



## Instruments of Empathy-Shaping in the Creation of a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence

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**Abstract:** Empathy as a human trait that gives the ability to understand, respect, and share the feelings of other people is one of the most important elements in building a secure society and a culture of peace and non-violence. The level of empathy in individuals is influenced by endogenous and exogenous factors, and it has an affective and cognitive dimension. The aim of this paper is to investigate the concept of empathy, the extent of influence of endogenous and exogenous factors, to investigate the influence of three main elements in the development of empathy in children and youth, namely family, school, and media, and to investigate the degree of correlation between empathy and creation and maintaining a culture of peace and nonviolence. The methods used in this paper are quantitative and qualitative content analysis, comparative analysis, historical method, analogy method, and analysis of primary and secondary sources. The research confirmed the importance of empathy in the development of a culture of tolerance, dialogue, respect for opposing opinions and goals, respect for diversity, and non-violent response to conflicts. All these elements are simultaneously elements of a culture of peace and non-violence, and therefore the conclusion is that empathy is one of the preconditions for building a culture whose goal is a safer and more humane society that provides greater security from physical destruction than a culture of war and aggressive problem-solving. The authors conclude this paper with recommendations for the three main pillars of shaping empathy in children, namely family, school, and the media.

*Keywords:* empathy, endogenous and exogenous factors of empathy, family, education system, media, the culture of peace.

### Introduction

Society and its achievements define the way of life of people, their mutual relations, and the dynamics of those relations. Each new iteration of a society and social relations, which are a consequence of either progress or regression, brings certain changes in the way of life of the members of that society. Some things remain the same, whether they are the product of human nature or civilizational postulates, while some other things change, whether radical or subtle changes, rapid or slow, changes to which large groups of people or specific smaller groups are exposed. Sometimes social changes are so massive and comprehensive that we call them industrial revolutions, behind which, as a rule, stand a certain technological invention and innovation. From the First Agricultural Revolution (or Neolithic Revolution), which enabled the emergence of the first civilizations, to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which is currently underway, huge changes in the way of producing material life have led to changes in lives and interactions and relationships between people. Although the benefits of changing production methods are enormous, those changes also bring negative things. Already during the First Industrial Revolution, there were concerns about the alienation of man from man, and this alienation became deeper with each major change. During the Third Industrial Revolution, which, among other things, brought us the Internet and ushered the world into the Information Age, it seemed that the connection inherent in the very nature of this technological invention would bring people closer and reduce alienation. But something paradoxical happened - people became more connected than ever, and communication became easier than ever, but the process of alienating man from man continued and deepened. Although through a

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permanent connection to the global network they have in some way become constantly together, people are essentially alone. But alienation not only results in loneliness but also has its much more harmful manifestations. Today's scientific and technological progress has made impressive, one might say revolutionary achievements of technical progress. Electronic media, universal computerization, mobile phones, music, traffic, and many other technical benefits, created "allegedly" to make life and work easier for modern man, not only represent this alienation as a specific category, which is nurtured and received in man "new age", but they direct them and force them not to treat other people as personalities (Bjelajac, 2014). If a person is alienated from other people, they can very easily be alienated from nature, as we can see in numerous examples of environmental destruction that seem to alarm an insufficient number of people to create a critical mass to stop this devastating trend, the trend that may result in the fact that those who will come after us will have nothing left, and that the heritage of modern man will be a completely destroyed global natural habitat.

Another dramatic but practically hidden consequence of human alienation is the growing lack of empathy in people. Empathy, roughly understood as a lack of ability to understand and share the feelings of others, is one of the most important elements in building and maintaining a humane society and culture of peace, non-violence, and security. If we start from the perhaps utopian assumption that society should be fair and equal for all, and that scientific and technological development aims to improve the quality of life of each individual involved in these changes, then any change that results in reduced levels of understanding between human beings does not lead to the achievement of the aforementioned goals. Only a society made up of individuals who are able to share other people's feelings, especially of those who are weaker or less influential, can be justly, truly progressive, and globally united in the purpose and activities that are derived from that shared purpose, aimed to improve their own well-being, but also for the betterment of their environment, community, and society. If that doesn't exist, then it's a bit pointless to explore space and colonize the planets of the solar system, because even if they go thousands of light-years away, people will carry the same flaws that prevented them from building the best possible society in their original habitat. An element of fundamental importance for creating the best possible society is empathy, and some developed societies have realized that, so they have introduced the study of empathy as a separate school subject in the educational system at all levels. As the level of empathy in people generally depends on several factors, the aim of this paper is to define the concept of empathy, explore the proportions of endogenous factors and environmental influences on the development of empathy, to explore the influence of family, school, and media in shaping empathy in children and youth, as well as to explore the importance of empathy for the creation, development, and maintenance of a culture of peace and non-violence, which is an extremely important element of human survival and maintenance of living conditions worthy of man. The basic hypothesis of this paper is that empathy is crucial in creating a culture of peace and non-violence, as well as in raising the quality of human life and social interactions, which is an important factor in the overall life satisfaction of each individual. The methods used in the preparation of this paper are quantitative and qualitative content analysis, comparative analysis, historical method, analogy method, and analysis of primary and secondary sources.

