nd and 83rd place, respectively. Overall, in demographic, cultural, and developmental aspects the two societies resemble one another quite closely.

Notwithstanding the similarities between the two societies, bearing in mind the importance of obtaining comparable samples in cross-cultural research (Segall et al., 1999) and the significance of I-C studies in this research area (Kagıtcıbası, 1994), the present research used the I-C orientation of participants at the individual level to help distinguish the effect of war exposure from the effect of culture.

## Hypotheses

*Hypothesis 1:* There will be a negative relationship between degree of war exposure and moral reasoning scores, that is, greater war exposure will be associated with lower moral reasoning scores.

*Hypothesis 2:* Participants with a secure attachment style will have higher moral reasoning scores than those with any of the insecure attachment styles.

*Hypothesis 3:* Attachment style will moderate the effect of degree of war exposure on moral reasoning such that secure attachment style will attenuate the negative effects of war exposure.

*Hypothesis 4:* Moral reasoning will not be significantly correlated with degree of individualism-collectivism.

## Method

### Participants

A total of 222 students participated in the study, comprising three groups: (a) 99 Kosovar undergraduate students from the University of Prishtina, Kosovo (39 men, 60 women; mean



age 19.8); (b) 24 Kosovar undergraduate students studying in universities in Istanbul, Turkey (20 men, 4 women; mean age 21.3); and (c) 99 Turkish undergraduate students from Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, Turkey (41 men, 58 women; mean age 19.8). More than 95% of the students were freshmen and sophomores.

## Measures

*War exposure.* Three natural groups were used to operationalize the independent variable of exposure to war. Because of their direct geographical proximity to the conflict combined with their Kosovar ethnic identification, Kosovar participants studying in Kosovo were categorized as the high war exposure (HWE) group. Kosovar participants studying in Turkey were categorized as the low war exposure (LWE) group because they were geographically distant from the conflict even though it involved their homeland, friends, and relatives. Turkish participants studying in Istanbul were categorized as the no war exposure (NWE) group as they were both geographically distant from the conflict and had no national or ethnic involvement.

*Measure of individualism–collectivism orientations.* The individualism–collectivism (INDCOL) scale developed by Hui (1988) was used as a measure of I-C orientations at the individual level. The INDCOL scale, which measures the extent of sharing, control, and involvement in self–other relationships in a Likert-type format, was translated into Turkish and adapted to Turkish culture by Göregenli (1995). Göregenli reported that the Cronbach's alpha value for the 40-item Turkish version of the INDCOL scale was .84. For the present study, the INDCOL scale was translated into Albanian from the Turkish version and then back translated. Comparison of Albanian and Turkish versions revealed no important differences in the meaning. Subsequently, seven bilingual Albanian students studying in Turkey were administered Albanian and Turkish versions of INDCOL scale with a time lag of 2 weeks. The test–retest reliability coefficient was satisfactory ( $r = .66, p = .01$ ).

*Measurement of attachment representations.* The Relationship Questionnaire (RQ; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) was employed to assess attachment style. The Turkish version used in this study was translated from the original by Alp (1999, unpublished raw data), who found considerable evidence for its validity in the Turkish culture in his study with university students.

The RQ consists of four short paragraphs describing the four attachment styles (secure, dismissing, preoccupied, and fearful). Respondents are asked to rate the degree to which they resemble each of the four styles on a 7-point scale. Afterward they are asked to choose one of the paragraphs as the one that best represents them. In this study, classification of respondents into attachment styles was done according to the self-chosen paragraph, not according to the rating scales.

The Albanian version of the RQ was translated from both Turkish and English by the first author and then back translated to English by an Albanian student fluent in all three languages. No significant differences were found. With a time lag of 2 weeks the Albanian and Turkish versions of the RQ were administered to seven Albanian students studying in Turkey. The test–retest reliability coefficient was satisfactory ( $r = .80, p < .01$ ).

