

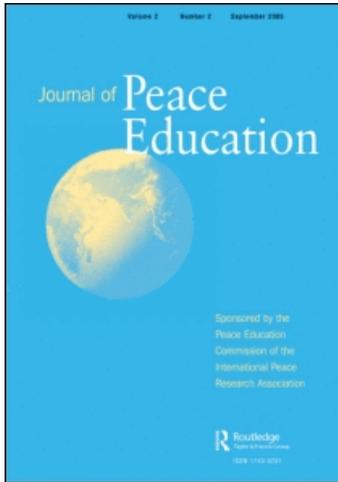
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Gender, militarism and the view of the future: students' views on the introduction of the civilian service in Serbia

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What are some of the obstacles to demilitarization of society? What role does worldview in general, and views of gender, future and peace in particular, play in this process? What could be some aspects of the intervention when educating students and the wider community for peace? This article discusses the results from a pilot study that investigated undergraduate students' attitudes to the introduction of the civilian service in Serbia. It reviews students' responses, intending to investigate the connections between perspectives on peace, future and gender. It also reports how students negotiate the confusing terrain of multiple discourses and narratives in regard to these issues.

Keywords: demilitarization; Serbia; students; peace; future; gender

Introduction

This article focuses on investigating attitudes in students in Serbia towards the demilitarization of society, or more specifically, towards the introduction of the civilian service. It investigates this parallel while also inquiring into the role of the underlying worldview and, more specifically, the role of views of gender, future and peace.

In terms of Vriens' (1999, quoted in Biaggio et al. 2004) identification of the three main themes that have emerged in European and North American studies on peace and war, this study fits within the third, or within the scope of students' 'conceptions of war and peace' (31). In the field of peace education a number of studies have been conducted in the context of post-conflict or conflict-ridden societies (i.e. McGlynn et al. 2004; Horenczyk and Tatar 2004; Hughes and Donnelly 2006; Vongalis-Macrow 2006; Hirsch 2006; Spink 2005; Maxwell et al. 2004). A number of studies have also focused on the impact of students' attitudes and researched attitudinal and cognitive spheres as they relate to the continuation or, alternatively, prevention of violence (i.e. Daniel et al. 2006; Biaggio et al. 2004). Lastly, numerous authors such as David Hicks (1988, 2004), Francis Hutchinson (1996), Birgit Brock-Utne (1985), Elise Boulding (1990) and Riane Eisler (2000) have already made theoretical links between education and peace, futures and gender issues. Our aim is thus to apply some of the insights coming from these studies and authors in a specific cultural and historical context via a pilot study, the first of its kind in Serbia. The main goal is to present findings to peace educators everywhere, but particularly to those working in the context of post-conflict, or even more specifically, former Yugoslav societies.

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The article first discusses the social and historical context within which this study takes place. It then proceeds with outlining specifics of the study and the main findings. These are organized within three main themes: first, general views on the introduction of the civilian service in Serbia; second, views on gender issues; and third, views on the role of education. In closing, we link these findings with some conclusions previously made in the peace education literature, especially as they relate to education in the context of the overall demilitarization of a society.

The broader social and historical context

The army has always been served in the uniform, in the classic way, from the times immemorial.¹

For a society steeped in a history of wars and violence, the introduction of the option to ‘serve the army’ in civilian institutions and organizations was bound to create some stir. Not only has Serbian and Yugoslav identity been organized around notions of ‘freedom’, ‘national independence’ and ‘strength’ for centuries, but this identity has also been constructed in the context of the politics of victimhood. The narratives that portray Serbs and Yugoslavs as victims of foreign oppressors have been ingrained in literature, education and the predominant worldview (Rosandić and Pešić 1994). The conclusion stemming from such a view has been that if one is to avoid becoming a victim, one must always be ready to defend (by means of fighting in wars) life, family, territory, nationhood. This, of course, requires preparation, and that preparation – by way of military training – is to involve every capable young man. The role of education in Serbia and former Yugoslavia – particularly towards a ‘bellicose model of socialization’ (Rosandić and Pešić 1994, 7) – has been pivotal in this process.

The most recent series of conflicts and wars in the former Yugoslav territory resulted – from the point of view of those residing in Serbia – in the blurring of the boundaries of ‘attack’ and ‘defence’, and ultimately, in the overall Serbian defeat in these wars. Together with the desire to join the (‘civilized’/‘democratic’/‘developed’) European Union, these factors possibly created the conditions for the introduction of the choice to serve the army either in the classic military way or through service in civilian institutions and organizations. Other contributing factors include several suspicious deaths of soldiers in the army (e.g., the unresolved case in Topčider, Belgrade, in 2004) as well as the increasing deterioration of living conditions and the increased impoverishment in the army. Furthermore, certain pressures and ‘pushes’ from the West also seem to have been influential. Intended for ‘societies in transition’, these pushes were part of a ‘defence sector reform’, initiated under the influence of ‘Anglo-Saxon writers’ and EU and NATO (Hadžić 2004). Such reform represents an attempt towards demilitarization and normalization in the post-conflict societies of the West Balkans (Hadžić 2004). Overall this reform is also an attempt at transition away from a totalitarian society. In Serbia, such reform legitimated alternative, non-violence-oriented views and gave a voice to those who had difficulty accepting the authoritarianism and strict hierarchy that still comprise the backbone of army training and discipline.

