SEARCH FOR POSITIVE PEACE IN EASTERN SLAVONIA: CONTENTIOUS HISTORICAL DISCOURSES AND SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

by

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Search for Positive Peace in Eastern Slavonia: Contentious Historical Discourses and School Communities

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my mother Nada, my grandmother Ana and grandfather Đorđe who taught me about love, sacrifice and forgiveness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

SEARCH FOR POSITIVE PEACE IN EASTERN SLAVONIA: CONTENTIOUS HISTORICAL DISCOURSES AND SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

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History is heavily rooted in what can be called narrative politics - different versions of the same historical event are tools used to assert, maintain or challenge action and legitimacy of the Other. Discursive contention is often transmitted into the realm of relationships and interactions on the ground that are marked by tensions and divisions. Eastern Slavonia will serve as a case study to explore how the members of school communities are affected by the master historical discourses, how this translates into their views of the Self and the Other and what is the role of teachers and parents in this process. The purpose of this study is to learn from school communities about the ways of dealing with the legacy of their contentious past and how this local knowledge can be used to promote interethnic understanding and tolerance as well as prevention of future violence.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

…Each man's death diminishes me, for I am involved in mankind…. (John Donne, Meditation XVI)

The opening quote of a metaphysical poet, John Donne, probably most succinctly captures the tone of this study underlying its humanistic and ethical considerations. Following far-away conflicts in the Middle East and Africa, the pictures of the Balkans emerge in my mind's eye, and with them a feeling of profound sadness and unrest. I can almost hear the cries of suffering, the clamor of arms, the sirens, the explosions of these distant, yet somehow familiar conflicts. Then the feeling of anger, despair and shame sets in for sitting in my room and writing my thesis with the aim to mitigate conflicts, while conflicts persist with vengeance all around us. The calling of a conflict resolutioner cannot be just to explore, analyze or practice different avenues of conflict resolution. Rather, the key of our vocation is about not losing touch with humanity; it is, above all, about empathizing, caring and loving our fellow humans. With this lofty stance, I am humbly introducing my topic, trying to identify ideas that would contribute, at least in miniscule way, to the much needed change in handling and resolving conflicts.

The proposition of this study is that people should be recognized as historical agents and the only way to do that is by exploring the originality of their actions that are always in the making and interwoven in relationships with others. As an alternative to

interventionism and militarism autistically implemented in conflict situations around the world that invariably fail to address the roots of conflicts in their local settings, building human potential to do good and capacity to perform autonomous action despite constraining circumstances should contribute to a paradigm shift in approaching conflicts.

It is important to stress that we cannot understand and explain conflicts if we only focus on people's potential to do evil, to be aggressive, and violent; we cannot understand it by only searching for causes of conflict in human *innate* competitiveness, historical traumas and grievances. We cannot even start to comprehend the logic of extreme violence if we do not have counter examples of people who decided to reject or interrupt it. The aim of this study has been to observe local communities that are facing the consequences of violent conflict and explore how they deal with a contentious past in their everyday lives. Specifically, it is my intention to illuminate ways of how school communities reconstruct and negotiate contentious historical discourses, which would provide some insight into the processes and tools that can be used to promote positive views and attitudes towards the Other. This will be an attempt to look for sources of human capacity and potential to do good despite the heritage of violence; it is a quest for values of forgiveness and love that are much-needed but often glanced over in post-conflict societies.

This study will also contribute to the furthering of conflict management and resolution capacities through a better understanding of key dynamics of memorialization and reconciliation processes at the communal level that may contribute to prevention of

future violent conflicts. It is important not to neglect the communities and their views of contentious history as they provide insight into the ways of how positive change can be introduced in the conflict cycle. Examining how people on the ground deal with a contentious past can illuminate the local and contingent solutions that conflict resolutioners must consider in order to incorporate local experiences into their approaches to peace and conflict resolution.

The last, but not least, aim of this study is to contribute to the peacebuilding capacity and intellectual capital of the local people as it seeks to develop suggestions for improving history education with emphasis on positive peace[1], conflict resolution and collaborative learning. There is a clear gap in knowledge about the processes of dealing with the past at the grassroots level, while the role of teachers and parents in mediating meanings about the contentious past remains a mystery. Suggestions will be based on an in-depth analysis of the key case and local knowledge that would inform policies, and encourage socialization and healthy relationships among different groups.

Subject Matter

The conflicts that swept through the republics of former Yugoslavia in the 1990s are often characterized as Europe's deadliest conflicts since World War II. These conflicts have ravaged the country and its peoples resulting in an estimated 130,000 to 200,000

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[1] According to Johan Galtung (1969) positive peace refers to the restoration of relationships and social justice, the creation of social systems that serve the needs of the whole population. Negative peace refers to the absence of (direct) violence.

dead and more than a million displaced (Leitenberg 2006). They have become infamous for the war crimes committed, including mass murder and genocide. Even seventeen years after the war has ended, the communities of former Yugoslavia are undergoing a painful process of facing the past, while reconciliation and positive peace remain elusive. This study will focus particularly on historical memories and narratives that emerged from the processes of Croatian state formation, war and transition towards peace in the context of the Eastern Slavonia region. The region of Eastern Slavonia, situated in the north-east of Croatia, witnessed some of the worst fighting and atrocities during the 1991-95 war, and nowadays, its Croat and Serb communities live in conditions of distrust, interethnic divisions, and segregation. The politics of memory operationalized through competing versions of the same historical events is used as a tool to assert, maintain or challenge action, status and legitimacy of different agents. Grievances and traumas of the war are reflected in historical discourses that tend to be contentious and divisive.

The struggle over meanings of the past is really a struggle for either maintaining or challenging legitimacy that ultimately translates into having or not having more access to benefits, status, agency and freedom in general. In the context of Croatia, there are two major ethnic groups that have struggled over the access to resources, power and legitimacy throughout history. Croats and Serbs had a status of nations within former Yugoslavia, which gave them similar access to political and economic resources. In the newly independent Croatia, Serbs' status has changed and dwindled to that of a minority, with almost two thirds of the Serb population exiled from Croatia as a consequence of the

military operations *Storm* and *Lightning*. However, debates over history persist not only in Eastern Slavonia, but also in the wider regional space in which these two groups live in different constellations trying to cope with the consequences of war and their interconnected destiny.

History has particularly been at the center of debates pertaining to education, history textbooks and schooling models in Croatia. Educational systems are loci where competing historical narratives often clash, and therefore the way those competing histories are dealt with can determine if educational systems would become repositories of conflict or of peace. The members of school communities, by which I mean students, teachers and parents, belonging to two former adversary groups are deeply involved in construction of meanings about history trying to make sense of themselves and others in a new national, regional and global context.

In the wake of war and trauma, people tap into the past collective narratives seeking explanation of present events, which subsequently shape their lives, actions, orientations and the world around them. However, this study posits that historical narratives should not only be seen as collective structures or scripts that individuals can tap into to get a sense of themselves and others. People's personal histories are equally important in production of meanings related to the past. This phenomenon is called the "sociobiographical memories" (Zerubavel 2004), which refers to individual narratives that are, in different ways, intertwined with social and collective histories.

Historical narratives operate at different levels and they represent structures that are not only constitutive of our individual selves influencing our present and future

relationships and actions, but they are actually constituted by us to fit our own particular views of reality. Insistence on individualization of historical narratives reflects the author's idea that there is a need to examine the complex realities on the ground, which would offer to the keen observer, an elaborate and rich picture about protagonists, their relationships and the context they live in. The key premise is that individuals are able to construct, imagine and live their own histories by retelling the past in various relational contexts, and in this retelling, it may be possible to find clues for dealing with and preventing future conflicts.

Importance of Education in Post-Conflict Societies

An educational system in post-conflict societies may serve as "a battleground and a repository of conflict where different communities compete over history and the society's narrative" (Aall, Helsing, and Tidwell 2007, p. 328) . History education in post-conflict societies is often characterized by segregation as a common denominator in schools. According to Aall et al. (2007) such a situation can be reversed through various approaches that enable exposure to multifaceted historical narratives, which can contribute to gaining a more holistic picture of the past. The importance of education for securing long-term peace is also emphasized by Davis (2005) and Harb (2008) who see teachers and students as agents for social change. The education can play a key role in shaping perceptions, feelings and the development of awareness of the other ethnic groups, which was emphasized in a study conducted by the OSCE in Macedonia (OSCE

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Publication 2010). The findings of that study identified the connection between teachers' comments and students' views about other ethnic communities.

An extensive attitudinal study with children, parents and teachers in Vukovar, Eastern Slavonia that examined the interplay between education in Vukovar and attitudes of majority and minority communities towards assimilation, integration and multiculturalism raised an important question about whether the students' negative attitude towards integration is a result of the segregated schooling or other forms of social divisions outside the school (Čorkalo Biruški & Ajduković, 2008). The proposition is that such a gap can be overcome by reaching beyond quantitative measures of number of contacts and attitudinal estimations (Čorkalo Biruški & Ajduković, 2008) and uncovering meanings and patterns of relationships through people's narratives not only in schools, but also wider contexts. The untested assumption is that perceptions toward the other ethnic group are not only shaped in classrooms, but also reflect deep divisions and cleavages that persist within the communities and society on the whole. The study looking at the school communities that represent the microcosm of youth's engagement and interaction with peers, parents and teachers in trying to make sense of the past is therefore a missing link in understanding the dynamics of relationships on the ground as well as possibilities of their transformation.

The important role of education in post-conflict societies has also been the focus of an ethnographic research, conducted by Amra Hromadžić, into the tension between the international community's discourses of integration and the local ethno-nationalist quest for separate schooling in post-conflict Bosnia & Herzegovina. This study focused

particularly on the Mostar gymnasium, pointing to the conclusion that more research

needs to be done to identify key factors of contention between macro and micro level

discourses. The assumption of the local communities that they can achieve protection of

their community, culture, and language through segregation in education, collides with

the assumption of the international community that is advocating the idea of integrated

schools. Hromadžić claims that "the exercise of the right to cultural autonomy led to the

shrinking of public places that nurture interaction, exchange, and exercise of democracy

across ethnic groups" (Hromadžić 2008, p. 561). While the students are sharing the same

premises in schools, they each go to their part of the town after school; they do not

associate with each other, not because they are not given the opportunity for interaction,

but because they are part of the social structures that are permeated by divisions,

segregation and ethnic hatred. Education is the locus of such tensions in Eastern

Slavonia, too, but to address those tensions, there is a need to focus our exploration not

only on schools and education systems but also on the communities.

Peace education programs and initiatives based on contact theory and creation of

shared identities as rooted in Western traditions are critically assessed as not having a

lasting impact in the context of Palestinian-Israeli education system because of youths'

embeddedness in a constraining communal enmity system (Hammack, 2011). Hammack

emphasizes the need to explore the relationship between master and personal narratives in

order to obtain insights into the mutual constitution of culture and mind through the

process of narration on the ground. More specifically, to understand the individual

choices and relationships in educational systems, we need to examine the interplay

between master narratives and individual stories embedded in such systems. There is a need for a more comprehensive and integrative approach in analyzing processes that are taking place at the communal level.

The Importance of Historical Narratives

Grievances and traumas of war are reflected in contentious historical narratives that increase tensions, mobilize nationalist sentiments and cause social divisions. As Rouhana and Bar-Tal (1998) argue, collective narratives gain their centrality in response to the political events while serving, among other functions, as a coping mechanism to strengthen the community's resolve in the face of adverse or traumatic events. When narratives of past collective traumas are challenged by the existence of alternative narratives, those alternative narratives are perceived as a threat to the national identity that as a result becomes entrenched, more salient and often evoked to reflect the past traumas (Volkan 1997). For example, when a group of authors, Snježana Koren, Magdalena Najbar-Agičić and Tvrtko Jakovina, published a history textbook supplement[2] to be used in Eastern Slavonia's schools that presented a diverse and complex narrative about the war talking about suffering of both Serbs and Croats, this caused a public outrage and was subsequently withdrawn (Marko-Stöckl, 2007). The supplement included the narrative about Serbian victims of Croatian military operations *Bljesak* (Lightening) and *Oluja* (Storm), as well as ethnic cleansing of Serbs from Croatia in the

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[2] The supplement to the history textbooks resulted from Erdut Agreement of 1995, which set out the guidelines for the peaceful reintegration of Eastern Slavonia and Baranja (previously Serbian Autonomous Region of Krajina) into Croatia.

aftermath of these operations.

Despite the state efforts to address the interethnic diversity, the people on the ground were not ready to recognize historical discourses of the Other because those discourses delegitimate their own views of the past. Therefore, it is important to explore views that people attach to contested historical discourses on the ground through which threats and meanings that undermine peace circulate, which will provide insights into the ways of how these contentious meanings can be renegotiated. As Margaret Smith (2005) points out, understanding the multiperspectival nature of history and realization that different groups experience the same events differently may be more important than searching for common narratives of history, possibly imposed from the outside. Nevertheless, the school communities represent the key sites for having difficult conversations about history and exploration of how change can be introduced into the conflict cycle that could lead to sustainable peace.

For conflict scholars, narrative as such, is particularly important when examining how people deal with the contentious past in post-conflict contexts, which past events they identify as important and how they orient themselves towards those events. Education in post-conflict societies is extremely political – it is a place where narratives of different groups clash and cause contention, so the issue of which or whose version of history is taught may become, for different communities, a question of their cultural and social survival, i.e., it becomes a key for preservation of their identity. Different groups have different stories to tell. The people's choice of a particular historical narrative is heavily ideological and political, while reflecting not only views or beliefs of the

speakers, but also of their communities and the larger societal contexts.

The rules governing production and interpretation of historical narratives serve as scripts that regulate and inform people's action and identity that is deeply connected with people's primeval need for knowing where they come from and how past action of their collectivities influences their present and future lives. Shotter and Gergen (1989) argue that, in the postmodern world, "persons are largely ascribed identities according to the manner of their embedding within a discourse—in their own or in the discourses of others" (p. ix). Examining these narratives therefore becomes key to understanding people's present views of themselves and the relevant others with whom they had shared the historical stage.

This overview of the studies that have been done previously on the topics of history education and its impact on post-conflict societies as well as the importance of historical discourses that influence identities and relationships of the people on the ground, confirm the need to examine and learn from discursive practices on the ground, which will enable exploration of new avenues for addressing the very roots of the conflicts that result in negative peace. More research is needed into the approaches to education, particularly the role of communities, parents and teachers, in post-conflict settings, because education might hold the key for conflict transformation and promotion of much-needed empathy towards the Other, which can significantly influence the future relationships between former adversaries.

A Brief History of the Conflict

A brief historical overview will provide a necessary insight into the relational genealogy of the two groups in question, Croats and Serbs, and will set the stage for the unfolding study. History has its continuity and one cannot explain present events without taking a step back. Especially in the case of a protracted social conflict characterized by renewed escalations of violence, as has been the conflict between Serbs and Croats, it is important to examine what preceded the recent war and what were the possible drivers of conflict.

Although we can trace the roots and continuity of contention between the two groups to the period before the Second World War, due to the specific focus of this study, we will start this brief historical overview with the Second World War that can be seen as a turning point in the level and intensity of violence between the two groups. Collective memory of atrocities and traumas of the WWII have had a significant impact on the dynamics of relationships and tragic trajectory of violence in the recent 1991-95 war in Croatia. During the Second World War, Croats sided with the Axis powers of Germany, Italy and Japan and implemented large-scale Catholization, cleansing and killing of Serb Orthodox community on the territory of Croatian fascist state. The Croatian proxy fascist state NDH (Independent State of Croatia) under the leadership of Ante Pavelić's Ustaša regime systematically carried out genocide of Serb, Jewish and Roma populations on its territory. Some estimates show that the systematic killing resulted in annihilation of about 390,000[3] Serbs in Croatia, primarily in Jasenovac and Nova Gradiška concentration

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[3] http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/jasenovac/frameset.html

camps.[4] The Croatian fascist state also annexed Bosnia, which resulted in a bloody Hobbesian conflict with many of the worst atrocities of the period. Serbs, on the other hand, were internally divided into two factions: Četniks, led by Draža Mihailović, who were under the direction of the Royal Yugoslav Government in exile that fought both Partisans and Ustašas, and Communist Partisans that fought Germans, Četniks and Ustašas. A smaller percentage of Croats in Croatia was also part of the Communist Partisan resistance movement. Such territorially oriented and exclusive nationalisms led to further divisions, internal fragmentation and fratricidal war.

Croatian traumatic experience came in the aftermath of WWII when partisan forces retaliated against fascist Ustašas that were massively killed in Slovenia and Austria as they attempted to surrender to Allied forces. The mass retribution took place against the former NDH soldiers by the Partisan army in the area near the Austrian town of Bleiburg as well as Dravograd and Maribor in Slovenia. The number of killed could not be accurately determined, although the estimates vary from 30,000 to 40,000 people. The rest of the prisoners and civilians were then sent back to Croatia on foot with the partisan escort – an event called *the Way of the Cross*. Scholars mostly agree that there are a lot of inconsistencies in describing this event as well as politicization of the number of

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[4] According to the entry in Encyclopedia of the Holocaust, edited by Israel Gutman, vol.1, 1995, pp.739-740 around six hundred thousand people were murdered at Jasenovac, mostly Serbs, Jews, Gypsies, and opponents of the Ustasha regime. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum assessed that the Ustasha regime murdered between 77,000 and 99,000 people of all ethnicities (but mostly Serbs) in Jasenovac between 1941 and 1945, and that during the period of Ustasha rule, a total of between 320,000 and 340,000 ethnic Serbs and more than 30,000 Croatian Jews were killed either in Croatia or at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Retrieved from: http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005449

casualties in various textbooks due to the lack of historiographic research as well as secondary literature and sources (Grahek 2005).

After the creation of Socialist Yugoslavia and the 1945 Constitution, the main idea that was promoted was that of equality of all nations in the federation. The official historical narratives within the Socialist Yugoslavia tried to ameliorate the trauma and atrocities of WWII, and improve the relationships between communities by silencing the stories about atrocities and focusing on positive rhetoric of brotherhood and unity, but these past events continued existing in collective memory and private narratives of people.

Even though the federal institutions were placed in Belgrade (the capital of Serbia) and despite the fact that Serbs were the most numerous ethnic group in Socialist Yugoslavia, the authoritarian life-long head of the state, Josip Broz Tito came from a Croat-Slovene family. At the same time, six Republics of Yugoslavia had a high degree of economic, cultural and educational autonomy. Historical narratives were suppressed by the new socialist state in educational and institutional systems. Atrocities committed during WWII were marginalized and equalized even though they were different in number and scope, while the genocide against Serbs in Croatia has never been properly addressed as well as Croatian aspirations for an independent state. To counteract the nationalistic tendencies of both Croats, that aspired to live in a homogenous independent state (to which a large Serbian population in Croatia was the biggest obstacle) and Serbs, who sought security through a unitary state (all Serbs in one state), Yugoslav elites had developed master discourses of unity and brotherhood with the aim of dissolving ethnic

differences and boundaries. This overarching discourse was implemented through education and public institutions that had to ensure, according to the "party key", the equal participation of all nations living in Yugoslav state. However, the loose structure of the federation of Yugoslavia contributed to the weakening of the state and with the end of the Cold War, death of Tito and economic crisis, disintegration of the country became imminent.

Croatian and Serbian nationalist elites had very different concepts about the ideal states for their nations that came to the forefront as Yugoslavia weakened. Those concepts clashed most notably in President Tuđman's discourse of a "one-thousand-year long dream" of independent Croatia as well as President Milošević's claim that "all Serbs should live in one state". Croatia and Slovenia began to seek greater autonomy within Yugoslavia, which later transformed into requests for confederal status and independence. At the 14th Extraordinary Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in January 1990, it became clear that the dissolution of Yugoslavia was imminent as the representatives of the six Yugoslav republics were not able to agree on the future of the state. The multiparty system brought very few alternatives to the nationalist party of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ - Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica), led by Croatian nationalist Franjo Tuđman. The major opponent of HDZ was the former communist party of Croatia called the Social Democratic Party (SDP) led by Ivica Račan that did not stand a chance in the overall climate of the collapse of communism in Europe. Franjo Tuđman's political platform was based on anti-Yugoslav and anti-Serb rhetoric as well as a promise of Croatian independence. The HDZ was

massively supported in Croatia and abroad in the diaspora that provided much of the funding for implementation of Tudjman's political program. Tudjman won the elections on April 22, 1990, and a new constitution was ratified that proclaimed Croatia a nation of the Croatian people, thereby degrading the status of Serbs from nation into a minority (Gagnon 2004). The Serb population refused to participate in the elections and held a referendum about their future in the areas that would later become SAO Krajina (Serbian Autonomous Region of Krajina). The Croatian government tried to stop the referendum by sending their police forces into those areas, but the Serbs blocked the roads with wooden logs. This incident was named the Balvan Revolucija or the Log Revolution, which marked the beginning of the formation of SAO Krajina. The conflict escalated and the bombing of towns and villages became an everyday reality, resulting in numerous civilian casualties. The siege of Vukovar by Serb forces backed by JNA in 1991 was the biggest battle in the recent war in Croatia, which resulted in hundreds of combatants and civilians killed. Many people on both sides had to leave their homes either under threat or from fear of being persecuted, which resulted in numerous IDPs and refugees in the surrounding regions and countries. One of the worst war crimes that occurred after the fall of Vukovar was Ovčara, nearby Vukovar, where a mostly Croatian group of 263 men (POWs and civilians) were killed by Serb forces.   After the ceasefire of January 1992, the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) was deployed[5] and open violence was stopped. In 1995, the Croatian army supported by NATO implemented operations Flash and Storm 'liberating' the territories of Serb Krajina, which resulted in hundreds of

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[5] United Nations Security Council. 1992. Resolution 743 S-RES-743, February 21, 1992. Retrieved on

people killed, thousands of homes burned and destroyed, and approximately 200,000 to 250,000 of Serbs driven out of Croatia (Amnesty International 2005). The progression of historical narrative of the two groups culminates in the war of 1990-95 with a finale that would leave a longstanding grievance and trauma for both sides.

Croatia has been a point where two great civilizations joined and merged: Byzantine Orthodox and Western Catholic. It is situated in a region in which its neighboring countries of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro all have Croat and Serb ethnic groups living on their territory, which makes the regional countries highly interconnected and raises the possibility of conflict spillover to the maximum. Throughout history, each of the groups living in these neighboring countries had given the support to their respective groups in Croatia.

The importance of alliances goes beyond the regional frontiers to the international arena whose involvement was so blatantly conspicuous in the conflict of 1991, where Serbs have been diplomatically backed by Russia while the abrupt recognition of Croatia and Slovenia by Germany can be considered as one of the main precipitating events that ignited the war in Croatia.

Overview of Chapters

The overview of the chapters in this study will provide summaries and initial insights into the subject matter, aims, historical background, theoretical underpinnings, methodology and findings of the study.

The first chapter introduces the topic and elaborates on the significance of the

study. It also illuminates the historical relationships between the two groups starting with WWII. The subject matter is examined by focusing on the key concepts such as historical narratives, interaction between official historical narratives and individual stories, relationships, possibilities of conflict transformation and positive peace. We will get insight not only into the official historical scripts, but also the *living memory*, into what is legitimate and correct according to the participants of this study, and how this influences their views of Selves, the relevant Others and the relationship between the two. This chapter also outlines previous studies related to the subject matter and provides a historical overview of the relational genealogy of the two groups.

The second chapter represents a critical review of concepts and theories relevant to this study. It focuses on explaining the difference between discourses and narratives and the connection between history and narratives. Narratives are seen as a vital mode of historical understanding, while discourses are viewed as much wider categories than narratives, including behaviors, practices and relationships mainstreamed from above. Collective memory is also discussed as both a top down and bottom up phenomenon, while identity is seen as dialogic, relational and always in flux. Ricoeur's narrative ethics and forgiveness are explored in the concluding part of the chapter.

The third chapter focuses on methodology. This chapter begins with an overview of the literature that has informed author's approach to the methodology, which is followed by elaboration of the research puzzle, aims, research format, research instrument and particular methods used to collect and analyze data as well as researcher's orientation. The case study format was used to allow an in-depth study of the discursive

dynamics that are taking place at the level of school communities. The spatial variation is based on the fact that there are two different history educational models used in schools in Eastern Slavonia - *integrated and segregated*. This variation will serve for comparing views of the participants regarding recent history and determining if and how they comply or defect from the official narrative.

Chapter four focuses on data analysis. The first section of the chapter is dedicated to the analysis of students' Likert scale responses to select interview questions, while the following section focuses on the analysis of data elicited around the areas of interest that provide some insight into the research puzzle, such as: 1) relevance of history for present and sources of historical knowledge, 2) influence of recent history on the view of the Other, 3) mediating historical meanings and the role of parents and teachers and 4) suggestions for the future.

Chapter five is dedicated to the analysis of students' narratives about the historical events that they deemed most relevant for their present life and their connection to the official historical narratives from the history textbooks. The aim of this chapter is to examine the resonance of official historical narratives from the history textbooks in students' individual narratives, which will provide some insight into the discursive processes at the grassroots' level and how those processes shape people's views and relationships.

Chapter six focuses on the discussion of findings. The discussion begins with an exploration of the role of education in interrupting cycles of violence and transforming destructive conflict situations into constructive ones. The discussion then centers on the

relevance of history and how official historical narratives resonate on the ground. It recognizes that the appropriation of history on the ground is not only influenced by the sources of historical knowledge, but also by mediating actors such as parents and teachers. The findings suggest systemic thinking based on complexity theory as a useful framework for identifying latent drivers of conflict as well as factors that can generate positive change.

Chapter seven concludes the study of Eastern Slavonia's case with implications and suggestions that may enrich theoretical knowledge and prompt new initiatives of conflict resolution in the post-violent conflict settings. A section on Croatia's integration into the EU provides some expectations and predictions about the implications of this event for relationships between Serbs and Croats. This chapter underlines contributions of this and similar studies to various peace constituencies with the aim to promote constructive conflict resolution approaches and to move conflict systems towards positive peace.

Conclusion

One of the key arguments of this study is that dealing with the contentious past is a communal process, which requires a dedicated and joint involvement of all relevant social levels and structures, from students, parents, teachers to ministry officials and civil society. History education can play a positive role in post-violent conflict contexts only if tolerance, decentralization and acceptance of difference are seen as a possibility rather than a threat. The value of fostering respectful, friendly and caring relationships through

interactive learning about history can be key for societies that are trying to navigate their way out of the historical cycles of violence. It is necessary for people on the ground to own the process and believe in the possibility of truly integrated communities that will not be imposed from the outside but emerge from within.

CHAPTER 2: CRITICAL REVIEW OF THEORIES AND CONCEPTS

This chapter outlines key theories and concepts that will provide lenses for the analysis of findings in this study. It begins with the discussion of the difference between discourses and narratives as seen by the author and continues with the analysis of connection between history and narratives. A claim is made about the interconnectedness between narrative and history whereby narratives are seen as a vital mode of historical understanding necessary for community building. Discourses are seen as much wider categories than narratives including enouncements, constructs or groups of signs through which certain behaviors, practices and relations are regulated from above.

Narratives represent modes of discourse that can both be constituted and constitutive of agents and the context. Historical narratives, in particular, differ from the traditional view of narrative in that they often do not provide closure. They have certain recurring structural patterns that entrench positions leading to contention. In the following section, collective memory is discussed as both a top down and bottom up phenomenon, while identity is seen as dialogic, relational and always in flux. In the final part of the chapter, Ricoeur's narrative ethics and forgiveness are considered as a remedy for reconciliation and conflict resolution in post-conflict societies.

Discourses and Narratives

Discourses are seen in this study in Foucauldian terms as enouncements, constructs or groups of signs through which certain behaviors, practices and relations are regulated from above (Foucault 2002). They are much wider in scope than narratives, which are in this study considered a form of discourse. Although some authors use terms such as public narratives (Somers 1992) to describe something similar to the meaning of discourses in this study, I still prefer to use discourses as they do not only refer to the stories, but also to social practices, actions, institutional and social forces that exist outside stories and tend to regulate and shape them.

However, the idea of discourses as wider social categories does not take away the relevance of narratives as such. Narratives are seen as powerful tools of not just making sense and reflecting on different experiences, but also constructing the world, identities of Self and Other (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008). Narratives have the capacity within them to both constitute the world and be constitutive of agents. They are a particular mix of the outside social forces that are regulating meanings of an agent, but at the same time they provide an opportunity for an agent to find her or his own voice. They are both constraining and liberating. Moreover, narratives are interactional (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2008) and interpersonal; it is through them that we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world as well as our relations and views of the Other depending on our position (Somers, 1994). Narratives are seen as social or symbolic practice (Bourdieu 2002, 1977) in which ethnic groups engage in struggle over

legitimacy and recognition in order to accumulate symbolic capital and social power (De Fina 2008). This study sees narratives as prime loci in which time, space and relationality merge and in which interplay between structures, agency and identity can be explored in its historical and cultural context.

It is important to point out that historical narratives in this study diverge from Aristotelian definition of narratives as having straightforward linear structure that consists of a beginning, middle and end as well as some sort of closure and value judgment. The idea of historical narratives as cyclical, or more accurately, spiral will be explored in more depth as the findings of this study show that historical narratives tend to follow certain patterns that recur with slight differences over time and space. They do not provide closure and nothing gets solved at the end of such stories. Such patterns represent a challenge for Conflict Resolution scholars who are trying to change certain persistent and recurring types of conflict behaviors and dynamics in order to prevent a contentious past from repeating itself. The analysis of the structure of historical narratives is therefore crucial for generating a much-needed understanding as to how such narratives produce and perpetuate certain types of conflict behaviors.

Narratives and History

One of the main aims of this study is to illuminate the interplay between individual and official historical narratives, which would provide insight into the workings of

history and memory at the communal level in Eastern Slavonia. At the very core of interaction in communal and institutional contexts is narrative: the narratives used by students, teachers, parents and school administration; the narratives of regional policies and models; the narratives of textbooks and narratives emerging from classroom discussions. Drawing from David Carr's (1991) idea of interconnectedness between narrative and history, whereby narratives are seen as a necessary mode of historical understanding around which communities and groups are built, this study posits that historical events acquire meaning through narratives. However, narratives are not static. They depend on the perspective; they are unstable and fluctuating. Due to their plasticity, narratives carry within them the possibilities for transforming nationalist tendencies into collaborative and peaceful ones (Rothbart & Korostelina 2006). Additionally, the analysts of those narratives have to be aware that their own perspective influences not only the analysis, but also the original narrative that changes its form through analyst's interpretations. Conflict resolution researchers and practitioners should be aware that their methodologies and assumption that fit into a particular paradigm may cause limitations of their worldview, which may derail their research and interventions (Sandole 2002a).

As Hayden White aptly suggests:

Discourse, ... throws all 'tactical' rules into doubt, including those originally governing its own formation.... Discourse always tends toward metadiscursive reflexiveness. This is why every discourse is always as much about discourse itself as it is about the objects that make up its subject matter (White 1985, p.4).

Narratives are relational, interactive or *dialogic* (Bakhtin 1982). The meaning is created through narrative interaction of at least two subjects; through exchange, affirmations, negations, questions and feedback. The multitude of voices merge connecting past, present and future in a unified scheme of who we are. Narratives are key for establishing a communal and collective identity bringing together various of voices and perspectives.

Hayden White (1990), in his book *The Content of the Form,* deals with the problematic relationship between 'narrative discourse and historical representation' (p. ix), pointing to the fact that history since its beginnings comprises stories and narratives. Yet, narrative properties such as their ideological and political embeddedness point to the absence of neutrality, which questions the scientific premise of historiography. Many historiographers have rejected the narrative form of historical representation such as Tocqueville, Burkhardt and Huizinga, opting for non-narrative modes such as anatomy, the meditation and the epitome (White 1990). They have rejected the narrative mode to avoid the paradox between what is real, which is the aim of historiography, and imaginary; what historiography becomes if represented in narrative form. On the other hand, there is a problem with historiography stripped of narrative form. The historical representations such as annals or chronicles do not have narrative form, but they "leave things unresolved". Immanuel Kant argues that "historical narratives without analysis are empty, while historical analyses without narrative are blind" (cf. White 1990, p. 21). Only through narrative form can historical accounts reach their fullness, coherence and closure as well as an imaginary world of values worth transmitting to new generations.

The demand for closure in the historical story… is a demand for moral meaning, a demand that sequences of real events be assessed as to their significance as elements of a moral drama (White 1990, p. 21).

The problem of temporal discontinuity between the actual historical event and the individual who is narrating or writing about it contributes to the notion that history cannot ever be represented *objectively*. While the work of Hayden White supports this notion by suggesting that history cannot become part of human experience unless it is packaged in a narrative form, the narrative form does not need to be seen as a stumbling block in our exploration of the actuality of past. Rather, it is our very Western view of time and history that needs to be re-examined. How can we do that? An important concept that illuminates a different view of time is introduced by Heine (1994) who describes "the historical continuity of past and future in terms of an ever-renewable cyclicality and reversibility of time" (p. 1). The historical continuity is a very interesting concept that in a way emphasizes the present as an intersection of past and future. The present is a crucial locale for understanding the past and imagining the future. It represents a ground zero in an ever-evolving cycle of time in which we can for a moment observe its workings in an integrative manner.

This study considers current narratives of the past as an important space in which we can trace shifts, evolution and consequences of certain ideas. We can also gain insight into the contention and conflicts that arise from competing ideas, which Mikhail Bakhtin (1982) ascribes to tension between *centripetal* (tending toward greater homogeneity) and *centrifugal* forces (tending toward greater heterogeneity) (pp. 263, 289) that are operating

through narratives. Narrative contention is not necessarily negative, but can actually be creative if multiple voices and perspectives are properly recognized in various contexts. Contexts in which narratives operate are always relational. Narratives gain traction through interplay of discursive formations and reception of these formations that gain meaning intersubjectively, i.e. relationally.

It is often difficult to imagine and trace the processes of resonance of the official narratives at the interpersonal level, which is one of the aims of this study. They are usually private and hidden as opposed to, for example, commemoration and memorialization, which represent public practices of remembering that include the objects, the ritual, the context and community that performs the ritual. The objects may be monuments, statues, sites, religious objects etc. The ritual varies and depends on culture, tradition or official protocol. The context in which the practice takes place is changing with time and with it practices of commemoration and communities themselves.

Those changes can be traced in communal performance of practices over time. For example, if we consider processes of commemoration of WWII socialist heroes we can see the progression of pompous and glamorous commemorative performances and spectacles until the fall of socialism, at which point they lost their significance and were not any longer performed by the communities. While we can imagine the interplay of various factors that characterize the processes of commemoration, it is more difficult to imagine the workings of the official narratives at the interpersonal level because rituals and objects of memorialization appear to be more fragmented as they include discursive practices of various individuals making up a particular community.

Although different sources of historical knowledge do influence people's views of the past, the focus of this study is to learn how official narrative, as presented in the history textbooks, is reconstructed in individual narratives. Looking at history through a discursive lens and the nexus of individual and official enables us to examine different interpretations and voices as well as the functions of those interpretations in maintaining, negotiating and transforming social identities and interactions. This outlook is also helpful in identifying the meanings emerging out of social interaction, which cause divisions among different actors and perpetuate conflict. The perspective of the individual or the recipient of the larger official discourses is not only noteworthy because it is underexplored, but also because any individual perspective gives us insight into various forms of discourses present within a certain community. Following Bakhtin's (1982) argument that meaning itself is an event involving at least two parties, a speaker and a listener, or a writer and a reader, the meanings about past are constructed interactively and relationally between texts and subjects as well as between subjects themselves.

This study also posits a question of how official narratives of the past are taken up and reshaped by particular individuals who appropriate them in an attempt to re-articulate and employ those narratives in their particular local discursive milieus. The point is to understand how individuals deal with conflicts and divisions perpetuated through contentious historical narratives within their communities. The findings of this study show that contentious narratives of the past could hardly become joint, particularly in societies plagued by long-standing and protracted conflicts. Also, the study will show that

the idea of commonness of history and the attempts to create artificial compilations of joint historical narratives as a path towards reconciliation are not just redundant, but can actually be counterproductive.

The question of whether we can tell true stories about the past is not as important as embracing the multitude of stories, particularly about the war, that bear certain value judgments, beliefs that need to be understood so that conflicts and divisions within such communities can be properly addressed. Cronon (1992) suggests:

> *To try to escape the value judgments that accompany storytelling is to miss the point of history itself, for the stories we tell, like the questions we ask, are all finally about value* (p. 1376).

What seems to be needed is digging below manifest structure of the competing narratives and seeking themes, forms and structures that can serve as a first step towards disambiguating a contentious past. Openness to learning and curiosity are necessary for the creation of history textbooks, curricula, and trainings for teachers and parents that would equip all relevant stakeholders with analytical and critical tools to analyze manifest and latent structures of historical discourses. It is not about receiving historical discourse passively, but actively and curiously engaging with the discourse, digging deeper in search for meaning. Certainly, the possibility of social transformation towards positive peace seems more likely in communities that take up learning and awareness about the past in a more serious, critical and inclusive way.

Disambiguating Collective Memory

An important concept that requires attention when discussing how individuals are constituted by and constitute narratives of the past is the concept of collective memory. Maurice Halbwachs (1992) has contributed greatly to illuminating the phenomenon of memory, and his stance that individuals remember drawing from the existent social scripts and frameworks of memory supports the argument that some of the frameworks and structures of memory are so prevalent and institutionalized that it is very difficult for individuals to defect from them. The individual memory is, therefore, given a back seat in the overpowering processes of institutionalized, chartered and accepted patterns and practices of collective memory.