*Measurement of moral reasoning.* The short version of the Defining Issues Test (DIT; Rest, 1979) was used to assess the level of moral reasoning. Although the original DIT uses six stories, in the cross-cultural literature shortened versions of the DIT are more often used (Cesur, 1997; Ma & Cheung, 1996). In the present study the four-story version of the DIT was used. The four stories include dilemmas regarding (a) stealing a drug to save a life, similar to Kohlberg's "Heinz and the druggist" dilemma; (b) whether or not to report an escaped prisoner who has become an upstanding member of the community under an assumed identity; (c) a request for euthanasia by a person with a painful terminal illness; and (d) hiring an ethnic minority worker who is the best qualified candidate versus the risk of lost business. None of the stories refers to war in any way. Translation into and adaptation for Turkish use were carried out by Cesur (1997). The test was translated into Albanian by the first author using both English and Turkish versions. After back translation, comparison of Albanian and English forms revealed no important differences in meaning. The score used in this study is the P score, that is, the percentage of principled or postconventional responses made by the individual (see Rest, 1986, for scoring procedures).

*Demographic data.* In addition to the scales and measures described earlier, other relevant demographic data such as sex, age, year in school, and department were collected from respondents.

## Procedure

The Relationship Questionnaire, Defining Issues Test, and individualism-collectivism scale were administered in classrooms in Boğaziçi University and Prishtina University or at the students' homes. The three questionnaires were randomly ordered in the battery of questionnaires. Participants were informed that their responses would be anonymous and that they would participate in a cross-cultural study aiming to explore the issue of how students in different countries view different social problems.

## Results

From the responses to DIT dilemmas, postconventional (principled) moral reasoning scores (P scores) were computed for each participant and these served as a measure of moral reasoning. These scores ranged from 0 to 67.5 ( $M = 26.84$ ,  $SD = 13.37$ ). Participants were categorized into four attachment groups on the basis of their responses to the RQ: secure, dismissing, preoccupied, and fearful. Of a total of 222 respondents, 25% were secure, 25% were dismissing, 26% were preoccupied, and 20% were fearful (data for 4% were missing).

The responses to the RQ also were used for two other classifications. First, they were grouped as secure versus insecure (25% vs. 71%). Second, they were grouped according to positive versus negative model of the other; for this classification, secure and preoccupied respondents were combined for the positive group and dismissing and fearful respondents were combined for the negative group. P scores by war exposure and the different attachment classifications are shown in Table 1.

INDCOL scores were computed from the responses to the INDCOL scale. Mean INDCOL score was 3.24 ( $SD = 0.31$ ) on a 7-point scale and the scores ranged from 2.38 to 4.55 (higher scores indicate higher individualism/lower collectivism orientation). No significant

**Table 1**  
**Means and Standard Deviations of P Scores as a Function of War Exposure and Attachment Classification ( $n = 208$ )**

A. Four Categories Classification		War Exposure					
		NWE		LWE		HWE	
Attachment	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>
Secure	34.57	13.29	26.25	7.20	21.77	9.38	29.94
Dismissing	35.29	14.81	25.00	6.67	17.28	10.01	24.38
Preoccupied	36.25	13.32	24.00	7.42	19.42	7.88	28.24
Fearful	32.24	13.46	18.33	9.46	18.21	8.26	24.42
B. Two Categories Classification		War Exposure					
		NWE		LWE		HWE	
Attachment	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>
Secure	34.57	13.29	26.25	7.20	21.77	9.38	29.94
Insecure	34.80	13.66	23.61	7.29	18.25	8.78	25.81
C. Model of Other Classification		War Exposure					
		NWE		LWE		HWE	
Model of the Other	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>
Positive	35.34	13.22	25.23	7.02	20.92	7.90	29.35
Negative	33.24	14.05	23.46	7.54	18.25	8.91	24.60
Total	34.72	13.46	24.27	7.20	18.90	8.94	27.11

Note: P score = the percentage of principled or postconventional responses made by the individual. NWE = no war exposure; LWE = low war exposure; HWE = high war exposure.

difference was found between the Turkish ( $M = 3.23$ ) and Kosovar ( $M = 3.24$ ) samples. Likewise, no differences in INDCOL scores were found among war exposure groups.

As a check on possible effects of sample characteristics, a simultaneous regression analysis was carried out with P score as the outcome variable and age, sex, major department, year in university, and INDCOL score as the predictor variables. None of the predictor variables had a significant relation with P scores, and together they accounted for less than 1% of the variance in P scores. Accordingly, these variables were not used in other analyses.

