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## **FILM AND RECONCILIATION: A CASE STUDY FROM THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

### **Abstract**

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*Systematic violence and reconciliation between and within groups are complex and continuous processes. Unfortunately, a number of movie and series adaptations regarding these issues create a distorted image of the problems societies face in their attempts to reconcile ('black and white' image of the perpetrators and victims, the almost magical catharsis of audience after listening to a lonely hero's monologue, etc.). With these problems in mind, this paper provides a concise overview of the social and psychological factors influencing reconciliation after violence and conflict, focusing on Apartheid in the Republic of South Africa (RSA). At the same time, the movie *Country of My Skull* will be used as an accurate illustration of scientific contributions of psychologists in creating a better future. In other words, this paper is a combination of theoretical understandings and scenes which capture various psychological factors that either facilitate or hinder mutual understanding, forgiveness and reconciliation.*

**Keywords:** *reconciliation, cinematography, peace psychology.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Cinematography was always attracted to the human ability to inflict pain on others. In that sense, a plethora of films as series (Hotel Rwanda, Schindler's List etc.) were created in order to vividly portray the evils of war, genocide, injustice, etc. Unfortunately, screen adaptations of these phenomena can be misleading because the storyline of the film does not necessarily entail a comprehensive explanation of the context as well as socio-psychological processes underlying systematic violence. Because of that, screen adaptation carries a risk of oversimplification. However, cinematography is an influential societal channel (a medium for distribution of a group's beliefs and values) and, as such, its potential cannot be viewed as purely negative. In this paper, I'll examine the potential of cinematography to accurately introduce a person to various scientific fields. More precisely, I'll provide a case study of a movie called *Country of My Skull*<sup>1</sup> regarding its portrayal of the process of reconciliation from the perspective of peace psychology. With this broad goal in mind, the further text will illustrate the nature and dynamics of reconciliation.

Reconciliation is a multifaceted process composed of four key aspects: truth, justice, regard and security.<sup>2</sup> The truth is defined as an exhaustive account of the violent past: support for established conflict narratives that provide only partial information about the suffering are detrimental for reconciliation as they focus only on the grievance of one side. Therefore, the joint search for the truth means that all sides are obliged to provide every detail about the conflict, not just stories about suffering at the hand of their adversary. Justice is the goal which can be reached in different forms: reparation for victims, punishment for the perpetrators, etc. The rationale behind all forms of justice is the need to 'right a wrong': persons and/or groups that suffered need to be helped and those that made them suffer need to answer for those actions. Regard provides a basis for all other aspects of reconciliations because it entails an acknowledgement of one's identity, suffering and humanity. To put it simply, having regard for its adversary means that society views members of the out-group as equal and, therefore, worthy of understanding. Lastly, security is the most concrete aspect of reconciliation because it implies a promise that no more harm will come from the out-group.

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<sup>1</sup> Another title commonly used for the film is *In My Country*.

<sup>2</sup> Kriesberg, L. (2004), "Comparing Reconciliation Actions within and between Countries", in: Y. Bar-Siman-Tov (ed.), *From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation*. Oxford University Press, 81-110.

Understandably, the four aspects of reconciliation can be achieved simultaneously and to varying degrees, using different means. At the same time, the complex nature of reconciliation means that a number of obstacles can be in the way of its full achievement. In this paper, the focus will be on a particular format for reconciliation – the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in RSA as well as different social and psychological factors that hinder or facilitate commission's work and, in turn, the process of reconciliation.

## **SETTING THE STAGE: CONTEXT BEHIND THE MOVIE PLOT**

In its essence, *Country of My Skull* is a detailed account of the hardships which a divided society faces in the aftermath of its social reconstruction. More precisely, the dramatization of the TRC's work is focused on the latter part of the whole picture. In order to understand how difficult it was to achieve reconciliation in RSA, one must understand the vicious circle of polarisation which a divided society follows.

One must understand that society members' readiness to commit crimes and atrocities against the 'evil other' is a multifaceted process that goes through several stages.<sup>3</sup> First, polarisation among different social lines as well as difficult living conditions caused by possible international isolation creates a situation in which a person's basic needs (safety, health, etc.) are constantly threatened. Unfortunately, a divided society often creates a dysfunctional explanation of this harsh life: a scapegoat subgroup is provided, members endorse various forms of 'better world' ideology, etc. All these different strategies have a common goal: the in-group is glorified, while the out-group is delegitimised. At the same time, broader factors such as obedience to authority, monolithically defined culture (heterogeneity of society is denied), history of social division and unresolved historical grievances provide support for the above-mentioned antagonistic attitudes.