However, another line of thought argues that individuals, when trying to understand and conceptualize memory, are not merely reproducing discourses from above, but they are actual agents that use the existing discursive practices to create new meanings, histories, social relationships and identities in the process of interaction with each other. The concept of collective memory presupposes a relationship between history and commemorative symbols on the one hand, and individual beliefs, sentiments and judgments of the past, on the other (Funkenstein 1989; Olick and Robbins 1998). According to Schuman and Scott (1989), collective memory represents "a widely shared knowledge of past social events that may not have been personally experienced but are collectively constructed through communicative social functions". Individuals form

beliefs about the past collectively and through interaction with others, which result in different individuals or groups interpreting and commemorating the same events differently. Memory gives meaning to human life; memorializing is both a top down and bottom up process of intertwining "formal institutional and informal communicative remembering" (Paez and Hou-fu Liu 2010, p. 107).

The collective memory is produced both around salient past events that have left a deep imprint on a group's collective consciousness as well as around current events and relationships that dictate particular positioning and relevance of past events. Bloome and Bailey (1992) conceptualize events as the empirical space in which practices come into play with each other, and the conception of past is not just part of a shared cognitive cultural model, but it is always being constructed and reconstructed in the process of interaction. Events are not only remembered due to their relevance for collectives but also as a result of political currents of the day, media attention, dialogue and commemorations. For example, the rise of nationalism and fascist imagery in Croatia in the 1990s resulted in invocation of Croatian fascist atrocities in WWII in Serb collective memory, generating a feeling of threat and resistance, which eventually contributed to the escalation of conflict. Events from recent history can be very intense and emotionally loaded as they are part of the living history and exist through witnesses of those events and oral memory. Bearing witness is one way of constituting the memory in the self and the community.

The power of 'communicative or living' memories led some authors such as Jones (2004) to conclude that the sources of conflict in former Yugoslavia are in the living

memories of WWII. Traumas and unhealed wounds of WWII gain their momentum at times of perceived threat, fear mongering and a sense of endangerment that do not necessarily presuppose the existence of real threat:

> *Memories of past conflicts are maintained and reactivated when they fit dominant cultural values, …, when they are based on direct and vivid experience for the group or society, when they are relevant for current social issues, enhance collective self-esteem and are supported by institutional and informal acts of remembering. (*Paez and Hou-fu Liu 2010, p. 113)

Chosen trauma theory can provide additional insight into intrapsychic individual and collective workings of memory sparked by some traumatic historical event and subsequently perpetuated through contentious historical narratives. Vamik Volkan argues that unless a chosen trauma is mourned and recognized, it will persist and will always be a tool for reigniting the conflict. Both collective and individual memories have at their epicenters a traumatic event that serves as a vehicle for the continuation of certain beliefs, images and stereotypes. Serbs' trauma with regards to Croats occurred during WWII in the form of genocide committed against them by Croatian fascist Ustaša regime, which has not been properly mourned, addressed or commemorated.6 When Croatian President Franjo Tuđman started introducing the new Croatian language, exhibiting flags and other symbols of the WWII fascist Croatian state, this action evoked Serbian "psycho-cultural" narratives of victimhood, which resulted in rebellion due to imminent threat and a security dilemma.

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6 The other great trauma was the plight of Serbs in Kosovo after the Turkish occupation symbolized in the Kosovo Battle of 28th June, 1389.

Volkan argues that when a chosen trauma remains active, the shared psychological and mental depiction of the past victimization is often founded on misrepresentations of a large group's perceptions, which leads group members to view descendents of their ancestors' perpetrators as extensions of the perpetrators. Jones (2004) states that this stimulates the feeling of humiliation that accompanies the past victims' shame (due to loss), which serves as a bonding mechanism, transmitted from generation to generation, linking generationally different members of the same group across time. However, it is not only shame that bonds the members of the group, but a perceived threat and fear based on collective experience of trauma. For example, Croatian traumatic experience of Bleiburg in the aftermath of WWII is closely connected to the fear that the neighboring country of Serbia might stand in support of the Serb minority group within Croatia. Both groups have their psycho-cultural narratives of victimhood, which are related to their very existence as a collective. Those narratives always emerge in the moments of crises or existential threat to become an extremely powerful and unifying tool for initiating and perpetuating conflicts.

The functions of memory are not only in paying due respect to the past, but also in building groups, identities and allegiances. Memory, thus, becomes a tool through which transformation of relationships and views of the Other becomes a possibility. The connection to the past becomes a lifeline through which values, beliefs and dispositions are transmitted to future generations. These values and beliefs are not necessarily the constructive ones, but they are certainly not immutable and fixed; indeed, they can be changed as the context and actors change. Evaluative practices lead to preferred choices

and selection among the infinite number of events and experiences. Margaret Somers (1994) suggests that the primacy of themes within narratives influences how events are processed and selected (p. 54). The selection of particular historical narratives is based on evaluation and importance of certain narratives for people's individual and collective lives.

Relational Power of Individuals in Memory Production

Scholars, policymakers and advocates have all found themselves confronted with pressing questions about the workings of memory in the practice of post-violent conflict healing, reconciliation and construction of group identities. This study posits that collective memory is a relational phenomenon and its objects and topics emerge out of networks and the interplay of various actors co-creating and selecting memories that gain relevance through interaction. Lee, Ramenzoni, and Holme (2010) argue that it is "communication that reinforces the memories of interacting individuals, and it is through this process that associative arcs can spread in a population so that memory webs come to share common elements across people collective memories"[7]. The production of memory is a multi-faceted process in which discourses of the past emerge and evolve through relational dynamics of various actors. People are enabled through communication within the web of relationships to structure and transform the understanding of the Self, the Other and the context.

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[7] Online article retrieved Feb 2, 2013 at:
http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0012522.

Memories are indeed operationalized through discourses of the past that acquire meanings relationally. If an utterance that a person makes is not recognized by the other person as meaningful, such utterance does not have any validity; it is placed in the realm of absurdity, it cannot be heard and it is reduced to non-existence. In conflict situations, there is often an almost impenetrable wall that is erected by those who are incapable of hearing each other's stories because those stories exist outside their reality, accepted norms and values. There is often a very limited array of discursive possibilities that are in use while the rest is condemned to oblivion, absurdity and silence.

Promoting and silencing certain discourses of the past has become a political game aimed at managing collective action in a way that suits particular needs and interests of elites. Having power over discourses means having power over knowledge, agency, and, in temporal terms, over past, present and future. Those who stand outside the mainstream discourse are usually those that are embedded in systems of structural violence (Galtung 1969), marginalized, oppressed or silenced. Although this line of thought is very common in the field of conflict resolution and conceptually intriguing, it may oversimplify the intricate currents of agency at the interpersonal level.

Rather than rendering discursive power to certain singular sources, this study posits that the workings of power are multiple, embedded in networks of relationships and in constant flux. One way to capture the workings of power is by examining the interplay of individual and official discourses of the contentious past in people's local contexts – how they are negotiated, constructed and utilized to either constrain individual agency or open up spaces for individuals to regain a certain amount of autonomy. As

Gergen (1995) posits, exclusionary practices maintained through discursive dominance are at work all the time as centripetal forces in any society or group as they operate towards stabilization and establishment of commonly accepted "valued meanings", thereby leaving those who dissent outside those meaning systems (p. 41).

Although centripetal forces in the post-violent conflict society, such as Croatia, seek dominance and uniformity with regards to the past, the findings of this study show that people at the grassroots, regardless of their ethnicity, do not replicate dominant historical discourses. Moreover, people in their everyday life balance their personal autonomy, conformity and practices of dissent choosing to avoid or confront contention. The dynamism within the web of conscious and subconscious decisions such as saying or not saying hello to the neighbors of other ethnicities, using or not using certain words that demarcate ethnic belonging which can put one in harm's way, or choosing particular models of schooling to either subdue or reclaim identity, remains an underexplored topic that this study will try to shed some light on.

Pierre Bourdieu (1977, p. 179) wrote extensively about cultural and symbolic power of groups and individuals, which is acquired not through access to resources and political structures, but through "a capital of honour and prestige". This capital is a result of relational bonds and allegiances that are constantly in flux and changing through interaction. The historical narratives carry within them values, beliefs and judgments that constitute a social script about the past, which affects social relations, status and power positioning of different groups in a given society. To understand the dynamics of

interaction of various parties in conflict calls for analysis of the language used by those parties as they struggle to position Self and Other (Bamberg and Andrews 2004).

Therefore, historical narratives can be seen as the loci of power struggle that opens or closes opportunities for certain groups and their analysis can provide a key insight into the roots of conflict such as production and maintenance of unjust power relationships. The analysis of how contentious historical narratives become loci of power and legitimacy struggle that shape communal interactions can be a significant contribution in determining deeper social fractures and subsequently addressing the very roots of conflict in Croatia. How society navigates through, and promotes different historical narratives determines in part whether social reconstruction following violent conflict and massive human rights violations actually takes place or not (Sinclair 2002).

Identity

The concept of identity is particularly relevant in explaining how divisions between groups are maintained and transmitted through discourses and under which conditions they tend to be invoked to mobilize groups along ethnic lines. The constructivist view of identity emphasizes continuous alteration and construction of social, cultural, religious, and gender identities depending on socio-political and cultural contexts as well as audience. However, when certain discourses are continuously performed, they also become standardized, thus orienting communities' positions towards their past, present and future as well as their identities and relationships towards the Other. Croats and Serbs in Croatia still hold on to their different versions of history and

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the present, which have produced separate socio-cultural entities. Thus, the challenge for enduring or positive peace in Croatia today is that both ethnic groups, Croats and Serbs, seek legitimation of their own views of the past and present, through which they affirm their identities and position themselves on the higher moral ground in relation to the 'Other'. Identity is an important concept to look at, in the context of this study, especially because of the variation in the choice of different educational models that point to the fact that ethnic identity and preserving ethnic identity are, for some reason, more important in one context than the other. The discursive struggle is indeed a symbolic struggle (Bourdieu 1977a), due to power asymmetry and the fact that, in Croatia, Serbs are the minority and Croats the majority group. However, this struggle is not to be neglected as it has much wider significance if observed in a broader context of neighboring countries such as Bosnia and Serbia, where discourses of the past involving Croats and Serbs are similarly and relentlessly negotiated, showing striking regional interconnectedness and potential for contention.

First, it is important to stress that the concept of identity in this study will be examined not through an instrumentalist lens (Posner 2005), which suggests that identities become salient depending on payoffs, but rather a poststructuralist lens, which posits that identities are constructed by people, "locating themselves or being located within a repertoire of emplotted stories" (Somers 1994, p. 614). Narratives are products of the interplay between our own view of the past, context, macrodiscourses and our interlocutors. Narratives are a mixture of master structural discourses, such as discourses of victimhood, aggression, domination and unity on the one hand, and personal stories,

on the other. This mixture influences not only the development of personhood and identity of individuals and groups, but also establishes a certain kind of order with regards to relationships that position those groups and individuals in a particular way.

More specifically, the concept of narrative identity to be used in this study was developed by Paul Ricoeur (1981), among other scholars, and is based on connectivity between narratives, temporality, history and personhood. This concept is supposed to enable social scientists to empirically study the phenomenological conceptualization of identity since narrative identity can be described as the story we tell ourselves in the present moment about our past, present and future selves and others. Senehi (2000) argues that, "stories create and give expression to personal and group identity by encoding a body of shared knowledge to which persons are intellectually and emotionally committed" (p. 48). The narrative theory of identity focuses on the underlying structure of personal histories or life-stories and considers the phenomenon of identity not as part of cognitive structures, but as an analyzable ingredient of personal histories that include narratives and overarching discourses about others and ourselves. These narratives are drawn from the knowledge and scripts stored in "cultural memory" which is "characterized by sharp distinctions made between those who belong and those who do not" (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, p.130).

People position themselves while telling stories to particular listeners in a particular context and these stories vary due to these relationships (Harre and Langenhove 1999). Narratives are vehicles that shape people's sense of the Self and the Other, but at the same time, they can also constrain people's decisions and provide them

with the set of choices and options that is constraining and limiting. Individuals are not always rational actors that are seeking to realize the most beneficial outcomes for themselves, but they are significantly constrained by the power that permeates structures and is "circulated through discourses" (Senehi 2000).

Socio-psychological theories of identity such as social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 2004) and chosen trauma theory (Volkan 1998) can also be useful for this study by shedding some light on how the interplay between official and individual historical narratives influences identity formation. Identity threat, for example, is very often an element of narratives that results from people's perceptions that the collectives to which they belong are evaluated negatively. Negative evaluation leads to the feeling of threat, which challenges the need of people to maintain a positive perception of their groups and collectives. Korostelina (2007) argues that group members' identities can become salient and lead to conflict once individuals sharing a group membership perceive that their social identity is being threatened and they use defense mechanisms embedded in their mind either through socialization, or trans-generational transmission (narrative) of a negative past experience. The opposite meaning systems have at their core the idea of positive, morally pure and superior "us" and evil, vicious and negative "them" (Rothbart and Korostelina 2006a). Another important element of historical narratives that bears particular significance for identity formation of the groups in question, are traumatic historical memories of past atrocities that serve as vehicles for continuation of divisions and conflict. This is particularly true in school contexts where history is very much alive and persists in being a heated topic through constant reminders such as textbooks,

commemorations, media or more specifically, criminal court decisions, etc.

One of the objectives of this study is understanding how official narratives of the past function to transmit collective values, beliefs and convictions that are mainstreamed from above. Some studies based on socio-psychological approaches to identity have explored the emotional value or valence of historical accounts. Cronon (1992) examined how the valence, source, and nation of historical accounts of the Korean War affected Chinese and US students' beliefs about their shared past, emotions, national self-esteem, and threat perception in the present. He discovered that historical narratives do have influence on students' beliefs and emotions. He further claims that exposure to positive in-group historical accounts boosts students' collective self-esteem, identities, emotions, while exposure to negative historical accounts of the ingroup has an opposite effect. According to Branscombe and Doosje (2004), negative outgroup narratives about shared history could have both positive and negative effect on the ingroup members, either increasing positive ingroup identity or resulting in feelings of collective guilt. Gries et al. (2009) posit that:

> *…differing knowledge about (a product of education and socialization) and the varying importance of certain past events to present-day national identities creates differences in how the people of different nations respond to historical controversies involving their shared pasts* (p. 438).

However, the challenge that all of these studies point out is a lack of a more nuanced and holistic approach that would enable exploration of the dynamical nature of individual responses to historical accounts.

An important concept that needs to be discussed before delving into particulars of identity formation is the concept of contact. Since different educational models in Eastern

Slavonia imply a varying degree of contact between two groups, the question that needs to be raised is whether contact contributes to better relationships and reduction of stereotypes or not. The findings of contact theory, particularly in its early days, suggest that contact improves relations under the conditions of equal status, common goals, acquaintance potential and support of authorities among groups that are experiencing or had experienced conflict (Allport 1979). These conditions are only partially fulfilled in the case of Eastern Slavonia, where asymmetrical power relations between the two groups, lack of support and adequate initiatives from the government and differing goals represent factors that persistently fuel divisions. Additionally, the issue of more contact through educational integration may actually be seen as counterproductive and a threat to minority identity (Pettigrew 1998, Pettigrew and Tropp 2000).

The case study of Eastern Slavonia posits that it is not contact, but rather the quality of engagement between the two groups that matters. The quality of engagement and interaction cannot be explored by only looking at the interaction within different educational models, but also by considering wider communities and contexts in which students find themselves embedded. The segregation in school contexts is a reflection of wider divisions that plague those communities. The influence of divided communities on patterns of interaction among youth was previously identified and studied in other post-conflict contexts, most notably in Northern Ireland. For example, Gallagher (2004) points out that wider communal divisions and social inequity are some of the major contributors to segregation among youth in Northern Ireland.

Constructivist approaches suggest that identity is not fixed (Gay and Hall 1996;

Sachs 2001). It is constantly reclaimed through narratives that bridge the horizons of past experiences and future expectations. The narrative identity approach "assumes that people act in particular ways because not to do so would fundamentally violate their sense of being at that particular time and place" (Somers 1994, p. 624). People's identities cannot be understood unless situated in a particular historical time, place and set of relationships. Moreover, an individual sense of Self cannot exist without the presence of Others. We need the Other to author ourselves, to open up to the possibilities of life, freedom and inevitability of living in a community of similar, yet different individuals. We should not assume that we can a priori apply theories that would help us examine human behavior or identity in a certain context and time, nor we should impose preconceived categories on people's views and behaviors in order to explain them. Rather, as researchers, we need to be humble, curious and willing to explore the realities on the ground with an open mind and sensitivity for dynamics of identity in its historical context.

Symbolic Violence, Conflict Transformation, Values and Reconciliation

The very tragedy of our Western-centric approaches to dealing with the past in the aftermath of violent conflicts often lies in the tendency of such approaches to produce an unpredictable counter-reality that is imported in local contexts from the outside, rendering shock to the social system that cannot be cushioned through adaptation. The non-organic changes introduced to the system tend to be problematic and this study attempts to disambiguate such practices. Gergen (1995) argues that conflicts emerge

through promotion of 'the single reality' (such as promotion of a single master narrative of the past), while the vague notion of 'the production of counter-reality' is seen as a remedy for transformation of conflict. How does one go about production of counter-reality? The production of counter-reality or an alternative story is actually about uncovering the counter-reality already existent in the system. Thus, the societies can start rebuilding peace from within, based on their own self-correcting tools and values.

Bourdieu's concept of "symbolic violence" similarly suggests the existence of the contradictory or "double reality" of conduct that is "intrinsically equivocal" and ambiguous, which can shed some light on the current relationships between the two groups in this study:

> *Symbolic violence is "the gentle, invisible form of violence, which is never recognized as such, and is not so much undergone as chosen, the violence of credit, confidence, obligation, personal loyalty, hospitality, gifts, gratitude, piety… The violence becomes an invisible form of continued oppression "in the guise of a voluntary acceptance"… (cf. Mitchell 1990: 551)*

Symbolic violence denotes outward compliance, subordination and voluntary participation in oppressive practices that are so fragmented and interwoven in social fabric that people often take them for granted. According to Bourdieu (1979), symbolic power demands both a dominator and a dominated to accept their position in the exchange of social value that occurs between them. The question is why some individuals accept their position while others refuse to do so, and what are the ways in which individuals subvert this template relationship of dominated and dominator in order to find more constructive ways of dealing with the challenges not only in situations of conflict but also every day life.

Symbolic power with its invisible forces of domination as well as overpowering centripetal forces, promulgate uniform master narratives in a dynamical world of interpersonal relationships through a multitude of seemingly chaotic and unpredictable social relationships that emerge from a diversity of human engagement. Having posited that conflicts should be observed within a complex network of relationships rather than singular cause-effect models, this study proposes that individual choices of remembering may impact the trajectory of conflict resolution. Therefore, it is necessary to learn how individual everyday choices multiply and coalesce, leading to specific outcomes.

Educational systems in this study represent organized systems that promote certain coda, rules and regulations mainstreamed from above, necessary for maintaining certain social practices that are supposed to be unifying and cohesive. However, actors within those systems, primarily students, are not only influenced by coda and practices in schools, but also at home and in their communities. Moreover, educational coda and practices are often external and non-organic interrupters in the milieu of actual communities. When discourses of the past, promoted through such systems, reach the individuals, they go through processes of adaptation through interaction, through human interconnectedness that give some of the individuals the capacity to become open or preserve the ability to act autonomously, which needs to be further examined.

Let me digress for a moment and present an interesting case that sheds some light on the relational values necessary for introducing change into a conflict system through education. Kupermintz and Salomon (2005) discuss an exercise conducted in a class of students studying *distant conflicts* intended to neutralize emotions and promote critical

thinking when learning about contentious history. The students learned about an intractable conflict in another region, without mentioning their region's intractable conflict. Later, when asked to describe their own conflict, but from the view-point of the "other side," those who participated in the *distant conflicts* exercises, were able to write, "well-balanced and impartial essays" (p. 296). In other words, the critical approach to learning history was transferred from a neutralized conflict (for the participant) to the more emotionally charged conflict within their community in a way that counteracted the emotionally entrenched positioning and enabled openness to insight and learning. Interestingly, when the researchers tried the same exercise in an Internet-based setting, they found that the Internet messages decreased over time and, "included expressions of anger, frustration, despair, and defensive expositions of one's own opinion on the ongoing events" (p. 297).

The above example shows not only that alienation from other human beings through the use of technology may contribute to conflict, but emphatically suggests that the lack of human-to-human interaction leads to suppression of key human values such as empathy, forgiveness, recognition and trust, which in turn closes our horizon of thinking critically and broadly about the history of a conflict. This is not to say that human-to-human contact is enough to improve relationships among adversarial groups or individuals, as our previous discussion of contact theory shows, but it speaks of the need of fostering respectful, friendly and caring relationships through meaningful engagement within and outside educational contexts.

Ricoeur's narrative ethics speaks loudly about the value of forgiveness that is key for reconciliation and conflict resolution, which is often placed at the backburner and left to be tackled by individuals in their spiritual and religious explorations:

Forgiveness precipitates a dialectic tension between memory and forgetting. The trajectory of pardon originates from a disproportionate relationship between wrongdoing and forgiveness. Forgiveness can be difficult to give and difficult to receive. Yet, Ricoeur argues that forgiveness is the horizon of the future, the generous gift granted in order to write a new script for communities as well as individuals (Duffy 2009, pp. 351-354).

In a constrained conflict system, and a system of fragmented experiences and knowledge, narrative becomes central for making sense of the whole; it integrates all the pieces of human life connecting context, time, space and interlocutors with the Self. It provides space for imagination, creativity and reflection about past, present and future. More importantly, narratives carry within them values that enable us, as Ricoeur argues, to 'see oneself as another', allowing the possibility of existing in uncertainty and being reconciled with it. It is from uncertainty that curiosity and necessary openness towards the Other comes, a genuine and unselfish care for the Other, because, after all, the Other is a reflection of oneself.

Conclusion

The proposition of this study is that rather than focusing on the workings of memory from above that charter and constrain individual agency, we need to shift the focus on the ways people become authors of their own destinies through their authentic production of history in interaction with others. The focus should, for a moment, shift to

people's everyday choices that enable them to dissent from the collective discourses and scripts of the past. The argument, based on the findings of this study, is that a more useful approach to dealing with the past in post-conflict societies is in learning how to accept differences not as a threat but as a possibility. A possibility of accepting uncertainty that can result in both positive and negative outcomes can be a tricky task. However, it does not mean that conflict systems can self-correct on their own without some sort of exogenous impetus. Therefore, we still need modus operandi that would introduce change in conflict systems and this study may illuminate a methodology for doing that.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an overview of literature that has informed this study's approach to its subject matter and methodology. Since the study revolves around the concept of narratives, which is used across different disciplines, the author finds it necessary to expound on her methodological orientations and perspectives regarding narratives and discourse. It is author's belief that analyzing narratives cannot be separated from the discourse theories that provide the blueprint for data analysis. The overview of relevant literature will not only serve to inform the reader of how it intellectually stimulated author's thinking and writing, but also to explain how this study complements, builds on and adds knowledge to the chosen literature. Subsequently, this chapter will focus on the research puzzle, aims, research format, and research methods used to collect and analyze data as well as author's orientation as a researcher in the study.

Theoretical underpinnings

The choice of qualitative methodology will be informed by social constructivist theory that suggests different views of reality based on subjective and social constructions, which create diversity of meaning, positions and understanding. The constructivist approach emphasizes context, symbols, history and culture that provide the researcher with clues on how to address challenges of a particular research and

methodology. Social constructivism implies that the knowledge and the way we understand the world is "…constructed in the process of social interchange and language has an important social role in building the reality" (Flick 2009, p. 80). Constructivism implies an important point of departure for my research that emphasizes views and perspectives, which are socially conditioned and constructed and therefore susceptible to change. The author intends to explore this constructivist assumption in her research and examine how people construct meanings related to the contentious past in Eastern Slavonia. This study will not be looking at the "true nature" of historical narratives as part of cognitive structures of individuals, but how they are "negotiated, produced and deployed" (Willig 2001, p. 103) in language and how this affects intergroup interaction and relationships. Ownership and authorship of narratives are seen as partial and dependent on the context, interaction and rules of engagement.

Taking a social constructivist theory as a lens in approaching the subject matter, this study is largely indebted to Foucault (1972), Fairclough (1993) and Hall (1992) and their views of discourse, which informed my understanding of how discourses influence and shape individual actions and intergroup relationships at the grassroots. For Foucault, discourse is about production of knowledge and power through language. While physical objects and actions exist separately from discourse, we can only have knowledge about them if they have meaning and it is discourse that gives them meaning (Foucault 1972). All social practices entail meaning, and meanings shape and influence our actions (Hall 2001, p. 73). Although Foucault included the subject in his theory, and in his later works gave him/her a certain reflexive awareness, he still maintained that even when

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"…subjects produce particular texts, they are still operating within the limits of particular discursive formation" … they are always …"subjected to discourse" (Hall 2001, p. 79). While discourses give meaning to what we do and how we make sense of the world, there is a lack of knowledge to what extent certain discourses or elements of those discourses have influenced perceptions and relationships between groups and individuals in post-conflict societies. This study is an attempt to add knowledge about the reception of discourses at the grassroots and if there is a space for the subject's agency.

While Foucault emphasizes the primacy of structure over agency, Fairclough's critical discourse theory allows a certain space for agency of individuals and groups, which is closer to the view of discourse in this study. Fairclough argues that the balance between the subject as ideological effect and the subject as active agent is a variable, which depends upon social conditions (Hall 2001, p. 91). If one focuses only on production and creation of discourses, one would be taking a single-sided perspective, which would not answer the questions of how students in this study are dealing with a particular discourse in their classrooms and communities, or how this shapes their view of the Other. That is, "newspapers, television programming, and textbooks tell us what communication and academic elites believe about the past; they do not necessarily tell us what ordinary people believe, or how they feel about what they believe" (Schwartz, Fukuoka, and Takita-Ishii 2005, p. 267). By exploring how communities at the grassroots view and make sense of the contentious past, we will be able to develop a deeper understanding of how to use context-specific and local knowledge to promote positive peace in post-conflict societies.

Charles Tilly (1999) draws attention to the need in the social sciences to reconcile three contradictory features of social life: the recurrence of a limited set of causal processes in a wide variety of situations, the incessant improvisation in social interaction and the great weight of particular histories, congealed as particular cultural configurations. He argues that "social interaction generates stories that justify and facilitate further social interaction, within limits set by the stories people already share as a consequence of previous interactions" (Tilly 1999, p. 268). There is a limited and recurrent repertoire of stories that facilitate interaction and serve a particular function and there is a clear gap in the social sciences about how discourses and stories affect "our conduct of social life" (Tilly 1999, p. 268). However, as Margaret Somers argues,

> *…there is no reason to assume a priori that people with similar attributes will share common experiences of social life, let alone be moved to common forms and meanings of social action, unless they share similar narrative identities and relational settings…* (Somers 1994, p. 635).

Therefore, actions or agency of the subject should not be explored as abstractions, but through their linkages to narratives that determine their social and historical embeddedness. It is through exploration of narratives in interaction at the grassroots level that we can determine how macro-structural processes operate at the micro level and what influence they have on individual's views and agency.

Schwartz, Fukouka and Takita-Ishii (2005) influenced the methodological aspect of this research in that they contributed to the understanding of how to approach the politics of memory, i.e., the struggle of groups over the meaning of the past. The research they conducted with American and Japanese students that focused on living memory at the grassroots shows that "cultural differences rather than unequal gravity of past wrongs

must explain different perceptions" (Ibid p. 264)… of students regarding certain historical events. Although "Western theories of culture are predicated on the rupture of historical continuity" (Ibid p. 267) and emphasis on individuality and free choice, we still attach our actions and values to the rules, standards and scripts given to us by past communities. In the wake of war and trauma, people tap into the past, seeking explanation of present events, which subsequently shapes their lives, actions, orientations and views of the world around them. Although people's individual narratives are invariably emplotted into the web of social, cultural, communal and national scripts, this study observes an individual as an agent with a free will to chose his or her historical position and continuity.

Examining Structure of Narratives

This study is, theoretically and ideologically, tied with memory studies as well as postmodernist, critical and conflict resolution theories. Memory studies have looked at "the structures that enable the societies to hand down beliefs about the past from one generation to the next, the purposes for which those beliefs are mobilized, their nature and shape, and the ways they change over time" (Seixas 2004, p. 5). Historical narratives do not only serve to construct collective identities as part of nation building projects, but they also influence present and future collective projects, relationships and actions as well as individual commitments. The features of narratives may include a story line with a particular *selection and ordering of events* that are *causally linked* over time, protagonists that undergo various trials and whose *identities* appear to be *coherent and*

continuous, demarcation signs that indicate beginning and ending*,* and conclusions imbued with certain *valued endpoints* (Gergen 1998, 2005). Even through we can trace this basic structure in the historical narratives of the two ethnic groups in Eastern Slavonia, these narratives are much more complex as realities on the ground, and offer to the keen observer, an elaborate and rich picture about protagonists, their relationships and the context in which they live.

By examining more closely the structure of these narratives by means of thematic discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Burman and Parker 1993), this study will seek traces of the official historical narrative in the respondents' individual stories to determine if and how they comply or deviate from the national historical narrative. Through interaction between official historical narratives and individual stories on the ground, we will develop insight into the *living memory*, into what is legitimate and correct according to the participants, and how this influences their views of Selves, the relevant Other and the relationship between the two. Methodologically, this research constitutes an attempt to introduce dynamic interactive processes of meaning making that take place at the grassroots level into the study of historical discourses and their influence on people's perceptions. Wills suggests that "the reading or use of cultural texts and practices is rather a social …process involving the …construction of meaning, meaning that is located in the interaction between cultural texts, context, conditions and people" (Wills, 1994: 367; see also Epstein, 1998).

Experiences from Eastern Slavonia suggest that there is a need to examine this interaction between official master narratives and individual stories, which can contribute

to our understanding not only of how official narratives about the past influence practices, meanings and relationships at the grassroots, but also provide an opportunity to identify alternative ways of dealing with the current and past contention.

Narratives provide a unifying linkage in this study of intersections of the structural and individual. They are a "bridge between social sciences not only because scholars from diverse disciplines find them a concept of interest" (Hammack 2011, p. 17), but because of their integrative features across global, local, institutional and interpersonal contexts. Narratives are stories that create and give expression to personal and group identity as they "encode a body of shared knowledge to which persons are intellectually and emotionally committed" (Tilly 1999). They enable the formation and interpretation of human conditions and actions through constant renegotiation of meaning, and making sense of these conditions. As Barthes has suggested, stories are *omnipresent and transcultural* (cf. Herman 2009, p.23); they give us insight into the meaning systems of individuals and groups. The powerful forces that challenge peace, whether they are played out in social, economic, political or environmental levels, are underpinned by the struggle over meaning. Narratives are systems in which different texts intersect, where protagonists and events are not devoid of historical continuity and embededdness in context, thereby linking the immediate telling of a situation with larger social and cultural processes.

The methodological importance of narratives in this study is in their capacity to provide a comprehensive framework for research on the individual self through people's stories as well as master narratives reflected in those individual stories. Recent research

on narratives has emphasized the situatedness of storytelling and its embedding in social life (De Fina, 2008). Donald Polkinghorne (1988) calls for a narrative approach as a way of tapping into human experience, and McAdams (2001) has argued that "people carry with them and bring into conversation a wide range of self-stories, and these stories are nested in larger and overlapping stories, creating ultimately a kind of anthology of the self". According to the claims of poststructuralist, constructivist and critical theory, language as such is not just a system of signs through which we communicate with each other, but carries within itself historical, cultural, mythical and political meanings. Therefore, narratives are considered as proper loci for analysis of the interplay between wider the social context and our identities, relationships and belief systems.

The Research Puzzle

This study proposes that people make sense of their lives through narratives and that people's individual narratives reflect larger discourses as a result of their embeddedness in certain communities and wider social contexts. History is heavily rooted in what can be called narrative politics - different versions of the same historical event are tools used to assert, maintain or challenge political action and legitimacy of the Other. Discursive contention is often transmitted into the realm of relationships and interactions on the ground that are marked by tensions and divisions. This is evident in the educational system in Eastern Slavonia that will be used as a case study to explore how the members of school communities are affected by the master historical narratives and how this translates into their views of the Self and the Other.

The focus of this study is on finding out how the people belonging to the two ethnic groups, Croats and Serbs, are dealing with the legacy of contentious past that drastically affected their lives, identities, views and relationships with the Others, and how they make sense of their new Selves in a new national, regional and global context. The intention of the researcher is to study these phenomena by specifically looking into the interpretations of the recent history experienced by the two ethnic groups – the competing historical narratives - and their influence on their views of Self and the Other. The author will seek traces of the official historical narratives in the participants' individual stories to see how much they comply or deviate from the official national historical narrative. Both official narrative and individual stories are influenced by various discourses such as media, educational, nationalistic or textbooks's discourses. This study will particularly focus on the official narratives as presented in history textbooks and their interplay with the individual historical narratives.

Case Study

The case study format has been chosen because it enables an in-depth study of the research puzzle by giving the researcher both structure and freedom to navigate through data, context and the wider system that constrain and generate meanings. The case study will provide a space for a more holistic and detailed analysis of the nexus between macro and micro discourses as well as the discursive dynamics that are taking place at the level of school communities.

The aim of this case study is descriptive rather than causal, i.e., gaining deeper

understanding of the key case. Therefore, the intention is to examine the features of the key case whose spatial variation offers an opportunity for comparisons across educational models and ethnicities in the context of Eastern Slavonia. The spatial variation is based on the fact that in some schools in Eastern Slavonia, students belonging to Serbian and Croatian communities follow an *integrated history education model*, while in the other schools, the students belonging to Serbian and Croatian communities follow *separate history education models,* even though they live within the same geographical space with a population of similar ethnic composition.[8]

The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, Constitutional Law on national Minorities' Rights and Law on Education in Languages and Letters of National Minorities specify three types of minority schooling in Croatia. The first type (Model A) provides for establishing schools in which all subjects are taught in the language of a particular minority, with the Croatian language being just one of the school subjects. In the second type (Model B), the subjects relevant for minority cultural heritage are taught in their mother tongue, and the other school subjects (i.e., math and science) are taught in Croatian. In the third type (Model C), the whole standard curriculum is taught in the Croatian language, with the possibility that *additional classes* relevant for the minority cultural heritage can be introduced in the minority's mother tongue. Students belonging to the Serbian community in some schools in Eastern Slavonia have chosen *the integrated model of schooling (type three),* opting to learn the whole standard curriculum in the Croatian language together with their Croatian peers, while in the other schools, the

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[8] For more details on schooling models see: http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?sec=3154

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students belonging to the Serbian community have chosen the *segregated model of schooling (type one),* opting to study all of their subjects separately in the Serbian language and alphabet.

The features of the proposed key case will be examined to enhance our understanding of the current relationships between the two ethnic groups in Eastern Slavonia and to enable comparison of the processes and dynamics that are taking place at the level of school communities. This will, in turn, lead to some propositions for improving approaches to history education in a post-conflict context based on bottom-up communal experiences and knowledge.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to learn from school communities about the ways of dealing with the legacy of their contentious past and how to use this grassroots knowledge to promote interethnic understanding and tolerance as well as prevention of future violence.

This will be achieved by:

1) Learning how official historical narratives shape youth's views of Self and Other;

2) Learning about the role of parents and teachers in mediating historical meanings to the youth;

3) Developing practical recommendations for improving approaches to history education in the context of post-conflict Croatia and beyond.

Participants

Purposive sampling[9] is used for the relevant groups of subjects within school communities - students (4th high school graders and recent high school graduates, age 18-23), school teachers and parents. Purposive selection of people or groups of interest that possess knowledge or offer a variety of perspectives about the studied phenomenon, may contribute to elaborating and deepening of initial analysis (Patton 1990). Triangulation of data sources will also contribute to the validity of study. There were 60 participants who were either 18 or more, with an equal distribution of males and females. Specifically, the participants in this study include 40 youths, 12 parents and 8 teachers. Among the interviewees, twenty youths, six parents and four teachers had selected the integrated model of schooling, in contrast to twenty students, six parents and four teachers who had selected the segregated model of schooling.

In terms of demographic characteristics, such as ethnicity and gender, the participants were distributed almost identically within their respective groups of participants. Students in the integrated model amounted to eleven females and nine males, while students in the segregated model included twelve males and eight females. There were ten student respondents who identified themselves as Croats and ten as Serbs in each of the models. Four parents in the integrated model were females and three were

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[9] Purposive sampling is used in situations when a researcher needs to reach a target population. Selection of participants is based on the purpose of the study and on some characteristic. In this case study, it was the members of school communities in Eastern Slavonia who were a target population. Purposive sampling is, however, nonprobability sampling technique. This means that such sampling cannot be used to infer from the sample to the general population, but it can be useful in case studies, which examine a certain group with similar features.

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males. Among them, four were Croats and three were Serbs. Three parents in the segregated model were Croats and two were Serbs; two were female and three were male. Eight teachers were equally distributed across models, ethnicities and gender.

The units of analysis are individual representatives of two major ethnic groups in Eastern Slavonia, Serbs and Croats that were accessed through the local network of acquaintances within the civil society community. Specifically, Proni Center for Social Education[10] in Osijek, an NGO which had previously worked and conducted workshops with students, parents and teachers in Eastern Slavonia, was instrumental in enabling contacts with the participants. Before interviews were conducted, participants were given recruitment letters and the researcher explained beforehand the nature of the research particularly taking into consideration ethical implications in dealing with respondents in volatile post-conflict contexts. The researcher explained that she was conducting research for a doctoral dissertation to get a better understanding of youth's views on the recent history of their country, how these views influenced their perceptions about the relevant other and what was the role of teachers and parents in the process of production of meanings related to the recent past. They were also given informed consent forms that they did not have to sign, which explained that their participation was completely voluntary, and there were no consequences if they declined this invitation or decided not to participate. The informed consent forms stated that the researcher would personally conduct the interviews that would entail them providing answers to some questions. All the views and answers that the interviewees shared during the interviews would be handled with strict confidence. Guarantees of privacy and

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[10] See: http://www.proni.hr/index.php/en/

informed consent had been discussed with all participants in advance.