## **Empathy - between endogenous factors and environmental influences**

Empathy is primarily a personal relationship with people and situations in which human emotions are expressed, but deeply conditioned by social circumstances, the context in which the situation takes place. In the not-so-distant past, the most vulnerable social groups, such as children, were (mis)used and exploited in the most brutal way without any empathy or concern for their suffering, which is unthinkable today (although even today, unfortunately, hidden from the public eye and out of the reach of legal sanctions, there is brutal exploitation of children for economic, sexual, political and other purposes).

Empathy is a very complex and multidimensional phenomenon. To date, there is no clear consensus on what empathy is and what phenomena are associated with it. To get a clear and unreduced picture of empathy, all these phenomena should be viewed as separate but mutually conditioned and closely related. The most common approaches in empathy studies are based on the differences between the two basic dimensions of empathy, namely affective empathy and cognitive empathy.

Affective empathy (Cuff et al., 2016) deals with emotional experience caused by emotional stimuli, while cognitive empathy is the ability to understand or rationalize other people's feelings. The affective component is what is inherent in empathy and refers to the affective state caused by the sharing of emotions and emotional states of another person (Banissy et al., 2012). This aspect of empathy focuses on the emotional processes of empathy and defines it through experiencing and sharing emotions. When

discussing affective empathy, one should always keep in mind the complexity of human emotions.

The cognitive approach to empathy gives priority to cognitive processes, which include understanding other people's feelings, situations, and circumstances, taking on roles, and seeing the world "through the eyes of others". Many scholars who emphasize this aspect of empathy believe that cognitive empathy precedes affective empathy (Banissy et al., 2012).

Definitions of empathy that encompass both the cognitive and affective dimensions note that "although empathy involves emotional resonance between the empathizer and the object of empathy, it is also characterized by maintaining a clear cognitive and experiential boundary between the two, so the empathizer can always distinguish his thoughts and feelings from others" (Hollan, 2012).

The organization of neural activities of the brain during evolution has enabled the emergence of certain human behaviors, such as empathy. Empathy plays an important role in the survival of the species and increases the likelihood of remaining in a social group. However, during evolution, humans have developed several separate neural systems whose combination and cooperation allow for complex behavior in social interactions, such as the development of emotional and social intelligence (Banissy et al., 2012).

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize, identify, understand, control, and use feelings to express thoughts. Emotional intelligence describes the ability to effectively maintain the connection between emotions and opinions, to use emotions to facilitate reasoning and to think intelligently about emotions (Mayer, Caruso and Salovey, 2016).

Daniel Goleman singled out five essential components of emotional intelligence:

1) Self-awareness – is an essential component of emotional intelligence and refers to the recognition of their own feelings at the time when they are expressed, as well as the willingness to realistically assess their own abilities.

2) Self-control - Self-control is based on self-awareness and represents the ability to overcome and manage emotions.

3) Self-motivation - channeling emotional excitement into action energy directed towards the desired goals, taking responsibility, and willingness to persevere in what we have set as a goal.

4) Empathy - recognizing emotions in other people. Empathetic people are sensitive to almost invisible social signals that indicate what others want, how they feel, or what they need. Namely, empathy represents the readiness and ability to feel what other people feel, as well as the ability to mentally put ourselves in their place within its frame of reference.

5) Social skills - relationship management, ie. interpersonal skills (Goleman, 1995).

Here we see that empathy is only one of the elements of emotional intelligence as a much more complex and broader concept than empathy itself.

