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Reconceptions of 'Home' and Identity within the Post-War Bosnian Diaspora in the United States

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ABSTRACT

According to estimates by Bosnian authorities, there are two million Bosnians and their descendants living in diaspora, the highest number recorded since the end of the conflict in 1995. Most of these individuals are forced or involuntary migrants who fled the genocide and ethnic cleansing campaign of Serb nationalists who sought to destroy Bosnia as a historically multiethnic homeland in order to create ethnically homogeneous Serb territory. Over twenty years after the war, many of those that were displaced have not returned to their former homes and are unlikely to ever return.

This study contributes to deepening understanding of the challenges faced by those displaced as they struggle to rebuild their lives and future in a new context. It does so through a theory-based analysis of the notion of home and constructions of identity in diaspora following conflict, and the narratives of members of the Bosnian diaspora about their experiences of conflict and violence in the places they called home. The strategy of violence used by nationalist Serbs physically destroyed places and people's homes, but it also impacted long-existing social structures and relationships, transforming the images of those places. As a consequence, the dispersal itself and the causes behind it became a central element in displaced Bosnians' redefinition of home and identity, where the place of resettlement developed as the best place to be, a new home, based on a search for 'cool ground' and 'normal life.' Two processes have played critical roles in this reconceptualization. First is the expansion of the family network, allowing for a regeneration of family structures that were fragmented by conflict. Second is translocalism, referring to the community-specific ways individuals maintain attachments to their former home. The places of resettlement and their particularities influence these processes and activities, producing distinct conditions for a reconceptualized home.

The study's findings suggest that further research into translocalism as an enduring solution to the condition of displacement would be of benefit, as contemporary refugees from Syria and other places of conflict try to re-establish life outside of their home countries. The findings also provide a foundation for research on the children of refugees, specifically on how memory and trauma are being communicated and passed on to them by their parents.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

According to estimates by Bosnian authorities, there are two million Bosnians and their descendants living outside the country in 'diaspora,' the highest number recorded since the end of the conflict in 1995. Most of these individuals are forced or involuntary migrants who fled the genocide and ethnic cleansing campaign of Serb nationalists who sought to destroy Bosnia as a historically multiethnic homeland in order to create ethnically homogeneous Serb territory. Over twenty years after the conflict, many of those that were displaced have not returned to their former homes and are unlikely to ever return.

This study contributes to deepening understanding of the challenges faced by those displaced as they struggle to rebuild their lives and future in a new context. It examines what the lives of members of the diaspora were like in the places they called home before everything became upended by violence and conflict. The strategy of violence used by nationalist Serbs physically destroyed places and people's homes, but it also impacted long-existing social structures and relationships, transforming the images of those places. As a consequence, the dispersal of Bosnians as refugees and the reasons for their dispersal became a central element in how they have redefined their notion of home and their identity. According to this redefinition, the place they resettled developed as the best place to be, a new home, based on a search for 'cool ground' and 'normal life.' Two processes have been particularly important in this reconceptualization. First is the expansion of the family network in the place of resettlement, which has allowed for a regeneration of family structures that were fragmented by conflict. Second is translocalism, which refers to the community-specific ways individuals maintain attachments to their former home. The places of resettlement and their particularities influence these processes and activities, producing distinct conditions for a reconceptualized home.

The study's findings suggest that further research into translocalism as an enduring solution to the condition of displacement would be of benefit, as contemporary refugees from Syria and other places of conflict try to re-establish life outside of their home countries. The findings also provide a foundation for research on the children of refugees, specifically on how memory and trauma are being communicated and passed on to them by their parents.

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> Displacement results in a tenuous relationship with the past, with the self that used to
> exist and operate in a different place, where the qualities that constituted us were in no
> need of negotiation. Immigration is an ontological crisis because you are forced to
> negotiate the conditions of your selfhood under perpetually changing existential
> circumstances.
>
> Aleksandar Hemon*, The Book of My Lives*

How do those displaced by violent conflict recalibrate their notions of home and identity

in diaspora? With more people displaced around the world than ever before, and with open

hostility to people fleeing war-torn countries loudly proclaimed in both the United States and

western Europe, this question could not be more timely. According to a report by the United

Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the global population of forcibly displaced people is

now at an unprecedented 65.6 million (UNHCR 2016). This figure represents almost a doubling

since 1997, when 33.9 million were estimated to be displaced. While the total number is

staggering on its own, it is made even more so by the fact that most of those who are now

refugees only became so in the last several years – between 2012 and 2015 – and as a result of

one particular conflict. While the conflicts in Iraq, Yemen, and sub-Saharan countries such as

Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and

Sudan have also forced residents to flee, the conflict in Syria is responsible for generating the

largest number of refugees in recent years (UNHCR 2016, p. 9).

How the current crisis of Syrian refugees is being addressed by the international

community hearkens back to a conflict two decades ago in the Balkans. In the early 1990s, when

the breakup of Yugoslavia dissolved into conflict and generated its own refugee crisis, with most

fleeing Bosnia-Herzegovina in particular, western European countries reacted by implementing

more cautious and restrictive intake policies that were underpinned by the assumption that their

protection regime would be temporary rather than permanent. The displaced were only

conditionally welcomed. In recent years, as the global refugee problem has worsened, such

impulses are being manifested again. For example, while Syria's neighbors Jordan, Lebanon and

Turkey have provided protection for the greatest number of refugees, the response of countries

that have historically been regarded as beneficent to those in need during crisis has been quite

austere. Specifically, while countries in the region were hosting 3.68 million Syrian refugees by

the end of 2014, the number of Syrian refugees provided protection by Germany, Sweden, the

United Kingdom and the United States combined was approximately 125,000 (Ostrand 2015).

At the same time, neighboring countries have experienced extreme strain as the massive flow of

refugees overburdens their systems of housing, food, water, healthcare, and security. Lebanon,

Jordan and Iraq are not parties to the Geneva Refugee Convention and as such do not offer full

refugee status but an

> ill-defined denomination as "guests." These "guests" are sometimes generously hosted
> and protected, but most of the time they are denied all the basic rights that would make
> settlement an option (work, access to services, etc.), even though history shows that
> guests may wait a lifetime and never return home. (Fargues 2014, p. 3).

These circumstances propelled many refugees, data shows, to seek shelter in countries outside of

the region, primarily Europe (Ostrand 2015).

Though the conflict in Syria is not yet over, host countries have begun openly

contemplating the return of Syrian refugees back to their homes, reminiscent of western

European countries' calls for Bosnian refugees to return home shortly after the conflict ended in

Bosnia. Driving this focus on return is a changing military situation in Syria as well as anti-

refugee rhetoric in host countries that have hardened some countries' policies and practices

(Norwegian Refugee Council et al 2018). Aid agencies have reacted in protest, arguing that Syria

is still 'dangerous ground' – that it continues to suffer from conflict and insecurity as evidenced

by new displacements occurring for every return that does take place. These organizations also

see the focus on return as undermining the chances of resettlement for refugees:

> Submissions for resettlement of vulnerable refugees, already low in previous years,
> plummeted in 2017 by nearly 50%. This lack of political will from wealthy countries to
> share responsibility for the world's largest refugee crisis has enabled Syria's neighbours
> to justify their own initiatives to close their borders or return refugees. (Norwegian
> Refugee Council et al 2018, p. 5).

Allen and Turton (1996) described the involuntary movement of the Mursi people in Ethiopia – a

survival strategy – as a 'search for cool ground.' The phrase has since become a metaphor for the

search of displaced persons for shelter and security (for examples of studies that have used the

metaphor, see Bakewell and De Haas 2007, Brun 2001, Jansen 2007, and Parkin 1999). The

Syrians are also searching for 'cool ground' somewhere in the world, a place to reclaim a sense

of normalcy and perhaps rebuild their life and families – a new home.

This study contributes to deepening our understanding of the challenges faced by those

displaced by war as they struggle to rebuild their lives and future in a new context. It does so

through a theory-based analysis of the notion of home and constructions of identity in diaspora

following conflict. Syrian refugees are at the beginning stages of a process of reconstituting

home and identity after violence and displacement, a process that Bosnian refugees embarked on

over 20 years ago. Both emigrations were propelled by the disintegration of the state into

sectional warfare: they were not predicted, organized, or orderly. Both emigrations involved

painful family separations. And both emigrations, however undesired they may have been, are

likely permanent. This is because in both cases, the intensity of violence caused utter destruction

to homes and communities, making return an extremely difficult prospect. Wherever Syrian

refugees (re)settle therefore – whether it is across the border from their homeland or in new

homes far away, the conflict and displacement inevitably catalyzes a process of re-examining the

core notions of home and identity. Based on an analysis of the Bosnian diaspora's experiences, I argue that for Syrian refugees and other populations violently displaced and with little prospect of returning home, the dispersal itself and the causes behind it may become a central element in their redefinition of home and identity. While inherently a negative experience, dispersal may also be regenerative, as it impels the displaced to recreate aspects of their former home in their new homeland, through various forms of cultural production as well as transnational and translocal activity. The places of settlement and their particularities influence these processes and activities, producing distinct conditions for the reconceptualization of home by the displaced.

Home and identity

What is home and what is its relationship to identity? These are fundamental concepts within this dissertation that need foregrounding in order to explain why studying them is of particular significance in the prevailing context of high levels of conflict-driven migration of individuals worldwide. Home is a multidimensional notion that refers to both specific spaces and places but also the emotions that it engenders.

> To be 'at home' refers to a bodily experience of place and space. It connotes bodily feelings of familiarity in a climate and landscape […], but homes are created and sustained also by narratives: this is where I come from, or my people come from. (Huttunen 2005, p. 179).

Home is thus a place of belonging that embodies senses of shelter and intimacy, somewhere one can return to from elsewhere. In this sense, it is closely linked to identity, in variable ways: "home can be an expression of one's (possibly fluid) identity and sense of self and/or one's body might be home to the self" (Mallett 2004, p. 84).