The research questions posed in the study are as follows:

1) *How did official historical narratives shape youths' individual narratives and how did these narratives translate into youths' views of themselves and others?*

2) *What is the role of parents and teachers in mediating meanings about the past?*

3) *How can we learn from those communities about alternative and locally-owned approaches to history education that would lead to reconciliation and sustainable peace?*

Data Collection

Data were collected from multiple sources: three history textbooks and sixty semi-structured interviews[11] with youth (40), parents (12) and teachers (8). The process of recruiting the participants started after presenting the recruitment letter and consent forms to the participants, explaining the nature and ethical aspects of research and what the interview entails. The participants were then given a copy of the interview questionnaire just before the researcher started asking questions. Each interview was audio-taped, transcribed verbatim and then translated into English by the researcher. The transcripts were stored under lock and key in a password-protected folder kept on the researcher's external backup drive to ensure protection of data and participants' identities. To ensure anonymity of the participants, codes were used instead of names on

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[11] Semi-structured interviews combine a pre-determined set of open questions that prompt discussion with the opportunity for the interviewer to explore particular themes or responses further. Retrieved on 03/15/2013 from:
http://evaluationtoolbox.net.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=31&Itemid=137

each interview transcript.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire was developed by constantly keeping in mind the research puzzle and questions and it was aimed to elicit concrete shorter answers as well as longer narratives from the participants. 90% of the questions were open ended and about 10% of the questions were close-ended, allowing for a Likert type response pattern: *Strongly Disagree*, *Disagree*, *Neutral*, *Agree* and *Strongly Agree*. The questionnaire was developed for three particular groups of participants: students, teachers and parents. The questionnaire consisted of questions grouped around four relevant sections of interest that illuminate different aspects of the research puzzle, such as: 1) relevance of history for present and sources of historical knowledge, 2) influence of recent history on views of the Other, 3) mediating historical meanings and the role of parents and teachers and 4) suggestions for the future.

The first and the second areas of interest pertain to student participants, the third is related to teachers and parents' responses and the fourth pertains to all three groups of participants. The questions grouped around relevance of history for the present and sources of historical knowledge, aimed at finding out respondents' general attitudes towards history, if and why history as such is relevant for their present lives and which sources they use to gain knowledge about history. The questions around influence of recent history on the view of the Other were intended to explore reasons behind participants' choices of different schooling models, which would generate some insight

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into either the absence or persistence of divisions within school communities. Questions grouped around suggestions for the future were geared towards finding out respondents' views and recommendations on how approaches to contentious history in post-conflict contexts can be improved to enable mutual tolerance and understanding among former adversaries.

When talking to students, the researcher was primarily interested in finding out which historical events are deemed most relevant for their present life and how these events influence their views of the Other. The questions directed to students that are grouped around sections such as talking about history with parents, preferences of history teaching methods or models of schooling were geared towards finding out about history learning practices at home and in school as well as students' preferences on learning history together or separately.

When interviewing parents and teachers, the primary goal of the researcher was to gain insights into how parents and teachers see their role in the process of mediating historical meanings and what are the ways forward in improving learning practices. The questions directed to teachers grouped around the methods of teaching recent history and models of schooling. Students' reactions to the teaching of recent history were geared towards finding out about practices of history teaching in school contexts and how they shape students' reactions towards recent history. The questions directed to parents that are grouped around talking with the children about recent history, children's reactions when talking with parents about recent history, history taught in school and at home, and models of schooling, were aimed at learning more about the role of parents in shaping

their children's views about the recent past as well as the processes and practices of history learning at home and in school.

Finally, the Likert scale questions, making up about 10% of the questionnaire, were followed by an open-ended question about the reasons behind the respondents' choice. The Likert scale questions were geared at identifying how much student respondents agreed or disagreed (e.g. strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree) with certain statements.

Data Analysis

The data analysis started by looking into the history textbooks as primary sources of the official historical narrative in Croatia, which would enable examination of the traces of that master narrative in the individual stories of the participants elicited through interviews. While historical narratives are reproduced, circulated and mainstreamed through media, newspapers, Internet and other mass media outlets, the primary source of the official historical narrative are history books. These stories are approved and regulated by the structures of the state such as the ministry of education, school councils, and eventually, teachers themselves. The researcher's objective in analyzing history textbooks was to identify the content and structure of official historical discourse, which enabled examination of the traces of that discourse in the individual stories of the participants.

By establishing structure of the wider historical discourse, we were able to determine how certain patterns and conventions within official narratives that were

circulated by an entity of power and authority (Foucault, 1968) operated on the ground; if they were modified, challenged or fully accepted, and how people's views of themselves and their relevant others varied in relation to their historical narrative. The researcher made this choice because she was interested in how the mainstream version of the narratives about recent history was reflected at the grassroots level in the contexts of segregated and integrated history education models. We would also gain insight into how such stories regulate and shape participants' sense of Selves and Others, while paying special attention to the interaction between individual agency and larger discourses as well as the role of key mediators of meaning. The exploration of participants' narratives was done by looking into their structure, common features, consistency, deviations and variety of themes appropriated by the communities, which could open a window for a comparison with other cases. The researcher did not go into the analysis of classroom interaction, body language or symbolic practices that may all be focus of discourse analysis as such, but rather concentrated on analyzing written texts and oral transcripts.

To facilitate analysis and comparison of data obtained in interviews with different groups of participants and in different educational contexts, the researcher developed 2 x 2 matrix. The matrix was used for initial sorting of qualitative data. The data was collected from respondents that were part of either integrated or segregated educational models: Integrated Model (I) and Segregated Model (S), and Serb (Ethnicity (Sb)) and Croat (Ethnicity (C)) ethnicities. The clustering of data into four initial categories is presented as follows:

Table 1. Matrix for initial sorting of qualitative data

	Ethnicity (Sb)	Ethnicity (C)
Model (I)	Data (ISb)	Data (IC)
Model (S)	Data (SSb)	Data (SC)

The comparisons were initially conducted between different ethnicities within the single educational models including all three groups of participants, and then cross-comparisons between two different models and ethnicities including all three groups of participants were conducted.

Thematic discourse analysis (Potter & Wetherel, 1987; Burman & Parker 1993) was used to examine four history textbooks[12] used in secondary schools in the region. I also conducted thematic discourse analysis of 60 semi-structured interview transcripts with youths (40), parents (12) and teachers (8). The analysis of communal narratives was

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[12] The textbooks analyzed for the purposes of this study are as follows: 1) Erdelja, Krešimir & Igor, Stojaković. 2009. Koraci kroz vrijeme IV. Zagreb: Školska knjiga (Erdelja, Krešimir & Igor, Stojaković. 2009. *Steps Through Time.* Zagreb: Školska knjiga; history textbook for the 4th grade of grammar schools);
2) Dukić, Ivan, Krešimir Erdelja & Igor Stojaković. 2005. Hrvatska Povijest. Zagreb: Školska knjiga (Dukić, Ivan, Krešimir Erdelja & Igor Stojaković. 2005. *Croatian History.* Zagreb: Školska knjiga; history textbook for the 1st grade of vocational schools);
3) Erdelja, Krešimir & Igor, Stojaković. Tragom prošlosti 8. 2007. Zagreb: Školska knjiga. (Erdelja, Krešimir & Igor, Stojaković. *Tracing the Past* 8. 2007. Zagreb: Školska knjiga. History textbook for the 8st grade of primary schools).

aimed at exploring how discourses about recent history shape inter-communal

perceptions and relationships and how we can learn from the communities about

alternative and locally-owned approaches to history learning.

According to Lemke:

> *...discourse analysis produces its greatest insights when rich contextual information can be factored into the analysis of each text or episode. For this reason, longitudinal designs or case studies are well suited for discourse analysis methods. Here we may learn a great deal about a particular class, seeing repeated patterns within the data and a variety of strategies that create variations on those patterns* (Lemke 1998, p. 1184).

This study relied primarily on qualitative analysis of data, which was supported

by a quantitative descriptive analysis of Likert scales' generated data. Thematic discourse

analysis was used to uncover and compare patterns (themes) across respondents.

Comparisons among different sources of data, such as history textbooks and interview

transcripts, probed into intertextuality by searching for convergence of particular patterns

and themes in different texts.

> *The basis of discourse analysis is comparison. If researchers are interested in co-variation between text features and context features, they should not collect data only for the cases of interest, but also for cases they believe will stand in contrast with them* (Afroze 2011, online article).

What was important in the process of data analysis was to match my method to

the data at hand as well as to the research question leading the inquiry. The researcher's

initial intention was to look for underlying meanings, but she realized that to get to those

underlying meanings, she first had to establish a more explicit structure of the narratives

as well as their connection to the research question. It is also important for the data

analysis process to explain researcher's orientation or position, which was elaborated on

in the following section of this chapter.

> *The term 'thematic discourse analysis' is used to refer to a wide range of pattern-type analysis of data, ... which examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences, and so on, are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society* (Braun and Clarke 2006, p. 8-9).

The thematic discourse analysis (Singer and Hunter 1999; Taylor and Ussher 2001) used in this study is grounded in constructivist and critical theories, which focus on both larger discourses and individual meanings attached to those discourses. It implies theorizing wider ideologies, contextual nuances and latent meanings in which the surface meanings and explicit structures are grounded. Themes within data were explored through an inductive or „bottom up" approach (Braun and Clarke 2006), which implied that the themes were data- rather than theory-driven (Patton 1990). Thematic discourse analysis in this study allowed the researcher to make claims not only about the explicit structure of narratives but also about their functionality and connections with wider discourses and context.

Ensuring Quality of Research

Triangulation of data collection and analysis methods was not only a strategy for validating results obtained through disparate methods, but also "an approach for further grounding the knowledge in data"… as well as "further enriching and completing knowledge towards transgressing the (always limited) epistemological potentials of the individual method" (Flick 2009, p. 390). According to Flick (2009), to achieve complementary results when using triangulation of methods, it is necessary that the

results are different in focus and level. In my research, the data elicited through interviews and document reviews had different foci that complemented each other in illuminating the central phenomenon. Analysis of the interview data focused on how individuals created and made sense of the meanings related to the past and historical discourses circulated from above, while document analysis uncovered key elements of discourses that shape perceptions and relationships on the ground. Likert scale-generated data complemented the qualitative analysis of interview data and facilitated comparisons.

The value of research conducted in the spirit of constructivism and symbolic interactionism was in its diversity of meanings and perspectives. To produce credible results, the researcher employed "prolonged engagement, systematic observation, the analysis of negative cases, procedural dependability, triangulation of data and methods" (Flick 2009, p. 392). Continual exchange and consultations between the researcher and academic advisers has been key for maintaining quality of research.

Ethical Considerations

CR researchers are often dealing with sensitive issues, so it is very important to do no harm and employ "special safeguards to ensure that people's welfare and rights are protected" (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005). Making sure that the interviewed participants understood the nature of inquiry was of the greatest importance in this study. The research should be of benefit to the participants in the long run since the research findings would suggest the possible ways forward with regard to policy recommendations and initiatives in dealing with contentious historical legacy. The researcher should all the time

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reflect on her own intentions and motivations behind the procedures and questions asked and should be aware of her own identity issues that can challenge her objectivity. When conducting interviews, the participants were made aware in advance that they did not have to answer the questions they did not wish to answer and that they could withdraw from the project at any time. In such cases, it would be the duty of the researchers to consider alternative means of obtaining information.

Researcher's Orientation

Analyzing broader social discourses and individual stories of people, probing deeper into the meanings they attach to the past and uncovering hidden processes and ideologies, raise the question of the researcher's orientation. The researcher has to be aware of his/her own preconceptions, background, and theoretical and epistemological preferences since all of them can influence research. When using discourse analysis, the researcher should also reflect about the pervasive discourses in a particular context as well as researcher's own academic discourses that can influence her analysis. Bucholtz (2001) argues that "critical discourse analysis is engaged in a politics that privileges the analyst's viewpoint" (p.168).

The researcher does not pretend that she is just looking for emerging or existing themes in data detached from the real world and her own assumptions, but she openly states that the she had an active role and a particular position that influenced her analysis. She recognizes her role as an agent whose writing was, in a way, constructing the world. However, she is also reflective of processes and meanings that go beyond this study's

geopolitical context. Specifically, she is interested to know what is behind the manifest structures of discourses that generate conflicts, making use of this case study to transfer the knowledge to similar situations. However, it should be noted that it is not the researcher's intention to generalize her findings to other contexts, as the research design with non-random purposive sampling does not allow for such generalizations. However, lessons learned and implications for theory, research and practice derived from Eastern Slavonia's case may be very useful beyond this study's geographical boundaries.

Having an orientation is not the same as being biased. It would not be fair to the participants or the findings of this study if the researcher allowed her personal bias to get hold of her social scientific being. That said, she could not argue that, as a member of the community explored in this study, she is a blank slate without feelings and opinions about what the participants were saying or what she read in the history textbooks. However, throughout the process of research and dissertation writing, the researcher tried to distinguish between her own voice and the voices of participants, putting more emphasis on self-reflection, truthfulness and transparency of the process. Humility, constant going back and forth between various data sources and confronting researcher's own biases and beliefs in data analysis marked the process of discovery and writing. This has been an everyday struggle, but one that was necessary in producing an authentic and multiperspectival outlook on the topic.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter focuses on the analysis of data elicited from three groups of participants - students, parents and teachers. The analysis will be guided by the research questions and divided into four sections that will focus on relevant areas of interest that shed light on different aspects of the research puzzle, such as: 1) relevance of history for the present and sources of historical knowledge, 2) influence of recent history on views of the Other, 3) mediating historical meanings and the role of parents and teachers, and 4) suggestions for the future. The first and the second areas of interest pertain to student participants, the third is related to teachers' and parents' responses, and the fourth pertains to all three groups of participants.

The first section of the chapter is dedicated to the analysis of students' Likert scale responses. Likert scale questions were introduced to provide an additional lens for understanding the research puzzle and to add more richness to each of the relevant themes explored. The Likert scale responses are examined by making comparisons between mean scores, with higher scores on a 1-5 scale demonstrating levels of agreement with any particular statement. The second section is dedicated to the analysis of responses to open-ended questions by means of thematic discourse analysis. This method implies recognizing themes or patterns, and developing a system that would encode information by connecting the themes with the wider discourses. In the following

chapter, the themes will be interpreted in the context of certain theories and conceptual frameworks in order to consolidate existing and develop new knowledge. The responses to open-ended questions will be analyzed by identifying common themes within each of the participant groups and then comparing them across ethnicity and schooling models for each group of respondents. The comparisons will be conducted between different ethnicities within the single education models, which will then be followed by cross-comparisons between two different models and ethnicities including all three groups of participants.

Analysis of Likert Scale Responses

Students' Likert scale responses were elicited around three statements that are key for illuminating the research puzzle. The Likert scale responses were examined by making comparisons between mean scores for two ethnic groups in the two models of schooling, with higher scores on a 1-5 scale demonstrating levels of agreement with any particular statement. Likert-scale data are analyzed at the ordinal measurement level and the Likert-scale items presented in 2x2 tables are created by calculating a composite score (mean) from five Likert-type items. Ordinal scale data, in this case, can produce 'interval-like data' by producing 'mean responses'.

Since this study is descriptive, samples are not representative of the population and the participants are not randomly assigned to groups. The point of introducing Likert-scale questions into the questionnaire was to compare them to the findings from the open-ended questions in order to get a clearer picture of the possible effects of ethnicity and

models of schooling on students' responses. Moreover, the use of "mixed methods" can enhance the validity of findings.

The student participants were asked to indicate how much they agree or disagree with the following statements:

(1) Recent history of my country is relevant to my present life.

(2) This historical event (of your choice) influences my view of the Other.

(3) Learning history together contributes to better relations among the students of different ethnic origin.

Relevance of Recent History

This section offers an analysis of students' Likert scale responses to the question of whether history is relevant to their present life in both integrated and segregated school models. The majority of participants in the integrated model of schooling opted for strongly agreeing with the statement that the recent history of their country is important to them. 90% of Serb participants strongly agreed with the statement and 10% opted for agree. 60% of Croat student respondents strongly agreed with the statement and 40% opted for agree that the recent history of their country is important to them.

On the other hand, the majority of Croat and a half of Serb student participants opted for neutrality in the segregated model. This is an interesting finding because, in the integrated model, neither of the two groups chose neutrality. More specifically, 70% of Croat respondents opted for neutrality in the segregated model, while 30% strongly agreed that the recent history was indeed important for them. 50% of Serb participants

strongly agreed with the statement that the recent history is important to them and 50%

opted for neutrality. At this point, the students in both models were asked to explain what

prompted them to make their choice. The analysis of students' replies to the open-ended

question led to identifying several major themes that can shed some light on the

reasoning behind such different choices in the two models, which will be expounded on

in the following section of the chapter.

Table 2. Relevance of history (Students)

	Students (CI)	Students (CS)	Students (SbI)	Students (SbS)
Strongly Agree (5)	60% (6)	30% (3)	90% (9)	50% (5)
Agree (4)	40% (4)		10% (1)	
Neutral (3)	-	70% (7)		50% (5)
Disagree (2)	-	-	-	-
Strongly Disagree (1)	-	-	-	-

Table 3. Means of the individual responses to the 1-5 Likert-scaled statements

	CROATS	SERBS
SEGREGATED	3.6	4
INTEGRATED	4.6	4.9
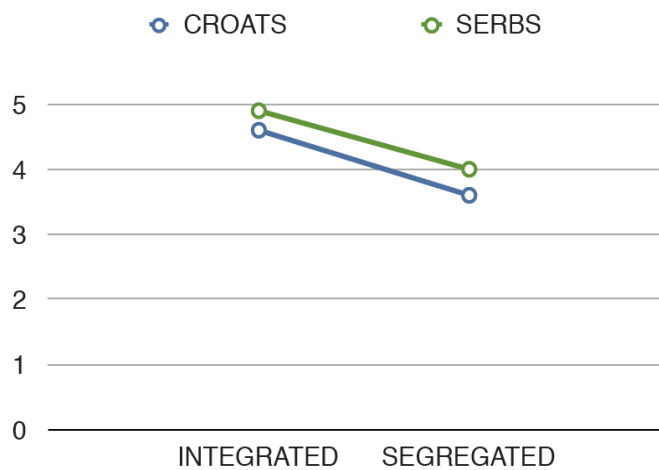
Figure 1. Graph shows the main effect of the models of schooling on the relevance of recent history for participants' present lives

The graph shows that the models of schooling may have influenced the views of participants with regards to the relevance of recent history for their current lives. It is interesting that although Serbs agree slightly more with the statement, the trend for both ethnicities is that the agreement reduces in the segregated model. If we go back to percentages, we can see that in the segregated model, both ethnicities seem to lean towards neutrality, though Croats slightly more than Serbs. The issue of neutrality in relation to this statement will be further explored through analysis of the open-ended responses. The implication of the findings is that agreement (consensus) is more likely in the integrated school model than in the segregated model.
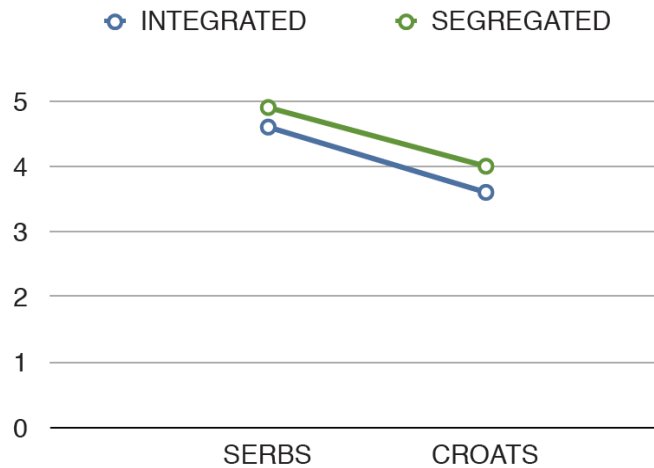
Figure 2. Graph shows the main effect of the ethnicity on the relevance of recent history for participants' present lives

Similarly to the previous graph, it appears that ethnicity may have slightly influenced students' views with regards to the relevance of recent history. The influence of recent history on the students' current lives in the integrated model appears to be higher than in the segregated model regardless of ethnicity. The graph also shows that Serbs tended to agree slightly more with the statement that recent history influences their current lives than their Croatian counterparts regardless of the model.

Influence of Recent History on the View of the Other

This section offers analysis of students' Likert scale responses to the question of whether recent history influences their view of the relevant Other. Almost 83% of the student participants, regardless of the model of schooling, stated that recent history

influences their view of the relevant Other. In the integrated model, there was an

agreement among all twenty participants that the recent history does influence their view

of the Other, while in the segregated model 40% of the Serb participants opted for

neutrality and 30% of Croat student participants stated that the recent past did not

influence their view of the Other. However, 70% of Croat participants and 60% of Serb

participants agreed with the statement.

Table 4. Influence of history on the view of the Other (Students)

	Students (SbI)	Students (CI)	Students (SbS)	Students (CS)
Strongly agree (5)	100% (10)	100% (10)	60% (6)	70% (7)
Agree (4)	-	-	-	-
Neutral (3)	-	40% (4)	-	-
Disagree (2)	-	-	-	-
Strongly Disagree (1)	-	-	-	30 % (3)

These findings show that, contrary to the integrated model where neither of the

two groups chose neutrality or disagreed with the statement, integrated model seems to

generate agreement. Such findings are also similar to the findings around the relevance of

history where students in the segregated model have been more inclined to neutrality. It

becomes more evident through the open-ended responses that students' choices are

affected by their inclination to put more emphasis on change of current intergroup

relations, importance of individual agency and resistance to history that they see as a tool

for fostering divisions.

Table 5. Means of the individual responses to the 1-5 Likert-scaled statements

	CROATS	SERBS
SEGREGATED	4.7	4.2
INTEGRATED	5	5
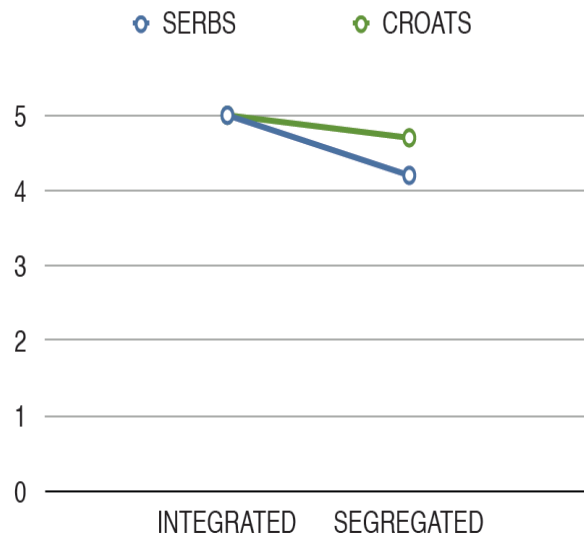
Figure 3. The main effect of models of schooling on recent history's influencing the view of the relevant Other

The graph above (Figure 3) shows that the model of schooling may have affected

different ethnicities in different ways. In the integrated schools, both Serbs and Croats

mostly agree with the statement that recent history influences students' views of the

other. What seems to be happening in the segregated model is that, although majority of the participants from both groups agreed with the statement, there is also 30% of Croats who disagree and 40% of Serbs that are neutral.
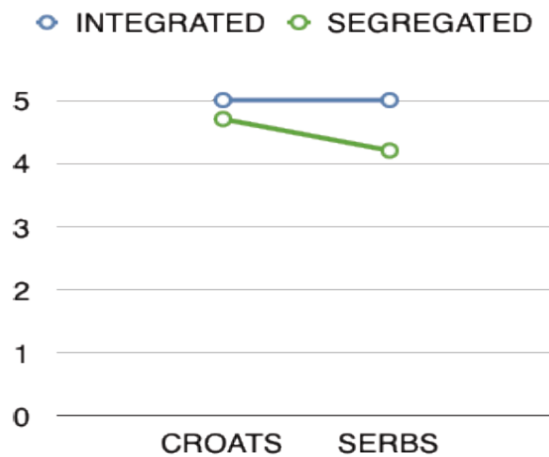
Figure 4. The main effect of ethnicity on recent history's influencing the view of the relevant Other

The graph (Figure 4) shows that ethnicity may not have contributed to shaping students' views of the recent history as a factor that influenced their outlook of the relevant other in the segregated and the integrated models of schooling. We can observe that both Croats and Serbs in the integrated model expressed prevalent agreement that the recent history did influence their view of the other. The graph also shows that in the segregated model Croat student participants tended to agree slightly more with the statement that the history influences their view of the other than their counterpart Serbs. It seems that agreement is more likely in the integrated school model than in the segregated model.

Learning History Together

In this section we explore students' Likert scale responses to the question if learning history together contributes to better relations among the students in and outside schools. 80% of the student participants, regardless of ethnicity, in the integrated model agree with the statement that learning history together contributes to better relations among students. Equal number of students of both ethnicities (20%) somewhat disagrees with this statement expressing concerns related to different versions of history and how they can increase tensions among students.

On the other hand, in the segregated model there is a significant drop in agreement with the said statement: 50% of Croat and 30% of Serb student participants agree with the statement, while 40% of Croat students remain neutral and 30% of Serb students express disagreement. Such variation within the segregated model is later expounded in students' open-ended responses where it is related to the lack of trust and persistent divisions within community itself.

Table 6. Learning history together

	Students (CI)	Students (SbI)	Students (CS)	Students (SbS)
Strongly Agree (5)	80% (8)	80% (8)	50% (5)	30% (3)
Agree (4)	-	-	10% (1)	30% (3)
Neutral (3)	-	-	40% (4)	10% (1)
Disagree (2)	20% (2)	20% (2)	-	-
Strongly Disagree (1)	-	-	-	30% (3)

Table 7. Means of the individual responses to the 1-5 Likert-scaled statements

	SERBS	CROATS
SEGREGATED	2.9	4.1
INTEGRATED	4.4	4.4
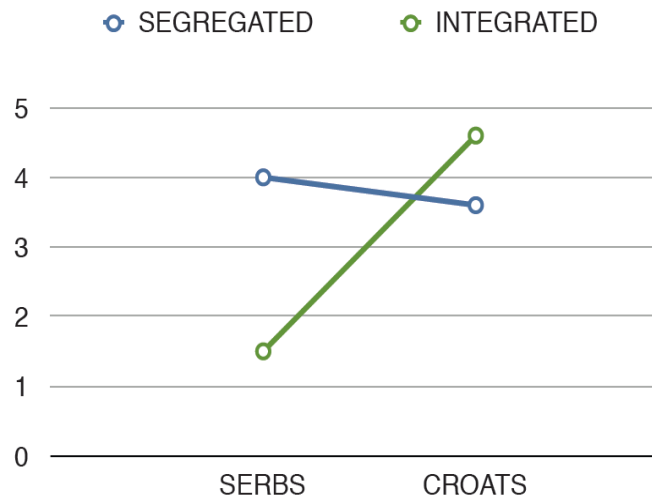
Figure 5. The main effect of ethnicity on students' views regarding the statement that learning history together contributes to better relations among students

The graph (Figure 5) shows interaction effect. Ethnicity may have an effect on the participants' views with regards to learning history together. This effect is much higher and more visible for the minority group – Serbs – whose view of the statement that

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learning history together contributes to better relations among students significantly varies in two models. In the integrated model both Serbs and Croats are in agreement that learning history together contributes to better relationships among students. In the segregated model we have slightly lower Croat agreement with regards to the statement in comparison to their compatriots in the integrated model. However, there is a significant drop in agreement among Serb respondents in the segregated model. This suggests that there is more agreement between the two ethnic groups in the integrated model on the topic of learning history together.
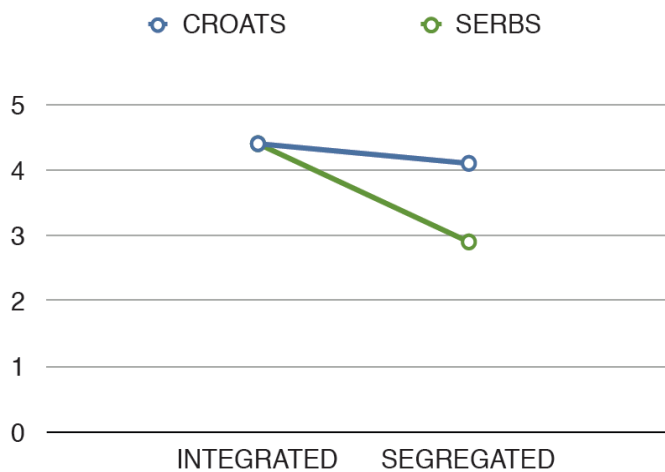
Figure 6. The main effect of the models of schooling on students' views regarding the statement that learning history together contributes to better relations among students

The graph (Figure 6) shows that there may be an effect of models of schooling on students' views of the statement that learning history together contributes to better

relations among students. The variation in students' agreement in terms of ethnicity was much higher in the segregated model, while in the integrated model both ethnicities agreed with the statement. Serbs in the segregated model expressed less agreement with the statement than Croats, while in the integrated model they both equally agreed. This suggests that segregated model of schooling seems to reduce minority students' willingness to learning history together.

The implication from the Likert-scales responses is that integrated schools are more likely to foster agreement among different groups, which may create conditions to reconciliation. The following section will provide more insight into student's responses.

Analysis of Participants' Responses to Open-ended Questions

This section is dedicated to the analysis of responses to open-ended questions by means of thematic discourse analysis. The method of thematic discourse analysis is helpful in identifying and connecting key themes to the wider discourses. The themes will be compared across ethnicities and schooling models respectively for each group of respondents.

Why is History Relevant to the Present?

Students (integrated model)

In students' responses to the open-ended question of why the recent history is

relevant to their individual lives, three major themes were identified within the integrated

model of schooling: 1) *history determines who we are, 2) history as unfinished process,*

and 3) historical bias.

Table 8. Relevance of history to the present (integrated model)

	Students (Sb)	Students (C)	Overall (Integrated)	Ranking
History determines who we are	30% (3) 3	30% (3) 1.5	30% (6)	3
History as unfinished process	70% (7) 1	20% (2) 2	45% (9)	1
Historical bias	40% (4) 2	30% (3) 1.5	35% (7)	2

Interestingly, the theme *history determines who we are* appears in responses of

30% of student participants and is equally distributed across ethnicities in the integrated

model. This theme is related to the collective identity and nation building stories of

participants' respective ingroups. Participants' individual narratives about the relevance

of history are closely intertwined with the collective nation-building discourses of

belonging. Through their individual narratives about the relevance of history, the

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participants are making sense of their own membership in a particular ethno-national

collective. For example, one of the Croat student participants states:

> *Every country has to have its history. We need to know who we are and I need to know where I belong.*

Another Serb participant adds:

> *It is important to me to know who our ancestors were, what happened to them and how that is connected to the present situation and what happened to all of us.*

When talking about the relevance of history for their individual lives, the

participants used the pronoun 'we' rather than 'I', which indicates that this theme is

strongly connected to their communal and collective identity rather than individual. The

need to distinguish ourselves from the others is often coupled with the myth of nations'

collective perseverance and heroism that bonds the individual members under the

umbrella of community. Such narratives seem necessary for collective bonding and sense

of *Us* as members of a collective whose unity is important for both individual and

collective survival. According to one Croat respondent:

> *If we do not preserve our past and our memory and if we decide to forget what happened to our forefathers, then there will be no us. I would not be here talking to you.*

The theme of *history as unfinished process* features in responses of 70% of Serb

participants and 20% of Croat participants. Such a difference in views between Serb and

Croat students can be explained by the specificity of the Serb position as a minority

group. Public or official discourses of recent history penetrate their every day lives in a

way that more than often counteracts the workings of their own discourses and identities.

History is thus a relevant force and a theme that they recognize as circulatory, persistent

and constraining of their own legitimacy and agency. According to one of the Serb respondents: "History is important for us and for our children's future". Another Croat participant observed that history is important not only for the future but also for their current life:

> *Recent history is not really over – it is an ongoing process – things have not been settled and resolved. It is difficult to say what is history and what is present. It influences our everyday life. So although history is not that important to me, it cannot be avoided…*

This theme is also connected to the need of learning from history: "What happened in the past and how it is accepted and processed will reflect on our life and future if we don't learn from it." According to one of the Serb participants, our present and future actions seem to be determined by our learning about the past: "We cannot move forward or plan anything if we do not learn from history." History is viewed by 45% of respondents, regardless of ethnicity, in the integrated model as an unfinished and cyclical process that stretches through time. The peculiarity of the position that the respondents are taking in the integrated model lies in the fact that history as unfinished and unstoppable force is taken as a given. This is not to say that history, and particularly contentious history, absolutely determines individual agency and choices, but it does have an impact. The contentious past, and more specifically, a particular history of conflict that people adopt, may constrain agency not only as societies slide into war but also in the aftermath of conflicts. On the other hand, peace demands stepping out of the constraints of particular histories that we are embedded in, which will be expounded further in the following chapter.

Through open-ended responses, we discovered an anomaly to the "equalizing" trend found in the Likert-scale data from the integrated model. The theme of history as unfinished process suggests that Serbs are less satisfied than Croats, even in the integrated schools. This distinction also suggests that Serbs are less likely to embrace reconciliation in a positive way, which may serve as the basis for continued conflict.

The theme of *historical bias* was identified in the responses of 30% of Croat participants and 40% of Serb participants in the integrated model of schooling. According to one of the Croat respondents:

> *History has different versions depending on who is telling the story. History has a lot of inventions – it is more about stories than real facts. This is particularly true of the recent history – one event has at least three different interpretations.*

Another Croat participant suggested: "Politicians are talking about history all the time to manipulate people. We cannot take history for granted." According to one of the Serb student respondents, human agency should be emphasized rather than historical structures: "While history is being used to influence our current situation, there are also things that we can influence ourselves as individuals."

Although this theme occurs within a relatively small percentage of responses overall (35% of respondents regardless of ethnicity), it is still relevant because it opens up space for complexity, doubt and dissent from the official historical narrative that rather controls and constrains individual agency. This, in turn, unlocks avenues and entries for conflict resolution strategies and tools to tap into.

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In the segregated model of schooling, three major themes were identified in students' accounts as to why, if at all, the recent history is relevant to their present. These themes are as follows: 1) _history determines who we are, 2) history as unfinished process_, and _3) breaking up with history_. The themes _history determines who we are_ and _history as unfinished process_ resemble the themes in the integrated model. However, the difference between the two models is not only in the existence of an additional theme of _breaking up with history_ and the absence of the _historical bias_ theme in the segregated model, but also in students' approach to the issue of relevance of history that illuminates the themes differently.

Table 9. Relevance of history to the present (segregated model)

	Students (Sb)	Students (C)	Overall (Segregated)	Ranking
History determines who we are	20% (2) 2	40% (4) 2	30% (6)	2
History as unfinished process	10% (1) 3	20% (2) 3	15% (3)	3
Breaking up with history	60% (6) 1	50% (5) 1	55% (11)	1

The theme of _history determines who we are_ features in responses of 40% of Croat participants and 20% of Serb participants. Overall, this theme is identified in 30%

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of students' responses regardless of ethnicity within the segregated model. According to one of the Croat respondents: "Recent history of my country is important for me because I am a patriot." Another one adds: "Recent history is important because our state was created." One of the Serb respondents similarly relates the importance of history and belonging to the particular collective: "History is important because we need to know who we are. We cannot understand ourselves if we do not know anything about our predecessors". An interesting finding is that this theme features slightly more in the responses of Croat respondents in the segregated than integrated model, which suggests a heightened need to belong to a collective and its nation building narrative. It can be argued that this theme is similarly constructed by the use of pronoun *we* instead of *I* as well as phrases such as *I am a patriot, our state was created and many of our people were killed*. Some of these phrases are similar to those used by the respondents in the integrated model, but they seem to have gained a different momentum and intensity in the responses of Croat respondents in the segregated model. Specifically, they seem to resonate more with the official nation-building narrative.

The theme of *history as unfinished process* is identified in the responses of 15 % of the participants overall. This theme occurs in 20% of Croat and 10 % of Serb student participants' responses. While the theme of history as unfinished process was viewed by the participants in the integrated model as an inevitable given, in the segregated model this theme relates to the politics of the day. The discourses of war-crime trials and arrests are closely connected to the theme of *history as unfinished process* in the segregated model. Although the war ended 18 years ago, the public is constantly reminded of it,

which causes renewed tensions, radicalization and ethnic divisions. The arrests have been done gradually, which one of the participants describes "as history in small dosages". The view of recent history as a "constant reminder" creates the space for patriotic and human rights discourses to clash with each other. One of the Croat participants stated: "History is by all means part of our life, it is far from over, we are still discovering things about recent history that we did not know." Another Serb student respondent pointed out: "Nothing is resolved. We are moving in circles, we are not masters of our destiny and we always fall into the same trap." This theme is treated differently in the segregated model in that history is not seen as a given, but as a destructive force that creates and maintains divisions in the present, which is often manifested in participants' frustration with their constrained agency.