### Effects of War Exposure and Attachment on Moral Reasoning

To test the effects of level of war exposure and attachment style on moral reasoning, factorial ANOVA was carried out with war exposure (HWE, LWE, and NWE) and attachment

style (secure, dismissing, preoccupied, and fearful) as between-participants factors. The main effect for war exposure was highly significant,  $F_{(2, 208)} = 39.1, p < .0001$ . The Scheffé test showed that the NWE group had significantly higher P scores than both the LWE and HWE groups ( $p < .0001$ ) but that LWE and HWE groups did not differ significantly. Neither the main effect for attachment style nor the interaction between war exposure and attachment style was significant.

This analysis was repeated twice more, first grouping the attachment styles as secure and insecure and second grouping them according to positive and negative model of others. Both of these analyses replicated the results of previous analysis: that is, there was a strong effect on moral reasoning scores of war exposure but no effect of attachment style and no interaction effect. Despite the lack of statistical significance, the pattern of scores for the “model of others” groups is suggestive; across the three war exposure groups, P scores of those who had a negative model of others were consistently lower than scores of those who had a positive model of others. See Figure 1 for a graphic representation of P scores by level of war exposure and model of others.

### Effect of War Exposure on Attachment Style

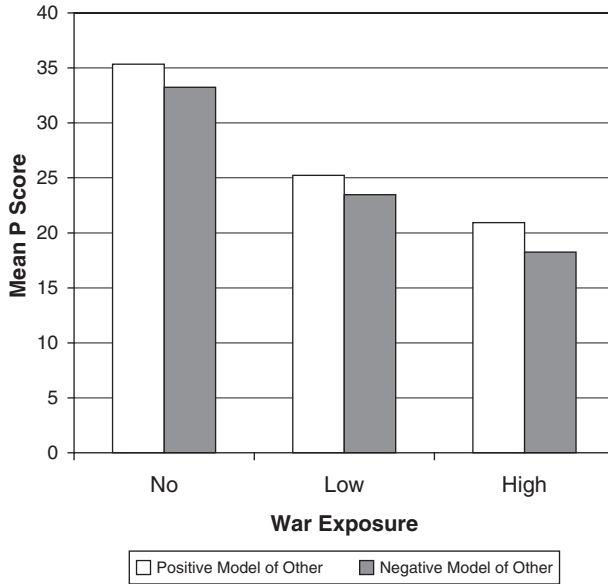
A chi-square test was conducted to determine whether the war exposure groups differed in their attachment classifications. With the four-group system of classification there was a strong trend in attachment patterns between groups,  $\chi^2_{(6, 213)} = 12.416, p = .053$ . In the NWE group the biggest proportion of participants were secure, whereas dismissing attachment was more prevalent in the war exposure groups (see Table 2).

This analysis was repeated using first the secure/insecure grouping and second using the positive/negative model of the other grouping. When attachment was analyzed as secure versus insecure, a significant difference in attachment style as a function of war exposure was found,  $\chi^2_{(df=4)} = 6.595, p = .037$ , with secure attachment found more often in the NWE group. When attachment style was categorized according to positive/negative model of the other, the chi-square test revealed a significant difference in model of others across war exposure groups,  $\chi^2_{(df=4)} = 6.164, p = .046$ . A positive model of the other was more prevalent in the NWE group, whereas a negative model of the other was more prevalent in the LWE and HWE groups (see Figure 2).

## Discussion

Results of the study support the hypothesis that exposure to war has a significant negative effect on moral reasoning. The hypothesis that individuals with secure attachment representations would score higher on moral reasoning as compared to individuals with any of the insecure attachment representations was not supported. Similarly, the hypothesis that secure attachment style would attenuate the effects of war exposure was not supported. The hypothesis that variations in I-C orientation would have no effect on moral reasoning was supported. Although not predicted, an effect of war exposure on attachment representations was observed in that the proportion of insecure individuals and the proportion of individuals with negative model of the other was found to be greater in the LWE and HWE groups than in the NWE group.

**Figure 1**  
**P Scores by War Exposure and Model of the Other**



Note: P score = the percentage of principled or postconventional responses made by the individual.