Second, first cases of intergroup violence appear. At first, these are more or less isolated examples, where perpetrators engage in both self-selection (persons who don't support violence distance themselves from the transgressors and/or organisation to which they belong or they are simply suspended) and reassessment of self-image (violence is

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<sup>3</sup> Staub, E. (1993), "The psychology of bystanders, perpetrators, and heroic helpers", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 17 (3), 315-341.

framed as a necessary means for a greater cause, the perpetrator sees themselves as somebody capable of inflicting harm if needed, and the victim as somebody who deserves and can be controlled by this violence). Through repetition of violence, perpetrators 'learn' from their actions: moral principles become inapplicable to victims, a person's psychological prohibitions are rapidly losing force and the violence, in extreme form, can become a goal in its own right.

Lastly, this dysfunctional re-socialisation loses its 'bottom-up' nature and becomes a systematic endeavour. Institutions accommodate themselves to the culture of violence, which the perpetrators see as support from their initial transgressions. Hierarchical organisations based on obedience and power, such as the police and the military, incorporate systematic harm as their third key attribute, while society as a whole normalises violence towards the outcasts. At the same time, evolution of violence is framed and supported by the mentioned dysfunctional attitudes and broader cultural factors.

This was the decades-long context in RSA. In other words, the movie dramatization which focuses on a personal struggle to understand the suffering and to resist the wish for revenge can have a complementary role in understanding how a divided society works and how it lives with its history of internal conflict. With this in mind, the next sections of the paper will focus on reconciliation efforts in RSA, as well as the film's scenes which capture different psychological obstacles to the normalisation of intergroup relations.

## **THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION**

TRC is a method of reconciliation focused on eliminating various forms of denial and disinformation about the past. In other words, the emphasis is on providing full facts and making them public in order to fully acknowledge the violent past.<sup>4</sup> However, TRC is not meant to replace any legal institution or conduct retributive justice. It should be understood as a complementary method of reconciliation focused on systematic search for facts, creation of a public platform for victims to share their experiences and receive psychological support, stimulating public debate via extensive media coverage and defining reparations and

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<sup>4</sup> Bar-Tal, D., & Bennink, G. H. (2004), "The nature of reconciliation as an outcome and as a process", in: Y. Bar-Siman-Tov (ed.), *From conflict resolution to reconciliation*. Oxford University Press, 11-38.

institutional reforms in order to promote reconciliation and democracy in society.<sup>5</sup> In other words, TRC is focused on several key activities: witness testimonies, public briefings and the creation of an extensive report that would serve as an instrument against historical revisionism. Nevertheless, the TRC possesses several aspects of a legal organisation: it has a clearly defined mandate and power (i.e. which crimes and in what period are in the focus, what are commission's authorisations etc.).

To put it simply, the primary role of TRC is to enable victims to come to the fore, making their (until recently invisible) suffering public. At the same time, testimonies taken from perpetrators also serve as a source for acknowledgement of victims, because they have to explain their motives for the violence. Meanwhile, mass media coverage serves an effective tool against tendencies to forget or deny victims' pain. In other words, TRC is a platform that motivates a whole society to empathise with the victims.

The film adaptation of TRC's work is a good illustration of several key aspects: mass media coverage, support for victims who come to testify, pressure put on perpetrators regarding their motives as well as controversial formula called 'truth for amnesty' that is characteristic for TRS in RSA. More precisely, perpetrators were pardoned if they provided a full account of their crimes, proved that they were simply following orders and that they didn't have any personal gains from the violence. This formula was the subject of harsh criticism (in the movie and in reality) because many people believed that the perpetrators are simply evading any retributive justice. The issue of amnesty is a problem discussed earlier, regarding the authorisations of TRC and its relation to different channels of institutional justice. However, the movie doesn't cover this issue extensively, but provides a concrete argument for the formula: amnesty is individual and based upon the perpetrator's willingness to critically re-examine oneself and his/her victims. At the same time, the film's extensive coverage of TRC's motto "*THE TRUTH SHALL SET US FREE*" provides a vivid illustration of the moral basis of TRC in RSA. It is the *Ubuntu* philosophy, which enables society to transcend the vicious circle of violence where the victim becomes the perpetrator and vice versa. Through *Ubuntu*, focused is placed on mutual interdependence, acknowledgement of one's humanity and moving beyond social polarity ('us/them' or 'criminal/avenger'). The movie does