In any case, whether predominantly influenced by internal or external factors, in 2003 Serbia-Montenegro issued a special decree recognizing the right to conscientious objection, i.e. the right of conscripts to opt for civilian service in humanitarian institutions rather than in army units. Civilian service lasts 13 months, while military service in the army units is four months shorter, lasting nine months. The option proved increasingly popular among young men. Earlier, in 1993, Serbia and Montenegro introduced an option to serve the army in army units but without carrying guns. In 1995 the response to this option was 0.01% and

in 2002 0.06% (Milovac 2005). After the introduction of civilian service, in the period from 12 December 2003 to 12 December 2004 the response to non-army service options increased to 25% (Milovac 2005). In early 2005, the response was over 30% (EBCO Balkan 2005). Yet another increase was registered in 2006: up to 44% of all conscripts opted for civilian service (B92 2006).

Such a dramatic increase – the continually rising number of draftees applying for civilian service – appeared to have worried Serbia-Montenegrin military officials, because of the danger that such a trend could ‘undermine the performance of the armed forces’ (Kosanović 2004). Thus in January 2005, legislative measures were put in place in order to ‘regulate’ civilian service (Uredba 2005; Official Herald of the Republic of Serbia and Montenegro). Even before these legislative measures, and during the first year of introduction of the civilian service option, Serbian newspapers reported numerous cases in which various obstacles had been put in front of young men wishing to take up this option. These ranged from draftees being bullied by army officers and pressured to change their mind in regard to the civilian option, to the lack of clarity in terms of how the measure was to be practically introduced. One highly popularized case in the newspaper *Glas Javnosti* in 2005 involved a man who was issued a monetary penalty for walking a dog – on the leash but without a muzzle – and was consequently refused a request for civilian service on the grounds that his biography included an infraction showing elements of violence. Another example was provided in March 2004 by researchers of the Vojvodinian Regional Center for Conscientious Objection who showed that even though 91% of those surveyed (using a random sample, researchers interviewed 1206 people between the ages of 15 and 30) had heard about the conscientious objection option, 82% were unaware how to register for it (Vojska Srbije i Crne Gore 2004).

In addition to various legislative limitations, and the sundry ‘tricks’ played by the army to discourage those wishing to take up the civilian option, there is also a set of ‘worldview’ limitations, or a powerful set of narratives organized not only around the issues of national identity, patriotism and security but also around the issues of ‘strength’, masculinity and the preferred vision for the future. As seen in the 2004 and 2008 elections for President of Serbia, Serbia is divided right down the middle: between the hard-line, pro-monarchic, socially conservative, religious and nationalistic Right (e.g. the Radical Party) and pro-democratic, pro-western, human-rights oriented Left (e.g. the Democratic Party). In these two diametrically opposite preferred visions for the future, various narratives form particular constellations. A view that promotes sharp divisions between genders and the overall patriarchal outlook is usually connected with overall social conservatism, nationalism and traditionalism. And, as the binary opposition to this constellation, there is a view allowing for more flexible interpretation of gender roles and gender partnership that is connected with social progressivism and a pro-democratic, human-rights orientation. The Serbian educational system has over the years witnessed a number of reforms, most of which have been politically motivated. In a nutshell, depending on which of the two streams/political options won, particular educational reforms followed accordingly. These reforms included changes in subjects, key learning areas, orientations, textbooks and in the higher administrative staff.

Still, while at the political level citizens of Serbia are torn between the pro-nationalistic and pro-European options, the demilitarization trend is clear. For example, enlistment to army ranks before the introduction of the civilian service was highest in the town of Novi Sad: 97.8% (B92 2006). After the introduction of this alternative, enlistment in that town dropped to 82% in 2004 and to 68.5% in 2006 (B92 2006). Out of that number between 5% and 8% of recruits were dismissed due to ‘temporary incapacity’, usually involving

stress-induced mental health disorders (B92 2006). Among some members of the Serbian population this drop in numbers within the army is creating concerns and anxieties in regard to overall army efficiency and national security. Such concerns usually result in demands to ‘go back’ to the previous system, minus the civilian system option. The demilitarization trend, while currently significant, is thus not to be taken for granted. Given the previously described socio-historical context within which this very new measure took place, it is important to be aware of the various obstacles and narratives that may be instrumental in reversing the current demilitarization trend. Also, an awareness of various discourses and narratives is crucial when devising peace-oriented initiatives, both when educating students and the wider community. Of particular concern for the authors of this article is the ways in which education could provide a support for the overall demilitarization of a society. Here, we specifically focus on some worldview/cognitive obstacles to this process and investigate possible points of the intervention when educating for peace.

