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THE NEXT GENERATION:

History Education in Serbia and Young Peoples' Understanding of the Violent Yugoslav Breakup

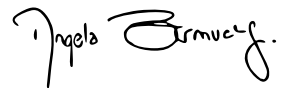

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**THE NEXT GENERATION: HISTORY
EDUCATION IN SERBIA AND YOUNG
PEOPLES' UNDERSTANDING OF THE
VIOLENT YUGOSLAV BREAKUP**

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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement N° 665959. In addition, a number of institutions back and co-finance this project. It reflects only the author's views, and the Research Executive Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

“Education is a better safeguard of liberty than a standing army”

- Edward Everett

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



This thesis, which is a product of a long journey, represents the most ambitious project I ever undertook. When I started working on it, I only had a vague idea of how challenging, inspiring, and life-changing an experience it will be. All of it would not be possible without the generous help of many people.

First, I am endlessly grateful to my supervisor Angela Bermudez who saw the potential in me and my work. She taught me an incredible amount about academic work. Her genuine support for my ideas helped me believe in myself when I lacked self-confidence. Her endless energy to engage deeply with every piece of my writing (no matter how bad it was) and get the best out of it kept me going. A big thank you to Dr Nimrod Rosler, who was kind enough to welcome me for my research stay at the University of Tel Aviv. A special thank you to Professor Daniel Bar-Tal for finding time to engage in fruitful discussions and give me invaluable comments about my work.

I owe deepest gratitude to all history educators and students who participated in the studies and generously shared their opinions, thus making my job much easier. I am grateful to the European Association of History Educators (EUROCLIO) and Centre for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeastern Europe (CDRSEE) for making it possible to conduct study two and allowing me to use the data as part of this thesis. I am also thankful to members of the Department of Psychology at the Faculty of Philosophy, the University of Belgrade for their help during my fieldwork. Kaja Damnjanović for recruiting her students to participate in the interviews, Danka Purić for letting me use her office to conduct small group discussions, and especially to Iris Žeželj for always selflessly offering her help and support.

I want to thank the fellow Ph.D. students at the University of Deusto - Raquel, Milica, Fernando, Roberto, Elena, Diego, Angelica - for reminding me, during the countless coffee breaks, that there is always a light at the end of the tunnel. A special thank you goes to Sonja for being my confinement buddy who kept me sane during the lockdown and to Rodrigo for always

being there to have a beer after a long day's work. I am incredibly grateful to Davinia for endless discussions on all topics (academic or not), her enduring motivation to co-organize RAW Sessions together with me, and for all the friendly support I could have ever wished for.

I am grateful to Dea Marić for being a fantastic research partner and a friend. Being a part of our little research duo made everything easier and gave me confidence that I am on the right path. A special shout out goes to Jelena Đureinović who I have always considered a sort of partner in crime, even though we work on very different subjects.

I want to thank my friends Jovana, Djurdja, Zorica, Milena, and Bata for being my chosen family, making me who I am, and supporting every step of my life and academic career. To Dubravka, my original travel buddy, for her readiness and talent to join the discussion on any possible topic. I am forever in debt to Sofija, for without her support this thesis would never be possible.

It is tremendously difficult to sum up all the things I am grateful for to my parents, Miodrag and Kaja. I especially want to thank them for continuously creating a safe space for open discussion, thus teaching me to freely voice my opinion and believe in myself. This valuable lesson shaped my critical approach, without which I would not succeed. To my sister Milena for always showing love and support while never compromising her honesty.

I dedicate this thesis to my nephew Vid who brought light to all our lives.

ABSTRACT



History education is where the official narratives about the past are transmitted to the future generation. The importance it has for the worldview of young people is undisputed. Its relevance is recognized by an abundance of recommendations and guidelines produced by international organizations such as the Council of Europe and UNESCO. Within the history education processes, young people are taught about the past. However, they are also trained to understand how history "works", how historians know what they know, and develop critical moral reasoning about the past. The content they are taught and how it is approached in the classroom concerns society members and captures the attention of many researchers, generating ample social controversy and academic debate.

All of these questions become even more contentious when we look at societies with a recent history of violent conflict. Conflicts, especially intractable ones, are known to cause long-lasting sociopsychological changes in these societies, and history education is recognized as one of the societal practices that can facilitate or hinder the reconciliation process. However, employing history education to pursue peace and a harmonious future does not come without specific challenges. One of the arguably most essential aspects is how past violence is represented, taught, and narrated within the educational process.

In this respect, Serbia represents a specifically meaningful case study. During the last decade of the twentieth century, it was, in one way or another, part of several wars that marked the Yugoslav breakup. While it currently maintains regular diplomatic relations with most of the past opponent countries, it still does not recognize the independence of Kosovo. The violence that ended twenty years ago is already included into history education curricula, and new generations learn about these events every year. What and how they are taught about these events will, to a large extent, shape Serbian society's future.

Research on history education in post-conflict societies mainly focuses either on history textbooks, history teachers, or (history) students. The current thesis combines these main research traditions as well as different methodological approaches through three separate but interconnected studies on the case of Serbia.

In study one, *Intercultural Education in Post-Conflict Societies: Historical Narratives of the Breakup of Yugoslavia in Serbian High School History Textbooks*, the complete corpus of Serbian high school history textbook lessons about Yugoslav breakup is analyzed. It employs thematic analysis to identify themes of the ethos of conflict and discourse analysis to establish an extent to which the textbooks narratively normalize violence. The study shows that textbook narratives indeed contain identifiable themes of the ethos of conflict and narratively normalize violence. Possible conceptual relationships between the two theoretical frameworks are explored, and the limitations of the intercultural education framework, especially in the case of history education in post-conflict societies, are discussed.

Study two, *Controversy in the classroom: how history teachers in the Western Balkans approach difficult topics*, focuses on history educators in the Western Balkans. This mixed-method study included surveying a sample of 793 history educators from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, as well as interviews with 14 history education experts. The study aimed to identify which topics history teachers find difficult to teach and what factors are connected to how they approach them in their everyday practice. In addition, the study represents the first quantitative exploration of the *avoider – risk-taker model*. Findings show that history teachers in Serbia find the Yugoslav breakup to be the most challenging topic they face in the classroom and that they are often confused about whether and how they should approach it. In addition, the results shows that teachers who engage to a greater extent in risk-taking are less religious, more educated, and more often members of national organizations that deal with history education and training.

Study three, *The Next Generation: Nationalism and Violence in the Narratives of Serbian Students on the Breakup of Yugoslavia*, addresses (history) students' narratives about the Yugoslav breakup. In-depth interviews and small-group discussions were used to elicit narratives from 31 young people with no direct experience or memory of war. As in study one, thematic analysis was used to identify themes of the ethos of conflict and discourse analysis to establish an extent to which participants narratively normalize violence. The findings show that participants' narratives contain themes of the ethos of conflict and narratively normalize violence. Similarities and possible connections between textbook narratives and student-produced narratives are subsequently discussed.

In sum, the findings in this thesis show that history textbooks, as well as young people, employ narrative mechanisms that normalize past violence and contain identifiable themes of the ethos of conflict. As mediators of these narratives, Serbian history teachers frequently take themselves entirely out of this equation due to political and societal factors that influence teaching controversial topics in post-conflict societies. Considering the contemporary debates in the field and the findings of this thesis, it is possible to say that history education about the violent breakup of Yugoslavia in Serbia insufficiently develops students' historical thinking skills, thus making it difficult for students to use what they learn in school to develop a critical moral stance towards the past. This is especially worrying in a specific politically unstable post-conflict context that requires them to make political decisions, frequently related to how recent violent history is understood and the moral judgments they make in this process.

Keywords: History Education, History Teachers, History Textbooks, Students, Young people, Serbia, Violence, Yugoslav breakup

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INTRODUCTION



*“There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than
the way in which it treats its children.”*

— Nelson Mandela

“ . . . I am using this opportunity, here in front of you, to start an initiative [. . .] History textbook needs to be written by the Serbian state, and only the state should be allowed and able, or at least that is the way it should be, to have clear and determined textbook our children are going to learn from. In that textbook, there will be at least one page devoted to Jasenovac. There will not be only three sentences where foreign publishers explain to us what Jasenovac is, where foreign publishers explain to us what Kosovo is, and what Srebrenica is. Please, if you find the space for it, discuss this topic, make a proposal, vote a law, do what you can for Serbia to write its own history, do not allow others to write our history [. . .] Make an effort, let us write our own textbook, containing only our fundamental Serbian truth, do not allow for others to write it, do not allow for us to buy history on the free market. Do not allow for us to receive history textbooks from foreign publishers, specifically from Croatian and German publishers, do not allow it. Let us be the ones who write it. Let us write it because we will disappear if we stop remembering”

*February 24th, 2021, Parliamentary address of Aleksandar Vulin,
Minister of Internal Affairs in Serbian Government*

This address was given days after Radio Television Serbia (RTS) screening of the feature film *Dara of Jasenovac* (Antonijević, 2020) stirred up public debate on what people in Serbia, and especially young people, learn and know about Jasenovac concentration camp and history in general (T. Ognjenović, 2021). The film, produced with the financial help of the Serbian government, depicts the horrors of one of the WW2 concentration camps in the Independent State of Croatia where Serbs, together with Jews, Roma, and others, were the primary victims. Rather than entering a complex debate on the memory culture in Serbia concerning World War II, this quote demonstrates how the Serbian political elite sees history education, its goals, and the role government should have in it. This initiative was later supported by the president of Serbia (Danas, 2021b) and the minister of education (Danas, 2021a). In addition, the President of the Republic of Serbia and the Serb member of the Presidency

of Bosnia and Herzegovina also agreed that the experts from the Republic of Srpska would be included in the production of these state textbooks and they will be used there as well (*Vučić i Dodik, 2021*).

What is proposed by these kinds of statements is greater state control of the textbook content and textbook market, at least when it comes to history textbooks. However, textbook production processes in Serbia, like in many countries in the world, are already to a large extent controlled by the government through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, the Agency for Improvement of Education, and the National Educational Council (for a detailed overview of these procedures see the section [History Education in Serbia](#)). The statement is clearly playing to the citizens' lack of knowledge of the complicated textbook approval procedures to gain political support. However, beyond that, it says a lot about how the current Serbian political elite understands the future of history education. The idea to further strengthen the grip government has on history textbook authorship, approval, and production processes points to an understanding of history and history education as a national project.

Furthermore, calling for “Serbia to write its own history” with “only our fundamental Serbian truth” attests to the great misunderstanding of the direction in which history education has been moving for the last 50 years, to say the very least. The idea that there are distinct national truths about what happened in the past and that young people within one nation–state should be exposed only to these truths signals a move in a direction opposite to modern historiography, pedagogical recommendations developed through research and innovation, and recommendations of international organizations concerning history education. For example, 1996 Council of Europe recommendations on history teaching warns explicitly about the dangers of politicians manipulating history while reaffirming the importance of carefully teaching controversial, sensitive, and tragic events, and the right of citizens to history that is not manipulated (Council of Europe, 1996).

Further recommendations talk about possible misuses of history, specifying different ways this is done including, but not limited to, “fixation on one event to justify or conceal another”, “an excessively nationalistic version of the past which may create the ‘us’ and ‘them’ dichotomy” and “omission of historical facts” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 5).

Vulin’s statement is particularly worrisome if we consider that in the last 30 years Serbia was, in one way or another, involved in four violent conflicts (war in Slovenia, war in Croatia, war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and war in Kosovo). Keeping this in mind, these kinds of statements seem like a dangerous push in the wrong direction that could have long-term negative consequences and evidence a political context that gives no support to the different challenges that textbook writers, teachers, and students face when learning about the violent past. As this thesis will show, history textbooks in Serbia are still treating these wars in a way that is not contributing to reconciliation, history teachers in Serbia are still struggling with how and whether to teach lessons related to these recent violent episodes, and young people in Serbia reproduce narratives that could prove harmful for building a more peaceful future.

Study Rationale

Researchers take different approaches to understand the role of history education in post-conflict societies, and a big part of this research focuses on history textbooks. Starting from an understanding that textbooks represent the dominant narrative in the society, or at least the desired version of history that political elites want young people to adopt, there is research on history textbooks from practically every country in the world. Although this productive line of research yielded incredible insight into historical narratives provided through history education, more recent research on educational media “no longer considers the textbook with its narratives and didactic principles to be an individual text, but rather locates it within a complex medial space” (Korostelina & Lässig, 2013, p. 4). Moreover, it is understood that “narratives,

symbols and cultural codes to be found in textbooks are repeatedly challenged and recoded by teachers and their biographical experiences” (2013, p. 5). Still, there is a lesser amount of research on teachers even though they are “far more important to the success or failure of a reform initiative than is generally understood” (Worden, 2014, p. 2) and research focusing on history teachers in post-conflict societies can shed light on how they teach these topics and what actually happens in the classroom (Goldberg, 2017; Kello & Wagner, 2017; Kitson & McCully, 2005). Nevertheless, if research focuses solely on teachers, we can be left asking ourselves if too much importance is given to their role in the educational processes, thus overlooking what students actually know and understand. Students might learn about the past from almost any source outside the formal educational system: family, friends, internet, media, film, etc., and this makes the direct exploration of student understanding an invaluable line of research within the area of history education in post-conflict societies.

This thesis represents an attempt to combine these three lines of research, focusing on history textbooks, history teachers, and “history” students. It aims to provide a better understanding of these elements of history teaching and uncover how young people in post-conflict societies come to understand the recent violent past. The empirical research, focusing on Serbia as a society with a recent violent history and unresolved political conflict in the present, will hopefully provide insights valuable beyond this specific case.

Structure of the Thesis

[Literature](#) section of the thesis covers the role of history education, international documents relating to history education and central debates in the field of history education concerning the [Goals of History Education](#) and [The Ethical Aspects of History Education](#). In addition, the literature on [History Education and Peacebuilding](#) is discussed with an emphasis on the place history education has in the current conceptualizations of conflict transformation and reconciliation. The role of [History Education in Post-conflict Societies](#), including a closer examination of [History Textbooks in post-conflict societies](#), [History Teachers in post-conflict societies](#), and [\(History\) Students in post-conflict societies](#), is also discussed. The [Context](#) section presents the [Yugoslav Breakup \(The course of the wars and Debates About the Causes of the Yugoslav Breakup\)](#), and the overview of the current state of [History Education in Serbia](#). In the following sections the [Objectives](#) of this thesis as well as the [Methods](#) and the [Analytical Framework](#) are presented. The next three chapters ([Intercultural Education in Post-Conflict Societies: Historical Narratives of the Break-up of Yugoslavia in Serbian High School History Textbooks](#); [Controversy in the classroom: how history teachers in the Western Balkans approach difficult topics?](#); [The Next Generation: Nationalism and Violence in the Narratives of Serbian Students on the Break-up of Yugoslavia](#)) report on the three studies published as three separate papers (R. Jovanović, 2020; R. Jovanović & Bermúdez, 2021; R. Jovanović & Marić, 2020). The [Discussion](#) includes examining of the findings in light of the presented literature, explores the possible connections between three studies, as well as limitations and possibilities for future research. The final section provides some [Conclusions](#).

LITERATURE



The Role of History Education

In 2019, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program recorded 67 non-state and 54 state-based conflicts (Pettersson & Öberg, 2020). Many of them conflicts “between ethnic or other identity groups within a single political unit” (Kelman, 2008, p. 15). Mass political violence is the reality many societies are facing or have faced in the recent past. Once the violence ends, societies are left to struggle with inconceivable long-term consequences. After the material evidence of violence is gone, relationships between previous opponents continue to be highly complex and troubling for the members of these groups. The very attitudes, emotions, and beliefs that led to and maintained the violent conflict often continue to be present after the conflict is over (Bar-Tal, 2013). Thus, building towards a culture of peace in post-conflict societies is a long and uncertain road. Many contextual factors can influence the specific post-conflict reality (the nature of the conflict, the scope and length of the conflict, recency of the conflict, the outcome of the conflict, the transitional justice strategies chosen in a society to deal with the past, the overall political system, the degree of foreign involvement in the conflict and conflict settlement, and the strength of civil society) (Bentrovato, 2017, p. 62). However, no matter what the specific context is dictating, it is undisputed that, to build a culture of peace, peace needs to become a supreme value. This entails that ‘both parties [...] must establish a common moral as well as utilitarian epistemic basis that completely negates the use of violence’ (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 373). Education seems to be one of the essential tools that can serve to overcome, but also to perpetuate, the challenges posed by the recent violent past. This is partly because educational media are considered an epistemic authority and reach almost all young people in a society (Bar-Tal, 2013).

International organizations founded after the end of World War II recognized the importance of education for building and maintaining

peace. The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) constitution stipulates that:

the wide diffusion of culture, and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace are indispensable to the dignity of man and constitute a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfil in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern (UNESCO Constitution, 1945)

Additionally, UNESCO is to “give a fresh impulse to popular education” by “suggesting educational methods best suited to prepare the children of the world for the responsibilities of freedom” (UNESCO Constitution, 1945). Article 26 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights similarly states that:

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace (UDHR, 1948)

However, in post-conflict societies, education is often more complex. Building peaceful relations in societies with a recent history of violent conflict can include various educational methods: civic education, peace education, education for humanitarian law, or programs including dialogue and encounters between the members of past opponent groups, to name just a few. While these may or may not be in place in all post-conflict societies, all societies teach history as part of, most often mandatory, formal educational process. History education is a space where official stories about the past are transmitted to the young members of society. The great significance of history education for maintaining and building peace is also clear from the extensive work of the Council of Europe (CoE). While mainly concerned with European identity and the relationships between European states, policy documents produced by CoE consistently underline the importance of history teaching for building peaceful, democratic societies.

Already in 1953 proceedings of the first conference on “The European Idea in History Teaching” raise essential points such as fighting nation-centric history, introducing multiperspectivity, and the importance of social history (Council for Cultural Co-operation, 1995). The focus of the CoE projects later changed in line with the changes in academic history as well as major political shifts. For instance, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the number of CoE members rapidly expanded, and so did the understanding of European history (Low-Beer, 1997). Recommendations for history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe devote a significant amount of attention to the importance of history teaching for building democracy, reconciliation, and promoting remembrance (Council of Europe, 2001). One of the very aims of history teaching in the twenty-first century is “to be a decisive factor in reconciliation, recognition, understanding and mutual trust between peoples” (2001, p. 4). The connection between teaching and remembrance is emphasized in stating that:

everything possible should be done in the educational sphere to prevent recurrence or denial of the devastating events that have marked this century, namely the Holocaust, genocides and other crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and the massive violations of human rights (2001, p. 8)

The 2009 recommendation entitled *History teaching in conflict and post-conflict areas* deals more directly with the potential of history teaching in societies with the recent history of violence. It recognizes history teaching as a tool for supporting peace and reconciliation in conflict and post-conflict areas (Council of Europe, 2009). Similarly, the latest guidelines for *quality history education in the twenty-first century* include, among eight principles for establishing democratic, diverse, and inclusive history curricula and pedagogy one that states “recognizing that people of different cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds have often been long established in societies” as well as “addressing issues that might be sensitive or controversial” (Council of Europe, 2018).

Granting these recommendations and guidelines are of great importance for the development of education and clearly demonstrate the importance of education and history education for peacebuilding; they also face some criticism. Many of the recommendations and guidelines place history education within a larger framework of intercultural education, thus tying history education's relevance for reconciliation and peacebuilding to the concept of intercultural education itself. For example, the 2009 recommendation emphasizes the role of history teaching for developing tolerance and understanding concerning migration and changing demographics (Council of Europe, 2009). This approach is previously outlined in the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue *Living Together As Equals in Dignity* (Council of Europe, 2008). The connection is further emphasized in the 2011 recommendation on intercultural dialogue and the image of the other in history teaching that includes a section on history teaching, dialogue, and post-conflict situations (Council of Europe, 2011). The common denominator is the problematic portrayals of *Others* in history teaching – members of the former enemy group or newcomers to a society.

The understanding of the intercultural education framework promoted in these guidelines is best summed up in 2006 UNESCO guidelines on intercultural education (UNESCO, 2006). This framework understands intercultural education as aiming “to go beyond passive coexistence, to achieve a developing and sustainable way of living together in multicultural societies through the creation of an understanding of, respect for and dialogue between the different cultural groups” (UNESCO, 2006, p. 18). In addition it sees culture as being “at the core of individual and social identity and is a major component in the reconciliation of group identities within a framework of social cohesion” and represents “all the factors that pattern an individual's ways of thinking, believing, feeling and acting as a member of society” (UNESCO, 2006, p. 12). Understanding of intercultural education promoted in this document is criticized exactly for building on a conception of apolitical and neutral culture instead of seeing it as a “site of discursive

struggle between competing groups” (Dasli, 2018). This criticism resonates even more, when we consider applying an intercultural framework to history education in post-conflict societies where different groups of unequal power are in constant struggle over the interpretation of the past. Thus, while the guidelines created and promoted by international organizations signal a general pathway to be followed in the reforms of the educational system, they should be understood for their strengths and flaws, especially when applied in the post-conflict context.

In addition, it is essential to be aware of at least two significant limitations of formal history education: it is not the only source of historical knowledge in society and is almost entirely controlled by the state. First, however important, it is far from being the only source of narratives about the past. Family members' personal histories and memories of the past and a variety of information available through various media play a significant role in disseminating narratives about the past to future generations in society. However, this makes focusing on formal history education that much important, or as conclusions of the 1953 conference on “The European Idea in History Teaching” state, “If the younger generation is not taught recent history by historians, they will be left exclusively to the influence of press, film, radio, etc.” (Council for Cultural Co-operation, 1995). Second, the extent of the implementation of international recommendations depends on the individual countries since the states almost entirely control formal history education. This is often precisely the decisive factor determining if the potential of history education to foster reconciliation will be fully realized. State educational institutions have a say in all parts of the educational process. They decide on the history education curriculum content and the extent of freedom teachers have in deviating from it; they approve textbook manuscripts, set educational goals to be achieved, and create tests that determine which knowledge is more important. In addition, history teachers' initial and in-service training is also, to a large extent, determined by the state through the organization of higher education and professional

development programs. With all these elements, history education offers an opportunity to create a more peaceful future by providing young people with valuable, truthful stories about the past in effective ways. However, at the same time, it runs the risk of providing nationalist single-perspective narratives that could further entrench future generations in the divisions of the past. Unfortunately, many states do not fully use the opportunities history education could provide and continue to perpetuate conflict-supporting narratives through formal history education. This is even more frequently the case in post-conflict societies. Before discussing the specific role history education has in post-conflict societies, let us first overview literature on history education and its goals in general.

Goals of History Education

Much of the debate among history education researchers is based on what should be the goals of history education. Agreeing that history education has great importance for identity formation, values, and beliefs about the past, present, and future, the debates in the field are asking what do we want history education to accomplish? Elaborating on the goals of history education, Carretero (Bermúdez & Carretero, 2012; Carretero, 2011; Carretero, Lopez, et al., 2012) makes a distinction between romantic and enlightened goals. The former, being the primary goals of history education since its inception until 1960es and still persistent in most countries, secures that a future citizen will adopt “a positive assessment of their own social group’s past, present and future; a positive assessment of the country’s political evolution; identifications with past’s events, and characters and national heroes” (Carretero, Lopez, et al., 2012, p. 154). These goals are considered romantic because “the whole idea of the nation as a specific ethnic group that is under a process of awakening and finally it constitutes itself in a community of destiny, cannot be conceived without the contribution of the Romantic ideal” and historical narratives are one part of that idea (Carretero, Lopez, et al., 2012, p. 154). In addition, they are romantic because they are “achieved

through an intense and rapid process of identification with one's own nation through emotional, affective, and social-interaction mechanisms," and loving a country is more of an affective than a cognitive process (Bermúdez & Carretero, 2012, p. 635). The latter, enlightened (disciplinary) goals of history education are about "fostering critical citizens capable of informed and effective participation in the progress of the nation, including a possible criticism to the own local or national community" (Carretero, Lopez, et al., 2012, p. 155). They involve a complex understanding of the past "according to age and educational level; distinguishing different historic periods, through the appropriate comprehension of historical time; understanding the complex historical multiple causality; approaching the methodology used by historians; relating the past with the present and the future" (Carretero, Lopez, et al., 2012, p. 155). It is precisely the tension between these two types of history education goals that often represent a significant challenge in post-conflict societies. Hence, it seems incredibly important for the role history education can have in the peacebuilding processes. These opposing goals of history education further clarify the meaning of the opening quote. The need for history textbooks to provide "only fundamental Serbian truth" written "by us, for us" represents a straightforward example of the romantic goals of history education and stands in contradiction to the prolific theoretical and empirical work on history education stemming from the enlightened tradition.

There are several important models within the tradition of enlightened goals of history education. One of the most influential conceptualizations of the disciplinary goals of history education focusing on the development of historical thinking comes from British scholars. Between the 1960es and 1990es, the major shift happened in emphasis in history education in Britain with the elaboration of the difference between substantive concepts and second-order historical concepts (Lee & Ashby, 2000). On the one hand, there are substantive concepts such as migration, nation, conquest, war, king, etc. These are key concepts of a discipline that factual knowledge is ordered

around. On the other hand, second-order concepts, sometimes referred to as meta-historical or procedural concepts, such as change, evidence, causation, etc., refer to the ideas that “shape peoples’ abilities to do history” (P. C. Seixas, 2004, p. 105). Evidence, for example, is one such second-order concept. Understanding the concept of evidence is considered to be so important it has been said that without it, history becomes impossible and trivial because “if knowing something depends on having seen it (or better still, having done it), one can never say anything worthwhile about most of the past” (Lee, 2005, p. 36). Understanding the idea of evidence is considered invaluable because only when students “begin to operate with a concept of evidence as something inferential [...] history can resume once again; it becomes an intelligible, even a powerful, way of thinking about the past” (2005, p. 37). By developing this and other metahistorical ideas, students acquire “the best intellectual toolkit we have for thinking about the human world in time” (Lee & Ashby, 2000, p. 216). Through understanding second-order concepts students are gaining an understanding of history as a discipline without which they would “lack the tools to reflect on their own knowledge, its strengths, and its limits” (Lee, 2005, p. 69). This by no means implies teachers should give up on substantive concepts and the content of history in order to pursue teaching procedural ideas. It instead means the recognition that the understanding of second-order concepts “allows more serious engagement with the substantive history students study and enables them to do things with their historical knowledge” (Lee, 2005, p. 40).

Another important model of history education, stemming from the German philosophical tradition and its application in the pedagogical sphere, is more interested in the meaning of young peoples’ narratives for practical life (P. C. Seixas, 2004) and understands historical education as the development of historical consciousness. Rösen proposes a “disciplinary matrix of the science of history” which demonstrates how paradigms shift through the relationship between practical life and scientific history (Megill, 1994). The matrix consists of five factors or principles divided into two realms

connected circularly: historical discipline and life-practice. The matrix begins in the sphere of life-practice with the cognitive interest – the human need for temporal orientation. This need is what historical consciousness, as well as historical science, emerges from. Influenced by this need, historians, now in the sphere of the historical discipline, employ theories and methods to create representations that feed back into the life-practice “constituting identities and offering guidance” (Megill, 1994). It is precisely this dialogical relationship between historical science and practical life that results in historical consciousness. Historical consciousness redirects the focus to “how the past – in its relation to present and future – is understood” (Macdonald et al., 2000). It is an operation of the human mind that allows actors to connect past and present to provide a future perspective. Historical consciousness provides a temporal orientation that allows a person to understand themselves as having a historical identity – to extend temporally beyond one’s own life and achieve *temporal immortality*. In this view, narrating history and understanding historical narratives is the key to conceptualizing historical consciousness (Kölbl & Konrad, 2015). Telling a story is the central operation by which “the human mind realizes the historical synthesis” of time, value, and experience (Rüsen, 2004, p. 69). This competence consists of three sub-competencies that form the historical narrative: the competence of historical interpretation, the competence of historical experience, and the competence of historical orientation (Rüsen, 2004). Through these three qualities, historical narration enables the orientation of practical life in time, an orientation without which “it is impossible for human beings to find their way” (Rüsen, 1993, p. 5).

A certain level of integration of the two conceptualizations is offered by the Canadian Historical Thinking Project (*Historical Thinking Project*, n.d.) which represents one of the most influential North-American approaches to historical cognition and history education. It primarily draws on the British tradition in focusing on second-order ideas students need to develop to gain fuller understanding of history while combining it with some elements of the

historical consciousness approach. Scholars associated with the Canadian Historical Thinking Project define historical thinking as a “creative process that historians go through to interpret the evidence of the past and generate the stories of history” (P. Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 2) and as a “set of thought processes and attitudes that, taken together, recreate the intellectual apparatus of the historian” (Laville, 2004, p. 173). To think historically is “to understand how knowledge has been constructed and what it means” (Lévesque, 2009, p. 27). The primary goal of history education is to enable students to begin to do what historians do. Like their British colleagues, they are not arguing that pupils should become professional historians. It is instead argued that the “development of historical scholarship [. . .] can serve as a benchmark for students' own historical development” and that it would “assist students in developing more of a sophisticated understanding of past and contemporary issues - as opposed to a strict accumulation of content knowledge” (Lévesque, 2009, p. 31). Seixas and Morton, in their model of historical thinking, propose six historical thinking concepts understood as problems or tensions inherent to constructing history: *Historical Significance* (How do we decide what is important to learn about the past?), *Evidence* (How do we know what we know about the past?), *Continuity and Change* (How can we make sense of the complex flows of history?), *Cause and Consequence* (Why do events happen, and what are their impacts?), *Historical Perspectives* (How do we better understand the people of the past?), and *The Ethical Dimension* (How can history help us live in the present?) (P. Seixas & Morton, 2013). The ethical dimension, not present in the British historical thinking models but central to the historical consciousness approach, represents an effort to integrate elements of historical consciousness tradition into this historical thinking model. Additionally, tying the two approaches, according to Seixas, are concepts of historical significance, evidence, and cause and consequence (2017). Historical significance and evidence are “equally embedded in the relationships between our present and a foreign past” (2017, p. 66) because what is significant and what sources we will seek depends on the questions

we ask in the present. The narrative competence, one of the central elements of historical consciousness, is closely connected to the concept of cause and consequence because “the conundrum of causation, central to narration, arises from the question of human freedom and agency” (2017, p. 67).

Recently, there has been an empirical attempt to understand the connection between historical consciousness and historical thinking as two different frames for making sense of the past (Duquette, 2015). Duquette proposes a model composed of four developmental levels that mark the progression from non-reflective to more reflective historical consciousness. Students at the highest narrative level are able to take into account the complexity of the past, propose a hypothesis and examine the reliability of available sources (2015, p. 57) as well as “combine different events in the past to construct a narrative explaining the evolution of a historical phenomenon from past to present” (2015, p. 55). The model connects historical consciousness and historical thinking by proposing that a certain level of historical consciousness requires a certain complexity in historical thinking. Finally, in his critique of Rösen’s model of historical consciousness, Lee also connects the two traditions through the concept of the *usable historical framework* (2004). He claims that in order to help students develop a usable framework of the past, “we need a history that allows students to orientate themselves in time” (Lee, 2004, p. 38) while at the same time permitting them to “understand the past to which they orientate as constructed historically” (Lee, 2004, p. 38).

These approaches shed light on the potential of history education to facilitate peacebuilding by providing students, who are learning about the recent violent history of their societies, the tools to better understand the past, present, and future. Historical consciousness, as discussed above, plays a determinant role in the present decisions and actions of the actors. Without narrating the past, it would be impossible for people to understand current situations and make justified decisions about future action, or in Rösen’s words, “history is the mirror of the past actuality into which the

present peers in order to learn something about the future” (2004, p. 67). Understood in this way, history and history education have an immense role in determining the future of any society. However, to understand the past and orient themselves in time, young people need to understand how the past is historically constructed. This can be done by facilitating students’ understanding of second-order historical concepts that “can help students make sense of any new topics they encounter” (Lee, 2005, p. 40). Without the development of these ideas, it becomes impossible for students to “adjudicate between competing versions (and visions) of the past” (Lévesque, 2009, p. 27) and they are left “naively apprehending what is presented to them by authorities, whether they are political leaders, movie producers, parents, or teachers” (2009, p. 172).