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<sup>5</sup> Freeman, M., & Hayner, P. B. (2003), "Truth-telling", in: D. Bloomfield, T. Barnes & L. Huysse (eds.), *Reconciliation after violent conflict: A handbook*. International IDEA, 122-139.

not systematically examine these phenomena, but the use of local cultural resources for reconciliation in addition to more-or-less universal legal institutions is in the focus of research on reconciliation.<sup>6</sup> Hence, the film adaptations can provide a concise overview of some of the issues regarding the work of TRC and the way through which different cultural, social and psychological factors combine in the process of reconciliation. With these insights in mind, the next sections of the paper will focus on TRC's role in reconciliation (and its cinematographic adaptation) from the perspective of several main roles members of a divided society have, given its history of violence: victims, perpetrators and bystanders.<sup>7</sup>

## THE VICTIM'S PERSPECTIVE

After decades-long silence, evasion, minimisation and 'semantic deformation', victims' suffering is acknowledged. Because of their testimonies, structures involved in violence cannot engage in denial: the pain has become a part of nation's official history.

Cinematography plays a significant role in portraying just how psychologically charged these testimonies are, because re-experiencing trauma through public speech is extremely hard for the victims. A number of examples are provided in the movie, as people often fall into desperation upon finally learning what happened to their loved ones and are in need of psychological help. At the same time, audience of the film adaptation can even experience personal grief when focusing on certain perpetrators who show no remorse for their crime, but are pardoned because of their minor role.

However, testifying in front of TRC has its immense benefits. Victim become empowered because they demand answers from the perpetrators and they judge whether the apology is sincere. Again, these demands are in line with TRC's main goal: providing closures, healing of trauma and transcending any revenge or 'quick solutions' in order to achieve a long-term reconstruction of society. In other words, through these testimonies, society finally acknowledges victim's pain and helps them to restore his/her self-respect and dignity. At the same time, society

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<sup>6</sup> Baines, E. K. (2007), "The haunting of Alice: Local approaches to justice and reconciliation in Northern Uganda", *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* 1 (1), 91-114; Irani, G., & Funk, N. (1998), "Rituals of reconciliation: Arab-Islamic perspectives", *Arab Studies Quarterly* 20 (4), 53-73.

<sup>7</sup> Staub, E. (2003), *The psychology of good and evil: Why children, adults, and groups help and harm others*. Cambridge University Press.

is transformed in such a way that would prevent the repetition of silence about similar crimes in the future. In the ideal case, perpetrators not only admit to their crimes, but publicly show remorse: apology is now a part of the public discourse.<sup>8</sup> Such an atonement contains shame and remorse, condemnation of one's behaviour as well as commitment to moral behaviour in the future.<sup>9</sup>

Having this in mind, it is clear why apology is defined as an integral part of reconciliation: in combination with forgiveness, sincere apology represents remorse for the negative past and willing to work for a more positive future. Again, the dramatization of such cases can provide a detailed representation of empathy and emotional catharsis present during testimonies. In other words, movie scenes can be understood as prototypical examples of different stages of atonement: apology (remorse for the act and promise never to repeat it), acceptance of apology (conviction that apology is authentic), asking for forgiveness (implies an appeal for acquittal) and forgiving (releasing the former perpetrator from his/her guilt).<sup>10</sup>

In conclusion, the victim's part in the TRC is as significant as it is complex. However, the dynamics of reconciliation can be fully understood only through examination of the remaining roles other members of society have. In the next section, focus will be on the opposite perspective: the perpetrator and the effect of this role on the TRC's work.

## THE PERPETRATOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Cinematography has an immense role in vividly conveying various mechanisms through which the perpetrators weaken social (external) control as well as their moral principles and create 'buffers' against self-condemnation. In other words, theoretical and empirical insights regarding the relativization of violence can be portrayed in such a way that a layman can begin to understand the plethora of ways through which the perpetrators become ready to commit crimes, as well as their 'arguments' for justification of inflicting pain on the victims.

There are several broad strategies of negating a crime. The first form is literal denial – denying that the crime even happened. If this is

<sup>8</sup> Govier, T. (2003), "What is Acknowledgement and Why is it Important", in: C. Prager & T. Govier (eds.), *Dilemmas of reconciliation: Cases and concepts*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 65-91.

<sup>9</sup> Gofman, E. (1971), *Relations in public: Microstudies of the Public Order*. Basic Books.