The study

To investigate how young people navigate through existing discourses and narratives in regard to the demilitarization of society, a pilot study was conducted in June 2004 in Novi Sad, Serbia (then Serbia and Montenegro). A questionnaire was distributed by researchers at several faculties at the University of Novi Sad, and 272 completed questionnaires were collected. The study is indicative rather than comprehensive, as it involved a particular segment of the population, higher education undergraduates, in a particular part of Serbia – Vojvodina – that is (still) a multi-ethnic and multicultural community.² The classes were chosen randomly at the participating faculties – including technical and natural sciences, economy, law, literature and philosophy. The vast majority of students attending the classes on that day consented to participate in the study and fill in the questionnaire.

The first part of the questionnaire focused on basic composition data, asking students about their field of study, gender, ethnicity, and so on. The second part focused on attitudinal data. Students were asked questions about their views on conflict, war and militarism, peace, gender relationships, family and education, plausible and desired social and personal futures and – the focus of the study – views on the civilian option and conscientious objection. The composition of students in regard to their gender, ethnicity, class, faculty, etc. was as follows:

- Female 63.1%, male 36.9%;
- Date of birth: between 1982 and 1984 (80.9%), in 1980 or 1981 (8.3%), in 1985 (7.5%) and from 1976 to 1979 (3.4%);
- Serbian nationality 74.6%, Hungarian 6.0%, Montenegrin 4.1%, SCG (Yugoslav) 1.9%, Croatian and Ruthenian 1.1% each, Slovak 0.4% and the rest 10.8%;
- Place of birth: Novi Sad and other cities in Vojvodina 61.9%, Vojvodina villages 6.7%, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia city 9.7%, village 4.5%, Central Serbia city 12.3%, village 2.2%, Montenegro city 1.5%, village 0.4% and the rest 0.7%;
- Place of permanent residence: Novi Sad and other cities in Vojvodina 57.5%, Vojvodina villages 23.1%, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia city 1.1%, village 2.6%, central Serbia city 1.5%, village 0.4%, Montenegro city 0.4%, village 0.4% and the rest 0.4%;
- Field/faculty of study: technical and natural sciences 55.6%, economy 11.2%, law 20.1%, literature and philosophy (and related) disciplines 11.2%, the rest 1.9%;
- Mother’s occupation: routine non-manual workers (clerks, civil servants, etc.) 47.8%, professionals 28%, housewives 9.7%, pensioners 5.6%, manual labour 4.5%, private business owners 0.4% and the rest 4.1%;

- Father's occupation: routine non-manual workers 36.9%, professionals 30.6%, manual labour 14.6%, pensioners 5.2%, farmers 3.0%, private business owners 2.2%, the rest 7.5%.

As seen from these figures, most students come from middle-class social backgrounds, were born and reside in Vojvodina and are of Serbian nationality. Significant numbers of students were born in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina but only a very small percentage still live there permanently. This is consistent with migration trends during and after the war in former Yugoslavia (Serbs from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina moving to Serbia and vice versa). The ethnic composition of the student sample also corresponds to the current overall data on ethnicity at the 13 faculties at the University of Novi Sad: Hungarians (6.47%), Slovaks (1.12%), Croats (0.95%) and Ruthenians (0.74%) (Dnevnik 2005).

General views on the introduction of the civilian service

Asked what they thought about the civilian service option in general, most respondents supported the idea (73.8%), while 17.2% were against it and 6.7% stated they were indifferent to the idea. The introduction of civilian service was supported on several grounds. These include:

- the need for 'civilizational advancement';
- movement in the spirit of non-violent conflict resolution amongst people;
- option necessary for exercising a basic human right (to have a choice not to be forced to train for fighting);
- because of democracy and freedom of choice;
- based on 'capability' issues ('not everybody is capable of serving the army');
- because of the benefits to the society and the draftee.

In the words of students:

This is but a first and the smallest step towards changing the attitude of society towards the army and for traditional warrior thinking to be put aside.

Civilian service and professional army represent a big civilizational progress.

The very fact that there is a choice is a huge advancement in comparison to the previous system of enforcement and compulsion. I consider this an important step towards the change in consciousness within the society.

Finally. Not only is this option one of basic human rights it is also an opportunity to help out society in quality ways.

I support it and I am glad because of this because some of my friends were either leaving the country or extending full-time study just so that they could avoid going into the army. It is good that there is a choice, an alternative for those wishing to take it. Besides, this is one important aspect of democracy.

Society overall gets much more benefits from those types of 'soldiers'.

Not everybody is cut for the army.

On the other hand, those that opposed the introduction of civilian service talked about the role of army being to ‘make a man out of a boy’, and the need to be ready for defending one’s country, because of tradition and the general instability of the region:

I don’t think it is fair because of the previous generations that served a year or more and also were mobilized [to go to the war].

Truthfully, I am against this. I believe that military term should last between 12 and 18 months, so all men would become stronger and tougher and not stay mama’s babies. With civilian service neither will men become tougher nor will there be anybody to defend this country, while in the military they could learn how to do basic things: fold their clothes, iron, wash, make the bed...