Another distinctive way of conceptualizing history education, the socio-cultural approach, is influenced by different socio-cultural theories from psychology and social sciences and has great potential for a deeper understanding of the role history education can have in post-conflict societies. Within this tradition, Barton and Levstik (2004) proposed a model that stresses the role history education has in developing democratic culture while looking at the contextual particularities of how students in different cultures and social settings learn about their past. The authors identify four “specific actions students are expected to perform when they learn history” (2004). Students are asked to *identify* (“embrace connections between themselves and the people and events of the past”), *analyze* (“establish causal linkages in history”), *respond morally* (“remember, admire, and condemn people and events in the past”) and *display* (“exhibit information about the past”) (2004, p. 7). The assumption of sociocultural theory about the embeddedness of human thought and action in a social context has significant implications for history education. To analyze students’ historical understanding, authors assert, we need to know broader societal contexts (museums, movies, TV, family, etc.). More importantly, even within the school context, we cannot limit the analysis to course requirements and curriculum objectives. Rather

we need to know “how teachers convey information to students and how textbooks and other materials represent content” (2004, p. 18). The most important implication of this approach for history education is calling attention to the “socially situated nature and purpose of students’ actions—what they do with history—rather than focusing on the knowledge assumed to exist inside their heads or the skills they are believed to possess as individuals” (Barton & Levstik, 2004, pp. 6–7).

Looking back at the opening quote, it is in stark contrast to the presented theoretical and empirical advances in the field of history education. It could be argued that calling for a “fundamental Serbian truth” undermines history as a discipline. Referring to the truth goes against the development of the procedural idea of evidence in history since within the discipline of history, “the past is not a given” but rather depends on the “interrogation of sources of evidence, which do not of themselves provide an unproblematic picture of the past” (Lee, 2005, p. 34). Furthermore, calling for students to learn “only fundamental Serbian truth” would hardly help them critically examine, integrate alternative historical accounts of the recent violent past and understand that historical accounts are “constructions that answer a limited range of questions within a chosen set of boundaries” (Lee, 2005, p. 70). Only when they do this can they “begin to understand how several valid accounts can coexist without threatening the possibility of historical knowledge” (Lee, 2005, p. 70). An additional question that arises is what kind of temporal orientation students can develop based on the proposed understanding of history. Consequently, what would this temporal orientation imply for future actions when the history is one of violence in the specific context such as Serbian. How can history education in Serbia engage with the stories of past violence in a way that builds towards a peaceful future? All the approaches presented here contribute valuable insights on the ways history education can develop a fuller understanding of history as a science as well as an understanding of specific historical episodes. Furthermore, they outline the potential of history education to nurture the capacity of young people to orient

themselves in time and acquire critical thinking skills that would all together lead to responsible citizens ready to participate in a democratic society.

The Ethical Aspects of History Education

However, the discussion of history education in relation to violent conflict always involves some form of ethical judgment, so it is important to take a closer look at what different history education approaches contribute to the debates on the ethical dimension of history education. Interest in the moral significance of history has been growing since the 1990es. The concept of history is said to have changed from “the pursuit of an objective universal story about the past” and now comes with a “clear moral injunction not to forget either the triumphs or the horrors of the past” (Chinnery, 2013, p. 254). For history education, this shift means moving towards educating for historical consciousness, which is said to “cultivate an understanding of history not only as artifacts from the past but also as something that makes moral demands on us here and now” (2013, p. 254). Indeed, the historical consciousness approach puts the ethical dimension of history in the center of the picture. Narrating stories about the past makes it possible for people to understand the situations they encounter in the present and justify the decisions they make (Rüsen, 2004). In Rüsen’s words, “the sense-creating procedures of historical consciousness are necessary for moral values” (2004, p. 68). Similarly, although earlier conceptualizations of historical thinking did not include an ethical dimension, for the scholars representing the Canadian Historical Thinking Project, the past tragedies and injustices make the ethical stance unavoidable (P. Seixas & Morton, 2013). Building on Rüsen’s work, they position it as one of the six historical concepts that chart historical thinking. The central question of “how can history help us live in the present” is further elaborated through related questions such as: “How should we judge historical actors?”; “What are the implications for us, today, of the horrors and heroisms of the past?”; “How can we use the study of the past to inform judgments and actions on controversial issues in the present?”

(2013, p. 6). The meaning in the study of history, according to this view, comes precisely from this dimension. Helping students develop the ethical dimension of historical thinking, “we help them learn to judge the past fairly” (P. Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 170). The students will further be able to see the connections between past, present, and future and “become more capable of negotiating the ethical dilemmas they will encounter in the course of their lives” (P. Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 171). Maybe most important for societies with a recent violent history is that the ethical dimension includes “coming to terms with the past crimes and injustices whose legacies – either benefits or deficits – we live with today” and the “memorial obligations that we in the present owe to victims and heroes” (P. Seixas, 2017, p. 67).

Responding morally is also included in the socio-cultural approach to history education as one of the four specific actions students are asked to do when learning history. Within this action, authors identify three purposes related to right and wrong: remembrance, condemnation, and admiration of the people and events of the past (Barton & Levstik, 2004). Such considerations have great importance for participatory democracy and how society members make decisions about the common good. Nevertheless, remembering is always dependent on what is selected from a great number of people and events that could be important. Research shows that for students, it is important to remember events that involve great suffering and death of many people – the events they see as unfair. However, in order for the development of democratic citizenship to be aided by students’ interest in fairness, teachers need to help them develop their ideas in a specific way. Namely, they need to “provide a chance for them to move beyond their pre-existing, common-sense ideas about what counts as fair and unfair and toward consideration of a broader and more inclusive conception of justice” (Barton & Levstik, 2004, p. 99). In addition, they need to provide them with experience in understanding “the intersection of historic injustices and contemporary concerns—particularly when their own concerns are at stake” (Barton & Levstik, 2004, p. 100). Authors conclude that “remembrance might

lead us [. . .] to begin discussing how we might avoid such tragedies today and in the future” (Barton & Levstik, 2004, p. 97).

These approaches show that history education can and should influence ethical judgments in the present and in the future. In societies with a recent violent past and an unstable political present, such as Serbian society, this “clear moral injunction” and “moral demands” of history gain additional relevance since the crimes and injustices of the past are that much closer, and their consequences are much more present in everyday life. In addition, the present context in societies in which these students learn about the past can often be a fragile one, marked by the complicated political processes that follow conflict resolution. In such context, history education is often burdened by telling the story of the triumph of ingroup and excluding or distorting exactly the episodes of suffering that could be an essential starting point for building these ethical stances towards the past injustices. Moreover, in such context, the tension between recognizing the misdeeds committed by the ingroup and developing critical thinking becomes even more strained. However, history education has a great potential to contribute to peacebuilding processes, especially the way they are understood in the recent literature.

History Education and Peacebuilding

During the last decades, it became evident that formal peace agreements are unstable, easily collapse, and can lead to cold peace (Bar-Tal, 2013). This started moving the attention of peacebuilding scholars away from conflict resolution to include the challenges societies face beyond signing peace treaties that end direct violence. This shift influenced the change in terminology used in the peacebuilding literature. While conflict resolution is an indispensable step in creating conditions for moving forward, more and more authors talk about conflict transformation. Following Galtung’s typology of violence (1996), the concept of conflict transformation:

puts emphasis not only on the end of direct violence but rather a constant orientation to positive peace and the end of structural (e.g. inequality, social exclusion and exploitation) and cultural forms of violence (e.g. perceived realistic and symbolic threats, prejudice, distrust). In other words, conflict transformation is concerned with transforming the systems, structures and relationships that give rise to violence and injustice (Psaltis et al., 2017, p. 2)

The objective of this constant orientation to positive peace is to achieve stable and lasting peace, which is defined as “mutual recognition and acceptance after the reconciliation process, whose supreme goal is the maintenance of peaceful relations characterized by full normalization with cooperation in all possible domains of collective life that provide secure and trustful coexistence” (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 370). While this might seem utopian, it is supposed to serve as an ideal that society should work towards. The overarching concept of peacebuilding marks the processes involved in getting there. The peacebuilding process represents all efforts to “realize lasting peaceful relations with the past rival within the framework of the culture of peace” (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 367). United Nations resolution on the culture of peace defines the culture of peace as consisting of:

values, attitudes and behaviours [. . .] that reject violence and endeavour to prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation and that guarantee the full exercise of all rights and the means to participate fully in the development process of their society (A/RES/52/13, 1997)

According to de Rivera, “culture” in the culture of peace is a process rather than a static concept, and he suggests it may be more accurate to use the term “building cultures of peacemaking” (2009). In his view, cultures are understood as systems – “a complex whole that include policies, economic and justice systems, relations with the environment, social inequalities, etc.” (2009, p. 4) so in terms of the goal, it is proposed to talk about building “peace systems”.

In addition to conflict transformation, the fact that the world saw much more conflicts “between ethnic or other identity groups within a single political unit” in the post-Cold War era (Kelman, 2008, p. 15) produced significant interest in the concept of reconciliation. Different authors emphasize different vital elements of this concept. For example, Morrow puts mutual trust between former rivals in the center of his definition of reconciliation (Morrow, 1999), while Kelman defines reconciliation in terms of identity with the critical element being “mutual acceptance of the other’s identity and humanity” (2008, p. 16). However, most authors agree that reconciliation involves much more than a cessation of violence and includes psychosocial transformation. It is a process that goes past the formal resolution of the conflict to include “changing the motivations, goals, beliefs, attitudes, and emotions of the great majority of the society members regarding the conflict, the nature of the relationship between the parties, and the parties themselves” (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004, p. 12). It is generally agreed that reconciliation is “formation or restoration of a genuine peaceful relationship between societies that have been involved in an intractable conflict” (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004, p. 14). In addition, it is characterized as a voluntary, deliberate, reciprocal, non-linear, long, and gradual process (Bar-Tal, 2013).

Contemporary understandings of reconciliation clearly put the emphasis on psychosocial processes that need to take place within and between former rival groups, and the considerable part of these psychosocial changes refer to the ways society members understand recent violent past. Quite a few authors see truth and truth-telling as the center of their understanding of reconciliation or one of the integral parts (Asmal et al., 1996; Kelman, 2008; Lederach, 1997; Long & Brecke, 2003). Truth-telling about the harm done by all parties is one of the main elements of the model proposed by Long and Brecke (2003), while truth, understood as an open expression of the past, is one of the four pillars of reconciliation for Lederach (1997). Teaching students

about all relevant events in the past is obviously the task history education has and should have. Furthermore, suppose it is to work towards the development of a temporal orientation that would help students understand current situations and make justified decisions about future action. In that case, it cannot conceal certain uncomfortable truths.

According to Kelman (2008), one of the conditions for reconciliation refers to “confronting history” which means coming to terms with the truth, reexamination of historical narratives and reevaluation of national myths. This is precisely what the enlightened goals of history education are aiming to do. By developing second-order concepts in history, students begin to understand how the historical narratives are constructed and thus become able to reexamine them. Developing various critical thinking skills also helps them evaluate myths, including national ones.

Further definitions of reconciliation deal more specifically with the fact that there are different, often competing interpretations of the same events after the conflict. Asmal defines reconciliation as “facing of unwelcome truths in order to harmonize incommensurable world views so that inevitable and continuing conflicts and differences stand at least within a single universe of comprehensibility” (1996, p. 46), and Kelman calls for “admitting the other’s truth into one’s own narrative” (2008, p. 29). This is precisely what developing second-order historical concepts makes possible. When students start developing second-order concepts, they will “begin to understand how several valid accounts can coexist without threatening the possibility of historical knowledge” (Lee, 2005, p. 70). Some understandings of reconciliation openly call for history and its ethical dimension. Reconciliation is said to require “inter-subjective agreements on historical truths and addressing the issue of historical responsibilities for the mass violations of human rights that have occurred in whatever forms” (Rouhana, 2008). Addressing historical responsibility is closely tied to the development of historical consciousness and a moral injunction that the past is making on

the present. History education can be a powerful tool in helping young people orient themselves temporally in an ethical way. However, many post-conflict societies suffer from being frozen in the conflict narratives and overcoming this includes assuming responsibility for past misdeeds and changing the way past rival groups are seen (Bar-Tal, 2013). Methods of reconciliation include, among others, writing a common or joint history (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004) that could serve as a “basis for rewriting history textbooks, which can affect the beliefs and attitudes of new generations” (2004, p. 31).

Thus, although differently understood, reconciliation almost always includes specific elements that could be aided in a significant way by history education, one that would work towards the development of historical thinking and historical consciousness. However, implementing these ideas proves to be a complex task since there are different ways for history education to realize its role in post-conflict societies.

History Education in Post-conflict Societies

History education is an essential element of the reconciliation process. Cole claims that “understandings of history are crucial to a society's ability to reckon with the past for the sake of a more peaceful future.” (2007b, p. 13). However, translating the theoretical concepts related to reconciliation to the practice of history teaching and determining the place history education should have in these processes is not an easy task. Cole points out several problems of history education in the context of reconciliation (2007b). One is the tension between two competing goals of history education: supporting patriotism and promoting critical thinking. Supporting patriotism has been a primary goal of history education since its early days. This practice started slowly changing only in the second part of the twentieth century to focus more on developing critical thinking (Bermúdez & Carretero, 2012; Carretero, 2011). Nevertheless, history education in many countries still serves its romantic goals while simultaneously developing critical thinking. This tension is profoundly amplified in post-conflict societies since the critical examination

of the recent violent past often stands in direct contradiction to building a positive image of one's group. Related to it is a problem of "clash between the needs of post-conflict or transitional societies and the accurate depiction of a negative past" (Cole, 2007b, p. 19). Due to the immense material and human cost of the conflict, societies are in a very fragile state immediately after conflict resolution. Furthermore, depending on various contextual characteristics of the conflict, the initial peace is frequently utterly fragile. For these reasons, there might be a need to balance other psychosocial needs of society with the need for an accurate depiction of the past. The final problem is that history education is only one element in this process, and it can be supported or hindered by many other sites of history learning such as family, museums, the media, etc. (Cole, 2007b). History education does indeed represent only one of the sources for young people in society to learn about the past, but this in itself does not need to represent a significant obstacle. The problem in post-conflict societies arises when the different versions of the past available outside history classrooms stand in stark opposition to what history as an academic discipline is providing to students through history education.

The problems related to the role of history education in post-conflict societies are addressed in various ways within different post-conflict societies depending on the context-specific factors. However, there is empirical evidence pointing to several dominant trends in how post-conflict societies across the globe tackle these tensions. Paulson's review of research on history education in post-conflict societies (Paulson, 2015) included 42 studies across 11 countries and identified three trends in modifying the nationalist approach to history education: 1) *National narrative* - history education continues to transmit the national narrative while "its pedagogy and inspiration expand to include more democratic teaching methods, a concern with social and economic history, and with the inclusion of marginalized histories" (Paulson, 2015, p. 13); 2) *Disciplinary approach* -the approach is grounded in the historical method and its goal is to equip students with the

toolbox of a historian; 3) *Globalized approach* – also characterized as “social-scientization”, this approach moves the emphasis from nation-state towards local, regional and global history while focusing more on contemporary history and society.

In addition, this review identifies three distinct approaches to the recent conflicts. Characteristic for Peru, Guatemala, and South Africa, *the exemplary memory approach* connects the recent conflict to the current reality using it as sort of a cautionary tale. Within this approach, conflict is presented “as an exceptional moment, an aberration overcome by the present” (2015, p. 21), and this kind of history education “does not engage substantively with the causes of conflict, with past injustices, or with the ways that both move to the present” (2015, p. 20). *A mythical unified past made official* is another approach and it describes the cases in which a strong official narrative based on “mythical ancient unity” (2015, p. 22) is created and relatively strictly prescribed by the government (Rwanda, Yemen). The main concerns with this approach are about how truthful these narratives are (what they exclude, oversimplify, etc.) and that they could limit the reconciliatory potential of history education (Paulson, 2015). Finally, the third approach in history education about recent conflict identified in this review is the *ethno-nationalist narratives and efforts to change them* (2015, p. 22). In this approach, characteristic for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, and Israel, the ethno-nationalist narratives are prevailing in history education even though there are various actors in the field (such as local and international NGO’s for example) working on different projects that should help change them (Paulson, 2015). Although history education in Serbia is not included in this review, based on the previous research findings and the activity of various NGOs, it would probably best be described by the last approach.

This review provides a sort of a bird-eye view of history education in various post-conflict societies and a valuable starting point. However, to explore students’ understanding of violence in post-conflict contexts, we

need to take a closer look at the literature on different elements of history education in post-conflict societies. Following what Barton and Levstik propose, to understand students' historical thinking, it is not enough to explore curricular objectives and course requirements, but we need to look into what textbooks contain and how teachers go about teaching (2004). In the following sections, I will discuss separately the literature on history teachers, history textbooks, and (history) students in post-conflict societies.

History Textbooks in post-conflict societies

History textbooks are “educational resources related to the historical discipline, produced with the aim of supporting or – depending on the country – of determining the contents of formal history teaching and learning, mostly in schools” (Grever & van der Vlies, 2017, p. 288). While understood as only one part of the educational system, they are nevertheless considered to be “important, privileged and authorized agents of meaning, knowing” (Lässig, 2013). Furthermore, history textbooks are said to “take on a discourse and adopt a usually univocal voice, assuming the truth of knowledge in their name while reproducing a supposed knowledge horizon” (Carretero, 2011, p. 34). The role of history textbooks in societies with a recent history of political violence is vital as they can be of great help to conflict transformation processes, but they can also hinder them. History textbooks have a significant role in identity formation because the way social identities are represented in history textbook narratives can foster a culture of peace, which in turn “prevents identity-based conflicts and reduces discrimination and violence overall” (Korostelina, 2013, p. 19). However, research shows that in many countries, “textbooks remain potent vehicles to render a particular, ‘official’, version of the nation’s past to young people” and that “in history textbooks students often encounter narratives that dominant groups choose to select and remember as representations of the national story” (Foster, 2011, p. 12). The implementation of mechanisms that can promote a culture of peace hence “depends on the willingness of particular governments to introduce changes in their history education” (Korostelina, 2013, p. 181).

There are several routes these changes can take in post-conflict societies, and they all come with their own challenges and opportunities. After the end of the violent conflict, societies are faced with the need to revise history textbooks to address these. While history textbook revision processes often represent “a battlefield for opposing narratives and interests”, they simultaneously “offer largely unexploited opportunities as potential sites and means of conflict transformation” as they can “provide a context for positive intergroup engagement and dialogue which could facilitate reconciliation” (Bentrovato, 2017, p. 38). Longer-term textbook revisions can create a single common narrative or adopt a multi-narrative and multi-perspective approach (2017). The single-narrative approach entails creating a harmonized narrative that should be accepted by all sides in the recent conflict and is expected to create unity and social cohesion where it is missing (Bentrovato, 2017). While coming together and agreeing on a single narrative has its clear advantages, this approach runs a danger of creating a new hegemonic narrative, obscuring differences between various groups on account of unity and “reproduce existing power relations by endorsing the beliefs, values, norms, and identity of dominant groups” (2017, p. 50). Finally, creating a single narrative is in direct contradiction to the dominant trends in understanding the goals of history education as it does not provide sufficient emphasis on student inquiry of various sources and often conflicting narratives. The multi-narrative path introduces exactly this into history classroom. Following the notion that students should, through history education, start developing the skills of historians (P. Seixas & Morton, 2013), this approach requires compiling various sources and making them available for students in order to inspire discussion and understanding of the complexity of different interpretations and narrations of the past. Many joint-history projects around the world (Korostelina & Lässig, 2013) attest to the popularity of this approach; however, it does not come without challenges. These stem from the possibility of continuous questioning causing uncertainty in already fragile contexts and the readiness of teachers and students to take on this task (Bentrovato, 2017).

We know about textbook representations of the past in various societies mainly from the critical tradition of international textbook research, which includes various contributions of independent researchers that focus on certain specific aspects of the textbooks they analyze (Foster, 2011). At the heart of critical research is the understanding that textbooks are selectively presenting accounts of the past and textbook authors decide what to include or exclude from the textbooks. As a result, “textbooks have long been a major site for the construction and contestation of national, regional, and international identities and are, understandably, the constant subject of critical study by international scholars” (2011, p. 13). However, in post-conflict societies, these constructions and contestations of different identities are dismally tied to the representations of recent violent conflicts. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the ways violence, especially recent violence, is represented in history textbook narratives. The analysis of the ways recent violence is represented in Serbian history textbooks is one of the main objectives of the current thesis.

Research in different contexts demonstrates how existing representations of violence in historical narratives limit students’ ability to understand events in history and connect past and present critically. In a discussion of U.S. history textbooks, Loewen (1996) claims that “history textbooks almost never use the present to illuminate the past” (1996, p. 8) and that students “exit history textbooks without having developed the ability to think coherently about social life” (1996, p. 9). For example, in regards to representations of slavery in U.S. history textbooks, the author notes that slavery “comes across as an unfortunate but minor blemish, compared to the overall story line of our textbooks” (1996, p. 132). This is done, according to Loewen, by decoupling the stories of racism and slavery in the textbook narratives as well as containing slavery in the progress narrative. Most importantly, the author concludes that “when textbooks make racism invisible in American history, they obstruct our already poor ability to see it in the present” (1996, p. 157). Representations of violence against African Americans in U.S. history

textbooks, in particular, are still portrayed as the “acts of autonomous immoral agents rather than systematic acts that had direct and long-term effects” (Brown & Brown, 2010, p. 56). According to the authors, these kinds of representations do not help students understand the background of such events in terms of more extensive socioeconomic and political infrastructure, institutional support, or systemic problems but rather as isolated individual acts of violence. Discussing the treatment of the Vietnam War in history textbooks in the U.S., Loewen (2000) claims that “most authors also leave out most of the acts, words, and images of the growing movement that opposed the Vietnam War.” (2000, p. 156) thus robbing students of the “tools to understand their own society today” (2000, p. 171). An analysis of Argentinian history textbooks (Friedrich, 2014) shows how narratives about the military dictatorship in that country present history as the progress of democracy, create a binary opposition between dictatorship and democracy and exclude from the narrative a large part of the population that supported the dictatorship. According to the author, these types of narratives do not foster students’ critical understanding of historical processes and are not helping strengthen democracy.

Recently, Bermúdez (2019) proposed a theoretical/analytical model that draws on Galtung’s (1996) understanding of violence and conflicts and offers a more comprehensive tool for analyzing the representations of violence in historical narratives. One of Galtung’s (1990, 1996) basic claims is that violence is a purposeful strategy used to achieve the desired goals in situations of conflict. However, historical narratives tend to normalize violence by representing it as an expected and natural part of the conflict (Bermúdez, 2019). Furthermore, Galtung differentiates between three types of violence: direct, structural, and cultural violence (1996). According to this typology, the main difference between direct and structural violence is the existence of the sender of violence. While direct violence has a sender, structural violence “comes from the social structure itself - between humans, between sets of humans (societies), between sets of societies (alliances,

regions) in the world” (1996, p. 2). Behind both of these is the third form of violence – cultural violence, with its primary function to “legitimize direct and structural violence” (1996, p. 2). According to Bermudez (2019), representations of violence in history textbooks often serve as mechanisms of cultural violence. In addition, representing violence in such a way impedes students’ critical understanding of such violent practices. The theoretical/analytical model proposed by Bermudez (2019) was applied in the analysis of history textbook in Colombia (Padilla & Bermúdez, 2016), Spain (Bermúdez & Argumero, 2018), and U.S. (Bermúdez & Stoskopf, 2020; Stoskopf & Bermúdez, 2017). This research demonstrated that textbook narratives contain many references to the violent episodes in all these cases but tend to present violence as a natural and expected feature of intergroup conflict. They often fail to shine a critical light on the use of violence and even make it invisible. The framework represents one of the main theoretical/analytical points of departure in the current thesis.

History Teachers in post-conflict societies

Most contemporary research considers the textbooks to be only one part of the “complex medial space” (Lässig, 2013). Textbooks and other educational resources could be employed in many different ways by teachers (sometimes not at all). What teachers actually do in the classroom needs to be considered to understand the ways history education influences young peoples’ understanding of history. Authors mainly agree that the way history is taught is as important as the content of history. According to Kello and Wegner, “the style of teaching not only conveys a message about epistemology . . . but also constitutes the history narrative in terms of its content” (2017, p. 205), and according to Goldberg, how teachers help students engage with the information is as important as the information itself (2017). The role of history teachers in teaching about recent violence in post–conflict societies is of great importance. History teachers, especially when it comes to controversial issues, “are positioned as mediators between different fields or perspectives [. . .]

or between different group-bound social memories” (Kello & Wagner, 2017, p. 203). Teachers *action space* is affected by the social and political context, education structures, and past-related scholarship, whereas “teachers’ positions towards the different kinds of contexts include their own positions on the social, mnemonic and political landscape, as well as their conceptions of those fields’ influences on their students and classrooms” (2017, p. 204). Many factors influence the way teachers approach controversial topics. Some of them are common to teaching any other topic, such as their knowledge of the topic, pedagogical skills, curricular expectations, etc. However, others stem from specific challenges such as their own position and experiences during the conflict, support from the community, the political climate in society vis-à-vis the recent conflict, etc.

There have been different ways to conceptualize approaches teachers take in these situations. Davies (2005) proposes ten “modes” of teaching about war and conflict. This typology provides a great starting point because it includes approaches in civic education that go beyond the history classroom but can nevertheless be extended to this subject and the practice of history teachers. The ten approaches are: *hate curriculum* where “the enemy is described in graphic and denigrating terms and one’s own nation is portrayed in heroic ones” (2005, p. 22), *defense curriculum* where “conflict is seen as a constant threat, and children are taught how to defend themselves physically against the enemy” (2005, p. 22), *stereotypes and allegiances* where “war and conflict are taught not specifically as hating or fearing an enemy, but as the result of a stereotypical culture which permeates everyone in that country” (2005, p. 23), *war as a routine* where there is an “emphasis on understanding the causes of war, and there may be an ‘objective’ coverage of ‘both sides’” (2005, p. 24). However, in these cases, it may be “presented as a series of ‘inevitable’ events, with little distinction between them” (2005, p. 24). The following modes are *omission form discussion* where “conflict is played down or not mentioned in curriculum, particularly in conflict or post-conflict states, in order not to ‘inflamm’ or cement attitudes” (2005, p. 24), *tolerance* where “the

emphasis is on tolerating the ‘other’, often within a multicultural framework, in order to promote harmony” (2005, p. 25), *personal conflict resolution* where “there is acknowledgement of conflict, and that young people will need skills and strategies to deal with these in their own lives” (2005, p. 26), *education for humanitarian law* which refers to a “specific project which explores ethical issues related to human behavior in times of armed conflict and war, with modules focusing on the role of citizenship and the need to demilitarize youth and reverse a culture of violence” (2005, p. 26), *dialogue and encounter* where “there is the recognition of ‘difference’, but also the attempt to bring people together of traditionally opposing sides to share perceptions, experiences and emotions” (2005, p. 26), and finally *action to challenge violence* which “involves not just conflict resolution but political learning about issues . . . and encouragement to take an active part in campaigns” (2005, p. 27). This combination of curricular, teaching, and school approaches demonstrate the wide variety of ways that teachers deal with past violence in the classroom. History teachers, especially when faced with unclear curricular expectations regarding teaching about the recent conflict, probably use a combination of these approaches based on various factors dictated by the specific post-conflict context.

Focusing specifically on history teachers in conflict and post-conflict societies some authors focus more on the emotions and the effect they have in the classroom when teaching sensitive topics. One recent contribution to this strand of literature deals with teaching about the Genocide in Rwanda. Understanding emotions as “subjective and dynamic, as both individual and social or relational, as context-specific and socially constructed” (Bentrovato and Buhigiro, 2020, p. 126) and the classroom as “complex emotional arenas” (Chen 2016, p. 68) “marked by multifarious and multidirectional emotional demands requiring management” (Bentrovato and Buhigiro, 2020, p. 126) the authors are looking into teachers’ “personal experiences and practices in navigating the emotionally charged nature of delivering the teaching about the genocide expected of them by the Ministry of Education” (Bentrovato and

Buhigiro, 2020, p. 125). The authors found that in the everyday discourses and practices of Rwandan teachers' emotions are very salient and they have a "determining role in shaping, and often constraining, teaching and learning experiences" (Bentrovato and Buhigiro, 2020, p. 125). Most importantly, teachers' pedagogical decisions and choices were shown to be affected by the emotions through the work of emotion management. The findings show several routes teachers take within the "strategy of deliberate selectiveness and limited disclosure" (Bentrovato and Buhigiro, 2020, p. 130).

Other ways to understand how teachers approach controversial topics in post-conflict societies are predominantly cognitive and value oriented. Kello and Wagner suggest that styles of history teaching can be conceptualized as communication styles of the *Social Representations Theory: diffusion, propagation, and propaganda* (Moscovici, 2008). *Traditional history teaching* where teachers "represent the past in a way that is determined by some kind of ideology" is understood as propaganda. In contrast, *critical history teaching* that provides "complementary historical interpretations, weighing their evidence and accepting them as possible alternatives" is seen as diffusion (Kello & Wagner, 2017, p. 206). However, the three communication/teaching styles are seen slightly differently than those in Moscovici's theory. The authors see *diffusion* (critical history teaching) and *propaganda* (traditional history teaching) as two ends of the continuum with *propagating* style covers the space in between and is represented by various teaching approaches (2017). This distinction "focuses on the teachers' intentions, motivations and the limits set by their action space" (2017, p. 207).

The connections between what curriculum prescribes and what teachers do are emphasized by Goldberg (2017), who proposes three teaching styles based on what he refers to as the *curricular pendulum* in Israel. According to this typology, *the official approach* is focused on "a single clear narrative, with a conventional textbook-oriented teaching, and a stress on in-group (Israeli) righteousness"; the *empathetic dual-narrative approach* focuses on

“perspective-taking and nonjudgmental acknowledgment of both sides’ narratives”; and the *educational reform for higher-order thinking approach* focuses on “critical disciplinary thinking and engagement in historical controversy evaluating and synthesizing conflicting historical accounts of both sides” (2017, p. 280). The author concludes that the official approach could be harmful to intergroup relations while the other two approaches seem promising in this regard.

It seems that these models use different starting points to propose a similar type of continuum, running from traditional history teaching on one end to modern history teaching on the other. Traditional history teaching generally involves a single-narrative approach, a lack of alternative sources, basing history lessons on some sort of ideology, and transmitting facts to students. Contrary to this, modern history teaching is characterized by adopting a multi-perspective approach, including different sources, and promoting critical thinking. The fundamental question that remains, which simultaneously represents the second objective of the current thesis, is to what extent do history teachers in post-conflict societies feel ready or willing to address the controversy and what factors support or hinder that work?

One theoretical model focuses explicitly on the willingness of teachers to tackle controversial topics and proposes factors that make teachers act in a certain way when it comes to teaching about the recent violence. Based on semi-structured interviews with history teachers in Northern Ireland, Kitson and McCully (2005) propose the *continuum of risk-taking* consisting of three roles teachers can take regarding difficult topics: *avoider*, *container*, and *risk-taker*. Although the authors represent it on a linear continuum, the differences between the roles are actually based on two interrelated yet distinct dimensions: a) how teachers approach controversial topics, and b) what are teachers’ attitudes on the social utility of history. The first refers to what teachers do when teaching about controversial topics. *Avoiders* avoid teaching topics that might be controversial, and *risk-takers* seize opportunities

to tackle them. *Containers* might teach parallel topics that are not too close to home or teach controversial topics but not encourage students to engage in the root of the controversy. The second dimension is teachers' attitudes towards the social utility of history. In this sense, avoiders feel that the purpose of teaching history is simply making students better at history. At the same time, risk-takers are said to embrace the social utility of history fully. Furthermore, concerning the factors that might influence the role teachers will adopt, the authors assume that they come from the characteristics of the teacher (class, religion, academic ability, cultural background, ethnicity), the school context (urban/rural, multicultural/monocultural, comprehensive/selective, high/low attaining), and the official and unofficial curricula (what are teachers required to teach by law, what are teachers likely to teach in terms of recourses and training, etc.). This model was more recently applied to the analysis of the ways Spanish history teachers approach the teaching of the Civil war and dictatorship in this country, showing that teachers' motivation and readiness to engage as well as the type of engagement with this controversial topic depended on their personal and family experiences, political positioning, local contexts and their attitudes about the social utility of history (Magill, 2016).