**Table 2**  
**Distribution of Attachment Patterns Across War Exposure Groups (*n* = 208)**

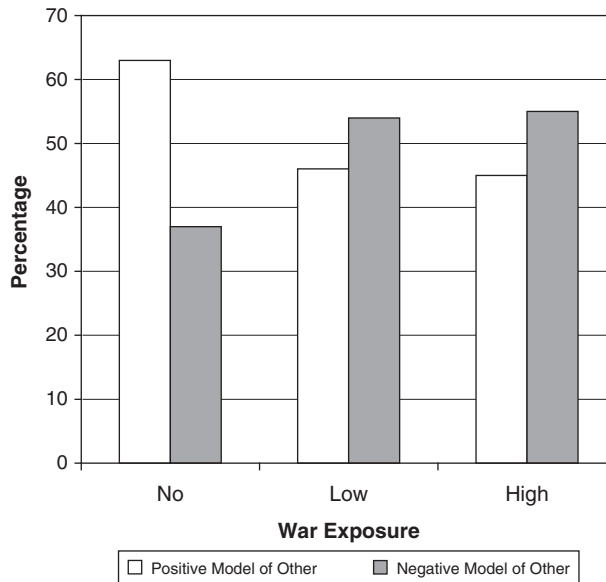
Attachment Classification	War Exposure					
	NWE		LWE		HWE	
	Percentage	<i>n</i>	Percentage	<i>n</i>	Percentage	<i>n</i>
Secure	34.0	33	25.0	6	18.5	16
Dismissing	17.5	17	41.5	10	31.0	27
Preoccupied	29.0	28	21.0	5	26.5	23
Fearful	19.5	19	12.5	3	24.0	21
Total	100.0	97	100.0	24	100.0	87

Note: NWE = no war exposure; LWE = low war exposure; HWE = high war exposure.

**Effect of Exposure to War on Moral Reasoning**

As predicted, students who had any exposure to war had significantly lower moral reasoning scores than students who had not experienced war. Low exposure respondents did not have significantly higher scores than high exposure respondents, although there was a trend in the predicted direction (the LWE mean was 24.3, whereas the HWE mean was 18.9). Lack of significance of the difference may be due to the small size of the LWE group

**Figure 2**  
**Distribution of Model of the Other by Level of War Exposure**



in comparison to the two other groups, although it is likely that ongoing concern for the fate of family and friends as well as the general undermining of future perspective may have affected the students at a distance in much the same way as those closer to the conflict. On the other hand, the fact that there is a significant difference between the NWE group and the LWE group underlines the strong effect of war exposure.

The results need to be interpreted cautiously as the NWE group members were all Turkish and the LWE and HWE groups were all Kosovar. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to rule out the possibility that the real difference is due to culture rather than exposure to war. In the case of this particular war, because of the small size of Kosovo and the widespread population dislocations, virtually all residents of Kosovo were exposed to the war in one way or another so that even a “low exposure” group could not have been found in Kosovo. Therefore, there was little choice but to use respondents from a different country for the “no exposure” group. However, because the two cultures (Turkey and Kosovo) are highly similar in many ways, as detailed in the introduction, and because all respondents are urban university students, it seems unlikely that cultural differences are responsible for the results. I-C orientations were used as a control for the effect of culture between samples, and there was no difference between the Turkish and Kosovar samples. Likewise, there was no discernible effect of individualism or any of the demographic variables on moral reasoning scores.

These results suggest that the effects of the experience of exposure to war are not restricted to psychopathology, stress, and aggression, which have been documented in previous studies such as those cited earlier, but it has negative effects on higher sociocognitive processes

such as moral reasoning. This conclusion draws strength from the facts that (a) the moral dilemmas in the DIT are about hypothetical situations unrelated to the war experience; (b) the samples did not differ significantly on other dimensions such as age, sex, department, and year in school; and (c) moral reasoning scores were not affected by I-C orientations.

It is important to note that the results show that war can be detrimental to moral reasoning even when it is not experienced directly, as in the case of Kosovar students living in Turkey, although the impact may be somewhat weaker than for those who experienced the war directly. This finding indicates that the effect of war is not restricted only to those who experience it directly and feel the stress and uncertainty for their own lives, but it has an impact on people who are physically distant from war as well, indicating that other factors such as concern for family members, friends, or the broader social setting may be as important as concern for the self, revealing the importance of reference groups (Zimbardo, 1985) and loved ones.