Social intelligence starts from emotional intelligence as self-reflection and follows how it is further reflected in interpersonal relationships. Social intelligence is reflected in dealing with emotions in specific social situations, developing harmonious relationships with others, developing sensibilities for other people's needs and desires, developing active listening, and all those qualities that we attribute to a "good" person. For the world to be better, it is necessary to start from the development of the social intelligence of the individual and reach the social intelligence of the society, which is today recognized and studied as social capital.

Rudimentary forms of social intelligence and empathy can be found in the behavior of some primates, such as caring for offspring, and organized group life, which can be considered an evolutionary precursor to empathy. However, what is specific for people is the development of the prefrontal cortex, i.e., the ability to rationalize reality as the development of self-awareness and awareness of others, self-regulation of emotions, ability to speak and understand language, sharing emotions, all leading to prosocial behavior and altruism. among people. In addition to the cortex, other biological systems vital to empathy have evolved, such as the autonomous nervous system and endocrine system, and especially the amygdala, which plays the most important role in the evaluation and regulation of emotions. Anatomical differences (Banissy et al., 2012), as well as genetic and developmental factors (Eisenberg and Morris, 2001), explain some variability in empathic abilities. In addition, other dispositional factors such as gender and education were observed.

Various neurochemical compounds participate in the formation of empathy. Research has shown that a large number of neuropeptides are involved in social behavior related to attachment or empathy, including oxytocin, vasopressin and opioids, dopamine and serotonin (Gonzalez-Liencre, Shamay-Tsoory and Brüne, 2013). Some analyzes have shown that genetic factors make up to 35% of the variance

of empathy. Researchers have even isolated specific genes that contribute to the likelihood of inheriting empathy, while certain metabolic conditions such as hunger, fatigue, lack of sleep, and pain reduce the empathic response (Watt, 2007). Medical practice and research, especially in neurology and psychiatry, have shown that in some psychological and brain pathologies, empathy is reduced and shows deficits. In general, low empathy is usually associated with damage to the frontal or prefrontal cortex, especially the right hemisphere. Research shows that if a person has not been exposed to enough affection and the exchange of empathy in the parent-child relationship and has not developed empathic skills accordingly, this can later be the cause of reduced empathy capacity. There are also certain psychopathological conditions that are accompanied by a deficit of empathy: autism, behavior and personality disorder, psychopathy, schizophrenia, Parkinson's disease, dementia...

As can be seen, an empathic response is subject to various endogenous factors, i.e., factors of individual differences, but also to a multitude of exogenous, situational factors. These include a positive relationship between the observer and the other person, the degree of closeness (siblings, guardians, best friends), similarity (personal attributes, biological and social background), belonging to the same group (nation, race, religion, sports team), assessment fair play of others, assessment of the helplessness of others, assessment of the emotional state of others (aggression and negative emotions of another person inhibit the observer's empathy as opposed to pain and suffering), social comparison through assessment of others' social status, wealth or success (Bošnjaković and Radionov, 2018).

It is very important to identify and analyze the diversity of cultural frameworks, social situations, and political-economic conditions that either suppress and inhibit basic empathy or reinforce it more precisely and systematically.