However, understanding what teachers do in the classrooms across post-conflict societies only tells us one part of the story since it leaves out the key actor in the educational process – the student.

(History) Students in post-conflict societies

What do we know about how “ordinary” young people understand history? This question inspired prolific research in the field of history education. Researchers representing the British historical thinking tradition, following the focus of this approach on the second-order concepts, propose models of the development of these concepts. The starting point is the fact that children arrive at the history classes with some everyday ideas about these second-order concepts (Lee, 2005). While these understandings are of great use to

children in everyday life, there is a need to expand them and understand the, often counterintuitive, meaning they have within the study of history. Lee discusses the concepts of *time*, *change*, *empathy*, *cause*, *evidence*, and *accounts* (2005; 2003). For the concept of *time*, for example, this means that “conventional time markers and their normal mathematical relationships” need to be complemented by other ideas such as historical periods and themes (2005, p. 42). Concerning *causes*, students at a younger age are found to understand them as discreet events. In contrast, the development of the second-order concept of *cause* moves towards understanding “explanations as dealing with relationships among a network of events, processes, and states of affairs” (2005, p. 52). The concept of *evidence* seems central to the development of the understanding of what exactly historians do. Rather than understanding history as a copy of the past that can be true, false, or biased to a certain degree, students need to develop the understanding that historians construct a story about the past based on the evidence. According to Lee, history becomes impossible without this understanding of the concept of evidence (2005). Similarly, Seixas identifies three elements of students' historical thinking that history education should develop (1993). According to this view, students need to be able to recognize historically significant events, understand historical epistemology and a “triad of interrelated concerns” of agency, empathy, and moral judgment (1993, p. 303). However, these models do not pay much attention to the context in which history is being taught and learned. Research based on social representations theory and sociocultural approach to history education does precisely this.

Extensive research on social representations of the history of non-expert participants of all ages identified several biases that affect learning history and perceptions of history. Building on the social representations theory by Moscovici (1976, 1985), social representations of history are said to “embrace shared images and knowledge about the past, elaborated, transmitted and conserved by a group through interpersonal and institutional communication” (Páez et al., 2017, p. 492). There are two underlying processes necessary to

understand social representations in general and help understand social representations of history: *anchoring* and *objectification* (Páez et al., 2017). Anchoring happens when the meaning is ascribed to new information “by means of integrating it into existing worldviews, so it can be interpreted and compared to the ‘already known’” and objectification when abstract processes are turned into something concrete (for example, when historical events are reified in historical figures or images) (2017, p. 492). Various biases that stem from these underlying processes influence non-expert’s historical reasoning, including young people’s historical reasoning, thus affecting the process of history learning. Understanding *historical significance* is affected by the westernization of history, recency bias, normative bias, the centrality of war, etc. Understanding *historical continuity* and change is affected by positivistic bias, linear–progressive view, etc. Finally, *historical consciousness* and perspective-taking are affected by religious perspective, romantic perspective, technology and science-oriented perspective. These biases, established in abundant social representations of history research, can have psychological consequences, particularly for intergroup relations (Páez et al., 2017, p. 504).

Research within the sociocultural perspective also emphasizes the importance of context and provides an additional layer crucial for grasping students’ understanding of history. Empirical evidence shows that “school, community, and personal factors interact in complicated ways to produce a variety of ideas about the nature and purpose of the subject” (Barton, 2008, p. 248). Students’ “prior narrative understandings” interact in various ways with the new and often conflicting information (2008, p. 247). It can lead to discounting, transformation, ignoring, reinterpreting, distorting, or selectively adopting the narratives encountered within formal history education. Students’ ideas about the importance of history are “tied to national, ethnic, or religious identities” and depending on the position of their group within the society (majority/minority), they can find school history to provide a sense of identity to a various degree (2008, p. 248).

National identification is crucial in the discussions of students' understanding of history in post-conflict societies. Based on empirical work involving students of various ages in different countries, Carretero and colleagues provide a deeper exploration of what national identification entails within history education. They propose six dimensions of national master narratives: 1) Exclusion-inclusion as logical operation contributing to establish the historical subject; 2) Identification as both cognitive and affective anchor; 3) Mythical and heroic character; 4) Simplification of historical events around the main motive of search of freedom; 5) Ontological and essentialist conception of the nation and its nationals; 6) National narratives offer fundamental moral examples and directions (Bermúdez & Carretero, 2012; Carretero, 2011, 2017b; Carretero & van Alphen, 2014; Lopez et al., 2015). The first dimension deals with establishing the nation and its nationals as the main historical actor. A nation is affirmed as "preexisting and everlasting historical subjects" (Carretero, 2017b, p. 359). This means that the nation is a subject even in the narratives about the periods before it actually existed. Historical continuity is thus assumed between these periods and the national group today. It is proposed that students should be supported to deconstruct the subject and understand "past and present historical subjects as heterogeneous entities instead of homogenous, essentialist and idealized ones" (2017b, p. 360). The second dimension deals with how history learners, and other members of the society, identify with the nation as described in the first dimension. Reaffirming the continuity between the national group as it is today and the distant past in which nation politically did not exist, students identify with the "everlasting historical subject" (2017b, p. 359). The specific conception of national territory is the third dimension. In line with narratively positioning the nation as everlasting and preexisting, the belongingness of territory is also everlasting and preexisting instead of understanding "the correspondence of nations and their territories to be the result of different political, social and historical complex processes along several decades or even centuries" (2017b, p. 361). The fourth dimension

emerges from the findings that show that student narratives often include mythical and heroic figures. This tendency, reminiscent of the previously discussed “great men” perspective in understanding history, includes historical figures that most often contribute with their greatness to in-group and are considered anti-heroes by the other groups. The next dimension of the national master narratives has to do with the understanding of the concept of nation itself and “implies the conceptual view of the nation and its nationals as naturalized political entities, having a kind of ‘eternal’ and ‘ontological’ nature” (2017b, p. 365). The last dimension is of particular importance here because it deals with the moral standpoint that legitimizes the nation's activities. The research showed that “students tend to view national master narratives as moral vectors maintained by the values of nation” (2017b, p. 364). Often, establishing what is good and bad falls down the lines between in-group and out-group where “we” are doing good things and “they” are doing bad things. In addition to this, loyalty to the nation is an integral part of the national master narratives (2017b, p. 364). In post-conflict societies, this kind of national identification can represent a great challenge for conflict transformation, reconciliation, and building sustainable peace.

Things become more complex when we look at a specific type of conflicts – intractable ones. In these cases, the socio-cultural context in which history is taught and learned is marked by various specific features derived from the period of violent conflict, the outcome of the conflict, the current relationships between former opponents, and the political climate and political stability of the society. One of the most influential theories about the sociopsychological foundations of intractable conflicts is one proposed by Daniel Bar-Tal and it provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the changes within societies when they are involved in intractable conflicts.

Intractable conflicts are *protracted, violent, perceived as unresolvable, they demand great investment* (Kriesberg, 1998), they are *total, central, and perceived as zero-sum in nature* (Bar-Tal, 1998). They are protracted, long-

lasting conflicts. For a conflict to be viewed as protracted, it needs to last at least one generation or 25 years (Bar-Tal, 2013). The longevity of the conflict is a critical factor for the development of the culture of conflict. One of the most crucial characteristics separating other conflicts from the intractable ones is that intractable conflicts are violent. Violence is defined as “acts carried out with the intention of harming a rival” (2013, p. 39), and it includes physical and psychological violence, violent acts committed by individuals as well as groups. It does not need to be continuous or appear at the beginning of the conflict but can fluctuate in intensity and frequency. Even when violence seems informal and is committed by individuals, “the social system provides the rationale and the justification for the violence” (2013, p. 42). When a conflict is perceived as unresolvable by society members, we can talk about intractable conflict. This feature points to the beliefs held by both sides that the conflict cannot be resolved peacefully but also that they are not able to win. This element usually appears later in the conflict, and it is purely psychological – the belief that the conflict is unresolvable does not have to be grounded in reality. Intractable conflicts demand great investment. The societies involved in the conflict make the material as well as the psychological investments to maintain the conflict. While the material ones are easily visible, the psychological ones refer to coping with the situation of conflict. Another vital element for categorizing a conflict as intractable is the conflict being total. It refers to the competing goals of two or more groups. The more contradictory and more critical the goals, the more total they are perceived to be. With intractable conflicts, the goals are often one or more of the following: power, territory, resources, etc. Intractable conflicts have a central place in the minds of the group members. All actors in a society are concerned with the conflict, it is present in all spheres of the life of a society, and it becomes part of everyday life. If the conflict is perceived as zero-sum in addition to other elements, we are dealing with an intractable conflict. This means that the sides in a conflict are unwilling to compromise the goals they want to achieve. For them, each side succeeding is considered the loss of the

other side. Psychologically, the societies close themselves, which blocks them from considering the opponent as the human being (Bar-Tal, 2007, 2013).

During intractable conflicts, the society members find themselves affected by an array of negative experiences such as stress, hardship, uncertainty, losses, suffering, etc. Together with the negative experiences, there are specific challenges members of society are facing. The most critical challenges are coping with stress, the satisfaction of different needs, and withstanding the enemy. To face these challenges, they develop a shared socio-psychological repertoire consisting of societal beliefs, attitudes, and emotions. These are institutionalized through the channels of communication and influence the development of the socio-psychological infrastructure. The socio-psychological infrastructure consists of three elements: collective memory, the ethos of conflict, and collective emotional orientation. When institutionally disseminated, together, they create a culture of conflict that influences how new information and experiences are being processed. In this perspective, societal ethos is understood as “configuration of shared central societal beliefs that provide a dominant orientation to a society” (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 174). It gives “meaning and predictability to societal life and provides a coherent view of societal institutions – their structure, history, visions, concerns, and courses of action” (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 174). Societal beliefs are “cognitions shared by society members on topic and issues that are of special concern for the particular society” (Bar-Tal, 1998). For societal beliefs to form the ethos, there are certain conditions they must meet. Societal beliefs need to be well known among the members of society, present in public through various channels of communication, the basis for leaders and institutions in decision-making processes, present in cultural products of the society, transmitted to younger generations, and finally they need to be showing in rituals and ceremonies of the society (Bar-Tal, 2013). This theory represents another theoretical/analytical pillar of the current thesis.

CONTEXT



“War, of course, was not inevitable nor did it come as some kind of natural phenomena, an expression of alleged “ancient hatred” self-reproducing in a fatalistic vicious circle with no way out.

Nothing in history has to happen, and the same goes for war. War is always there, it is a constant possibility, the memory of war never fades away. But if it will become a reality, depends on those who make decisions as well as the context in which decisions are being made”

(Jović, 2017, p. 171)

Yugoslav Breakup

There is prolific literature about the causes and the violence that happened during the Yugoslav breakup. This chapter intends not to cover all of them but to introduce critical events related to, and disputes about, the Yugoslav breakup. With an awareness that every such selection tells a specific story, the current one was made solely to contextualize the empirical work presented in this thesis¹.

The country that broke up during the last decade of the twentieth century was the second country by this name. Right after World War I, On December 1st, 1918, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca) was founded and later, in 1929, was renamed Yugoslavia by King Alexander I. The "second Yugoslavia", Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPR Yugoslavia, FNRJ) was established on November 29th, 1945, following the first elections after World War II held on November 11th, 1945. On January 31st, 1946, the constitution of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia established six Socialist Republics: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia and two Socialist Autonomous Provinces within Serbia: Kosovo and Vojvodina. Josip Broz Tito was appointed lifelong president of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia.

The ethnic composition and geographical distribution of ethnic groups in Yugoslavia before the breakup provides a better understanding of the relationship between different ethnic groups within the country. There were two types of ethnic groups making up Yugoslavia. Majority ethnic groups (Narodi) were Croats, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Muslims², Serbs, and Slovene, while all other ethnic groups, such as Albanians, Hungarians, and other minority ethnic groups, were regarded as nationalities (Narodnosti).

1 For a more comprehensive overview of the Yugoslav breakup see Catherine Baker's *The Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s* (2015) and for the list of relevant events see [Appendix G - Timeline of Yugoslav breakup](#)

2 According to an amendment to the 1971. constitution of SFRY 'Muslim' with a capital M refers to a ethnic group while 'muslim' to the religious affiliation.

According to the 1981 census³, the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia counted almost 22,5 million (22.424.711) citizens (Savezni Zavod za Statistiku, 1985). Ethnic Serbs represented the majority, followed by ethnic Croats, Muslims, Slovenians, Albanians, Macedonians, and Montenegrin.

As we can see in Table 1, three large ethnic groups were living in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Muslims 39,52%, Serbs 32,02%, and Croats 18,38%). Montenegro had a majority Montenegrin population (68,54%) with a relatively significant Muslim minority (13,36%). The majority of the citizens of Croatia self-declared as ethnic Croats (75,08%), while there was also a relatively sizeable Serbian minority (11,55%). In the Republic of Macedonia, a majority of ethnic Macedonians (67,01%) and a significant Albanian minority (19,76%), while Slovenia was the most ethnically homogeneous with over 90% ethnic Slovenians. The situation in Serbia was a bit more complex because of the autonomous regions (AR). Ethnic Serbs were the majority (85,44%) in Serbia proper (without ARs), a little less so in AR of Vojvodina where Serbs made up for more than 50% and in AR of Kosovo ethnic Albanians were a majority (77,42%), and Serbs were the second largest group (13,22%) (Savezni Zavod za Statistiku, 1985) (Figure 1 shows the geographical distribution of the ethnic groups in SFR Yugoslavia in 1981).

The specific ethnic composition of Yugoslavia and the geographical distribution of different ethnic groups give rise to the argument that one of the critical aspects to consider is the fear of becoming a minority in your own country (Jović, 2001b, 2017). This argument contends that exchanging self-management narrative of “no majority, no minority” for the representative democracy narrative with a clear majority and minority would have made “all ethnic groups (including the Serbs) what they really were - a minority” (Jović, 2001b, p. 1), and it is maybe best summed up in the assumed internal logic of all parties “why would I be a minority in your bigger state, when I can be a majority in a smaller one that is my own” (Jović, 2017, p. 129).

³ 1981 census data is presented since the last Yugoslav census (1991) was held only a few months before Slovenia proclaimed independence and was largely boycotted by Kosovo Albanians (Bieber, 2015)

Table 1. Ethnic composition of SFRJ Republics According to 1981 Census - % within the Republic or Autonomous Region; Adapted from Statistical Yearly of Yugoslavia 1985

Declared Nationality	SFRJ	BiH	Montenegro	Croatia	Macedonia	Slovenia	Srbija			
							Total	Serbia proper	Kosovo	Vojvodina
Montenegrin	2,58%	0,34%	68,54%	0,21%	0,21%	0,17%	1,58%	1,35%	1,71%	2,13%
Croat	19,75%	18,38%	1,18%	75,08%	0,17%	2,94%	1,60%	0,55%	0,55%	5,37%
Macedonian	5,97%	0,02%	0,15%	0,12%	67,01%	0,17%	0,53%	0,51%	0,07%	0,93%
Muslim	8,92%	39,52%	13,36%	0,52%	2,07%	0,71%	2,31%	2,66%	3,70%	0,24%
Slovenian	7,82%	0,07%	0,10%	0,55%	0,03%	90,52%	0,02%	0,14%	0,02%	0,17%
Serbian	36,30%	32,02%	3,32%	11,55%	2,33%	2,23%	66,38%	85,44%	13,22%	54,42%
Albanian	7,72%	0,11%	6,46%	0,13%	19,76%	0,10%	13,99%	1,27%	77,42%	0,19%
Others	4,50%	0,43%	0,47%	1,64%	7,40%	0,84%	8,11%	2,44%	3,03%	27,93%
Did not Declare Nationality										
Did not declare	0,21%	0,44%	0,05%	0,37%	0,03%	0,16%	0,08%	0,08%	0,01%	0,17%
Yugoslav	5,44%	7,91%	5,35%	8,24%	0,75%	1,39%	4,75%	4,78%	0,17%	8,22%
Regional belonging	0,11%	0,09%	0,27%	0,19%	0,05%	0,21%	0,07%	0,09%	0,02%	0,08%
Unknown	0,68%	0,64%	0,74%	1,41%	0,20%	0,56%	0,46%	0,68%	0,09%	0,16%

However, this does not mean that the wars can be viewed only as ethnic wars. Baker argues that they were also "wars of opportunism and control" (Baker, 2015, p. 129) and calls for more micro-dynamic research and a study of organized crime that would shine a light on the economic dynamics and material motives of various actors.

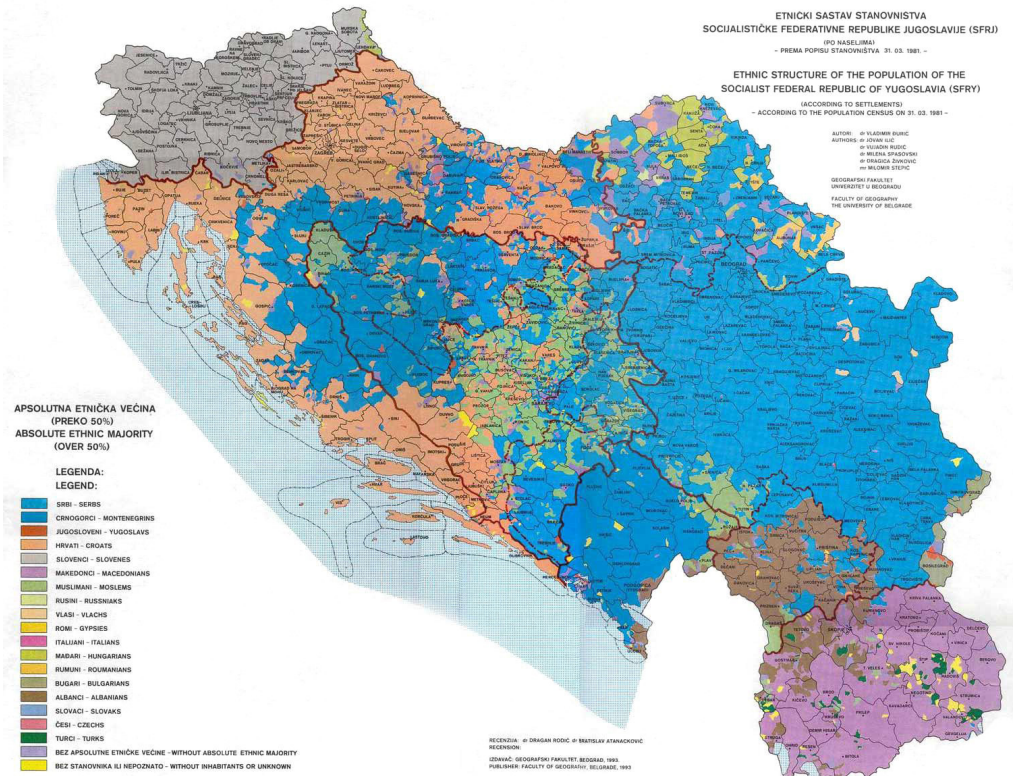
The war of Yugoslav succession started in 1990/91 however, some social and political turning points from the last 20 years of SFR Yugoslavia provide contextualization of what followed. One such is the constitutional reform in 1974 that introduced a more decentralized organization of the federation and granted the Autonomous Provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina the status like that of the republics. This change signaled a move towards a less centralized federal system and created a situation in which the political control of the autonomous regions became more important. Besides this, the 1974 constitution established Josip Broz Tito the president without limitations and established that a rotating presidency⁴ would take over leading the country when he died.

Josip Broz Tito died on May 4th, 1980. During his life, he was identified with the state itself, held all the power, and according to some, he represented the only effectively functioning institution. This made the period after his death one of uncertainty and disintegration. In the spring of 1981, a protest in Kosovo, starting as a spontaneous student protest, gained nationalist elements demanding that Albanians in Kosovo get the same status as other peoples of Yugoslavia and that Kosovo gains more independence. The protest was met with a violent suppression with the Presidency of Yugoslavia instituting the state of emergency in Priština and Kosovska Mitrovica for one week in April (Allcock et al., 1998). These events marked the initiation of the deteriorating relationship between ethnic Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo

⁴ Rotating presidency refers to the practice where a new chairman of the presidency of SFRJ is elected every year with each member (one representing each republic and autonomous region) gets one year in the position.

that continued throughout the 1980s, during which around 30.000 Serbs and Montenegrins left Kosovo.

Figure 1. Ethnic Map of SFR Yugoslavia (1981)



The Eighth Session of the League of Communists of Serbia, held in 1987, is another turning point. During this session, Slobodan Milošević⁵ gained more support for the nationalist politics he represented. This led to the revocation of the AP Vojvodina and AP Kosovo autonomy in 1989. From that moment

⁵ Slobodan Milošević was the President of Socialist Republic of Serbia (within SFRY from 1989-1992 and within Federal Republic of Yugoslavia 1992-1997). He also served as the President of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 1997-2000, when he resigned due to the country-wide demonstration on October 5th. He was charged by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in relation to the wars in former Yugoslavia, however he died in custody before the trial ended.

on, the Belgrade regime revoked many of the cultural rights Albanians had before (broadcasting in Albanian, newspapers in Albanian, changes to the school system). Around 15.000 Albanians were let go from the public-sector jobs leading to the creation of the parallel Albanian institutions in Kosovo (Mertus, 1999; Pula, 2004).

Another critical event took place in January 1990 when the last, 14th Extraordinary Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia was held. After two days of the congress, where the Slovene delegation pleaded for the confederate state, they walked out. Milošević, the head of the Serbian delegation, wanted to continue with the congress, which propelled the Croatian delegation to walk out as well. During 1990 the first multiparty elections were held in all republics, and on December 23rd Slovenia also held an independence referendum. In Croatia, the independence referendum was held on May 19th, 1991, and Slovenia and Croatia declared independence in June 1991. The independence referendum was held in Macedonia on September 8th and this republic declared independence on September 25th the same year.

The economic situation represents another critical factor often seen as part of the cause of the breakup. In the 1970es and 1980es, there was a financial crisis in Yugoslavia. However, it did not affect all the regions equally. There were significant economic inequalities between republics and autonomous regions. North-western republics were doing much better than South-eastern ones. The average per-capita income in 1981 in Slovenia was almost two times the Yugoslav average, while in Kosovo, the average was one-third of it (Mertus, 1999). Similarly, unemployment in Kosovo was nearly 40%, while in Slovenia, there were practically no unemployed citizens (Woodward, 1995). This kind of uneven economic development created tensions in several respects. On the one hand, in the economically better off republics, Slovenia in the first place, independence was seen as a means of becoming financially independent and not having to finance the underdeveloped regions. On the

other hand, in the economically less developed regions, this situation created dissatisfaction.

The course of the wars

With more than 130.000 victims and an even larger number of refugees and displaced persons, the violent breakup of Yugoslavia represents the biggest armed conflict in Europe since the end of World War II (*Map of Victims*, n.d.). The violent conflict that marked the breakup of Yugoslavia, specifically the years from 1991 to 1995, is sometimes referred to as the War of Yugoslav succession (Hoare, 2010, p. 111). There are three distinct conflicts within the War of Yugoslav succession: the war in Slovenia, the war in Croatia, and the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Yugoslav breakup indicates longer and broader process, including the War in Kosovo (1998–99).

The first in the series of wars was the so-called Ten-day war in Slovenia, where Yugoslav People's Army (Serbian: Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija, JNA) confronted Slovenian Territorial Defense from June 27th – July 7th, 1991. During this war, 44 JNA soldiers, eight Slovenian soldiers, and 15 civilians were killed (*The United States & Central Intelligence Agency*, 2002).

The War in Croatia lasted from 1991 until 1995. It mainly took place in and around the Serb majority areas within Croatia: Kninska Krajina, Western Slavonia, Eastern Slavonia, Baranja, and Western Sirmia. These regions were proclaimed Serbian Autonomous Regions (SAO) during 1990/91 (SAO Krajina in October 1990, SAO Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmia in June 1991, SAO Western Slavonia in August 1991). Serbian Autonomous Region of Krajina proclaimed itself a Republic of Serbian Krajina on December 19th, 1991, and in February 1992, the other two regions were added to its territory. On one side of the conflict were the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), paramilitary groups, and Croatian Serbs, and on the other side were the Croatian Army (HV), the National Guard (ZNG), and the paramilitary organization Croatian Defense Forces (HOS), all formed during 1991. The first major confrontation

between the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) and the Croatian police happened on May 2nd in Borovo Selo when 12 Croatian policemen were killed. The first phase of the violent conflict in Croatia, marked by extreme violence against civilians on both sides with an intention to force them from villages and small towns, lasted from July 1991 until January 2nd, 1992, when the Sarajevo Ceasefire between Croatia and JNA was signed. The fighting was going on in three front lines: Eastern Slavonia, Krajina, and Dalmatia. During this time, around 84.000 Croats were displaced from the territories controlled by Serbs. This period's major event was the Battle of Vukovar (August 25th - November 18th, 1991), a multiethnic town in the far East of Croatia, close to the Serbian border. Months before it started, more than 100 Serbs were abducted and tortured there. The Serbian forces encircled the city for 87 days before it fell on November 18th. The battle resulted in the death of 1.100 soldiers on the Serbian side and around 900 on the Croatian side. Approximately 1.100 civilians died, and more than 500 went missing.

The war in Bosnia had some similarities to the war in Croatia regarding the Serbian minority proclaiming autonomy and its own state in the areas with the ethnic majority. However, in the case of Bosnia, the Croatian minority did the same. The Croatian Community of Bosnian Posavina was proclaimed on November 12th and the Croatian Republic of Herceg-Bosna on November 18th, 1991. The two joined in October 1992. Serbs in Bosnia declared the sovereign Republic of Srpska (RS) on January 9th, 1992. The referendum on the independence of Bosnia and Hercegovina from SFRJ was held on March 1st leading to the declaration of independence on April 6th. The Bosnian Serb community boycotted the referendum. The war in Bosnia was marked by extreme violence against civilians. One of the major turning points was the Washington agreement between the Croatian Defense Council (HVO, the Republic of Herceg-Bosna military organization) and the Military of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ARBiH), ending the conflict between Croatian and Muslim sides. During the war in Bosnia, Sarajevo was held under siege by JNA and later by VRS from April 5th, 1992, until February 29th, 1996, making it the

longest siege in the modern history of warfare. The single most violent act was the Srebrenica genocide that happened in July 1995, when more than 8000 Muslim men and boys were killed by the Military of the Republic of Srpska.

Around the same time, the war in Croatia was getting its epilogue when the Croatian Army launched two military operations “Flash” (Bljesak) in May 1995 and “Storm” (Oluja) in August 1995. During the latter operation that ended the war in Croatia, the Croatian Army overtook RSK territory forcing around 200.000 Serbs to flee and killing 500-700 Serbs who remained (Ramet, 2006; Subotic, 2016). War in Bosnia was ended November 21st the same year when the political leaders of Bosnian Muslims, Croatia, and Serbia reached the Dayton peace agreement that was officially signed in Paris on December 14th, 1995.

Dayton agreement left the issues of Kosovo Albanians unaddressed, which led to the formation of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) that started fighting Serbian security forces (Baker, 2015, p. 77). The war in Kosovo began in 1998, and during that year, Serbian forces killed thousands of Albanians, and 230,000 were forced from their homes (Ker-Lindsay, 2009). In this war, the central turning point was the Račak massacre of 40 Albanians on January 15th, 1999, the reports of which were the reason NATO threatened air strikes if the peaceful solution was not found. The Rambouillet talks started on February 6th, 1999, and the proposal included "demobilizing the KLA, stationing a NATO force in Kosovo, and reaching a political settlement for Kosovo within three years" (Baker, 2015, p. 81). On March 24th, NATO opened the air campaign that targeted "not only military installations and convoys but also, more controversially, industrial facilities with dual civilian/military uses" (Baker, 2015, p. 81). The campaign ended on June 9th with Milošević agreeing to the UN administration and NATO ground forces in Kosovo. By the end of the year, tens of thousands of Serbs left Kosovo after KLA reprisal. According to Humanitarian Law Center, between January 1st, 1998, and December 31st, 2000, 10,317 civilians lost their lives or went missing. Of this

number, 8,676 were Albanians, 1,196 Serbs, 445 Roma and others. In addition, 3,218 members of armed formations, including 2,131 members of the KLA, 1,084 members of Serbian forces, and three members of KFOR, were killed (*Kosovo Memory Book*, n.d.).

Debates About the Causes of the Yugoslav Breakup

Moving away from looking at individual factors, Jović (2001a) proposes an integrative view of the various factors influencing the breakup. He presents seven groups of arguments primarily used in the literature to describe different stances of authors who dealt with the topic: (1) *the economic argument* claiming that the economic crisis and the unequal regional development caused the breakup; (2) *the 'ancient hatred' argument* claiming that the conflict begun and went on solely as an ethnic conflict; (3) *the 'nationalism' argument* claiming that nationalism and the hatred that came with nationalism were the only option once communism was defeated; (4) *the cultural argument* focusing on the insurmountable cultural differences within SFR Yugoslavia, (5) *the 'international politics' argument* forwarding the events in international politics and the actions of foreign countries as the main cause for the breakup, (6) *the 'role of personality' argument* concentrating on the main political figures such as Josip Broz Tito and Slobodan Milošević, and (7) *the 'fall of empires' argument* that focuses on the idea that Yugoslavia developed as a multiethnic empire on the model of Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empire. According to him, all of these, except the "ancient hatred" argument, are relevant arguments in the discussion about the reasons for the breakup of Yugoslavia. However, individually they are not enough to explain the entire story. What is proposed is an integrated approach in which different arguments should be considered together and in interaction with others. This kind of integrative approach can lead to better understanding and prevent mistakes of simplification made in the past.

Additional debates in the field help understand the limitations of what has been researched thus far. Ramet, for example, gives an overview of

the disputes among the scholars writing about the Yugoslav breakup. One is about whether we should talk about four individual wars (in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo) or two separate wars, the War of Yugoslav succession 1991-1995 (Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the War in Kosovo 1998-1999. The second is trying to identify whether the war was a civil war or the international war (Ramet, 2005) and is closely connected to the question of Serbia's involvement in the war. Although there was no fighting on the Serbian soil before the Kosovo war (1998-1999), there is evidence of Serbia's involvement in the conflicts between 1991 and 1995. Discussing the nature of the conflict, Ramet (2005) points out several key arguments showing the involvement of Serbia: President of the Republic of Serbia, Slobodan Milošević was paying salaries to the Serbian members of both the Croatian Serb Army and the Bosnian Serb Army and had a key role in decision-making processes in many war-related matters, the Serbs fighting in both Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina had an objective to unite with Serbia any territories they take control over, and Serbian economy was suffering because different resources needed in the front were diverted from the Serbian market (2005). Another dispute about the relative responsibility of the actors involved is closely connected to the causes of the war. Depending on what they see as the "beginning of the end" different authors necessarily attribute the blame for what happened: 1974 (Constitutional changes), 1987 (Eight Session of the League of Communists in Serbia), 1990 (14th Extraordinary Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia) and even 1945 (Formation of SFR Yugoslavia after the WW2). When discussing the relative culpability, there are several 'usual suspects': policymakers on Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian Muslim (Bosniak) side for making the moves they made, "the Slovenes" for leaving when their help was needed, Western states for their interference and Austria and the Vatican for their support of the Croatian statehood (Ramet, 2017).

It has been almost 20 years since the peace agreement was signed between NATO and SR Yugoslavia that ended the Kosovo War, and all violent conflicts

connected to the Yugoslav breakup were finished; however, there are still some unresolved issues. Serbia has a regular diplomatic relationship with Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina however does not recognize Kosovo's independence proclaimed in 2008. The negotiation process mediated by the European Union representatives set to normalize the relationship between Belgrade and Priština is in a deadlock as neither side is willing to compromise.