Finally, these findings may shed additional light on the question of how people commit crimes and atrocities that normally in times of peace are absent and unthinkable. Although explanations based on group identity, conformity, obedience, and deindividuation (e.g., Milgram, 1974; Sherif & Sherif, 1969; Zimbardo, 1985) are very important in explaining crimes committed in the context of war or other violent conflicts, the reduction of moral reasoning capacity may also be seen as one of the mechanisms that conduces to this kind of behavior. The fact that the negative effect on moral reasoning is seen even in individuals not directly exposed to the war suggests that decline in moral standards may also occur independently of immediate situational pressures for conformity, obedience, or deindividuation.

In addition, these findings show that the detriment to moral reasoning is not restricted to the conflict situation. Rather, reasoning about hypothetical dilemmas far removed from the war and unrelated to the social identities of combatants is impaired.

Although results clearly confirm the negative relationship between the experience of war and moral reasoning, the mechanisms of this effect remain uncertain. However, several mechanisms or factors through which war may impair moral reasoning may be suggested.

First, the stress of war and the extremes of in-group identification that it promotes may reduce a person's role-taking abilities. Second, widely shared feelings of hatred and revenge, as documented by Cardozo et al. (2000) and Saloma et al. (2000), may have a negative effect on role-taking skills and empathy as well as the ability to balance self-interest and the interest of others in situations of moral conflict. What the present findings suggest is that this negative effect has considerable generality; that is, loss of empathy appears not to be restricted to the objects of hatred and feelings of revenge but to apply even to characters in vignettes, such as those used in DIT, that are unrelated to the conflict. Third, the effect of war on moral reasoning could be the result of increase in aggression and psychopathology in the general population during the period of war and its aftermath.

However, it is likely that the best explanation for these findings is that all these factors interplay with one another to produce the negative effect of war on moral reasoning. Future research in this area should focus on determining the exact mechanisms and effect size of these factors on moral reasoning. For example, by assessing feelings of hatred and revenge, in-group identification, and psychopathological indicators such as PTSD symptoms and comparing their effect on moral reasoning, the contribution of each factor could be determined separately.

## **Effect of Attachment Representations on Moral Reasoning**

As predicted, the moral reasoning score of secure individuals was the highest among the four attachment groups, although the difference did not reach statistical significance. Likewise, although mean P scores of those with a positive model of the other (secure and preoccupied) appeared higher than those with a negative model of the other (dismissing and fearful), the difference between them again failed to reach significance. These results fail to replicate the finding of van IJzendoorn and Zwart-Woudstra (1995) that secure attachment is related with a higher level of moral reasoning. However, the method used to assess attachment style was different in the two studies (the AAI in van IJzendoorn and Zwart-Woudstra, 1995, and the RQ in the present study), which could have led to different results (see Crowell, Treboux, & Waters, 1999, and Shaver, Belsky, & Brennan, 2000, for evidence that different instruments may produce different results). However, there may be alternative explanations for the incongruence between the present results and those of van IJzendoorn and Zwart-Woudstra, as discussed in the following.

## **Interaction of War Exposure and Attachment in Their Effects on Moral Reasoning**

Analysis of the effect of interaction of war exposure with attachment representations on moral reasoning revealed that there was no significant interaction for any version of the attachment classification. Rather, the effect of war appears to override any possible effect of attachment so that moral reasoning scores of even secure individuals in the war exposure groups (high and low) may have been lowered due to war experience.

## **Effect of War on Attachment Representations**

Comparison of attachment patterns across the three levels of war exposure revealed significant differences. When the pattern of secure versus insecure proportions was compared across war exposure groups, the highest percentage of secure individuals was in the NWE and the lowest percentage of secure was in the HWE group, with the LWE group in between (see Table 2). Similar results were obtained when the model of others was compared across three groups: In the NWE group, a positive model of others was more prevalent, whereas in the war exposure groups (low and high) a negative model of others was more prevalent (see Figure 2).

These results have two possible meanings; first, they may indicate that war exposure also has an impact on personality variables, that is, it may change attachment representations; and second, there may be cultural differences in child-rearing styles in the respective cultures.