This is not good for our society because military service is useful for helping our men grow up.

I believe this is not good because we live in unstable times.

The majority of men would decide whether to choose military or civilian option on practical grounds (52%), while 32.7% made their decision based on political and altruistic grounds. For those choosing the civilian option there is the convenience of staying in one’s home town and being able to continue a normal life:

I stay in my own home and the service does not take all 24 hours in a day.

I know the situation in our army is very bad, I heard stories about showers [once a week] and [inadequate] hygiene, general conditions...

Practical reasons behind the decision to choose the military option include the shorter length of the service:

Because it is shorter. If the length was the same, I’d think again.

Civilian service lasts longer and I am impatient by nature.

For those that opt for civilian service, the worldview factors include: general aversion towards the army, war and killing; democratic beliefs; and the desire to do something more ‘useful’:

Because I don’t like killing other people, even when they are killing me. I am a pacifist, and ... simply, I don’t want to be given an opportunity to use the weapons against somebody.

Because I despise both the army and the wars, everything the army represents.

I believe that people realize the senselessness of militarism more and more. I, as a human being, do not kill even the animals, let alone humans. And military service is exactly that, it is a preparation of a man as a human being to conduct evil, to kill another human being. And all that under the guise of nationalism and patriotism.

Civilian, after everything that happened.

On the other hand, those that would opt for military service do so because of the tradition, excitement, new learning and personal development:

I should learn how to use weapons to defend the country in the case of war.

I believe because the army is something wherein both my father and grandfather and all male members of the family served, so it would be shameful for me not to do so. I believe this would be an honour for me.

Because it is important for one man to separate from his folk for a certain time, so I could in fact 'grow up' ... The army is good for the man to get himself together, to consider what he wants to do further in life, to get stronger and physically better prepared for the future.

You gain new experience and new friends. It seems more challenging.

Army is the school of life. It could help provide regularity in life, in terms of getting up in the morning and sleeping, it provides discipline.

Underlying these responses is a strong connection between a particular view of gender, future and peace. A positive/preferable view of the future, defined in terms of progressive movement towards 'democratic', 'civilized' and 'non-violent' society is a narrative used to support demilitarization of society in general and the introduction of civilian service in particular. A negative view of the (most likely, plausible) future, defined in terms of the continuation of wars, conflicts, aggression and occupation is more likely to yield responses that are against both demilitarization and civilian service.

Patriarchal themes are present when the army and military discipline are seen as means of turning 'boys into men'. The preferred view of (traditional) masculinity – defined in terms of physical strength, toughness, endurance and resilience – influenced responses that are against introduction of the civilian service:

Terrible!!! I think a man cannot be a 'real man' without an experience in the disciplined army.

The relationship between views on gender and views on demilitarization is further explored in the following section.

Masculinities, femininities and (de)militarization

A man who does not serve the army in the uniform, with the gun in his hand, is not a man.

A subset of questions aimed at establishing a connection between a particular view of gender and militarism/demilitarization. Some questions were prompted by statements made in the media, where the above quotation featured prominently. As far as our respondents were concerned, 50% believed that such a statement is 'stupid' or 'outdated', 32.5% disagreed for other reasons and 12.7% agreed with the sentiment. That the quotation above touched a raw nerve is evidenced by the emotional undertones in several responses:

Stupid statement, simple provocation and imposition!

I believe this statement is based on plain male chauvinism and primitivism!

Typically Serbian, absolutely wrong and primitive attitude!

Out stupidities, like this one or the one about 'Beat your wife, if you don't know why she does' – both shocking. Manhood/masculinity and humanity are not proven this way.

This statement comes from narrow-minded people, those whose intellectual level is similar to animal instinct. Because, if somebody defends a territory that was 'peed on' that person cannot be much differentiated from an animal. Human life is more valuable than any kind of ideology, politics or nationalism.

These emotional undertones amongst those respondents that disagreed with the above-mentioned statement may also be due to the frequency with which such statements are present in the wider society. As assessed by students themselves:

I disagree but this has been a common opinion in our society up until now. Serbian stereotypes!

I think that in our society probably a high percentage of people still think this way, because we are a 'warrior society'. We continuously fought wars, were colonized by Turks [Ottoman Empire] for many centuries. Our mentality is such, which is very difficult to change.

I believe this statement is better suited to the generation of our grandmothers and grandfathers, and I cannot understand that somebody, even today, supports this attitude. On the other hand, this statement reflects attitude within our society, which is extremely patriarchal, which is really not good. The statement probably dates from ages ago, due to all those wars that took place.

Others believed that such a statement is simply outdated and no longer represents the belief system of younger generations, or in certain parts of Serbia, or amongst particular party supporters:

You can ask this question to my grandmother. I think this statement is outdated and it does not impact me at the personal level at all. [This belief] is only present among older generations within our society.

This statement is very dated ... I believe that killing of people with weapons constitutes past tense which is going to keep on becoming more and more dated and which will be considered human primitivism in the future ...