History Education in Serbia

In Serbia, education consists of several levels: pre-primary (up to age seven with the length of a minimum of one year), primary education (age seven to 15 with the length of eight years), secondary education (age 15 to 17-18 with the length of 3-4 years) and higher education. There is a graduation exam after compulsory, primary education and most of the students graduating from elementary school continue their education and enroll in high school. History has a small place in this exam. The graduation exam after the primary level consists of three separate exams: Mother tongue, Mathematics, and Combined test. The latter tests the knowledge from the fields of Biology, Physics, Chemistry, History, and Geography. The next transition, after secondary education, involves a graduation exam and an entrance exam for enrolling into the university programs. At the moment, the graduation exam has very little importance for the continuation of the education process, but this is supposed to change with the reform announced for 2022. This reform should put more weight on the graduation exam and terminate most of the enrollment exams to the universities (except for some of the specialized skills). The content areas planned to be tested with this new exam are still unknown, but it is safe to assume history will be a part of it.

Primary education is compulsory and split into the lower and upper levels (4 years each). In the first four years, one class has one teacher teaching most of the subjects (except for the English language, which is, in most cases, taught by another teacher specialized in this content). During these four

years, there is no history as a separate subject (number of history lessons per level of education in Table 2).

Table 2. History lessons in the Serbian educational system

School level	History lessons
Elementary – lower grades	part of the subjects 'World around us' and 'Nature and Society'
Elementary – higher grades	Grade five – one class per week
	Grades six, seven, and eight – two classes per week
High school	
Vocational education	Minimum two classes per week over one year
Gymnasium - General	Two classes per week over four years
Gymnasium – Humanities Orientation	Two history classes per week in the first two years and three history classes p/w in the other two years
Gymnasium – Natural Sciences Orientation	Two history classes per week in the first three years

Topics that could be loosely defined as historical are taught as part of the subjects named 'World around us' (srb. Svet oko nas) and 'Nature and Society' (srb. Priroda i društvo). The second 4-year part of primary education is organized differently. Each subject is taught by a different teacher who is specialized in the content. In this phase, history is taught as a separate subject in the following way: in grade five, there is one history class per week, and in grades six, seven, and eight, there are two history classes per week. In these 4 years, history is taught chronologically, with the first lesson in grade five dealing with prehistory and the last lessons in grade eight dealing with the last decade of the twentieth century. What is of interest to us, the violent breakup of Yugoslavia is taught at the end of grade eight as part of the topic 'Societal crisis and the defeat of Yugoslavia' (srb. Društvena kriza i poraz Jugoslavije).

There are two main types of secondary education: general high school/gymnasium and vocational high school. Although there are three types of gymnasium orientations with different extents of history lessons, all of them take four years to graduate from: General (srb. Opšti smer) with two history classes per week in all four years, Humanities orientation (srb. Društveno-jezički smer) with two history classes per week in the first two years and three history classes per week in the other two years, Natural Science orientation (srb. Prirodno-matematički smer) with two history classes per week in the first three years and no history classes in the fourth year. All the gymnasium programs, regardless of the extent of history lessons throughout high school level of education, include lessons on the breakup of Yugoslavia. The curricula are organized similarly to the elementary school curricula. They are chronological and cover the last decades of the twentieth century in the lessons close to the end of the last year of studying history. Vocational schools can take three or four years, depending on the specialization⁶. The minimum extent of history lessons across vocational schools is two classes per week over one school year, with a possibility of choosing history as an elective for one more year in some of the schools (pilot program tested in some of the schools). After examining a portion of the history curricula, it is safe to conclude that, even if the vocational education programs contain above-mentioned minimum of history lessons, these lessons include content on the breakup of Yugoslavia.

History Education Curricula

According to the curricula, all students in Serbia are taught about the breakup of Yugoslavia once during grade 8 of elementary school, which is compulsory. Since the enrollment rate in the secondary school was 84,4% in 2009/10 and increasing (Pešikan, 2016), most of the students learn about

⁶ Specialisations are as follows: Agriculture, food production and processing; Geodesy, construction and architecture; Economics, law and administration, finance, banking and insurance; Textile and leather processing, Natural sciences, Electronics and informatics; Traffic; Mechanical engineering and metalworking and Other – personal services

this period one more time before graduating from high school. The curricula for both elementary and high school lessons about the breakup of Yugoslavia suffer from similar problems. Both are chronological and cover the topic within one of the last lessons. They focus on the crimes committed against ethnic Serbs, deny the Srebrenica genocide, and reframe the violence in Kosovo. To a large extent, elementary school curricula are based on a document called "Key concepts for the end of elementary education – History" (Ferjančić et al., 2008), which, for example, connects the concept of Genocide only to World War 2. Furthermore, it discusses the demonstrations in Kosovo in 1981 under the larger concept of Terrorism. Day-to-day plans for history lessons of one of the publishers demonstrate similar challenges. The lesson on the breakup of Yugoslavia, under human rights violations, only discusses crimes committed against ethnic Serbs (*Metodički podaci o času br. 67, n.d.*), while the lesson covering the violent conflict in Kosovo does not refer to it as War in Kosovo but instead talks about the emigration of ethnic Serbs, NATO bombing without any mention of the crimes committed by Serbian police and military forces (*Metodički podaci o času br. 68, n.d.*).

Day-to-day plans for high school history lessons about the Yugoslav breakup include, among their educational goals, condemnation of aggression and territorial claims (*Podaci o času br. 60, n.d.*). However, they approach these topics like the elementary school curriculum. Under the discussion of ethnic cleansing, the plans only mention the crimes committed against ethnic Serbs (*Podaci o času br. 60, n.d.*). One of the activities of the teachers within the lessons about Kosovo even states that they should "condemn the still ongoing murders and executions of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija, who are allegedly protected by agreements which are not applied in practice" (*Podaci o času br. 61, n.d.*). With this kind of content, it seems that the condemnation of aggression would refer only to the others and not the Serbian side.

All of this stands in stark contrast to the commitment of the Serbian government, as part of the European Union accession process, to improve the

curricula "in a manner that allows the students/pupils to obtain a sufficient quantity of relevant information on the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, the war crimes committed during that time, and the norms of international humanitarian law" (Republic of Serbia, 2016, p. 30). This quote is part of the education segment of the outreach activities of the 2016 National Strategy for the Prosecution of War Crimes that refers to the period 2016–2020. However, the closer examination of the action points for implementing this element of the national strategy revealed that they do not relate to the teaching of the Yugoslav breakup but rather vague claims about anti-discrimination (Đureinović & Jovanović, 2020, p. 11).

History textbooks

In this section, the focus will be put on the history textbooks used in the final grades of primary and secondary levels of education dealing with the breakup of Yugoslavia. Up until the textbook law was passed in 2009 the state-sponsored publishing company, Agency for textbooks (ser. JP Zavod za udžbenike) had a monopoly on producing all the textbooks for primary and secondary education levels. With the new law, in 2010 came the first independent publishers' history textbooks for the final grades of primary and secondary levels of education. According to this law, teachers are free to choose the textbooks they will use, given that all the teachers teaching the same grade in one school agree on one textbook. Once selected, they cannot be changed for three years. The textbooks are financed by the parents, except for students coming from economically disadvantaged families. Since 2010 there was an increasing number of publishing houses entering the market, resulting in six different history textbooks for the final grade of elementary education level being licensed in the 2016/17–2018/19 catalog (*Udžbenici po školskim godinama*, n.d.). Two of them were published by the state-sponsored publishing house, and private publishing companies published the other four. The same catalog provides the list of textbooks licensed for use in high schools in 2016/17. There are six history textbooks, including the lessons on the

breakup of Yugoslavia. The state publishing house publishes four textbooks, and private publishing companies publish the other two.

Previous research on history textbooks in Serbia mainly focused on elementary history textbooks probably because elementary education is obligatory, and all students encounter the same topics at the same age whereas the high school curricula are more diverse and depend on the type of high school. This research shows several trends present in textbook writing, especially when it comes to the lessons about the Yugoslav breakup. In her analysis of the history textbooks in Serbia and Croatia from 1974-2017, Pavasovic-Trošt (2018) found five distinct periods in relation to nationhood narratives. According to this analysis, during the period 1974-early 1980s is marked by the strong “brotherhood and unity” narrative within which the ethnic associations are avoided. In the second period (early 1980s-1991) ethno-nationalist narratives are steadily introduced and the textbooks published towards the end of this period start discussing the “problems” of Yugoslavia. During the period 1991-1999, the textbooks, written and published during the ongoing conflict, are dominated by ethno-nationalist narratives. In addition, the narratives about WW2 in these textbooks are rewritten to support and justify the current events. The period between 2000-2010 is marked by the transition to democracy where textbooks include ethno-nationalism, but they do so in a more implicit way. Finally, in the textbooks produced after 2010, nationhood narratives are consolidated, and there is a noticeable "degree of backsliding into renewed historical revisionism in accordance with the current political climate" (2018, p. 5). In her analysis of the Serbian textbooks, Stojanović similarly recognizes two significant shifts inspired by the political changes in Serbia (2009b). The first one, in 1993, represented the change during the armed conflict and incorporated the topic related to the relationships between Serbia and other former Yugoslav republics. This change corresponds to the third period identified by Pavasovic-Trost. The second major political change that influenced the change in history textbook narratives, according to Stojanović is the "October 5th Revolution"

(Stojanović, 2009b) corresponding to the third period of Pavasovic-Trost analysis. What is important to note here is that these and other studies agree that the textbooks still contain narratives that depict one's own group as the victim, the other groups as the perpetrators, and the relationship with neighboring nations throughout history as dominantly marked by conflicts (Stojanović, 2004, 2009b). Additional overview of the previous research on history textbooks in Serbia and other Yugoslav successor states can also be found in Study 1 and Study 3 of this thesis.

Initial Teacher Training, Employment, and Professional Development

There are four full study programs for history teachers at the Department of History, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade; the Department of History, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad; the Department of History, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš; and the Department of History, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Priština, temporarily settled in Kosovska Mitrovica⁷. Overall, university programs are content-dominated, with a small proportion of didactics, psychology, or pedagogy (Table 3).

The bachelor's degree program provided at the University of Belgrade offers, as compulsory subjects, Psychology for teachers and Methodology of history teaching. Within the one-year master's degree program offered at the same University, there are two courses offered as electives: Methodology of history teaching 2 (6 ECTS) and Information-communication technology for history teaching (6 ECTS). The University of Niš offers a four-year bachelor's degree that includes three mandatory courses from this group: Teaching methods, Methodology of teaching 2, and Practical teaching methodology. Within this degree, students have to choose one to three electives per semester, out of which two blocks of electives consist solely out of courses

⁷ University of Priština, founded in 1969, went through several turmoils (1991/92, 1996) due to political crisis in Kosovo. This culminated during the Kosovo War (1998/99) after which the Serbian part of the University was moved to several cities in Serbia to be settled (temporarily) in Kosovska Mitrovica in 2001.

from this group (School pedagogy, Psychology, Pedagogy, and Moral education), making them de facto obligatory.

Table 3. Initial Teacher Training for History Teachers in Serbia

The proportion of the obligatory teaching didactics, teaching methods, psychology, or pedagogy courses within university programs for history teachers (in ECTS points)	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree
Department of History, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade	18/240	0
Department of History, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad	24/240	0
Department of History, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš	29/240	0
Department of History, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Priština, temporarily settled in Kosovska Mitrovica	21/240	0

Bachelor's program at the University of Priština temporarily settled in Kosovska Mitrovica includes four mandatory courses from this group: Mental health, Pedagogical psychology, Methodology of history teaching 1, and Practical teaching methodology. Some other elective courses cover these topics, but a student can graduate without choosing any of these. Finally, the University of Novi Sad offers a specialization for the history teachers that includes six mandatory courses from this group in the fourth year of studies together amounting to 24 ECTS points, and other elective courses covering these topics. However, similar to the University of Priština, temporarily settled in Kosovska Mitrovica, a student can graduate without choosing any of these. Once a university graduate obtains a teaching position, they become a trainee and are assigned a mentor within the school. After at least one year in the trainee role, future teachers are allowed to apply for the state exam, which, if passed, grants the license for working in a pre-primary, primary, and secondary level educational institution. To renew the license, the teacher is obliged to attend seminars and collect 100 points during five years.

Non-State Initiatives Related to History Teaching in Serbia

As is the case in many post-conflict societies, there are several local and international non-governmental organizations doing work related to the field of history education. These initiatives can be roughly divided into two groups. On the one hand, there are those focusing on producing and disseminating teaching resources, and on the other initiatives focusing on teacher cooperation and training. One of the most important initiatives related to the production of teaching resources is the Joint History Project run by the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeastern Europe (CDRSEE). Within this project, historians from Southeastern Europe were brought together to create teacher resource books dealing with the common history of Southeastern Europe during different historical periods. The most recent one published within this initiative dealt with a period between 1990 and 2008, including the violent breakup of Yugoslavia (Koulouri & Repe, 2016). This initiative, which focuses on multiperspective approach to history education, also included training teachers to use the resource books. Several resource books for history teachers were also developed in the last 20 years by the network of local history teacher associations with the help of the European Association of History Educators (EUROCLIO) (Dujković – Blagojević, 2008; *Ordinary People*, 2008). Within the various initiatives of EUROCLIO are also the regional summer schools providing teachers from the region a chance to exchange knowledge and cooperate (*Regional Summer Schools*, n.d.). Arguably the most essential part of the EUROCLIO initiatives in the region is the capacity building of local history teachers' associations. Association for Social History – EUROCLIO was founded in 2001 in Serbia and since then is actively participating in regional projects and conducting various activities related to history teaching in Serbia (*UDI - EUROCLIO*, n.d.). Together with the partners from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Montenegro, the association is currently a part of the regional project "Learning History that is not yet history". This project involves various activities intended to make it easier for history teachers from these countries to teach the topics related to the violent

breakup of Yugoslavia (*Learning History*, n.d.). Association for Social History – EUROCLIO is also involved in the state-organized teacher training system. It offers the only two seminars aimed at helping teachers teach the breakup of Yugoslavia. In addition to this, the Serbian association of history teachers also produced recommendations for responsible teaching about the wars in the 1990s (UDI - Euroclio, 2018). Overall, the resources developed within these initiatives bring the multiperspective approach to history teaching and try to shine a light on the events often disregarded by the national curricula and textbooks. However, the role of these organizations is limited to a relatively small number of teachers who choose to attend the trainings they provide. In addition, they are mostly not consulted when it comes to creating and developing new curricula and materials used in the classroom.

All of this points to a complex situation in the Serbian educational system concerning history education. Firstly, history education curricula often provide conflicting requests for history teachers. While the stated outcomes of history education often include condemnation of aggression and territorial advances, the content of curricula and specific lessons tells a different story. Secondly, future history teachers in Serbia receive largely content-based initial teacher training and one that suffers from a lack of training in teaching methods. Furthermore, government-provided in-service training opportunities for history teachers do not provide many chances to engage with the topic of Yugoslav breakup on a deeper level. Thirdly, as previous research demonstrates, history textbooks often provide one-sided and somewhat distorted versions of the events related to the Yugoslav breakup. Finally, the education landscape is marked by a significant presence of international and local non-governmental actors that work towards amending some of these problems. However, since this work is project-based, it frequently suffers from a lack of continuity, and the educational authorities rarely adopt these project activities.

OBJECTIVES



This thesis main objective is to **analyze history education in Serbia about the violent breakup of Yugoslavia and the potential role it plays in fostering young peoples' critical understanding of the violent breakup of Yugoslavia.** To achieve this, the thesis is guided by several general and particular objectives:

1. To analyze the official narratives, as contained in high school history textbooks, about the violent breakup of Yugoslavia.
 - a. Identify the ways in which Serbian high school history textbook narratives represent the violence committed during the Yugoslav breakup.
 - b. Determine the extent to which Serbian high school history textbook narratives normalize violence committed during the Yugoslav breakup.
 - c. Determine the extent to which these representations of violence transmit societal beliefs of an ethos of conflict.
 - d. Analyze challenges for the intercultural education framework when applied to post-conflict societies and in general.
2. To explore the ways history teachers in Serbia approach the breakup of Yugoslavia.
 - a. Identify the topics that history teachers in Serbia consider difficult to teach.
 - b. Identify which factors relate to the way teachers deal with such topics
 - c. Identify which events do history teachers in Serbia mainly cover in their history lessons.
3. To map the narratives young people in Serbia invoke when they try to make sense of the recent violent past.
 - a. Explore the ways in which young people in Serbia represent the violence committed during the Yugoslav breakup in their narratives.
 - b. Explore whether these representations of violence contain the themes of the collective memory of conflict.

4. Explore the possible interplay between Serbian high school history textbook narratives, Serbian history teachers' attitudes, and the narratives of young Serbians about the violent Yugoslav breakup.
5. Examine the relationship between narrative normalization of violence and the societal beliefs of an ethos of conflict in history textbook narratives and young peoples' narratives.

METHODS

To understand what role history education may play in fostering a critical understanding of recent violent conflict, this thesis approaches the problem from three different angles: the analysis of textbook narratives about the recent violent past, the analysis of history teachers' approach to these topics, and the analysis of young peoples' understandings of the recent violent past. The findings discussed in this thesis come from three empirical studies that correspond to these central aspects. The first study explores how violence is represented in the high school history textbook lessons on the breakup of Yugoslavia, the second study investigates how history teachers in Serbia approach this topic in their everyday practice, and the third study explores the narratives of young people in Serbia concerning the Yugoslav breakup. The decision to design and conduct the studies in this way and use these particular approaches comes from a careful examination of the issue at hand as well as lessons drawn from previous research. The main aspects of the methodological approach are discussed in this section and more details on methods are provided in each of the empirical chapters.

Study One

The study explored the content of high school history textbook lessons about the Yugoslav breakup in the light of the intercultural education initiatives proposed by international organizations such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe.

Study one employed a qualitative methodology to explore a) to what extent the themes of the ethos of conflict are present and b) to what extent violence is normalized in history textbook narratives. Discourse analysis was employed to identify and reveal how the content and structure of textbook narratives communicate discursive constructs of social messaging or social meaning (Billig, 1996; Gee, 2014). The analytic questions that guided the analysis were: what actors and events are included/excluded, in which ways are certain actors positioned against other ones, which relationships between events does the narrative establish or breaks, what is missing from the

narrative (Bermúdez, 2014; Haste & Bermúdez, 2017). The two theoretical/analytical frameworks informed the analysis: ten narrative keys for the normalization of violence (Bermúdez, 2019) and the themes of the ethos of conflict (Bar-Tal, 2013), which will be presented in detail later.

Table 4. Textbook included in the analysis in study one (S-state publisher; P-privately owned publishing house)

Author(s)	Publisher (State/Private)	Type of school (Grade)	Year published	Total pages	No. of pages
Ivan M. Becić	Zavod za Udžbenike (S)	Vocational (2nd)	2006	170	5
Đorđe Đurić, Momčilo Pavlović	Zavod za Udžbenike (S)	Gymnasium (3rd/4th)	2010	256	6
Milutin Perović, Novica Bojović	Zavod za Udžbenike (S)	Vocational (1st)	2013	219	5
Radoš Ljušić, Ljubodrag Dimić	Freska (P)	Gymnasium (3rd/4th)	2013	307	10
Mira Radojević	Klett (P)	Gymnasium/Vocational (3rd/4th)	2014	385	12
Dr Danilo Šarenac	Zavod za Udžbenike (S)	Vocational (1st)	2015	155	8

The decision to focus on high school textbooks, as opposed to elementary school textbooks, is motivated by three considerations. First is the understanding that higher education levels should provide more complex explanations since older students should be able to grasp more complex narratives and engage in a higher-level analysis within history education. Given that, high school history textbooks should provide more complex narratives as opposed to elementary history textbooks. The second consideration, informed by previous research, is that high school history textbooks were never examined in such a way while numerous history textbook analyses already focused on Serbia's elementary school history

textbooks (Pavasović Trošt, 2018; Stojanović, 2001, 2004, 2009b). Finally, it was important to analyze precisely high school history textbooks since these are the textbooks participants in study three recently had experience with. The study included all history textbooks approved for high school history teaching in the Republic of Serbia (Table 4). Since there are currently two versions of one textbook approved, the analysis excluded the older version of the same textbook.

Study Two

The second study was conducted within the activities of the project Education Partnership for Advocacy, Capacity-Building, and Transformation (EPACT, n.d.) that allowed for collecting data in Serbia and other Western Balkan countries. Survey design with a snowball convenient sampling strategy was employed in study two to reach as many history teachers as possible in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia. The survey was complemented by interviews with teachers and history education experts in all countries. The invitation to participate was disseminated through the communication channels of the European Association of History Teachers (EUROCLIO), the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeastern Europe (CDRSEE), and national teachers' associations. Overall, 793 teachers participated in the survey (country breakdown in Table 5).

Table 5. Country breakdown of the sample study two

Country	% Of the sample
Albania	8,32%
Kosovo	8,45%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	26,48%
Macedonia	14,25%
Montenegro	14,50%
Serbia	27,99%

The study employs a quantitative methodology to explore the ways teachers approach the topic of the Yugoslav breakup in their everyday practice. Based on the behavior descriptions in the original *risk-taking model* proposed by Kitson and McCully (2005), a Likert-type scale was created where teachers were asked to mark on a scale 1-5 the extent to which they engage in these behaviors in their everyday practice. In addition, teachers were asked about which topics they consider difficult in and outside the curriculum, events up until which year their teaching covers, as well as various demographic data.

Study Three

Study three focuses on first- and second-year university students, young people born after the violence ended and did not have a first-hand experience of the violent conflicts. Moreover, this group of participants has the most recent experience with history education on the highest possible level, excluding young people who decide to become professional historians. For study three, interviews and small group discussions were conducted with young people to provide appropriate space and time for participants to explain their views about this complex and often traumatic topic. In addition, this allowed for in-depth exploration of their understanding of history that could not be achieved through other methods (e.g., a survey). Interview participants were recruited in one of the first-year psychology courses at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, while the public call posted in various University of Belgrade students' Facebook groups was used to recruit participants for the small group discussions. The study included 31 participants (socio-demographic characteristics of the sample Table 6), out of which 17 participated in the interviews. The small group discussions included three interview participants and 14 new participants out of which 11 were students of various faculties based in Belgrade.

Table 6. Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample study three (*three students participated in both interviews and small group discussions)

		Interviews	Small-Group Discussions
Gender	Female	9	12
	Male	8	5
City	Belgrade	7	9
	Other	10	8
Type of high school	Gimnazija	13	11
	Other	4	6
Family experience of war	Yes	10	5
	No	5	9
	Unclear	2	3
Total		17	17*

Almost all students who participated in interviews and small group discussions were exceptionally motivated and highly cooperative. This was perhaps partly due to some of my perceived personal characteristics. First, my ingroup status and relative closeness in age made it easier for them to open and freely share their thoughts. Second, since all the participants were students, they were to a certain extent primed with the academic environment and aware of the importance of academic achievement. Most of them perceived me as someone who, being a Ph.D. student, achieved some degree of academic success. This was especially important for psychology students who could identify with my career path, knowing that I am a former student of the department they are currently affiliated with. When it comes to psychology students, their additional motivation to participate in the study stemmed from their professional curiosity about the research process. Third, almost all students expressed interest and a positive attitude towards the fact that I am studying outside of Serbia. Their comments made it clear they perceive Europe as a “better place” to study, one with more opportunities. This consequently meant they perceived me to be more successful relative to someone studying

at one of the universities in Serbia. All of this made it easier to create rapport with the participants. On the other hand, some obstacles are resulting from the content of our discussion. Even though I opened every interview and small group discussion underlining that I am not going to evaluate their knowledge of history, the questions seem to conjure a history oral exam type of situation for some participants. They would start providing excuses for their lack of knowledge, apologizing for not being of sufficient help, and being apparently uncomfortable. In these situations, I would remind them that I am interested in what they have to say, whether it includes formal historical knowledge such as specific dates, names, etc., or not. More often than not, this strategy was effective, and by the end of the interview, we would laugh about the fact they know much more than they think they know.

The study employed a qualitative methodology to explore to what extent the themes of the ethos of conflict are present and to what extent violence is normalized in student-produced narratives about the violent breakup of Yugoslavia. The theory-driven deductive analytical approach (Boyatzis, 1998) was based on the ten narrative keys for the normalization of violence (Bermúdez, 2019) and the themes of the ethos of conflict (Bar-Tal, 2013). Thematic analysis (Gibbs, 2018; Saldaña, 2016) was employed to identify the themes of the collective memory of conflict in students' narratives about the violent breakup of Yugoslavia, while a discourse analysis (Billig, 1996; Gee, 2014) was used to explore if and to what extent do participants narratively normalize violence. The analysis of the student-produced narratives followed the analysis conducted in study one to allow for drawing parallels and explore similarities and differences between these narrative features in textbook narratives and students' narratives.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK



Different studies on history textbooks, history teachers, and students focus on different aspects of the narratives and hence employ various analytic frameworks. Since this thesis focuses on how violence is represented in textbook narratives, how it is taught, and how that might or not foster a critical understanding, three different analytic frameworks that focus on these points were chosen. The analysis of textbook and students' narratives relies on the *themes of the ethos of conflict* (Bar-Tal, 2013) and *narrative keys for the normalization of violence* (Bermúdez, 2019), while the analysis of teachers' attitudes and everyday teaching practices is based on the *risk-taking continuum* (Kitson & McCully, 2005). The analytical framework of ten narrative keys for normalization of violence (Bermúdez, 2019) was chosen because it permits the identification of the specific narrative mechanisms used to (de)normalize violence in textbook and students' narratives. This analytical framework was complemented by the themes of the ethos of conflict that stems from the theory on sociopsychological foundations of intractable conflicts (Bar-Tal, 2013) and provides the conceptual tools to identify societal beliefs/themes of the ethos of conflict previously identified in many post-conflict societies. Although including societal beliefs concerning various aspects of intractable conflict, this theoretical framework also deals with violence to a large extent. Finally, since violent episodes often represent exactly the controversial history that is difficult to teach, the risk-taking continuum (Kitson & McCully, 2005) was chosen as a theoretical starting point for analyzing teachers' attitudes and behaviors. In the following sections, these analytical frameworks will be presented in detail.

Sociopsychological foundations of intractable conflicts

One of the most influential sociopsychological theoretical frameworks of intergroup conflict is one developed by Daniel Bar-Tal (2013). While mainly focusing on the Israel-Palestine conflict, the theory also provides an invaluable contribution to understanding sociopsychological processes within any society that was or currently is a part of an intractable conflict.

Table 7. Themes of Ethos of Conflict (Bar-Tal, 2013)

Justness of one's own goals	Justifications can come from different categories: historical, economic, national, theological, or cultural sphere. An additional part of this theme is negating and discrediting the goals of the other side.
Delegitimization of the opponent	Delegitimization denies the opponent's humanity and morality, providing a sort of permission to harm the delegitimized group. There are different categories: dehumanization, outcasting, trait characterization, political labels, and group comparison.
Victimization	Focus on the injustice, harm, evil, and atrocities of the opponent, while emphasizing one's own society as being just, moral, and human. It is connected to the theme of justness of one's own goals, positive collective self-image, and delegitimizing the opponent.
Positive collective self-image	Variety of positive traits, values, or skills that characterize the society but also the positive actions performed in the past and positive contributions to mankind and civilization.
Unity	The beliefs refer to staying united against the opponent since experiencing internal disagreements may weaken our position
Patriotism	The belief focuses on the particular bond between the society members and their collective that is essential for participation in the conflict. It is always found in ethnic groups and nations. Still, blind patriotism reflects unquestionable acceptance of group goals, means, ideology, policies, norms, practices, and formal leadership without tolerating criticism of possible failings or violations of moral codes.
Security	Security is an essential precondition of an ordered existence for an individual and for a collective and a societal system. The beliefs serve as an important rationale for the legitimization of policies, decisions, and actions in society.
Peace	The belief indicates that if a society can achieve the goals of the conflict, peace will be achieved. Almost always presented in general, utopian, vague terms, this belief presents society members as peace-loving and peace-seeking.

How conflicts start, what makes them escalate, and what is required for peacebuilding are the main questions tackled by the author. In this perspective, societal ethos is understood as a “configuration of shared central societal beliefs that provide a dominant orientation to a society” (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 174). Here, I will present eight themes of the ethos of conflict

that compose the analytical frame used to analyze history textbooks and participants' narratives.

There are eight themes or societal beliefs (Table 7) out of which three (the justness of one's own goals, opponent delegitimization, self-victimhood) "develop in times of intractable conflict and are the key themes that feed and maintain it" (2013, p. 176). Other five (positive self-image, security, patriotism, unity, and peace) that exist in every group but gain specific form in societies experiencing intractable conflicts (Bar-Tal, 2013).

The first theme, *societal beliefs about justness of one's own goals*, is crucial for explaining how the conflict started, why it is maintained and worthy of further sacrifice. The goals could be justified by calling upon "historical, economic, national, theological, cultural, or economic spheres" (2013, p. 177) and can also be based on sacred values for which it is "impossible to use rational tools in measuring their utility or substitution" (2013, p. 177). In addition, the justifications "are frequently embodied in national or ethnic ideology" (2013, p. 177).

Delegitimization of the opponent group is another core theme of the ethos of conflict. Delegitimization is defined as "the categorization of a group, or groups, into extremely negative social categories that exclude it, or them, from the sphere of human groups that act within the limits of acceptable norms and/or values, since these groups are viewed as violating basic human norms or values and therefore deserve maltreatment" (Bar-Tal & Hammack, 2012, p. 30). It can take several different forms: dehumanization, outcasting, trait characterization, political labels, and group comparison. The harshest form of delegitimization is dehumanization. It refers to excluding the members of the opponent group from the category of humans by using subhuman epithets, biological, zoological or medical terms, demonizing terms or mechanistic terms (Bar-Tal, 2013). Outcasting is "categorization of the rival into groups that are considered as violators of pivotal social norms," while trait characterization suggests "attributing traits that are considered

extremely negative and unacceptable in a given society" (i.e., terrorist) (2013, p. 181). Another form of delegitimization uses political labels that refer to ideologies, values, or political goals that are considered unacceptable (Fascist, Nazis, etc.). Finally, group comparison happens when the opponent group is described using the names of the traditionally hostile groups (i.e., Vandals) (Bar-Tal, 2013).

The next theme of the ethos of conflict, *victimization* or self-victimhood, is closely connected to the delegitimization of the opponent and justness of own goals. This self-perceived collective victimhood is defined as a shared mindset "that results from a perceived intentional harm with severe and lasting consequences inflicted on a collective by another group or groups", and it is specifically the harm seen as "undeserved, unjust, and immoral and one that the group was not able to prevent" (Bar-Tal et al., 2009, p. 238). The sense of victimhood doesn't have to be connected to the current or recent harm but is often related to the harm committed in the distant past. Furthermore, it reduces the possibility of taking the perspective of the opponent group (Bar-Tal, 2013).

Furthermore, there are other five themes of the ethos of conflict/societal beliefs that exist in every group but gain specific form in societies experiencing intractable conflicts.

Positive collective self-image refers to a "variety of positive traits, values or skills that characterize the society but also the positive actions performed in the past and positive contributions to mankind and civilization" (2013, p. 190). While it is present in every society, during the intractable conflicts, it becomes more important to engage in self-glorification to minimize the apparent immoral acts one's own group is committing and maintain favorable comparison to the opponent group. The societal belief of *unity* also exists in every society, but in societies involved in intractable conflicts, it become of great importance to maintain this unity against the opponent and minimize any internal disagreements. *Patriotism* is another societal belief that is found

in every society. However, during the intractable conflict, it can become blind patriotism that reflects unquestionable acceptance of group goals, means, ideology, policies, norms, practices, and formal leadership without tolerating criticism of possible failings or violations of moral codes (2013, p. 200). The situation of conflict also changes the societal belief of *security* into one that starts serving as an important rationale for the legitimization of policies, decisions, and actions in society. Finally, the societal belief of *peace* is different than one that we encounter in other societies. In societies involved in intractable conflict, peace is "almost always presented in general, utopian, vague terms, this belief presents society members as peace-loving and peace seeking" and it "indicates that if a society can achieve the goals of the conflict, the peace will be achieved" (2013, p. 200)

Normalization of Violence

The primary claim of the analytical/theoretical framework of (de)normalization of violence is that violence is not an expected or natural part, but a purposeful strategy used to achieve the desired goals in situations of conflict. Starting from this idea, the model elaborates ten narrative keys, narrative mechanisms/features (Table 8) that can be used to represent violence in one of these two ways – either normalize or denormalize it.