### **The influence of family, school, and media in shaping empathy in children**

Security culture is an umbrella term that includes the culture of peace and non-violence as one of the extremely important elements. Security culture and its functioning are closely connected with collective and individual changes that take place in society and the state. It acts by expanding the range of human knowledge from various fields of science and technology, expanding knowledge of the types and levels of new hazards, their dynamics, and possible transformations. Accordingly, in modern conditions, purposeful work on the promotion and implementation of security culture in all spheres of public and private life should be specially organized educational and humanistic activities of the state, school system, teachers, and students, aimed at forming a person of safe and secure type (Bjelajac and Filipović, 2021a). If in this recommendation we place special emphasis on peace education and empathy as a fundamentally important element of successful peace education, as an integral part of broader security culture and the process of forming a safe type of personality, we can also identify the carriers of the process of shaping empathy in children and adolescents. These carriers are - the family, the school, and the media, and each of them has an important, different but complementary role in this process. Of course, the adoption of the basic rules of safe living must begin in the family. This means that the child needs to be taught the basics of life security that will enable them not only to coexist safely in society later, but also to permanently build a security culture necessary for coexistence, and when the time comes, they form their descendants as safe individuals. Thus, through the continuity of security education, safe personalities, safe families, and, finally, a safe society is permanently created. It should be quite clear that full and irreversible security culture is permanently formed through a certain set of knowledge, abilities, and skills that young people acquire as a result of pedagogical interaction with the school within the school program on the basics of life safety (Bjelajac and Filipović, 2021a). Analogous to this quote, and because empathy is a fundamentally important component of adopting the principles of security culture, and thus the culture of peace and nonviolence, we can say that the process of shaping empathy in children begins in the family, learning and adopting elements of understanding, respecting and sharing other people's feelings, first members of the immediate and then the extended family and immediate environment; and in the case of the correct shaping of empathy within the family, at the moment when the child enters the educational system, it is this system that should enable the continuity of shaping empathy through specially created compulsory school contents. Just as the continuity of security education ensures the permanent creation of safe personalities that form safe families that form a safe society, so the continuity of education about empathy ensures the permanent creation of safe individuals who have a high level of empathy, which will lead to a critical mass at the same time to safe, but also to a humane, pacifist society in which understanding and dialogue will be the basic means for approaching and resolving conflicts at all levels.

We mentioned earlier that empathy is a very complex concept. Some scholars study empathy

within the framework of a much more complex and multidimensional theory of moral development and explain moral behavior in terms of self-awareness, socialization, empathy, autonomy, moral reasoning, etc. The affective aspect of empathy focuses on the emotional processes of empathy and defines it through experiencing and sharing emotions, where "emotions are most often caused by evaluating or evaluating events, in relation to everything we consider important: our goals, our worries, and aspirations. They give intensity to our lives and are partly based on our cultural contexts and what we consider socially acceptable" (Outli, 2005).

Empathy is especially subject to discuss if we keep in mind exogenous factors in the formation of empathy. Exogenous factors include the influence of the environment, where we primarily mean the geographical, national, religious, civilizational, ideological, class, racial and other affiliations of empathizers. All these factors, and many others, affect the formation of value systems, worldviews, prejudices and other personal characteristics of empathizers. The basic definitions of empathy are relatively imprecise and arbitrary, and probably biased towards the forms of empathy expressed in the European and North American contexts and their dominant value systems. Also, a very important factor is the exposure to the media, especially new media on the Internet, to which we will pay more attention.

From the very beginning, the traditional mass media have had an informative, educational, and entertaining function. The power of manipulation that they had was very quickly noticed and applied primarily for commercial and political purposes. The concentration of ownership of the mass media on a global scale has made them a powerful weapon of manipulation of public opinion, attitudes, emotions, and empathy. Empathy can be manipulated, especially for political purposes, in crisis situations such as war conflicts. If the empathizer adopts some of the preferences of the person or group of his empathy under the influence of the media, it is likely that aversions towards the other side have also been adopted. The mass media have a particularly large influence on public opinion and emotion-al-empathic response because they establish authoritative unilateral communication with the masses and generally identify with official government positions. When it comes to the role of the media in creating a culture of peace, we think that it should be noted with regret that the media have little chance and opportunity to dedicate themselves to this humanitarian goal. In the first place, it should be borne in mind that for the vast majority of media, income is the basic driver, the reason for its existence, and a kind of determinant of editorial policy. Revenue and revenue opportunities increase with the number of users of that medium (viewers, readers, listeners). Increasing the audience can be influenced by the credibility and quality of information and content, but it is a much longer and more arduous path, and with that, with the increase in the number of information circulating between interconnected users, credibility is becoming more and more relative. Sensationalism, which has always been one of the most important factors in attracting new media audiences, has gained additional importance in the era of the primacy of new media. In addition, in the flood of information, the audience usually watches the head-lines and only then may read the rest of the text or watch/listen to the rest of the media content. Therefore, media whose success, or even existence, depends on the size of the audience that is directly related to the number of advertisers and the price of advertising space are more inclined to report on conflicts than tolerance, and in such a set of things, it is very difficult to adjust the editorial policy to the goals of creating and promoting a culture of peace, even if there is a consensus and the will to do so (Filipović, 2021).

Since the emergence of new social media and the so-called virtual communication that is not based on face-to-face relationships, conclusions about the negative impact of this type of communication on the socialization and empathy of the generations growing up on these media began to appear. Such conclusions were based on the basic lack of communication on social networks, and that is the absence of non-verbal communication and the impossibility of developing the affective component of empathy.