<sup>10</sup> Galtung, J. (2001), "After violence, reconstruction, reconciliation, and resolution", in: M. Abu-Nimer (ed.), *Reconciliation, justice and coexistence: Theory and practice* Lexington books, 3-23.

not possible, the denial of the interpretation is used – the crime is re-defined into socially acceptable frameworks (it is not excessive use of force, but the technique of enhanced interrogation, it was a fight against terrorism, etc.). In the end, if it is not possible to deny that the crime took place or that ‘something else’ happened, then the denial of implications begins – perpetrators start to minimise responsibility, negative consequences, etc.<sup>11</sup>

How do these stages of denial influence the reconciliation process? First of all, because of the TRC’s work, literal denial is not possible. Suffering can no longer be hidden – the facade of ‘normal everyday life’, public secrets, collusion and ‘patriotic institutions’ has fallen. Therefore, the emphasis is transferred to the relativization of the meaning behind suffering, causes, consequences and responsibility. At the same time, the individualization of responsibility is maintained in the TRC’s work: amnesty cannot be given to the hardened perpetrators, who even enjoyed inflicting suffering on the victims.

It is important to note here that the strategies of violence relativization is in line with the nature of social division. More precisely, RSA was institutionally divided along racial lines which means that system as a whole (legal institutions, security forces) had an active role in maintaining these demarcation lines. Therefore, the issue of validity in cinematographic portrayal of social division is analysed with regards to the institutionalised violence by structures with a clear hierarchy (military and police). For example, *Country of My Skull* accurately depicts differences in exonerating strategies used by perpetrators, depending on their position on the hierarchical ladder. For example, the very top of the structure justified itself by saying that the middle and lower levels did not understand the orders and did not have direct control over their execution. Those at the lowest level, ordinary policemen and soldiers, insisted that they were just ‘cogs in the machine’, that they simply obeyed the orders of their superiors and that everyone did it (insisting on obedience and conformity). On the other hand, the colonel, as the embodiment of the middle level of the hierarchy who understood the vague orders of his superiors and at the same time encouraged the lower levels to violence, does not have this possibility. Therefore, the film adaptation illustrates a number of more subtle techniques related to the relativization of interpretation and implication:

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<sup>11</sup> Cohen, S. (2013), *States of denial: Knowing about atrocities and suffering*, John Wiley & Sons.



- violence as a necessity for the good of the state ('someone has to do the dirty work'),
- denial of the existence of victims (he emphasises that they were terrorists and communists whose goal was to destabilise society),
- accusing the accusers (he considers that the TRC's staff is compromised and that they are the embodiment of the malignant influences against which he fought),
- appeal to a higher loyalty (he is a patriot who served the state),
- insisting on historical (and therefore moral) relativism (he emphasises that what was called service to the state until yesterday is now called a crime, i.e. that he was a hero, but now he is a psychopath),
- insisting that everyone would behave in such a way if they found themselves in the same situation (justification though extreme situational determinism),
- depiction of the conflict as a 'zero-sum' fight<sup>12</sup> (every gain of the opponent is simultaneously 'our' loss).

Broadly speaking, the movie's vivid portrayal of various exonerating techniques used by the colonel are actually a part of the system of societal beliefs (society's reference system that provides meaning to the social reality). For example, previous research<sup>13</sup> illustrated that themes such as security, patriotism and delegitimization of the opponent can become tools through which a society understands the conflict and creates a symbolic prism for its justification and continuation. In accordance to these insights, the colonel insists on the dehumanisation of his opponents, that the survival of the entire society was at stake, that violence was aimed at defending against threats and that he was ready to make the greatest sacrifice for the state. In other words, colonel's self-exoneration should not be simply interpreted as the distorted opinion of a madman. Although he firmly believes in what he says, his reasoning should also be understood (at least in part) as a manifestation of culturally available resources through which group members frame their actions and adapt to the conflict situation.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Kriesberg, L. (1993), "Intractable conflicts", *Peace Review* 5 (4), 417-421.

<sup>13</sup> Bar-Tal, D. (1998), "Societal beliefs in times of intractable conflict: The Israeli case", *International Journal of Conflict Management* 9 (1), 22-50.

<sup>14</sup> Bar-Tal, D. (2000), "From intractable conflict through conflict resolution to reconciliation: Psychological analysis", *Political Psychology* 21 (2), 351-365.; Cohen, S. (2013), *States of denial: Knowing about atrocities and suffering*, John Wiley & Sons.