The foundation of the notion of home as a place of comfort and safety, Douglas (1991) argues, is in its regularized, controllable nature: "home starts by bringing some space under control. Having shelter is not having a home, nor is having a house, nor is home the same as

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household" (p. 289). The important implication in Douglas' point is that while home can be created by bringing a space under control, under certain conditions home can be destroyed. Conflict can destroy physical homes, but it also upends all the associated feelings and emotions embodied within the notion of home. In this process, what and where home is, and the meaning this has for identity, becomes a point of contention and interrogation.

For refugees and the displaced, the loss of home as a result of conflict sets in motion a complex process of re-examination of both deeply personal as well as entirely practical aspects of a change in life course. On a personal level, it involves leaving behind family and social relationships that existed and attachments one had to places and communities. On a practical level, displacement involves leaving behind all of what constituted one's material and professional life. All of these immensely consequential developments often occur under traumatic circumstances. And once they occur, displacement involves, or rather requires, trying to re-establish or re-constitute all of these aspects of a past life in a new place, often far from one's original home and homeland.

These are the enormous personal and practical struggles currently facing Syrian and other refugees. Black (2002) writes:

> Home can be made, re-made, imagined, remembered or desired; it can refer as much to beliefs, customs or traditions as physical places or buildings. Most important, as a concept it is something that is subject to constant reinterpretation and flux, just as identities are renegotiated. (p. 126).

Thus as the number of refugees and the displaced swells, the questions of how they re-conceptualize home and identity are becoming more pressing to understand. This is because, for one, those that do manage to be resettled become members of new communities; they become colleagues, neighbors and friends. In their re-making of home, they become part of others' homes. Second, studying home and identity among refugees and the displaced is also pressing

given the reality that the possibility of even reaching a place one may call home is becoming increasingly challenging. Stricter immigration policies constitute 'border work' in Jones and Johnson's (2014) terminology, which occurs at a range of scales and places and

> is directed not only at transgressions of borders in the narrow sense of preventing a human from violating territorial sovereignty by crossing a line at the margins of a state's sovereignty, but also at border crossing by particular undesirable categories of goods and services, specific types of information, certain classes of humans, and nature. (p.3).

For Jones and Johnson (2014), despite the predictions of postmodernist literature, borders have become a larger, not smaller part of everyday life for most people. For Syrian and millions of other refugees seeking a new home, 'border work' means that they are the 'undesirable categories,' the 'outside' from which 'the inside' is being protected.

Organization of chapters

This dissertation studies the intersection of forced migration, home and identity in the context of a specific, somewhat recent case of displacement: the members of the Bosnian diaspora that have resettled in the United States. With the view that the lived experiences of conflict, violence and displacement were the process through which the conceptualization of home and identity were negotiated by those displaced by the conflict, this dissertation is organized as an arc. The arc begins with the conflict and the extreme violence that defined it, continues through the steps of becoming displaced and a refugee in a neighboring country, and ends in the current period following resettlement in the United States. As this arc and the events that constitute it at each stage are described in the subsequent chapters, members of the diaspora's processes of negotiation of home and identity are analyzed.

The Introduction provides an overview of the global Bosnian diaspora, its geographic distribution, and its transnational activities.

Chapter One establishes the theoretical underpinnings for the study, engaging with literatures studying the intersection of diaspora, refugee, identity and belonging. The concepts of home and translocalism are discussed as key analytical frameworks for understanding the effects of displacement on how belonging is negotiated among members of the Bosnian diaspora.

Chapter Two reviews the existing literature on the Bosnian diaspora that has informed the questions within this study.

Chapter Three outlines the hypotheses around which the study is organized, and explains the methodology used to explore them through fieldwork with members of the Bosnian diaspora.

Chapter Four is the beginning of the arc of how home and identity have been negotiated through the experiences associated with forced migration. It explains how places – the 'homes' of members of the Bosnian diaspora – were impacted and transformed by violence. It details how the diaspora experienced the arrival of the conflict and the ways they came into contact with the extreme violence that characterized it. Rather than a broad overview of the conflict, this chapter instead narrates the experiences and perspectives of members of the diaspora living in four different places in Bosnia. This approach acknowledges the distinctions within broader shared experiences of conflict in that it highlights how the war was 'an experience in places' – in homes, communities, settlements, and regions. It also helps illustrate the intensity of violence and its intended goal of destroying people, families and communities.

Chapter Five describes a critical transition stage in the lives of the Bosnian diaspora, as they became displaced and fled to neighboring countries in Europe. These countries implemented a variety of policies targeted at managing incoming refugees. While these policies put pressure on refugees and their decision-making processes about a durable solution to their displacement, the chapter highlights how rather than being helpless receivers of these policies,

refugees used different resources and techniques as strategies to navigate life under such systems and to achieve the outcome of resettling in the United States.

The arc comes to an end in Chapter Six, with an examination of some of the ways that respondents' narratives indicate the effects of the experiences of conflict. These are discussed through the lens of three themes that recur across respondent narratives and across sites of research: national identification, conceptions of 'home,' and family scattering and dispersal.

Chapter Seven concludes the study by summarizing the findings and discussing the implications for future research.

Introduction: An Overview of the Bosnian War Diaspora

As a result of the conflict in the early 1990s, over half of Bosnia and Herzegovina's (hereafter simply 'Bosnia') 4.3 million people were driven from their homes. Of this number, over a million were internally displaced, while the rest left the country as refugees for various countries around the world. According to estimates by Bosnian authorities, at least 2 million people originating from Bosnia currently live outside the country (Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2017). Within this figure, Bosnian authorities include not only individuals born in Bosnia that have left their homeland, but also their descendants born in other countries, regardless of nationality. If accurate, this is the highest number recorded by the Ministry since it began publishing an annual report on migration flows in the late 2000s as one of the requirements for visa liberalization with the European Union (EU).

Not all of the Bosnian diaspora living abroad left the country as a consequence of the conflict, of course. In the 1960s and 1970s, thousands of Bosnians migrated to other republics within Yugoslavia, while tens of thousands migrated as guest workers (*gastarbajteri*) to western European countries such as Germany, but also to Canada, the United States, and Australia (Valenta and Ramet 2011). But these outflows are small compared to the migrations triggered by the conflict. Most of the Bosnian global diaspora is dominated by forced or involuntary migrants. In addition, most of them are Bosnian Muslim/Bosniak. This is because the purpose of one of the parties in the conflict, Serb nationalists, was to destroy Bosnia as a historically multiethnic homeland in order to create ethnically homogeneous Serb territory. Their leader Radovan Karadžić did not parse words in the methods they intended to use: "They do not understand that there will be rivers of blood […] and that the Muslim people would disappear" (Donia 2014, p. 116). Over almost four years, Serb nationalists carried out a campaign of violent ethnic cleansing

and genocide across Bosnia to achieve their goal, forcing hundreds of thousands of Bosnian Muslims, but also Bosnian Croats, to leave their homes and homeland for refuge across borders. At his trial before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in March 2016, Karadžić was found guilty by the court of committing genocide in the town of Srebrenica as well as, across Bosnia, of persecution, extermination, murder, deportation, forcible transfers, terror, unlawful attacks against civilians, and hostage taking – all crimes against humanity or violations of the laws of war (ICTY 2016).

The conflict ended with an agreement reached in Dayton, Ohio, in November 1995 by representatives of Bosnian Muslims, Bosnian Serbs, and Bosnian Croats, shepherded by negotiator Richard Holbrooke and then-US Secretary of State Warren Christopher. The political divisions and structures that are in place in Bosnia today were agreed upon at this peace conference, including the Inter-Ethnic Boundary Line (IEBL). The IEBL separates Bosnia into two entities, a Bosniak-Croat Federation and the *Republika Srpska*, translated to "Serb Republic." The territories that fall within the boundaries of the *Republika Srpska* are by and large areas that were violently attacked and their non-Serb residents killed or expelled during the conflict. The formalization of the IEBL at the Dayton Peace Agreement was thus a de facto acceptance of the results of the ethnic cleansing project that had been carried out over the previous three and a half years.

Quantifying the Bosnian diaspora

According to Bosnian authorities' figures cited above, the five leading host countries for individuals born in Bosnia are Croatia, Serbia, Germany, Austria and the United States. These data are based on information collected by host countries on immigrants and their descendants, which use either citizenship, birth country or broader ancestry as a marker for categorizing one's

national background. Though it is commonly used, the narrow definition based on birth country

has an important shortcoming, particularly for conflict-generated migrants as the case of

displaced Bosnians illustrates. For example, the US Census Bureau uses birth country as a

marker, and in its 2010 American Community Survey it estimated that there were 126,000

Bosnians in the United States. But this number is significantly smaller than what Bosnian

authorities reported for the same period, based on estimates from its diplomatic and consular

representatives. According to these, in 2009 there were 390,000 emigrants from Bosnia living in

the United States, which is much larger because of the inclusion of descendants into the

calculations. Bosnia is a relatively new country (at least in the modern era), not recognized by

the international community as an independent state until 1992. This means that in the statistics

of the US Census Bureau, individuals that were born in other Yugoslav republics prior to the

conflict are not counted as being of Bosnian background. The children of Bosnian refugees, born

in other countries as their parents became displaced, are also not counted. Among the Bosnian

diaspora – and the diasporas of other conflict or post-conflict countries – the

number of such individuals is arguably quite significant.