Modern definitions of empathy are more complex and stand out through the cognitive, affective, and physiological processes that underlie it, which gave rise to the establishment of a quantitative index of empathic ability. There have long been developed scales for measuring the coefficient of empathy, so that opened the possibility to really determine how new media and the Internet affect the level of empathy of all age groups, especially adolescents who grow up on these media. The first scale, the Hogan Empathy Scale, was created in 1969. Today, however, the IRI scale (Interpersonal Reactivity Index) or Inter-Personal Reactivity Index is most used. The most common measured aspects of empathy were perspective, fantasy, empathic concern, and personal distress. PT scale (understanding perspective) measures the process of taking on a role, and the tendency to adopt the psychological points of view of others. The EC scale (empathic concern) measures the tendency to experience feelings directed at others and the response to anxiety in others with a reactive response of sympathy and compassion. FS scale (fantasy) measures the tendency to transpose oneself into the feelings and actions of fictional characters. The PD (personal distress) scale is designed to highlight one's own feelings of personal discomfort and

discomfort as a reaction to the emotions of others (Bošnjaković and Radionov, 2018).

The results of the conducted research mostly rejected all hypotheses that assumed that with the increase in the use of social media and the Internet, empathy decreases, i.e., no significant connection between the use of social media and empathy has been established. Also, research has shown that there are no differences in the intensity of expression of emotions between online communication and face-to-face communication, as well as a significant difference in the development of affective and cognitive components of empathy using social media. Adolescents often use social media to practice social skills and successfully transfer those skills to offline interactions. The use of social media has been shown to have positive effects on adolescents as it gives them the opportunity to share emotions with others and understand their feelings. Regarding the use of Facebook, the results of the research suggest that people who are actively involved in Facebook show higher ratings of empathy, increased self-esteem, and life satisfaction, as well as increased empathic concern.

Despite efforts to support evidence that the use of the Internet and social networks reduces empathy, this has not been proven. New generations are growing up with new technologies and new ways of communication, and it has always been so. The Internet and interactive Web 2.0, on which social platforms such as Facebook were created, enable unlimited interactive multilateral communication, exchange of views, ideas, emotions, life philosophies, dialogue, argumentation, and even quarrels and conflicts of opinion. This is a huge step forward in relation to the centralized mass media and the unilateral authoritarian rule of opinion and information. For decades, the mass media have been "burying" the audience with bad news, placing false and ridiculous values (reality shows), and promoting people unworthy of public attention. This could not reduce empathy, but it significantly helped to create "emotional fatigue" when our brain turns on defense mechanisms and rejects this information, dulls the senses, and thus avoids empathic response. Variations in empathic responses may be greater or less given the many factors we listed (endogenous and exogenous), which is normal, but the absence of empathy is a psychopathological phenomenon with deeper causes.

It is ungrateful to arbitrarily appreciate the overall level of empathy in society, the ability of people to empathize with other people's emotions, and to put the helpless under their protection, which is the basic and expected outcome of empathy. On the other hand, it is an indisputable fact that the global society, the whole civilization, is in the biggest crisis in history so far and that it is certainly sliding towards a very uncertain dystopia. The circumstances in which we live are so complex that it is almost impossible to rationalize them, take a stand towards them and correctly direct our own empathic response. Although globally networked and connected, the individual must, as never before, take personal responsibility for building a culture of peace and non-violence, not agree to be manipulated by other people's interests, and direct his empathic response in the right way. Empathy is just one of many factors that affect overall life satisfaction, happiness, and personal and overall social prosperity, but it is extremely important for the healthy and progressive coexistence of people.

## **The fundamental importance of empathy in creating a culture of peace and nonviolence**

Empathy is fundamental in creating a culture of peace and nonviolence. People are social beings who share their lives with others, and understanding other people's mental states, especially emotions, desires, thoughts, behaviors, and intentions, affects the way they engage in social interactions. Empathy facilitates understanding of our social environment, anticipating the behavior of other people, and is necessary for healthy coexistence, mutual understanding, and cooperation between people. Empathy influences our motivation through prosocial behavior, altruism, compassion, and care for others, inhibits aggression, and is the foundation of morality. As such, empathy attracts scientists from various scientific fields such as philosophy, sociology, psychology, medicine, neuroscience, etc. (Bošnjaković and Radionov, 2018). The human brain is a modular organ full of adaptive cognitive structures, most of which are unique to the human species. These are innate forms of cognition, but also an emotional reaction to cognition, which is also typical. We are not born with preinnate ideas about morality and empathy, but there are innate cognitive predispositions as well as emotional reactions that condition and enable the formation of ideas about morality and the development of empathy towards other people.