Although the *post hoc* rationalisations of crimes are portrayed in the movie, the question rises as to why the perpetrators came to that position in the first place (why were they able to commit so many acts of violence). In the film, the influence of three extremely powerful mechanisms of the normalisation of violence was pointed out. The first is routinization – committing a crime makes it easier to repeat it, to the point where it becomes a ‘daily routine’.<sup>15</sup> Another mechanism are rhetorical means such as euphemisms and jargon (neutralisation, information extraction, waterboarding etc.). Thanks to them, the perpetrators manage to completely depersonalise the violent act (‘I did it to her/him’ becomes ‘I did it’) and to prevent the inclusion of valid social and moral principles in the evaluation of their behaviour.<sup>16</sup> Finally, the importance of active concealment within the institution itself should be mentioned. The members of the group (in the film, the security forces) behave as if nothing criminal is happening, the emphasis is on the uniformity of the group, information is assimilated into strategies of denial, there are tacit agreements about ignorance, while the members are ‘bombarded’ with socially desirable narratives – myths about the moral principles of the group, descriptions of prototypical members (idols, i.e. role models) etc. Hence, it is not surprising that, through the combination of different mechanisms of justification, an individual who was initially an opponent of violence becomes a person for whom inflicting suffering on victims becomes a daily routine.

Bearing in mind these conclusions, any accurate cinematographic adaptation of TRC’s work must follow a number of broad guidelines:

- division is an endeavour in which society as a whole participates,
- the mere nature of institutions involved in violence can provide a basis for a person’s justification,
- symbolic repertoire of the society can be manipulated for providing a socially acceptable framework for violence,
- perpetrators differ between themselves in the degree to which they support this dysfunctional framework.

Lastly, a divided society is not a ‘black and white’ picture composed of only the ‘bad guys’ and their victims. On the contrary, largest proportion of society is not involved directly in violence as people often

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<sup>15</sup> Kelman, H. C., & Hamilton, V. L. (1989), *Crimes of obedience: Toward a social psychology of authority and responsibility*, Yale University Press.

<sup>16</sup> Arendt, H. (1958), *The human condition*, The University of Chicago Press.

don't fully understand the situation and/or do not actually care because they didn't experience personal harm. With this in mind, it is important to understand the role of the bystander in a divided society.

## THE BYSTANDER'S PERSPECTIVE

This is probably the most heterogeneous position in the conflict because people, for a variety of reasons, do not react to the violence that is taking place. Often, the public is not even aware of how and to what extent violence is maintained. People become a part of the so-called public secret – the state between full awareness of the victims' suffering and active participation in the cover-up.<sup>17</sup> However, complete unawareness of what was happening in situations of prolonged, institutionalised violence is very unlikely, so people try to justify their inaction in different ways.

First of all, some bystanders do not participate in violence, but tacitly support it, as several short frames from the movie speak vividly about this. Certain groups of wealthy whites do not participate in the TRC's work, they ignore the information it presents and, essentially, retain all forms of behaviour characteristic of their privileged position in a segregated society. On the other hand, when faced with the undoubted condemnation of their actions, they resort to various 'causal' explanations that are nothing more than a manifestation of the belief about a just world – what happens to you is what you deserve.<sup>18</sup> Simply put, their justifications are very similar to those given by the perpetrators, with the main difference being that passive supporters of violence are trying to justify their inaction.

Second, some bystanders oppose such a state of affairs, but they have done nothing because of the experience of loneliness (phrases such as 'It seems that only I am bothered by this' are common) and helplessness in the face of the power of institutionalised injustice. Again, most bystanders do not fully understand the nature and scope of violence, so the TRC's live broadcasts can pose a traumatic experience for them. The movie touches upon this through scenes of people turning off their radio because they were overwhelmed by victim's stories which were being broadcasted live.

Nevertheless, once the 'institutions of injustice' break down, a number of bystanders takes on a more active role in demanding punishment

<sup>17</sup> Cohen, S. (2013), *States of denial: Knowing about atrocities and suffering*, John Wiley & Sons.