Table 1. Number of emigrants born in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 15 leading host countries*

No.	HOST COUNTRY	NUMBER	SOURCE OF DATA/REFERENCE
1	Croatia	404,874	UN, 2015
2	Serbia	335,992	UN, 2015
3	Germany	199,837	UN, 2015
4	Austria	157,844	Eurostat, 2015
5	United States	122,190	UN, 2015
6	Slovenia	105,313	UN, 2015
7	Sweden	58,583	UN, 2015
8	Switzerland	57,542	UN, 2015
9	Australia	41,449	UN, 2015
10	Canada	39,583	UN, 2015
11	Montenegro	34,259	UN, 2015
12	Albania	29,077	UN, 2015
13	Italy	27, 726	Eurostat, 2015
14	The Netherlands	25,440	Statistics Agency of the Netherlands 2013
15	Denmark	18,735	UN, 2015

*Table 1 is based on figures taken from *Bosnia and Herzegovina Migration Profile for the year 2016,* published by the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Bosnian diaspora in the United States

Regardless of the definition or exact population number, it is safe to say that a significant portion of the global Bosnian diaspora currently live in the United States. Where and how they settled throughout the country was in the 1990s the primary responsibility of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the Department of Health and Human Services. Funded by the State Department, ORR identified host communities through contracts with national voluntary agencies and relevant state refugee coordinators from participating states (Coughlan and Owens-Manley 2006). The program operated by seeking first to reunite refugees with relatives already living in the United States (Singer and Wilson 2007). In cases with no existing family ties in the United States, the preferred host communities were ones with low welfare

utilization, favorable employment prospects, and low housing costs (Office of Refugee Resettlement 2012). While there is no official data on the main Bosnian population centers in the United States, it is widely believed that St. Louis has the largest population, estimated to be around 70,000, with large numbers also in places such as Chicago, Jacksonville, Phoenix, Seattle, Grand Rapids, and Syracuse/Utica (Sacirbey, n.d.).

When Bosnian refugees began arriving in the United States during the 1990s, there were few pre-existing explicitly and self-consciously Bosnian communities into which they could readily blend. This was the case not only in the United States but also in Norway and Australia as Valenta and Strabac's and Halilovich's studies indicate (Valenta and Ramet, 2011, chapters 3 and 4). The only exception to this is perhaps in Chicago. According to Wight (2000), a small Bosnian (Muslim) community existed beginning in the 1900s and established organizations such as *Dzemijetnl hajrije*, the *Bosnian American Cultural Association* and Chicago's first Bosnian mosque. Communities that identified as Croat or Serb did exist however, having been formed in historic migrations long pre-dating the conflicts in the Balkans. For example, it is estimated that by World War One, there were already between 600,000 and one million Croatian immigrants in the United States, most of whom settled in industrial cities in the Northeast (Prpic 1971). This diaspora had already been actively engaged in the politics of their Croatian homeland when the conflicts in the Balkans of the 1990s revived this engagement, in both extreme forms as described by Hockenos (2003) but also in practices of 'banal nationalism' "aimed at supporting the emerging Croatian state, and Croatian 'nationals' (broadly defined)" (Carter 2005, p.57). Serbian immigration to the United States similarly dates back to the 1880s. These migrants set up many community groups such as the Serbian Benevolent Society, the Serb National Federation and the Serb Singing Federation which then expanded into chapters in industrial cities in the

Northeast, Midwest, and California (Blitz 1996). Most of these groups were religious or cultural rather than political in scope; this changed however in the early 1990s when Serb political action committees began registering to lobby for Serbian interests. The Serb diaspora contributed financially to these groups, whose policy goals mirrored those elaborated by Serb political leaders in both Serbia and Bosnia; the diaspora thus became "the executor of Serbia's war lobby overseas" (Blitz, 1996, p.196). Hockenos (2003) argues that ancestry was behind the Serb diaspora's vigorous support for the Serb nationalist projects in the 1990s, as most Serbian Americans are not from Serbia itself but are descendants of the first influx of Serb emigres in the 1880s, who actually hailed from Croatia and Bosnia. In addition to existing Croat and Serb diaspora communities, Yugoslav multiethnic clubs, such as soccer clubs, were established by the Yugoslav state in countries such as the United States and Australia in order to promote the idea of a 'Yugoslav diaspora.' The goal of these clubs was to counter anti-Yugoslav feeling among the Serb and Croat ethnic diasporas and political emigres from Communist Yugoslavia (Valenta and Ramet, 2011, chapter 3; Bennett 1978).

As refugees fled the conflict in Bosnia in the 1990s therefore, existing ethnic diaspora communities were able to absorb Croat and Serb refugees that sympathized with what these communities espoused. However, given the terms and ethnicized nature of the conflict, the vast majority of refugees from Bosnia – Bosnian Muslims as well as a smaller number of Bosnians in mixed marriages or those who rejected ethnic categories as a basis for their identity – were not incorporated into these communities. It is with this background in mind that Coughlan argues that the context of reception in the United States was particularly challenging for the Bosnian Muslims in comparison to Bosnian Serbs or Croats: "recently arrived Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs will have been absorbed by ethnic enclaves that were formed by their

predecessors in earlier times; Bosnian Muslims had to create their own communities from the

outset (Valenta and Ramet, 2011, chapter 5, p. 105). The creation of these communities included

establishing mosques and cultural organizations. Non-religious organizations concordant with

more multiethnic conceptions of Bosnia were also established. For example, in Chicago the

Radio Free Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Bosnian and Herzegovinian Club of Chicago were

both launched in the early years of the war by individuals of diverse backgrounds and ethnicities.

Such organizations are notably few in number in the United States, however. Therefore, an

important consequence of the way communities of the various peoples of Bosnia were

established – and the reasons behind it – is that the terms 'Bosnian' and 'Bosnian Muslim' are

increasingly conflated in both usage and definition.

The purpose of acknowledging this issue at an early stage of this study is to highlight it as

one of the central lines of inquiry within the overarching question about how home and identity

are being re-conceptualized among the post-war Bosnian diaspora in the United States. If the

majority of the Bosnian diaspora is Bosnian Muslim – both because of the demographics of

ethnic cleansing that occurred and because of the absorption of Bosnian Croat and Serb arrivals

into existing ethnic Croat and Serb communities – how does the absence of non-Bosnian Muslim

voices in the war and displacement experience impact 'Bosnian' identity? For example, as will

be discussed in more detail in the methodology section, most respondents within this study were

Bosnian Muslim. Though I made a significant effort to recruit them as respondents, no

individuals identifying as Bosnian Serbs and only two identifying as Bosnian Croats would agree

to be interviewed.[1] The marginalization of their voices and experiences – however voluntary it

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[1] Even those that identified as Bosnian Croats underemphasized their ethnic identities in favor of a more multiethnic belonging to Bosnia.

was, given their unwillingness to associate their identity with Bosnia – says something about how the definition of 'Bosnian' is being articulated in the diaspora and by what kinds of voices.

When visiting places in the United States where the Bosnian diaspora have resettled (as I did for my research), it is apparent that Bosnia – and in particular Bosnia in the Bosnian Muslim cultural sense – is an omnipresent feature in the daily lives of many. In St. Louis, where there are more Bosnians per capita living than anywhere else outside Bosnia, the Bevo Mill area of town is informally referred to as 'Little Bosnia' given the numerous restaurants, bakeries and cafes with a Bosnian cultural imprint that are located there. In the same neighborhood, there is a mosque with a predominantly Bosnian congregation that in 2007 caught some attention among local media when it began building the city's first ever minaret. A more recent addition to the neighborhood is a replica of the *Sebilj* (kiosk-shaped public fountain), modeled after the famous 18th century one in Sarajevo, and which the Bosnian community donated to St. Louis for its 250th birthday in 2014. There are several areas in St. Louis where Bosnian families have clustered residentially, which has enabled them to socialize on a daily basis – in some cases exclusively – with other members of the Bosnian diaspora. The residential clustering has also raised the ratio of students of Bosnian heritage at particular school districts in the city, which have begun offering a Bosnian American studies class focusing on Bosnian traditions and culture.

Many of the features of St. Louis' relatively large Bosnian diaspora community are mirrored on a smaller scale in other places in the United States where the Bosnian diaspora have resettled. Members of the diaspora remain in contact with relatives and friends in Bosnia in various ways, including visits to the homeland; these visits may be irregular but are supplemented by Internet-based platforms such as Skype, Viber and Facebook. These applications have made daily, almost constant contact with loved ones abroad easy to maintain.

They have also enabled members of the diaspora to re-connect in cyberspace with friends, acquaintances and communities from their pre-war lives. Bosnians living in the United States have the same access to entertainment as their friends and family back in Bosnia, through radio programs based in the United States and special television cable boxes. The consumption of entertainment is interestingly a fairly non-ethnicized space however, as members of the diaspora avidly watch popular series on Serbian and Croatian channels and listen to music by performers from throughout the region.

Members of the diaspora also have the opportunity to attend social and cultural events organized by community organizations. Some of these organizations were established around belonging to a particular place within Bosnia: the *Kozarac Association*, the *Srebrenica Association* and the *Organization of Sarajevans* in Chicago, and similar associations of former residents of the municipality of Prijedor in St. Louis and other cities in the United States. Community organizations often organize fundraising events for various causes that are either non-ethnic or multiethnic in their objectives, such as humanitarian cases in Bosnia as well as political lobbying in Washington. Most of the Bosnian diaspora and community organizations and their events are however premised on the notion of shared suffering and victimization, and it is in this context that inklings about the changing definition of Bosnian identity may be found. Shared suffering is the organizing element of the *Association of Survivors of the Srebrenica Genocide* in St. Louis, the *Brotherhood of Bosniak Genocide Survivors* and the *Bosnian-American Genocide Institute* in Chicago, to name just a few examples. Annual commemorations of the Srebrenica genocide – now simply referred to as '11 July' based on the day in 1995 on which it occurred - are very emotional events that incorporate Muslim prayer and rituals. The commemorations have also become a form of Bosnian transnationalism through the cultural

productions of remembering Srebrenica, such as the *Što Te Nema (Why are You Not Here?)* related activities in different countries (Karabegović 2014). Other events around which gatherings commonly occur are Bajram (the Muslim holiday Eid), as well as Statehood Day and Independence Day. At celebrations of the latter two, the post-war national flag representing the three constituent peoples of the country – Bosnian Muslims, Croats and Serbs – is often flanked by the 'golden lilies' flag that was used upon declaration of independence in 1992 and whose symbolism has been appropriated by Bosnian Muslims. The attention given to suffering and victimization within the Bosnian diaspora's larger history is not limited to diaspora organizations. St. Louis' Fontbonne University sought to establish an enduring record of the survivors of ethnic cleansing and genocide in Bosnia, many of whom live in St. Louis, and created the Bosnia Memory Project. In 2016 the Project was awarded a $100,000 matching grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to continue this work. Because of the focus on displacement and trauma, many of the events discussed above thus attract mostly (but not exclusively) Bosnian Muslims.