The model mainly was employed to analyze how history textbook narratives normalize violence; however, it simultaneously provides the ways to narratively (de)normalize violence.

The first narrative feature, the conflation of conflict and violence, points to the tendency of representing conflict and violence in history textbooks as one and the same thing. Although conflicts were and are an unavoidable part of group interactions, history textbooks often portray them as something inseparable from violence. They do not offer much explanation on when and how the conflict actually turned violent.

Table 8. Ten Narrative Keys for the Representation of Violence in Historical Narratives

1. Conflation of conflict and violence

Conflict and violence tend to be treated as inseparable, implying that where there is conflict, violence follows. Textbooks rarely explained why an episode turned violent, how violence evolved, or how violence defined the development of historical events.

2. Narrative framing that justifies violence

Narratives frame the meaning of specific events by locating them within a larger historical process. Most textbooks portrayed violence as an unfortunate but necessary means to valued social ends, such as attaining progress, gaining independence, or building a nation.

3. Biased representation of different narratives

History textbooks tended to convey dominant narratives that marginalized alternative viewpoints. Events or perspectives that went against the dominant storyline that justified or sanitized violence were reframed, distorted, or entirely suppressed.

4. Marginalization of the perspective and voice of the victims

Textbooks understated the extent and depth of violence leveled against certain sectors of the population (particularly if they belonged to an “out-group”). Thus, the accounts of a violent past came across as stories of violence with no hurt.

5. Disjointed discussion of the social structures that propel and sustain violence

Violent practices were often described in a vacuum, disconnected from the complex interaction of social structures that generate conflict and trigger the use of violence as a means to manage tensions and contradictions.

6. Removal of human Agency

Most textbooks portrayed violence as an inescapable response to conflict, disguising the fact that violence was often a socially constructed, deliberate, and instrumental practice. In this way, textbooks conveyed stories of hurt with no blame (decision-making, authorship, responsibility).

7. Silence about non-violent alternatives

Textbooks rarely represented the historical actors that expressed disagreement, actively opposed the use of violence, or advocated for non-violent strategies to deal with the conflicts at stake. This silence suggested that there were no alternatives to violence.

8. Simplistic account of the costs of violence

Beyond the number of human casualties, textbooks did not offer a comprehensive representation of the costs of violence, including, for instance, the psychosocial trauma, the destruction of cultural heritage, the loss of economic resources, or environmental devastation.

9. Omission of the benefits of violence

Textbooks provided virtually no discussion of what is gained with the use of violence, who gains from it, and who pays for it. This silence concealed the social interests and dynamics that mobilize the recourse to violence.

10. Disconnected Past

Most textbook accounts did not make connections between past and present, between societal processes and individual experiences, or between “academic” knowledge of the past and collective memory. In this way, they cast a shadow over the purpose of historical inquiry.

Narrative framing that justifies violence is the second narrative key that deals with how violent episodes are narratively framed in history textbooks as part of larger historical processes defining their meaning. Violence, like other episodes, does not exist in the narrative independently and is always situated within the narrative in a certain way. More often than not, it is framed as inevitable or justifiable by means of other valued societal ends such as liberation or nation building. The third narrative key, biased representation of different narratives, refers to history textbook narratives' tendency to present one dominant narrative, as described by the previous two narrative keys, and not include alternative viewpoints. Whether these alternative viewpoints critically examine the violence or belong to other groups, they are rarely found in history textbooks. Furthermore, history textbook narratives often marginalize voices and perspectives of victims by understating the extent and

depth of violence, avoiding presenting the human suffering that it caused, thus conveying stories of violence with no hurt. Removal of human agency refers to the perpetrators of violence and shows how narratives disguise the fact that violence is often a socially constructed, deliberate, and instrumental practice. By doing so, the narratives tell the story of hurt with no blame.

The following narrative key, disjointed discussion of the social structures that propel and sustain violence similarly shows how history textbook narratives often obscure the complex interaction of social structures that generate conflict and trigger the use of violence (Bermúdez, 2019). Textbooks also rarely discuss the non-violent alternatives that existed in the time of conflict. By omitting to talk about opposition to violence, narratives further strengthen the impression that violence had no alternative. Another narrative keys deal with the costs and benefits of violence. Textbooks often simplistically represent the cost and omit the benefits of violence. Somewhat similarly to the way textbook narratives marginalize the voices and perspectives of victims, when discussing the costs of violence, they often don't go further than showing human casualties. This approach ignores other costs of violence that include, for instance, psychosocial trauma, the destruction of cultural heritage, the loss of economic resources, or environmental devastation. When it comes to the benefits of violence, textbook narratives often completely omit what was gained by employing violence. Like removing human Agency when discussing violence, narratives do not discuss who gains from it and who pays for it. In this way, narratives hide social interests and dynamics that mobilize the recourse to violence. Finally, the narratives found in history textbooks often present disconnected past. That is to say, they fail to make valuable connections between violent episodes in the past and the impact they have in the present. In addition, they often fail to make connections between societal processes and individual experiences, or between "academic" knowledge of the past and collective memory, thus casting a shadow over the purpose of historical inquiry (Bermúdez, 2019).

Risk-taking continuum

The analytical model used to explore teachers' approaches to controversial topics in their everyday teaching is the risk-taking model proposed by Kitson and McCully (2005). This model assumes a continuum made up of three roles teachers can take in relation to teaching controversial topics (Table 9).

Table 9. Risk-taking continuum (Kitson & McCully, 2005)

Avoider	Container	Risk-Taker
Avoids teaching topics that might be controversial	Controversial issues are taught, but contained through the historical process	Fully embraces the social utility of history teaching
The purpose of teaching history is to make pupils better at history	Pupils not encouraged to engage in the root of the controversy	Consciously links past and present
Does not agree that history teachers have a wider contribution to make	Might teach parallel topics that are not too close to home	Seizes opportunities to tackle controversial issues
		Not afraid to push the boundaries

Each of the roles on the continuum is described in terms of behaviors teachers engage in and attitudes they hold regarding the social utility of history teaching. On one end of the continuum, a teacher marked as avoider thus avoids topics that might be controversial and believes that history teaching does not have a wider contribution to make, that is, holds that the purpose of history teaching is only for students to gain more knowledge of history. On the other end of the continuum is the risk-taker. This teacher fully embraces the social utility of history teaching, links past and present in a purposeful way, takes opportunities to engage with controversial topics, and is not afraid to push the boundaries. Between these two roles, there is a container role. This teacher does not avoid teaching controversial issues but

does not encourage pupils to engage in the roots of the controversy. More often than not, this teacher will teach controversial topics by using examples parallel but not too close to home.

Following the objectives outlined above and taking the analytical/theoretical frameworks presented here as a starting point, three studies were conducted covering three main aspects of history teaching in Serbia. Next three sections report on said studies, each of them published during the course of the doctoral training.

STUDY 1

“Da nema stvarnosti, kako bi se o njoj duboko i tačno pisalo”
[If there was no reality, how deeply and accurately would it be written about]

Borislav Pečić

INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN POST-CONFLICT SOCIETIES: HISTORICAL NARRATIVES OF THE BREAK-UP OF YUGOSLAVIA IN SERBIAN HIGH SCHOOL HISTORY TEXTBOOKS⁸

Regulations in the area of education in Serbia, as an EU candidate country, are projected to swiftly align with the ideology of interculturalism as prescribed by the international organizations (i.e., UNESCO and Council of Europe). For Serbian society, as for other societies burdened with recent violence, history education is one of the key societal practices that can help alleviate the challenges resulting from violent conflicts. In order to create transformations that will guide history education aimed at improving intergroup relations, certain questions need to be addressed. What are the challenges faced by intercultural education framework in post-conflict societies? Consequently, what are the limitations of the intercultural education framework in general? Discourse analysis presented in this chapter is aimed at examining the extent to which high-school history textbook narratives normalize or interrogate violence (Bermúdez, 2016) and sustain or challenge societal beliefs of an ethos of conflict (Bar-Tal, 2013). Conclusions point to the need for intercultural education framework to engage with all of the specificities of post-conflict societies in order to be a useful guideline for the furtherance of history education.

8 Published as: Jovanovic, R. (2020). Intercultural Education in Post-Conflict Societies: Historical Narratives of the Break-up of Yugoslavia in Serbian High School History Textbooks in Pica-Smith, C., Veloria, C. N., Contini, R. M. (Ed.) Intercultural Education: Critical Perspectives, Pedagogical Challenges, and Promising Practices, Nova Science Publishers, Inc., New York

STUDY 2

*Where everybody lies about everything of importance,
he truth-teller, whether he knows it or not, has begun to act;
he, too, has engaged himself in political business, for,
in the unlikely event that he survives,
he has made a start toward changing the world*

- Hannah Arendt

CONTROVERSY IN THE CLASSROOM: HOW HISTORY TEACHERS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS APPROACH DIFFICULT TOPICS?¹⁰

In the context of legacies of mass violence and political oppression during the recent past in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia), history teaching is seen as an important factor in building sustainable peace and democracy. Caught between various national and international policy actors, history teaching has been subject to frequently overlapping and inconsistent reforms. Despite prolific research on history education in the Western Balkans teachers' experiences of history education and its transformation have largely remained unexamined. This paper explores history teachers' perceptions of and approaches to the topics they find difficult to teach. The paper draws on data gathered through an online survey that yielded 793 responses from history teachers and 14 regional history education expert interviews. The results show which topics teachers consider difficult to teach in six Western Balkan countries, and how certain individual characteristics (e.g. religiousness and level of education) and school characteristics (e.g. urban or rural and a monocultural or multicultural environment) link to the roles teachers assume when teaching controversial topics.

Keywords: History education; Western Balkans; Difficult history; Difficult knowledge

¹⁰ Published as: Jovanović, R. & Marić, D. (2020) Controversy in the classroom: how history teachers in the Western Balkans approach difficult topics?, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 52:5, 636–653, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2020.1780326>

STUDY 3

For these are all our children; We will all profit with or pay for what they become.

- James Baldwin

THE NEXT GENERATION: NATIONALISM AND VIOLENCE IN THE NARRATIVES OF SERBIAN STUDENTS ON THE BREAK-UP OF YUGOSLAVIA¹³

Twenty years after the end of the violent break-up of Yugoslavia, new generations of young people in Serbia are living with its legacies. Despite the socio-psychological implications of violent conflict in post-conflict societies being well established in the literature, there are still only a few studies which focus on young Serbians' meaning-making in relation to the recent wars. The present study focuses on how a group of young Serbians, born after the violence was over, understands the violent break-up of Yugoslavia. The article presents the analysis of interviews and group discussions with 31 first-year university students in Serbia about these events. The goal of the analysis is to determine a) whether participants' narratives contain identifiable themes of a collective memory of conflict and b) whether participants normalize past violence through narrative. The relationship between the two as well as the relationship between history textbooks and participants' narratives will be discussed. Finally, the findings are discussed in regard to how participants' understandings of past violence might shape their political positioning in relation to nationalism.

Keywords: nationalism, violence, youth, Serbia, Yugoslav break-up, qualitative study

INTRODUCTION

There was no electricity [...] my mother literally gave birth to me under flashlights. Luckily everything went well, but my parents had to leave the hospital a few hours after she gave birth, on a stretcher, because the hospital was close to something they wanted to bomb. (Interview with Emilija)¹⁴

More than twenty years after the end of the mass violence that marked the breakup of Yugoslavia, a new generation of Serbian students, born during or after the Kosovo War, entered university. Emilija's words reveal a very particular relationship with these events. Young people may not have a keen curiosity about history, but they do have a lay understanding of what happened and how it continues to influence Serbian society. Fortunately, these young people have never experienced violence first-hand, but while growing up in Serbia they have had numerous opportunities to encounter stories about it. This article reports on an in-depth examination into how a small group of students narrates the violent breakup of Yugoslavia.

The immense psychological implications of violent inter-group conflict for societies are well established in the literature. Conceptualized in various ways, such as the transmission of a chosen trauma (Volkan, 2001) or an ethos of conflict (Bar-Tal, 2007), to name just two, psychological implications are particularly prominent in societies which experience an intractable conflict. The more the conflict is protracted and violent, the greater the psychological consequences for the societies involved. Particular memories, beliefs, emotions, and attitudes about the conflict are communicated through various means within society, thus helping to maintain the culture of conflict (Bar-Tal, 2013). Indeed, the collective memory of physical violence can be an important component for sustaining the culture of conflict long after the conflict is over (Bar-Tal, 2003).

One of the most important modes of dissemination, due to its epistemic authority and wide reach among young people, is education (Bar-Tal, 2013),

and especially history education, since this is where official versions of past events are conveyed. Research on textbook narratives shows that history textbooks tend to minimize and sanitize past violence (Bermúdez, 2019; Brown & Brown, 2010; Hein & Selden, 2000; Williams, 2014). They do so, for instance, by representing it as an unfortunate but necessary means to achieve societal goals (Bermúdez, 2016; Jovanović, 2020). Bermúdez (2019) has conceptualized this as one of the mechanisms in the normalization of violence that can hinder young people's critical understanding of violence and the development of a culture of peace.

Post-war Serbia offers an interesting and important case to study the historical representations and psychological implications of violent conflicts. With more than 130,000 victims, the violent breakup of Yugoslavia represents the biggest armed conflict in Europe since the Second World War. Serbia was involved in all three wars pertaining to Yugoslav secession (the war in Croatia 1991–1995, the war in Bosnia 1992–1995, and the war in Kosovo 1998–1999). Nowadays, the Republic of Serbia has established and maintains regular diplomatic relations with the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, it does not recognize Kosovo as an independent republic.

There is already a vast literature on the breakup of Yugoslavia which examines the actual reasons leading to the breakup itself (Dragović-Soso, 2002; Gagnon, 2004; Jovic, 2001; Jović, 2003; Ramet, 2014; to mention just a few). However, there has been far less of a focus on examining how ordinary people understand that breakup, and the studies that do exist are generally limited to broad opinion surveys (Ipsos Strategic Marketing, 2011; Stojanović et al., 2010). There are even fewer studies investigating how young people in Serbia understand these events (Malešević, 2003; Yerkes, 2004), and only a few of these include young people without any direct experience or memory of the wars (Obradović, 2016; Pavasović-Trošt, 2013).

Overall, studies that deal with the ways young people who did not witness

the wars first-hand understand nationalist violence are almost non-existent.

A limited number of studies from the fields of psychology, sociology, and education that focus on ordinary people's knowledge and understanding of historical events have found that young people in Serbia know very little about recent violent history and that they instead hold various misconceptions about it. A survey of a representative sample of adult Serbian citizens (Stojanović et al., 2010) showed that participants primarily learned history in school, and that the majority lack any interest in or knowledge of historical events. In relation to the breakup of Yugoslavia, participants demonstrated a fundamental lack of knowledge of the violence during the wars of the 1990s, and most participants thought that Croats carried the greatest responsibility for the breakup. The majority of participants in another opinion poll (Ipsos Strategic Marketing, 2011) believed that Serbs suffered the largest number of casualties and that Croats committed the most crimes during these wars.

Although these survey studies of the general population offer important insights into average opinions about the recent violent history within Serbian society, few studies focus specifically on young people's knowledge and attitudes. Some such studies point to a connection between nationalism and understandings of the past. Yerkes (2004) found that young people's perceptions of 'facing the past' in Serbian society are affected by nationalism. Malešević (2003) argues that young people are trapped between an 'ethno-national' and 'cosmopolitan' identity, partly due to the role of Serbian political elites during the wars and the contradictions that ensued after the fall of Slobodan Milošević. However, both of these studies included participants who were old enough to remember some of these events. Nonetheless, we know that attitudes towards, beliefs about, and memories of conflict are transmitted to all new generations of young people long after a conflict has ended. To understand the effects of this phenomenon it is therefore particularly important to examine the views of young people born after the conflict. Studies focusing on young Serbians with no direct experience of

war are mostly quantitative and provide a general idea of their relationship with and knowledge about the recent violent past. For example, the youngest participants in the abovementioned opinion polls were significantly less likely to indicate that Serbs suffered the largest number of casualties or that Croats committed the most crimes during these wars (Ipsos Strategic Marketing, 2011), but showed less knowledge of the violent episodes that took place in the 1990s during the wars (Stojanović et al., 2010).

A recent survey of a representative sample of young people in Serbia (Popadić et al., 2019) found that a large portion of participants had never travelled outside of Serbia and that many have a fear of travelling to the neighbouring countries in which the wars of the 1990s took place (the highest level of fear related to Kosovo, followed by Croatia, with the lowest for Bosnia and Herzegovina). One in four of the youngest participants (born between 1996 and 2005) do not have even one friend of a different nationality, religion, or language, and the level of ethnic distance expressed towards Albanians, Croats, Roma, and Bosniaks is high in this sub-group (Popadić et al., 2019). Only a handful of studies have included an in-depth examination of how young people born after the wars understand and negotiate the recent past.

Looking at the connection between understandings of the past and the construction of ethnic identity, Pavasović-Trošt (2018) found that the post-war youth in both Croatia and Serbia have little interest in history. Furthermore, their narratives are often inconsistent, and apart from the wars of the 1990s, they also struggle with narratives about the Second World War. Despite blaming the other group for crimes committed, no actual animosity was found, and young people are 'instead more preoccupied with just living a better life and actual day-to-day concerns and largely seemed genuinely eager to move past rigid ethnonationalist categories' (Pavasović-Trošt, 2013: 279). Similarly, Obradović (2016) found that social representations of recent history among the younger generation of Serbians show more in-group criticism and more awareness of the complexities compared with those of the

older generation.

The ways in which young people understand and negotiate recent violent history is influenced by various sources, such as the media, cultural products, and textbooks (Grever & van der Vlies, 2017; Haydn & Ribbens, 2017). However, education is one of the most important means of transmitting beliefs about the past because textbooks and other educational resources are considered to be an epistemic authority, they reach almost all young people in a society

(Bar-Tal, 2013), and their contents are controlled by the state. Thus, research on history education in Serbia and the Balkans is important in contextualizing young people's understandings of the recent violent past.

REWRITING HISTORY

An abundant literature has demonstrated how histories in the ex-Yugoslav republics have been rewritten following the violent conflicts of the 1990s (Koren & Baranović, 2009; Ognjenović & Jozelić, 2020; Stojanović, 2009). This research shows that immediately after the breakup of Yugoslavia, the successor states started making changes to history textbooks to reflect the new realities, including elements of victimization and the negative portrayal of others. While being continually revised and improved, most still include these features.

Croatian history education, for example, has come a long way from being predominantly determined by the ideology of ethnic nationalism as previously. However, these developments are still highly contested and ambivalent (Koren, 2020; Marić, 2016). A comparative analysis of Croatian and Serbian textbooks (Tomljenović, 2012) found that in both cases, 'we' are depicted as a victim of the 'other'. While some Croatian textbooks adopt a modern approach to history education, the image of Serbs is still negative (Švagir, 2018). In Montenegro, history textbooks that earlier followed a nationalist ideology appear to have been decisively reformed since the early

2000s (Knežević & Čagorović, 2020), while North Macedonian textbooks are said to contain a myth of self-victimization (Stojanov & Todorov, 2020) and continue to promote ethno-centric narratives (Todorov, 2016). Textbooks in Serbia and Kosovo, according to Gashi, 'do not promote civic values because they promote inter-ethnic hatred' (Gashi, 2020: 83). The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina seems very similar (Soldo et al., 2017), but is more complicated due to the country's very complex educational system: 'there is a power struggle between the three ruling political elites, and each have a set of textbooks that glorifies their own people, nation, and state, and undermines minorities and neighbouring states' (Šimić, 2020).

History textbooks in Serbia, just as those in other successor states, have undergone several important changes over the last thirty years. The first big change came in 1993, when 'wartime textbooks' were introduced that contained narratives that justified waging the ongoing wars. After the Democratic Revolution in 2000, the textbooks offered a gentler depiction of the recent wars (Stojanović, 2009) or plainly avoided these topics, while textbooks published from 2005 to 2009 reintroduced narratives of victimization (Pavasović-Trošt, 2018). According to a recent study of Serbian high-school history textbooks currently in use, their narratives normalize violence and to a certain degree support a culture of conflict (Jovanović, 2020). This body of literature is indispensable for understanding the official narratives conveyed to young people through history education in the Yugoslav successor states. However, its main focus is on system-level phenomena rather than a detailed analysis of young people's understanding and meaning-making.

NATIONALISM AND UNDERSTANDING PAST VIOLENCE

Research on young people in Serbia and the analysis of history textbooks provide valuable insights into the general views that young people hold about the violent past and some of the factors that might have shaped these opinions. Beyond this, it is also important to understand the consequences of

holding these views for the political positioning of young people, and for the presence of nationalism in their narratives. Perry (2019) claims that in Serbia there is a 'prevalent and unresolved culture of extremism, grounded in the reciprocal dynamics of the socio-political ecosystem that has emerged since the wars in the 1990s' (Perry, 2019: 18). Potential reasons include the close link between the most important political actors in Serbia today and at the time of war (Perry, 2019), or the links between the political mainstream and the far-right parties through coalitions that often blur the boundaries between them (Kelly, 2019). Other studies suggest there is a connection between understandings of past violence and nationalism (Malešević, 2003; Yerkes, 2004), although these studies do not directly measure nationalist tendencies. In a recent report covering this issue, Radoman (2020) categorized almost half of the participants in the study as mild nationalists on both organic and ethno-centric nationalism scales. One third of the participants agreed with the claim that Serbs have no responsibility for the wars or for war crimes. Radoman concludes that young people are more nationalistic than the general population due to their not remembering the wars of the 1990s.

The current study aims to deepen our understanding of how young people understand the recent violent past, as well as the ways in which these views might shape their political positioning and nationalistic tendencies. Its focus on youth who did not directly experience the violence offers a novel approach that will contribute to the literature on young people's understandings of recent violence in post-conflict societies and the effects of history rewriting, and to discussions of the relationship between violence and nationalism. The study consisted of in-depth interviews and small-group discussions about the Yugoslav wars with 31 first-year university students in Serbia. Participants' narratives were analysed using two analytical frameworks: the collective memory of conflict (Bar-Tal, 2013), which comes from the field of social psychology; and narrative keys for the normalization of violence (Bermúdez, 2019), which stems from history education research. Using these frameworks we analysed: a) whether participants' narratives contain identifiable themes

of a collective memory of conflict and b) whether participants normalize past violence through narrative. The relationship between the two analytical frameworks as well as the relationship between history textbooks and participants' narratives will be discussed. The findings are further discussed with regard to how participants' understandings of past violence might shape their political positioning in relation to nationalism.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The Socio-Psychological Foundations of Intractable Conflicts

Violence has immense psychological implications that affect generations of young people long after a conflict is over (Bar-Tal, 2013; Cehajic et al., 2008; Psaltis et al., 2017; Volkan, 2001). Intractable conflicts can have a great number of psychological implications for group members. There are several approaches to conceptualizing these implications. For example, from a psychoanalytic perspective, Volkan (2001) proposes the process of transgenerational transmission of a chosen trauma. This refers to a mental representation of a traumatic past event shared by a large group in which the group occupied the position of the victim (i.e. suffering loss, humiliation, etc.) or the position of the victimizer (i.e. the experience of loss and shame associated with the past). The trauma is chosen because 'it reflects [a] large group's unconscious "choice" to add a past generation's mental representation of an event to its own identity' (Volkan, 2001: 88). The chosen trauma then becomes woven into the large group identity and can be activated to different degrees, depending on the large group's circumstances. One of the most influential and overarching approaches to conceptualizing the impact of violence on a large group focuses on the socio-psychological foundations of intractable conflicts (Bar-Tal, 2007, 2010, 2013).

According to Bar-Tal, during a conflict, society members experience

stress, hardship, uncertainty, loss, and suffering, and they face several challenges in terms of satisfying their needs, coping with stress, and withstanding the enemy. In order to meet these challenges, societies develop a socio-psychological repertoire that consists of societal beliefs, attitudes, and emotions. Once this repertoire is institutionalized, a socio-psychological infrastructure consolidates, which then becomes the foundation of a culture of continuing conflict that includes three elements: a collective emotional orientation, an ethos of conflict, and a collective memory of conflict. In the context of an intractable conflict, the collective memory of the conflict expresses conflict-supporting narratives. These are 'socially constructed narratives that have some basis in actual events but are biased, selective, and distorted in ways that meet the society's present needs', and are 'treated by many [citizens] as truthful accounts of the past and a valid history of the society' (Bar-Tal, 2007: 1436). These narratives are organized around three main and interrelated themes: victimization of one's own group; delegitimization of the opponent; and justification of the conflict's outbreak (Bar-Tal et al., 2009: 241).

Once the violence is over and peace treaties are signed, societies embark on a long and uncertain journey of reconciliation, and it is exactly these narratives that need to change in order for a society to achieve a culture of peace. One of the key elements in this process is that peace becomes a supreme value, which entails that 'both parties [...] must establish a common moral as well as utilitarian epistemic basis that negates completely the use of violence' (Bar-Tal, 2013: 373). The adoption of new social narratives about the conflict – less antagonistic, less biased towards the in-group, more open to acknowledging some responsibility for the conflict, and less insistent on a sense of victimization – may create a new space for peace-oriented beliefs and values. However, do such renewed narratives necessarily transform people's views about violence? This question is particularly important, since research on school history textbooks indicates that violent pasts are represented in ways that do not shine a critical light on the use of violence.

The next section presents the second analytical framework that will be used to examine representations of violence in students' narratives.

Normalizing Violence

Studies in different contexts (Bermúdez, 2016, 2019; Brown & Brown, 2010; Friedrich, 2014; Hein & Selden, 2000; Jovanović, 2020) show how history textbook narratives minimize and sanitize past violence and represent it in a way that perpetuates and reproduces the harmful biases and stereotypes that can prevent students from developing a critical understanding of the violence. For example, in dealing with representations of violence against African Americans in US history and civic education curricula, Brown and Brown reveal that episodes of violence against African Americans, while more evident in textbooks than before, are portrayed as the 'acts of autonomous immoral agents rather than systematic acts that had direct and long-term effects' (2010: 56). According to the authors, these representations sustain the belief that racism exists only because of ruthless individuals; hence students fail to understand the socioeconomic and political infrastructure, institutional support, or systemic problems that form the background to such events. In another example analysing how new, progressive Argentinian text-books represent the military dictatorship in that country, Friedrich (2014) points to three distinct narrative features (presenting history as the progress of democracy, creating a binary opposition between dictatorship and democracy, and excluding the large part of the population that supported the dictatorship), and concludes that these narratives limit students' critical understanding of historical processes and do not help to strengthen democracy.

A recent research programme studying representations of violence in the history textbooks of a number of countries (Bermúdez, 2016; Bermúdez Vélez & Martínez, 2018; Jovanović, 2020; Stoskopf & Bermúdez, 2017) offers a more comprehensive perspective by drawing on Galtung's understanding and typology of violence (1996). According to Galtung, violence is a purposeful

strategy used to achieve the desired goals in situations of conflict. His model discusses three distinct types of violence: direct, structural, and cultural. Cultural violence refers to the complex web of belief systems and social practices through which instrumental, destructive, and unfair practices are rendered acceptable (Galtung, 1990). This then serves to legitimize the other two types of violence (Galtung, 1996). Bermúdez (2019) argues that representations of violence in history textbooks often serve as mechanisms of cultural violence. The basic premise is that historical narratives, while filled with references to violent events, tend to normalize violence by representing it as an expected and natural part of the conflict, and an inescapable trait of human interactions – thus reducing opportunities for readers to engage with the violence critically.

The analytical framework used in the current study (Bermúdez, 2019; Bermúdez & Epstein, 2020) identifies distinct and specific mechanisms (ten narrative keys) that drive the (de) normalization of violence in history textbooks, and it has recently been successfully applied in the analysis of memorial–museum exhibits (Bermúdez & Epstein, 2020) and Serbian high-school history textbooks (Jovanović, 2020). However, the model has not yet been applied systematically to analyse ordinary young people’s narratives. The current study represents a first attempt to do this by exploring how young people make sense of, appropriate, and negotiate the meaning of recent violence. In this way we hope to contribute to this evolving model and also to explore the link between the normalization of violence identified in the history textbook narratives and the potential normalization of violence in young people’s narratives.

METHODOLOGY

To answer our research questions, we carried out two studies. In the first study, 17 in-depth interviews (lasting one hour on average) were conducted in

late 2018 at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade¹⁵. In the second study, three participants from the first study and 14 new participants took part in group discussions (GD), which were conducted in the spring of 2019 at the same faculty. Both studies followed a similar protocol. First, participants were asked about their experiences with school in general, history classes, and history lessons on the breakup of Yugoslavia. The facilitator took special care to note the personal experiences of participants or their families during the wars in order to better understand their positions, while carefully navigating the conversation around sensitive topics so as to avoid causing additional trauma. Following this, the main part of the protocol employed political maps of the region dating from 1990 and post-2008, respectively. Participants were asked to describe, in their own words, what had changed and what had happened. After a general explanation, each of the wars was discussed individually. The last two themes for discussion related to the use of violence and Serbia's role in the wars. All interviews and group discussions were facilitated by the first author, who is a trained psychologist with experience in interviewing and facilitating group discussions.

Sample

A purposeful sampling strategy was used, which yielded a total of 31 participants across the two studies. All participants were first-year university students aged 18 to 19, chosen because of their specific position within the education system: having just graduated from high school, these students had a maximum amount of recent exposure to history education. Limiting the study to first-year university students is warranted by two considerations. First, the fact that the majority of high-school graduates in Serbia move on to some form of higher education (Republički Zavod za Statistiku, 2019, 2020). Second, because relevant knowledge and experiences from high school were still fresh for this group, since they had attended their last history lesson only a few months before the first study began. The call to participate in the first

¹⁵ All participants signed a consent form. The study design together with the interview and group discussion protocols were approved by the University of Deusto Ethical Committee.

study was disseminated across two faculties at the University of Belgrade. In this way, we obtained a long list of potential participants from which we selected our group of young people, striving for diversity in terms of gender and place of birth. For the second study we recruited students from various universities in Belgrade via an open call published in various student social-network groups. All potential discussion-group participants were offered a symbolic gift. Four discussion groups were formed, with three to five participants in each one.

Table 20. Sample overview.

		Study One	Study Two
Gender	Female	9	12
	Male	8	5
City	Belgrade	7	9
	Other	10	8
Type of High school	General	13	11
	Other	4	6
Family war experience	Yes	10	5
	No	5	9
	Unclear	2	3
Total		17	17

*three participated in both studies

The characteristics of the overall sample (Table 20) are comparable with the wider university student population. In terms of gender distribution, females made up 61.9% of our sample across the two studies, while female students made up 55.2% of all students enrolled for the first time in some form of higher education in 2019–2020 (Republički Zavod za Statistiku, 2019).

Two thirds of the students in our overall sample graduated from a grammar school (*gimnazija*), and research shows that grammar-school students enroll in university studies at a higher rate (Jovanović et al., 2016: 46). In terms of place of birth, students coming from various cities across Serbia are represented in our sample. In the overall sample, 13 participants (40%) reported their family having some kind of direct experience of war, either as refugees or through a father having participated in the war. The same percentage reported their family as having had no experience of war, while five participants were unsure of their family's experiences. As a general pattern, participants whose family had had war experiences demonstrated far more interest in the topic, which often translated into a fiercer reaction to the probing questions, as well as their having stronger opinions on certain wartime episodes. They possessed more information based on their family history, but this did not amount to more general knowledge about the episodes beyond the retold experiences.

Analytical Strategy

A theory-driven deductive analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) underpins the approach taken to the data collected in both studies. Thematic analysis was used to examine the presence of identifiable themes of the collective memory of conflict (Bar-Tal, 2013) in participants' narratives. Following this, discourse analysis (Billig, 1996; Gee, 2014) was used to explore if and how participants relied on narrative keys to normalize the violence (Bermúdez, 2019) in their reflections and discussion. We examined how social meanings are communicated through the content and structure of participants' narratives and expanded on this by exploring which actors are included or excluded within the narratives, how they are positioned in relation to each other, how causal relationships are established and broken, and which events are completely dropped from the narrative (Bermúdez, 2014; Haste & Bermúdez, 2017). In the next sections we will present our findings based on a thematic analysis that employs the three themes of the collective memory of

conflict, followed by the discourse analysis, organized around three narrative keys for normalizing violence.