An important storyline attached to the theme of 'history as unfinished process' refers to cross-border ties, suggesting the joint and interrelated experience of war with the neighboring countries of Bosnia and Serbia as well as the importance of regional and cross-border connections. When talking about the arrests of generals in Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia for the crimes committed in countries other than Croatia, students are echoing discourses of the political, cultural and geopolitical transnational ties that exist despite the borderlines of the newly created states. The existence of ideologically and culturally shared space in the discourses of people of the region is inevitable. One of the Serb student participants pointed out:

> *By following the arrests and trials of the generals on TV, we are discovering a lot of data that we didn't know. There is a lot of hidden history that is emerging about the wars in Bosnia and Croatia. The picture is changing as time goes by – history never seems to be finished.*

A negative influence of history on present and future is expressed in the response of one of the Croat student participants:

> *I have to say that we are messed up by the past and I don't know how we can deal with it. Whatever we do, wherever we go, we see history … we see pain and I understand it. But when are we going to deal with our present.*

One of the Serb student participants also expounded on the negative impact of recent history:

> *History is important for our present. Why – well, we see our friends are fighting all the time. They are fighting about stupid politics and history; it all comes down to that.*

History is vividly relevant to students' lives and very much present. It is also evident in students' responses that recent history has a tremendous impact on their present relationships with each other. The capacity of people to make their own present and future, despite their inability to change the past, features as an important topic in the narratives of student respondents in the segregated model regardless of ethnicity. Although one cannot claim that the respondents have a full grasp of their agency, the theme of *breaking up with history* that occurs in the segregated model shows a form of resistance to history as an overpowering force that suppresses human agency. The theme of *breaking up with history* is moreover fascinating in that it is the most prevalent theme in the segregated model, and yet, it does not occur in the integrated model.

Overall, this theme is identified in 55% of students' responses regardless of ethnicity. The *breaking up with history* theme occurs in 60% of the Serb student participants and in 50 % of Croat participants. It is framed around discourses of

resistance to history, particularly of the recent war. It also sheds some light on the declared neutrality of students, which is completely absent in the integrated model, in relation to the relevance of history for the participants' present life. What seems to be happening is that this theme challenges the neutrality expressed in the Likert scale answers. Based on the respondents' elaborations of their neutral position with regards to the relevance of history to their present, we can see that their explicit disinterest and neutrality is a manifestation of their actual resistance to recent history. The participants express their break up with history as disinterest, neutrality, and the need to focus on the future rather than the past. At the same time we can see that their choices are an expression of their resistance to being constrained by contentious history that influenced their lives negatively. For example, one of the Croat participants argues:

> *I am neutral and history is not important to me. I live in the present and not the past. The past has only brought misery to the people.*

One of the Serb participants similarly concludes:

> *The past is not important for my present life and I am not interested in history at all. Why should we think about past, it did not bring us anything good and it still causes divisions.*

This theme occurs in connection with a wider discourse that positions humans as ahistorical beings, disinterested and detached from their past. The respondents' choice of disconnecting themselves from the past often refers to the fact that to discuss thepast is often too painful. It is not surprising that this theme occurs in the responses of the students in the segregated model where facing the past is extremely complex and painful in both schools and communities, and where people have yet to find a proper, open and constructive way of dealing with it.

Comparison

According to the Likert-scale data, history seems to be more important to the minority group in both integrated and segregated model of schooling. However, history is, at the same time, more relevant to students of both ethnicity in the integrated, rather than segregated model of schooling. The majority of Croat respondents in the integrated model agreed that history is relevant for their lives, while interestingly 70% of them opted for neutrality in the segregated model. The seeming disinterest is better understood when contextualized in students' responses to the open-ended question as to why history is important to their present lives. They express the sense of marginalization by referring to alienation, frequent fights and lack of everyday communication with the other group. The theme that illuminates the seeming neutrality is the breaking up with history theme that points to respondents need to resist the past and reclaim their agency.

The theme *history determines who we are* occurs in the same number of cases (30%) in both segregated and integrated models. While this theme is distributed equally in responses of students regardless of their ethnicity in the integrated model, we can see that this theme occurs less with Serb respondents in the segregated model (20%). At the same time, this theme features in the narratives of 40% of Croat respondents, which points to their heightened sense of belonging to a particular ethnic milieu. Some of the phrases used by the Croat respondents in the segregated model point to the heightened resonance with the official nation building narrative, while the phrases used by the Serb respondents in the segregated model resemble those used by the Serb respondents in the

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integrated model. Serb participants tend to construct meanings around this theme without pointing to specific events from recent history, such as state creation or war. They primarily focus on the importance of their membership in a cultural and historical, rather than political entity, which may suggest their detachment from the wider nation building narrative that they do not seem to fit into.

The theme *history as unfinished process* occurs in 45% of students' responses in the integrated and 15% in the segregated model. An interesting finding is that this theme features in the responses of 70% of Serb participants and 20% of Croat participants in the integrated models, while it occurs much less overall in the segregated model, and more with Croat than Serb participants. History as an unfinished and cyclical process that stretches through time is connected not only to respondents' sense of inadequacy to cope with the forces of history, but to a certain extent, to their sense of responsibility about the past and inability to change what had happened.

In the integrated model, history as unfinished process has been accepted as a given and as something that one cannot change. The key emphasis in the integrated model is on learning from the past, which can serve as a remedy to our present and future conditions. In the segregated model, there is a sense of frustration connected with this theme because it implies that history impinges on human agency, rendering humans helpless and unable to cope. This frustration is highlighted by the prevalence of the *breaking up with the past* theme through which respondents in the segregated model are trying to reclaim their agency.

While the occurrence of the *historical bias* theme in the integrated model points to the respondents' capacity for critical thinking, the fact that this theme does not occur in the segregated model does not mean that the respondents lack critical cognitive abilities. It rather suggests that the *breaking up with the past* theme has taken precedence and is more relevant for the respondents in the segregated model, primarily because of their preoccupation with the present situation marked by painful memories and divided community.

Sources of Historical Knowledge (Integrated and Segregated Models)

The majority of student participants (65%), regardless of ethnicity, in the integrated model indicated that the Internet is the primary source of their historical knowledge. The primary source of historical knowledge in the integrated model for 70 % of Croat student participants is the Internet, while 30 % indicated that parents' stories are their major source of their historical knowledge. TV and newspapers as sources of historical knowledge were identified in the responses of 30% of Croat student participants, while only 20% indicated that textbooks are the main source of their historical knowledge. One of the Croat respondents stated:

> *There is media that is more objective and more serious than others. I listen to both Serb and Croatian media and select information - not all can be trusted. That is why I prefer the Internet – you can find everything in one place.*

The Internet was also identified as the main source of historical knowledge for 60 % of Serb student participants. TV and newspapers feature in the responses of 50% of

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Serb student participants as additional sources of historical knowledge. Parents' stories are the third main source of historical knowledge as indicated by 30% of the Serb respondents. The history textbooks as a source of knowledge about history are identified in 30% of Serb participants' responses. According to one Serb respondent:

> *I like the Internet because you can find many sources and many versions with few clicks of the button.*

The Internet features as the key source of historical knowledge overall in the segregated models as indicated in 70% of responses regardless of ethnicity. The primary source of historical knowledge for 80 % of Croat student participants in the segregated model is Internet, while 60 % of Croat student participants indicated that TV, radio and newspapers were their additional sources of historical knowledge. 40% of Croat respondents stated that they talk about history with their parents and their parents' stories feature as a third source of their historical knowledge. 20 % indicated that the textbooks are also a useful source of historical knowledge. One Croat participant noted:

> *I prefer the Internet because I don't like reading books and on the net everything is summarized.*

The other pointed out another convenience of the Internet:

> *I like the Internet because it is so wide-spread and comprehensive; it has a lot of information in one place. It is fast and easy to access.*

The Internet was also identified as the main source of historical knowledge for 70 % of Serb student participants in the segregated model. TV and newspapers are identified by 60 % of Serb student participants as their secondary source of historical knowledge. The parents' stories feature as the third main source of historical knowledge as indicated by 50% of the participants. One Serb student participant stated:

I speak with my parents about history because they were a part of that history and actually lived through it.

Another Serb student participant stated:

While I speak with my parents about history, I still have my own opinion.

An interesting finding is that textbooks do not feature as a source of historical knowledge for Serb respondents in the segregated model.

Comparison

The majority of participants in both models of schooling are using the Internet as their primary source of historical knowledge. The percentage of both Croat and Serb participants that are using the Internet as their primary source of historical knowledge is only slightly higher in the segregated model. The increased use of the Internet can be attributed not only to the lack of interaction at the communal and interpersonal levels that leads to more individualistic approaches to learning history, but also to the global trends in which the Internet and social networks serve as virtual connectors among people in the world that is becoming more dynamic as we speak. Multiplicity and diversity of online information seems to be an important and attractive Internet feature for the majority of students regardless of their ethnicity.

The lack of students' interest in textbooks may not only be a consequence of the competing and incomplete versions of history that can be found in different textbooks, but also due to the format of the books themselves that are not as interactive, dynamical or fast as the Internet. However, we need to make it clear that for learning about history,

it is not enough to just read about certain events, but what is necessary is the verification

of knowledge that the students acquire through various sources. Verification leads to

understanding and accepting of the subject matter, and this depends on the interaction

with the other individuals, primarily parents and teachers. Through such interaction,

students make sense of what they have passively acquired through various sources.

An interesting finding is that a higher percentage of students in the segregated

model emphasized stories of parents as their source of knowledge about history, which

may indicate that there is an issue of lack of trust and inclination of students to rely more

on the history taught at home rather than in school. The percentage of Serb respondents

that indicated parents' stories as their source of knowledge is slightly higher in both

models of schooling, which is not surprising as they do have a different story about the

war that is not taught in school. An important finding is that the role of the Internet as a

source of historical knowledge is dominant for both Serbs and Croats in both models of

schooling.

Table 10. Sources of historical knowledge in the integrated model

	Students (Sb)	Students (C)	Overall (Integrated)	Ranking
Internet	60% (6) 1	70% (7) 1	65% (13)	1
Parents' stories	30% (3) 3	30% (3) 2.3	30% (6)	3
TV & newspapers	50% (5) 2	30% (3) 2.3	40% (8)	2
Textbooks	20% (2) 4	30% (3) 2.3	25% (5)	4

Table 11. Sources of historical knowledge in the segregated model

	Students (Sb)	Students (C)	Overall (Segregated)	Ranking
Internet	70% (6) 1	80% (8) 1	70% (14)	1
Parents' stories	50% (5) 3	40% (4) 3	45% (9)	3
TV & newspapers	60% (6) 2	60% (6) 2	60% (12)	2
Textbooks	-	20% (2) 4	10% (2)	4

Influence of Recent History on the View of the Other

Students in both models were asked if and how recent history influences their view of the relevant Other. Almost 83% of the student participants, regardless of the model of schooling, stated that recent history influences their view of the relevant Other. In the integrated model, there was agreement among all twenty participants that recent history does influence their view of the Other, while in the segregated model 40% of the Serb participants opted for neutrality and 30% of Croat student participants stated that the recent past did not influence their view of the Other. Students in the integrated model expounded more on the reasons for the choice they made, regardless of ethnicity, while the students in the segregated model offered sparse explanations of their choice. The subsequent analysis shows that the students in the integrated model have been more open

in expressing their views about this difficult topic and have stressed change of their views through time. On the other hand, in the segregated model, there is a resistance not only to the notion that historical events influence students' opinions about the other, but also to recent history in general. The major overall themes identified in the narratives of students in both models are as follows: 1) Change, 2) Individual agency and 3) Resistance.

Students (Integrated Model)

In students' responses to the question, if and how recent history influences their view of the relevant Other, two overall themes were identified within the integrated model of schooling: *change* and *individual agency*. The theme of *change* has been traced in the narratives of 40% of the Serb respondents and 20% of the Croat respondents in the integrated model of schooling. The theme of change in the integrated model is connected to contact and human interaction. The change of views towards the other is not a static phenomenon, but an evolving one that depends on context and interlocutors.

Table 12. Influence of recent history on the view of the other in the segregated model

	Students (S)	Students (C)	Overall (Integrated)	Ranking
Change	40% (4) 1	20% (2) 1	30% (6)	1
Individual agency	30% (3) 2	10% (1) 2	20 % (4)	2

One of the Serb student participants explained:

We live with the consequences of the recent war every day. When the war began, there was fear and a struggle to survive. But when you come in contact with members of the other community again, your opinion changes.

Another Serb participant stated:

People are not in trenches any more. The change has been gradual; people got reacquainted again. Some people need less time to trust the others, while for some people, the process of thinking has not even started yet. My opinion changed but I will never take what happened for granted. In war you have a more constrained view, but life shifts you from that position, depending on context.

An interesting view was expressed by a Croat respondent who stated:

The historical events influenced my view of the other. It is not a positive or a negative view, but a confusing one. If we realize that different ethnicities have different views of the same event, one becomes confused. I think that history is changeable and changing. It is easy to believe in what we hear from our media and parents, but if we look at other sources, we may find something totally different.

In the integrated model, the theme of individual agency appears in the narratives of 30% of Serb student participants and 10 % of Croat student participants. This theme is not only connected to the role of individual leaders and their capacity to affect change, but also the agency of individuals at the grassroots. The respondents' views point to the notion that the agency of an ordinary individual becomes highly controlled and constrained in time of war. However, although the agency of the individuals is greatly conditioned by the constraints of conflict, the respondents recognize that individuals retain a certain level of freedom to act. Although small-scale gestures may not have a

major impact, they are important for individuals to make sense of the setting that they are part of. Small scale gestures that defy conformity to violence, divisions or stereotyping may have a multiplier effect at the communal level.

According to one of the Serb student participants:

> *The visits and apologies of Serbian and Croatian presidents are good for reestablishing better relations and coexistence between people – these are important historical events. But it is not only leaders that can introduce change; it needs to start from us, ordinary people. Also, we need to see action behind words and symbolic gestures.*

Another Serb student participant pointed out:

> *I think that the majority has been silent and the minority was loud. The loud minority created war propaganda, while most of the people were silent. That is how the war started.*

An important subtheme of silence occurring in the narratives of students points to the devastating effect of war on individual agency that is reduced to a minimum. The discourse of war is totalitarian; the wartime machinery that controls and constrains humanistic tendencies and behaviors banishes the voices of normalcy and everyday kindness. The conditions of war invariably negate individual consciousness, merging it with the collective consciousness, which is controlled from the top and co-opted by the ruling elite. One of the open propositions of this study that remains to be discussed is the question of suppression of individual voices and the everyday practice of humanity.

Students (Segregated Model)

Although 70% of Croat and 60% of Serb student participants agreed that the recent history influenced their view of the other in the segregated model of schooling,

there was still more variation within this model than in the integrated model where we had a complete consensus that history influenced the respondents' views of the other. Namely, 40% of the Serb participants opted for neutrality and 30% of Croat student participants stated that the recent past did not influence their view of the Other.

Table 13. Influence of recent history on the view of the other in the segregated model

	Students (Sb)	Students (C)	Overall (Segregated)	Ranking
Resistance to history	30% (3) 2	20% (2) 2	25 % (5)	2
Change	40% (4) 1	40% (4) 1	40% (8)	1

In this model there are two dominant themes that emerged from students' responses: *resistance to history* and *change*. The theme of resistance features in the narratives of 20% of Croat and 30% of Serb student participants. This theme is related to the views of history as a negative, divisive and problematic concept. The participants tried to distance themselves from history and its influence on the views of others by claiming their indifference, neutrality and lack of interest about the recent past, while at the same time, putting emphasis on the present. For example, one of the Serb student participant states:

> *I am neutral about this issue, because history should not influence my view of the other. It is the present that I am interested in.*

A Croat student participant gives quite the opposite view:

> *Nothing is resolved. We hear and talk about recent history all the time and it*

brings all of what had happened to the present. And here we are again. It should be different.

Another Croat student participant stated:

The recent past did not influence my view of the other because I don't have anything against the members of the other ethnic group.

The theme of *change* features in 40% of respondents' narratives overall and it is equally distributed between ethnicities in the segregated model. This theme is connected with the view of history as something inevitable, circulatory and ever-evolving. Interestingly, it occurred in participants' responses as they spoke about the progression of their views over a period of time. For example, this theme is evident in statements such as: "It influences my opinion, but that view is changing with time" or "Yes, it influences my opinion, but we cannot generalize because things change. We learn how to reacquaint with each other". There is no significant difference in how students from different ethnic groups frame the theme of change, which indicates another point where they seem to have found common ground.

Comparisons

The majority of student participants, regardless of the model of schooling, state that recent history influenced their view of the relevant Other. While this view is prevalent in the integrated model, in the segregated model 40% of Serb participants opted for neutrality, while 30% of Croat student participants stated that the recent past did not influence their view of the Other. The respondents from both models refer to the change, which is related to human contact and interaction that happens in flux and depends on the

changing context. On the other hand, the themes of individual agency in the integrated model and resistance to history in the segregated model emerge as two different themes in two models of schooling. In the segregated model, resistance is not only about the notion that the historical events influence students' opinions about the other, but also about the recent history in general. History is seen as a major constraint to human agency and ability to choose. In the integrated model, the respondents' view is that the agency of the individuals is possible despite the constraints of conflict.

Mediating Historical Meanings and the Role of Parents and Teachers

Before delving deeper into the analysis, we first need to distinguish between history taught at home and history taught at school as well as between sources and mediators of historical meaning. Both distinctions are important for understanding how students' views about history are shaped. The awareness that there is often the disconnect between the history taught at home and the history taught in school speaks to the need of involving the parents more substantially or differently in their children's history learning experiences. This involvement does not only mean parents' approval of their children's models of schooling, but actually participating in the development of learning models as well as in discussions about difficult topics that the children in post-conflict situations often face in schools and communities.

The role of teachers as mediators of meaning is also not clear, particularly if we talk about balancing between their own assumptions and curricula mainstreamed from

above. There is an obvious gap in understanding the role of parents and teachers in students' history learning that cannot be taken for granted. Forms and levels of involvement of different key stakeholders affect the effectiveness of schooling models, which may have a significant impact on how post-conflict societies function and, therefore, this study proposes a more integrative framework.

History does not only exist in books, or on TV, or Internet, which are, according to the student respondents, key sources of historical knowledge. Until children discuss, verbalize and understand history with their parents at home, it cannot become a living history and it cannot be acquired as part of their internalized system of values and beliefs. One of the key assumptions of this study is that the key mediators of historical meanings are parents and teachers because it is with them that the youth engages in making sense of their own identities by learning about the past and imagining the future.

The parents were asked to elaborate on whether they talked or not with their children about recent history and how they saw their own role in their children's history learning. The teachers were asked to elaborate on their role in mediating historical meanings, with a particular focus on methods and goals of history teaching as well as challenges they come across while teaching recent history. The analysis that focuses on the topic of mediation of historical meanings and the role of parents and teachers as key mediators of historical meanings was conducted by focusing on parents' and teachers' narratives in both integrated and segregated models.

The majority of parents, regardless of ethnicity, in both integrated and segregated model stated that they talked with their children about recent history. They pointed out

that talking about history is inevitable since history is very much present in their daily lives. Parents are very cautious in trying to balance their stories about the recent past. Some of the parents' responses around the topic of talking with their children about recent history are as follows:

I talk with my children; we often have similar opinion,s even though I am not trying to influence them.

They are independent people; they sometimes agree with what I say, and sometimes they do not.

I don't want to overburden the children and I am trying to avoid talking about tragic things. They mix with others and they should have their own opinions.

I speak with my children about recent history, but I don't want to influence them negatively. I don't want them not to communicate with others.

The parents' responses imply that the framing of history at home can have an impact on children's interaction with their peers of the other ethnicity. Their prudence in talking about history with their children is informed by a constant worry of how their children will treat their peers of the other ethnicity. Such an attitude features in responses of parents regardless of their ethnicity or the schooling models they have chosen for their children.

Parents in the integrated model were asked to elaborate on their role as mediators of historical meaning. Their responses were examined using thematic discourse analysis and the following themes were identified: *tolerance and historical truth*.

Table 14. Role of parents in mediating historical meaning in the integrated model

	Parents (Sb)	Parents (C)	Overall (Integrated)	Ranking
Tolerance	83% (5) 1	33% (2) 2	60% (7)	1
Historical truth	50% (3) 2	50% (3) 1	50% (6)	2

Tolerance

The theme of tolerance occurs in 60 % of parents' responses overall in the integrated model, and it is more prevalent in the narratives of Serb participants, where it amounts to 83 %, while in the narratives of Croat parent participants it amounts to 33%. The parents relate the theme of tolerance to their children's ability to associate and interact with the Others. It plays an important role that is closely connected to their social mobility and socio-economic integration. For example, one of the Serb parents states:

> *Parents should teach children not to be exclusive but tolerant – to be normal citizens – that they can associate with others.*

A Croat parent suggests:

> *I don't understand those parents who teach their children to provoke and insult other children only because they are of a different nationality.*

Tolerance is recognized as an important value in the post-conflict context, regardless of ethnicity. This theme features particularly in the responses of Serb parents as they are searching for a way to interact with the Croat majority in a meaningful way, balancing between social integration, on the one hand, and preservation of their identity, on the other.

Historical Truth

The theme of *historical truth* occurs in 50 % of parents' responses overall in the integrated model. It is equally distributed in the narratives of both Serb and Croat parent participants. The theme of historical truth is related to the concern of parents about the misinformation and propaganda that their children may be exposed to. A Serb parent suggests:

> *Parents have an important role and should teach their children history as it really was. They should tell the real truth about history and not tell lies and misinformation.*

A Croat parent has similar concerns, pointing out the responsibility of parents as well as teachers that should strive to provide a more objective picture of the past than the media or the Internet:

> *I think that we as parents have a great responsibility to tell the truth to the children. The views of the children are influenced by the media and they hear a lot of false information. The parents still have a lot of influence on the children's views together with the school teachers.*

There is a wider concern applicable to this theme, which is how can we determine what the historical truth really is and who can actually pass judgment of what is true and

what is not true. Another important point is that the truth, as parents see it, often stands at odds with the truth that is taught in school.

Parents (Segregated model)

The narratives around the topic of parents' role in mediating historical meanings were also examined in the segregated model, using thematic discourse analysis that revealed the following themes: *tolerance* and *tension between history taught at home and in school*.

Table 15. Role of parents in mediating historical meaning in the segregated model

	Parents (Sb)	Parents (C)	Overall (Segregated)	Ranking
Tolerance	66% (4) 1	33% (2) 1.5	50% (6)	1
Tension between history taught at home and in school	33% (2) 2	33% (2) 1.5	41% (5)	2

Tolerance

The theme of tolerance occurs in 50 % of parents' responses overall in the integrated model, and it is more prevalent in the narratives of Serb participants, where it amounts to 66 %, while in the narratives of Croat parent participants it amounts to 33%. In one of the Croat parent's responses, we can trace some hope for the improvement of broken relationships:

Parents should encourage children not only to learn about their own history, but also the history of other people. Learning about other groups' history can only bring us something good.

Another Serb parent adds:

Whatever we say to our children, it will have some impact on their future. If they decide to live here, the most important thing is to be tolerant to others' stories and opinions.

Although less prevalent in the segregated model, this theme is particularly relevant in the context that is troubled by increased communal tensions and divisions. It is not surprising that this theme occurs more in the responses of Serb parents who are trying to envision the future of their children in a society that is more tolerant of difference. Also, it is encouraging to see that a significant number of Croat parents view tolerance and learning about Others as a way forward.

Tension Between History Taught at Home and in School

The theme of *tension between history taught at home and in school* occurs in 40 % of parents' responses overall in the segregated model. This theme emerges in the responses of 33% of Serb participants, and 33% of Croat parent participants. One of the Croatian parents points out:

Parents should encourage children to learn and ask questions about history. They are often confused when they hear different stories in schools and at home.

According to a Serb parent:

> *We need to know more about what our children are learning in school. When I was a child, we learnt history in school, but children often do not hear the whole story in school, then they hear something on TV and ask us.*

Parents are acutely aware of the fact that history taught in school and at home is often contradictory, which brings about confusion of both children and parents. There is a need of more involvement of parents in what their children are learning to address this disconnect.

Comparisons

Although less prevalent in the segregated model, the theme of tolerance seems to be relevant for both communities in both integrated and segregated schooling models. The theme of tolerance occurs more in the responses of Serb parents in both models, and slightly more in the integrated model (83%). This theme is related to the need of the minority group for improved socialization, social mobility and socio-economic emancipation. However, this theme also occurs in 33% of Croat parents' responses in both models and it is similarly related to parents' concern about their children's socialization in a diverse environment. They connect the theme of tolerance with the need to learn about the others and with others as well as a way to recognize and respect those that are different. Interestingly, tolerance was high for Serbs in both models, but slightly higher in the integrated model. By contrast, the theme of *tolerance* occurred less in the responses of Croats in both models and at exactly the same proportion (33%).

The themes of historical truth and tension between history taught at home and in school appear in the integrated and segregated models respectively as separate themes. These themes are only seemingly unrelated. Namely, the theme of historical truth that occurs in the responses of the parents in the integrated model is connected to the debate of who has the authority to actually pass judgment of what is historical truth. The concern is also related to the trustworthiness of historical sources. Actually, parents are directly questioning the historical sources and indirectly challenging those who are in charge of the production of "trustworthy history".

In the context of the segregated model, the theme of historical truth becomes even more challenged with the parents' openly pointing to the existence of tension between the history taught in school and that taught at home. Challenging the trustworthiness of historical sources and critiquing the top-down production of history in the integrated model connects well with the open tension between history taught at home and in school that features in the segregated model. Parents view their role as often contradictory in the history education of their children, which points to the need of more involvement for parents in finding the educational modus operandi that would address this disconnect.

The Role of Teachers in Mediating Historical Meanings

The teachers were asked to elaborate on their role in mediating historical meanings within the contexts of different models of schooling. The thematic discourse analysis of eight teachers' responses in the integrated and segregated models was conducted and the following themes were identified: *tension between history taught at*

home and at school, isolation, developing common values, learning through exploration,

focusing on basic information vs. detailed analysis.

<u>*Teachers (Integrated Model)*</u>

Table 16. Teachers as mediators of historical meanings in the integrated model

	Teachers (Sb)	Teachers (C)	Overall (Integrated)	Ranking
Tension between history taught at home and at school	75% (3) 1	75% (3) 1.5	75% (6)	1
Isolation	50% (2) 2.5	50% (2) 3	50 % (4)	3
Developing common values	50% (2) 2.5	75% (3) 1.5	62 % (5)	2

Tension Between History Taught at Home and at School

The teachers often referred to the cause of tensions as the disconnect between

history taught at home and in school. The occurrence of the theme of *tension between*

history taught at home and in school is equally distributed in teachers' responses in the

integrated model, regardless of ethnicity. This theme is traced in 75% of Croat teachers'

responses and 75% of Serb teachers' responses.

According to a Serb teacher in the integrated model:

> *As much as we want to teach history from the books, children are very much*
> *influenced by their parents. We see that children are saying they do not want to*
> *associate with the other side. I noticed that on both sides. It is what they bring*
> *from their communities – from their homes.*

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A Croat teacher similarly suggested:

> *It is difficult to reach students who come to school with some preconceived notions about history. On the other hand, we cannot claim that we are offering the only true version in school.*

We can see that different versions of recent history taught at home and at school often clash with each other in the classroom contexts. This may not necessarily be a completely negative experience, but an opportunity to open a discussion on what can be done to overcome differences. Specifically, envisioning the future may be an important aspect of learning about the past.

Isolation

There seems to be a lack of programs or trainings for teachers working on difficult topics in divided post-conflict contexts, which contributes to teachers' isolation. The teachers appear to be functioning autonomously and often detached from each other. They do not visit other schools and programs very often or receive visitors. Their responses show that very little has been done to encourage teachers' innovation. One of the Serb teachers suggests:

> *We have to follow the curriculum, but we often receive negative feedback from students. Students sometimes openly challenge what they hear from us. That is why I am trying to lecture less and encourage students' exploration of topics themselves.*

Almost 60% of teachers, regardless of ethnicity, in the integrated model pointed to the difficulties of dealing with difficult topics of the recent past that increased their sense of isolation.

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One Croat teacher argues:

We need seminars and trainings for teachers working on difficult topics. We are facing difficulties that we don't know how to handle, except by avoiding certain topics.

It is not surprising that this theme appears to be relevant in the integrated rather than the segregated model because teachers in the integrated model face the challenge of having pupils of both nationalities sitting in classes together. Avoiding or glancing over difficult topics may be a temporary solution, but it accentuates the actual problem of the contentious historical narratives that often clash in classrooms.

Developing Common Values

The theme of a disconnect between history taught at home and in school discussed above is related to the theme of developing common values. This theme is identified in 75% of Croat teachers' responses and 50% of Serb teachers' responses in the integrated model. A Croatian teacher states that she did not come across major problems while teaching recent history, but she adds that the teachers' role should be development of common values:

It all depends on the professors – if the professor is objective. Professors do not want to go into deeper analysis of recent history, which is fine because we don't want to create more divisions among children. But what they should learn is that people are all equal – that the value of a human being does not depend on his or her nationality. This is where teachers should have a role.

According to a Serb teacher:

I don't think that we have appropriate tools and techniques for teaching about the recent past, particularly in mixed classes. Children bring certain values and

beliefs from their homes and it is very difficult to change that unless we work on it all together.

Obviously, teachers' concerns about the inadequacy of teaching tools and dealing with difficult and highly charged topics are quite valid. What seems to be missing is the component of values that goes beyond traditional history learning. There is a need to create a baseline of common values that underpins our thinking not only about the past, but also the present and the future. Such a baseline could offer a space for innovation and experimentation in history learning in post conflict societies. It can serve as an optimal space for exploring common ground when teaching about the recent past. The teachers themselves may have a significant role in the exploration of common values together with other relevant stakeholders, such as students, parents, teachers, school administrators, ministry of education officials, etc.

Teachers (Segregated Model)

Table 17. Teachers as mediators of historical meanings in the segregated model

	Teachers (Sb)	Teachers (C)	Overall (Segregated)	Ranking
Tension between history taught at home and in school	75% (3) 1.5	75% (3) 1	75 % (6)	1
Learning through exploration	50% (2) 3	50% (2) 2.5	50 % (4)	3
Focusing on basic information vs. detailed analysis	75% (3) 1.5	50% (2) 2.5	62 % (5)	2

Learning Through Exploration

The theme of learning through exploration features in the narratives of 50% of teachers in the segregated model, regardless of ethnicity. The teachers often find it difficult to talk to students about the contentious recent past and they see their role as facilitators or coordinators who are mapping the way for students to explore and find things for themselves.

One of the Serb teachers states:

> *I think that the best quality of history learning can be achieved if students learn through exploration, when they visit the sites of memory and watch documentaries.*

A Croat teacher points out:

> *One example of how to approach the recent past is collecting and analyzing newspaper articles. I did it with my students. I gave students a task to analyze the Dubrovacki vijesnik newspaper during and after the war. They did research and, based on their own research, they were able to form their own views and write an essay about the topic.*

What is evident in teachers' responses is that they find it helpful to use certain extracurricular materials that are supplementing their lecturing on the recent past. While analyzing newspapers, watching documentaries and visiting to the sites of memory may not provide absolutely unbiased insights into the historical events of the period, the students' exposure to different sources and angles of looking at the same event can contribute to a more comprehensive picture as well as their critical thinking about certain topics.

Focusing on Basic Information vs. Detailed Analysis

Another important theme that the teachers singled out as mediators of historical

meaning is that they are trying to focus on the basic information about the recent past.

The majority of teacher respondents, primarily of Serb ethnicity, in the segregated model

agreed that they usually concentrate on some general things when teaching about recent

past. The theme of *focusing on basic information vs. detailed analysis* features in the

narratives of 75% of Serb teachers and 50% of Croat teachers in the segregated model.

One of the Serb teachers states:

> *The students need to know some dates like when was the formal break up of*
> *Yugoslavia as well as some important events and processes. We do not go into*
> *political questions.*

On the other hand, the Croat teachers in both the segregated and integrated

models pointed out the need for better books and more detailed scientific historical

analysis:

> *I think that the recent history should be approached in more details. In the*
> *current history books there is very little about it. In some of those history books,*
> *the approach to events is not really historical and I think that the recent history*
> *should be approached and dealt with in a more scientific way.*

The teachers of Serb ethnicity, regardless of the schooling model, were more

concerned with the topic of focusing on basic information, i.e., avoiding detailed

explanations that may presumably get them in trouble. They are pointing out that they

follow the curriculum and that the recent history is an ongoing process as new evidence

and historical sources are being discovered all the time. One of the Serb teachers states:

> *For example, we learn that the Dayton agreement was signed on a certain date
> and it marked the end of war in Bosnia. We do not go into a deep analysis of the
> aftermath of war since the new information is emerging as we speak.*

Tension Between History Taught at Home and at School

According to the majority of teacher participants, there is a difference between

what students are learning at home and at school about recent history. The theme of

tension between history taught at home and in school features in the narratives of 75% of

teachers in the segregated model, regardless of ethnicity. This is evident in students'

reactions to their lecturing. A Croat teacher from the segregated model states:

> *We had a topic from WWII. Students had a very strong reaction after the topic
> turned to a more recent war and a question if one should stay and defend his
> country.*

One Croatian teacher from the segregated school noted the influence of the community

and what children are learning at home:

> *There are students who have normal views, but there are also those who are
> saying they do not want to associate with the other group. They were born after
> the war – from 1995 onwards. They have learned at home whom not to trust.*

One of the Serb teachers in the segregated model pointed out a problem that he

found in classes that he taught using the books and curricula prescribed by the ministry:

> *Some students agree with what I am teaching and some don't agree. They listen to
> their parents and they come to the classrooms with certain views and attitudes.*

Some of them resist and completely reject my teaching. They say that the books are not telling the truth.

Comparisons

There is one common theme that occurs in both the integrated and segregated models, *tension between history taught at home and at school*. It is evident that there are high rankings and convergence between the integrated and segregated models around the *tension between history taught at home and at school* theme. Interestingly, this theme occurs in the responses of the majority of teachers, regardless of the model and the ethnicity. Its prevalence indicates that that the issue is endemic and needs further attention. Possible integration of insights from the key stakeholders – in this case teachers and parents – may be crucial to understand how to bridge this gap.

The themes of *learning through exploration* and *focusing on basic information* in the segregated model are interrelated in a sense that they are offering some sort of first aid solutions to the problem of learning history in the post-conflict contexts rather than offering more sustainable or preventative measures. The themes of *learning through exploration* and *focusing on basic information* in the segregated model seem to avoid tackling the divisive issues directly in order to reduce the possibility of confrontation among students. By contrast, the theme of developing a baseline of common values that occurs in the integrated model that would underpin students' thinking, not only about the past but also the present and the future, seems to provide more space for growth. Such a

baseline can serve as an optimal space for exploring common ground when teaching about the recent past.

The theme of isolation of teachers occurs in the integrated, but not in the segregated model. This theme emphasizes teachers' isolation particularly in contexts in which their authority and teaching materials are challenged. The lack of programs and trainings for teachers working on difficult topics in divided post-conflict contexts greatly contributes to the sense of isolation and inadequacy of teachers. The teachers appear to be functioning autonomously, having to individually face the challenge of talking about contentious topics in integrated classrooms. Common temporary solutions consist of avoidance of difficult topics, which has only accentuated the actual problem of contentious historical narratives that clash in classrooms, creating divisions among students as well as a rift between students and teachers. These rifts at the communal level reflect wider social cleavages and point to the need for change and action that would promote better and healthier relations among youth who represent the future of the country.

Suggestions for the Future

The responses around the suggestions for the future elicited from students, parents and teachers are grouped together to facilitate analysis of their insights on how history learning and teaching practices can be improved. I have identified six major themes emerging from the responses of students, teachers and parents: *regionalization and decentralization of history; integrated schools; the importance of language; shared*

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identity; role of parents for students' individual sense of self; role of teachers and development of critical thinking. The analysis of the last section will delve into comparisons right away because the major themes occur in both models, with different groups of participants and with different ethnicities.

Regionalization and Decentralization of History

One of the key suggestions emerging from the participants' responses around suggestions for the future is *regionalization and decentralization* of history teaching and history teaching materials. Regionalization and decentralization are seen as two solutions for teaching history in post-conflict contexts. This theme is prevalent in teachers' responses (100%), and it is equally distributed across ethnicities in both models. It is absent from parents and students' responses in both models. It suggests that history should not only be focusing on the main contenders in a conflict, such as Serbs and Croats in the case of Eastern Slavonia, but it should also include other nationalities living in the area. The respondents point to the fact that they have never had the opportunity to explore the histories of Roma, German, or Hungarian communities in their local contexts – the stories of minority communities are glanced over or are absent from history textbooks and history classes. Neither Croats nor Serbs had an opportunity to learn about their fellow citizens' histories and roles, as if they never existed. One of the teachers stresses:

> *…it is through decentralizing history learning that people could introduce more complexity to history itself and people would realize that history cannot be reduced to just us and them.*

This alternative idea of introducing stories of the people who were not the main protagonists but still suffered the same ordeal of war would provide different and multiple perspectives about certain events, which would diffuse interethnic tensions and enable students to see history as a multifaceted, complex and shared system of knowledge. The stories of Roma, German and Hungarian communities are untold stories, but those nations are integral parts of the region of Eastern Slavonia and its history. According to one of the teachers:

> *The students should be given a chance to present stories of different nations in the conflict and that is how they would learn how those stories intersect with the stories of their own nation. This would not only disambiguate the existing storylines and introduce complexity, but would also enable creation of a truly integrated school.*

Integrated Schools

A majority of the teachers and parents in both models experienced, what they called, "true integrated schools in old Yugoslavia" and they reminisced about this model of schooling with nostalgia:

> *When we were students, there was no mention of nationalities; we were all equal. Those were different and better times.*

Although students never experienced the integrated Yugoslav schools, 70% of students of both ethnicities referred to this theme in their responses. When compared to the present integrated schools in Eastern Slavonia, we can see that the meaning of integration in former Yugoslavia meant something different. As one of the Serb teachers pointed out:

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> *I participated in a conference in Vukovar about integrating all schools in the region, but when teachers talked about the values of integrated schools, they talked in terms of curriculum. The new integrated schools are only in Croatian.*

According to one of the students:

> *In integrated schools in Baranja, minorities have just optional classes of language and culture, but I heard that not many children are attending those.* This statement suggests that there are different value systems that are operating

beneath the surface. The value of integrating, in the Western sense of the concept, has a

positive connotation of bringing people together through contact and dialogue. However,

in post-conflict societies, where there is a majority and a minority, integration becomes a

threat of assimilation, dispersion, and disappearance for the minority group.