A factor reinforcing the increasing ethnicization of the Bosnian diaspora experience and collective identity as illustrated above is the effort by immigration authorities within the United States to bring to justice those that committed war crimes in Bosnia and that are now living in the United States. These individuals were able to resettle in the United States by concealing their participation in wartime atrocities in their immigration applications, a type of fraud which authorities can use as the basis of removal proceedings. Since the war crimes section of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency was established in 2008, it has apprehended an increasing number of immigrants of Bosnian nationality, peaking at 202 individuals in 2010 (Office of Immigration Statistics, 2016). As the investigators for the agency built their cases

against those apprehended, they have succeeded in deporting them to be handled by legal institutions back in Bosnia. In recent years, between 47 and 49 individuals with Bosnian citizenship were annually deported back to Bosnia. They were found living in communities in Ohio, Virginia, Nevada, Arizona, and New York, among others. Though the Immigration and Customs Enforcement data does not break down deportations by ethnicity, news sources have quoted officials as saying that most of the cases involve Bosnian Serbs (Lichtblau, 2015).

The deportations of large numbers of Bosnian Serbs and the public reporting of these cases has been one of the many points generating a reproduction in diaspora of the themes and issues that fueled the conflict in Bosnia. Lobbying groups in Washington, D.C. have been the primary carriers of this continuing conflict, countering each other's narratives through information campaigns targeted at US political representatives. Bosnia's ethnically cleansed entity *Republika Srpska* even opened a 'diplomatic' office in the US capital from where its chief Obrad Kesić directs the Bosnian Serb disputation of the causes of the Bosnian conflict. For example, in response to the announcement by US authorities in February 2015 that about 150 Bosnian Serbs would be deported, he argued:

> None of these people who for a decade have been hounded and put before court are even suspected of war crimes. They are being hounded just because they wore the uniform of the Serbian Army, or the Army of the Republika Srpska. ("US Wrong to Deport 150 Bosnian Serbs, 2015).

Conclusion

Most of the Bosnian diaspora in the United States and elsewhere were in the direct line of the conflict in their homeland. They experienced brutal violence that caused the death of loved ones, destroyed homes and property, and sought to extinguish the multiethnic social fabric of communities and Bosnian society. These events forced them to flee and live as refugees until they could work out a durable solution to their displacement. In their new lives in the places of

resettlement, the Bosnian diaspora nevertheless actively maintain an attachment and connectivity to their place of origin, in various forms and forums. The experience of conflict and displacement has undoubtedly colored and shaped those feelings, and is being manifested in mundane everyday practices as well as in the goals and activities of Bosnia-related organizations. How home and identity are being reconfigured among members of the Bosnian diaspora against this background of conflict, violence and displacement is at the heart of this dissertation, and is the topic I turn to next.

Chapter One: Negotiating Identity the Bosnian Way

Introduction

For several weeks every summer, I leave my home in the United States and return to

Bosnia and my hometown of Visoko. When I get on the plane in Vienna or Munich for that last

leg of the trip, I am surrounded by others like me. The diverse life trajectories that the conflict

has wrought converge at that point. We are a plane full of Bosnian diaspora, from everywhere

and of all ages, some elderly travelers speaking very little English and younger ones struggling in

accented Bosnian. Once we land in the capital Sarajevo, we are greeted by joyous hugs from

swarms of family members that some of us have not seen in years. Indeed, in the summer months

when most of the diaspora make return visits to Bosnia, the bustling streets and crowded cafes

make it easy to forget that this is a country half of whose population was displaced by the

conflict. When the visit comes to an end, the whole process is reversed. The diaspora scatter in

different directions, boarding flights back to their other home in Sweden, Australia, the United

States, or elsewhere that they have resettled, where their now everyday life awaits: a house, a job

or business, children and perhaps grandchildren, friends and neighbors.

The tragedy of the conflict that is implicit in such return visits by the diaspora is that

many of those that were displaced have not returned to their former homes and will likely not

ever return. This includes those internally displaced within Bosnia, of which according to the

most recent available data, there are still approximately 100,000 (Internal Displacement

Monitoring Centre 2014). In fact, only 400,000 of the 2.2 million displaced have actually

returned to their original places of residence (Halilovich 2013, p. 119). Thus what may have been

a temporary displacement has in effect become a permanent consequence and reality of the conflict. The diaspora is now an inseparable condition of contemporary Bosnia.

How have conflict and displacement impacted conceptualizations of home and identity among the Bosnian diaspora?

As discussed in the introduction, most of the Bosnian diaspora living abroad were refugees from the conflict. Many of them manifest a continuing deep connection and attachment to their geographic origins through various transnational activities in their country of resettlement. Their experiences of forced displacement have had a profound influence on identity; according to Halilovich (2013) who has conducted the largest study to date on displaced Bosnians, among this population "displacement has played the central role in (post) war memory construction" (p. 55). He argues that this is because while the conflict is over and is objectively an incident in the past, its aftermath – displacement – straddles both the past and present. Displacement was the cause of an involuntary, radical break with one's past life and the beginning of extended periods of personal hardship while living as a refugee, with uncertainty about what the future held for them and their family. As it became clear that a return home was not a viable option, resettlement was sought as a durable solution to displacement that offered prospects and opportunities for the future. Displacement has thus had long-term effects on individuals' life trajectories; it is the reason they are living in diaspora at all.

Scholars have examined the different ways that forced displacement may impact identity. At the root of these various perspectives is an analysis of the nature and intensity of the refugee's relationship to the homeland, which figures prominently given that underlying conceptualizations of diaspora and refugees in particular, there is a myth of return to that homeland. This myth is linked to a presumed natural bond between people, place and identity,

which Malkki (1992) calls a 'territorialization of identity.' Thus when one is removed from this place of natural origins as occurs in forcible displacement, they become homeless not only in the physical sense but also in terms of identity and belonging. According to this perspective, displacement is an invariable loss for the migrant, who is de-territorialized, neither 'here' nor 'there,' helpless, a victim.

Even though displacement certainly involves losses on multiple levels, those displaced are not powerless and incapable, simply waiting for their fate to be determined by external forces and actors. On the contrary, despite the obvious limitations of their circumstances, refugees retain pre-migration social networks and resources and they are able to exercise agency in identifying and pursuing better options or opportunities for themselves and their family (Hammond 2004; Hutchinson and Dorsett 2012; Rosenfeld 2002; Wahlbeck 1999). For some this involves a return to their country of origin; for others it means creating the conditions for life somewhere else. At the heart of these strategies and decision-making processes is an acknowledgement that homeland may not always be the best place to be (Eastmond 1996). And, not only may it no longer be the best place to be physically and materially, but for the displaced it may no longer feel the same on an emotional level. Conflict and violence involve the physical destruction of places and people's homes – but they also impact the social structures and transform the images of those places (Springer 2011). Thus conflict and violence can fundamentally change what made them places of comfort and of familiarity, and as Jansen (2007) argues, such 'troubled locations' may or may not continue to be home for those displaced from them.

This study draws on the concept of home that is transformed and redefined by conflict to ask, *how have the conflict and displacement impacted conceptualizations of home and Bosnian*

diaspora identity? In Bosnia the aggressor used ethnicized and "radical, place-destroying violence" in order to turn homes into others' ethnic homelands (Toal and Dahlman 2011, p. 141). Violent ethnic cleansing was the operationalization of an effort to destroy a historic Bosnian identity of multiethnicity and shared heritage that was demonstrated through ethnically mixed communities and places. I contextualize this through the narratives of my respondents, describing how the strategy of violence used by nationalist Serbs broke the bond between identity and homeland and transformed the places Bosnians called home. I argue that alongside or as a consequence of this altered relationship with Bosnia as home, a redefined conceptualization of the place of resettlement as the best place to be developed among the diaspora. This reconceptualization induced a process of 'emplacement' (Hammond 2004) in a new location based on a search for 'cool ground' (Allen and Turton 1996) and 'normal life' (Jansen 2015), creating a new, redefined home for the displaced. There are two related factors that are critical in this redefined conceptualization of home. One is the orientation of children to the place of resettlement as home. If home is associated with family, as an intimate social sphere, and conceptualized as a place where family relationships and parallel life courses occur, then the expansion of the family network in the place of resettlement increasingly imbues it with notions of home. The second factor is translocalism, which evokes how individuals may remake home and approximate how they feel there, here, through maintaining attachments at both the transnational and local levels. Buffel (2017) argues that translocalism is a concept particularly relevant to ageing migrants; they express emotional attachment to both the place of origin as well as to their local environment, on which they are increasingly becoming dependent for achieving a sense of home.

Several concepts that are key to the dissertation and that represent its theoretical groundwork have been mentioned thus far: transnationalism; translocalism; diaspora/the refugee; identity in migration; and home. In order to examine reconceptualizations of home and identity among the Bosnian diaspora in the United States, we must first review the literature on these concepts and explain what they mean. In the following sections, I address these concepts and their key academic contentions, and discuss how they relate to each other and inform the research question that this study seeks to answer.

Transnationalism

In the second half of the twentieth century, the development of technological, transport and telecommunications forms have rapidly transformed the world into one that is increasingly intertwined and globalized. New technologies such as the Internet, personal computers, cellular telephones as well as jet planes and satellites, just to name a few, have been crucial to fueling this latest and most powerful wave of globalization. These inventions were built on previous historical innovations such as the steam engine, the automobile, the telegraph, the telephone, and the typewriter, which themselves were based on even earlier historical innovations such as the telescope, the printing press and ocean-going ships. Thus even though globalization as a societal process and condition is often identified with the modern period, depending on how far back one goes in search of its roots, "these processes have been unfolding for millennia" (Steger, 2009, p. 18).