That is the statement most likely devised within the army itself. It probably originated during Tito's time when going to the army represented an honour. To me, the statement is very sexist and stupid. I also think that in Novi Sad and Vojvodina people no longer think that way, at least not in the circles I move within. But I suppose that 'down there' (in Southern Serbia) the statement is still representative of a wider opinion.

People who chose the Serbian Radical Party, people who are nationalists, who hate all other nations except the Serbian one, who would like to solve all conflict through wars – it is those people that carry such attitudes.

Other reasons for disagreeing with the statements include:

I disagree because not everybody is 'suited' to be a soldier, in a sense that there are persons who hadn't been given optimal psycho-physical attributes that are considered crucial for serving the military.

Times when wars were waged with guns with a shooting range of two meters are long gone; today wars are waged from several thousand kilometres away so we no longer need guns and uniforms but [military] experts.

Those that hold guns are not only men. Some women also go to the army even though their sex is not male.

On the other hand, a small minority that agreed with this statement once again relied on the narratives of history, tradition and 'proper' masculinity:

I believe this statement is correct. A real man has to know how to use weapons, and if needed, to protect his family and country, and not to wait for somebody else to do so. He does not have to ever shoot at somebody, but he needs to know how to do it.

In this statement there is indeed some element of truth. To me, being a soldier means honour. That also means that you are a mature, capable person and not asocial. However, today's army is no longer what it used to be so all is relative.

I think it is correct, because if our fathers could [serve the army] today's young men can do the same also.

I agree partially because men through the army become stronger, more disciplined and serious, but only if they serve the army with 'the uniform, and the gun in their hands'.

Army and gender equity

Significantly, some respondents focused on the dichotomy between women as a life-giving force vs. men as soldiers:

Harsh – but true! Well, women also carry a child for nine months inside their stomach, why wouldn't men also serve their military obligation, so one day (but I hope never) perhaps they will help their country.

This connection was apparent even more in the question that asked students their opinion on the introduction of compulsory military service (whether with or without arms) for women, as is the case, for example, in Israel. Support for this measure was 22%: 3.4% 'under certain political conditions' and 17.5% due to 'equality of sexes' and 'personal choice'. The vast majority disagreed but on different counts:

- Against gender equality: 22%
- Against women's involvement in this area: 34.3%
- Against compulsory military service in general: 17.5%

In this section we highlight the statements that are either against gender equality or against women's involvement in this area. Reasons behind such attitudes are as follows:

Personally I am against this [measure] because women need to be mothers.

I am not for this, women's place in a society is known, but I support that our country should have at least 50% of policewomen.

I don't support this initiative. The more beautiful and gentler sex should not serve in the military. I would need a certain time to understand and approve such a deed by a female person close to me.

I don't think that is appropriate because women are neither physically nor psychologically built for the army.

I believe that women's place is not in the army. Possibly in the kitchen or in the hospital!

Total stupidity. Women are not nearly capable of half of those things that men are capable of.

Thus, according to some of these views, women's role is to 'worry about population growth' and to 'give birth'. Women's place is 'in the kitchen', they are more 'panicky' and biologically not suited for the military, they are meant for 'more subtle things' such as 'caressing' and need to remain 'feminine and gentle', which army service would destroy. Some respondents puzzled over the question of who would in that case 'cook at home' and whether that would mean men getting pregnant also!

Others thought this would be an excellent idea – women would become even 'stronger and more independent', gain some 'discipline' and would also be able to strengthen their 'unstable psyche'! Yet others were more concerned about men's alertness and overall military capability, as 'with women around' they would be more concerned with them than with defence and security issues.

Of course, many answers also highlighted that this issue is 'a two-edged sword' between, on one hand, equity/equality and freedom of choice issues – which would consequently imply that both women and men should be equally drafted – and, on the other, the overall project of demilitarization ('The army should not exist at all'). Others highlighted that such a measure would be both unrealistic and impractical. Yet others stated that true equality would then mean that a measure should be introduced regarding compulsory child-care and housework for men as well. Themes of socialization and maturity again feature prominently. For example:

That is not needed. Because women even without that have enough opportunities to mature and become serious. For example, they drill us even when we are little girls that the house is to be cleaned, that you should know your responsibilities, what are not your responsibilities, what you can do, what you mustn't. I think men have more freedom here and that is why the army helps them. Women go through puberty even without the army.

Why army service is needed to assist young men through puberty may be puzzling to many; however, it is nonetheless a narrative that still features within particular segments of Serbian society.

The role of education

Interestingly, while 91% of respondents stated that they had been taught more about war than peace in schools, no significant percentage of participants identified this educational practice as one of the factors that cause wars in the first place. However, about 17.2% did identify the role of education and cognitive changes in establishing peace in the country and the region (18.3%). Likewise, the majority believed that men's violent behaviour is based on socialization (75.4%) rather than nature (14.9%).

The main factors identified as the rationale for schools' approach to teaching peace/war were: violent history and geopolitical reasons (52.2%) and a particular interpretation of history and tradition (35.1%). Significantly, 36.6% of respondents did not believe that such an approach should be changed. This conservative stream was also apparent in the responses to questions aimed at identifying preferred attitudes when it comes to gender differences: 22.4% believed differences between sexes and different roles for different genders should be maintained.