FINDINGS: THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF CONFLICT

Many of our participants do recognize that Serbia is responsible for some crimes and this could be seen in general remarks such as ‘we are not perfect’ (Kristina, GD) and ‘there were crimes on both sides’ (Damjan, GD). However, three major themes in the collective memory of conflict emerged in the analysis: the victimization of one’s own group; the delegitimization of the opponent group; and the justness of one’s own goals. For Bar-Tal et al. these ‘form a triangular system that constitutes the core beliefs of the intractable conflict’ (2009: 241).

Victimization of One’s Own Group

Theoretically, victimization of one’s own group results from a perceived intentional harm that has severe and lasting consequences, inflicted on a group by another group or groups. It can be based on social constructions or objective experiences and relates to harm done in the recent or more distant past. In addition, the victim status need not be recognized by the international community, nor even on occasion exist if the group is considered to be the perpetrator (Bar-Tal, 2003; Bar-Tal et al., 2009). When participants narrate specific episodes such as the war in Croatia, victimization-related beliefs are quite salient, as illustrated in the following examples:

Filip: Since there was a majority of Serbs there, what they did is not ethnic cleansing but genocide. (Int)

Toma: I am not sure if that is correct but it [Operation Storm] is the biggest ethnic cleansing since the Second World War and in general. (Int)

Jovan: This is new information for me. I thought that Operation Storm expanded the borders of Croatia [vis-à-vis Serbia]. (Int)

Djurdja: I think I heard somewhere, but I am not sure if it is true, that the Serbs had more victims. (Int)

Researcher: In the context of the breakup, what do you know about the war in Croatia?

Ivana: I know about [Croats] forcing Serbs to leave Croatia. (Int)

Dubravka: Well in Knin we have the Croatian Army committing violence against civilians [Serbs] and in Priština we have the same situation with the Kosovo Army. (Int)

Ivana: Serbia lost everything, it really lost a lot. I am not sure that it got anything at all, I think it didn't get anything. (Int)

These excerpts are just some of the numerous examples of how the story is focused on harm to one's own group. Ivana's words point to victimization. Participants omit many violent episodes in which violence is committed by the Serbian side, and the story is reduced to an episode in which Serbs were the victims. In addition, here we can see how participants overestimate the severity of the crimes (Filip, Toma), the negative effects the wars had for Serbs (Jovan), and the number of Serb victims compared with the opponent group (Djurdja).

Delegitimization of the Opponent

Theoretically, delegitimization of the opponent implies categorizing a group or groups within negative social categories. These groups are viewed as breaching basic human standards (their acts violate the limits of acceptable norms or values or both), and they are thus considered to deserve maltreatment (Bar-Tal & Hammack, 2012). In our analysis, three distinct types of delegitimization emerged: a) depicting the opponent group as cruel and brutal; b) depicting the opponent group as immoral – i.e. intentionally committing harm; and c) labelling the opponent groups as terrorist.

Janko: I just know that they, the Albanians were very brutal. (Int)

Toma: [...] we could have tried taking the diplomatic route but that would not stop the rampage of Albanians in Kosovo. (Int)

Andrijana: I absolutely agree that Croats were more brutal. (GD)

Jovan: If I am going to be honest, completely honest [...] I think that Croats [...] they are significantly more guilty for this [...] meaning they were much more brutal, I think there was much more hate there. (GD)

Jasna: They [Albanians] were hiding and attacking our people, year after year, day after day, and I can say that their army was growing and they became more aggressive. (Int)

Gojko: There were killings, I think that started in 1991, like officially, when they started [...] and there was this case of a peasant of ours, I know, they even burned him alive or something like that, burned, killed, I can't remember exactly, something really bloodthirsty. (GD)

Participants describe the opponent group using adjectives such as brutal, aggressive, and bloodthirsty. Jasna constructs this characterization by evoking events that portray the opponent group as sneaky and using unfair tactics, while Gojko uses anecdotal evidence to support the claim that in the past the opponent group was indeed bloodthirsty. The opponent groups are delegitimized by positioning them as groups that violate basic human norms. The second type of delegitimization to emerge from the analysis is when we see participants going one step further by ascribing intent to the opponent groups.

Damjan: Well, Croats got what they wanted. They forced the Serbs out. (GD)

Marija: Well, because they [Croats] wanted to cleanse the territory, so there are no more Serbs, so only they can be there. (Int)

Toma: Croats killed because they wanted to start some kind of ethnic cleansing. (Int)

Ivana: [...] they cleansed Croatia of Serbs and that is how they wanted it. Well they celebrate after that, like they killed a lot of Serbs and this is some kind of holiday for them, some celebration, like it's a good thing. (Int)

Ascribing intent enhances the immorality of the opponent group. Damjan, Marija, and Toma ascribe to Croats the desire to have a Serb-free state. Ivana makes the case for their motivation by emphasizing the fact that the opponent group is happy about the harm they committed. By portraying opponent groups as intentionally acting outside of acceptable values, the participants further delegitimize them. Depicting opponent groups as cruel and immoral is congruent with the appearance of a third theme in which participants label them as terrorists.

Researcher: And who was on the other side [in the Kosovo War]?

Gojko: Well, that was [...] literally

Zorica: the terrorist organization

Valentina: the KLA [Kosovo Liberation Army]

Gojko: I think it is qualified as a terrorist organization

Dubravka: Yes, a terrorist organization, Hashim Thaçi (GD)

Damjan: [...] and now the whole world thinks that the worst jihadists and the Taliban started appearing in Bosnia exactly during that war in the 1990s (GD)

This kind of labelling serves as a shortcut to charging the opponent groups with having fought via illegitimate means, and with having used violent methods and unfair strategies to achieve their immoral goals.

Justifying the Goals of One's Own Group

In order for any conflict to exist, there needs to be a conflicting set of goals pertaining to each of the opposing groups. According to Bar-Tal (2013), justifying the goals of one's own group underlines the crucial importance of that particular group; it explains the significance of the group and provides its acting rationale, while at the same time denying the goals of rival groups. The main theme that emerged in the participants' narratives – consistent with

describing the opponent groups as immoral, brutal, and cruel – is the danger in which members of the ethnic in-group were placed, and this justifies the in-group's participation in the violent conflict:

Zoran: [...] Croats kicked Serbs out as an equal nation and proclaimed them to be a national minority; Serbs felt threatened, thinking they will be assimilated into the Croatian nation, and then they took over those police stations. (GD)

Djordja: It [Serbia's aim] was to send the military to Croatia and Bosnia to defend its people. (Int)

Filip: Serbs wanted to protect their brothers across the Drina river, and this is how [...] that is how there was war. (Int)

Toma: I think that the interest of Serbia was simply in people living peacefully, not in fear of someone coming to their house and forcing them to leave and [...] simply not to be killed. (Int)

Jovan: If I am honest, I think there are some goals that justify going to war. We do not live in a fairy tale with rainbows and unicorns, it simply has to happen, especially for [...] if that opposite state obviously won't give freedom to their people, that it will not give any privileges and if people are suffering under the oppression, I think war is a justified means. (GD)

Filip's words 'that is how there was war' imply that there would have been no war if Serbs had not been in danger, and Toma enriches this story by ascribing a yearning for peace to his own group. The quotes show how participants build a causal sequence to explain the outbreak of the conflict, which consists of the ideas: we wanted peace – we were being attacked – we had to defend our own people. By rhetorically positioning a threat to in-group members at the beginning of this sequence, Serbian involvement is transformed into a completely justified, direct response to this threat. Participants focus on the sense of threat and the desire for peace while making no reference to the political, economic, and social goals of Serbs or the violence committed against others in order to achieve these goals. Jovan

reaches the same conclusion by calling upon the inevitability of wars. He establishes the context ('the world is a messy place where wars are reality') and places the wars of the 1990s within this. This allows him to conclude with the same point – under the given circumstances, the goals of his own group were justified.

The findings discussed above demonstrate the prominence of the three major themes of the collective memory of conflict in participants' narratives. These themes interact in ways that feed and sustain each other, thus creating a kind of causal loop. Focusing on how brutal and immoral the opponent groups are, combined with believing in the justness of the in-group's own goals, leads to the conclusion that one's own group is the sole or biggest victim of the conflict. Alternatively, the in-group's goals are justified because one's own group is the main victim of the opponent groups' immoral and unjust behaviour. The three themes support and enhance each other in a narrative that sustains the collective memory of the conflict.

FINDINGS: THE NORMALIZATION OF VIOLENCE

In this section we present findings based on the analytical framework of ten narrative keys for the normalization of violence (Bermúdez, 2019), which shows that participant narratives normalize the violence committed during the wars of the 1990s, and that they do so using three salient narrative keys: a narrative framing that justifies the violence; a disjointed discussion of social structures that sustain and propel violence; and the biased representation of different narratives.

A Narrative Framing that Justifies Violence

Much like other historical events, violent episodes are framed within a historical narrative that provides a bigger story within which they feature, and which illuminates the meaning and value of violent acts (Bermúdez, 2016). According to Bermúdez (2019), narratives often 'portray violence

as unfortunate but necessary means to valued social ends'. In our study, participants' narratives invoke the larger narrative frame of the 'inevitable breakup' of Yugoslavia. This narrative frame rests on four ideas that support its inevitability: a) the artificiality of Yugoslavia; b) Tito as the only thing holding Yugoslavia together; c) the emphasis on cultural differences; and d) the existence of ancient hostilities.

As concerns the artificiality of Yugoslavia, the participants presented the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as an artificial creation that was therefore destined to fail and break up. This is clearly noticeable in the following excerpts:

Emilija: Well, I sincerely think Yugoslavia was destined to break up because it was artificially created. (Int)

Maja: Well, in the first place I think this idea was simply never going to succeed – for so many different people to live all of a sudden under one law, one president or whatever, and then they started separating. (Int)

Marko: So, this is also my opinion that all of this was coming from the state, given that there was [...] um [...] socialism and the dictatorship, that all of this was held together [...] by the state in an artificial way [...] and people were forced by the state to believe in these ideals, simply. (Int)

This idea of artificiality serves to emphasize that the socialist federation was something opposed to the natural forces of ethnic and national essences. As Marko says, the source of this artificiality is found in socialism and the dictatorship: two top-down processes for moulding the beliefs of citizens that run counter to nationalist sentiments that worked in the opposite direction and emerged 'bottom-up' from the essence of people's identities. Another top-down element that is further emphasized is Yugoslavia's former president, Tito.

Let us now consider Tito as the only thing holding Yugoslavia together. Given that Josip Broz Tito is seen as the main source of unity, his death in

1980 opened the ‘dam’ that up until then had kept nationalism in check.

Dubravka: He [Tito] did make people come together for a short time, but they also, because of such a regime and polity, had to stay together as long as they had to. But, also, this is the reason everything culminated in the way it did, because it was suppressed for a very long time and then, so to say, exploded. (Int)

Julija: Well yes, while he was there, there was a possibility of [...] of existence, of the appearance of the existence of the community, and when he was not there anymore, everyone started to scramble, each wanted their own. (GD)

Marko: Now, when there was no more Tito [...] one part of that ideal of being Yugoslav was lost and then everything started sinking slowly back to, to the divisions that were naturally created over time. (Int)

Jasna: I for one think that when Tito died everything started going downhill – he held it together and they had to listen to him because he was the authority and had a lot of influence, some of which we did not know about. And I think he was the main one who held Yugoslavia together [...] in some kind of unity until the catastrophe started. (Int)

Tito is positioned as an authority figure and as the only element of unity. His death meant that the ideal of unity crumbled because it was not the ideal of the people: ‘they had to stay together’. Julija qualifies the existence of the community as merely an appearance created by Tito, implying that what is real is the division. Other participants’ language also implies the authenticity of what followed. Dubravka uses a metaphor of explosion, which indicates that an outburst of energy was earlier suppressed, while Marko talks about ‘sinking back’ and returning to a ‘regular’ order of things. This language erases any other causal factors that might have contributed to the breakup after Tito’s death. In addition, it renders invisible any strategic decision-making by the various actors involved in the events that followed, which thus adds to the depiction of nationalism as a force of nature, temporarily tamed by the benevolent dictator. But what exactly was temporarily tamed and suppressed?

The third point, the emphasis on differences, contains another important idea that supports the ‘inevitable breakup’ narrative frame by emphasizing the differences between the ethnic groups:

Filip: What contributed to this [the breakup] is also the religious differences, because Croats are Catholics; furthermore, probably linguistic [differences] and with that basically these are the most important differences, the most important characteristics of one nation [...] and they led to the end. (Int)

Dragana: There could be some cultural reasons. I mean [...] two religions [...] Christianity – yes, but Catholic and Orthodox, the larger influence of the West, the larger influence of the East. Again, the south part of Serbia – Turkey [...] It is possible that, I do not know enough, but it is possible that there are some deeply rooted motives that just piled on, piled on, and piled on, and it just couldn’t work. (Int)

Dubravka: Well, I mean these [...] these differences and the hostility that existed. You have nations that in general can’t stand each other or that speak different languages, that have a lack of understanding on many different levels, and they are put together in one state. (Int)

Milena: Now, I think that somehow, I don’t know enough, but I think there were always disagreements between Serbs and Croats. (Int)

Cultural differences between the nations that made up the SFR Yugoslavia were real. However, participants seem to give them too much explanatory power. In discursive terms, what is happening here is that other information that does not fit the overall narrative frame of the ‘inevitable breakup’ is excluded. For example, participants omitted any reference to the similarities between the nations or to the fact that the system did create room for cultural differences to (co) exist. By focusing on the differences, participants construct a story reminiscent of the pressure cooker idea – that the suppression of differences and disagreements led to the piling on of natural tensions that kept increasing with nothing to ease them, until finally everything exploded.

Turning finally to the existence of ancient hostilities, what is interesting is that cultural differences are equated with a hostility that clearly signifies ancient hatreds between these groups.

Dragana: Under the cultural differences we can consider precisely the fact that there was always some hostility between Serbs and Croats. I mean, it has permeated throughout history for I don't know how long. (Int)

Toma: I would just mention, for example, those, let's say, unresolved circumstances from the past. The Independent State of Croatia, for example, and maybe even earlier, [...] let's say [...] when we were all in conflict against each other. (Int)

Ljubica: I think that nationalism always existed in each of the republics, it was not something that emerged after Tito died, but there was always some sort of inequality and nuisance between the republics. The Croat was not the same as the Serb, and no one was ever equal there, there were always tensions. (GD)

Dragana talks about the continuity of a bad relationship ('there were always hostilities') and thus establishes hostility and hatred as trademarks of the groups in question. Jovan also proposes that these groups were never united and adds that everyone was aware of this. By evoking events from the distant past, Toma supports the idea of some continuity in a bad relationship. Additionally, differences are portrayed as long-established, immemorial, and ancient.

The four ideas discussed above form the narrative frame that renders the Yugoslav breakup as inevitable. Within this frame, the federation was artificially created out of nations with irreconcilable differences, held together only by Tito. In addition to being different, the nations had hostile relationships long before they entered the federation. Once the beloved dictator had died and the oppressive system had started to loosen its grip on society, everything started 'slowly sinking' back to 'normal'. The nationalist sentiments that had been repressed and which then took over led directly to the violent breakup of the country.

Although some research participants did have a basic knowledge of the different causal factors at play (such as political leaders and economic factors), these were few in number and all were placed on the margins of the ‘inevitable breakup’ narrative frame. They become free-floating pieces of information, unrelated to the main story, and stripped of any explanatory power within this simplistic, almost fatalistic narrative frame. Furthermore, by qualifying the nations as eternally hostile towards each other and the hostilities as something ‘natural’, this implies that the violence that followed was also expected, natural, and normal. Hence within this narrative frame, not only was the breakup inevitable, but the violence too.

A Disjointed Discussion of Social Structures that Propel and Sustain Violence

According to Bermúdez (2019), history textbook narratives often disguise the network of social, economic, and political structures and dynamics that inform the decisions made by different actors. Violent practices tend to be described in a vacuum, disconnected from the complex interaction of social structures that generate conflict and trigger the use of violence as a means to manage tensions and contradictions. However, inclusion of these is crucial for a critical understanding of the origins of violence in conflicts. The following excerpts illustrate how participants use this narrative key in support of the ‘inevitable breakup’ narrative frame.

Jovan: I think that was the key thing, the awakening of the extreme nationalism was the key thing for the secession of these areas. (GD)

Marina: I think when you are well off for some time, be it one, three, five years, you get used to it and then all of a sudden something starts that you did not expect. With that your worst qualities come out and what you are capable of. (Int)

Researcher: Generally, in relation to the breakup of Yugoslavia, why was it so violent?

Natalija: Well, it is possible that it is because the hostility was piling on, anger, dissatisfaction and then all at once, when one lets everything out. (GD)

Nationalism is an ‘awakening’, anger and dissatisfaction are being ‘let out’, and violence starts ‘all of a sudden’ and ‘overnight’. It ‘breaks out’ and the worst qualities ‘come about’ as a natural consequence of this nationalism. The language used by participants indicates a process that develops organically, with no reference to the external factors that intervene to change things. In participants’ narratives, the violence is not a consequence of deliberate actions, decision-making, or choices made by groups and individuals attending to particular reasons, interests, and expected outcomes. These narratives point to the empty space between conflict and violence in which not much happens. The abruptness and inevitability makes the violence seem self-made, and the social, economic, and political dynamics and structures that lie behind it are completely invisible.

The identification of the main actors in the violence further speaks to the disjointed discussion of social structures that sustain and propel violence. Occasionally, participants refer to military forces (the Yugoslav People’s Army, the Croatian Army, the Army of Republika Srpska), political leaders (Slobodan Milošević, Franjo Tuđman, Alija Izetbegović) and military leaders (Ratko Mladić, Radovan Karadžić). However, for most of them, the actors in their stories are ethnic and religious groups in general: more often than not, participants refer to the violence as being committed (and suffered) by Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks, Albanians, Christians, and Muslims.

Marina: Well, let’s say that most of Kosovo is Albanian people, right? I guess that was the war between Serbs and Albanians. (Int)

Olja: Well, I think that here [the war in Bosnia] we are talking about the conflict between Muslim and Christian, I think it is divided now and it was divided back then. (GD)

Vladimir: Well, I think there was a conflict between Orthodox and Muslim in Bosnia. (Int)

Referring to the actors as entire ethnic or religious groups gives the impression that there are no social, economic, ideological, or other distinctions within these groups. Furthermore, narrative homogenization of the ethnic groups renders any opposition to violence within these communities completely invisible, which is clear in the participants' lack of knowledge about anti-war activism. With the exception of three students, participants had no knowledge of any organization, person, or movement that had participated in the numerous anti-war protests across Yugoslavia during the breakup. This kind of narrative exclusion contributes to the normalization of past violence.

Biased Representations in Different Narratives

It has been shown that history textbooks often present one single narrative, while alternative viewpoints are largely marginalized. The evidence supporting alternative viewpoints, i.e. those not fitting the narrative frame that justifies violence, is frequently distorted or completely omitted from the story (Bermúdez, 2019). When narrating specific violent episodes within the 'inevitable breakup' frame, participants in our studies tended to omit the alternative view-points of other groups involved in the conflict. For example, when narrating the war in Croatia, most of them reduced it to Operation Storm, a military action that took place at the end of the war, during which a large number of ethnic Serbs were forced to leave Croatia.

Researcher: OK, there were elections in Croatia and what happened after that?

Kristina: Well, the ethnic cleansing of Serbs started, I think. (GD)

Researcher: Have you ever heard about the war in Croatia?

Jasna: That's Storm [Operation Storm], isn't it? Is that where this event fits? (Int)

Researcher: The breakup was accompanied by violent conflicts, do you know from when to when the conflicts lasted, where they happened, what they were?

Gojko: Well, the most important one for us is Storm in my opinion. (GD)

Note how all the participants quoted here omit the whole course of the war in Croatia (1991–1995) – four years of war marked by various violent episodes on both sides of the conflict – and go straight to the operation that marked the end of the war. Kristina positions the beginning of the ethnic cleansing right after the elections of 1990, while Jasna gives the impression that Operation Storm represents the whole war. Gojko even shows an awareness that the most important event ‘for us’ is the violence against our own group. As discussed earlier, when asked about the role of Serbia in the wars, quite a few participants do note that everyone, including ‘us’, committed crimes. However, when asked to tell the story of a specific violent episode, this information is missing and is not coordinated within a multi-vocal narrative. In a similar fashion, some participants briefly mentioned Vukovar or Knin in relation to the war in Croatia. However, almost no one included in their narrative the Yugoslav People’s Army’s (JNA’s) bombing of Croatian cities (Kolarić, 2018), or other military actions undertaken by either the JNA (Hoare, 2010; Kolarić, 2018), the military of Republika Srpska (Hoare, 2010), or Serbian paramilitary units (Vukušić, 2018). The war in Croatia becomes a tale in which Croats – driven by their desire for a homogeneous nation-state following Tito’s death when the ‘ban on nationalism’ was lifted – started forcing Serbs out of Croatia. A similar pattern is discernible in how participants narrate the war in Kosovo.

Andrijana: Well, when the breakup of everything started, Albanians created that image of Great Albania and then it started little by little. (GD)

Researcher: So, do you know about Kosovo?

Vladimir: Well OK, the stories that are present with the people are that Albanians came to the territory of Kosovo and they started [...] to, well move in with [...] in the houses of Serbs and practically forced them out, and that is how it started. (Int)

Researcher: When we say war in Kosovo and the problems in Kosovo, how would you explain this to someone? [...] Do you know something [about it]? What is the first thing that comes to mind?

Jovan: That man breaking the cross¹⁶, everyone is talking about that.

Dragana: Same, yes.

Everyone: Yes! (GD)

These students reduce the war to a few processes or events that all represent violence against their own group. This is similar to the story of the war in Croatia being reduced to Operation Storm. Even though the war in Kosovo took place from 1998 to 1999, participants focus on an event in 2004. Nowhere in the student narratives can we find reference to the viewpoints of the victims of the Serbian oppression of Albanians (Udovički, 2000), the Serbian offensive in May 1998 (Trix, 2010), or the war crimes committed by the Serbian police (Stjepanović, 2017).

DISCUSSION

In this paper we have explored whether participants' narratives contain identifiable themes of a collective memory of conflict, and whether participants normalize past violence through narrative. We have presented findings from in-depth interviews and small-group discussions on the Yugoslav breakup which were carried out with a group of young people in Serbia. Theory-driven thematic analysis has revealed that participants hold what Bar-Tal calls a collective memory of conflict (Bar-Tal, 2007, 2013), composed of three main themes. When narrating the violent episodes related to the Yugoslav breakup, the participants focus on victimization – the harm done to one's own group by another group or groups (Bar-Tal et al., 2009) – while largely disregarding the violence committed by their own group. Furthermore, participants delegitimize opponent groups (Bar-Tal &

¹⁶ This refers to the violence of March 2004 when 'at least 550 homes and 27 Orthodox churches and monasteries were burned, leaving approximately 4,100 Serbs, Roma, Ashkali, and other non-Albanian minorities displaced' (Failure to Protect, 2004)

Hammack, 2012) using three interrelated yet distinct strategies: a) describing other groups as cruel, brutal, and bloodthirsty; b) representing other groups as immoral by ascribing to them the intention to commit violent acts against their own group; and c) labelling opponent groups as terrorists. Finally, they justify the participation of their own group in the violence as self-defence in the face of an external threat (Bar-Tal, 2013).

Discourse analysis of participants' representations of violence shows that when narrating the breakup of Yugoslavia, they employ three narrative features that contribute to the normalization of violence (Bermúdez, 2019). Participants employed the narrative frame of an 'inevitable breakup' to make sense of the violence committed during the breakup of Yugoslavia. Resting on four ideas (the artificiality of Yugoslavia, Tito as the only thing holding Yugoslavia together, the emphasis of cultural differences, and the existence of ancient hostilities), this narrative frame serves to justify the violence. It does so by arguing that the SFR Yugoslavia, held together by Tito's authority, was an artificial creation that temporarily dulled the edges of the irreconcilable cultural differences and ancient hatreds between the ethnic groups. Told in this way, the story necessarily leads to the breakup and to violence as a consequence of the bottled-up and repressed natural tendencies. Fitting their accounts into this narrative frame, participants almost never talk about the complex social, economic, and political dynamics and structures that actively inform the decisions made by different actors. Violence is further ascribed to entire ethnic or religious groups, which thus renders any in-group differences invisible. Lastly, participants do not coordinate different perspectives into a multi-vocal narrative.

Of particular note is the interesting parallel the findings reveal between the narrative features of the normalization of violence and the themes of the collective memory of conflict. Both frameworks point in a similar direction; that participants' narratives display a simplistic, biased understanding that perpetuates the culture of conflict and justifies violence. In addition, the

narrative features shape the expression of the collective memory of conflict. For example, using the narrative frame of the inevitable breakup makes it easier to justify the goals of one's own group. The narrative frame provides an explanation and justification of violence, while at the same time implying a causal sequence that justifies the involvement of one's own group in the violence. Similarly, the homogenizing of ethnic groups places the story within the overall frame that uses nationalism as the main explanatory tool. Establishing whole groups as actors in the conflict paves the way for victimization and delegitimization to appear.

Given their recent exposure to history education, it is surprising that for the most part, participants were not able to reproduce more detailed accounts of the events; and looking at what is missing reveals some shared 'holes'. For example, participants report knowing little about the war in Croatia, and were often not even able to date it correctly, yet they possess a considerable amount of information about Operation Storm during which Serbs were forced to flee Croatia.

Similarly, the war in Kosovo is often limited to the NATO bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and many participants are unable to provide evidence of events prior to March 1999 when the bombing started. We refer to these 'holes' as strategic silences. They are strategic because the events dropped from the narrative have something in common – they refer to violence committed by their own group, and to the perspectives and experiences of their victims.

Strategic silences represent the missing building blocks of the stories that allow for distortions and certain kinds of conclusions. Strategic silences about own-group transgressions and the victims of such transgressions enable the creation of an explanation for the conflict which makes it much easier to subscribe to beliefs based on victimization and delegitimization of the opponent.

Furthermore, strategic silences reveal an important connection between history textbook narratives and participants' narratives. We know that Serbian high-school history textbooks skip the same violent episodes and their consequences (Jovanović, 2020). However, most of our participants reported not having covered these lessons during their history classes. This points to the possibility that both history textbooks and our participants reflect the same dominant narrative; one that our participants do an excellent job of adopting and actively employing. Furthermore, this attests to the effectiveness of these social discourses in permeating citizens' lives through education, public discourse, and the media. While more research is needed in order to draw definite conclusions about the relative importance that formal history education has for how young people in Serbia understand the violent breakup of Yugoslavia, it is certain that history education misses an opportunity to introduce facts that could work towards enriching the views of young people and helping them evaluate past violence critically.

The demonstrated narrative pattern about the recent violent past, if present beyond this group, could have important consequences for Serbia as a post-conflict society. First, the lack of critical interrogation of violent practices could reduce the chances of resolving future conflicts in a non-violent manner. As mentioned previously, violence is just one of the ways in which humans interact in a conflict situation. It is not an inescapable trait of human nature, but a deliberate practice used to achieve certain goals (Galtung, 1996). In order to prevent violence, it seems necessary to engage critically with past uses of violence and reveal the social, economic, and political dynamics that made it possible. Second, it is said that in order to build a stable and lasting peace, societies need to work on changing 'societal beliefs (i.e. collective memories) about the past by learning about the rival group's collective memory and recognizing one's own past misdeeds and responsibility for the outbreak and maintenance of the conflict' (Bar-Tal, 2013: 382). Our findings point to the conclusion that Serbian society is still far from achieving a stable and lasting peace described in this way, since

learning about the rival group's memory and recognizing the misdeeds of one's own group is exactly what is missing from our participants' narratives. Finally, the findings contribute to a discussion of the connection between understanding past violence and nationalism. Participants use nationalism as the main explanatory tool in the story of the Yugoslav breakup. Based on these findings, participants are, in a way, agreeing that nationalism is how things work – that the world is guided by nationalisms that can easily, and legitimately, turn violent. A couple of participants expressed this in a fairly straightforward manner:

Filip: [...] exactly because there were no clear ethnic borders [...] that is how it came to be, essentially that is how war came to be, that is how war started. (Int)

Milena: Well, I think that when there is, in one place, a certain number of Serbs and Croats, there has to be more Croats so that place could belong to them, because if there are more Serbs, it is theirs. (Int)

Both Filip, by calling for clear ethnic borders, and Milena, by explaining the 'majority rule' of 'what belongs to whom', imply that any territory where minority and majority ethnic groups live together consists of a potential war-in-waiting. Since all ethnic groups operate in the same way, guided by a primary desire to create a homogeneous nation-state, violent encounters are not just a natural way for 'us' to achieve that goal, but essential in an effort to protect ourselves from 'them' trying to achieve it.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we have shown that participants' narratives contain identifiable themes of a collective memory of conflict. Specifically, participants emphasize self-victimization and often disregard the violence committed by the group they belong to. Furthermore, they delegitimize opponent groups by a) describing other groups as cruel, brutal, and bloodthirsty; b) representing other groups as immoral by ascribing to them the intention to commit violent

acts against their own group; and c) labelling opponent groups as terrorists. Finally, they justify the involvement of members of their own group in the violent acts. We also showed how participants normalize past violence by placing it within the 'inevitable breakup' narrative frame, by disguising the complex social, economic, and political dynamics and structures that actively inform the decisions made by different actors, and by failing to coordinate different perspectives into a multi-vocal narrative.

We have focused on an in-depth exploration of the participants' narratives regarding the breakup of Yugoslavia, and this methodology necessarily comes with certain limitations. While affording an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the ideas expressed by participants, interviews and small-group discussions rely on a small number of participants, which limits the possibility of generalization. In addition, the convenient sampling strategy used in this study resulted in a sample which did not include any high-school students who did not enter higher education, any lower socio-economic status youth, or any young people from rural areas, and the findings should be understood in this light.

Future research should include a larger and more diverse group of participants in a similar type of study, and also seek confirmation of the findings by employing additional methodologies. Since the scope and methodological approach of this paper did not allow for this, future research programmes should test the impact of history education on young people and their opinions about the violent episodes. In this way, it would be possible to track better the effects that a particular way of teaching history has on students' understandings. In addition, it would be interesting to continue to explore the application of the two methodologies to other studies in order to learn more about what they yield together and the challenges that may emerge.

Nonetheless, the findings do show that the narratives of young Serbians who have no direct experience of war and whose only access to stories about the

violent breakup of Yugoslavia is indirect – through family members' stories, movies, TV, news, and history education – contain many characteristics of the conflict-supporting narratives while simultaneously normalizing violence as a legitimate and inevitable strategy in a situation of inter-group conflict. These young people use nationalism as one of the main explanatory tools when trying to make sense of the past violence, and this view can have important consequences for their current and future political positioning. If they accept nationalism as the main driving force and the lesson they take away is one that reaffirms nationalism as the 'natural order of things', there seems to be little to stop them from interpreting current and future inter-group relations in the same manner.

DISCUSSION

*As long as war is regarded as wicked, it will always have its fascination.
When it is looked upon as vulgar, it will cease to be popular.*

- Oscar Wilde

Summary of Findings

The three empirical studies presented here examine Serbian high school history textbook narratives, Serbian history teachers' attitudes, and the narratives of young Serbians about the violent Yugoslav breakup in order to explore the possible interplay between them with the focus on the potential role textbook narratives and teacher attitudes may play in fostering young peoples' critical understanding of recent violent conflict in Serbia. This exploration included approaching the main objective from three overlapping yet distinctive angles. First, an exploration of the Serbian history textbook narratives about the violent Yugoslav breakup; second, an exploration of the ways history teachers approach this topic in their everyday practice; third, an exploration of the ways young people in Serbia narrate the violent breakup of Yugoslavia. I will first summarize the findings from each of the three studies and then discuss the possible relationships between them and the theoretical implications of the thesis in relation to existing theory and research.