These innovations bridged physical and cultural distances between geographies and people and created the possibility for increasingly connected lifeworlds. They've led to a contemporary condition, as Clifford (1988) argues, where "the 'exotic' is uncannily close […] Difference is encountered in the adjoining neighbourhood, the familiar turns up at the ends of the

earth" (p.13-14). The impact of innovations associated with a more globalized world, bringing the local and global closer than ever in history, has been supplemented by a rapid increase in migrations across the globe since the 1980s. These migrations have occurred partly due to improved modes of mobility but also political instability which has fueled movements of people in search of safe havens. In the modern period therefore, social relations have also expanded and transcend borders so that the "new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models" (Appadurai, 1996, p.32). Appadurai argues that one of the dimensions through which this new global cultural economy can be understood is in the concept of *ethnoscapes*, which he defines as "the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals" (p.33). Such individuals, bound by a shared experience of mobility, "constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree" (Appadurai, 1996, p.33).

The concurrent and related processes of globalization and migration have facilitated and expanded cross-border connections and activities, activating scholarly interest into how these far-reaching and multidimensional developments transform social relations. A broad literature on the phenomenon of 'transnationalism' has been generated as a result. Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc-Szanton (1994), early contributors to scholarly thinking in this field, defined transnationalism as

> the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders. (p.7).

Transnationalism can take many different forms. The activities involved can be categorized as political, economic, social and/or cultural; they may be performed individually or through an institution; and they may be focused on the country of origin or the host country (Al-Ali, Black and Koser 2001). For example, transnational political activities involve participation in the political process in the country of origin through voting in elections there or through organizing in the host country in order to influence its government's policy towards the country of origin. Transnational economic activities include the sending of remittances to family and relatives still living back in the country of origin or investing financially there, or conversely, in the host country, making donations to charities or organizations that support causes in the country of origin. Transnational social and cultural activities are perhaps the broadest and most diverse, as they include more personal behavior such as speaking the native language and maintaining informal contacts with family and friends back in the country of origin, as well as public and formal behavior through social activities and events with co-nationals in the host country, among others. Such cross-border contact by migrants with people and institutions in the place they came from is not a new phenomenon, but the transnationalism observed since the 1980s has been more intense than before and has evolved to include greater economic and political activities (Vertovec 2001). Scholars studying transnationalism therefore are interested in tracking the scope and nature of activity, but also the considerable economic and political impacts this movement has on migrants, their families, and the places involved in transnational activities.

Translocalism

Within the transnational paradigm of studying migration, the state is the fundamental feature across which social relations and activities are mediated. Borders, and the crossing of

these, is what constitutes transnationalism. But the privileging of the state at the expense of the role of locality in transnational activities and processes is also the basis of one of the primary criticisms leveled at studies on transnationalism. Smith and Guarnizo (1998) for example argue that locality needs to be further conceptualized because transnationalism is bounded by "the opportunities and constraints found in particular localities where transnational practices occur" (p.12). They use cities as an illustration of this point, which are underprivileged in transnational studies in favor of state-to-state practices but which are nevertheless the "local sites of global processes" (p. 12). Scholars like Goldring and Smith (in Smith and Guarnizo 1998) push the importance of locality within transnational processes and activities further, arguing that transnational activities do not just take place in a local sense, they are also made much more complex in that they are 'trans-local' – meaning they are local-to-local:

> Translocal relations are constituted within historically and geographically specific points of origin and migration established by transmigrants. Such relations are dynamic, mutable, and dialectical. They form a triadic connection that links transmigrants, the localities to which they migrate, and their locality of origin. […] The fit between specific kinds of migrants and specific local and national contexts abroad shapes not only the likelihood of generating, maintaining or forsaking transnational ties, but also the very nature of the ties that migrants can forge with their place of origin. (Smith and Guarnizo 1998, p. 13).

For Brickell and Datta (2011) however, such conceptualizations of translocalism still have critical limitations. They argue that even as they have deepened scholarly understandings of increasingly diverse spatial processes and identities beyond that captured by the concept of transnationalism, traditional conceptualizations of translocalism still function within an overarching framework of state boundaries. This may be because translocalism developed from "a concern over the disembedded understanding of transnational networks"; the consequence however is that it has been constrained to remaining a subset of the debate on transnationalism

(p.3). Thus within this kind of 'grounded transnationalism' in Brickell and Datta's terminology, "spatial registers of affiliation that are part of migrants' everyday embodied experiences remain largely unexplored" (p.3). Brickell and Datta instead propose an understanding of translocalism that extends beyond grounding in locales – and specifically beyond transnational locales – but also incorporates spatial scales where identities are negotiated and transformed. In terms of geographies then, this translocalism

> includes migration in all its forms; it includes highly mobile and elite transnationals as well as those who are 'immobile' and often viewed as parochial; and it includes a focus on local-local movements that are part of a continuum of spaces and places related to migration. (p.10).

The scalar dimension deepens their proposed conceptualization of translocalism, which "allows us to examine the local as situated across a variety of scales – body, home, urban, regional or national; which means that translocal geographies can become a set of local-local negotiations across these different scales" (p.10). To explain how migrants may be situated across scales of experience, Brickell and Datta (2011) rely on Bourdieu's notion of habitus as a key variable. They argue that through habitus, the embodiment of life experience and skills that orient human behavior, individuals attain different forms of capital – social, cultural, and symbolic – learning how to value their different aspects and when to draw on them. They argue that if habitus is extended to a fourth, spatial type of capital as conceptualized by Soja (2000), individuals can extract from it in different geographic but also scalar circumstances. This is important because

> different scales of the body, home, neighbourhood, urban, regional, national or transnational require different rules of practice which migrants must learn and internalize in order to be successful. And when translated across different scales, different forms of capital are also valued differently across different scales, which means that 'success' across one scale of the home or city, might actually be marginalizing across another scale of the national or regional. (Brickell and Datta 2011, p.12).

Translocalism and the idea that trans-local relations may define the nature of ties with a place of origin is a key issue for this study. As will be discussed in the literature review chapter, Halilovich (2013) argues that "translocalism constitutes the distinguishing feature of post-war Bosnian identity formation and social organisation" (p. 202). I build on his findings to argue that it is also a crucial component in the reconceptualization of the places of origin and resettlement as home.

Diaspora and the refugee

Diaspora

As the transnational (and translocal) activities of migrants attracted increasing interest among scholars, the term 'diaspora' that is often used to refer to those actors abroad also received renewed attention as a theoretical concept (Brah 1996; Braziel and Mannur 2003). The launch of the journal *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* in 1991 sought to harness the diverse perspectives on this topic into a space for debate. One active strand of discussion among scholars was about the very definition of the term. In its original meaning, diaspora referred to the specific experience of the Jews as a group whose traumatic forced exile from their historical homeland led to a dispersal to multiple locations. Other populations, such as Armenians and Greeks, whose experiences resembled these original notions later became associated with the term. In the preface to *Diaspora*'s very first issue however, Tololyan (1991) set the tone for a broader definition that encompassed "the vocabulary of transnationalism," so that terms like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-worker, exile community, overseas community, and ethnic community could all be subsumed under the 'diaspora' rubric (p. 4). Tololyan argued that together, these "diasporas are exemplary communities of the transnational moment" (p. 5). The term has since not only been applied to a wider number of cases, but has also been extended to

emigrant groups and other groupings (Brubaker 2005). In its most common modern definition therefore, diaspora addresses the voluntary or involuntary dispersal to multiple locations of individuals who retain connections with a (usually territorial) 'homeland' (Faist 2010). But for Brubaker, if the only common thread or experience among the various groups that are being conceptualized as diasporas in the modern period is dispersal, the term itself becomes weak and empty of meaning: "if everyone is diasporic, then no one is distinctively so. The term loses its discriminating power – its ability to pick out phenomena, to make distinctions. The universalization of diaspora, paradoxically, means the disappearance of diaspora" (2005, p. 3).

A related aspect of the debate on how narrowly or widely to define diaspora that has produced different perspectives among scholars is the emphasis on return to the homeland. In his enumeration of the characteristics that define 'expatriate minority communities' as a diaspora, Safran (1991) placed critical weight on the orientation to the homeland. According to his model, a diaspora is one where members of the community or their ancestors were dispersed from an original "center" to two or more "peripheries"; they "retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland"; they feel a certain amount of alienation from their host society; they see their "ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home" where they will eventually return; they work towards improving or restoring their homeland to its original status; and they maintain an attachment to that homeland whereby "their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship" (p. 83-84).

Scholars have critiqued the extent to which a return to the homeland figures in Safran's idealized definition of a diaspora, with Clifford (1994) for example arguing that "decentered, lateral connections may be as important as those formed around a teleology of origin/return" (p. 306). Falzon (2003) indicates that Safran's as well as ensuing studies on this topic have a

somewhat flexible notion of the homeland, meaning that despite the focus on return to the homeland in their conceptualizations, there is an understanding that return may very well not happen because of political or economic conditions. The 'myth of return' nevertheless continues to operate and "comes to resemble an eschatology of identity more than a political project" (p. 664).

Refugees

Legal concepts that have been developed within international law to address rights-related and policy issues surrounding diaspora populations acknowledge the involuntary or forced nature of the dispersal at the heart of the original meaning of diaspora. Even before the birth of the official 'refugee' category in 1951 that became the basis for offering protection and rights to those displaced, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognized that displaced persons were warranted some rights to shelter. In Article 14, the Declaration states that "everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution," but that asylum must be politically-based (United Nations, n.d.). An asylum seeker is thus someone who has formally requested the right to remain in the country to which they have fled, but whose claim to asylum has not yet been resolved. In 1951, the United Nations Refugee Convention outlined a specific legal category under which asylum-seekers and other displaced persons could seek to be recognized, in response to the large numbers of people fleeing eastern Europe following World War Two as well as similar crises in the earlier interwar period. According to the 1951 Convention (and its adjoining 1967 Protocol), a refugee is a person who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality" (UNHCR, n.d.).