Amongst those who wanted change in regard to the way schools approach teaching about war and peace, 25% suggested overall reform of education, 15.3% believed more discussion about peace is needed and 10.4% identified overall social change as key ways to change

current approaches. Education and cognitive changes were also identified as necessary in order to solve the crisis in the society (19.8%) and the region (18.3%).

However, when it came to the situation in the world as a whole, cognitive changes received many fewer affirmative answers (11.6%). Instead, students proposed international equity in politics and economy (26.9%) and political changes (16.8%) as the two most significant factors for addressing various crises in the world. Similarly, while respondents identified the role of education and cognitive changes as the main path towards establishing peace in the country and the region (17.2% and 18.3% respectively), no significant percentage of participants identified this at the world level. Instead, they believed that lasting peace in the world is to be achieved through dialogue, positive communication, tolerance and diplomacy (25.4%), changes in social structure, law and demilitarization (22%); as well as through limiting the influence of the most powerful nations (20.5%).

The perception of the higher impact of politics than education and cognition when it comes to wars and violence was also apparent in relation to opinions about the most common causes of wars: 36.2% identified 'will for power' and manipulation of masses by the political elites as the most frequent cause; 32.1% identified economic interests; 12.3% racism and religious intolerance; and 10.4% identified ethnic and religious differences themselves as the most frequent cause for wars.

Implications of the study

There are numerous conclusions that can be drawn from the findings of this pilot study. These are relevant to peace educators in general and more specifically to those working in a context of post-conflict societies, both globally and in the region. The main points we raise here are related to teaching critical literacy, providing peace-oriented alternative discourses, engagement with futures and gender issues, as well as with global/local and identity issues.

The role of historical stories and narratives

First, it is apparent that historical stories and narratives which operate within a particular society deeply influence perceptions and attitudes about war and peace in general and the demilitarization of society in particular. For example, historical narratives on the role of genders within a society, reasons behind wars, ways of achieving peace and so on, are embedded within cognitive frames and consequently influence decision-making processes in regard to any given issue. Thus to enable new narratives to emerge and more recent ones to be enhanced it is important to 'excavate' old historical stories, make them visible and compare them to other existing alternatives, as part of the overall critical literacy project.

Based on postmodernist epistemology, some educational authors have recently critiqued the idea of progress. For example, Popkewitz (1998, xiii) highlights the ways in which until very recently, both Left and Right still relied on 'modernist notions of progress to justify their theoretical, empirical, and political strategies'. The problem with this strategy, according to Popkewitz, has been a lack of reflective examination. Rather, the narratives of progress have been used with 'almost missionary zeal' in order to obtain the 'salvation' of the masses through education (xiv). This insight by Popkewitz notwithstanding, our study indicates that narratives of progress are still needed to counteract some violent histories. For example, the majority of students who participated in the survey found the rationale for abandonment of views that promote war, violence and gender inequity in the notion of progressive change – from backward past to (hopefully) more enlightened future. And according to them, progress is defined mostly in terms of betterment, overall movement

forward to a better future. This better future is envisioned mostly in terms of equality and harmony, with good relationships amongst people and mutual support, without oppressive hierarchies (50%), without crisis, war and violence (8,6%) and only marginally in terms of economic advancement (12.7%).

The question of identity

Hence, second, it is important to identify deep-seated narratives that work against and for the above-mentioned narratives of progress. This, however, needs to be carefully balanced with the narratives of western European versus 'Balkan' identity. This is because in some contemporary global narratives 'Balkan' and 'balkanization' are associated with primitivism, violence and irrationality (Todorova 1997). As was seen in some of the responses, these narratives have also been internalized by some students – whether taking the form of a self-critique or used for justification of measures that reinforce 'our' identity, history and tradition. Thus rather than defining progress in terms of a global/local continuum, it is really crucial to see progress in terms of the development of one's own society. Teaching of local peace histories and non-violent struggles needs to form the basis of such progressivist narratives. Otherwise, as Cvetkovich and Kellner (1997, 13–14) write:

In many mainstream social theories, the discourse of the global is bound up with ideological discourses of modernization and modernity, and from Saint-Simon and Marx through Habermas and Parsons, globalization and modernization are interpreted in terms of progress, novelty and innovation, and a generally beneficial negation of the old, the traditional, and the obsolete. In this discourse of modernization, the global is presented as a progressive modernizing force; the local stands for backwardness, superstition, underdevelopment, and the oppressiveness of tradition.

Peace education theory and practice is strongly linked with addressing global and international issues (Harris and Morrison 2003; Hicks 1988, Milojević 2006). It is thus crucial that peace education practitioners tread very carefully in order not to reproduce some broader narratives that in fact may work against the main principles of peace education. That is, there is a danger of evoking hierarchical worldviews in which 'global' places become superior to 'local' ones, seen in need of development and 'proper' education.