Study One

Study one presents the analysis of Serbian high school history textbook lessons dealing with the Yugoslav breakup. The study explored the content of these lessons in the light of the intercultural education initiatives as proposed by international organizations such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe. Discourse analysis showed that high-school history textbook narratives about the Yugoslav breakup normalize violence (A. Bermúdez, 2019) and transmit societal beliefs of an ethos of conflict (Bar-Tal, 2013). It further showed how the sophisticated narrative mechanisms of normalization of violence work to transmit societal beliefs of the ethos of conflict. The findings demonstrate that conflation of conflict and violence is present in all the history textbook lessons analyzed. Narratives conflate conflict and violence by interchangeably using words like war, conflict, or fighting to describe violent episodes and refer to violence as breaking out. It further identified six narrative keys of normalization of violence that consequently sustain different societal beliefs

of the ethos of conflict (Table 21). Narratives frame violence as the logical and natural consequence of nationalism which, through the desire to create an ethnically homogeneous nation-state, produces violence. In doing so, textbook lessons convey a story of security threats for ethnic Serbs living in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo, thus sustaining the societal belief of security. Similarly, violence is narratively reduced to the interethnic hatreds, and whole ethnic groups are positioned as the actors of violence, thus ignoring the complex social, economic, and other dynamics within the violent conflict. In this way, narratives sustain the societal belief of patriotism.

Table 21. The connections between Narrative Keys for Normalization of Violence and Societal Beliefs of Ethos of Conflict

Narrative Keys for the Normalization of Violence	Societal Beliefs of Ethos of Conflict
Narrative Framing of Violence: Violence as a logical consequence of nationalism and the desire to establish a nation-state which would be ethnically homogeneous	Security: Framing violence as such leads to security threats to our group
Disjointed Discussion of the Social Structures That Propel and Sustain Violence: reduction of violence to the interethnic hatred ignores the complex social, economic and other dynamics at play within a complex historical episode	Patriotism: positioning the whole ethnic groups as the main protagonist of the violence sustains the societal belief of patriotism
Silence About Nonviolent Alternatives: Narratives exclude individuals and organizations who worked to stop violence and proposed nonviolent solutions	Unity: creating the image of a unified societal decision to act violently in the conflict
Lack of Coordination of Different Narratives: textbooks exclusively present the official narrative of the Serbian ethnic group	Justness of One's Own Goals: goals of the Serbian ethnic group come across as justified
Removal of Human Agency behind Violence: Perpetrators are identified when they are the members or organizations of the opponent group	Delegitimization of the Opponent creates an image of disproportionate perpetrator role, thus delegitimizing the opponent groups
Marginalization of the Perspective and the Voice of Victims: victims are identified when they are members of own group	Victimization: Creates the image of disproportionate victim role of members of own group, thus sustaining victimization.

Societal beliefs of unity are sustained by the exclusion of peace organizations and peace activists from the narratives. Societies seem united in the decision to choose violence as the response to the crisis because the textbook narratives acknowledge no dissonant voices. Textbooks exclusively present the official narrative of the Serbian ethnic group, not coordinating different narratives, thus depicting the goals of ethnic Serbs as unquestionably justified. The narratives delegitimize the opponents and represent ethnic Serbs as victims by sophisticated narrative mechanisms of selectively removing human agency behind the violence and selectively marginalizing victims' voices and perspectives. Namely, the textbook narratives hide the human agency behind the violence when the perpetrators are ethnic Serbs and clearly identify the perpetrators when they are members of the opponent groups. Similarly, they marginalize the voices and perspectives of the victims when they are members of the opponent groups while engaging with their suffering when they are ethnic Serbs.

This analysis of Serbian high school history textbook narratives about the Yugoslav breakup further shows limitations of the framework of intercultural education (as advocated by the international organizations such as UNESCO and CoE) when it comes to post-conflict societies. While they do address the sensitive and controversial issues as per recommendations of CoE (2018), the way they currently do it does not tackle complicated power relations and can hardly foster harmonious intergroup relations in the future. Complex relationships between groups that advocate for different constructions of past events result in a constant struggle over all aspects of history education in post-conflict societies. This renders the above-mentioned principles and guidelines following from it insufficient to guide history education that will be able to engage with sensitive and controversial topics. Moreover, when it comes to history education, the intercultural education framework proposes developing critical thinking skills while failing to acknowledge the tensions, particularly amplified in post-conflict societies, between two groups of history education goals: identity formation and development of critical thinking.

Study Two

Study two explored how history teachers in Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, and North Macedonia approach controversial topics in their everyday practice. This mixed-method study involved 793 history teachers from the Western Balkan region as well as interviews with 14 history education experts from these countries. Here I am going to focus on the findings related to the history teachers from Serbia. As expected, the findings indicate that Serbian history teachers see the Yugoslav breakup as the most difficult topic in their teaching. Interestingly, they see it as the most difficult topic in and outside of the curriculum. This signals a high level of confusion concerning the curricular expectations aimed at teachers regarding these topics, since one topic is either included in or excluded from the curriculum. This is probably due to the ambiguous educational policies and political abuses of this topic outside the classroom. Furthermore, the study findings show that the container role is amalgamated with the risk-taker role. This is likely due to teachers seeing any engagement with the difficult topics as some sort of risk-taking behavior. The findings further indicate there are certain characteristics connected to teachers' risk-taking in the classroom. Teachers who engage in risk-taking to a greater extent are less religious, more educated, and more often members of national organizations that deal with history education and training. Finally, the findings of study two demonstrate that concerning when the "history ends" teachers make decisions that are often not in line with what the curricula prescribe. Most of the teachers report on ending their lessons with 1990 or 2000 even though the curriculum prescribes teaching the events until 2006. While this is partly because the curriculum is overwhelming and too ambitious in terms of the amount of content to be covered, the fact that teachers report on these two specific years tells us many make a conscious decision to include or exclude the wars from their everyday teaching.

Study Three

Study three presented the analysis of interviews and small group discussions (SGD) with 31 first- and second-year university students in Serbia. The interviews and SGD's focused on the topic of the Yugoslav breakup, during which participants were asked to explain these events in their own words. In addition, students shared their experiences with history teaching on this topic and possible personal or family experiences in relation to these events. The main questions guiding this study were to what extent participants' narratives contain themes of a collective memory of conflict and whether participants narratively normalize recent violence. The study identified four keys for the normalization of violence in students' narratives about the violent breakup of Yugoslavia (Table 22): "inevitable breakup" as the narrative frame that normalizes violence, disjointed discussion of social structures that propel and sustain violence, silence about nonviolent movements, and biased representations of different narratives. Students narratively normalize violence by employing the narrative frame of "inevitable breakup".

The narrative frame rests on four central ideas (the artificiality of Yugoslavia, Tito as the only thing holding Yugoslavia together, the emphasis of cultural differences, and the existence of ancient hostilities) that render violence as an expected and natural outcome. Furthermore, participants narratively ascribe violence to whole ethnic/religious groups. By doing so, the narratives obscure the complex network of social, economic, and political dynamics and structures that actively informed the decisions made by different actors during the violent episodes. Representing whole groups as actors in these narratives makes it hard to examine various struggles between different groups within society. Finally, long and complicated violent episodes in students' narratives are reduced to the instances of violence against members of their own group, thus representing one single narrative and disregarding alternative viewpoints, for example, perspectives of opponent groups.

Table 22. Narrative Keys for Normalization of Violence in participants' narratives

Narrative Keys for the Normalization of Violence

The narrative frame of violence	Inevitable breakup
	Artificiality of Yugoslavia
	Tito as the only thing holding YU together
	The emphasis of cultural differences
	Existence of ancient hostilities
A Disjointed Discussion of Social Structures that Propel and Sustain Violence	Ascribing violence to whole ethnic/religious groups
Biased Representations in Different Narratives	Disregarding alternative viewpoints
Silence about nonviolent movements	Almost no knowledge of nonviolent movements

Along the same line, when it comes to societal beliefs of the ethos of conflict (Table 23), students emphasize violence against members of their group while discounting the violence committed against opponent groups. This clearly points to victimization as one of the dominant themes of the collective memory of the conflict. Another theme of the collective memory of the conflict is the delegitimization of the opponent, which is also present in students' narratives. More often than not, participants describe opponent groups as 1) cruel, brutal, and bloodthirsty; 2) immoral by ascribing to them the intention to commit violent acts against their own group; and 3) labeling them as terrorists. Finally, students justify the goals of their own group in their narratives about the violent breakup of Yugoslavia as a response to the violence of the opponent groups.

These findings tell us that in Serbia, certain narrative features presented in history textbook lessons about the violent breakup of Yugoslavia are also found in young peoples' narratives about the Yugoslav breakup. In the

following sections, I will first discuss the relationship between these three elements of history education in Serbia and later theoretical contributions of the current work, and limitations and avenues for future research.

Table 23. Themes of Ethos of Conflict in participants' narratives

Themes of Ethos of Conflict

Justification of the own group's goals	Defense
Victimization of own group	Emphasis on the violence against own group, discounting the violence against opponent groups
Delegitimization of opponent group	Their goals are not legitimate
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cruel • Immoral • Terrorists

Serbian History Education about Yugoslav Breakup

Based on the findings presented it could be argued history education in post-conflict Serbia could be best described as following the “national narrative approach” trend as opposed to “disciplinary approach” and “globalized approach” (Paulson, 2015). It seems that despite some changes to methods, which are mostly driven by local and international NGO’s, history education in Serbia, at least when it comes to teaching about the recent violence, transmits the national narrative. Trying to determine whether the conflict is included in the curriculum brings further complexity. Examination of the curriculum shows that the violent Yugoslav breakup is included, and teachers are required to teach this period. At the same time, study two findings show that teachers find it the most difficult topic to teach and some skip it. Additionally confirming this, most students in our study three sample indicate their teachers skipped this topic. So, while the recent conflict is officially included in the curriculum, it seems that it is *de facto* not

being taught in many schools. Teachers who do teach this period are working with textbooks that, as study one findings show, contain the elements of the conflict supporting narrative and narrative features of the normalization of violence. These findings point to the single ethno-nationalist narrative that rarely considers other perspectives and narratives. Given the large number of history education related projects by local and international NGO's, this situation is reminiscent of what Paulson (2015) refers to as the "ethno-nationalist narratives and efforts to change them" (2015, p. 22).

Serbian History Education about Yugoslav Breakup Between Intercultural Education and Classroom Reality

History education in Serbia, as well as the rest of the educational system, is declaratively guided by the principles and values promoted by international organizations dealing with education such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe. These organizations, to a large extent, promote the framework of intercultural education in addition to providing specific guidelines for history education that should foster peaceful coexistence in post-conflict societies. As the findings of study one show, there is a contradiction between these declarative abstract values and what is actually found in history textbook narratives about the violent Yugoslav breakup. These findings are in line with the emerging empirical evidence from other post-conflict contexts. One such study, focused on Sri Lankan civics textbooks, found these textbooks simplifying the causes of the conflict, obscuring the systemic violence, and promoting social justice, democracy, and human rights without entering the discussion of what the application of these values would mean in the local context (Bentrovato and Nissanka, 2018). The authors argue that promoting these abstract values "may be meaningless or indeed counterproductive if it is not accompanied by efforts to critically address domestic experiences of violence, its root causes, its present-day legacies, and related continuing controversies" (Bentrovato and Nissanka, 2018, p. 356). Looking at the Serbian context this tension is clear when we remember what educational

reforms Serbian government is committing to in the process of EU accession. For example, the education segment of the outreach activities of the 2016 National Strategy for the Prosecution of War Crimes for 2016–2020 (the new one is being drafted at the moment) commits to improve the curricula “in a manner that allows the students/pupils to obtain a sufficient quantity of relevant information on the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, the war crimes committed during that time, and the norms of international humanitarian law” (Republic of Serbia, 2016, p. 30). Yet, study one findings show the omission of many crucial events that would be useful for understanding the violent conflicts, obscuring systemic violence and power relations between different ethnic groups, as well as reducing the conflict to an ethnic one. These and other study one findings are in complete contrast with the above-mentioned commitments of Serbian government and the general direction of educational reforms towards values proclaimed by European Union institutions. In addition, some political statements are in contradiction to these commitments. One example of these is quoted at the beginning of this thesis and calls for “fundamental Serbian truth” and history textbooks written by “us” for “us”. This kind of political discourse bears great similarities to what Christodoulou (2018) found as elements of the resistance towards textbook revision discourse in Cyprus. Some of the most striking similarities refer to the fear that the historical truth will be lost, the fear that the national identity will be lost, and that revised textbooks serve foreign interest (Christodoulou, 2018).

The tensions and contradictions between the values coming from the outside, including intercultural education framework, and the reality of history education, as seen in the curricula content, history textbook narratives and some political statements, amount to a context filled with ambivalent and mixed messages. Given this kind of context, it seems unavoidable for many teachers to experience insecurity and confusion when it comes to teaching sensitive topics like the violent Yugoslav breakup.

History Textbook Narratives, History Teachers and Young Peoples' Understanding of the Recent Violent Past

Findings further indicate that Serbian history education about the violent Yugoslav breakup is not easily categorized into one of the broad approaches proposed by Davies (2005). Looking at textbook narratives, we can recognize elements of several approaches. On one hand, findings indicating unity and patriotism as well as homogenizing group members, point to *stereotypes and allegiances approach* where “war and conflict are taught not specifically as hating or fearing an enemy, but as the result of a stereotypical culture which permeates everyone in that country” (Davies, 2005, p. 23). On the other hand, narrative normalization of violence with its different elements, points to *war as a routine approach* where there is an “emphasis on understanding the causes of war, and there may be an ‘objective’ coverage of ‘both sides’” (Davies, 2005, p. 24) and a danger of presenting the war as a “series of ‘inevitable’ events, with little distinction between them” (Davies, 2005, p. 24). Finally, looking at study two findings, it seems most of history teaching about the violent Yugoslav breakup in Serbia avoids it in line with the *omission form discussion approach* where “conflict is played down or not mentioned in curriculum, particularly in conflict or post-conflict states, in order not to ‘inflare’ or cement attitudes” (Davies, 2005, p. 24). Taken together, while the current situation with Serbian history teaching about the recent conflict is complex and not easily placed in one of the categories, all three categories, elements of which are found, are the ones not contributing much to reconciliation efforts. Similar conclusion is reached if we look at findings about Serbian history teaching considering other theoretical models proposed. In the model proposed by Kello and Wegner (2017) consisting of propaganda (traditional history teaching), propagation, and diffusion (critical history teaching) as teaching styles, Serbian history teaching about the conflict could be placed on the imagined continuum of propagation with strong elements of propaganda approach. Likewise, Serbian history teaching is closer to what Goldberg (2017)

refers to as *official approach* which is in his analysis shown to be harmful to intergroup relations.

Study three findings shed additional light at the existing scholarship on young peoples' understanding of recent violent past in Serbia. There is a very limited number of studies focusing on young people born after the violence was over and they provide contradicting evidence. Some findings are relatively optimistic about the future. For example, Obradović (2016) found more in-group criticism and more awareness of the complexities with younger participants when comparing them to the older group. Somewhat similarly, Pavasović-Trošt (2013b) found young people are eager to move away from the ethno-nationalist narratives despite blaming others for what happened. Others, however, are speaking to an opposite trend. Radoman (2020) concludes young people are more nationalistic than the general population due to their not remembering the wars of the 1990s. Current study provides additional depth to the analysis of young peoples' narratives due to the employment of two theoretical/analytical frameworks and the findings are not offering much optimism. They indicate nationalism is used, to a large extent, as a main explanatory tool in narrating and understanding what happened during the violent breakup of Yugoslavia. We could say that uncritically employing nationalism to explain recent violent past could indicate acceptance of nationalism in their current and future political thinking. Future research, based on the study three findings, is necessary to better understand and measure the relationship between nationalism among young people in Serbia and the ways they understand the recent violent past.

Furthermore, there are salient similarities between the high school history textbook narratives and participants' narratives about the violent breakup of Yugoslavia. These findings could mean that students simply adopt the textbook narratives, but the findings prevent us from drawing a straight line between the two since we know that Serbian history teachers often skip these lessons. The content-heavy curriculum does not leave much time for

teachers to deal with the lessons that come at the end of the textbook. In addition, because the curriculum is chronological, the lessons about the Yugoslav breakup most often come at the end of an educational cycle when students and teachers are preoccupied with the preparations for entrance exams for the following educational cycle. Furthermore, most participants in study three openly admitted their history classes never dealt with this topic. Serbian history teachers, as opposed to some other post-conflict contexts like Rwanda where it is mandatory for history teaching to cover recent violence (Bentorvato, 2021), have the liberty to make independent decisions to a certain extent. However, study two findings indicate many use this liberty to skip exactly the lessons about the topic they find most difficult – the violent Yugoslav breakup. This is probably due to the dominant narrative about the wars in Serbian society as well as confusing curricular expectations. All of this adds to the argument that, although students do not learn much about these events in school, they reproduce narratives like those found in history textbooks because both seem to be influenced by the dominant narrative present in Serbian society and disseminated through various communication channels.

The Goals of History Education and Serbian History Education About Yugoslav Breakup

History education clearly has an immense potential to help build peaceful and democratic societies and thus represents an indispensable tool for reconciliation. However, the realization of this potential depends on many different factors that determine the characteristics of history education.

Looking at the scholarship on history education, there are at least two big competing groups of goals: romantic and enlightened history education goals (Bermúdez & Carretero, 2012; Carretero, 2011; Carretero et al., 2012). Romantic goals, which revolve around creating a positive group identification with the nation, have prevailed in history education since its inception until relatively recently; they are still dominant in many societies worldwide, and

there is a tension between these and enlightened goals in many others. The quote from the beginning of this thesis asserts that Serbian textbooks need to contain “only our fundamental Serbian truth”. It seems to encapsulate the major characteristics of the current political context in Serbia which is in line with the romantic goals of history education. As we see from different studies and reports examining history education in Serbia, this understanding of the history education goals is present on all levels of the educational system, apparent in educational policies and textbook narratives. The content of high school history textbook lessons analyzed in study one confirms this, at least when we speak about the Yugoslav breakup. High school history textbook narratives about the breakup of Yugoslavia work hard to maintain the positive collective self-image in the light of the recent conflict. They selectively use mechanisms for the normalization of violence to transmit the societal beliefs that support the ethos of conflict, resulting in an image of Serbia always being “on the right side” of the conflict. Often disregarding or minimizing the violence committed by the Serbian side in the conflicts speaks to the lack of critical examination of the events and especially the role of Serbia in these events.

The other group of history education goals comes from the enlightened tradition and focuses on developing historical thinking and historical consciousness. Some authors put more emphasis on the development of historical thinking through developing second-order historical concepts (Lee & Ashby, 2000), others on the development of historical consciousness through developing the capacity of students to orient themselves temporally (Rüsen, 2004), and some combine the two approaches by including historical consciousness into their historical thinking models (Seixas & Morton, 2013). The combination of the two traditions is maybe best summed up in the call for “history that allows students to orientate themselves in time” but one that would allow students “to understand the past to which they orientate as constructed historically” (2004, p. 38). Thus, students need to develop certain historical thinking capacities to engage with historical narratives and

learn from them. Once they start doing so, history teaching will be able to aid them with the temporal orientations necessary for understanding the past and facing the future. A vital part of this orientation is the moral demands that history, and consequently, history education make. Findings of study three however, show that Serbian students provide simplified narratives that normalize violence to a certain extent and contain some of the themes of the ethos of conflict. This points to them relying on basic historical thinking skills. It seems that current history education in Serbia provides students with a specific kind of temporal orientation, especially the moral component, one that has been absorbed from social context and appropriated by the individuals without much critical ethical reflection.

The analysis of Serbian history textbook and participants' narratives points to a particular moral stance, one that is in line with nationalism, victimhood, maintaining the conflict-supporting narratives, and normalization of violence. The kind of characterization of in- and outgroup in historical narratives about violent past that runs down the lines of "*they = bad*" and "*we = good*" obstructs the possibility of students building a more complex, critical ethical reflection. It instead fosters the development of what we could refer to as "*ethnicized*" morality - the moral stance that is crossed over by ethnic belonging. In this way, the usual refrain ***never again*** seems to turn into ***never aging will we allow them to do that to us***, and ***never forget*** seems to become ***never forget our victims and their crimes***. All of this can be detrimental to the development of harmonious relationships with the members of past opponent groups and the reconciliation process in general.

Furthermore, the socio-cultural approach to history education reminds us to be attentive to the context in which history is taught and learned. It "calls attention to the socially situated nature and purpose of students' actions—what they do with history—rather than focusing on the knowledge assumed to exist inside their heads or the skills they are believed to possess as individuals" (Barton & Levstik, 2004, pp. 6–7). Moreover, authors state

that we need to know “how teachers convey information to students and how textbooks and other materials represent content” (2004, p. 18). Again, the opening quote serves as an indicator of the Serbian context and reveals the vision of what students are expected to do with history; however, study findings provide a more nuanced picture. Textbook analysis shows how narratives about the Yugoslav breakup contain and transmit the elements of the conflict-supporting narratives by employing narrative mechanisms for the normalization of violence. These narratives are then used in the classroom by teachers who often do not have the sufficient knowledge or motivation to engage with these sensitive topics. They, themselves members of a society with their own memories, personal experiences, and attitudes, report in study two that they consider this topic to be the most difficult. In addition, they are often confused by the curricular expectations, and all of this results in them frequently skipping the lessons altogether and letting students seek knowledge outside the formal educational system. Finally, we see that young people in study three also normalize violence and hold some of the beliefs of the ethos of conflict. Given these characteristics of the context, it could be argued that they uncritically adopt a dominant narrative that is salient in society.

Based on all the above, we can say that history education’s potential to develop historical thinking and nurture historical consciousness with a critical ethical stance towards past violence is **not fully realized** in Serbia. This, in turn, can have long-lasting negative consequences on peacebuilding efforts. Maintaining conflict supporting narratives in relation to past opponent groups and normalizing past violence can be an explosive combination for future political disagreements. This kind of history education can have many negative consequences for the young people exposed to it. First, they are not exposed to all the relevant facts about past violence. Most often, the ones concealed are exactly facts about the misdeeds committed by ingroup members. This puts them in a situation where they could react with surprise and disbelief when confronted with these facts later in life. Consequently,

this can create society members that respond negatively to any person or organization trying to reveal the truth about what happened. Second, based on this kind of history education, it comes easy for students to conclude that *we* are not “even” and that *we*, as a group, have a right to some kind of revenge. If *we* think that *Others* owe *us* something, why would *we* put effort into building a better relationship with *them*? Missing the opportunity to help students develop more advanced historical thinking skills and the critical ethical stance, that could help them confront the violent past in the classroom, could result in future citizens being easily influenced by nationalist rhetoric and manipulated by false accounts of past events. This kind of thinking can be hazardous and hurt the political as well as personal reconciliation process.

Theoretical Contributions

Connections Between Normalization of Violence and Conflict Supporting Narratives

One of the theoretical contributions of this thesis is the exploration of the possible interrelations between two out of the three theoretical/analytical frameworks the thesis is building on: *(de)normalization of violence in historical narratives* (A. Bermúdez, 2019) and *societal beliefs/themes of the ethos of conflict* (Bar-Tal, 2013). Although these two frameworks were previously used to explore narratives in conflict and post-conflict societies, this thesis is the first attempt to explore the relationship between the two in a single analysis. This approach proved to be exceptionally useful in providing a deeper understanding of the historical narratives in studies one and three.

The framework of *ten narrative keys for the (de)normalization of violence* deals primarily with the ways historical narratives represent past violence. It claims that this is what can in part determine whether consumers of such narratives (in the case of textbooks - young people who learn history) will consider violence as legitimate means of dealing with future conflicts. Critical engagement with various aspects of violent pasts through history education

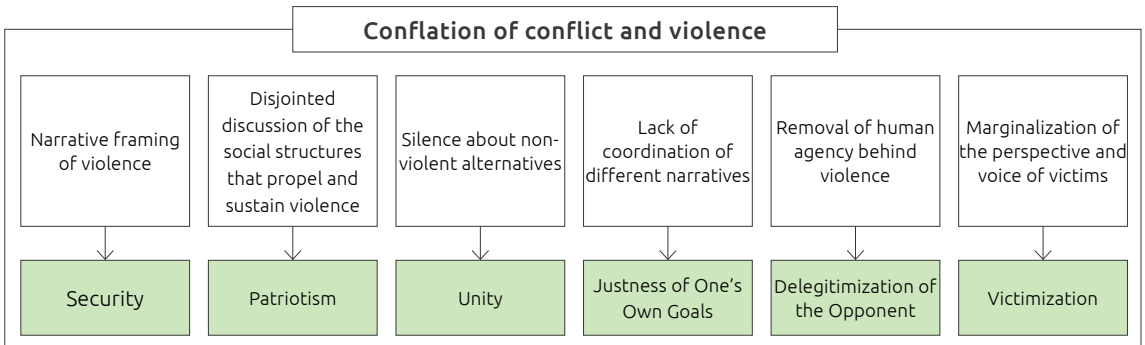
is seen as a strategy that would help young people understand that violence is just one of the ways people and groups react in a conflict situation, thus de-normalizing violence and fostering a peaceful approach to future conflicts.

The numerous analyses of the societies involved in protracted conflicts discovered certain themes present in such societies. *Themes/societal beliefs of the ethos of conflict* are developed during intractable conflicts due to the challenges posed by the conflict. They serve society members to satisfy specific needs that arise from the conflict. These themes, understood as societal beliefs, are found within different communication channels including history textbooks. According to this view once the conflict is formally over, it is necessary to change these beliefs to achieve peaceful and harmonious relations between former adversary groups. However, conflict supporting narratives are often maintained long after the violence is over but changes in the dominant narrative do not allow us to analyze these directly.

This is where combining two analytical/theoretical frameworks is proving to be a useful tool. When it comes to history textbook narratives, previous research (Pavasović-Trošt, 2018) showed an evolution of narratives from being explicitly ethno-nationalist during and right after the wars towards contain the same features but in a more implicit way. In the case of Serbian high school history textbook lessons dealing with the Yugoslav breakup complementing the framework of the themes of the conflict supporting narratives with the narrative keys for (de)normalization of violence provides the opportunity to explore more sophisticated mechanisms that still transmit the themes of ethos of conflict without being explicit about it. The situation is similar when we consider young peoples' narratives about the same period. While the themes of the ethos of conflict represent the content of beliefs members of societies involved in intractable conflict hold, the framework of (de)normalization of violence focuses on the discursive strategies used to transmit specific messages about violence through historical narratives. All of this points to a compatibility of the two frameworks in the analysis of history teaching about recent violent conflicts.

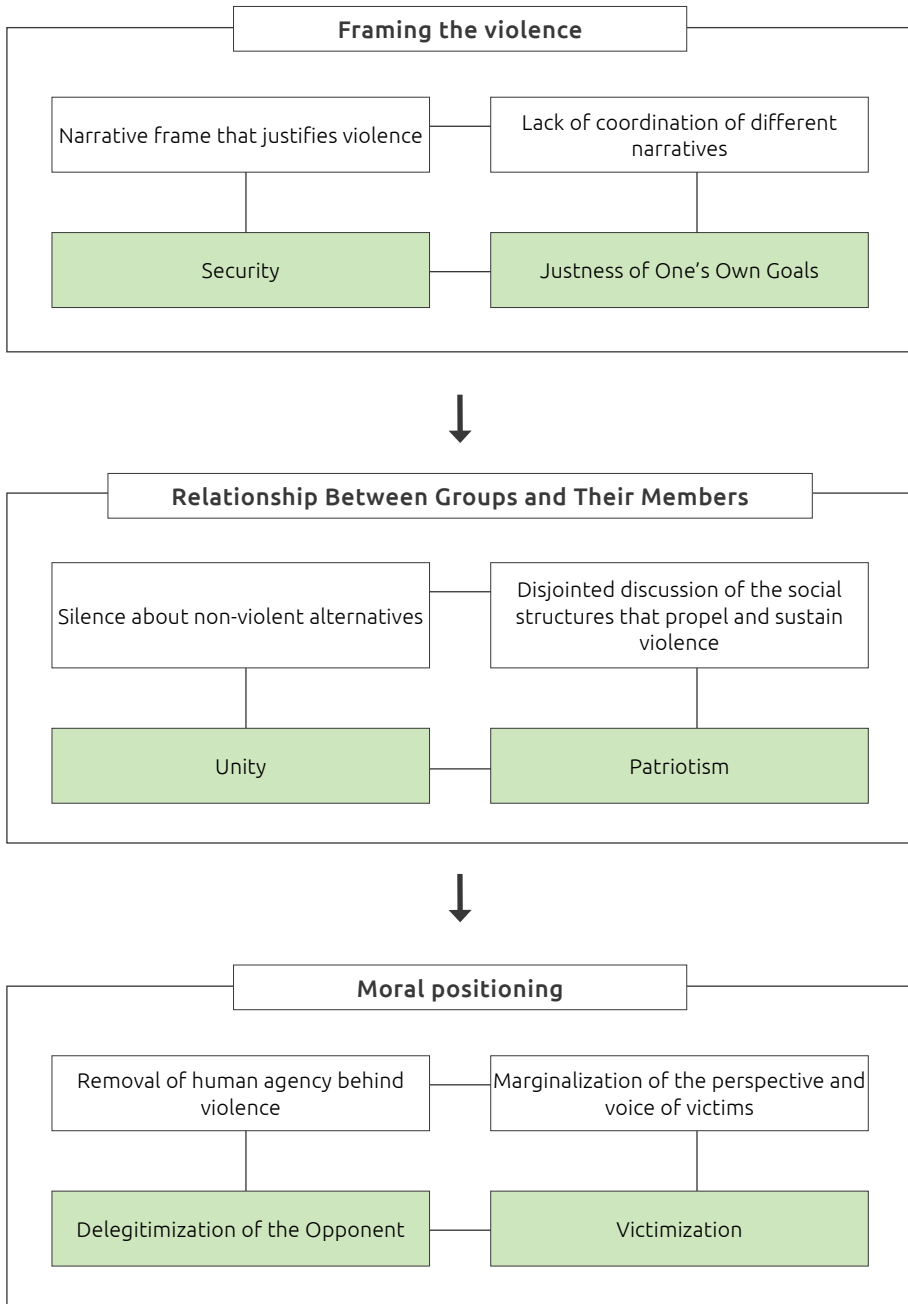
The analytical framework of study one ([Intercultural Education in Post-Conflict Societies: Historical Narratives of the Breakup of Yugoslavia in Serbian High School History Textbooks](#)) provides one attempt to map the possible connections between the two frameworks. Six categories of one model relate to six categories of the other model in a series of one-on-one relationships, as seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Analytical model (Study One)



However, a careful consideration of additional material collected during the interviews and SGD's in study three ([The Next Generation: Nationalism and Violence in the Narratives of Serbian Students on the Breakup of Yugoslavia](#)) and examination of study one and study three findings together signaled the possibility of additional connections between the categories not accounted for by the model developed in study one. This led to rethinking the relationships to provide a more comprehensive conceptual model and resulted in three cluster: *framing violence*, *relationship between groups and their members*, and *moral positioning* (Figure 4). Each cluster consists of four categories (two narrative keys and two themes of ethos of conflict) interconnected in more ways than one and create one consistent story about a violent conflict. The clusters are discussed in the following subsections.

Figure 4. Relationship between the narrative normalization of violence and themes of the ethos of conflict



Relationship Between Groups and Their Members

The first cluster of connections refers to the narrative keys and themes of conflict supporting how narratives depict the relationship between groups involved in the conflict and their members. Two closely related themes of the ethos of conflict are the societal belief of unity and the societal belief of patriotism. Both exist in every society, whether involved in a protracted conflict or not. Still, they gain specific meaning in the former where patriotism becomes “blind”, and unity is accepted as unquestionable. Again, the narrative keys for the normalization of violence help us understand the sophisticated mechanisms at play when these are transmitted through historical narratives. The disjointed discussion of the social structures that sustain and propel violence is a feature of many narratives about past violence through which the complex network of social, economic, and political factors is over-simplified, thus blurring the various motivations and decision-making processes that led to the use of violence. As we saw in the case of Serbian textbooks and participants’ narratives, this simplification frequently means using the ethnic group identification when defining the actors of violence (Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks, Albanians) and categorizing people and organizations solely by their ethnicity. In this way, the narratives sustain the image of patriotism where ethnic membership narratively becomes equal to the willingness to commit violence in the group’s name. While these mechanisms simultaneously strengthen the societal belief of unity of the ethnic groups, an additional narrative feature further sustains it. The silence about nonviolent alternatives, demonstrated in the examples from Serbia, creates a distorted image of the lack of dissonant voices and a unanimous group decision to act violently in the face of conflict. If, as in the case of narratives analyzed here, unity is requested within the ethnic group, the connection between the two becomes evident. Concurrently, the connection between the two narrative keys is emerging. Silence about nonviolent alternatives in the Serbian example works as one part of the simplification that occurs within the narrative representation of past violence

since pointing to the nonviolent initiatives (organizations, persons, events) could start unraveling the narrative simplification and imagined unity of the group.