Importance of Language

A key theme closely related to that of *integrated schools* is the *importance of*

language. This theme occurs in the responses of 80% of student participants equally

distributed in the two models of schooling and across ethnicities. It also occurs in the

narratives of the majority of parents and teachers who recognize that language is closely

tied to the ethnic identity of particular groups. Language has played a significant role in

demarcating borders between groups and creating divisions among peoples of former

Yugoslavia. After the collapse of former Federation, linguists have been working hard on

developing new languages by introducing new words, phrases and expressions so that the

languages could be as different as possible. The 'mutilation' of language was aimed at

the formation of particular autonomous identities, but what they really succeeded in

doing was to create deeper cleavages and obstacles to communication among the different groups, inhibiting possibilities for establishing relationships and achieving reconciliation.

The suggestion of one parent around the theme of language was that, "…the students should use their own languages in school; as long as they are doing it consistently, neither of the languages should be in any way discriminated against." This does not suggest that the languages will become more problematic and ungrammatical, but they would foster respect and recognition through education in multinational and mixed contexts. One of the teachers suggested: "Students should also be encouraged to learn the languages of nations that live in their neighborhoods or nearby regions". Thus, the minorities would feel accepted, and the idea of a truly integrated school would become possible.

Shared Identity

Another important theme emerging from the responses of parents, teachers and students, equally distributed in both models of schooling and across ethnicities, is "shared identity", which is closely related to the discourses of belonging to a unified European entity. This theme occurs in the responses of 80 % Serb and 80 % of Croat student participants. It also occurs in 50% of parents and teachers' responses in both models, and regardless of ethnicity. The idea of a superseding European identity and promotion of all-European values that broadens the context and encompasses different nationalities

have been framed as alternatives to local nationalist tendencies. One of the teachers

pointed out:

> *If we connect national and European identities, we could find common ground. Through classroom and out-of-classroom activities, such values should be promoted in some future civil society. European identity is very important – it is positive because both Serbs and Croats belong to the European pool of nations that are culturally and geographically connected.*

The European project proposes a sort of structural and institutional security for

the nations under its umbrella. However, nationalism is still a dominant currency in

Croatia, and the change in political agendas of elites who are currently pro-European and

democratic, is mostly enforced from the outside. This theme will be further discussed in

the following chapter.

The Role of Parents for Students' Individual Sense of Self

The theme of *importance of history for an individual sense of Self* occurs

predominantly in the responses of parents as they make sense of their role in their

children's understanding of history. It appears in 60 % of parents' responses equally

distributed across ethnicities and in both models. One parent emphasizes:

> *People remember history differently and I think that parents' and grandparents' oral transmission of their experiences has an enormous impact on what children remember. Their stories are selective and they are so difficult to change.*

The stories of parents and grandparents are the stories that children are raised on

and heard early in their lives. Those stories are imbued with a particular set of values, of

what is just and correct, which shapes children's sense of Selves in the formative years of

their development. However, parents also point out that, as children grow, they become

more exposed to other sources and influences such as school, peers, media and the

Internet. One of the parents suggests:

> *What children hear at home is sometimes different from what they hear in school.*
> *I think it is good that children hear different views so that they can form their*
> *own.*

Although children are exposed to various sources of historical knowledge

production as well as interaction with their peers, the role of parents in the process of

historical meaning making is very crucial. Their role in mediating meanings about the

past is intimate, authentic and significant, particularly in the formative years of young

people. While parents strongly support diversity of views that their children are exposed

to, they also express worry that their children often find themselves in situations where

the views they acquired from home are disconnected from what is said in the school or

other contexts. To address this acute problem, the parents are proposing to be more

involved in curricular development and school practices that would address the

challenges of history learning in post-conflict settings.

One of the parents explained:

> *The books and what our children learn in school is in total contrast to what we*
> *are telling them at home. There is a lack of trust among children about what they*
> *are learning in school. We need to think how to include all relevant stakeholders*
> *in the discussion about those challenges, particularly the parents.*

A majority of teachers, regardless of ethnicity and models of schooling, framed their role as facilitators of historical meanings that are based on facts and objective truth, with the educational objective of developing critical thinking among their students. One of the teachers explained:

> *I think that the best quality of history learning can be achieved if students learn through exploration, i.e., by exploring the past themselves, and I can play the role of coordinator. History has to be based on sources and facts, not on gossip, stereotypes and stories.*

Teachers' discourse, however, points to the subthemes of l*ack of teaching materials related to recent history, teachers' ideological bias* and *insufficient historical distance.*

As another teacher pointed out:

> *I think that history should be approached in a more scientific way. The same history books are used and in those books, there is only one side's story, while the other side is presented negatively. Most of the sources that we use are questionable because there should be a time distance, a period of time should have passed. At least 50 years should pass so that we could talk about history objectively. It is still too early to talk about everything.*

A noteworthy suggestion that the teachers were making in relation to the tension between history taught at home and at school was that channels of communication between parents and teachers on the topic of history learning should be established. A majority of the teachers suggested that the reason as to why students showed resistance to what they were teaching was because students heard different stories at home.

One of the Serb teachers in the segregated model explained the challenge of

teaching history based on official books and curricula:

> *Students listen to their parents and they come to the classrooms with certain views and attitudes. Some of them resist and completely reject my teaching. They say that the books are not telling the truth. So, I concentrate on some general things – they need to know some dates like when was the formal break up of Yugoslavia, some important events and processes. We do not go into a deep analysis. I think that we need a different approach to teaching history and it cannot happen unless we include parents in the discussion.*

Table 18. Students', parents', and teachers' suggestions for the future in both segregated and integrated models of schooling

	Teachers (Sb)	Teachers (C)	Overall	Ranking
Decentralization and regionalization	100% (4) 1.3	100% (4) 1.25	100% (8)	1.3
Integrated schools	75% (3) 4	100% (4) 1.25	88 % (7)	4
Importance of language	100% (4) 1.3	100% (4) 1.25	100% (8)	1.3
Shared identity	50% (2) 5	50% (2) 5	50 % (4)	5
Development of critical thinking and better communication between parents and teachers	100% (4) 1.3	100% (4) 1.25	100 % (8)	1.3
	Parents (Sb)	Parents (C)	Overall	Ranking
Integrated schools	100% (6) 1.5	100% (6) 1.5	100% (12)	1.5
Importance of language	100% (6) 1.5	100% (6) 1.5	100% (12)	1.5
Shared identity	50% (3) 4	50% (3) 4	50 % (6)	4
The role of parents for students' individual sense of self	83% (5) 3	83% (5) 3	83% (12)	3
	Students (Sb)	Students (C)	Overall	Ranking

Integrated schools	70% (14) 3	70% (14) 3	70% (28) 3
Importance of language	80% (16) 1.5	80% (16) 1.5	80% (32) 1.5
Shared identity	80% (16) 1.5	80% (16) 1.5	80 % (32) 1.5

Conclusions

Relevance of history

The findings show that history seems to be more important for the minority group in both the integrated and segregated model of schooling. Such a difference in views between Serb and Croat students can be connected to their respective group status as well as the influence of official discourses on their identities, agency and marginalization. The sense of exclusion seems to be reinforced by the discourses of the past that legitimize exclusion and marginalization of the minority group. On the other hand, in the segregated model, the majority group students express their position towards the relevance of history as neutrality, thereby resisting the past that they see as a tool for creation and maintenance of divisions and inhibitor of progress in their communities.

The relevance of history for students' sense of who they are is elaborated differently by Croats and Serbs. While history and nation-building narratives seem to be important for Croatian students' ethnic and national identity, Serb students find history important for delineating their membership within a wider cultural and historical entity, rather than a political entity. Serbs define their identity in relation to their genealogy as a

nation that lived dispersed and outside the borders of their motherland, which made their position uniquely different and difficult to fit into newly created national states.

The view of history as an unfinished and cyclical process occurs in both models, but significantly less in the segregated. Additionally, there is also a difference between ethnicities regarding this theme. Serb participants, particularly in the integrated model, are more inclined to see history as an unfinished process, which can be explained by the constant workings and presence of the history in their everyday life. They see official history as being used to constrain their agency and legitimize their marginalized position. However, their view of history as unchangeable and a given does not mean that they have given up any willingness to act. They place emphasis on learning, which can help them overcome past and present wrongdoings.

On the other hand, in the segregated model, there is a sense of frustration and inadequacy in dealing with the contentious past. The attitude of student participants, regardless of ethnicity, in the segregated model is that the only way to reclaim their agency is to break away from history and public discourses of the past that engender oppressive practices. The public is constantly reminded of its contentious history in ways that cause renewed tensions, radicalization and ethnic divisions. While history should serve as a reminder of the past and as an educational tool, it is often misused in the public discourse to exacerbate divisions among different groups. The participants express their resistance to history by being neutral and by shifting their focus to the present and future rather than the past. However, their choice is often an expression of their resistance to being constrained by history in the present as well as the painful nature of the contentious

past that they are facing in everyday lives and interactions within their divided communities.

The absence of the historical bias theme that pertains to critical thinking about history in the segregated model does not mean that students are devoid of the ability to critically assess the situation they are in. It only highlights students' intense focus on resisting or breaking away from the past, because the past that that they are faced with is manipulated to promote tensions and divisions within their community.

Sources of Historical Knowledge

Sources of historical knowledge are important for determining entry points for possible initiatives that can improve educational efforts in conflict and post-conflict societies. The findings of this study show that the majority of participants in both models of schooling use the Internet as their primary source of historical knowledge. As the dominant source for history learning, the Internet offers remarkable multiplicity and diversity of information, which in comparison to textbooks, enables interactivity, dynamism or fast exchange and access to information.

However, an important point about acquiring information from the Internet or other sources of historical knowledge is that acquiring information is not the same as adopting the information. A process of verification through interaction with the mediators of historical meanings (parents, teachers) is necessary for students to adopt a particular piece about information on history, which then becomes knowledge. An interesting finding is that the students in the segregated model, and particularly the minority Serb

students, pointed out that stories told by their parents is one of their main sources of historical knowledge. This leads us to conclude that there is a disconnect between history taught in school and at home and that the lack of trust in official historical narrative is an acute problem in segregated communities.

Influence of Recent History on Participants' Views of the Other

The majority of student participants, regardless of the model of schooling, stated that recent history influences their view of the relevant Other. This view is prevalent in the integrated model, while in the segregated model, a significant number of Serb participants opted for neutrality, while almost one third of Croat student participants stated that the recent past did not influence their view of the Other. Students in the integrated model stressed change of their views through time and the importance of individual agency. The respondents from both models agreed that the change is related to human contact, re-engagement and interaction.

The change of views towards the Other is seen as an evolving process that depends on the changing context and interlocutors. On the other hand, the themes of individual agency in the integrated model and resistance to history in the segregated model, point to different attitudes of respondents in the two models of schooling. In the segregated model, resistance is not only to the notion that the historical events influenced students' opinions about the Other, but also to recent history in general. History is seen as a major constraint on human agency and the ability to choose. In the integrated model, the attitude is that the agency of individuals is possible despite the constraints of conflict.

The questions of suppression of individual voice and everyday practice of humanity as well as human resistance remain to be explored further in the discussion section of this study.

Mediating Historical Meanings and the Role of Parents and Teachers

The awareness that there is often a disconnect between the history taught at home and the history taught in school, speaks to the need to involve both parents and teachers more meaningfully in youth's history learning experiences.

There is a major gap in understanding the role of parents and teachers in students' history learning that can influence them, which may have significant impact on how the post-conflict societies function. How children understand the history of their country, particularly a contentious history, may have far-reaching consequences on the future escalation of violence. Children and youth are susceptible to different influences that may come from different sources such as the Internet, textbooks, TV or newspapers, but it is not until they discuss what they have read or have seen with their parents at home or teachers in school, that this history becomes part of their identity and value belief system. The living history emerges through interaction with the key mediators of historical meanings - parents and teachers.

The majority of parents, regardless of ethnicity, in both the integrated and segregated models talk about history with their children, but they are very prudent when talking about recent history that, in their view, can have a major impact on their children's interaction with their peers of the other ethnicity. One of the major topics

through which parents elaborated their role in both models is the topic of tolerance. This theme is more prevalent with Serb parents, particularly in the integrated model, as it relates to the need of the minority group for improved socialization, social mobility and socio-economic emancipation. This theme is relevant for Croat parents, too, who expressed concern about their children's socialization in a diverse environment. This theme represents a point of agreement between parents of different ethnicities and the value of this theme is in its openness to learning about the others and recognizing others that are different.

The themes of historical truth and tension between history taught at home and at school also emerged in parents' responses in both the integrated and segregated models. The theme of historical truth that occurs in the responses of the parents in the integrated model is related to the discussion of who has the authority to actually pass judgment about historical truth. Parents are questioning the trustworthiness of historical sources and those who are in charge of history production. In the segregated model, the theme of historical truth is challenged by the parents' openly stating the existence of tension between the history taught at school and at home. Challenging the trustworthiness of historical sources and critiquing top-down history production in the integrated model, connects well with the open tension between history taught at home and in school in the segregated model. Parents in both models view their role as mediators of historical meanings as contradictory, which points to the need for increased parental involvement in finding the educational modus operandi that would address this contradiction.

The teachers in both models, regardless of ethnicity, are acutely aware of the tension between history taught at home and at school. The view of teachers in elaborating their role as mediators of meaning is closely related to the themes of learning through exploration, focusing on basic information in the segregated model. However, teachers are aware that such techniques represent only a first aid solution in addressing a widespread and entrenched problem of learning history in the post-violent conflict context. These mediating techniques represent avoidance of confrontation and other difficult topics. On the other hand, the theme of developing a baseline of common values, occurring in the integrated model, seems to provide more space for growth and exploration of common ground among students when teaching about the recent past.

Suggestions for the Future

The suggestions for the future are based on responses from students, parents and teachers in both schooling models that were grouped together to facilitate analysis of their insights on how history learning and teaching practices can be improved. Those suggestions are grouped around the following cross-cutting themes: *regionalization and decentralization of history; integrated schools; the importance of language; shared identity; role of parents for students' individual sense of self; role of teachers and development of critical thinking*.

Regionalization and Decentralization

Regionalization and decentralization may be one of the possible solutions for improving history teaching in post-conflict contexts. It is the teachers who speak about this theme, regardless of ethnicities and models. The teachers point out that history should not only be focusing on the main contenders in a conflict, such as Serbs and Croats in the case of Eastern Slavonia, but also on other nationalities living in the area, such as the Roma, German, or Hungarian communities. Such an inclusive approach of introducing stories of the people who were not the main protagonists, but still suffered the same ordeal of war, would enable different perspectives to emerge, creating complex histories and shared systems of knowledge that would counteract dichotomous versions of history that cause divisions and conflict.

Integrated Schools

The suggestions with regards to integrated schools imply the existence of different value systems that operate at the communal level. This theme is relevant for all three groups of participants, but particularly for teachers and parents who have experienced different kinds of integrated schools in former Yugoslavia. Parents and teachers evaluated integration based on their experience of integrated schools in old Yugoslavia, which is different from the integrated schools that exist currently. Namely, students sit in the same classrooms in the integrated mode of schooling and learn from the same books, but once they step out of the classrooms, students usually associate with the peers of their own ethnicity. 70% of students overall evaluated integration as

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something positive, following the Western-centric discourse of integration as a means to bring people together through contact and dialogue. However, 30% of students of both ethnicities pointed to the fact that in post-violent conflict societies integration may mean a threat of assimilation and dissolution of group identity.

Although Serbian and Croatian languages are very similar, reflecting primarily dialectic differences, the language is seen as a tool for fostering divisions. The linguistic changes introduced particularly in the 1990s, were intended to delineate separate ethnic identities. Now these small differences are used to inhibit possibilities for establishing healthy relationships and achieving reconciliation. Parents suggested that students should be allowed to use their own languages in school as long as they are doing it consistently. Hearing different dialects in their everyday interaction would foster respect for the other groups and acceptance of difference as something positive. The idea of diversity and multiculturalism is difficult to sell in societies with two strong ethnic groups, but it is not impossible. The inclusiveness and acceptance of difference would actually bring the idea of a truly integrated school to the forefront as a possible solution to the current post-war situation.

Shared Identity

The suggestions around the topic of shared identity are based on the idea that the superseding European identity and promotion of all-European values can help diffuse local nationalist tendencies. All three groups of participants, regardless of ethnicity, shared the opinion that the local nationalist movements will lose their relevance after

Croatia joins the European Union. However, the question of whether the change introduced from outside will actually take place in a space where negative peace (J. Galtung 1969) is still ongoing, remains to be seen.

Role of Parents for Students' Individual Sense of Self

Although students are exposed to various sources of historical knowledge production as well as interaction with their peers and other adults, the role of parents in the process of historical meaning making remains crucial. Parents' role in mediating meanings about the past is particularly relevant to students' formative years when students' systems of values and beliefs are shaped. Parents suggested that they need to be more involved in curricular development and school practices that would address the challenges of history learning, particularly the disconnect between what is taught at home and in schools.

Role of Teachers and Development of Critical Thinking

Similarly to parents, the teachers play a key role in mediating historical meanings. A majority of teachers, regardless of ethnicity and models of schooling, emphasized that their educational objective was developing critical thinking among their students. Lack of teaching materials related to recent history, teachers' ideological bias and insufficient historical distance represent obstacles to developing critical thinking. Being acutely aware of their important role as well as the inadequacies that come with it, teachers suggested the need to improve channels of communication between themselves and

parents on the topic of history learning, echoing the parents' suggestion. The disconnect between what is taught at home and in school indeed needs further attention and innovative practices that would promote better understanding of differences and diversity in schools contexts in post-violent conflict societies. One of the possible solutions appears to be in the hands of parents and teachers as key mediators of historical meanings, whose greater involvement and interaction may introduce the necessary change in school communities.

CHAPTER 5: EXPLORING RESONANCE OF OFFICIAL HISTORICAL NARRATIVES IN INDIVIDUAL STORIES

Peace building occurs in dialogue with the past… Peace builders have to compete with the discourses and values that sustain war. To compete effectively they need to know how much and what kind of these discourses and values for war youth have inculcated and how they reproduce and transform them (McEvoy-Levy 2006, p.285).

This chapter starts with a detailed account of the qualitative analysis of the textbooks and then delves into students' narratives about specific events from recent history that they consider relevant for their present lives. The last section of the chapter focuses on the comparison of themes occurring in both textbooks and students' narratives. The objective is to explore the resonance of official historical narratives from the history textbooks in students' individual responses, which will contribute to better understanding how official narratives are acquired and reconstructed at the communal level. Thematic discourse analysis is a method of qualitative analysis used in this study to examine both textbooks and participants' responses. This type of data analysis will provide insights into grassroots' communal processes of dealing with the contentious past.

The first stage of data analysis consisted of reading through all the collected texts (textbooks and interview transcripts) to get an overall sense of the data. While reading

through the data, the researcher was making notes about certain topics, putting down ideas, puzzles and questions as they came along. In certain instances, the researcher was also recording her impressions so that she did not forget them. After that, she formulated what she really wanted to get out of my data. It was her intention not only to explore the explicit structure of narratives, but also get to the latent, implicit meanings for which thematic discourse analysis seemed to provide tools and resources. For the purposes of coding, it was important to identify what represented a theme and how much of data in terms of size should be encompassed within a theme.

Identification of thematic clusters or some general predominant themes depends on the research question. However, these thematic clusters are not mutually exclusive since certain meanings may appear in different clusters. The prevalence of a certain theme in terms of frequency of specific content markers is an important factor in determining ranking of themes, but it is not the only criterion pointing to the relevance and the choice of a particular theme. Thematic discourse analysis cannot really ignore instances of dissent, counter-themes and counter-narratives that appear in rare cases and with only a small percentage of participants. Why? Because these are exactly the cases that defy the rule and it is important to capture them and learn why they appear with certain respondents, and not with the others.

So the importance of a theme does not have to depend on "quantifiable measures [of specific content markers], but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question" (Braun & Clarke 2006). Codes represent "the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a

meaningful way regarding the phenomenon" (Boyatzis 1998, p. 63). Themes were collected by always having in mind their connection to the research question. As the analysis progressed, the researcher started to connect those themes to certain explanations through a reflective process of questioning and interpreting the meanings, themes, subthemes and underlying assumptions.

Textbooks

Discussions about textbooks became quite important with the nationalist leaders' ascension to power in 1990s. Textbooks as main sources of the official historical narrative have a role of communicating politically correct versions of history, values and the national identity that are aimed at creating followers or loyal citizens (Bourdieu 1973; Luke 1988). This analysis is focusing on the politics of history, which is not about gauging accuracy of historical interpretations, which mostly belongs to the realm of historiography, but the political use of historical interpretations to form master discourses that subsequently determine a particular collective memory, culture and political system. My goal is to analyze the history textbooks used in schools in Eastern Slavonia as primary sources of the official historical narrative, which would enable examination of the traces of that master narrative in the individual stories of the participants elicited through interviews.

The following textbooks were analyzed for the purposes of this study:

1) Erdelja, Krešimir & Igor, Stojaković. 2009. Koraci kroz vrijeme IV. Zagreb: Školska knjiga (Erdelja, Krešimir & Igor, Stojaković. 2009. *Steps Through Time*. Zagreb: Školska

knjiga; history textbook for the 4th grade of grammar schools);

2) Dukić, Ivan, Krešimir Erdelja & Igor Stojaković. 2005. Hrvatska Povijest. Zagreb: Školska knjiga (Dukić, Ivan, Krešimir Erdelja & Igor Stojaković. 2005. *Croatian History.* Zagreb: Školska knjiga; history textbook for the 1st grade of vocational schools);

3) Erdelja, Krešimir & Igor, Stojaković. Tragom prošlosti 8. 2007. Zagreb: Školska knjiga. (Erdelja, Krešimir & Igor, Stojaković. *Tracing the Past* 8. 2007. Zagreb: Školska knjiga. History textbook for the 8st grade of primary schools);

History textbooks represent "one of the formal representations of the society's ideology and its ethos" (Grahek 2005). The researcher's objective in analyzing textbooks was to identify the structure of the "formal representations", official mainstream historical discourse, which would enable examination of the traces of that discourse in the individual narratives of the participants. One of the major issues in post-conflict societies is the question of how to avoid "replication of educational structures that may have contributed to the conflict" (Tawil and Harley 2004, p. 7). By establishing the structure of a wider historical discourse, we will be able to see how such discourse operates on the ground; if it is modified, challenged or fully accepted, and how people's views of themselves and their relevant Others vary in relation to their accepted historical narrative.

Thematic Discourse Analysis of Textbooks

For the past ten years, Croatian history textbooks have gone through changes in both methodology and content, which has enabled them to –more or less – distance themselves from the strongly criticized interpretative paradigm that

dominated throughout the 1990s. The analysis has shown interpretative differences among textbooks that significantly depend on how their authors position themselves in relation to the problematic heritage of the 1990s: whether their narratives show continuity with those elements that dominantly shaped the politics of history in the 1990s, or try to distance themselves from it and even to question some of its key elements (Koren 2009, p. 263).

Based on the document analysis of the three history textbooks, with particular emphasis on the textbook used in the 4th grade of grammar schools, four major themes were identified in the official discourse related to the war of independence/civil war in Croatia: 1) *ingroup reconciliation, 2) sites of memory and nationbuilding, 3) victimhood and hegemony, 4) legitimacy.*

The method of thematic discourse analysis attempts to cluster meanings around salient themes connecting them to wider discourses and ideologies, which is the first step in determining how such discourses operate and resonate at the grassroots level.

Ingroup Reconciliation

The theme of ingroup reconciliation is one of the dominant themes in the textbooks and it refers to the reconciliation of all Croats, 'sons of former fascist Ustaša and former communist partisans', which was promoted by the political elites led by President Franjo Tudjman. Croats, as an ingroup, have been deeply divided from the time of the Second World War, and the Croatian leadership has tried to overcome this division for the sake of the establishment of a unified and independent Croatian state as the common goal of all Croats, regardless of their political views. However, this reconciliation only included Croats, while the other citizens of Croatia, primarily Serbs,

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were excluded from that process (Koren 2009).

History education and history textbooks played an important role in facilitating the ingroup reconciliation. For the ingroup reconciliation to take place, a discourse that positions different factions within a framework of victimhood became increasingly important as well as the politics of numbers. For example, the numbers of victims of Ustaša and partisans' crimes were almost equalized in the textbooks. The number of the victims of Bleiburg is inflated to 70,000 in the textbooks (Erdelja and Stojaković 2009, p. 219), while the majority of the sources have argued that the actual number cannot be determined, and the estimates have usually been between 20,000 to 40,000 people (Tomašević 2001; Booker 1997; MacDonald 2002). The number of the victims of Jasenovac in the textbooks was said to be also around 70,000 (Erdelja & Stojaković 2007), or from "60,000 to 100,000 (Erdelja and Stojaković 2009, p. 185), which according to the genocide memorial archives, are only the identified victims, while the list with all the victims is not complete as the gathering of names is still ongoing.[13]

Minimalization and relativization of the Ustaša's extermination policies towards 'minorities', as they are called in the textbooks, particularly Serbs, Jews, Roma, is not only done through minimizing the numbers of victims, but also by placing the majority of victims that were targeted solely because of their ethnic origin together with the small percentage of victims that were targeted due to their political beliefs: "The Ustaša

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[13] The list of names of Jasenovac victims can be found at http:// http://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr/Default.aspx?sid=6711 . It is noted on the web-site that the list of individual victims of the Jasenovac Concentration Camp is the result of work done so far by experts from the Jasenovac Memorial Site, and it is not complete. Until 18 April 2010, a list of dates, names and details for 80,914 victims was collected and it is still ongoing.

government was in support of the Nazi program. Soon, the deportation of Jews to the concentration camps started…. Serbs and Roma were also deported to concentration camps, together with Croats that were members of the HSS party, communists and other contenders of the regime." (Dukić, Erdelja & Stojaković 2005, p. 168).

At the same time, the role of Croats in the anti-fascist movement, and thereupon, in the formation of Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia is portrayed in the textbooks with the emphasis on political moments and entities such as ZAVNOH[14] (Koren 2009, p. 245; Erdelja & Stojaković 2007, p.171-172; Erdelja & Stojaković 2009, p. 207-207), stressing the creation of a Croatian state within the Yugoslav federation. Such a discourse once again reconciled the contentious ideologies of communism and fascism under the umbrella of continuation of Croatian statehood. The discourse also frames the initial support of Croatian citizenry for the independent state and its Ustaša regime as progressively declining due to difficult economic conditions and Ustaša terror against Serbs, Jews, Roma and Croatian political opponents (Erdelja & Stojaković 2007, p. 182-185). All of the textbooks are critical of the Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska, NDH) and its racial and anti-semitic policies against 'minorities', but this discourse is framed in such a way that it was the Italians and Germans who had the real power and mentored their implementation, which in turn implies a denial of responsibility.

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[14] According to the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia (consolidated text) under "Historical Foundations", the National Anti-Fascist Council of the People's Liberation of Croatia (ZAVNOH) (*Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Hrvatske)*, was the highest governing organ of the anti-fascist movement in Croatia during World War II. It was developed to be the bearer of Croatian statehood. At its last meeting, it changed its name to the National Parliament of Croatia, (*Narodni sabor Hrvatske*). Retrieved 2012/03/24 at:
http://www.sabor.hr/Default.aspx?art=2406&sec=729

Koren (2009) posits that it was the change of government after President Tudjman's passing in 1999 that marked the beginning of a debate about history textbooks, which led to the establishment of the Commission for Assessment of History Textbooks and emergence of a multitude of textbooks.

The representations of the Second World War play an important role in the textbooks not only in framing ingroup political reconciliation but also in legitimizing and delegitimizing certain positions towards events of the recent war of the 1990s. The subtheme of breaking with communism is evident in the textbooks describing the events that led to break-up of Yugoslavia. In 1990, the Croatian Parliament (Sabor) changed the official name of the state from the Socialist Republic of Croatia to the Republic of Croatia "by which the new government marked their break-up with the socialist heritage" (Erdelja & Stojakovic, p. 281). A more problematic change happened when the new nationalist government led by President Tudjman and his HDZ party (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica or Croatian Democratic Union) introduced a flag with *sahovnica* (checkeredboard) and new currency called *kuna* that were both used under Pavelic's Ustasha regime. Rehabilitation of fascist imagery definitely reinforced the break up with socialist legacy for Croats, but it also heightened tensions and fear among the Serb population who saw the new Croatian establishment as the extension of Pavelic's state.

Sites of Memory and Nationbuilding

The sites of memory and their relevance for the Croatian nationbuilding narrative feature as some of the key themes in the textbooks. Separate sections in the history

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textbooks are dedicated to the sites of collective memory such as Vukovar, Jasenovac and Bleiburg[15] and their analysis proved to be crucial for understanding discourses of the recent war and postwar dynamics. Those sites do not have only symbolic but also mythical meaning within the collective historical narrative of the key protagonists. They are also perpetual subjects of debate and collision between Serbs and Croats to this very day.

In the books, the town of Vukovar is represented as "a hero city" and a victim of Serb aggression. Aggression is a term particularly used in depicting Serbian fighting against Croats who are mostly portrayed as heroes and victims. The discourse around aggression and aggressors in this context implies that the other or the enemy is actually coming from the outside. This narrative excludes the large portion of indigenous Serb population and their suffering, positioning them in this narrative as strangers, occupiers and outsiders. "This was a rebirth of Serbian imperialist politics from the 19th century, and their aspiration that 'all Serbs live in one state', regardless of aspirations of other peoples…Particularly tragic was the destiny of Vukovar. The Serb forces killed several thousands of Croatian civilians…non-Serbs were forced to leave their homes…" (Erdelja & Stojakovic 2009, p. 286-287). There is no mention of Serbs killed and exiled from their homes in Vukovar, Osijek, Zagreb and other cities that were under Croatian control.

The narratives of Bleiburg and Jasenovac in this context are very relevant in their interconnectedness with the story of Vukovar. These stories have particular emotional

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[15] Most of the information about the sites of memory was found in the history textbook for the 4th grade of grammar schools Erdelja, Kresimir & Stojakovic, Igor. 2009. Koraci kroz vrijeme IV. Zagreb: Školska knjiga,

relevance for the two nations and were used in the 1990s to stir up the memory of atrocities, to provoke outrage, fear and hatred that were manipulated by political elites to escalate conflict. Although a scientific comparative study of Jasenovac and Bleiburg as sites of collective memory does not exist, I will try to use a narrative lens to deconstruct the major storylines in their presentations in history textbooks, which can be the beginning of a scholarly discussion about these two sites of memory and their use for political purposes.

The topic of Bleiburg and the Way of the Cross, or the so called, 'death marches', is covered within the separate sections of textbooks such as *Croatia at the End of the Second World War* and in the *Post-War Period*. The very name *the way of the cross* and its reference to Jesus' suffering, implies religious, mythical and an almost sacred nature of this site of memory. The narrative in the book starts with the advancement of partisan units and withdrawal of the German army from the eastern parts of the NDH, and – along with it – withdrawal of the NDH troops and of numerous civilians, primarily families of Ustaša's collaborationists, who were fleeing possible partisan retribution. The textbooks mention that this was a prepared withdrawal, 'clarifying' that partisans did not only want retribution against those who committed crimes but also to get rid of their possible class and political contenders. The people in the convoy wanted to surrender to the British, but the British refused. In the aftermath, mass retribution took place against the former soldiers by the Yugoslav army in the area near the Austrian town of Bleiburg as well as Dravograd and Maribor in Slovenia. The number of people in the convoys was estimated at around 100,000 to 150,000, while the number of killed could not be accurately

determined, although the book in brackets mentions the estimate of the controversial

Vladimir Žerjavić, who has been notorious for reducing the number of victims and

proclaiming that the scope of the Holocaust in World War II-era territory of Yugoslavia

was intentionally exaggerated. His estimate of 70,000 people having been killed, was,

however, mentioned in the book for the fourth grade of grammar schools (Erdelja &

Stojaković, p. 219). The rest of the prisoners and civilians were then sent back to Croatia

on foot with the partisan escort – an event called *the Way of the Cross*. This event was

depicted in terms of exhausting death marches "…on that journey many prisoners died of

hunger and exhaustion while a number of them was killed…" (Erdelja & Stojaković, p.

219). The textbooks' authors mostly agree that there are a lot of inconsistencies in

describing this event as well as politicization of the number of casualties in various

textbooks due to the lack of historiographic research as well as secondary literature and

sources.[16]

Jasenovac was Croatia's largest concentration and extermination camp that

consisted of a network of several sub-camps, established in August 1941, and dissolved

in April 1945. It was run by the Ustaša that annihilated more than 100,000 people

including Serbs, Jews, Roma and Croats deemed as opponents of the Ustaša regime.[17]

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[16] Grahek, Martina, 2005. Bleiburg i Križni put u hrvatskim udžbenicima povijesti, in Fleck, Hans-Georg/ Graovac, Igor (ur.), *Dijalog povjesničara-istoričara 9*, Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, Zagreb: 641-663

[17] According to the entry in Encyclopedia of the Holocaust, edited by Israel Gutman, vol.1, 1995, pp.739-740 around six hundred thousand people were murdered at Jasenovac, mostly Serbs, Jews, Gypsies, and opponents of the Ustasha regime. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum assessed that the Ustasha regime murdered between 77,000 and 99,000 people of all ethnicities (but mostly Serbs) in Jasenovac between 1941 and 1945, and that during the period of Ustasha rule, a total of between 320,000 and 340,000 ethnic Serbs and more than 30,000 Croatian Jews were killed

When they saw that Germany was losing the war, Jasenovac's administration decided to blow up much of the camp and kill most of the prisoners in an attempt to conceal evidence of the mass murders. This concentration camp represents a key symbol of Serb suffering and victimhood in Croatia, and an important 'site of memory' that was used by both Serbs and Croats for political purposes before, during and after the recent war. For example, President Tudjman had an idea to repurpose the Jasenovac memorial site into a site of Croatian national reconciliation, whereby the victims of Bleiburg would be buried together with victims of Jasenovac (Mataušić 2003, pp. 161-163). This would mean, in the simplest terms, that the perpetrators of genocide in Jasenovac would be buried together with their victims, thereby equalizing the crimes and proclaiming all sides victims.

Dukić, Erdelja & Stojaković (2007) frame the narrative of Jasenovac and implementation of race politics around the discourses of the Ustaša's repression towards its political opponents, and pressure from its fascist allies. For example, in the narrative about Jasenovac, the authors first mention Vladko Maček, a Croatian politician, as one of the political prisoners of Jasenovac (Dukić, Erdelja & Stojaković, 2007, p. 168). After that, they describe the deportation of Croatian Jews to the concentration camps, mentioning that Serbs and Roma populations were also taken to the concentration camps. It is interesting that even though Dukić, Erdelja & Stojaković (2007) talk about 'tens of thousands of victims' that were murdered in those concentration camps, they also point out that "the increase in numbers of victims by the Serbian historians have led to Serbian

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either in Croatia or at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Retrieved from:
http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005449

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revenge and hatred that resulted in war in the 1990s" (p. 168).

The textbooks' narratives of all three sites have very simplistic, dichotomous storylines located within discourses of *victimhood and aggression*, *us and them*, with an emphasis on legitimizing and justifying the atrocities of the ingroup and demonizing the atrocities of the outgroup, which go hand in hand with the ideology of national reconciliation and state building. Bleiburg is framed as a 'partisan crime', Jasenovac as a consequence of Serbian imperialist politics and Vukovar as a victim of Serbian aggression. All have their place and role in the ideological system of Croatian nation building. What is interesting is not the one-sidedness and simplicity of narratives about Vukovar, Jasenovac and Bleiburg, which was to be expected, but seemingly moderate and cleverly framed patterns and discourses that echo the 1990s' ideologies of ingroup reconciliation and nation building laid out by President Tudjman and his elites.

Victimhood and Hegemony

The story of Croatian participation in the Yugoslav state was presented through the discourse of Croatian victimhood and Serbian hegemony. The idea that the continuity of the Croatian state has been obstructed within Yugoslavia contributes to the discourse of Croatian victimhood whose independence and sovereignty has been constantly threatened by Serb hegemony and imperialism (Najbar-Agičić and Agičić 2006).

The theme of Serbian hegemony is prevalent in the textbooks in framing the narrative of the recent war. It is evident in the discursive formations coined by the late President Tuđman and his elites about Serbian rebellion and Great Serbian aggression.

For example, "Serbs wanted to succeed from Croatia the so-called Serb autonomous regions (where Serbs were a majority). This was actually a renewal of the Great Serbian politics from the 19th century, i.e. the aspiration that 'all Serbs live in one state', regardless of the aspirations of other nations." (Erdelja & Stojaković 2009, p. 286) This theme is closely related to the nation building theme and Tudjman's political integration and reconciliation ideology.