Balancing global and local

Sometimes certain global narratives have a potential to backfire, creating reactive politics reinforcing local identity in terms of opposition to the global and all that global represents. In Serbia, anti-western narratives feature prominently, especially since the 1999 NATO bombings of Serbia and Montenegro, and are the backbone of conservatism in general and the conservative parties (i.e. Radical Party) in particular. Peace educators working in any post-conflict or post-colonial context thus need to know how to treat global/local and discourses on progress carefully.

It is of course possible and critically important to link local non-violent histories and practices to the new emerging global paradigm that informs so-called 'adjectival' education approaches, or peace, global, futures, human rights, development, gender, antiracist/multi-cultural, citizenship, conflict-resolution and environmental education; for these narratives and approaches to be embraced locally a certain level of 'ownership' needs to take place. Otherwise it is unrealistic to expect that those on the receiving end of colonialism or military

(or educational) intervention initiated by ‘developed’ nations will fully and wholeheartedly embrace their (foreign) ‘liberating’ discourses. While the principles of peace education are, of course, those of inclusion, equity and dignity of all people, peace education initiatives also exist in a global socio-historical context. That global socio-historical context is still the world in which a hierarchy of nations does exist and in which some are more successful than others at influencing what takes place at the level of the global. Peace educators thus need to be aware of the conflicting thoughts and emotions in regard to the global issues/narratives that may exist amongst local communities and individual students. And they need to address these conflicts by naming them, by critically evaluating them and by enhancing/praising peace-oriented local histories and practices.

Gender issues

The fourth point is connected to the foregoing three and is about the research finding in regard to the connection of gender issues with the overall militarization/demilitarization of a society. As seen from the responses of the participants in our study, many still believed that it is a man’s duty to defend family and nation, and to do so by the use of arms. Feminist theorists have shown the dangers associated with this view. Not only are stereotypical views of gender implicit in the overall attitude a society takes on a peace/violence continuum (Eisler 2000), but these views may be the main reason behind particular forms of violence, especially during times of war. For example, while explaining the rape of women in wars, Seifert (1993) connects these horrendous crimes with a particular bonding pattern amongst warriors, in which a gang rape symbolically becomes a means both of proving one’s masculinity and one’s own belonging to the group (of warrior men). Thus undoing some of those deep-seated stereotypes and narratives about traditional gender roles is also a crucial task for peace educators.

It is important not to see gender issues as something to be addressed on the side, ad hoc and sporadically. In fact, based on our research and observations, we argue for inclusion of gender education and issues into the core of what peace education is about. For example, in their seminal *Peace Education* (2003) Harris and Morrison state that

Current names for peace education, as it is being practiced throughout the world, include such diverse terms as ‘human rights education,’ ‘environmental education,’ international education,’ ‘conflict resolution education,’ and ‘development education.’ All of these different approaches include education about the problems of violence, though in some approaches this is more implicit than in others. (66)

Feminist theory and gender education initiatives have also always included addressing the problems of violence, as well as providing alternatives. While peace and conflict theory has initially emerged from the robust ‘masculine’ field of international politics, peace education owes quite a bit to theorists who linked gender and violence. As stated by Chadwick Alger (1996),

Eventually it would be women peace researchers who would sharpen our capacity to perceive the roots of militarism, violence, and other forms of peacelessness, within our own families, neighborhoods, schools, churches and professions. Birgit Brock-Utne has played a critical role in bringing the perspectives of women, into the peace research community. Particularly instructive has been her insistence that peace education must be extended beyond formal schooling, into family relationships, decisions about physical activity, and selection of toys and games. At the same time, she has challenged transnational women’s movements to define peace more carefully, and more broadly... (2–3)

Since Brock-Utne's (1989) and Boulding's (1990) initial intervention in linking peace, education and gender issues – and parallel to their efforts – myriad studies have emerged that confirm this connection (more recent examples include Eisler 2000; Mills 2001; Reardon 2001). They all show that unless issues of masculinities traditionally defined (by patriarchy) are addressed and alternative non-belligose masculine identities are provided, peace education initiatives can only go so far. This may be even more important in societies where feminism is also considered an alien, foreign force aimed at undermining the very fabric of local communities and families. Here too it is important to tap into local historical discourses that promote gender partnership and women's empowerment.

Alternative masculinities

Therefore, another critical task when supporting the demilitarization of society may lie in addressing patriarchal practices in general and those related to the themes of maturity and socialization in particular. This would mean providing alternative stories about boys' maturation into men, minus the army/military and violence. These alternatives may include changes in the practices within a patriarchal family wherein boys are overprotected and not expected to contribute much towards the overall running of the household. Economic changes and increases in economic prosperity would equally enable different means of separating from parents – i.e. through travel, getting new experiences elsewhere, living with friends, etc. 'The latest' is out of reach for most young Serbian men, thus some recognize the army as the only possible way to break free from parents and 'grow up'. Peace educators of male gender are in a critical position to provide positive role models themselves. Their say in promoting gender partnership can have huge value for the young men and boys negotiating their own gender-based identities. All peace educators can also provide positive role models from historical and contemporary public figures, of men supporting gender partnership and non-violence/peace in all spheres of society. Again, in addition to discussing the lives and work of figures such as Nobel Peace Prize laureates and so on, finding local examples is of critical importance.