Framing Violence

One of the main themes of the ethos of conflict is the societal belief about justness of the goals of own group. It is connected to understanding how the conflict started in the first place and why the engagement of one's own group in the conflict makes sense. More often than not, it is closely connected to the theme of security, whereas a security threat is used to justify the involvement in the conflict. However, what needs most justification is precisely the violence committed by the members (organizations and representatives) of own group. Here, the connection between the two frameworks becomes clear. Narratives often frame violent episodes in a way that makes them seem justified, and studies one and three showed that they use security threat as a major element of this justifying frame. Groups in violent conflicts always have conflicting goals. Often, to justify the ingroup goals, narratives do not coordinate alternative narratives and completely exclude the opponent group's narrative. This lack of coordination also supports the overall justification frame, and the circle is complete. We could say that all four categories work towards the same goal – framing the beginning of the violence as caused by the opponent group.

Moral Positioning

Narratives about past violence often conceal the human agency behind violence and marginalize the voices and the perspectives of the victims. In the narratives analyzed, this is done selectively following a specific pattern. The perpetrators of violence are rendered almost invisible when it comes to ingroup members, while this is not done when they are part of the past opponent groups. At the same time, victims' voices and perspectives are marginalized when they are members of the opponent groups and not when they are ingroup members. Like the other two clusters, four categories from

two models within this one are all interconnected. Marginalizing the voices and perspectives of victims if they are members of the outgroup (usually harmed by the ingroup members) while not doing so when the victims are ingroup members does two things. It creates an image of a violent conflict in which members of the ingroup were disproportionately more victimized and thus clearly supports self-victimization. On the other hand, it creates the image of outgroup members committing disproportionately more violence than members of the ingroups. This delegitimizes the opponent as more violent and cruel. Adding to this is the selective removal of the human agency behind the violence. By further supporting the image of outgroups as the perpetrator and the ingroup as an innocent victim, it clears the way for seeing ingroup as moral and righteous while perceiving the past opponent groups as immoral.

In addition, the clusters themselves are related and provide meaning to one another within the overall narrative about the recent violent past. The specific understanding of groups as unified and their members as patriots establishes the actors of the historical episodes and sets the stage for the possibility to frame the violence in a specific way. It provides the answer to whose goals are justified and whose security is threatened. This particular framing of violence as natural and expected response to a threat in turn leads to a specific moral positioning.

All of this demonstrates a tremendous analytical and explanatory value of connecting the two theoretical frameworks. While the themes of the ethos of conflict provide an understanding of what narratives are likely to contain in order to satisfy the needs of the society members during and after intractable conflict, specific narrative features can show us the mechanisms at work within these narratives. This seems especially important in post-conflict societies where the textbook narratives are, as the time passes, often changed not to explicitly support the conflict. When this is the case, narrative features that normalize violence can help us identify if and how historical narratives

still do so in an implicit and sophisticated way. The two studies about the Serbian case presented here clearly demonstrate this.

Integrative View of History Education in Post-Conflict Societies

The field of history education and especially research on history education in post-conflict societies is an important topic that continues to inspire researchers to propose, test, and develop new approaches and understandings. However, some aspects of this line of work need further improvement, and hopefully, this thesis represents a step in the right direction.

First, there is a need for more interdisciplinary research on this complex topic. Reading the literature on history education in post-conflict societies coming from psychology, peace studies, history, sociology, political science, etc., one often encounters the same phenomena. However, they are often named, understood, and explored differently depending on the discipline. Much like in the famous Indian parable “*The blind men and the elephant*”, the authors coming from different fields use their own methodologies and approaches to answer the same questions, thus generating a fragmented and sometimes repetitive picture of the problem. This thesis represents an attempt to combine different disciplinary approaches to provide a fuller understanding of this complex topic. The theoretical base of the work presented here is built on the insights of psychology, peace studies, and educational science and is further informed by the lenses of history, political science, and area studies on Eastern Europe. This way, it provides a genuine interdisciplinary attempt to grasp the complexity of history education in post-conflict societies.

Second aspect is often closely connected to the lack of interdisciplinarity. There is a tendency of authors in the field, despite rare exceptions (Bentrovato, 2021), to focus only on one aspect of this complex issue. Some studies focus solely on textbook analysis, others on history teachers, and some exclusively on young peoples’ meaning making, leaving the rest of the picture somewhat in the background. While these approaches yielded

many significant contributions, they often fall short from engaging with the complexity of the subject examined. This thesis represents an attempt to grapple with this complexity, by including three separate empirical studies on history textbooks, history teachers, and “history” students. Doing so paints a bigger picture and provides fuller understanding of how history education about recent past in contemporary Serbian society might be shaping young peoples’ understanding of the violent past.

Normalization of Violence in Participants’ Narratives

Previous studies demonstrated how violence is narratively normalized in history textbooks (A. Bermúdez, 2019; Á. Bermúdez & Argumero, 2018; A. Bermúdez & Stoskopf, 2020) and museums (A. Bermúdez & Epstein, 2020) but this thesis represents the first attempt to explore whether ordinary peoples’ (in this case young peoples’) narratives contain the narrative features of normalization of violence. In study three, we identified four narrative features that serve to normalize the violence that happened during the Yugoslav breakup. Participants in study three placed the violent breakup of Yugoslavia in a larger narrative frame of “inevitable breakup” that renders violence an expected and natural outcome. Furthermore, participants represented the violence in a way that conceals the complex social, economic, and political structures that propelled and sustained violence. This was done by employing nationalism as the explanatory tool and identifying the actors of violence as whole ethnic groups. Participants rarely provided a multivocal narrative of the violent episodes and mainly presented one perspective – the perspective closest to the official narrative present within the Serbian society. They regularly reduced complex and long stories to one or two events, and more often than not, these events were the instances of violence against Serbs. Finally, they rarely made any reference to numerous nonviolent movements that existed during the conflict.

This tells us that the framework of ten narrative keys for (de)normalization of violence (A. Bermúdez, 2019) possesses yet untapped potential for

understanding the ways ordinary people tell stories about and make sense of past violence. This is an important finding since it could lead to a better understanding of the specific ways these kinds of narratives are adopted, their connections with other types of beliefs and behaviors, and expand our knowledge of what it would take to change them.

Limitations and Future Research

While this thesis provides many important insights, opens additional questions, and points to many future research possibilities, it also suffers from certain limitations. This thesis is a mixed-method study to a certain degree. However, triangulating different types of data within each study was not possible due to time and financial restrictions.

Because it uses a large sample, study two provides sufficient justification for generalizing the findings. Nevertheless, conducting in-depth interviews with history teachers could yield more profound insights into their motivations and attitudes when tackling Yugoslav breakup through their everyday practice. Conversely, study three allows us to track nuances and fine-grained mechanisms students use to narrate the Yugoslav breakup but limits generalization due to the small sample. Future research would benefit from including a larger representative sample of young people in a survey study with a representative sample.

Including three distinct yet overlapping aspects of history teaching about the recent violent past is an important step towards integrating different strands of research in history education. However, due to practical limitations studies two and three were designed and conducted as separate studies which limits our ability to make direct connections between them. Future research would benefit from developing a study that would integrate the exploration of teachers, the resources these teachers use, and students they teach. In this way, it would be possible to trace the connections and draw more reliable conclusions about the effects of certain teachers' characteristics, teaching

methods, and teaching resources on students' understanding of the recent violent past.

While current work deals with three arguably most important aspects of history teaching, it does not include the analysis of other sources of historical narratives about the violent Yugoslav breakup in Serbian society. Future research should include the analysis of media (traditional and social) reporting about the violent Yugoslav breakup, reporting on previous opponent groups and members of these groups (Croats, Bosniaks, and Albanians) as well as media reporting on the war crimes trials in Serbia and outside. Another important future research avenues include exploration of commemorations, especially state funded and organized commemorations of the events related to the violent Yugoslav breakup.

Additional limitation is related to the geographical focus of the thesis. Due to practical limitations, study two includes teachers from all Western Balkan countries, yet the other two studies focus only on Serbia, which represents the main focus of the current work. Since some studies show that the problems of history education are similar in other Western Balkan countries, future research should encompass the analysis of all these elements of history education in all Western Balkan countries. In this way, it would also be possible to understand the relationships between these societies and get a fuller picture of what true reconciliation would entail on all sides. The need for this kind of research is further supported by the fact that most Western Balkan countries were involved in the Yugoslav breakup, so they share this recent violent history and, in many ways, operate as communicating vessels.

The findings presented open many additional questions that should be addressed by future research. One refers to mapping the connections between narrative normalization of violence and maintaining societal beliefs of conflict on the one hand, and other constructs on the other. Rich material obtained through interviews and small group discussions, part of which is analyzed in study three, points to the elements of moral disengagement (Bandura, 1999).

Following this line of thought, future research could test whether narrative normalization of violence and the presence of conflict supporting narratives in history education is connected to the emergence of moral disengagement concerning the past immoral acts of the ingroup. In addition to this, future research should look at the possible connections with various aspects of young peoples' political behavior such as political participation, ideology, attitudes towards important political issues, etc.

CONCLUSIONS

The main objective of this thesis was to examine the interplay between three different dimensions of history education (textbook narratives, teacher attitudes, and student narratives about the violent Yugoslav breakup). The specific objectives were achieved by the empirical work that included several aspects of history teaching about the recent violent past. First, I analyzed high school history textbook lessons about the Yugoslav breakup in Serbia. Second, the analysis of how history teachers in Serbia approach these topics and what characteristics are connected to “risk-taking” in the classroom was conducted. Finally, I analyzed narratives about the violent Yugoslav breakup of a group of young people in Serbia. The analysis employed three analytical frameworks with three distinct methodologies: thematic analysis to identify themes of the ethos of conflict (Bar-Tal, 2013), discourse analysis to identify narrative keys for normalization of violence (A. Bermúdez, 2019), the survey-based study grounded in avoider – risk-taker model of history teachers’ practice (Kitson & McCully, 2005)

The findings show that history textbooks as well as young people employ narrative mechanisms that normalize past violence and contain identifiable themes of the ethos of conflict. As mediators of these narratives, Serbian history teachers frequently take themselves entirely out of this equation due to political and societal factors that influence teaching controversial topics in post-conflict societies. Considering the contemporary debates in the field, history education about the violent breakup of Yugoslavia in Serbian schools insufficiently develops students’ historical thinking skills, thus making it difficult for students to use what they learn in school to orient themselves temporally. This is especially worrying in a specific politically unstable post-conflict context that requires them to make political decisions frequently related to how recent violent history is understood and the moral judgments they make in this process.

These findings further show that history education in Serbia about the violent Yugoslav breakup, instead of providing students with the usual moral

injunctions “never again” and “never forget,” interprets them through an ethnic lens. In this way, everything good and moral is associated with the ethnic ingroup, and everything bad and immoral with the ethnic outgroups. This kind of “ethnicized” morality stands in stark contrast to the development of a democratic society and hinders the attempts to build harmonious relationships with the members of past opponent groups. The findings point to the conclusion that history education about the recent violent past in Serbia misses the opportunity to deconstruct societal beliefs of the ethos of conflict and foster a critical engagement with past violence.

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APPENDIX



Appendix A – Informed Consent Form (English) (Study 3)



Consent to participate in the research

Name of the research project: How young people in Serbia see the recent violent past?

Researcher: Rodoljub Jovanović, PhD Student, Centre for Applied Ethics, University DESUTO, Bilbao

Name of the participant: _____

I accept participation in the research conducted by the PhD student Rodoljub Jovanovic under supervision of professor Angela Bermudez, Centre for Applied Ethics, as part of the doctoral thesis. My participation is completely voluntary.

Please read the information bellow and ask about any aspect of the research process before you make a decision on your participation in this research

- The interview will be recorded and based on the recording transcript will be produced
- The transcript will be analyzed by the researcher Rodoljub Jovanovic
- Access to the transcript will be limited to the researcher and his collaborators within this project, as well as the researchers that could collaborate on this project in the future
- Any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified
- Special care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed
- The actual recording will be kept until the end of the research process and deleted after
- Any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval

All or part of the content of your interview may be used:

- In academic papers, policy papers or news articles
- On our website and in other media that we may produce such as spoken presentations
- When using the interviews, you as a participant will be anonymous, and your identity will be completely protected

By signing this form, I agree that:

- I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don't have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time;
- The transcribed interview or extracts from it may be used as described above;
- I have read the Information sheet;
- I don't expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation;
- I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.

Participant's signature

Date

Researcher's signature

Date

Researchers' contact info:

Rodoljub Jovanović

r.jovanovic@deusto.es

Avda. Universidades 24

48007 Bilbao, Spain

+34 944 139 000 – Ext. 3091

Appendix B – Informed Consent Form (Serbian) (Study 3)



Pristanak za učestvovanje u intervjuu

Naziv istraživačkog projekta: Kako mladi ljudi u Srbiji vide nedavnu nasilnu prošlost?

Istraživač: Rodoljub Jovanović, student doktorskih studija, Centar za Primenjenu Etiku, Univerzitet DESUTO, Bilbao

Ime učesnika: _____

Prihvatam učešće u istraživanju koje sprovodi doktorant **Rodoljub Jovanović** pod supervizijom profesorke **Angela Bermudez** iz **Centra za Primenjenu Etiku Univerziteta Deusto** kao deo istraživanja u sklopu doktorske teze. Moje učešće u istraživanju je u potpunosti dobrovoljno.

Molimo vas da pročitate informacije koje se nalaze ispod i postavite pitanja o svemu što potencijalno ne razumete pre nego što donesete odluku o učešću u istraživanju.

- Intervju će biti snimljen i biće proizveden transkript (zapis intervjuja reč-po-reč)
- Transkripte intervjuja će analizirati Rodoljub Jovanovic kao istraživač na ovom projektu
- Pristup transkriptima će biti ograničen na istraživača i saradnike na projektu, kao i istraživače sa kojima može biti ostvarena saradnja u sklopu istraživačkog procesa
- Svaki prikaz intervjuja ili direktni citat koji bude objavljen kao deo akademskog rada će biti anoniman kako vi, kao ispitanik/ca, ne možete biti prepoznati.
- Vodiće se posebna briga da se ne otkrivaju bilo koje druge informacije koje bi mogle da vas identifikuju.
- Snimak intervjuja će biti sačuvan do kraja istraživanja i nakon toga izbrisan.
- Svako menjanje navedenih uslova se ne može dogoditi bez vašeg eksplicitnog pristanka.

Celokupni intervju ili njegovi delovi mogu biti korišćeni:

- U akademskim radovima, izveštajima ili novinskim člancima
- Na web stranici Univerziteta Deusto ili u drugim medijima koji mogu biti proizvedeni kao npr. prezentacije
- Prilikom korišćenja intervjui će biti anonimni, a Vaš identitet u potpunosti zaštićen

Potpisivanjem ovog formulara slažem se da:

- Dobrovoljno uzimam učešće u ovom projektu, razumem da nisam primoran/a da u njemu učestvujem i da mogu da prekinem intervju u svakom trenutku;
- Transkribovani intervju ili njegovi delovi mogu biti korišćeni na gore opisani način;
- Sam pročitao/la ove informacije;
- Ne očekujem nikakvu nadoknadu za svoje učešće u projektu;
- Sam bio/la u mogućnosti da postavim sva pitanja koja sam imao/la i da razumem da mogu kontaktirati istraživača sa bilo kakvim pitanjima vezanim za projekat koja mogu imati ubuduće.

Potpis učesnika

Datum

Potpis istraživača

Datum

Kontakt podaci istraživača:

Rodoljub Jovanović

r.jovanovic@deusto.es

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+34 944 139 000 – Ext. 3091

Appendix C – Ethical Committee Approval (Study 3)



UNIVERSITY OF DEUSTO RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE REPORT Ref.: ETK-14/18-19

Assessment of the PhD project entitled 'The Next Generation: How Young People in Serbia Understand Recent Violent Past?', submitted by Ángela Bermúdez Vélez, in her capacity as supervisor of the PhD project, carried out by Rodoljub Jovanovic.

As documented in the record of the proceedings of the meeting held on 19 November 2018, the University of Deusto Research Ethics Committee qualifies the project as: FAVOURABLE REPORT

After reading the provided documentation, the research ethics committee of the University of Deusto states that the project is appropriate from an ethical point of view.

The project purpose is clearly defined and its implications regarding interaction with people and data gathering. The project deals with the concrete ethical issues. Aspects such as how research participants will be recruited, informed consent procedures to be applied, management of personal data and interaction with vulnerable people are all suitably addressed from an ethical standpoint. The project demonstrates being aware of the ethical aspects associated to their execution and suggests suitable mechanisms to control those ethical aspects.

The project takes into account the new Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679, which was approved by the EU Commission and Council in April 2016, about 1) consent form activities; 2) access to own data and right to be forgotten; 3) the use of data for public interest and profiling and 4) responsibilities of the controller and the processor.

Issued, placed on record and signed in Bilbao on 20 November 2018.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Cristina de la Cruz'.

Cristina de la Cruz Ayuso
Coordinator, Research Ethics Committee

Appendix D – Interview and Small Group Discussion Protocol (Study 3)

Demographic data

Name?

Age?

Where do you come from? (Where were you raised? Where do you live now?)

What do you do? What do you study?

Where did you go to school? Which school?

How was the school/teachers/other students?

History education

Within your school, how were history lessons? Did you have to use the book or did the teacher talk and you write it down? Was it interesting?

Did you like history? Why (not)?

How was the teacher?

How many years did you attend history classes for?

How many classes per week?

History lessons in high-school?

History lessons about the breakup

Do you remember the breakup of Yugoslavia being covered by the history lessons at your school?

If not, did you ever read the lesson from the book? Was it clear? Interesting?

If they were not covered properly, did you talk about the breakup within the lessons?

How much did you deal with it?

Try to recall what they taught you, anything you remember? Anything that called your attention?

Personal experiences

Does your family have any experience with the war/displacement/any member of the family died in the war? – if yes, could you tell me about it? Where do you mostly hear about the breakup of Yugoslavia? Books, movies, family, friends, news, media (facebook etc)?

Have you ever been to any memorial site/monument/museum dedicated to any of the events connected to the breakup?

Have you ever travelled to Montenegro, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo?

Do you know someone from these republics?

Is this a topic you talk about with your family, friends, teachers, etc.?

Show the map of Yugoslavia before the breakup and the map of the region after the breakup

What do you see here?

Can you explain what are the main differences between two maps? What happened?

What do you know about the breakup of Yugoslavia?

When did it start? Did it end? If yes, when?

What are the main events that marked the breakup?

Who were the main actors of the breakup? What was the role of each one?

Why did Yugoslavia broke-up? What caused the breakup?

What are the main consequences of the breakup?

Do you think this topic is relevant today? Why (not)?

War in Slovenia

What do you know about this War?

(open, if the participant does not know much offer them some information)

Do you know any important events that marked the war?

Who were the sides fighting in the war?

Who won the war?

What caused the war?

What do you know about the violence during this war?

What was lost and won with the war?

War in Croatia

What do you know about this War?

(open, if the participant does not know much offer them some information)

What caused the war?

Who were the sides fighting in the war?

Who won the war?

What do you know about the violence during this war?

Do you know any important events that marked the war?

War in Bosnia and Herzegovina

What do you know about this War?

(open, if the participant does not know much offer them some information)

What caused the war?

Who were the sides fighting in the war?

Who won the war?

What do you know about the violence during this war?

Do you know any important events that marked the war?

War in Kosovo

What do you know about this War?

(open, if the participant does not know much offer them some information)

What caused the war?

Who were the sides fighting in the war?

Who won the war?

What do you know about the violence during this war?

Do you know any important events that marked the war?

Violence

During the breakup there was a lot of violence, do you know some examples (if not mentioned before)?

Do you know how many people were killed during the wars?

What are the other consequences of the war?

What are the consequences of the violence?

Do you think the war was necessary or inevitable?

Do you know about any anti-war initiatives during (or after) the war?

What do you think was lost with the war?

What do you think was gained?

The role of Serbia in the breakup

What was the role of Serbia in the breakup of Yugoslavia?

What was the role of other republics?

Appendix E – Material Used During Interviews and Small Group Discussions (Study 3)

**SOCIALIST FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA
AS OF JANUARI 1991**



**FORMER YUGOSLAVIA
AS OF JANUARI 2008**



Appendix F – Survey Questions (Study 2)

Dear History educator, thank you for taking the time to fill in this survey. The survey is conducted as part of the project “ePACT: Education Partnership for Advocacy, Capacity-Building and Transformation” (read more about the project here). The project is run in cooperation between EUROCLIO - European Association of History Educators and CDRSEE Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe (we will include logos if possible). Important part of this project is to assess the needs of history educators in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. Our aim is to give the voice to history educators across Balkans. The questions in the survey will ask from you to assess different aspects of the history education including topics such as: Initial Teacher Training, Employment and Professional Development, Learning materials, Everyday teaching practice. Participation in this survey is voluntary. There are no right or wrong answers in this survey. Please give your honest opinion. The survey is completely anonymous and we do not collect information about your identity. Data retrieved in this survey will be only used and presented as aggregated data.

Dear participant, in the first part of the survey we kindly ask you to fill in some informations about yourself.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Age?	Open
Gender?	M, F, Undefined, I do not want to answer
Country?	Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Albania
Educational institution you attended?	List of Universities and other educational institutions in all countries
How do you define your ethnic identity? Choose from a list or add additional category.	Serbian, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, Gorani, Turkish, Albanian, Kosovo Albanian, Montenigrian, Macedonian, Bosnian Serb, Bosnian Croat, Bosnian, Bosniak, Croatian, + Other + Undefined + I don't want to answer
Highest level of education?	BA, Diploma, MA, Magister degree, Phd, 3 year higher education, 2 year higher education,
How long have you been teaching?	open!
Which level of school do you currently teach?	Elementary school (lower secondary school), Highschool (upper secondary school)
Which community (village, town, city) do you teach in? (if you teach in more than one community, please choose one that you spend more time teaching in and refer to this one in the rest of the questionnaire)	
Are you a member of any national association connected to history teaching?	yes (which), no
Are you a member of any international association connected to history teaching?	yes (which), no
Are you a member of a labor union?	yes (which), no
Are you a member of any Civil Society Organization?	yes (which), no
Is the school in which you teach multi ethnic (teachers or students of different ethnicities)?	Mono 1 2 3 4 5 Multi
To what extent would you describe yourself as a religious person?	Scale (Not at all - Very Religious) I don't want to answer
If yes, are you a member of any organized religion community?	Yes, No

In the next part of the survey you will be asked about your experiences when dealing with difficult topics in class. Keep in mind that this survey is anonymous. Please give your honest opinion.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT TOPICS

In my teaching I cover events up until year . . . ?	2016 to 1980
What topic (included in the curriculum) do you find most difficult to teach? Name at least one.	Answer up to 100 letters.
Do you think the curriculum addresses this topic/these topics appropriately?	Not at all Very appropriately
How much do you actually teach these?	Almost never, sometimes, often, very often
Are there difficult historical topics in your society that are not included in the curriculum? If yes, name at least one.	Very short open answer.
To what extent does following describe your teaching?	
I avoid teaching topics that might be controversial	Not at all Very Much
The only purpose of teaching history is to learn about the past	Not at all Very Much
History teachers should have a wider contribution to the society	Not at all Very Much
I teach controversial topics but I don't want to stir up my student's emotions too much.	Not at all Very Much
I encourage pupils to actively engage in the root of the controversy	Not at all Very Much
I choose parallel topics that are similar, but distant from, home.	Not at all Very Much
I deal with contemporary and popular interpretations of the past as problematic but valuable.	Not at all Very Much
I consciously link past and present in my lessons/activities	Not at all Very Much
I seize opportunities to tackle controversial issues	Not at all Very Much

Appendix G – Timeline of Yugoslav breakup¹⁷

1980

4 May Death of Josip Broz Tito

1981

March May Protests by Albanians in Kosovo

1986

May Milan Kučan becomes Party leader in Slovenia Slobodan Milošević becomes president of Serbia's Central Committee

24 September 'Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences' memorandum leaked

1987

January 'Contributions for a Slovenian National Programme' published

24 April Milošević visits Kosovo Polje

September 'Agrokomerc' scandal revealed in Bosnia- Herzegovina

Milošević forces resignation of Ivan Stambolić

1988

May Mladina leaks case in Slovenia

September Milošević's 'anti- bureaucratic revolution' demonstrations begin

October Party leaders in Vojvodina resign

¹⁷ Adapted from (Baker, 2015)

1989

11 January	Party leaders in Montenegro resign
January	'Association for a Yugoslav Democratic Initiative' (UJDI) founded
February	Kosovo miners' strike resisting revocation of Kosovo's autonomy Kučan addresses Slovenian support rally for Kosovo
16 March	Ante Marković becomes federal prime minister
28 March	Republic of Serbia revokes autonomy of Vojvodina and Kosovo
28 June	Milošević's 600th anniversary Kosovo speech
July	Slovenian constitutional amendments proposed
13 December	Ivica Račan becomes Party leader in Croatia
23 December	Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) founded

1990

22 January	Slovenian and Croatian delegates leave Party congress
17 February	Serb Democratic Party (SDS) founded in Croatia
24– 25 February	Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) holds first congress
27 March	Party of Democratic Action (SDA) founded in Bosnia- Herzegovina
8– 22 April	Slovenian elections (DEMOS controls parliament; Kučan president)
22 April– 6 May	HDZ wins Croatian elections
May	Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) disarms Slovenian/Croatian Territorial Defence
30 May	HDZ founder Franjo Tuđman becomes president of Croatia
17 June	VMRO– DPMNE (nationalist party) founded in Macedonia
July	Marković founds 'Association of Reformist Forces of Yugoslavia'
12 July	Serb Democratic Party (SDS) founded in Bosnia- Herzegovina
25 July	'Serb National Council' in Croatia calls for referendum on autonomy
17 August	SDS roadblocks against Croatian police in Knin ('log revolution')
18 August	HDZ founds Bosnian branch
30 September	'Serb Autonomous Region of Krajina' declared
October	Slovenian– Croatian 'confederation' proposal
November	Macedonian elections (VMRO– DPMNE first, ex- Communists second) SDA, HDZ and SDS form coalition after Bosnian elections
December	Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) wins Serbian elections
23 December	Slovenian independence referendum

1991

January	Federal parliament discusses disarming Croatia
February	Slovenia declares intent to secede Izetbegović- Gligorov 'asymmetric federation' proposal
9 March	Large anti- Milošević demonstrations in Belgrade
25 March	Milošević and Tuđman meet at Karađorđevo
March	SDA forms 'Patriotic League'
March– May	Confrontations between Croatian police and JNA
April– May	Croatian 'National Guard' (ZNG) formed
2 May	Borovo Selo massacre
19 May	Croatian independence referendum
25 June	Croatia and Slovenia declare independence
27 June– 3 July	JNA operations against Slovenia
3– 5 July	JNA advances into Croatia
7 July	Brioni Agreement
July	'Centre for Anti- War Action' founded in Belgrade
July– Sept	JNA offensive escalates in eastern Slavonia and Krajina
27 August	EC forms 'Badinter Commission'
8 September	Macedonian independence referendum
14 September	ZNG starts attacking JNA barracks in Croatia
23 September	JNA attack on Dubrovnik begins
25 September	Macedonia declares independence
September	SDS in Bosnia- Herzegovina declares 'Serb Autonomous Regions'
8 October	Brioni Agreement moratorium expires
October	SDS withdraws from Bosnian parliament, forms own assembly 'Women in Black' founded in Belgrade
18 November	JNA captures Vukovar
19 December	SDS in Croatia declares 'Republic of Serb Krajina' (RSK) SDS in Bosnia- Herzegovina sends 'crisis headquarters' plans

1992

2 January	'Sarajevo Ceasefire' between Croatia and JNA
9 January	SDS in Bosnia- Herzegovina declares sovereign 'Republika Srpska' (RS)
15 January	EC recognizes Slovenia and Croatia
Feb– March	'Cutileiro Plan' negotiations
21 February	United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) sent to Croatia
1 March	Bosnian independence referendum, boycotted by SDS SDS temporarily barricades Sarajevo streets
18 March	'Lisbon Agreement' signed
31 March	Serbian police and paramilitaries begin attack in eastern Bosnia
5 April	Serb snipers fire on Sarajevo peace demonstration
6 April	Bosnia- Herzegovina declares independence
8 April	Croat Defence Council (HVO) formalized
15 April	Army of the Republic of Bosnia- Herzegovina (ARBiH) formed
27 April	Serbia/Montenegro become 'Federal Republic of Yugoslavia' (FRY)
30 April	SDS takeover of Prijedor begins
2 May	JNA attempts to divide Sarajevo
3 May	'Dobrovoljačka Street' incident in Sarajevo
4 May	Army of Republika Srpska (VRS) formed; continues to attack targeted towns and villages
6 May	'Graz Agreement' between Bosnian SDS and HDZ
12 May	Radovan Karadžić's 'six strategic goals' speech
27 May	'Breadline massacre' in Sarajevo
30 May	UN introduces sanctions against FRY
29 June	UNPROFOR given mandate to secure Sarajevo airport
Early August	Western media reports on RS concentration camps
25 August	Sarajevo library shelled
26– 27 August	London Conference on Former Yugoslavia
14 September	UNPROFOR to protect aid convoys in Bosnia- Herzegovina
9 October	UN declares 'no- fly zone' over Bosnia- Herzegovina
23 October	HVO attack on Prozor

1993

2 January	Draft ' Vance– Owen Plan' published
31 March	UN allows NATO enforcement mechanism for no- fly zone
16 April	Srebrenica declared UN 'Safe Area' HVO attack on Ahmići
6 May	UN declares Bihać, Goražde, Sarajevo, Tuzla, Žepa 'Safe Areas'
9 May	HVO attack on eastern Mostar (to January 1994)
20 August	'Owen– Stoltenberg Plan' published
27 September	Fikret Abdić declares 'Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia'
9 November	HVO destroys Mostar's 'Old Bridge'
November	In Sarajevo, ARBiH disarms gangster brigades and assimilates HVO

1994

5 February	First 'Markale massacre' in Sarajevo
1 March	ARBiH and HVO sign 'Washington Agreement'
April	VRS attacks Goražde, UN/NATO use air- strikes
Autumn	ARBiH offensives in Bihać pocket

1995

1– 3 May	Croatian 'Operation Flash' against RSK
25 May	'Youth Day' VRS artillery attack on Tuzla
28 May	VRS takes UNPROFOR hostages at Goražde
8– 10 July	VRS attacks Srebrenica
11– 13 July	VRS and paramilitaries kill 8,000 men and boys from Srebrenica
25 July	VRS captures Žepa
4– 8 August	Croatian 'Operation Storm' against RSK (entering Knin 8 August)
28 August	Second 'Markale massacre' in Sarajevo
November	Milošević, Tuđman and Izetbegović negotiate in Dayton
14 December	General Framework for Peace in Bosnia–Herzegovina

1996

February	First operations by Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA)
March	RS evacuates Sarajevo suburbs being transferred to Federation
17 November	Protests in Serbia (to February 1997) after local elections

1998

Spring	Serbian security forces begin offensive against KLA (to June 1999)
24 October	UN calls for ceasefire in Kosovo

1999

15 January	Račak massacre
6 February	Rambouillet talks begin
18 March	NATO ultimatum to Milošević to sign the Rambouillet Agreement
24 March	NATO air - strikes against FRY begin (to 9 June)
27 May	International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) indicts Milošević
9 June	Milošević agrees Kosovo to be put under UN administration NATO ground troops enter Kosovo
10 December	Franjo Tuđman dies

2000

September	Vojislav Koštunica defeats Milošević in FRY presidential elections
5 October	Demonstrations in Belgrade, Milošević resigns