Human nature is characterized by a growing number of various needs. The quality and quantity of these needs have changed throughout history. Marx said that the wealth of man is reflected in the wealth of his needs. "The issue of human security is conditioned by the question, what are human needs? Philosophers see human needs as a powerful source for explaining human behavior and social interaction.

People need a few basic things to survive, including the physical and non-physical elements needed for human growth and development, as well as all the things that people innately want to achieve” (Bjelajac, 2021). Whether we are supporters of the concept of the hierarchy of needs or the concept of cumulative action of multiple motives and needs on human behavior, one thing is certain: the need for security, both physical integrity and personal integrity, is at the top of every person’s needs and motives. We can give the need for security an ontological character, and place it outside any classification and hierarchy of motives because without it every other activity has no meaning or context. In modern rule of law, the issue of security takes on dimensions of security regulated by law. The motto of the Enlightenment woven into modern states is “laws make us free”.

From the Magna Carta Libertatum from the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the British Glorious Revolution of 1688, the American Revolutionary War of 1776, to the French Bourgeois Revolution of 1789, and many national liberation movements, the European and then the world order of sovereign states emerged. Citizens entered a contractual relationship with the state, exchanging their unbridled freedom and a state “in which life was miserable, short and uncertain” (T. Hobbes) for security and certainty guaranteed by the state with its authority and monopoly on physical coercion, for the implementation of which its mandate was given by the citizens themselves. At the same time, starting with the division into Whigs and Tories in the English Parliament during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, through the division into left and right parties in the French Assembly after the revolution, then the first, second, and third internationals, a modern European political field emerged, bringing politics into the lives of modern European citizens. When we finally add the utopia of free-market competition created by Adam Smith and his work “The Wealth of Nations”, according to which the “invisible hand of the market” will make the most rational allocation of resources in the interest of the whole nation, we find all elements that marked modern history. It was a time of hope, as Woodrow Wilson put it in the early twentieth century, in which we need to “make the world safe for democracy” where peace, democracy, and a market economy are the preconditions for social prosperity. (This insistence on peace as one of the three presuppositions of prosperity was the greatest objection to Wilson’s concept, because at that time war was still considered a legitimate and unquestionable way of pursuing the interests of states.)

UNDP, in its Human Development Report (UNDP, 1994) comes out with the concept of human security. The individual is placed in the center of the security space, and the responsibility for his security is lowered from the exclusive state level to the regional and local level as well, with many more actors than before. Security threats are no longer just issues of threatening borders, nuclear catastrophe, and war, but also threats arising from the consequences of sudden globalization. These are unequal economic growth north-south, rising poverty because of the market economy and deregulation of national legislation, environmental catastrophe, uncontrolled money flows, terrorism, religious fundamentalism, etc. Human security is a relatively new paradigm for approaching the security problem. Compared to traditional security concepts based on the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state, human security is based on the fact that the security of each individual is essential for the creation of peaceful and stable societies (Bjelajac, 2021).

The UNDP concept of human security recognizes seven aspects of human security:

- a) economic security
- b) food safety
- c) environmental security
- d) health safety
- e) personal security
- f) community security
- g) political security (UNDP, 1994)

So what is the future of a culture of peace and non-violence? Simply put, a culture of peace is a culture that promotes peaceful diversity. Such a culture includes lifestyles, beliefs, values, behaviors, and accompanying institutional arrangements that promote mutual care and well-being, as well as equality that includes respect for diversity, governance, and equitable sharing of resources. This offers mutual security to humanity in all its diversity through a deep sense of species identity, as well as kinship with the living earth. There would be no need for violence (Bjelajac, 2021).