Education about the need for positive peace and peace education

Lastly, there is the need to communicate about the impact particular educational practices have in promoting violence and war, or alternatively peace. Social, political and economic changes are obviously critical but further recognition of the role of education is also needed. Peace educators can thus educate about the need for demilitarization and positive peace but also about the need for education as a means, a vehicle enabling society to both create and adjust to these changes.

Implicit here, of course, is a futures perspective. It is critically important that before 'a solution' is provided, various alternatives, futures scenarios and options, are discussed. Futures studies and futures education are less normative than peace education (for better or worse). Futures-oriented approaches can critically assist peace educators in removing some cognitive obstacles – i.e. if students themselves have their identities and politics already invested in certain violence-promoting discourses. Crucial in this process is showing that alternatives to violence do exist and that they are beneficial to all involved. Envisioning alternatives and preferred futures may help with previously mentioned 'ownership' of an alternative discourse that is proposed by educators. As argued by Hicks (2004),

for much of peace education the future is either tacit, token or taken for granted ... [however] a particular stress on the importance of images of the futures and the need for individuals and groups to be able to envision more hopeful and positive futures [is needed]. (175)

Futures studies bring into the picture 'a whole range of specialist tools and techniques for understanding and analyzing possible, probable and preferable futures' (Hicks 2004, 176). For peace educators, to acquaint oneself with these tools may mean the difference between more or less successful interventions. As seen in our study, when clearly outlined, locally 'owned', preferred peace-oriented futures alternatives are not there, students as well as the broader community may easily go back or continue to hold on to historical patriarchal and violence-promoting discourses.

Conclusion: some points of intervention when educating for peace

Our study confirms the many key principles of peace education: making deep-seated beliefs visible and transparent, the need to provide alternatives and undo hegemonic narratives of war and violence, and to undo stereotypes and promote critical literacy. Also, and connected to the provision of alternatives, there is the need to create a new story, especially one that taps into the collective unconscious, through existing and new myths and metaphors. 'War is so twentieth century' becomes one new metaphor with which peace educators can work, to both enhance various progressivist narratives in general and demilitarization processes in particular. 'Women give birth and men go to the army' is a metaphor that, on the other hand, needs to be replaced by metaphors promoting gender partnership, especially in patriarchal and post-conflict societies. Connecting gender and demilitarization issues in these contexts remains crucial.

The study was conducted a year after a new measure – the undertaking civilian service option as part of an overall demilitarization of society project – was introduced. It would be useful to follow up this pilot study five or ten years hence, and investigate whether particular demilitarization measures may have had an impact on existing narratives and attitudes in the society. That is, whether some conservative views will have diminished by the very means of having an alternative option to preparing to fight in wars.

As it stands now this study contributes to the literature in peace education and the region in three main ways. First, it cautions about the need to tread carefully between local and global issues and identities, especially as they relate to the narratives of progress and development. Second, it reaffirms the need for linking peace and gender issues and for outlining of alternative masculinities grounded in peace and gender partnership-promoting narratives. Here too these alternatives need to be locally relevant and meaningful. And third, as peace educators are inherently concerned with creating a better world, they also need to move beyond 'token, tacit and taken for granted' futures. Rather, explicit engagement with future issues as well as with the futures studies knowledge base and concrete tools and techniques is needed. As futures educators have shown (i.e. Hutchinson 1996; Hicks 2004), this approach is crucial in opening up the future and rescuing it from dominant, violence-promoting 'most realistic' and 'plausible' futures. Given the level of violence embedded in our presents and pasts, it is to the image of preferred, positive and holistic peace-based future alternatives that young people may look for the inspiration and hope.

Notes

1. All the statements in quotes, unless otherwise referenced, are from the survey respondents.
2. Vojvodina [Voyvodina], of which Novi Sad is the capital, is situated at the north end of Serbia, bordering Croatia, Hungary and Romania. Due to its history (once upon a time part of the

Austro-Hungarian Empire) and geographical position, a diversity of ethnic groups live in the territory. During the existence of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ), multiculturalism was actively promoted, for example five official languages existed simultaneously. Since Milošević's regime revoked autonomous status for both Vojvodina and Kosovo, and since (even though often tokenistic) the multiculturalism and internationalism of SFRJ was replaced by Serbian nationalism, the ethnic composition of the province has been in flux. Members of many national minorities were either forced to or chose to leave, while Serbian refugees from Bosnia and Croatia arrived in large numbers. The pressures for Hungarians, Slovaks, Croats, etc., to leave and make space for the newcomers (who were expelled from or chose to leave their own homes) continue. This in many ways helps create an environment somewhat conducive to the rise of cultural intolerances and multi-ethnic tensions; however, compared to the other parts of the former Yugoslavia, the incidence of physical violence and the overt types of ethnic hatred have been relatively low.

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