The textbooks lay out several factors as causes of war: the Serb nationalist's idea of the creation of Greater Serbia, Serb media and agitators frightening Serbs in Croatia that Croatia is becoming similar to the Ustaša state of NDH and statements of some of the Croatian politicians that only contributed to Serb propaganda (Erdelja & Stojaković 2007, p. 233). They continue to explain that "the killing and driving out of non-Serbian population from the areas controlled by rebel Serbs was intended to create ethnically clean areas, inhabited solely by Serbs" (Erdelja & Stojaković 2007, p. 234). On the other hand, the book portrays ethnic cleansing of 250,000 Serbs in Croatia, in the aftermath of Operation Storm, as a willful act of leaving: "Being called by the leadership of the Republic of Serbian Krajina, and partly because of the fear of facing consequences of committed crimes, the majority of Serb population has left this region and went to Serbia. Their return is still ongoing." (Erdelja & Stojaković 2007, p. 237). The one-sided portrayals fit within a framework of Croatian nation building where key protagonists are seen through a black-and-white lens with the ingroup being characterized as a victim or a liberator and the outgroup as an aggressor and a hegemon.

Legitimacy

Another important theme in the textbooks is that of legitimate action of the ingroup and illegitimate action of the Outgroup. This theme can be traced in the discourse about Serb fighters in Croatia as rebels (pobunjenici) or outlaws. The image of rebels has been used to frame the Serb uprising as illegitimate and outlawed, which was part of the system of symbolic imagery developed by President Tudjman and his elites. Hajdučija or hakduks' (rebels, outlaws) imagery was, however, part of the mythological corpus and collective memory of Croats from Herzegovina, which had both positive and negative implications as hajduks were seen, on the one hand, as Robin Hood type of characters who fought and robbed the occupiers/enemies (the Ottomans), and on the other hand, they were also seen as criminals who used to plunder ordinary citizens. Žanić points out that the use of hajdučija to frame the Serb struggle has in turn preempted Croats in Herzegovina, for whom the mythology of hajduk-s was part of collective memory, from using it in framing their own struggle in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Žanić 1998, pp. 131-165).

The struggle over legitimacy has been most obvious when used in the textbooks to describe military operations Flash (Bljesak) and Storm (Oluja), and the Hague proceedings. The Croatian army attacked the Serb-controlled regions[18] under the UN

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[18] On April 15, 2011, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) convicted two generals, Ante Gotovina and Mladen Markac, for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during "Operation Storm," sentencing them to long jail terms. A third defendant, Ivan Cermac, was acquitted. About 300 Croatian Serb civilians died during the 1995 military offensive that defeated rebel Serbs, and several hundred thousand more fled Croatia. Retrieved from: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,HRW,,HRV,,4dc796bb1a,0.html

protection, which resulted in about 300 people killed and about 250,000 Serbs expelled

from Croatia in one of the largest ethnic cleansing operation in former Yugoslavia. The

textbooks portray this operation as a heroic action, as liberation of its territories: "20% of

Croatian territory was liberated …Oluja has shown that the Croatian army has become a

very organized and trained force. After the defeat, almost entire Serb population from the

occupied regions left Croatia." (Erdelja & Stojaković 2009, p. 293). The aftermath of

Operation Storm is presented in the books in a short paragraph: "There were several

accounts of criminal behavior at the end and after the operation. Few murders of Serb

civilians occurred as well as plunder and destruction of their properties. It should be

noted that the majority of crimes was not committed by members of the Croatian army,

but by civilians" (Erdelja & Stojaković 2009, p. 293).

Such a discourse that legitimizes the actions of the ingroup by minimizing or

disregarding the plight of the Outgroup is neither uncommon nor new in conflicts. The

point in this analysis is to trace the patterns and drivers of possible future conflicts

embedded in narratives and ideologies that are widely circulated and taken for granted.

President Tudjman expressed his intentions very clearly in a speech delivered after Oluja:

> *And there can be no return to the past, to the times when they, the Serbs, were*
> *spreading cancer in the heart of Croatia, cancer which was destroying the*
> *Croatian national being and which did not allow the Croatian people to be the*
> *master in its own house and did not allow Croatia to lead an independent and*
> *sovereign life under this wide, blue sky and within the world community of*
> *sovereign nations...They [i.e., the Serbs driven from their homes by the Croatian*
> *Army] didn't even have the time to take with them their filthy foreign currency or*

Gotovina and Markac were released on 16 November 2012 by the appeal court at the Hague war
crimes tribunal that overturned the convictions of the two Croatian generals for the expulsion of
ethnic Serbs in 1995. http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/nov/16/war-crimes-convictions-
croat-generals-overturned

their underwear.[19]

The metaphor of disease, and particularly of cancer, was previously used by others, most notably by the Nazis who referred to Jews as "parasites, plague, cancer, tumor, bloodsucker, vermin, racial tuberculosis on the German body that would supposedly be killed with the Jewish disease" (Richter and Stein 2012). Language and ideology are tied closely together and although narratives appear local, they are always embedded in global and historical contexts in which values, beliefs and ideologies are transmitted through "the intersubjective web of meaning" (Taylor 1985).

Individual Narratives

In this section, the focus of analysis shifts to students' narratives about specific events from the recent history that they consider relevant for their present lives. The events from recent history that the students chose to talk about are as follows:

1) Homeland War/Civil War
2) Disintegration of Yugoslavia
3) Trials in the Hague Tribunal

Four major overall themes were identified in the responses of students from both ethnic groups and from both integrated and segregated models of schooling. Major themes that emerged from the students' narratives are as follows: *economic uncertainty, patriotism, human rights and justice, history as 'unfinished business'* and *historical bias*.

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[19] Speech delivered by Franjo Tudjman on Croatian Radio, transcribed by the BBC Summary of World Broadcasts on 28 August 1995.

Economic Uncertainty

One of the themes in the students' narratives related to recent history, and particularly to Homeland/Civil war, is *economic uncertainty*. 20 % of the overall number of students, regardless of ethnicity, talked about the impact of war on their dire economic circumstances. In the integrated model, this theme is identified in the narratives of 20% of the respondents of Croatian ethnicity. The participants point to unemployment, lack of money and monetary security as well as significantly reduced standard of living as consequences of war. One Croatian respondent explained: "The war changed our life and everything bad came out of it. Look at us – we finished school and we don't have a job or a future."

The theme of *economic uncertainty* is more prevalent in the narratives of Serb respondents (30%) in the integrated model. This theme is constructed through the storylines of limited and obstructed access to employment as well as inadequate political and cultural representation that were a consequence of war after which Serbs' status dwindled to that of a minority and their access to various benefits was significantly reduced. As one of the Serb respondents concluded: "My parents lost their jobs in the war and could not get jobs after the Croats came back – they are old now and their pensions are hundred Euros. It is terrible what kind of conditions we live in."

Interestingly, this theme is much less present in the narratives of students in the segregated model of schooling, regardless of ethnicity. It does not appear in the narratives of students of Croatian ethnicity in the segregated model at all, while it appears only in 10% of the narratives of Serbian students. This finding calls for further exploration as to

why students in the integrated model appear to be more concerned with their economic situation, and moreover, why this theme seems to be less relevant to the students in the segregated model, despite similar economic conditions throughout the region. Let us look at the other themes and explore possible clues to the said puzzle.

Patriotism

Another prominent theme traced in students' narratives is the theme of *patriotism*. This theme is closely connected to the participants' collective sense of self, ingroup ideals of freedom, liberation and group membership. It occurs primarily in the narratives about Homeland/Civil war. The theme of patriotism is more prevalent in the narratives of Croat students (80 %), particularly in the segregated model. In the integrated model, this theme emerges in the narratives of 40 % Croat student participants and is totally absent in the narratives of Serb student participants. Interestingly, this theme occurs in the narratives of only 10 % of Serb participants in the segregated model, and it is usually related to the national sense of identity that functions separately from Croatian nation-building narrative. This theme is imbued with various storylines - from those that are echoing the official discourse of the importance of Homeland war for the collective sense of self, freedom and liberation from aggression, to those that imply the contradiction of the actual and expected. Patriotic ideals of freedom, belonging to a nation and the promise of a better future for Croatian students, are often juxtaposed to the actual lack of opportunities, unemployment, and social stagnation. Specifically, the discourse of trauma, economic uncertainty and post-traumatic stress disorder are closely related to the

theme of patriotism, particularly in the integrated model. One of the Croat participants stated:

> *Before people of my age were working and having children, and here we are dealing with unemployment and PTSD.*

It is noteworthy to mention the difference in characterization of the recent war and the use of adjectives of 'homeland' war and 'civil' war. Serbs call the war 'civil' detaching themselves from a positive and emotional characterization of the war that led to the deterioration of their economic and political status, while Croats refer to the war as 'homeland' war, which is related to the official patriotic discourse of homeland, nation building and the ingroup sense of self.

According to one Serb student participant:

> *Everything that happened to us as people during the civil war is important to me because it is what makes us who we are. I cannot learn about that in school but I talk about it with my parents and friends.*

Metaphors of death and sickness, such as "they fought in trenches and many got sick", are also associated with the theme of patriotism. Emphasis on suffering and victimhood is related to the dogmatic nature of the nation-building story that, in this way, becomes cemented, unquestionable and exclusive.

Human Rights and Justice

While Croatian students were more concerned with the theme of patriotism and the contradictions of actual and expected events, the theme traced in the narratives of 70% of students belonging to the Serbian ethnic group in the integrated, and 40% in the segregated model, was related to the topic of *human rights and justice*. This theme

occurred in 20% of Croatian students' responses in the integrated model, and only in 10% in the segregated model. Patriotism and human rights discourses are often juxtaposed and contradicting each other and this represents one of the key points of discursive contention between the two groups. There are, however, remarkable variations within the scope of this theme. This theme is constructed through the discourses of loss, trauma and victimhood, which can be traced in the Serb stories about the plight of refugees in the recent war:

> *Because of Operation Storm, my relatives had to leave their homes in Banija and they came to live with us. They lost everything. I will never forget their faces when they arrived.*

Different storylines around the war-crimes trials in The Hague often converge around the *human rights and justice* themes. It can be said that the points of contention between patriotic and human rights discourses are based in diverse views held by the two ethnic groups. In respondents' narratives, there is an obvious tension between the patriotic discourse exemplified in metaphors such as 'the just war', 'heroic action', 'us - heroes' and 'them - aggressors', that features more prominently in Croat narratives. By contrast, the human rights/justice discourse that challenges patriotic and victimhood discourses, suggesting that 'the crimes have been perpetrated against the relevant Others on all sides', features more in Serbian narratives.

What is remarkable is that there were few respondents who crossed ethnic lines and dissented from their groups' official discourses, but those few cases were indeed a feast for the researcher. In the narratives of dissension, as I would call them, both groups of respondents tended to question the patriotism and victimhood themes in the process of

verbalizing their experiences and acknowledging the realities of arrests of their leading

political and military figures. The narratives of dissension are related particularly to

respondents' attempts to make sense of The Hague trials and 'collective responsibility'.

Dissent is important because peace requires it – a movement across identity lines

into the realm of ambiguity and complexity. The absence of any questioning and of doubt

with regard to the patriotic and victimhood discourses, suggests a denial of responsibility

and lack of openness for dialogue, which inhibits the emergence of peace and

reconciliation. The tension between patriotic and human rights discourses is evident in

the statement of one of the Croatian participants:

> *I would not want to sound as an enemy of the state, but I see that Croatian generals are also accused of crimes, so it could not have been just a defensive war.*

Similarly, the Serbian victimhood narrative is challenged by one of the few Serb

respondents pointing to the notion of responsibility:

> *We don't hear much about the reasons for their arrest. We hear that these arrests were a mistake and that they are heroes. Why did the process of capturing them last so long? There are many questions that our leaders cannot answer because they are part of the old establishment.*

The rise of inquiry into the crimes perpetrated against the relevant Other creates

the space for movement across ethnic lines, which represents an important ground for

more just and sustainable future relationships between former adversaries. History is

often ambiguous and confusing, as one Croat student in the integrated model suggests:

> *When I step in the Other's shoes, my story changes – it is confusing. It is easy to look at history in a particular way and take it as the truth. But when you take a*

distance and try to look at other sources and versions, history just becomes so confusing.

Interestingly, the narratives of dissent are manifest in conversation. After verbalizing their thoughts, the participants are often surprised, which speaks to the importance of conversational interaction in generating movement towards a change of views and attitudes. For example, one of the Serb respondents in the integrated model suggested:

I cannot believe that I am saying this, but the problems are related to a non-willingness to cooperate and non-willingness to accept responsibility. That is what I see happening in the trial processes.

What can be observed is that dealing with the past in Croatia has been primarily tied to judiciary and justice-related processes, which are reflected in some of the respondents' narratives as they point to the issues of accountability and non-cooperation. Still, what appears to be missing from the students' narratives related to the human rights and justice themes is how communities and communal relationships are affected by the wider institutional and structural processes.

Historical Manipulation

The most prevalent theme overall, regardless of ethnicity and educational models, is *historical manipulation,* which was expressed in 65% of responses. Particularly in the integrated model, historical manipulation was reflected in the responses of 90 % of Serb student participants and 60% of Croat respondents. In segregated model, this theme is more prevalent in the narratives of 40% of Serb student participants and 30 % of Croat

student participants. This theme suggests that history lacks objectivity and is used for political purposes. History is seen as having multiple versions and being dependant on one's point of view. The expressed relevance of the theme of historical manipulation points to a certain degree of awareness on the part of Serb and Croat student participants, about the political use of history, which tends to open up a space for complexity, criticism, doubt and dissent from the conflict narratives that constrain people influencing them to think in very simplified and dichotomous terms. For example, one of the Croat respondents in the integrated model recognized:

We just hear one and the same story repeated over and over again: 'Croatia was attacked by aggressors'... I would like a more detailed account of what had happened. I don't want to hear the history that was written by Tudjman.

By pointing to the multifacetedness of stories, the respondents are questioning simplified narratives and their objectivity. According to one Serb respondent in the integrated model:

Of course, things are not represented objectively. It always depends on the angle. It is still early to make evaluations - not all data are known. I am not sure that history will ever be objective.

This theme occurs much less in the segregated model, and more with Serb than Croat respondents. Interestingly, this theme is related to discourses of power and control in the segregated model. What appears in the respondents' narratives is the idea that by manipulating the past, we can justify our actions in the present. By controlling the past, we are imposing control over the present. For example, one of the Serb participants explained:

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> *It is difficult for me to read the books that are assigned in the class because this is not the whole story. The history is one-sided.*

A Croat respondent similarly concluded:

> *I wish we had more details about history in our textbooks. The problem is that what is happening to us today rewrites history. There are facts that cannot be denied, but they can be forgotten or just not mentioned at all.*

The idea of the cyclical nature of history and its construction that is always in conjunction with the present and the future appears to be relevant in respondents' narratives. The respondents seem to have tapped into a problem that needs to be further explored. Economic uncertainty does not feature too highly in the narratives of Serb and Croat students in both models. By contrast, Serb students see human rights and justice as major issues in both models, while Croat students see patriotism as the dominant issue.

Table 19. Resonance of official historical discourses in individuals' narratives (integrated model)

	Students (Sb)	Students (C)	Overall (Integrated)	Ranking
Economic uncertainty	30% (3)	20% (2)	25% (5)	2
Patriotism	-	40% (4)	20% (4)	3
Human rights and justice	70% (7)	20% (2)	45% (9)	1

Table 20. Resonance of official historical discourses in individuals' narratives (segregated model)

	Students (Sb)	Students (C)	Overall (Segregated)	Ranking
Economic uncertainty	10% (1)	-	5 % (1)	3
Patriotism	10% (1)	80% (8)	45% (9)	1
Human rights and justice	40% (4)	10% (1)	25% (5)	2

Cross-Comparison with Textbooks

Students' narratives only partially echo official narratives of the past presented in the history textbooks. History textbooks are relevant testimonies of the official narratives of the past as well as loci where the state's ideological and political axes converge. How people position themselves to the official narrative indicates individual and collective choices that have become what we call a living memory - a memory that is often determined by individuals' present condition and their orientation towards the future. The important issues of how individuals and collectives choose to remember, how they mourn, resuscitate and forget their past will be discussed later in the following chapter, using Paul Ricoeur's philosophical thought and the concept of pedagogy of pardon (Duffy 2009).

Let us begin the comparison between the official and individual narratives with the focus on how the themes of *ingroup reconciliation, victimhood and aggression,* and *legitimacy* from the textbooks are operationalized and reconstructed at the grassroots' level. An important point for this analysis is the view of power as the circulatory system (Foucault 1980) that explains the researcher's focus on the nexus between structures and the body, official discourses and individual narratives. According to Foucault (1980), the true face of power is most visible at the very ends of a *circulatory system of power,* in places where discourses meet with the body, with individual lives. It is at these very ends of a circulatory system of power that I am seeking answers as to how we can deal with the contentious past in a constructive way to promote a peaceful future for all.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, for ingroup reconciliation to take place, the discourse that positions different factions within a framework of victimhood is key. Positioning Us as victims or rightful defenders of a just cause, and placing Them on the opposite side as vicious, illegitimate aggressors, resonates clearly in the narratives of students of Croatian ethnicity in the segregated model. A clear parallel between the individual and the official discourses can be seen in phrases, such as: *just war; we fought for our freedom; we were defending our homeland; they attacked us; they were the aggressors and not us*. The theme of victimhood is closely connected to the theme of patriotism that functions in individual narratives to bond the ingroup at the expense of the outgroup. The interplay of victimhood and patriotism creates dichotomous realities for the subjects, clearly delineating differences between *us* and *them*, which function as enablers of ingroup coherence and bonding based on differentiation from the other. As

mentioned earlier, the theme of patriotism is more prevalent in the narratives of Croat

students, particularly in the segregated model where it has been identified in the

narratives of 80 % of Croatian respondents, while in the integrated model this theme

emerges in the narratives of 40 % of Croat student participants.

The meanings of patriotism in the individual narratives converge on many aspects

with the meanings underpinning the theme of ingroup reconciliation in the textbooks. The

meanings related to ingroup reconciliation function not only as a tool for the

reconciliation of the two factions or two ideologies, partisan/communist and ustasha/right

wing nationalist that have caused a constant rift among Croats from the period of the

Second World War. Rather, those meanings have become a connecting tissue of a newly

emerging nation that reinvented itself through a powerful narrative coined by the elites

that transcended past deficiencies and glories and created a new set of values based on

morality and legitimacy of past action. The meanings of patriotism and ingroup

reconciliation operate within a system of collective enterprise towards achieving

freedom, liberation and national emancipation.

The themes of patriotism, victimhood and ingroup reconciliation serve to

operationalize morality and legitimacy of past action of the state. Those themes reflect

aspirations towards acquiring the status of unquestionable, mythical, deeply engrained

dogmas in the national consciousness. However, although these themes clearly resonate

in the narratives of Croat students in both models, we can also trace the themes of

economic uncertainty and disillusionment in the narratives of students of both ethnicities,

which are a consequence of the contradiction of the actual and expected. Patriotic ideals

of freedom, belonging to a nation and the promise of a better future as presented in

official textbooks' narratives are, often juxtaposed to the actual lack of opportunities,

unemployment, and social stagnation, particularly in the integrated model. Specifically,

discourses of trauma, economic uncertainty and post-traumatic stress disorder are closely

tied to the themes of victimhood, legitimacy and patriotism that in a certain way also

counter the function of ingroup reconciliation in the history textbooks, which is based on

legitimacy and morality of past action.

One of the Croat participants in the integrated model states:

> *Homeland war and arrests of the generals made me think what the war was all about – I mean what good came out of it.*

Another adds:

> *Homeland war is important because we are feeling its consequences. There is n o work for the young people, there is still a lot of hatred and divisions.*

In the segregated model, the official discourse resonates more in the narratives of

Croat student participants. A statement such as "…we fought a liberating war, and

aggression was done against us…", clearly echo the prevalent theme from the official

narrative of 'us' as defenders/victims and 'them' as aggressors. However, even in the

segregated model there is dissonance between the actual and expected, which usually

emerges in conjunction with particular events from recent history such as the trials in The

Hague or the death of President Tudjman. Statements such as "…General Gotovina's trial

is ironic. He is a hero and not a criminal…"; "…We fought for our freedom. I don't see

how this could have happened…."; or "…the most important event from recent history is

the death of our first president Franjo Tudjman because after that everything went

downhill…", all indicate contradictions between the actual and expected in students' narratives.

The economic uncertainty and dissonance between the actual and expected is very much a part of the Serb students' narratives when they reflect on recent history. They describe their present living conditions as a direct consequence of the war and dissolution of Yugoslavia. These conditions are manifested as the limited and obstructed access to employment as well as political and cultural underrepresentation. The theme of human rights and justice that occurs in the narratives of both Serb and Croat students stands in contrast to the discourses of ingroup reconciliation, victimhood and aggression in the textbooks. Such a disconnect is not surprising since the students do have their own counter narratives of the recent past.

The nationbuilding or patriotic narratives, as such, imply a clear distinction between right and wrong, *Us* as moral, legitimate and *Others* as immoral, lacking and illegitimate. Such structural simplicity can be traced not only in the Croatian nationbuilding discourse, but also in Serbian counter-patriotic narratives. While the explicit structure of the story differs, the same deep latent narrative structure in both types of discourses – nationbuilding/patriotic and counter-patriotic - depicts the ancient struggle between good and evil. The elements of such narratives include: protagonists that are on opposite sides, a challenge that the good have to overcome after facing many obstacles, and the victory of good over evil. Below are examples of core storylines of the Croatian patriotic nation-building discourse and the Serb counter discourse traced in students' narratives.

Table 21. Patriotic and counter-patriotic storylines in narratives of Croat and Serb students

Croat patriotic/nationbuilding discourse	Serb counter-patriotic discourse
We have always wanted our independent state, but our dreams were always frustrated by the others.	We wanted to stay in Yugoslavia where we felt safer and where our rights could be protected. The Yugoslav army was protecting the borders of Yugoslavia.
They started the aggression against us. Milosevic sent his troops to attack and kill us.	They started to arm themselves, kill and dismiss our people. Everything they did reminded us of 1941. Serbia came to our defense.
We fought bravely, lost many of our soldiers and won even though the other side was better armed and was more numerous.	When troops from Serbia withdrew, we were left without protection and betrayed - our people were killed, exiled and destroyed.
We have our independent state and are looking forward to a better future in European integration.	We have lost our rights, benefits - we are citizens of the second order.

Discourses around the human rights and justice offset both Croat patriotic and Serb counter-patriotic discourses, while standing at odds with the themes of ingroup reconciliation, victimhood and aggression. They appear simultaneously in student narratives regardless of ethnicity, although they are slightly more prevalent in the integrated model and with Serb participants. Human rights and justice discourses are related to respondents' inquiry into the accountability and responsibility of their respective ingroups for acts perpetrated against the outgroups in the recent war. Participants from both ethnic groups tend to use similar logic, phrases and metaphors to

reflect on their ingroups' accountability for actions taken during and after the war. This suggests that such discourses may provide entry points for complexity and curiosity that may lead to transformation of entrenched positions and dichotomous, contentious narratives through learning, attentiveness and openness to the existence of an alternative, more inclusive story.

Table 22. Human rights and justice storylines in narratives of Croat and Serb students

Human rights and justice discourse	
Croats	Serbs
I don't believe that Croatian generals are all heroes and Serbs are killers.	Both Croatian and Serb generals were called to answer in the Hague for what they did.
This war was not only a defensive war.	We can see through events related to the Hague Tribunal that all sides are unwilling to cooperate; they are unwilling to accept responsibility.
There are many questions that our leaders cannot give answers to because they are part of the old establishment. They do not want to accept responsibility.	Why was the process of capturing the fugitives so long?

Discourses around the human rights and justice theme occur mostly in the integrated model and among Serb respondents. However, the significance of such discourses should not be measured only by the quantity, but also by their very occurrence. For example, there are a number of Croat students that dissent from the

mainstream patriotic, nationbuilding discourse and challenge it, which points to the ability of individuals to recognize that crimes have been perpetrated against the relevant Others. This shows critical thinking and dissent as well as individual agency that take the individual out of his/her safety zone. Movement across ethnic lines, willingly losing part of the self and embarking into the unknown is often a necessary ingredient of emerging peace.

The representations of Homeland/Civil War as well as the Second World War play an important role in the textbooks not only in framing ingroup political reconciliation, but also in legitimizing and delegitimizing certain positions towards events of the recent war of 1990s as well as delineating roles of *us* as victims and *them* as aggressors. The representations of the Homeland/Civil War as well as the Second World War in students' narratives are not merely learned or repeated, but there are also other issues and themes attached to them. The importance of being a victim is key for legitimizing one's discourse and position and we can trace the victimhood storylines in narratives of students in both ethnicities. For many of the Serb student participants, the Second World War is deeply interconnected with the recent war in Croatia. The tragedy of Serbs in Croatia in the recent war is an extension of their plight from the Second World War and the symbolic function of *lieu de memoire* has unprecedented value as a testament of this suffering. The connectivity across decades between large scale ethnic cleansing of Serbs from Croatia in Operations Storm and Lightning in 1998 and the plight of Serbs symbolized most vociferously in the sites of memory such as Jasenovac and Stara Gradiška, reinforce the continuation of unmourned suffering and victimhood that

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stretches through time. The importance of victimhood is relevant for both ethnicities, regardless of war outcomes and despite current conditions or future plans. The discourse of victimhood is connected to value-belief system of nations that seem to be far more important for the respondents than turbulences of the present day.

While victimhood is prevalent in the narratives of both groups, it is not surprising that the theme of patriotism is absent from the narratives of Serb student participants in the integrated model. Only 10 % of Serb participants in the segregated model talk about their national sense of identity that is unambiguously tied to the land and the ethnic collective rather than the nation-state of Croatia. Their identity is attached to recent history only through the discourse of loss and victimhood that functions separately from the Croatian affirmative nation-building narrative. The counter narrative of Serbs from Croatia reflects the uniqueness of their past experience and their resistance to the current state of affairs, which is particularly visible in their resistance to being boxed together with the other minorities. For example, some of the Serb respondents emphasized: "…we are different from other nationalities in Croatia – in numbers, relationships and long history…" or "…we cannot really compare with other nationalities, so called minorities."

Conclusion

In contrast to the textbooks' simplistic and mostly dichotomous narratives, individual narratives are not as simple as they may appear to be at a first glance. First, there is a discrepancy in both groups' understanding of the past since their memories are closely connected to their present living conditions as well as their orientations toward

the future. Moreover, there is a potential for an alternative story that transcends ethno-national rift. The common ground in the individual narratives of both groups is a certain degree of awareness and reflection about the consequences of war, which is exemplified in the theme of economic uncertainty that points to the dissonance between the actual and expected. An important theme of human rights and justice, which is related to respondents' inquiry into the accountability and responsibility of their respective ingroups for acts perpetrated against the outgroup in the recent war, is another point of agreement between respondents of the two groups. Both groups, regardless of educational model, speak of this theme using similar phrases, metaphors and syntactic structures as they relate them to the recent war. This theme is even more important because, in many instances, the respondents are surprised about how its verbalization leads to personal reflection about the meaning of violence and aggression. This is not to say that the participants have undergone transformation, but one can claim that those were instances of personal insights for both the respondents and the researcher creating a platform on which to build alternative narratives of inclusivity, reconciliation and common purpose, while appreciating their acknowledged ethnic, religious and other differences.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Let us start our discussion with a proposition that the past does not only exist in archives, records and books written by historians, but also in interaction of various forms of historical production and their reproduction on the ground. This study is seeking voices from the ground, voices that are usually not part of official historical scripts. The historians' macro focus on major events often ignores some of the fundamental issues voiced in certain locales and by certain individuals or groups that are not part of the master discourses. The violence that occurred in Croatia touched each and every individual, and those individuals suffered in different ways. The horror that happened to the ordinary people is, however, largely absent from the official discourse of the past. This study is an attempt to bring to the forefront the stories of the ordinary people.

The 'trifle memories', as Pandey (2001) calls them, offer an alternative that enables us to learn about the history that is left out from the official historical record. It is the author's belief that learning from the grassroots can challenge us to think beyond our academic and ideological constraints and embrace the complexities and intricate nature of conflicts that are in the making. There is nothing more immediate than trying to find ways to address and prevent conflicts that are latent, invisible and can be described as negative peace (Galtung 1969). The reason for the immediacy is simple: we cannot wait for violence to erupt. Violence in the Balkans has been cyclical, rather than linear, which

suggests its recurrence throughout history. This study proposes a shift in our meta-

thinking about both analysis and transformation of cycles and systems of violence.

Rather than visualizing conflict through a traditional 'Bell curve', with stages of

beginning, escalation, and termination, we may need to map conflicts as spirals, having in

mind both preventive efforts and crisis response needed at various points and often

simultaneously. Such a complex systems' orientation may help better ground

peacebuilding as well as prevention efforts in a broader understanding of the conflict and

its root causes.

Education and Conflict Transformation

We begin our discussion of the findings by posing a question about if and how

education can interrupt cycles of violence and transform destructive conflict situations

into constructive ones. There are a few points to be considered when answering this

question. According to the prominent advocate of progressivism, John Dewey (1915, p.

3):

> *All that society has accomplished for itself is put, through the agency of the*
> *school, at the disposal of its future members. All its better thoughts of itself it*
> *hopes to realize through the new possibilities thus opened to its future self.*

The optimism of such a view is rooted in an idealistic belief that education can be

an engine of progress and motivate people to always build better curricula, pedagogical

tools and textbooks that would contribute to the overall improvement of the human

condition.

A different outlook on education is offered by Pierre Bourdieu whose rather pessimistic 'reproduction theory' argues that education serves the higher classes to reproduce class and status relationships that favor particular privileged groups (Bourdieu 1977b; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). According to Bourdieu, education is seen as a medium for the transmission of values, attitudes and cultural capital that tend to maintain the status quo. Historical knowledge is an important part of that cultural capital, which can serve as a tool for excluding a group or an individual through silencing and omission of certain historical facts and narratives.

Antonio Gramsci's (1971) viewpoint provides an equally appealing lens to education that he sees as a stage for contention of various groups trying to control or reform education with the goal of achieving social, cultural or political hegemony. At the very essence of this contention is the struggle over values that are necessary to maintain certain kinds of relationships in the present as well as the future. The values and attitudes promoted through education often reflect power inequalities, which is evident in the case of Eastern Slavonia. At the same time, education has the potential to affect both values and inequalities, potentially offering a way of framing the future differently.

The three outlooks on education provide the basis for different approaches to analysis. The first option is hopeful and optimistic, but the argument that education can affect positive societal change remains uncertain as education represents only one in the plethora of other structural and institutional alternatives that can influence change. Bourdieu and Gramsci's viewpoints imply caution about the ability of education to affect change. Schools cannot fully control preferences and behaviors of individuals, because

those preferences are also influenced by exposure outside schools and complex social conditions imbued with power dynamics often beyond their grasp. Possibly, truth is located somewhere in-between. The study of the Eastern Slavonian case suggests that we should be open to the possibility of reforming education by recognizing education's strengths and limitations in advancing social change and by bearing in mind the preconditions for educational practices to play a role in post-conflict contexts.

An enticing vision of ''complex adaptive schools'', presented by Davies (2003), suggests that providing "the possibility space" for thinking about conflict resolution to maximize connectivity is a way to move destructive conflict systems into constructive ones (p. 217). The work grounded in complexity theory opens a new horizon for thinking about education as a place in which it is fine for certainty and uncertainty to co-exist at the 'edge of chaos'. It is only then that our thoughts and actions can truly be liberating and produce change. However, what does this mean in practical terms?

Complexity theory can be used to better understand not only the intricate relationships in schools and the wider communities, but also to give us clues about the ways to approach change. The school communities in Eastern Slavonia show enormous complexity leading to the conclusion that systemic change cannot be introduced only by changing curricula and textbooks. Change has to be undertaken at various levels, addressing multiple sources of conflict and involving a variety of actors from teachers, students, parents and the administration to local authorities, ministries and civil society. The issues and causes of conflict in school communities are complex and, therefore, change cannot be thought of in linear terms.

The findings of this study show that the two select models of schooling seemed to have some influence on the views of students. The integrated model, for example, appeared to generate more interethnic agreement. Nevertheless, we must not disregard the effects of the wider system in which those schooling models are embedded. While Dugan's (1996) nested model provides an interesting analytical tool for connecting immediate issues in schools to the subsystemic and systemic environmental levels, we still cannot see the dynamism of the multiplicity of interlinked, interdependent factors, agents and forces operating in such a model.

Sandole (1984; 1987) offers a useful *Four-worlds' Model of the Perceptual and Behavioral Process* in which he argues that "all actors operate in a dynamic space comprised of two external (human-made and natural) and two internal (mental and biological/physiological) *worlds*" (Sandole 1999, p. 180). Actors' perceptions and behaviors are influenced by the interaction between those worlds and, "in any given conflict analysis, we can map, model and monitor the situation in terms of the world of nature (resource scarcities), the human-made world (structural violence, role scarcities), the mental world (paradigms, worldviews) and biological/physiological world (emotions) (Sandole, 1999, p.180). It can be said that this model represents an integrated framework for analyzing and explaining conflict because of its emphasis on the interaction between nature and nurture, external and internal worlds. When we look at the education system in Eastern Slavonia, we can see how historical narratives (the human made world) influence students' views (the mental world) in a process that is clearly multifaceted and complex.

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Davies proposes an interesting concept that complements Sandole's model in understanding the complexity of our case. She posits that educational systems should be looked at as complex adaptive systems suggesting that such systems can have certain 'lock-in' or 'path dependence' features that thwart their evolution to better forms (Davies 2013). In our case study, some of the key factors that seem to be cementing the polar positions among different groups are historical narratives. Histories have become important to students who do not have the actual memory of conflict themselves, but are socialized by parents, religious, educational, and other institutions into certain culturally accepted frameworks of thinking and acting that are fundamentally prejudicial, biased, closed. Therefore, it becomes crucial to identify points of divergence from these learned attitudes and behaviors that can provide insights into approaches to introducing change. Such points of divergence or convergence will be discussed later in this chapter.

Complex adaptive systems are a useful concept as they argue for the effectiveness of horizontal structures existing within uncertainty, and learning from trial and error. There seems to be a lack of experimentation and dialogic processes that would include all relevant stakeholders in a respectful manner and safe setting to work for change in educational systems, not only in Croatia, but also in many other places. Through joint and participatory exploration and networking with different actors, numerous feedback loops and new possibilities can emerge. As Bartoli argues, "peace is in the movement" (Bartoli, Bui-Wrzosinska, and Nowak 2010). It is a process that puts forward the possibility of positive outcomes despite the fact that many variables may be unknown.

By taking this position, the author is not arguing that systems should be left to their own devices to generate change. Rather, the agents of change can only come forward through the creation of opportunities for engagement, facilitated encounters among students and other stakeholders, and modeling of values that emerge from within in a participatory process. Complexity theory seems to suggest that the creation of a space in which people can engage in open, safe and honest inquiry may be crucial (Davies 2013; Manson 2001; Renesch and Chawla 2006). Such spaces do not necessarily have to be joint classrooms. The desire of minority students to have separate classes in their language and cultural discourse, as in the case of Eastern Slavonia, should be respected, particularly in situations where they perceive that their identities are threatened by assimilation, exclusion and other oppressive practices. However, spaces that would attract students, parents, teachers and other members of a community that can be seen as common, free and inclusive are necessary and needed in divided societies, be they sports events, artistic workshops or some other extracurricular activities.

Relevance of History

The majority of students belonging to both groups, regardless of the model of schooling, emphasized the relevance of history for their present life. However, the relevance was not necessarily seen as positive. Quite the contrary; there is a rejection of history in the segregated model that students of both ethnicities see as a tool for creating interethnic divisions. Historical narratives, for Serb students, seem to be a vehicle for

positioning them as outsiders, excluded and marginalized. Croat students tend to connect recent history to their difficult economic circumstances and social immobility. Students' positioning in relation to the recent past is co-produced within communities, in schools and at home. This is not a mono-directional and linear process, but rather a multidirectional, complex and often unpredictable one.

Historical narratives promoted through educational systems tend to be centripetal, monochromatic, and intended to bring together and unify a community (Bakhtin 1982; Gergen 2009). However, the realities on the ground show that once the official historical narratives 'touch the ground', they tend to have a life of their own and are multiplied through centrifugal forces that stem from experiences that individuals are exposed to in a certain relational context. Such complexity that emerges at the individual level is often invisible or disregarded, but it is by paying attention to these multiple voices that we can actually trace solutions for the current negative peace. Historical narratives often serve as a catalyst for the emergence of current underlying problems affecting the community, such as economic uncertainty, unemployment, dissonance between the expected and actual, exclusion, nationalism and structural violence. What the findings show is that we need to scratch the surface of problems that are seemingly related to the topic of contentious history, that the ground zero for our views of history is our present, and that multiple voices at the individual and interpersonal levels must be properly recognized.

Historical narratives are troublingly biased, but at the same time very relevant for human lives. They acquire even more potency in the contexts of conflict and post-violent conflict societies in which the politics of memory and history have very concrete goals

and impacts. On the one hand, historical accounts attain their intelligibility and relevance through narrative form, enabling closure, transmission of values and coherence that people need. On the other hand, they can be deeply flawed, causing perpetuation of unjust practices and relations on the ground. The key point of this discussion is to advocate for an awareness of the workings of history or, more accurately, historical discourses in post-conflict societies. Rather than imagining uniformity or the creation of joint historical narratives as a remedy, which is, according to the findings of this study, a priori deemed to fail, I propose raising consciousness about the use of history in order to deal with the contentious past more effectively.