Under international law and its rootedness in Westphalian sovereignty, the fact of having crossed or not crossed an international border is a critical difference with profound implications for the displaced. In most countries, asylum seekers can only apply for asylum once they have entered the country where they are seeking permission to stay. On the other hand, to request official refugee status, a displaced person must have left their country of origin. These border-centric categorizations and rules disadvantage a specific group of displaced persons, internally displaced persons (IDPs), of which there were 31.1 million new cases in 2016, the equivalent of one person displaced every second (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2016.) Since in their displacement IDPs have not crossed an international border, they are outside of the United Nations' mandate and as such there is no universal legal definition of an IDP nor rights extended to them even if they share many of the same circumstances as refugees. Though UNHCR works with IDPs through assistance and expertise, it is the primary responsibility of national governments to protect them (UNHCR, 2001b.) This paradoxical catch-22 in which IDPs find themselves is an illustration of what Jones (2016) calls a subtle, yet nevertheless systematic form of 'violence at borders,' which "deprives the poor of access to wealth and opportunities through the enclosure of resources and the bordering of states" (p.9).

The persistent association between diaspora and a homeland has been most prevalent in studies of refugees as a particular segment of diaspora. The association is somewhat understandable, as the distressed relationship to one's homeland is the basis for the definition of a refugee within international law. However, the focus on the homeland in the conceptualization of what a refugee is has had significant implications for how refugees have been studied and represented, as well as how policies targeting them have been crafted. Because refugees left or were expelled from their homeland involuntarily, it is often presumed that as long as they are

living outside of that homeland, the myth of return is a powerful emotional factor. Al-Rasheed (1994) explains that the myth consists of two elements: the myth itself, which refers to the realm of the imagination, and the return, which is a concrete act of migration to a fixed place. If one holds a myth of return, both elements are active simultaneously, where the person imagines returning to a territory, the physical embodiment of the homeland. As territory acquires a symbolic role, the myth of return becomes spatialized, illustrating what Malkki (1995) calls the tendency towards 'sedentarist analytical bias' within the field of refugee studies. She argues that this bias is conspicuous in the language that is used to describe forced migration, specifically 'roots'-related metaphors such as *uprooted*, *displaced* or *transplanted*. These are the terms that are often used to describe the refugee condition, and they invoke a sense of being removed from a place of natural origins and belonging. Importantly, they presume and perpetuate the notion that such an organic link between people and place, or territory, exists in the first place. This underlying belief was perhaps the basis of the non-refoulement clause of the 1951 Refugee Convention. According to this clause in Article 33 of the Convention,

> No Contracting State shall expel or return ("refouler") a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his [or her] life or freedom would be threatened on account of his [or her] race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. (UNHCR, n.d.)

In other words, until the causes behind forced displacement are resolved and the refugee can return to their natural place of origin, host countries must not return refugees there.

A latent presumption in approaches to refugees that elevate return to the homeland following displacement is that refugees themselves are helpless victims who are just waiting for other actors to make decisions that will determine their fate and future. They are shell-shocked from their experiences of fleeing, and they arrive in the host country lost and confused. This state of 'refugeeness' and associated perceptions of weakness and victimization is bolstered by the

famous personal account of Hannah Arendt, who eloquently captured the internal psychological

dynamics of the 'classical' diasporas in her essay (1996) "We Refugees." She describes the

sensitivity Jewish refugees like herself felt about being called a 'refugee' with all the

connotations of helplessness that it entails, and the ensuing struggle to prove to their new society

of residence through an exaggerated sense of optimism that they were the typical immigrants

who arrived to the new country out of their own free will or for economic reasons, rather than

because they were forced to flee their own. In those struggles they hide what really happened and

what, in effect, discerns them from other immigrants:

> We lost our home, which means the familiarity of daily life. We lost our occupation, which means the confidence that we are of some use in this world. We lost our language, which means the naturalness of reactions, the simplicity of gestures, the unaffected expression of feelings. We left our relatives in the Polish ghettos and our best friends have been killed in concentration camps, and that means the rupture of our private lives. (p. 110).

The experience of Jews fleeing Nazi persecution was an overarching factor shaping

refugee law after World War Two and in essence the contemporary refugee system. In the

interwar period, a refugee regime existed under the auspices of the League of Nations and

defined a refugee based on group affiliation, such as Russian refugees at the time. This system

proved to be unworkable in the context of the Nazi persecution of Jews, as Germany rejected

assistance being given to Jews as a group that were fleeing the country. According to Skran

(1992), "this objection, combined with the desire of Britain and French governments to appease

Germany, resulted in a relatively weak response by the League of Nations to this refugee

exodus" (p.20). The weak response included denial of refugee status for most Jewish refugees in

the 1930s (Barnett 2002). The failure to protect them became the impetus for the elaboration of

a post-World War Two and modern definition of a refugee based on the persecution of

individuals for their political, religious, group or class beliefs: "in many minds, refugees became synonymous with victims of Nazi persecution" (Skran, 1992, p.20).

Pushing back on the tendency to essentialize the refugee within scholarly and nonscholarly debates, Malkki (1995) criticizes the construct 'the refugee experience,' which for her:

> posits a single, essential, transhistorical refugee condition. The quest for *the* refugee experience (whether as an analytical model, normative standard, or diagnostic tool) reflects a wider tendency, in many disciplines, to seize upon political or historical processes and then to inscribe aspects of those processes in the bodies and psyches of the people who are undergoing them […] Almost like an essentialized anthropological "tribe," refugees thus become not just a mixed category of people sharing a certain legal status; they become "a culture," "an identity" […], "a social world" […], or "a community" […] There is a tendency, then, to proceed as if refugees all shared a common condition or nature. (1995, p. 511).

While Malkki is correct to encourage more critical studies of refugee experiences(s), her view ignores the fact that the refugee is a legal category that has significant implications for the opportunities afforded to and limitations placed on individuals who are labeled as such in host countries. In fact, her characterization of refugees as "just a mixed category of people sharing a certain legal status" perhaps goes too far in the other direction, to the point of underemphasizing the importance of the experiences associated with the genealogy and 'classical' diasporas in shaping identity.

The primary counter evidence to the essentialized 'refugee experience' is in fact research on refugees themselves. While displacement obviously entails great personal and material losses and a sense of disorientation, research findings on specific refugee groups also suggest that a quite different progression can occur. That is, despite loss and confusion produced by violence, conflict and displacement, refugees nevertheless retain an ability to think and act strategically. There are constraints on their abilities to do so and in the options available to them, but they

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continue to exercise agency and decision-making power about issues that pertain to their or their family's situation or trajectory in life.

Hammond (1999) illustrated this in a study of refugees being repatriated to a part of their native Ethiopia that is climatically, agriculturally and culturally different from the region of their origin. Describing how these returnees addressed adjustment to their new environment, she shows how economic realities conditioned the returnees' preferences and actions. This awareness of the political and economic realities impacting their situation and a willingness to adjust their own aspirations with an eye to those realities indicates, Hammond writes, that the displaced "are experts at assessing a situation and adjusting their plan of action accordingly" (1999, p. 239). They are able to exercise agency and carry out different strategies to improve their conditions despite the unfortunate circumstances they're in because, as Hammond's research suggests, their experiences force them to be adaptable and flexible to change and new environments in order to survive.

In the next section, I address how migration on a broad level impacts identity, and how forced migration specifically may shape it.

Identity in migration and diaspora

In the literature on migration, there is a consensus that the experience of migration brings about identity transformation. Migration illustrates the constructed nature of identity, as it is a shift in life course that challenges identity and exposes its vulnerability and transformability. For example, migration tests identity because it involves the potential loss of cultural traditions: "tradition itself is malleable, but the process of migration, flight, and exile accelerate change […] people adjust to new ideas that distance them from traditional culture" (Sorenson, 1992, p. 225).

Migration, in other words, lays bare "the reality that when people move, identities, perspectives, and definitions change" (Radhakrishnan, 2003, p. 123).

One aspect of diaspora identity that has been of great interest to scholars is the pattern of cultural hybridity that is activated by migration (Wahlbeck 2002). Cultural hybridity refers to the multiplicity of attachments that the diasporic subject may experience, and that "are constitutive of hybrid forms of identity" (Braziel and Mannur, 2003, p. 5). Hall (1990) in fact defined the diaspora experience through the lens of cultural hybridity, writing that "diaspora experience is defined not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of necessary heterogeneity and diversity…by hybridity." Brah (1996) similarly conceptualizes diaspora as something that can easily cross cultural and other boundaries, signaling "processes of multi-locationality across geographical, cultural and psychic boundaries" (p. 194). Vertovec (1997) views diaspora therefore as more than a grouping of individuals that share similar characteristics but also as "a type of consciousness" because "it puts greater emphasis on describing a variety of experience, a state of mind, and a sense of identity" (p. 281). The consequence is that the diasporic individual's multiple identifications or senses of belonging "weld" together, to use Radhakrishnan's (2003) vivid description, and that identity becomes webbed in with one's particular history and the way it is remembered, their experience of dispersal from the 'homeland,' and other senses of belonging. This may vary across gender and class, and especially across generation. It also cannot be separated from the structural context, including power relations in the country of settlement and within the diaspora community itself (Wahlbeck 2002). Brubaker (2005) has however noted that the patterns of cultural hybridity observed among the diaspora creates an ambivalence in the literature on diaspora. 'Boundary-maintenance' – or an effort to preserve a distinct identity within the group vis-à-vis the host country – is one of the

key criteria in defining a diaspora. With the recognition that the diaspora experience also involves 'boundary-erosion' through greater cultural hybridity for example, Brubaker argues that there is a tension in the literature that isn't always fully acknowledged.