Is it really possible to achieve such a goal, today when society is atomized, when states have completely lost their sovereignty and terminated the social contract with their citizens when informal organizations lead humanity into an uncertain (perhaps really “better”) utopian/dystopian future, when war has once again become a legitimate means of achieving some, most incomprehensible goals? At the

same time, the rest of humanity is becoming a global “clan community” left to itself, connected, networked, informed, and increasingly aware of common destiny. Will the upcoming economic, energy, environmental, health, in one-word, general crisis succeed in provoking a common empathic response of the world’s citizens and mobilize them to “disagree” and build a global culture of peace and non-violence, or will empathy be suppressed by apathy, and will its future be left in the hands of those who think they have a sure solution to their problems? This danger is real, and there are a handful of historical precedents for it, especially since it is much easier to stand with a dominant leader or political or national structure, and through that homogeneity caused by fear and apathy to avoid the efforts and uncertainty of individualism for a better community. It is an abstract way of saying “building a safe and humane society of peace and non-violence through the adoption and adherence to the principles of empathy and security” in which the central role is played by the individual, at whose level all these processes and principles must be adopted.

## Discussion

One of the possible solutions for moving towards a culture of peace and non-violence is to implement empathy in education systems. Peace education is an essential component of quality primary education. It is equally important in conflict and unstable societies, where children are helped to cope with the trauma of war, manage and resolve conflicts and build dialogue processes to better understand the “other”, and in more stable and prosperous societies, where empathy develops as the ability to understand the emotions of others (e.g., migrants and other socially vulnerable groups). Practice suggests that such an approach can contribute to reducing racism, discrimination, and prejudice, with an emphasis on social cohesion and building a successful multicultural society, despite significant cultural and religious diversity ([Bjelajac and Filipović, 2021b](#)). In some Scandinavian countries, we have an example of implementing empathy in school syllabi, where children systematically learn to understand and share the feelings of others, with the goal that future generations have ingrained values that contribute to the sustainability of a humane society that is both a society of peace and nonviolence.

Economic prosperity is one of the most important factors for building positive empathy, especially if social wealth is at least approximately equally distributed among all members of the community. The impact of material well-being can have an ambivalent effect on empathy. On the one hand, it can lead to individualism as a life philosophy based on egoistic hedonism, which is certainly not an environment for the development of empathy (which is increasingly proven by practice in the most economically developed countries through deep alienation and disinterest in others), and on the other hand, personal economic and material well-being can be a stimulus for empathic participation in people’s problems related to poverty and suffering caused by any reason.

Human beings behave as beings who strive to maximize individual benefit, but also as beings who see themselves as part of a wider social group. Trust is nothing but the expectation of some members of the community that other members will behave regularly honestly and cooperatively on the basis that they share common values with them. Social capital is usually transmitted through cultural mechanisms such as religion, tradition, and customs. Trust is an ethical category and as a common language of good and evil of a nation, trust and collective empathy are acquired through the history of nations, especially concerning socio-historical circumstances in which a nation created its ethos - its language of good and evil. In that light, we would tie the mentality to behavior or attitude towards ourselves, the people around us, and the community. Social capital is an even narrower term and is related to the society of commodity production, especially to capitalism and the market economy, because it implies the influence of the ability to associate and form spontaneous social groups on the creation of new value (for individuals and communities). In that case, social capital becomes a resource in addition to money, raw materials, and labor as classic resources that otherwise participate in the creation of new value. Thus, we can define social capital as the ability of people to work together with mutual trust and empathy to work together for common purposes in groups and organizations and thus create new value.

The ruling ideologies during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries brought with them very coherent value systems, especially those related to the economic aspects of social life. The issue of property, social distribution of wealth, class divisions, but also social and cultural policies, directly affected the level of trust, social capital, and thus empathy among people. But since all ideologies are “political ideologies”, i.e., behind general and common interests, partial and personal interests were hidden, despite the ideals they carry (whether liberal or communist), they were always ultimately a factor of social conflicts, mistrust, and disintegration. It was certainly not an environment for the development of empathy as a necessary factor of social integration and a culture of peace.