This study's focus on the relevance and uses of history, particularly in post-conflict societies, provides a glimpse into our common humanity. Uses of history in identity formation, group bonding and promotion of nationalist agendas have been topics broadly studied (Korostelina 2008). Historical education has also been seen as a tool for the formation of the informed, critical and accountable citizen (Seixas 2004). However, the humanizing function of history in situations where humanity has been wounded, destroyed and almost lost, as often happens in war, is a category not widely explored and put in context. History is inevitable, whether we talk about history that we experience directly or distant history that is transmitted to us via books, narratives and other media. Realizing our place in the historical continuum raises our awareness of belonging to a common humanity.

As Wineburg (2001) aptly argues:

> *By tying our own stories to those who have come before us, the past becomes a useful resource in our everyday life, an endless storehouse of raw materials to be*

shaped or bent to meet our present needs. Situating ourselves in time is a basic human need. Indeed, it is impossible to conceptualize life on the planet without doing so (p. 6).

When societies are shattered by war, lives are lost and people try to find ways to deal with the past. Under such circumstances, the need to reconceptualize others and themselves in relation to what happened in the past becomes paramount. This study shows that the function of history, which is intended to foster a compliant citizen with a sense of belonging to a particular group and order, is *out of sync* with processes on the ground. At the communal level, we can see a different positioning in relation to the official historical narrative that takes us into the realm of unexplored and relevant clues about the workings of history in the real world.

This study shows that the exploration of historical narratives can become an experimental tool for comparing cases that illuminate historical reasoning. Thus, we can learn about alternative ways not only of dealing with the past, but of reconceptualizing ourselves, our belief-value systems, and subsequently, our structures which would move us closer to a somewhat better and less conflict-prone world. History's importance is not diminished by the argument that we can never know true history because it is determined by the present, the speaker's position and embededness in a certain context. Decision- and policy-making that is, at any time and context, devoid of historical reasoning often leads to disaster. The inability of humans, particularly in leading positions, to situate themselves and their nations along a historical continuum, thereby implying their interconnectedness with times and people of the present and the past, can have devastating consequences. Indeed, history can help us to make better decisions and

become better persons only if we are open to learning from the past; learning analytically, critically and curiously.

Very often, the literature distinguishes between 'history' and 'collective memory', with the former approaching the past as an academic discipline and the latter exploring the past as social and cultural practices (Wertsch, 2002). History's proclaimed function is to seek historical facts and truth, and the study of memory suggests historical bias and embededness of history or, more accurately, historical discourses in certain larger structures, be they ideological, political or cultural (Assmann 2008, p. 68). However, the border between history and collective memory is quite blurred because the people writing the history, the historians, and the people on the receiving end, do not exist in isolation. They are situated in certain relational contexts. The conflict at the narrative level, embodied in competing versions of the past, thus becomes the conflict between mnemonic communities and the way they remember. According to some actors, conflict arises when certain narratives become so important to the communities that they are central for their group identity (Smith 2003; Wertsch 2008). This study has attempted to explore this claim by going into the communities and examining processes of history reconstruction and appropriation at the grassroots. One of its goals is to uncover the ways of how historical narratives can function to foster peace.

It is through an exploration of history's significance at the grassroots that we can better understand the past actions and consequences of those actions in a more comprehensive and humane way. The findings of the study show that production and reproduction of history is not only the purview of historians and elites. This process also

happens at the grassroots. The strong sense of frustration with regards to the past and dealing with the past in the segregated model shows participants' desire to reclaim their agency in the face of discourses that engender oppressive practices. What they actually reject is consent and participation in discursive practices that generate renewed tensions, radicalization and ethnic divisions that are part of their every-day reality. The findings highlight students' capacity to think critically even when faced with constraining circumstances. Although this is not a major trend in both models, occurring more in the integrated model, the emergence of critical thinking shows that the possibilities for positive peace and true reconciliation do exist, but are left untapped due either to the lack of awareness or intentional disregard. It appears that the interactive patterns in the integrated model are more conducive to development of critical thinking among students. Attending classes together possibly raises awareness of the Other, which creates shared rather than exclusive realities. Whether the views about the Other are positive or negative, students cannot disregard each other due to the constant engagements. Yet, it is the quality of these interactions and not the quantity that truly counts, and the development of critical consciousness depends on fostering good interactive practices based on principles of collaborative learning and free inquiry, which will be discussed in the final chapter of this study.

Master and Individual Narratives

This study is posing a question about how history is appropriated and reconstructed by the individuals and how official historical discourses resonate on the

ground. The issue of appropriation (Wertsch 2000) or, as some other authors call it, reception (Fukuoka 2011) of history, has not been widely researched. In this study, an appropriated historical narrative is not seen as a deep-seeded part or an attribute of an individual's identity, but rather as a socially and communally mediated form that is in constant flux. The concept of resonance has been helpful for illuminating this intricate and interactive process. Resonance is, according to Jochemczyk and Nowak (2010), the beginning of an emergent 'shared reality'. It suggests the emergence of common patterns in a meaning-making process as well as the realization that all parties to the conflict form a relational system that is manifested and made possible through meaningful events, encounters and interaction (Noelle-Neumann 1984; Reese et al 2003; Solis 2010). Such resonance is often not obvious to the participants and this research is an attempt to make certain patterns and themes within such relational containers more visible and recognizable.

Wertsch (2000) has found that individuals can appropriate constructs of official history, while at the same time believing in alternative and dissenting versions of the past. What is necessary is to go beyond acknowledging that the appropriation of a historical narrative is diverse and complex, towards exploring points where those narratives converge and diverge. For example, the findings of this study suggest that such converging points in the individual narratives of both groups are related to a certain degree of awareness and reflection about the consequences of war, which is exemplified in the theme of economic uncertainty that emphasizes the dissonance between the actual and expected.

Another point of convergence in the narratives of both groups and in both models is human rights and justice, which is related to respondents' inquiry into the accountability and responsibility of their respective ingroups for acts perpetrated against the outgroup in the recent war. Both groups, regardless of educational model, speak of this theme using similar phrases, metaphors and syntactic structures as they relate them to the recent war. Such points where participants of both ethnicities, regardless of the schooling model, express similar views and concerns that dissent from the official discourses, enable the researcher to imagine a platform on which to build alternative narratives, or practical recommendations, around topics that truly matter to the participants.

An important theory that can shed more light on the interaction of structures and individuals, historical narratives and individual agency is Giddens' structuration theory (Giddens 1979). Structuration theory suggests that structure and agency should not be treated as separate concepts, but as the two sides of the same coin joined together through practice. Structures for Giddens represent "structured practices which do not exist without enacted practices that become enduring patterns of action" which are constantly guided by rules and resources. These components of structure – resources and rules - are intertwined and their existence is dependant on the knowledge that agents have about what they do in their day-to-day activity (p. 26). Structure is therefore seen as internal (Giddens 1984, p. 25) to the individuals, in the form of memory traces and instantiated in social practices. Understanding a social system from this point of view requires an understanding of each individual as an agent, an entity capable of the will to action and

the ability to execute action—agency. Giddens explains, very convincingly, that the continuity of structure is perpetually created through interaction with agency, similar to what Sandole is suggesting with his Four Worlds' Model.

This study posits that individuals should be seen as historical agents that are not only puppets of the structures within which they operate. They are not blindly replicating historical scripts given to them through media, education, books, etc. However, we need to be cautious because an emphasis on the high level of knowledgeability and reflexivity given to individual actors can be seen as a disadvantage. Giddens argues that people act on the basis of partial information about the context and possible outcome; and no matter how reflexive and conscious of their acts, agents do not see the whole picture.

Foucault's argues that power lies in the ability to transmit information and have it be accepted as "true" (Michel Foucault 1995). The ability to control the concept of truth, in our case historical truth, carries with it the ability to shape the view of reality and to influence legitimacy, power relations and the future itself. In this context, we must admit that people often see fragmented reality and pieces of truth, while the 'official truth' is being controlled from above. If the context in question is one in which a group has lost the ability to interact with the structure in the way in which it feels it ought, then we are dealing with a situation in which such deprivation and frustration increases the propensity to violence. The resistance of minority members in complying and interacting with the structure, its rules and practices - be it education system, history classes or historical narratives - can be an indication of a serious dysfunction within a system that may result in conflict. We do not see such dysfunction only with the minority group that has found

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itself in a disadvantaged position, but also with students belonging to the majority group whose expectations were thwarted as a consequence of the past actions of their forefathers.

Giddens' view is that change comes when contradictions in behavior become visible at the intersections of agency and structure, i.e., when practical consciousness that informs everyday routine is being questioned. That is exactly what we discover in students' narratives when they question responsibility of their ingroups for the atrocities committed during the war. They show resistance to various social practices and behaviours, and in that way, they produce and reproduce social structures in an ever-evolving process. In other words, a society can be seen as a system in which a pattern of discourses and actions between agents is sustained over time while structure represents the medium though which those discourses and actions are transmitted, and which enables or constrains them through time.

Therefore, I propose a different model of looking at the relationship between discourses, agency and time. Discourses, during the time of conflict, constrain individual agency and contribute to recursive spiraling violence, as various agents act to control, take control or regain control of power through the possession of dominant discourse. In the situation of negative peace, the voices of peace tend to be marginalized, while the aggressive and nationalistic voices further strengthen the discourse of violence. Under such circumstances, person or group is more likely to form chosen traumas stemming from a loss of their own sense of agency.

Seeking Points of Convergence and Divergence

The findings of this study show that certain elements of official discourses such as ingroup reconciliation and victimhood resonate in the individual narratives of both groups. The official top-down discourses around *us* as victims and *them* as aggressors are an important ingredient for ingroup bonding and categorization (Korostelina 2011). However, identifying with an ingroup and its "one-sided" suffering often leads to the lack of empathy and consideration for the suffering of the other. The themes around discourses of patriotism, victimhood and ingroup reconciliation that occur in official textbooks' narratives also serve to operationalize morality and legitimacy of past action. Although these themes clearly resonate in the narratives of Croat students in both models, they are often tied to the economic uncertainty and disillusionment themes that are very much present in the narratives of Serbian students. Those counter narratives are the product of a relational system, in which students are embedded, and they also represent a point of convergence and shared reality that is not, as of yet, recognized as such.

Human rights and justice discourses represent another point of convergence at the level of individual narratives of both Serb and Croat students in both models. Even though they are more prevalent in the integrated model and with Serb participants, human rights and justice discourses show participants' critical examination of the responsibility of their respective ingroups for acts perpetrated against the outgroups in the recent war. Participants of both ethnicities tend to use similar logic, phrases and metaphors to reflect on their ingroups' accountability for actions taken during and after the war. Clearly departing from monochromatic official narratives, the existence of human rights and

justice discourses in individual narratives suggests that they are not only much more complex, but that the possibility for creating a shared reality already exists on the ground.

Such a dissent from the official discourse shows a certain degree of awareness and reflection about the consequences of war. It shows that the participants' views of recent history are closely linked to their dire present conditions as well as future expectations. Participants' critical reflections about the impact of the recent war brings to the forefront the concept of responsibility or, more accurately, relational responsibility. The notion of responsibility connects agency to relational processes. The dominant meaning of the concept of responsibility implies causally linking an agent to an outcome of his/her action. An obvious case is convicting a perpetrator for a crime proven in a trial and supported by evidence, witnesses, etc. However, such a model of responsibility may not be very effective for addressing structural injustice, exclusion, unemployment, and discrimination whose sources are either invisible or cannot be connected to a single agent, but rather to some processes and elements of the system. Although fragmented, the responsibility of each individual actor manifests itself in questioning what is normal, controlled, and mainstream.

According to Chomsky, the question of an individual regaining his or her agency depends on the opportunity and privilege in a certain time and context, which enables or disables the individual to think about and act against the inequities and injustice in society.[20] If we imagine that all humans are connected in their respective contexts in a

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[20] Talk to Al Jazeera - Noam Chomsky: The responsibility of privilege. Retrieved on January 13, 2013 http://www.internationalpeaceandconflict.org/video/video/show?id=780588%3AVideo%3A80328 3&xgs=1&xg_source=msg_share_video#.UPNAYLamCKw

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network that makes up a system, starting from family, community, region, state and global society, we may notice that we cannot always trace the connection between the specific agents or specific actions, and specific outcomes. Conversely, because it is difficult for individuals to see the connection between their actions and certain social outcomes, it is easy for them to refrain from taking responsibility for their actions. On the other hand, by holding individuals or groups responsible for certain systemic wrongdoings, we may be discouraging exploration of the web of relations that contribute to the creation of a victimhood culture. By simplifying complex situations, we are often prevented from digging deeper and thinking about our own participation and complicity in certain systemic wrongdoings. The concept of relational responsibility (Gergen 2011) offers another perspective that suggests shifting from an individual-centered to a relational ontology in explaining interaction between agency and structure within certain systems, be they educational, communal, local or global.

What the findings of this study show is that through narratives, we can observe participants' questioning of what is mainstream, normal and legitimate. In this sense, these individuals are regaining their agency by taking on the responsibility to question what is considered right, official and mainstream. Such responsibility did not occur in a vacuum – it is relationally produced through interaction with other community members who are similarly identifying and renegotiating certain societal patterns, such as dissonance between the actual and expected or economic uncertainty. What is necessary for true responsibility to emerge is not only critically assessing the present structural

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dysfunctions, but also learning and awareness about what happened in the past, trying to trace processes that have resulted in current abuses or injustices. Moreover, it also means acknowledging participation in current practices of oppression and exclusion. As Young (2003) argues, "transformation in structures that produce or perpetuate injustices can occur only when many individuals take responsibility for making such transformation" (p. 19).

Interestingly, findings of this study show that participants' positionings and orientations towards the present and future trigger processes of inquiry into the officially accepted historical narratives. By exploring the resonance of historical narratives and identifying "enabling and disabling patterns and assumptions which run across the system, we can develop mutual understanding, providing a framework within which evidence, which is often discounted, can be brought within the boundaries of the inquiry" (Burns 2006, pp. 182-3). By acknowledging the confines of official stories about the recent past within traditional educational systems, we can stimulate new ideas and practices emerging from the communities themselves that are taking responsibility seriously.

With the rise of technology, communication is becoming much faster and access to an infinite number of sources at the same time facilitates and fragments the relational and communicative processes. As a result, we have a proliferation of conflicting meanings. The findings show that the majority of participants in both models of schooling use the Internet as their primary source of historical knowledge. While the Internet provides an enormous amount of information that has opened the door for

conflictual meanings to emerge, this study proposes that such meanings do not

necessarily have to lead to violence and oppression. What seems to be important is the

process of verification and acquisition of certain meanings through interaction with the

mediators of historical meanings such as parents and teachers.

Identity, Agency and the View of the Other

The preference for narrative and critical theories of identity in this study is

primarily influenced by the complexity of the subject matter that requires an exploration

of connectivity and dynamism of the key factors, such as historicity, time, context and

relationality. As Margaret Somers (1994, p. 621) states:

> *While a social identity or categorical approach presumes internally stable concepts, such that under normal conditions entities within that category will act uniformly and predictably, the narrative identity approach embeds the actor within relationships and stories that shift over time and space. It thus precludes categorical stability in action.*

The narrative approach to identity addresses both the possibility of change as well

as persistence of some identities mediated relationally through narratives. The author that

has significantly influenced the view of identity in this study is Paul Ricoeur whose

masterpiece, *Time and narrative* (1990), has provided an inspiration for putting all the

pieces of the puzzle together. The new age that we are living in has brought about the

fragmentation of knowledge and decline of values, and it is through narrative that we are

building a horizon that connects past knowledge, values and scripts with the present and

our individual lives. We gain meaning of who we are through narratives, by being

embedded in the stories we construct with others relationally.

Proponents of the narrative approach "…seek to retrieve the unity of the person who is rooted in history, culture and tradition…. through integration of reason and passion, as the basis of moral character" (Duffy 2009, p. 23). Values play a key role in the formation of identity due to the fact that all stories, and particularly stories about the past, have evaluative weight with regard to the characters and their actions. This was communicated early on by Aristotle who pointed out that stories represent "emplotted relationships between character, virtue and fortune" (cf. Duffy 2009, p. 31). Ethics embedded in stories serve as a key ingredient for our action as well as our view of the Other. The idea that sprung from reading Ricoeur is that identity formation is about recognizing both similarity and difference with the Other, and embracing it, both magnanimously and curiously, as a possibility rather then an obstacle or a threat. This may be a key for the resolution of conflict and reconciliation in post-conflict societies such as Croatia.

We can see a perfect example of how human-to-human interactions within two schooling models and two communities in Eastern Slavonia analyzed in this study, lead to different participants' views pertaining to the relevance of memory and history. In our case study, the relevance of memory and history for students' identity is elaborated differently by Croat and Serb students attending segregated and integrated models of schooling. In the integrated model, while history and nation building narratives seem to be important for Croatian students' ethnic and national identity, Serb students find history important for delineating their membership in a wider cultural and historical corpus,

rather than a political entity. Serbs define their identity in relation to their genealogy as a nation that lived dispersed and outside the borders of their motherland, which made their position uniquely different and difficult to fit into the narratives of the newly created national states. Serb students are more inclined to see history as an unfinished and circular process, which can be explained by the constant workings and presence of history in their everyday lives. They see official history as being used to constrain their agency and legitimize their marginalized position. However, their view of history as a *given* does not mean that they have given up any willingness to act. They place emphasis on learning which can be seen as a way to reclaim agency that helps them overcome past and present wrongdoings.

On the other hand, in the segregated communities there is a sense of frustration and inadequacy in dealing with the contentious past among the participants from both groups. The attitude of student participants, regardless of ethnicity, in the segregated model shows that the only way to reclaim their agency is to break away from history and public discourses of the past that engender oppressive practices. The public is constantly reminded of contentious history in ways that cause renewed tensions, radicalization and ethnic divisions. While history should serve as a reminder of the past and as an educational tool, it is often misused in the public discourse to exacerbate divisions among different groups. The participants express their resistance to history by taking a seemingly 'neutral' position and by shifting their focus to the present and future rather than the past. However, their choice is often an expression of their resistance to being constrained by history in the present as well as the painful nature of the contentious past

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that they are facing in their everyday lives and interactions within their divided communities.

Contact among students of different ethnic groups is not enough to start the dialogue and open inquiry among students (Allport 1979). Students from both groups attend the same schools in Eastern Slavonia. Even if they do not meet in classes, they have an opportunity to meet in the halls or on the playground. However, there seems to be more agreement between the two ethnic groups in the integrated model on the topic of learning history together, while the findings suggest there is less willingness to learn history together in the segregated model, particularly among the Serb students.

By exploring this finding further through the open-ended responses, we gained a significant insight that suggesting more contact through educational integration may be seen as a threat to minority identity. What needs to be done is to provide a better quality of engagement between the two groups regardless of the model and a safe space for students to engage in interactive processes. This would require engaging communities, primarily parents and peers, because it is the communities, which make an important relational space in which students' perceptions and attitudes are formed, challenged and reinforced.

Master scripts of both nations seem to have a similar structure that positions *Us* as victims and *Them* as aggressors. Individual historical narratives can be seen as the loci of identity struggle that has at its core an *Us vs. Them* dichotomy mainstreamed through master discourses. Croat nationbuilding/patriotic discourses and Serb counter-patriotic master discourses, serve as the key for respective ingroup bonding and collective identity.

While the explicit structures of the stories differ, the same deep latent narrative structure in both types of scripts suggests the basic struggle between right and wrong, which brings us to the realm of values.

What seems to be missing in school communities and educational systems is the consensus over values about what it means to learn history in post-violent conflict situations. There is a need to create a baseline of common values that underpins our approaches toward not only the past, but also the present and future. Such a baseline could provide a platform for innovation and experimentation in history learning. All the relevant stakeholders, from teachers and students to school administrators and ministry of education officials, may have a significant role in the exploration of common values. A baseline of common values can serve as a framework for the creation of an optimal space for exploring common ground and convergence points when teaching and learning about the recent past. Development of relational empathy that focuses on managing differences in conflict and the co-creation of meaning in a group setting through the interactive process may be one of the important factors.

Understanding among individuals does not depend only on characteristics of these persons or, if they are intrinsically more or less empathetic, but it also depends the way people interact with each other in a certain setting (Broome 1993). An effort to understand a person with whom we may disagree requires working with the Other to "develop new means of interacting" and, so called, "third culture" based on a new set of values that did not previously exist in that relationship (London 1999, p. 66). Broome (2009) emphasizes that relational empathy can be developed through an ongoing process

of learning rather than seeking 'truth' and that creation of alternative understandings is more fruitful than looking for a middle ground.

Mediating Historical Meanings and the Role of Parents and Teachers

This study suggests that individuals taking a stance regarding a particular historical narrative - their appropriation or rejection of a certain storyline - is dependent not only on the mere influence of historical narratives, media, textbooks and other sources of historical knowledge that are ready-made cultural, social and ideological products, but it is also mostly affected by the existence of mediating actors such as parents and teachers. Studies have shown that teachers have more power than the mere written texts in forming children's understandings and value systems (Angvik and Von Borries 1997). The question of history as the "uncritical heritage exercise … intended to convey a particular version of the past" (Stearns, Seixas, and Wineburg 2000, p. 2) or a discipline that will groom students to think and act critically and thoughtfully, is in the hands of teachers, and I would add, parents and other relevant actors within communal networks.

One of the questions that this study tackles is how students learn history and how they make sense of history. This is particularly important in post-conflict situations where knowledge about sources as well as mediators of historical meanings are key for determining the approaches to healing, reconciliation, relationship and trust building. Research on teaching and learning history has had few significant shifts in emphasis. A cognitive shift in focus in the second half of the twentieth century was from "behaviour

to the acts of meaning and sense-making" (Stearns, Seixas, and Wineburg 2000, p. 4).

Learning was no longer seen as a direct, automatic outcome of teaching or reading

textbooks. Instead, it pointed to the mediating effects of students' prior knowledge,

beliefs, values and biases that induce disconnects and uncertainties in learning history.

Postmodernist and feminist movements in the last few decades have brought to the

forefront debates about the nature of historical knowledge and who decides what is

accepted and what is not accepted in official historical narratives (Collins and Skover

2005; Collins 1999; Di Leonardo 1991; Jaggar 1989). A third development pointed to the

heightened interest in the impact of historical representations on historical consciousness,

collective memory, identity and nation building (Assmann 2008; Seixas 2004; Downey

and Levstik 1991; Korostelina 2011). All of these developments have given an enormous

boost to the research on history teaching and learning, but much-needed attention on the

key mediators of meaning has been lacking.

The findings of this study emphasize that historical narratives, which are

culturally and socially mediated phenomena, influence our identity and our view of the

Other. This study shows that in order to appropriate certain historical narratives, we need

to confirm their content through the family, school and community. Such confirmation

does not have to be intentional; rather it is randomly negotiated through the various

interactions that individuals have that they are usually not even aware of.

When we talk about the roles of parents and teachers as key mediators of

historical meaning, we need to acknowledge the disjunctions between school and family

as spaces for divergent reconstruction of historical knowledge. In school settings in

societies dealing with a contentious past, students may share a common historical experience, but have completely different versions of what had happened. Such discrepancies "at best render school history less meaningful, and at worst pose an impediment to students' construction of any meaningful frame of historical reference" (Seixas 1993). The awareness that there is often a disconnect between the history taught at home and the history taught in school speaks to the need for involving both parents and teachers more meaningfully in their children's history learning experiences.

There is a major gap in understanding the role of parents and teachers in students' history learning, which may have significant impact on how post-conflict societies function. How children understand the history of their country, particularly the contentious one, may have far reaching implications for the future escalation of violence. Children and youth are susceptible to different influences that may come from different sources, such as the Internet, textbooks, TV or newspapers. However, it is not until they discuss what they read or saw with their parents at home or teachers in school, that this history becomes part of their identity and value belief system. A living history, therefore, emerges through interaction with the key mediators of historical meanings - parents and teachers.

The majority of parents, regardless of ethnicity, in both integrated and segregated models, talk about history with their children, but they are very prudent when talking about recent history that, in their view, can have a major impact on their children's interaction with their peers of the other ethnicity. One of the major themes through which parents elaborate their role in both models is tolerance. This theme is more prevalent with

Serb parents, particularly in the integrated model, as it relates to the need of the minority group for improved socialization, social mobility and socio-economic emancipation. This theme is relevant for Croat parents, too, who express concern about their children's socialization in a diverse environment. This theme represents a point of agreement between parents of different ethnicities and the value of this theme is in its openness to learning about the others and recognizing others who are different.

The themes of historical truth and tension between history taught at home and at school also emerge in parents' responses, regardless of ethnicity, in both the integrated and segregated models. The theme of historical truth that occurs in the responses of the parents in the integrated model is related to the discussion of who has the authority to actually pass judgment about historical truth. Parents question the trustworthiness of historical sources and those who are in charge of history production. In the segregated model, the theme of historical truth is challenged by the parents openly pointing to the tension between the history taught at school and at home. Challenging the trustworthiness of historical sources and critiquing top-down history production in the integrated model, connects well with the open tension between history taught at home and in school in the segregated model. Parents in both models view as contradictory their role as mediators of historical meanings, which indicates the necessity of parents' increased involvement in finding suitable educational solutions that would enable critical thinking rather than cause confusion among students.

The teachers in both models, regardless of ethnicity, are acutely aware of the tension between history taught at home and at school. One of the teachers' techniques to

override this tension is avoidance of confrontation and difficult topics, and focusing on learning through exploration and basic information. However, teachers are aware that such techniques do not represent a solution for addressing a widespread and entrenched problem of learning history in a post-conflict context, instead they create divisions among students as well as a rift between students and teachers. On the other hand, the theme of developing a baseline of common values that occurs in the integrated model seems to provide more space for growth and exploration of common ground.

Knowledge about sources as well as mediators of meaning of history in post-conflict societies, seems to be key for determining the approaches to healing, reconciliation, relationship and trust building. The findings of this study show that both Serb and Croat students, regardless of schooling model, use the Internet as the primary source of historical knowledge rather than textbooks or other types of media. Although the Internet provides a variety of sources and different perspectives that contribute to the shaping of historical narratives, it does not help students to develop the necessary tools that will enable them to deal with contentious versions of history.

Critical thinking is lost in the limbo of teachers avoiding or not having proper tools to discuss difficult topics, and parents' unwillingness to discuss those topics out of fear of their impact on their children's socialization. Another question is whether we should discuss those contentious issues of the past at all or simply orient the children to look forward to the future. The problem with that option is that students are daily bombarded with contentious topics through different types of media, popular culture and public discourses. One of their reactions is rejection of history as something that pollutes

their present, but this rejection does not isolate students from those historical narratives that are perpetuating divisions. It becomes evident that, in order to cope with various ideologically motivated versions of history, students need to be able to analyze and critically assess them, which is actually empowering them to become more curious, open and thoughtful.

The disconnect between history taught at school and at home has not been taken into consideration by the developers of history curricula and programs. The history curriculum that students have experienced has done little to address the concerns, fears, and questions raised by their family stories. Forms and levels of involvement of different key stakeholders affect the effectiveness of schooling models, and for that matter, can have impact on the communities themselves. Reconciliation and true integration may be possible only if school communities on the whole engage in an open and free dialogue, a joint inquiry that is about seeking solutions together.

The insight theory approach (Lonergan 1992; Melchin and Picard 2008) offers some idea about the rules of engagement in a process to which the communities in Eastern Slavonia should be invited. This approach assumes that when humans are in conflict, they are constrained both in their action and thought. In other words, they seek to verify thoughts that may not necessarily be true in moments of tension and become restricted to a narrow space. The key goal of this approach is to stimulate human creativity and curiosity. It encourages and empowers the conflicting parties to remain curious to each other's perspectives in order to deepen the understanding of the conflict itself. Through that process, insights can be generated, solutions can be suggested, and

conflicts can ultimately be addressed in a manner that satisfies the needs of all concerned. Changing the rules of engagement and providing space for free and safe inquiry will be further discussed in the concluding chapter.

Suggestions for the Future

Suggestions as to what can be done to move a complex relational system from negative to positive peace in Eastern Slavonia, from the points of view of students, parents and teachers, have provided insight into the local knowledge that needs to be taken into consideration before we can determine this study's implications for theory, research, practice and policy. One of the suggestions is promotion of a common historical narrative or development of a shared superseding identity. The promise of diffusion of national hegemonic identities as a way to move forward and bring about change to the status quo and move beyond negative peace aligns with emerging interests, new roles and relationships that are shifting focus from animosity to collaboration in a unified European space. Current discussions in the public sphere are very much focused on Croatia's imminent ascension to the European Union, but the question of whether ascension can really help diffuse local nationalist tendencies remains to be seen.

Whether diffusion of nationalistic tendencies by joining a regional transnational entity could work requires an integrative approach of analysis at various societal levels. The scope of this study is limited to the grassroots level and provides a snapshot analysis of local trends in a particular region using collected local knowledge as basis for recommendations to the stakeholders at various other societal levels. Sandole (2002)

argues that the possible solution to the danger of conflicts assuming an entropic character and perpetuating themselves should be explored through the lens of complexity theory (p. 16-17), which overlaps with chaos and catastrophe theories, and postmodernism, and deals with the 'critical region of the edge of chaos'.[21] The exploration should focus on shifting balance within critical region from the dominance of negative peace to the dominance of positive peace or what Sandole calls the '4+2 framework' (Sandole 1999, p. 112). Based on the participants' suggestions about truly integrated schools, recognizing minor differences in language as a possibility to enrich rather than to harm, and the creation of a superseding identity, shows that the conditions for movement towards positive peace already exist on the ground. However, there is a need for mechanisms and initiatives that would excite and accelerate this movement. Contributions of complexity theory include analysis of the conflict system by using dynamical systems theory to identify positive and negative attractors. According to Coleman et al. (2000) an attractor represents "a narrow range of mental states and actions that is experienced by a person or group" (p. 42). Positive attractors in a certain societal system result in actions or mechanisms that induce change towards positive peace. Negative attractors lead to further deterioration and failure of peace processes and initiatives that lead to negative peace.

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[21] Sandole's '4+2 framework' (Sandole, 1993; 1999, Ch. 6) represents a 'complex' synthesis of *Realpolitik*, *Idealpolitik*, *Marxism*, and *'Non-Marxist Radical Thought'* (NMRT) political paradigms, plus *competitive* and *cooperative* approaches. According to Sandole, this framework is probably the ultimate expression of the 'edge of chaos' in conflict analysis and resolution. It suggests that in 'conflict-as-process' stage (negative peace) the system can be moved toward positive peace through *learning* in the *coevolution* of cooperation and conflict, and maintaining a stable equilibrium in the critical region of the 'edge of chaos', between *Realpolitik*'s order within chaos and, at minimum, *Idealpolitik*'s chaos within order (Sandole, 2002, p.17).

Bartoli, Bui-Wrzosinska, and Nowak (2010) argue that in order to develop constructive, latent attractors in a system, we need to identify and support the existing pockets of peace that survive in a sea of conflict, by assuming that even in war, attractors are present in the minds and relationships of some actors. This study is looking for positive attractors within individual narratives by identifying points of convergence. Upon identifying such elements, we should be able to design interventions aimed at modeling and mainstreaming narratives that introduce change in the system to promote positive peace. The new rhetoric has to go hand in hand simultaneously with other processes at different levels.

The proposition emerging from the participants' responses indicates that the change in the conflict system can be introduced through a momentum from the grassroots as well as other levels by fostering values of humility about one's own Self and viewing one's identity as equally valued and relevant as the identity of any other group or individual. Such values can gain traction and can be fostered relationally and interactively. History learning can be seen as a process that depends on interactivity between communal as well as national, regional and global factors. It requires dedicated and joint involvement of all relevant stakeholders at different social levels and structures, from students, parents, teachers to ministry officials, civil society, the EU, etc.

Another important suggestion given by the participants is that history education can play a positive role in postconflict contexts only if tolerance and decentralization in and outside classrooms are allowed. It should be stressed that decentralization, as such, does not imply a threat to someone's identity, but rather signifies the possibility of choice

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and awareness that we may all be equally right or wrong. Decentralization and multiperspectivity does not mean either uniformity or fragmentation, but joint exploration of complexity of histories. Tolerance becomes an important value for equal treatment and joint exploration of historical narratives in post-conflict educational systems. It is through the very process of free and open inquiry that students will learn about tolerance, respect, civic values and freedom of choice. For this process to be truly successful in societies that are trying to navigate their way out of the historical cycles of contention, it is necessary for people on the ground to own the process, to belong and believe in the possibility of truly integrated communities that will not be imposed from the outside, but emerge from within.

However, such processes require extensive dedication and work as the people on the ground are still facing tensions and acute divisions, particularly in Eastern Slavonia. For example, when the government recently proclaimed that it would introduce official use of the Serbian language and Cyrillic script into about 20 Croatian municipalities where Serbs make up more than a third of the population, the war veterans took to the streets in protest.[22] Ideas of diversity and multiculturalism are difficult to promote in divided communities. The linguistic differences have been used to separate groups for a long time through public discourse and media, creating situations where people identify themselves and others based on certain linguistic phrases and words. Changing of such exclusive and discriminatory behaviors cannot be induced by a single government regulation. However, some parents, regardless of ethnicity, recognized the importance of

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[22] See "Croatia War Veterans Protest Against Cyrillic Roadsigns" at:
http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/war-veterans-guard-vukovar-street-signs

language and suggested that students should be allowed to use their own languages in school as long as they are doing it consistently. In other words, parents identified the value of recognizing the difference of Others' language, not as a threat, but as an opportunity to enrich both ourselves and others. The acceptance of difference requires a dedicated process that engages not only communities on the ground but also other stakeholders at different societal levels.

Another suggestion is that parents and teachers need to be more involved in curricular development and school programming that would address the challenges of history learning, particularly the disconnect between what is taught at home and in schools. The disconnect between what is taught at home and in school, indeed, needs further attention and innovative practices that would promote better understanding of differences and diversity in school contexts in post-violent conflict societies. Peter Coleman's "dynamical systems" approach can shed some light on how to address protracted conflicts in a comprehensive way (Coleman 2006). He suggests that the aim of conflict intervention is not to advance one particular *outcome*, but to alter the overall *patterns of interaction* of the parties, which would bring about lasting change (Coleman 2003; Coleman, et al. 2008). This suggestion will be further discussed in the concluding chapter.

Systemic thinking based on complexity theory is helpful in understanding how resistance to conflict comes about, as was the case of dissent from official narratives in individual stories revealed in this study. This can be crucial for suggesting and planning programs and practices that can introduce change. By thinking in terms of dynamical

systems, we are able to look more closely into seemingly unimportant or random drivers

of conflict, tracing their roots and multiplier effects as well as possible interrupters that

can generate change.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

… Let who you are ring out and resonate
in every word and every deed.
Yes, become who you are.
There's no sidestepping your own being
or your own responsibility.
What you do is who you are.
You are your own comeuppance.
You become your own message.
You are the message…

(My Life is a Sun Dance, Peltier 2000)

This final chapter is dedicated to implications and suggestions stemming from the study of Eastern Slavonia's case that would hopefully enrich theoretical knowledge and trigger new ideas for practice of conflict resolution pertinent not only for educational settings, but also other contexts engulfed in negative peace processes. Moreover, this chapter is about the art of conflict resolution and significance of peace. After all, this study is my canvas delineating, on the one hand, the trajectory and completion of the first cycle in my nomadic quest for peace. On the other hand, it signifies the beginning of a new cycle as I put forward an invitation to the reader to engage in a dialogue through which we can seek solutions together.

This study argues that educational systems should be constructed in ways that reduce conflicts and promote sustainable peace. The interdependent relationship between

the fields of education and conflict analysis and resolution require revisiting the gap between theory and practice. Peacebuilding practices that focus on educational systems in post-violent conflict societies are constantly in need of insights and recommendations based on the analysis of real life cases. This study draws from the theoretical and literature review on this topic followed by an analysis of participants' narratives and official narratives in the textbooks to give suggestions and offer tangible recommendations for reform of educational systems to promote sustainable, positive peace.

Changing schooling models will not in itself address interethnic tensions because schooling models are embedded in divided communities and divided societies. Although the findings of this study show that the integrated model of schooling seems to generate more agreement among students, we cannot claim that such a model would, indeed, contribute to the reduction of tensions, interethnic stereotyping and biases. However, a certain degree of openness within the integrated model seems to foster conditions for free inquiry into the problems that need constant and explicit tackling.

It must be noted that ethnic diversity within a classroom in the integrated model of schooling can be a significant condition for exchange of ideas and development of critical thinking. However, this may not necessarily happen due to the power imbalance and lack opportunity and safe space for minority students to voice their concerns. This is why the role of teachers and parents is crucial in establishing and implementing the rules of engagement as well as balancing power. To move a conflict system from negative to positive peace, there needs to be a change in "patterns of interaction" among parties

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(Coleman 2003). The teachers and parents who promote creativity, curiosity and imagination at school and at home are actually planting seeds of change. Such change can occur in certain spaces and at certain times when individuals or groups are enabled to use resources of the past, relationships and space of the present and orientation towards a more peaceful future for their community.

Welcoming questions and invitations to a free inquiry is also a matter of changing discourses and ethos, which seems to be inhibited in educational systems in Eastern Slavonia. The idea of creating spaces at the level of school communities that would enable questioning, free inquiry and curiosity about the past is an approach to learning history, which does not necessarily mean discarding the traditional approaches and values. It actually builds on them through a dialogue between the present and the past that is not intimidating, dismissive and hegemonic, but rather open to verification, curiosity or uncertainty. The creation of safe spaces, be they in or outside classrooms, for an open dialogue about the past and the present can actually enable insight into how we became who we are and where we are going. Moreover, if such dialogue is based on free and open inquiry in a safe place, it may introduce latent peace attractors into the current system affected by negative peace.