Because of the similarities between the two cultures, especially in view of the fact that they did not differ on the dimension of I-C, we are inclined to reject the latter alternative. Rather, we favor the former explanation that differences in the distribution of attachment styles across the three groups may be due to direct or indirect traumatic experiences caused by war. A stepwise decline in the proportion of secure individuals from NWE to LWE to HWE group is also consistent with this explanation. Certainly, further empirical studies are in order before a strong statement can be made on this issue, particularly in view of differing findings reported by Mikulincer et al. (1993).



Our results also show that when compared with those who had not been exposed to war, individuals who had been exposed to war (LWE and HWE groups) were more likely to hold a negative model of the other. That is, the proportion of dismissing and fearful categories combined was greater in the war exposure groups, whereas the proportion of secure and preoccupied categories combined was greater in the no exposure group. This seems to indicate that the model of the other was particularly vulnerable to experience of war. It appears that the threat of danger from outside or traumatic experience itself may shift one's view of the world toward the negative end, resulting in avoidance and distrust of others. On the other hand, war exposure did not appear to have an effect on the model of the self as no increase in the proportion of fearful or preoccupied attachment styles was observed when comparing the NWE group with the two war exposure groups combined.

It may be tentatively concluded then that war may have an effect on attachment styles, especially on how the individual views others. Moreover, this effect is a negative one, with greater likelihood of a negative model of others and a dismissing attachment style.

### **I-C Orientations of War Exposure Groups**

In the present study, I-C orientations were used to control for the effect of culture. The results reveal slightly collectivistic orientations in both cultures, with no significant difference between Turkish and Kosovar groups. This was in line with the pattern of sociocultural and historical similarity between the two societies.

One of the questions of this study was the question of whether responses to Kohlbergian dilemmas (Kohlberg, 1981) are affected by cultural orientations such as I-C. Contrary to arguments by researchers such as Berry et al. (1992), Miller et al. (1990), and Ma (1989) that measures based on Kohlberg's (1981) theory are biased toward individualistic tendencies and disfavor respondents with collectivistic tendencies, the results of the present study revealed that I-C orientations at the individual level had no significant effect on moral reasoning scores; this suggests that at least at the levels of collectivism represented in the present sample, Kohlberg's conceptualization as measured by the DIT is relatively free of bias in the dimension of I-C.

### **Conclusion**

The present study clearly shows the deleterious effect of war on moral reasoning and suggests that it may also negatively affect attachment style by inducing a negative model of others. Although an effect of attachment representations on moral reasoning could not be demonstrated, the pattern of results suggested that a connection might exist. Overall, the results are congruent with Kohlberg's (1981) assumptions that moral reasoning in dilemmas is heavily dependent on role taking, perspective taking, and empathy, and they are also congruent with the argument by van IJzendoorn and Zwart-Woudstra (1995) that being autonomous, trusting of others, and less vulnerable to social surroundings increases the probability of moral reasoning at the postconventional level.

Thus, it appears that the effects of war are multilayered; not only can exposure to war influence cognition, personality, and the person's view of the world, but these factors may influence one another as well. War exposure influences one's view of the world by arousing feelings of hatred, pushing internal working models of others in a negative direction,

reducing empathy, and interfering with perspective-taking abilities, all of which interact and influence each other. These interactions may ultimately distort the cognitive abilities necessary for postconventional reasoning in the hypothetical situations of moral dilemmas. The present study found significant relationships between war exposure and both attachment representations and moral reasoning, providing evidence for deleterious effects of war on higher level psychological processes. This is an addition to the previous literature, which has focused mostly on the relationships between war and psychopathology, aggression, and feelings of hatred and revenge. Future research in moral reasoning should focus on multimethod assessment of attachment, role-taking and perspective-taking skills, and empathy and their relationships with moral reasoning to identify the mechanisms of effects of war exposure.

As a final note, we should point out again that the data were collected within 1 year after the end of the war. How long these effects would last is an empirical question that should be addressed in future studies. It is possible that at least in the case of some individuals, the experience of war would in the long run lead to posttraumatic growth along the lines proposed by Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004), which could in turn have a positive impact on moral reasoning. This is also an empirical question that needs longitudinal study for a satisfactory answer.

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