<sup>18</sup> Lerner, M. J. (1980), *The Belief in a Just World: A Fundamental Delusion*, Springer.

for perpetrators and justice for victims. Hence, these are the people who actively participate in the reconciliation process. This is how the main heroine of the film should be interpreted – she paid attention, she did not ‘turn her head the other way’ and she devotedly participated in discovering the truth. In that sense, another important contribution of *Country of My Skull* to the issue of popularisation of scientific knowledge is the heroine’s struggle against the so-called excessive awareness<sup>19</sup> (a condition similar to the burnout syndrome). More precisely, being immersed in the stories of the victims carries with it the risk of living in the past – people who are overly aware of these wrongdoings cannot incorporate them into their life narrative, but instead recreate them anew in the present through an obsession with new painful information, the construction of an image of themselves as a victim and through the desire for revenge.

Again, *Ubuntu* philosophy, as a local cultural resource, appears as a solution in the movie. The purpose of the truth about the past is not revenge, but the restoration of humanity to both victims and perpetrators. In that sense, the heroine interprets the experiences of victims and perpetrators as an integral part of a wider community and of a comprehensive destiny – suffering, shame, grief and forgiveness are different manifestations of mutual dependence of people and their eternal orientation towards each other. Bearing this in mind, it is not surprising that some experts insist on the resocialization of perpetrators as a necessary step towards reconciliation and social reconstruction of society.<sup>20</sup>

In conclusion, a passive bystander is an indispensable part of a divided society. As long as the privileged minority can provide a socially acceptable context for prolonged division and as long as basic needs of the (mis)informed majority are not fully threatened, people who act against institutional violence are the exception, rather than the rule. Therefore, the reconciliation process needs to include as many members of a community as possible in order to eliminate the risk of indifference and oblivion, once the initial denial is eliminated.

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<sup>19</sup> Cohen, S. (2013), *States of denial: Knowing about atrocities and suffering*, John Wiley & Sons.

<sup>20</sup> Ajduković, D. (prir.) (2003), *Socijalna rekonstrukcija zajednice: Psihološki procesi, rješavanje sukoba i socijalna akcija*, Društvo za psihološku pomoć.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

In summary, there are a several key insights regarding the process of reconciliation and its cinematographic depiction that deserve closer attention.

First of all, truth about past injustice must be revealed, because it form a basis for respecting those who suffered in the past (appreciating their pain prevents them from suffering in the future due to social oblivion) and for the fight against revisionism. In other words, the general tendency is that people tend to have a positive image of themselves and in-group, in order to preserve their self-esteem.<sup>21</sup> In this regard, there are many attempts of historical revisionism by politicians, the education system, mass media and other 'identity managers', whose aim is to relativize negative historical facts for the sake of preserving the positive image of the nation.<sup>22</sup>

Second, truth is one of the basic factors of reconciliation. In other words, exclusive reliance on retributive justice or a simple cessation of armed conflict inevitably leads to its re-emergence. Truth, as a process of forming a common interpretation of the past and sharing it among members of all parties of the conflict, is a necessary part of the reconciliation process.<sup>23</sup>

In the end, the film points to one of the extremely powerful mechanisms for bringing the warring parties closer together. It is the existence of the so-called multiple or shared identity. People do not belong to just one group, but simultaneously share membership with others based on their ethnicity, religion, workplace etc. The possibility for warring parties to find a category that will encompass them all is one of the most important tools of reconciliation.<sup>24</sup> More precisely, construing a shared or inclusive identity emphasises the similarities between the members of the opposing parties and mitigates the stubborn insistence on differences. In that sense, the heroine of the film overcomes the malignant

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<sup>21</sup> Tajfel, H., Turner, J. C. (2004), "An integrative theory of intergroup conflict", in: M. J. Hatch & M. Schultz (Eds.) *Organizational identity: A reader*, Oxford University Press, 56-65.

<sup>22</sup> Mammone, A. (2006), "A daily revision of the past: Fascism, anti-Fascism, and memory in contemporary Italy", *Modern Italy 11* (2), 211-226.

<sup>23</sup> Kriesberg, L. (2004), "Comparing Reconciliation Actions within and between Countries", in: Y. Bar-Siman-Tov (Ed.), *From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation*. Oxford University Press, 81-110.

<sup>24</sup> Nadler, A., Malloy, T., & Fisher, J. D. (eds.) (2008), *The social psychology of intergroup reconciliation*, Oxford University Press.

racial division by identifying herself with her country, that is, together with all sides of the conflict.

Indeed, one can say that the strongest message of both the film and scientific literature is precisely the appeal to find something similar to the side with which we are in conflict with and to try to see them as equal. The heroine did it through love for the country in which she lives. Someone else will try the same thing in a different way. The author of this paper offers the following possibility: *we are all human*.

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