The whole idea of observing educational systems and school communities in Eastern Slavonia as complex, dynamic and adaptive systems (Davies 2003) is important for envisioning the possibility of change that is not linear and cannot be explained as a consequence of only one or a few simple causes. A complex systemic approach considers multiple causes and events dynamically influencing each others to produce change.

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Change takes place when certain apparently *random* events lead to certain outcomes. As those events are only seemingly random, they often occur as a consequence of the particular way of engagement within the system. Such *random* events are exactly those points of dissention from the official scripts as well as points of convergence that were traced through data analysis in this case study.

Looking at education through the adaptive complex system lens, helps us to think of the intricate networks of interactive individuals that are considered to be part of "social capital" (Ropers 2008) and "a resource used to facilitate human action toward productive outcomes, obtained through the relationships of individuals in a social system" (cf. Price-Mitchell 2009, p. 17). The findings of this study emphasize the need for promoting social ties and networks that can function within or despite structures they are embedded in. They can become the isles of positive peace in the system affected by negative peace that are actualized by relying on their own set of rules, engagement patterns and shared values.

Students, teachers, parents, school administrators and many other members of a school community share a common purpose in educating new generations - new generations that will hopefully not have to face violent conflict in the future. The traditional history education programs, textbooks and curricula are less likely to be sustainable and effective unless they work in conjunction with other learning initiatives that genuinely engage all members of a school community, including educators, administrators, outside community members, and the students. In order to accomplish their common purpose, the school communities should promote collaborative learning

and the creation of baseline values necessary for change. Values of trust and respect for each other's experiences and unique gifts may lead to an uninhibited and collaborative exploration of possibilities for change and innovation. The participation in learning communities should be seen as an invitation to continual knowledge creation.

Engaging communities in processes of collaborative learning, both inside and outside of classrooms, will encourage the free exchange of opinions, build relationships, and promote peace. The collaborative learning model reconsiders how we learn (Bruffee 1999; Hiltz 1998; Goodsell 1992). It emphasizes the interaction of two or more people, encourages the awareness of this interaction and challenges the existing schooling model in which students are not passive learners, but rather agents of change that author each other's learning in non-linear and interactive ways (Polat 2011; Van Schaik, Van Oers, and Terwel 2011).

Individuals experience the world around them differently and they learn through interaction. For members of school communities to genuinely engage in processes of collaborative learning, they must share and value the voices and experiences of one another and engage with various stakeholders at different societal levels. By establishing spaces for meaningful interaction, therefore, we can enhance learning, build trust, and open the lines of communication both in the classroom and in the larger community.

It is important to note that spaces for collaborative learning should be created from within and not imposed by outside 3rd parties. They can start with a small group of enthusiastic individuals, be they students, parents, teachers or other individuals concerned

with the current state of affairs, whose ownership and dedication to the collaborative learning process would allow for the organic development and growth of such initiatives.

Implications for Practice

One of the key implications for practice based on the findings of this study is that its objective in post-violent conflict, negative-peace situations should be altering *patterns of interaction* (Coleman 2003) rather than creating of common historical scripts. This study recommends collaborative learning and open inquiry to be introduced as communal practices that would help local populations to search for ways to address contentious issues. By transforming engagement patterns, the possibility of hearing and recognizing each other's stories becomes more palpable.

Another important point is that conflict resolution practitioners must pay attention to and design their interventions based on the local knowledge. As Sandole (2011b) aptly argues, outsider's "explanation" should be matched by insider-driven "understanding" (p. 82). Contentious issues cannot be tackled unless the people on the ground take ownership and responsibility for such processes. Therefore, for the sake of sustainability, it is crucial to work together with locals. The suggestion is that CAR practitioners should empower communities to create a relational space and capacity to spearhead the momentum for change through participation, and respectful and open patterns of engagement.

A constant challenge for Conflict Resolution scholars and practitioners is in finding modalities to change certain persistent and recurring types of conflict behaviors

and dynamics in order to prevent the contentious past from repeating itself. The analysis of the structure of historical narratives, as presented in this study, is crucial for generating a much-needed understanding not only about the patterns of engagement that tend to produce certain types of conflict behaviors, but also about points of convergence that can move the system toward positive peace.

Third parties should be aware of the unstable and shifting relationship of the conflicting parties and that they can cause damage because they adhere to the belief of the primacy of a single factor or good intentions that do not allow them to see beyond the immediate circumstances (Sandole 2011). In the field of conflict resolution, there is a need for new frameworks or paradigm shifts to account for anomalies or unexpected outcomes that are significant breakdowns in paradigm-based expectations (Richmond 2012), which occur as a result of faulty analyses, approaches and interventions. Through the lens of complexity theory, conflict resolution researchers and practitioners also have to be aware that by embedding themselves in a particular paradigm, they will be limited in their worldview, thereby undermining their approaches and interventions. Similarly, parties to the conflict cannot move forward until they start to listen and recognize the point of view of the Other.

Going back to the individual, and his or her capacity to act and think as an agent of positive change, requires change in thinking about local communities as passive and marginal. By identifying points of divergence from the official narrative and convergence in narratives between two ethnic groups, we are actually *repoliticizing* the grassroots – the local - by uncovering their agency.

Common ideas across ethnic divides with the potential for generating a movement exist at the local level. They are, in a way, a response to the state structures' inability to address the needs and frustrations at the grassroots. They also signal to the local institutions working with communities for peace that spaces for collaborative learning have yet to be established. Learning history in post-violent conflict contexts requires involvement of the communities that will supplement the state promoted curricula and programs with learning how to interact with the Other.

However, for collaborative learning to be truly effective, it requires the involvement of actors from various social levels and structures - from students, parents, teachers to ministry officials, civil society, the EU, etc. Sandole suggests that the attempts for such integrated approaches in conflict resolution are already ongoing, but they are lacking optimal coordination and integration. Sandole proposes the "New European Peace and Security System" (NEPSS), which is both a prescriptive and descriptive model for peace and security in post Cold War Europe that would shift volatile societies from negative towards positive peace through the integration of "existing mechanisms and institutions within the context of the OSCE" and new European institutions (Sandole 2007, p. 47- 49). The regional actors, such as the OSCE and the EU, that are already involved in educational reforms in Bosnia and Serbia, may play an important role in suggesting proper modalities of decentralized history learning in the case of Eastern Slavonia. However, top down approaches and policies can hardly work if the communities do not take ownership of those approaches. Providing spaces for

collaborative learning among different groups may be an appropriate way to address such a disconnect.

Principles of Collaborative Learning

Reflection and Creation of Learning Communities

An important component of collaborative learning practices should be reflection on both issues and processes, which can help create truly integrated communities in which parents, teachers and students can be partners in their quest for positive peace. Their responsibility for implementing and reflecting upon their activities and practices should be shared. Every member of such communities should have a voice and participate equally in practices, which would eventually lead to the creation of *communities of learning*. Such learning communities must be open to research and inquiry as the mode of engagement, and I foresee trainings and workshops through which people are given an opportunity to adjust and change through inquiry.[23]

Equality and Safety

Processes of free inquiry can be implemented and open discussion can occur only if all participants feel safe, and it may take some time and effort to create a space in

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[23] I was intrigued by the view of inquiry presented by Harvard psychologists Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey Kegan in their book, *Immunity to Change: How to Overcome it and Unlock the Potential in Yourself and Your Organization* (2009). The authors argue that inquiry unfolds as we try to overcome our immunity to change. They posit that the "deepest human hunger is to experience the continuing unfolding of our capacities to see more deeply (inwardly and outwardly) and to act more effectively and with greater range" (p. 316). By offering a methodology aimed at the development of a more complex mental framework (the "self-transforming mind"), the individuals will be better equipped to recognize the limitations of their own paradigms. This recognition will allow the individuals to begin to negate the effects of an internally imposed immunity to change.

which sensitive issues will eventually be dealt with. The initial stage of a collaborative learning process should focus discussion on setting the rules of engagement agreed upon by all participants. Facilitators - teachers, students, parents or some other party - should monitor the process and provide students with opportunities to openly discuss their concerns. This process demands that everyone is considered equal, which would counteract the usual teacher-student power asymmetry. Each participant's opinion must be respected and the continuation of the process will depend on the participation of all stakeholders. Internal relational responsibility will then emerge from within and from participants' respect for each other and the process, rather than from some outside authority.

Language of Peace

This study examines narratives communicated via language. Language can be used constructively, but also destructively. As Deutsch (1973) has noted in his classic work on competitive (confrontational) conflict, competitive processes tend to produce "unreliable and impoverished communication that reinforce the pre-existing orientations and expectations toward the Other" (p. 353). The language represents and invaluable source of knowledge about the level or magnitude of deprivation in a given society (Kriesberg 2007). In educational settings, narratives and the very language can provoke a reaction or a series of reactions that can move the system toward contention. Learning how to communicate peacefully and nonviolently, and also learning how to avoid harming or hurting others communicatively can be very important in this context.

Language itself can be used as a tool to escalate conflicts because of its salience for individual and group's identity. Providing minority with the right to use their language in educational and other public settings may diffuse tensions, but true transformation can only take place through free and open interaction between minority and majority. In the case of Croatia, two groups can perfectly understand each other, but there are certain words and phrases that mark the differences in languages. The collaborative learning process aims at overcoming such differences through mutual recognition and fostering of relational responsibility.

Creation of Shared Reality

Moving the system from negative to positive peace requires changing the ways we learn. The resistance of certain groups or individuals to comply and interact with the structure, its rules and practices - be it education system, history classes or historical narratives - is an indication of a serious dysfunction within a system. However, based on the findings of this study, we can claim that the possibility for creating a shared reality already exists on the ground, and needs to be tapped into. Development of common values through collaborative learning can serve as a framework for the creation of space that can introduce bottom-up momentum for change. Determining truthfulness of sources of historical knowledge is not as important as finding proper approaches towards analyzing and appropriating historical knowledge. Broom (2009) argues that by shifting focus on procedures that would enable creative processes can be a key for creation of relational empathy. This could lead to a change in patterns of interaction towards

openness, learning and creativity.

Involvement of Various Community Members

The role of primary mediators of meaning such as parents and teachers can be key for students' engagement in the analysis of various historical sources as well as for the quality engagement and the development of critical consciousness. Various stakeholders, including parents, teachers, students and administrators, need to be engaged in the process of free, open inquiry and collaborative learning in which they will be given an opportunity not to discuss whether some historical information is accurate or not, but how the process of learning together can be enabled, keeping in mind values of tolerance, respect, civility and freedom of choice.

The Role of the 3rd Party

The 3rd party role in facilitating collaborative learning processes comes with certain challenges. Balancing between enabling the local communities to take ownership of the process and navigating those processes to generate positive change may be a daunting task. How much should the 3rd party be involved? Practitioners and researchers should be aware that their role in collaborative learning process is not only of an advisor or facilitator, but that of an agent of change. However, the third party cannot do much if the seeds of change are not already existent in communities. As Kriesberg (2007) suggested, it is important for the 3rd party to have an open mind and to examine each conflict situation freshly rather than "assuming it is just like another struggle" (p. 381).

Learning is not a mono-directional process, but the 3rd party should be humble enough to have an open mind and learn from the other participants and the process itself.

Implications for Theory

The findings generated by this study offer a small contribution to the study of historical narratives and conflict - an original visualization of time and narrative that I call the "Spiral Model of Time and Narrative". Aristotle defines narrative in his *Poetics* (1987) as having a beginning, middle, end and a single plot (See figure 27). Roberts (2001) argues:

> *What distinguishes stories from other forms of discourse is that they describe an action that begins, continues over a well-defined period of time, and finally draws to a definite close, with consequences that become meaningful because of their placement within the narrative. Completed action gives a story its unity and allows us to evaluate and judge an act by its results.* (Roberts, 2001, p. 424)
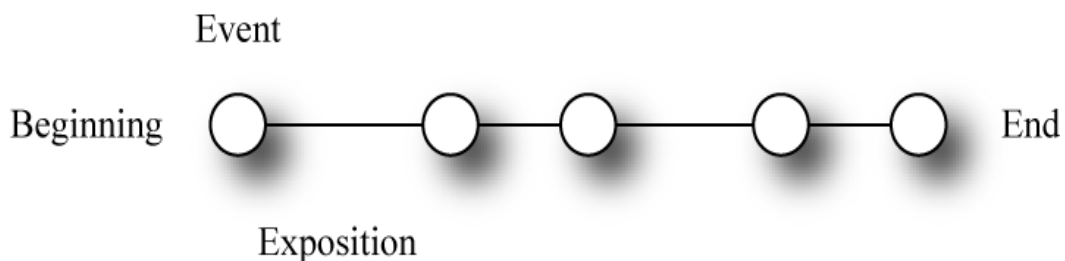

Figure 7. Linear narrative model[24]

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[24] Source: http://playwithlearning.com/tag/narrative/

Such a linear understanding of narrative structure is often challenged by the complexity of situations and phenomena in conflict and post-violent conflict contexts.

I propose that the relationship between time and historical narrative is best visualized as a spiral, as follows:
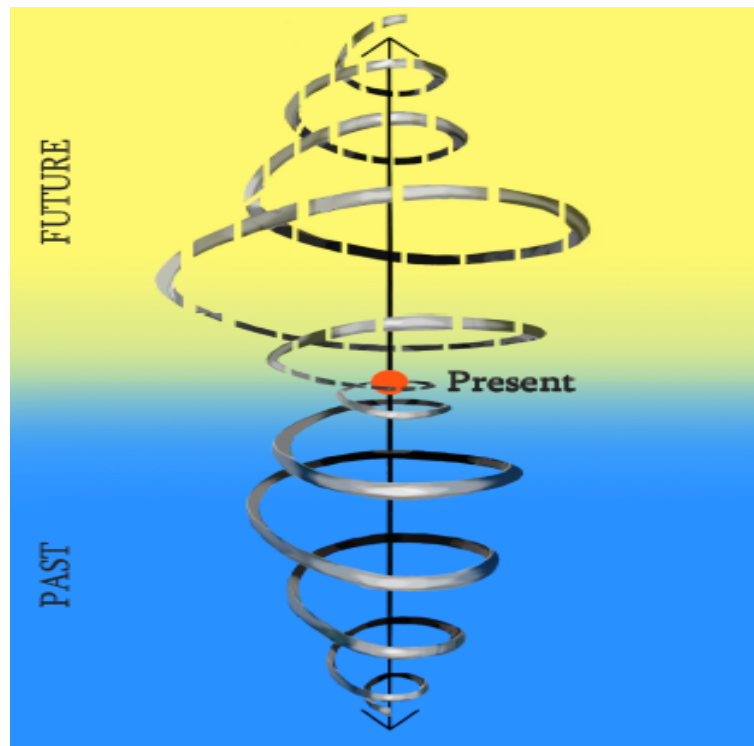

Figure 8. Spiral model of time and narrative[25]

I find the spiral model very helpful in showing the function of historical narratives in connecting the past, present and future. The narratives about past events are always connected to a speaker's present conditions and future orientations. The cyclical construction of historical narratives takes place around the axis of time, and such a construction is fluid and in traces, because the initial narrative does not preserve its content, but rather changes with the progression of time.

When we say that "history repeats itself", we are only partially right. While recurrent practices, behaviors and language constructs can certainly be traced throughout history, even the most resilient master narratives change over time. This study has shown that a narrative contracts and widens based on the present orientations of agents. It contracts when there is less space for individual agency, openness and curiosity, leading to the creation of a uniform, compact and simplified narrative. Morton Deutsch (1973) suggests that destructive conflicts are characterized by their tendency to expand and escalate in terms of issues, motives, costs, negative attitudes towards adversary etc. (p. 351). At the same time, "the processes involved in the intensification of conflict result in the harmful and dangerous elements driving out those which would keep the conflict within bounds" (cf. Deutsch 1973, p. 352). During a period of conflict, the number of events increases exponentially, while narratives and their diversity contract, thereby implying that historical time becomes denser during conflict. Voices of dissent are subdued and individuals are drawn towards more simplified, uniform narratives.

During the time of peace, the space for narrative construction widens, as people become more open, curious and ready to engage with the stories of others. This model

also shows that individual narratives are always in flux, dynamical and responsive to changes of the evolving interactive processes of the people on the ground. In such a world, time is not linear, but axes of the past, the present and the future interact, creating a complex and dynamical system. Heine (1994) describes "the historical continuity of past and future in terms of an ever-renewable cyclicality and reversibility of time" (p. 1). It can be argued that the concept of historical continuity, in a way, emphasizes the present as an intersection of the past and the future. The present is a crucial locale for understanding the past and imagining the future.

Implications for Research

One of the key implications for research stemming from this study is that we need to pay attention to both structural as well as individual processes when examining complex phenomena such as conflicts. Conflicts in communities are embedded in larger societal, regional and global systems that may, in various ways, influence outcomes of those conflicts. Sandole argues that an individual should be a starting unit of analysis and that much of what happens at the individual level can be applied at the societal level (Sandole 1999, p. 120). This study started from individual narratives connecting their themes and patterns with larger structural processes. What we discovered is that the uniform storylines of official historical narratives 'burst' into the multitude of storylines at the grassroots. In individual narratives, we did discover resonance with certain themes from official discourses. However, what was prevalent in individual narratives was complexity

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and multiplicity of various themes. What we discovered is that conflicts and historical outcomes are not solely about interests, positions and rational choices of the parties involved, as presented in official discourses. They are also about traumas, irrational fears, entrenched positions, false beliefs and various identity issues that keep conflicts from resolution.

Only recently, the first independent empirical and quantitative analysis of Israeli and Palestinian textbooks was boycotted by Israel's Education Ministry, which proclaimed that it was biased and false. The study suggests:

> *The historical events ... are selectively presented to reinforce each community's historical narrative ... there is a lack of information on religions, culture, daily activities or even the existence of the other on maps...which serves to deny the legitimate presence of the other* (Greenberg 2013).

Contention around interpretation of historical events seems to occur in various conflict and post-conflict settings, which speaks to the significance of this and similar studies. The study of textbooks and historical narratives conducted in Eastern Slavonia can possibly be useful for scholars and practitioners in other contexts as they draw and apply lessons learned to their own cases.

Another important implication for research is that the complex problems of today cannot be resolved without integrating knowledge and 'hybridity' of approaches and ideas. This study also aims to contribute to the shift in discourses and research paradigms from the dominance of violent Realpolitik towards egalitarianism and cosmopolitanism of Idealpolitik as an ideology that underpins both conflict resolution analysis and practice. Realpolitik assumes that human beings are innately competitive and that they

struggle for dominance trying to promote or defend their interests. Idealpolitik suggests that human beings are cooperative and they tend to use cooperative approaches to resolve conflicts. There is a need for "discourses without domination and a methodology towards an everyday ontology of peace that is empathetic, bottom-up, emancipatory, and capable of responding to changes in contexts" (Richmond 2012, p. 14). The conflict resolution field is eager for new and improved mechanisms and hybrid frameworks such as "unified field theory" (Sandole 1999, p. 200), which can be informed by complexity theory and supplied in the form of designs of new interventions for complex conflict resolution (Sandole 2002, p. 18).

Research of complex conflict situations must include local knowledge and be informed by the insights from the local, including the marginalized. Richmond (2012) proposes an interdisciplinary research agenda, based on everyday life and involving coalitions of scholars, policy makers, politicians and indigenous people to develop multiple concepts reflecting an understanding of peace that is context-specific. These propositions resonate very clearly with the idea of collaborative learning processes as one of the grassroots' modalities for inducing the shift from Realpolitik to Idealpolitik. The collaborative learning model proposed in this study presupposes interconnectivity with other societal levels, openness to learning and different theoretical and practical approaches.

Implications of Croatia's Joining the EU

Croatia is set to become the 28th member state of the European Union on 1 July 2013. No one can deny the positive aspects of Croatia's accession, such as better regulation and policies that would reduce corruption, improve mobility of people and provide overall security in the context of a larger European setting. However, the question that remains open is how will this event influence relationships and reconciliation processes in Eastern Slavonia and more broadly, relationships between Serbs and Croats in the region. The discussion in this section is informed by my conversations with several EU officials as well as reviews of most recent online reports on the accession of Croatia to the EU.

As Sandole (2010) argues, the EU can be considered, for several reasons, an exemplar of Immanuel Kant's concept of "perpetual peace". It has transformed the European states system into a broader body that is primarily based on cooperation and providing security for all its members. It is a union grounded in equality and respect of common goals and interests that still recognizes diversity and cultural distinctiveness.

The EU was created to promote economic and political cooperation and mutual accountability based on consensus through which its member states voluntarily give up some of their national sovereignty for the sake of collective good. One can argue that the EU "*theory-in-use* is based primarily on membership conditionality" (Sandole 2010, p. 101). It is through fostering cooperative relationships based on partnership, respect and

relational responsibility that the peace has more chance to emerge. In that sense, the Nobel Peace Prize 2012, awarded to the European Union for its "contribution to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe,"[26] should not come as a surprise to anyone.

The accession of the Yugoslav-successor states, plagued by perpetual instability, to the EU family has certainly been a heated topic in European policy circles, and more so, with the rising economic crisis and insecurity within the Euro-zone. Many are concerned about corruption, dysfunctional institutions and economic decline in the Western Balkan states that may contribute to the weakening of the already troubled European economy. Moreover, it is not only political and institutional shortfalls that are worrying, but unresolved past grievances, ethnic politics and contentious historical discourses that tend to perpetuate tensions and divisions within those states.

On the other hand, this argument can be reversed and Croatia's imminent accession to the EU can be seen as an invaluable incentive that would signal and inspire change in attitudes and approaches to political and economic issues in other Western Balkan countries aspiring to join the EU. Croatia's joining the EU may improve stability and promote cooperation as well as different political ethos in the region as ethnic and political contention becomes replaced by economic and social solidarity that will benefit all its members. While this seems to be a viable possibility in the long run, Croatia's accession to the EU has already started creating some economic challenges for surrounding countries. The Serbian and Bosnian economies are interrelated with the

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[26] "The Nobel Peace Prize 2012". Nobelprize.org. 6 Apr 2013
http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2012/

Croatian and they will have to adjust their agricultural production, employment

regulations, business transactions and trade in accordance with European standards,

which may accelerate reforms, but also create some immediate difficulties.

The EU member states have generally had a positive outlook on the imminent

accession of Croatia, which has successfully fulfilled the required conditions. EU Policy

makers and analysts have also positively assessed Croatian accession to the EU. Only

recently, at an event organized by Johns Hopkins University, the political counselor at the

EU Delegation to the US, Rory Domm, argued that Croatia is, "the best prepared member

state to date … having made progress in all ten areas identified in the Commission's

previous report from March 2012". [27] Similarly, among US policy makers, Jonathan

Moore of the US State Department, expressed support for the inclusion of the Western

Balkan countries in the EU by stating that, "this region will not be settled until its

countries are in the EU".[28]

However, certain difficulties that characterize the realities in the Western Balkan

countries should not be dismissed. Croatia, once it becomes an EU member state, is not

an isolated island, but a country located in an economically and politically volatile region

whose interconnectedness and cooperation with its neighbors is key for its economic and

political success. As Jeleva (2012, pp. 73-74) argues:

> *The pre-accession procedures were treated as strictly technical and institutional,*
> *while important social, cultural and political aspects of those societies have*
> *remained neglected in the 'traditional' EU accession approach. The challenge*
> *now is whether and how to adapt the pre-accession instruments and enlargement*

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[27] "Enlargement: No Problem with Croatia Joining in July, says EU diplomat." *Europolitics*. March 26, 2013 Tuesday. LexisNexis Academic. Web. Date Accessed: 2013/04/07.
[28] Ibid.

policies to the process of full integration into the European mainstream. The challenge is that the region encompasses communities at different degrees of development and fulfillment of their national identity and nation-building agendas.

The ongoing nation-building processes and memory politics have had an impact on euroscepticism, particularly with regard to the ICTY in the Hague. Croatia has been no exception in this respect. The decisions of the criminal court may have influenced the agendas of the reconciliation initiatives implemented by states and civil society in the Former Yugoslav countries. The decisions to acquit Gotovina and Markač were a significant blow to the efforts of reconciliation between the two groups in both Croatia and Serbia. The fact that no one was found guilty for the expulsion of 200,000 Serbs from Croatia, killings of those who stayed behind and destruction of their property, stands as an anomaly in the system proclaiming to uphold justice for all. Such decisions have fueled nationalist discourses in the public sphere that have undermined reconciliation processes on the ground.

However, regardless of this and similar decisions that are part of state and international agendas for dealing with the past that have undermined reconciliation processes between the two groups, this study argues that the top-down initiatives have limited impact on people's views about historical events. Those views are often influenced by present conditions and people's sense of identity and belonging to a certain group. Therefore, the possibility for generating a willingness to embrace reconciliation processes still exists at the grassroots, but needs to be tapped into as the ultimate avenue for positive peace to actually emerge. The emphasis should be on developing procedures

or processes that would enable creativity and generate "collaborative action agendas"(Broome 2009) based on learning. Rather than seeking compromises that ignore differences, the focus should shift on creating something new through processes of collaborative learning.

The accession of Croatia and other Yugoslav-successor states to the EU may help diffuse nationalist discourses in the public sphere, which would create new pathways towards cooperation. This does not imply that the two sides will finally find the joint narrative of what had happened in the past, but rather the nationalist discourses of the past will become less relevant in a process organically emerging from the necessity of former adversaries to cooperate in a new regional arrangement. The principles of relational empathy, as suggested by Broome (2009), provide conditions through which a group can come to understanding of its goals through structured interactive processes. Croatia has already shown indications of good will towards Serbia, when President Josipović apologized for the crimes Croats committed during the war, which was reciprocated by President Tadić's apology for Vukovar. Such top-down initiatives marked the initial positive steps towards transformation of relationships plagued by past wrongs.

Only recently, in April 2013, some 20,000 people, mostly war veterans, rallied in Zagreb's central square to protest against a plan to introduce signs in the Cyrillic script in Vukovar, Eastern Slavonia. According to Croatian law, Serbs in Vukovar account for over one third of the population, which enables them to exercise minority rights to have

signs written in their alphabet. European Enlargement Commissioner spokesman, Peter

Stano, remarked on these protests:

> *We do not comment on details in relation to the events in Vukovar. We only want to remind everyone about two European Union principles: the rule of law, which means that the laws should be respected and the government should ensure the enforcement of laws. The other principle is reconciliation and protection of minorities. These principles are an integral part of the values embraced by the EU.*[29]

Croatian Prime Minister Milanović's moderate, but firm rhetoric, confirmed Mr. Stano's

position, as he stated that Croatia has to uphold the law and constitution. It remains to be

seen what the outcome will be, as local aspirations and policies supported by the EU

continue to clash.

However, we must note that the nationalist tendencies are not only characteristic

of transitional societies such as Croatia, but also of current EU member states. The recent

rise of nationalism within EU member states is troublingly linked to the deteriorating

economies, as clearly seen in the rise of nationalist, neo-fascist movements such as

Golden Dawn in Greece. France, the Netherlands and Germany have also seen the rise of

nationalist and right-wing movements directed against the so called Others – immigrants,

Muslims, etc. Such movements are feeding on economic instability and the scapegoating

of the Other. Political processes in Croatia seem to suggest the opposite as the country is

trying to break away from nationalist tendencies and shift toward economic growth

through European ties.

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[29] See: http://daily.tportal.hr/253661/20-000-protest-in-Zagreb-against-use-of-Cyrillic-script-in-Croatia.html

Croatia has, more or less, been capable of navigating nationalist tendencies as the official discourses have tended to emphasize Croatia's national identity as European, in the attempt to disassociate it from the Balkans. The idea of belonging to the European family, as championed by the first Yugoslav successor state to join the EU, Slovenia, has already been present in Croatian nationalist discourses, which have contributed to the wider public consensus regarding accession to the EU. The de-Balkanization of Croatia started with President Tudjman, whose political discourse was aimed at secession from Yugoslavia, moving away from the Balkans towards the European family of nations.

By entering a broader space of possibilities, Croatia now has the opportunity to lead by example and facilitate the accession to the EU of other countries in the Balkans. This shift is already taking place with the advent of burgeoning economic links between Serbia and Croatia. Despite political disagreements, "both the Serbian and Croatian ambassadors to London attended an event on November 28 to mark a $399 million given to Atlantic Grupa, a Croatian company, by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development"[30]. Atlantic Grupa has major investments in Serbia and other countries of the former Yugoslavia.

In the long term, Croatia's joining the EU is a positive move in the sense that it can accelerate accession of the other countries in the region aspiring to join the EU, e.g. Serbia and Bosnia & Herzegovina. The EU can be a source of cohesion in the region and eventually bring about much-needed stability through economic progress and relationships. However, it remains uncertain how much can be done with regard to

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[30] T. J. 2012. "Old Wounds, New Grievances." *The Economist*, November 29.
http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2012/11/croatian-serbian-relations.

relationships and people-to-people interactions among various ethnic groups. People-to-people relationships are currently facilitated mostly by civil society. One of the examples of successful Serb, Bosnian and Croatian collaboration is the Coalition for RECOM, which is a "non-political regional network of civil society organizations and individuals that works on creating a regional commission tasked with establishing the facts about war crimes and other serious human rights violations committed on the territory of the former Yugoslavia in the period from 1991 to 2001."[31] Civic and anti-nationalist voices as well as campaigning against homophobia and xenophobia are significant areas of cooperation between Serbs and Croats. Although these areas are mostly overlooked, they may plant the seeds of civic identity, which may diffuse the salience of the "omniscient" ethnic and national identities and pave the way for different patterns of engagement between two nations within Croatia and Bosnia and between Croatia and Serbia.

The agreement reached by Serbia and Kosovo on 22 April 2013, with the tremendous third party assistance of Lady Ashton, EU foreign policy chief, is another indication that EU membership is still significant to two Yugoslav successor entities. Moreover, such agreement marks the stabilization not only of the relationships between Serbia and Kosovo, but it sends a signal to the other Yugoslav successor states, aspiring to join the EU, that agreement and cooperation are possible. Although this agreement signifies a new chapter in the history of the region, more has to be done to enable the transition from ethnically-based to issue-based politics in Croatia, Serbia and other former Yugoslav countries. Under the auspices of the EU, such transition seems to be

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[31] See: http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/josipovic-supports-recom

more likely if coupled by enhanced clarity with regard to ongoing reconciliation processes as well development of values that would enable peaceful resolution of conflict and collaboration on various issues "within a basically cooperative system" (Sandole 2007, p. 163).

Implications for Policy

This study proposes enabling participation of various stakeholders in developing education policies, curricula and textbooks in post-conflict societies. Educational policy makers should be ready to listen to the voices from the grassroots where such policies are being implemented.

In order to create positive peace within the structure, an alternative narrative needs to be promoted that is able to challenge nationalist and exclusionist narratives and practices. A route to peace leads through the change of language about conflict and, as the findings of this study have suggested, the conditions for such change already exist within communities. For positive peace to occur, people must come to an understanding about what peace really means and what institutions we can put in the place of exclusionary or oppressive ones. This can happen only if people engage in interactive processes of learning about each other, the structures and fundamental questions of peace.

By engaging in collaborative learning processes, change becomes a possibility, but in certain situations, only some options will be open to particular agents and the

corresponding change will not necessarily be what the agents had envisioned. However, the practical aspect of conflict analysis and resolution field would be in crisis if we believed that the only change that the agents can produce is of the unintended variety. Social change, therefore, does not have to be massive; the introduction of grassroots' small-scale interventions will usually not result in large structural transformations. However, they can certainly contribute to increased knowledge and understanding of the "unacknowledged conditions of action" (Giddens, 1984, p. 5), such as repoliticizing voices and agency from the grassroots, which can, through shared networks, influence wider narratives and the polity itself.

In situations where the narratives promoted in school and at home are contentious, it is necessary to engage with multiple stories in formal and informal settings in order to learn about those stories that can support positive peace. What comes to mind is Gandhi's belief that, in every fight, there is an underlying struggle between views that are both right to some degree and that illuminate the same truth. *Satyagraha* embodies Gandhi's approach to conflict resolution and means "grasping onto principles," or "truth force" (Juergensmeyer 2002, p.3). Satyagraha's aim is to redirect the focus of a fight from persons to principles.

By considering one's adversary as a potential ally and engaging him or her in a collaborative learning process, we would be inviting the opponent to participate in a process in which they can resolve conflict together. It is imperative that the parties use means of action within the conflict that are consistent with the end goal, for if they do

not, a credible resolution can never be sustained if it was achieved by means not agreeable with the resolution.

It should be noted, that this process requires navigation through different dimensions of truth and many versions of the "truth" that are likely to be expressed in post-violent conflict societies. The aim of such a process would not be to find common truth or a joint narrative about what happened, but common principles of learning together, accepting that they can agree to disagree and encouraging people to accept the existence of contrasting narratives.

Building trust and relationships within the communities and with youth should involve multi-level stakeholders. Adults in the study still remember the bonds that existed in the former Yugoslavia, but the youth have grown in separate societies and their attitudes have been learned under different societal conditions (*structures*). Encouraging interactive programs, encounters and exchanges with youth in regional countries may have an impact on creating new relationships with the Other in their own communities.

Additionally, the findings demonstrate that the participants have been greatly concerned about economic uncertainties that they see as consequences of the recent past. This points to the need to set up functioning structures and institutions to promote economic development, without which security and reconciliation would not be possible.

Conclusion

A key proposition of this study is that individuals continue to have agency and a

capacity to choose even in the constraining circumstances of negative peace. It also suggests that by changing interaction patterns, we can move the system engulfed in conflict towards positive peace. On the other hand, important theorists in discourse studies, such as Foucault and, to some extent, Giddens, argue that people cannot see the whole picture of the sources and distributions of power, but rather see and follow the rules and codes, which create certain types of relations that are imposed by the invisible elite, be they in the form of official historical narrative or some other modality. This leads to the internalization of disciplinary individuality, and creation of the "docile body" or compliance of individuals who are less likely to break the rules.

Official historical scripts serve to promote certain social rules that control human behavior, ensuring the continuity of the states and structure. The structure imposes certain patterns of relations through discourses of discipline. As those discourses, knowledge and technology evolve, control over people becomes more refined and more dangerous. Mind or "soul" control, as Foucault calls it, becomes the primary locus of power struggle. As this control progresses and becomes more sophisticated, humans are more and more stripped of their willingness to resist and bring about change, which leaves us with a very pessimistic view of the world. Moreover, war is enabled by a structure that promotes the institution of war and discourses that legitimize it (Jabri 1996). War, in Jabri's view, is legitimized and promoted within society because the structure has placed and continues to place military action before peaceful action. In the case of the Balkans, it is nationalist and exclusive narratives that are legitimizing and feeding negative peace, which prevents society from moving towards positive peace. Nationalist narratives delegitimize forms of

action tilted toward positive peace and "seek to conceal dissent, individuality, and non-conformity" (Jabri 1996, p. 160). By delegitimizing and alienating other forms of action among people on the ground, the nationalist/patriotic narrative and subsequent social practices will continue to promote violent action and war.

Such actions are not necessarily a product of *evil* intentions, but are perpetrated by people who think that they are protecting their identity, values and national interests. The delusion is twofold: first, people on the ground do not necessarily 'buy' into those narratives and often resist them; and second, identity, values and national interests are not well served by the promotion of nationalist narratives. Such narratives are dysfunctional, conflict generating tools that may gain traction in the moments of state failure, collapsing economy and other destabilizing factors. They may also be a tool of opportunistic elites to sway the polity in a particular direction. The bottom line, however, is that they usually bring about more harm, long-standing grievances and traumas that modern societies cannot really afford.

Peace

I dedicate my final section to the concept of peace. Peace is much more than a condition or a circumstance - peace is a universal value. It is a value that transcends time, historicity, memory, everyday struggle and pain. Peace is most missed by those who, at some point, knew it and lost it. Therefore, I do not want to define peace as absence of violence or by the degree of violence, or as something that can be structurally defined or

measured, but rather, I will look into the meaning of peace as something personal, intimate and widely human.

Peace is both internal and external – it is equally important for our microcosm as it is for our collective being. Peace is a process, and a state of harmony that we are all constantly seeking, but are unable to fully reach. Peace partly depends on the system and the structure of a particular society, but the question about the humanistic value of peace has yet to be addressed. At the present time, we can see individual initiatives for peace taking off and becoming global, such as Tel Aviv graphic designer Ronny Edry's Facebook message from Israel to Iran: "*Iranians, we will never bomb your country. We love you.*"[32] Only one sentence that carried the simple message of love and of recognition to the supposed enemy, received enormous feedback and attention despite official rhetoric. This speaks to the value and the strength of narratives of resistance. The animosity shatters in the face of peace, just as injustice withdraws when faced with justice, and the lie when faced by truth. It is incumbent upon each individual to extend her or his hand toward the perceived enemy. At least, we can try.

This study is a small contribution to the efforts of many who are working on expanding the message of positive peace across different societies. By adding knowledge and ideas to the peace constituencies around the world, I hope to contribute to the recognition that violence is an increasingly less acceptable and less practical form of conflict resolution. I believe that, as a matter of faith, if we can learn together about non-violent and constructive options of engagement and can become comfortable about

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[32] http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/culture/2012/03/israel-loves-iran-on-facebook.html

plunging into the chaos of the unknown, we can create a momentum for positive peace, integrity and forgiveness. It is within the reach of each and every one of us to shift the tendencies to destruction in that "critical region of the edge of chaos" towards love and cooperation with the faith in human goodness as a key ingredient that informs our action and enhances prospects for the sustainability of our lives and common environment.

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