Migration-related factors that may impact identity

Even though there is agreement on whether migration impacts identity, there is no defined or predictable direction of the transformation of identity that occurs when one migrates and become part of a diaspora however; the patterns vary greatly (La Barbera 2014). This is because there are migration-related factors that may impact identity in different ways. Scholars have identified three main sets of these migration-related factors.

a) *Context of reception*

The context of reception refers to the array of conditions that influence how well a migrant is able to integrate into society. Examples are whether the migrant arrives to an existing ethnic support network; his employment prospects in the new society; and the level of tolerance in the locality of settlement. In a study of Kurdish refugees in Finland and England for example, Wahlbeck (1999) identified differences between the two countries in terms of resettlement policies and social structures, arguing that these policies had a major impact on how refugees were integrated into the host society. In fact, he found these policies to be more important in influencing integration of refugees than the refugees' level of attachment and transnational connection to their homeland, which is a reason that is commonly used to explain poor integration. As Wahlbeck argues, "the integration into the wider society seems to be largely dependent on the exclusionary and inclusionary policies of the country of settlement and not on the degree of diasporic feelings amongst the refugees" (p. 150).

b) *Influence of homeland*

A second migration-related factor that shapes identity in diaspora is the continuing influence of the homeland on the migrant's identity negotiations in the country of resettlement. Hopkins (2010) for example has studied to what extent members of an ethnic community are pressed to conform to particular cultural traditions and gender roles, which may come into conflict with the culture of the new society of settlement. She finds that for her respondents, Somali women in Britain and Canada, resettlement "entailed constantly negotiating Somaliness and adjusting social, religious and cultural practices within the competing parameters of Somalia, the receiving society, and the local Somali community" (p. 533).

c) *Context of departure*

A third migration-related factor that scholars have identified may impact identity in diaspora is the 'context of departure.' Kunz (1981) represents an early effort to distinguish refugees from other migrants, creating a strong linkage between reason for migration and a migrant's integration in the society of settlement. Since Kunz's work, other scholars have attempted to provide a more nuanced understanding of the experience of the refugee in migration as compared to other types of migrants, and the implications that experience holds for integration and identity. Based on fieldwork with the Kurdish diaspora in Europe, Wahlbeck (2002) for example argues that refugees in particular have dual – not paradoxical – orientations with their societies of origin and settlement. He notes that refugees and displaced persons may have a "distinctive relationship" with their society of origin as compared with other migrants, "often manifested as political activism oriented towards the country of origin" (p. 228). This finding is supported in other studies of diasporas that have fled ethnicized conflict, though in contradictory

ways. For example, in her research on the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, Orjuela (2012) describes the hard-line, nationalist discourse that persists among this diaspora as a continuation of the conflict in the homeland, despite that conflict having ended. Centering on self-determination from the Sinhalese-dominated state as being fundamental to Tamil diaspora identity, the Tamil nationalist discourse is not only at odds with the Sinhalese but also with their co-nationals back in Sri Lanka who are more pragmatic. On the other hand, Panossian (1998) finds that the conflict-generated Armenian diaspora is very heterogeneous, with divisions existing within the diaspora itself as well as between the diaspora and the homeland. Nevertheless,

> despite such profound divisions, differences, and competing identities, a sense of belonging to the same nation – of being, or feeling, Armenian – still prevails. There is a thread that dies the diaspora to the homeland and vice versa, makes it possible to discuss diaspora-homeland relations, connects all the diasporan Armenians together – which, in short, makes it possible to speak of 'Armenianness' in the context of one nation. (p. 184).

Long-distance nationalism

In focusing on how conflict, violence and displacement have impacted members of the Bosnian diaspora's conceptualizations of home and identity, this study builds on this last set of contributions within the migration/identity literature about the importance of considering the context of departure. It recalls the genealogic roots of diaspora and the experiences inherent within the history of 'classical' diasporas, highlighting them as formative influences. Finney (2002) captures how cataclysmic such experiences can be in a person's life, writing:

> Modern war necessarily entails ruptures in the fabric of identity on multiple levels since it engenders death and the personal experience by combatants and others of unimaginable horror, the distortions of patterns of everyday life and suspension of normal modes of behaviour, the disruption of social, economic, family and gender relations, and profound political and geopolitical change. It also makes questions of identity – the demarcation of 'us' from 'them' – literally ones of life and death. (p. 6).

There appear to be two prevailing directions that identity can take as it comes under pressure and changes with the experience of forced migration. According to scholars, forced migration may bring about an emphasis on particularistic identities that are often associated with the reason behind forced migration; or, forced migration and its traumas may encourage more reconciliatory and compromising stances.

For the perspectives that link forced migration to heightened senses of a particular identity, the aphorism of politician-historian Lord Acton that "exile is the nursery of nationality" has been a source of inspiration. Lord Acton argued that 'nationality' arose in exile when individuals could not easily return to the territory where they had been born. This sense of 'nationality' fomented a nationalism that for Acton would present an increasing threat to civilization: "the combination of different nations in one State is as necessary a condition of civilised life as the combination of men in society." Writing over 100 years later, Benedict Anderson heralded Acton's perceptiveness and coined the term 'long-distance nationalism' that has built on Acton's theories and has been increasingly used in social science literature since the 1990s. It refers to the sense of shared identification with an ancestral territory by people who live in disparate locations and for whom borders do not delimit who has membership in this nation. What makes long-distance nationalism a potent force however is that in addition to inducing nationalist emotions and sentiment, it involves actions:

> These actions link a dispersed population to a specific homeland and its political system. Long-distance nationalists may vote, demonstrate, contribute money, create works of art, give birth, and fight, kill, and die all for a 'homeland' in which they may never have lived. (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001, p.20).

It is these potentially conflictual aspects of long-distance nationalism that scholars studying diasporas argue can be agitated by experiences of forced migration. In a broad study of the causes of civil conflict and focusing on the opportunity for rebellion, Collier and Hoeffler (2004)

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identify diasporas as a source of funding for rebellion and find that the trauma of a forced migration experience may bring about more pronounced identities which morph into hatreds and support for violence. The risk of identity being shaped in negative directions in this way is the reason Sheffer (2006) believes that the study of ethnonational diasporas should be a separate inquiry from the wider transnational phenomenon, since their identification processes are in many ways different from other diasporas. Sheffer's point is one of the hypotheses driving this study, using fieldwork with the Bosnian diaspora to examine how it applies to the Bosnian case.

The counter perspective on how forced migration may impact identity is that instead of a trauma-induced swelling of 'long-distance nationalism' that prompts those that experienced it to interject in politics or developments back in the homeland, forced migration on the other hand generates feelings of rapprochement, reconciliation and openness. It may open up the space for dialogue (Mohamoud 2005), and the process of structural integration in the new society may encourage more tolerance and reconciliatory attitudes (Hall and Kostić 2009).

Home (does the place of displacement make a difference?)

The previous section illustrated how forced migration may impact the identity of migrants in various ways. Forced migration and the conditions that surround it however, such as conflict and violence, also transform the identity of the places involved. Jansen and Lofving (2008) argue that in anthropological approaches to violence the role of place is often under emphasized. Specifically, place tends to be important only insofar as the 'where' of violence occurs – as "'the décor' of where the violence 'takes place'" (p. 7). However, Lang and Sakdapolrak's (2015) study of the impact of post-election violence in the locality of Naivasha in

Kenya exemplifies how the meaning of place is re-structured for different groupings following an experience of violence. According to them, a place acquires identity, or identities,

> as a discursive product of multi-scalar cross-linked relationships and negotiations, and a moment of temporal constellations. A place does not hold only one uniform identity. Rather, various imaginations of place coexist, according to how people are organised in space, how they define places and see themselves as belonging to them, and claim control over them. (p. 69-70).

When violence occurs, the social structures and images of a place are altered and can give rise to social division, particularly ethnically-based division (Linke 2013, Springer 2011, Trigg 2009). They become 'troubled locations' (Jansen 2007), where the effects of conflict persist and alter their identity. Even though in Lang and Sakdapolrak's (2015) Kenya case, the post-election violence is exceptional and represents only a moment in the longer history and social relations of Naivasha, the experience of violence nevertheless reshaped narratives and discourses about it. On one hand, for individuals that used to see Naivasha as a place for job-seekers but were directly implicated in the violence, it became a 'traumascape' (Tumarkin 2005) whereby the suffering they encountered during the violence compels memories, crystallizes identities and induces collective sensitivities. For individuals that perpetrated violence for the purpose of claiming territory on the other hand, Naivasha became "their own" territory, a 'homeland.'

If a place is identified as 'home' in the imagination of a group of people, the changes brought about by conflict and violence may therefore pierce the understandings of it as home. This means that even though policymakers may prioritize a return home as the preferred solution to displacement – because of the deep-seated belief that a person has a natural place of belonging and that it is a critical source of his sense of identity – the reality is that after displacement, many refugees do not, and have no desire to, return to that home. It may not be home anymore, in the way they used to imagine it. Al-Rasheed (1994) points out that "the universality of the myth of

return is based on the mistaken assumption that refugees or exiles constitute an undifferentiated mass of individuals just because they share a common cause of flight or displacement" (p. 202). In truth, refugees may feel and express nostalgia and many maintain an orientation to the place of origin, but may at the same time not want to return. Scholars studying the process of refugees and return, or the lack of it, have thus argued that what and where home is for the displaced is far from a straightforward concept, and that the home within the myth of return must itself be problematized (Black 2002, Jansen and Lofving 2008).

The concept of home spans the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, psychology, human geography, history, architecture and philosophy and has produced a broad academic literature. Mallett (2004) took on the daunting task of reviewing the different ways home is understood and discussed, in order to bring together dominant or recurring ideas. She finds that across disciplines, "home is variously described as conflated with or related to house, family, haven, self, gender, and journeying. Many authors also consider notions of being-at-home, creating or making home and the ideal home" (p. 65). For her this communicates that "the term home functions as a repository for complex, inter-related and at times contradictory socio-cultural ideas about people's relationship with one another, especially family, and with places, spaces, and things" (p. 84). Across disciplines home is thus simultaneously a place, space, feeling, practice or active state of being, and the emotions associated with it are safety, security, feeling at ease, intimacy, and familiarity.

Even just as spatially defined, home remains a complicated concept, as there are a variety of spatial scales that it could refer to: a building, village, town, or region (Black 2002). These are all sources of alternative identities with a function within one's conceptualization of home. In this sense it is important to distinguish home from the notion of homeland, which has a more

expansive territorial reference while at the same time holding an abstract or mythical

significance as the place of belonging for a particular nation (Naficy, 1999, p. 6). Though

policymakers may conflate home and homeland when they refer to the repatriation or return of

refugees, for the refugee home and homeland may hold different meaning and significance.