All this leads us to the conclusion that there is a direct correlation between a high level of empathy and the creation and maintenance of a culture of peace. In an era of rapid technological development that has direct implications for social structures and life, and which aims to improve the quality of life and work of people, it seems that humanity has reached a sufficient level of development and civilizational values that we can think of developing a sustainable society a consequence of the development of a sustainable culture of peace and non-violence. In this regard, if we identify the individual, family, school, and media as the most important factors in this endeavor and identify the need for the development of empathy in individuals that must be nurtured while the individual is a child, then we can single out family, school, and media as carriers of empathy in individuals, and propose certain recommendations that would help achieve that humanitarian goal. The family, as the basic cell of society, and at the same time the initial and most important element of raising children, has a role to teach the child to recognize, understand, respect, and share the feelings of others - firstly family members and then the child's immediate environment. Of course, if in the next step, i.e., when the child encounters the next factor in the process, there is no upgrade to what was learned in the family, even without meeting the opposition within the new environment, the process will be interrupted and possibly annulled. Therefore, the next factor - the education system - is extremely important for this process. Recommendations for the education system could be that at the kindergarten level, educators continue to teach children empathy by implementing its principles in their educational and upbringing methods. At the primary and secondary school level, it is recommended that the study of empathy as a separate subject be included in the syllabi, according to the model already used in certain countries. In that way, the continuity of shaping empathy in children and young people would be ensured, and for it to take place in the educational environment, with a scientific component that would contribute to the theoretical adoption of the principle of empathy, it is possible to additionally upgrade the knowledge and skills acquired in class through practical work and field visits and identify the need for possible additional didactic methods in order to increase the efficiency of empathy education. As for the role of the media in this process, we have already mentioned that their real power to actively work towards achieving this goal is extremely limited and that it is easy to promote a culture of peace and empathy in a period of peace and stability. However, when turbulence occurs, the media will always behave in accordance with the interests of its founders and financiers and will act residentially on their audience in accordance with those interests. When we talk about new media, especially social media and Web 3.0, decentralization, and democratization, which is their main feature, directly disables consistent action, and so it is when we develop empathy and promote a culture of peace and nonviolence. This does not mean that these efforts should be abandoned, but only illustrates the challenge that really exists. On the other hand, there is a certain space for the useful work of the media in the function of developing empathy and creating a culture of peace, and the media can be used for that purpose. Therefore, what the media can do first is to desensationalize events and avoid a discourse that mimics war discourse. What the media also shall and can do is promote the elements and values that are an integral part of a culture of peace and non-violence, such as tolerance, dialogue, respect for diversity, respect for different and opposing opinions and goals, and this is the most important space in which the media can act to help create a culture of peace. Promoting these values would reduce the potential for violent conflict resolution of all kinds while reducing tensions in society and nurturing democratic and humanistic values (Filipović, 2021). It should only be added here that empathy is one of the most important elements and values that are an integral part of the culture of peace and non-violence, that the existence of empathy conditions and promotes tolerance, dialogue, respect for diversity, and respect for opposing views and opposing goals and that as such it should be intensively and creatively promoted through the media content of both traditional and new media.

## Conclusion

Developing and continuously maintaining empathy in children and young people is one of the preconditions for building and maintaining a culture of peace and non-violence, and consequently, a safe and humane society. It should be borne in mind that the culture of peace, from the historical aspect, is the antithesis of the way of thinking, and even the structure of societies and states and their priorities, because almost until World War II war was thought of as the basic way in which states achieve their goals and progress. Even today, there are numerous opinions that aggression, violence, and wars have made a greater contribution to the progress and degree of today's development of civilization than peace has done. On the other hand, any conflict and violent approach to resolving them carries the danger of destruction and causes permanent damage to the largest number of individuals who participated in it and

carries the inherent danger of physical destruction. Therefore, although violence is part of human nature, and precisely because people as a species tend to resort to it at the first sign of conflict, it is necessary to make a great effort to make a change in that sense, first temporary, and eventually permanent. Empathy is also part of human nature, although less common and less visible than violence, and by nurturing and developing empathy in children and adolescents we can take the first but extremely important step, initially in reducing the discrepancy in the frequency of violent and empathic responses to conflict, and further, towards a significant increase in the frequency of empathic response to conflict. If war is entropy, then peace is negentropy, and although negentropy may be in vain in the long term because entropy prevails in the end, isn't everything else that people do, build, and nurture, also negentropy? If humanity were reconciled with the transience of things and the inevitability of chaos and disorder, we would not have any civilization today, and with all the flaws and shortcomings, we have reached a degree of civilizational development that allows us to talk about peace and safe, quality life for all, and one of the most important elements of such a life is the high degree of empathy achieved in the critical mass of individuals.

### Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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