When they yearn for home, they may be yearning not for homeland but to specific spatial

locations such as a neighborhood, village or region and the 'homely' feelings of familiarity and

ease that characterize them.

As was discussed in the previous section, the refugee's displacement from a perceived

natural home has often been described through a discourse of loss and victimization that fails to

recognize the agency and resourcefulness that refugees exercise even in constrained

circumstances. A crucial way this agency is demonstrated is in how they approach the loss of

home. Specifically, the contributions of Hammond (1999) and Allen and Turton (1996)

demonstrate how following tumultuous experiences the displaced engage in strategic thinking

and calculations about the choices available to them in terms of next steps in their family's life

trajectory. The decisions made as part of this process of internal strategizing and negotiation are

based on the recognition that, as Eastmond (1996) put it very well, "we cannot a priori assume

[…] that the homeland is always the best place to be" (p. 232).

Hammond (1999) found in her study of refugee returns to Ethiopia that in her

respondents' case, the economic difficulties of returning to the place of origin caused "a

reformulation of the connection between identity and place" (p. 239). As a result, though their

place of origin was perhaps their ideal home, economic realities shifted the aspirations of

returnees, catalyzing a process Hammond calls 'emplacement' in a new location. Emplacement

involves enacting the various practices that make up everyday life, both material and moral,

based on a redefined sense of community. Through various forms of emplacement – whether it is building a house, enrolling children in school, celebrating holidays, performing particular cultural traditions – her respondents reconstructed a home in the physical, social and emotional sense. As Hammond (2004) writes: "Home is a variable term, one that can be transformed, newly invented, and developed in relation to the circumstances in which people find themselves or choose to place themselves." (p. 10). Allen and Turton (1996) similarly portray a search for home as a search for 'cool ground' among the African Mursi people, where movement in search of such better places is required if one is to survive.

The contributions of Hammond (1999) and Allen and Turton (1996) communicate three critical points about the conceptualization of home following tumultuous experiences in a particular locality. First, they demonstrate how the reasons for forced migration can alter the identity of a place, including one's place of origin, and consequently disrupt one's conception of it as home. The place of displacement may be a traumascape, a 'poisoned location' for those forced to flee. The war and violence were thus "experiences in places," and how home is re-conceptualized is impacted by these experiences in place. This is another hypothesis to be examined in the context of the Bosnian war diaspora. Second, Hammond's (1999) and Allen and Turton's (1996) contributions demonstrate how these changes force a process of analysis and negotiation about one's life needs and how to satisfy them. Third, the concepts of 'emplacement' and 'cool ground' indicate that the elements that constitute something or someplace as home are not fixed or immutable, but can be constructed so that new meanings and associations are created. This means that not only can different places be defined as home at different points in life, but particularly for the diaspora, that one may have more than one place that fits with the conception of home, even if they don't physically return to it.

Conclusion

The research question at the heart of this study, which asks how conflict and displacement have impacted conceptualizations of home and identity among the Bosnian diaspora, is premised on the unique character of Bosnians as a diaspora. Bosnians left their homes and their homeland unwillingly and under great duress, having been exposed to violence and in many cases war crimes. They were dispersed among many countries around the world, including the United States. They maintain quite extensive transnational connections to Bosnia as well as to other Bosnians in other countries, and at least among a segment of its population, Bosnian Muslims, a collective identity built around belonging to and displacement from Bosnia is in existence. In these ways they have many of the characteristics of a diaspora, though not necessarily a coherent one, as Ali-Ali (2002) and Kelly (2003) have argued. With this background, the Bosnian diaspora are comparable to the 'classical' diasporas in terms of experience – they share a history of tumultuous political upheaval that produced extreme violence and forced thousands to flee their homes in fear. These processes have been powerful lived experiences that have shaped the identity and memories of those who suffered and survived through them. According to Lasse Thomassen, "identities are constituted through a process of negotiation where that process of negotiation is the very medium through which the identities are constituted" (La Barbera, 2014, Foreword, p. vi). The purpose of the study is thus to obtain a more distinct understanding of how forced migration and its associated experiences have influenced conceptualizations of home and identity among the Bosnian diaspora.

Chapter Two: Telling Stories about the Bosnian Diaspora

What are the stories about the Bosnian diaspora?

The conflict in Bosnia has spawned a wide literature across disciplines. A significant number of studies have focused on explaining what happened and why, and have ranged from personal accounts to historical narratives to theoretical analyses about the causes of conflict in multiethnic and multi-faith societies. Many studies have also been devoted to the inhumanities that were on display during the war, chronicling the unfolding of genocide, ethnic cleansing, and mass rapes, and the efforts to find justice for those crimes. With the end of the war, the effects of the mass migrations of people that the conflict produced increasingly became of interest to scholars, who began studying, from different perspectives, the Bosnian population living abroad.

The literature on the war and post-war Bosnian diaspora can be divided into roughly three strands, though this breakdown is by no means comprehensive. The first set of studies examines the integration process and experiences of the diaspora who settled in various countries around the world. A second set examines how members of the diaspora have managed and negotiated questions and challenges of identification at the transnational, national, religious, ethnic, and local levels, among others. A third set also looks at (re)settlement, but from the perspective of returnees to Bosnia as opposed to Bosnians already living in diaspora, and particularly how they reconstruct 'home' after return. This dissertation draws from all three sets of literature in order to study how conflict and displacement have impacted conceptualizations of home and identity among members of the diaspora. I focus my review on three books in particular: Valenta and

Ramet's *The Bosnian Diaspora*; Maja Korac's *Remaking Home*; and Hariz Halilovich's *Places of Pain.* These books were key in shaping the research question and in formulating additional hypotheses that guide this dissertation. They also span many of the themes within the broader literature on the Bosnian diaspora in a skillful manner. In addition, I provide a shorter overview of other works that complement the issues and arguments within these three books. This chapter thus reviews the findings of relevant works, explains how they contributed in the formulation of questions and arguments within this dissertation, and how my approach is distinctive and superior.

The literature on numbers

Before delving into the three books mentioned, it is worth highlighting a study that has made great strides in improving the statistical foundations of all research on the Bosnian diaspora. As was discussed in the introduction, knowing accurate population numbers in host countries has always presented somewhat of a challenge. Many of the figures often cited are estimates that have been repeated anecdotally. They rarely match the numbers within census figures which, as was also discussed, fail to capture segments of what some consider to be a diaspora population. Valenta and Strabac's (2013) study compiles available and updated data on the Bosnian diaspora's migration paths and presents them in a systematic way. Furthermore, the researchers relate the trends demonstrated in the migration statistics to policy developments in major host countries. In other studies on the Bosnian diaspora population, this relation is often explored on a singular country basis. Valenta and Strabac (2013) make this relation the centerpiece of their study and provide supporting evidence to show how in the case of Bosnian refugees, policy developments in European host countries are related to increases in migration to countries with permanent resettlement programs such as the United States. Valenta and Strabac

(2013) thus provide more thorough estimates of the range of dispersal of the Bosnian diaspora both numerically and geographically, but also more systematically link that range of dispersal to host countries' policies.

Valenta and Ramet's *The Bosnian Diaspora: Integration in Transnational Communities* (2011)

With the publication of *The Bosnian Diaspora,* Marko Valenta and Sabrina Ramet launched one of the first efforts to take a comprehensive as well as comparative look into the situation of the Bosnian diaspora worldwide. By examining the case of the Bosnian diaspora, Valenta and Ramet contributed to a rich and growing literature on diasporas and transnationalism, but one that was in need of specificities through the experiences of particular diaspora populations (Winland 2012, p. 607). While many scholarly studies have addressed the migration of the Bosnian diaspora to individual western countries, the edited collection sets itself apart by also examining the situation of the diaspora in the neighboring countries of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. Through the use of methodologies that include both quantitative analysis and ethnographic fieldwork, the essays in Valenta and Ramet's volume seek to explore the integration outcomes of the Bosnian diaspora in various locales as well as understand how they maintain a transnational relationship with their homeland.

Several essays are devoted to examining the integration of Bosnian diaspora in host societies – transitional countries of refuge such as many European states were in the first years of the conflict as well as countries of permanent resettlement. These essays take the perspective that integration is influenced by the characteristics of migrating individuals and groups, as well as the context of reception, meaning specific policies in the receiving society. The level of integration is measured by recourse to socio-economic indicators, which the scholars argue are an indication

of the extent to which the Bosnian diaspora has adapted, acculturated or assimilated into their new societies, and how these 'integration outcomes' compare to other refugee populations. In Valenta and Strabac's chapter on Bosnians in Norway for example, the authors argue that Bosnians' higher levels of integration relative to other immigrant groups – despite their more recent arrival – is due partly to their socio-demographic background, their migration patterns, and a context of reception in the host society characterized by generous government assistance and low levels of prejudice. In research on Bosnians living in Austria, Franz similarly finds that Bosnians' integration indicators were better than other new immigrant groups'. She credits Bosnian diaspora members' own agency in making better use of opportunities, particularly in relation to education and work, for their comparatively successful integration process. Kalčić and Gombač analyze the situation of the Bosnian diaspora in Slovenia, mostly Bosnian Muslims, who face obstacles to successful integration given unfavorable Slovenian legislation and in some cases violations or manipulations of otherwise favorable laws. And in Raduški's chapter on Bosnians in Serbia, she finds that the diaspora is relatively younger and more educated, but nevertheless largely unemployed or engaged in illegal employment due to the general economic situation in the country. She also finds that the diaspora is in large part ethnically Serb, composed of people who fled in two large waves – immediately after the outbreak of conflict in Bosnia and then following the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Most of these refugees express a desire to resettle in Serbia as opposed to returning to Bosnia, due to perceived unviable economic and political conditions there as well as unresolved property issues.

Other essays within Valenta and Ramet's volume are focused on the transnational practices of the Bosnian diaspora globally. They demonstrate the wide range of activities and transactions that are subsumed under the transnationalism in which diaspora members engage.

Jakobsen for example investigates remittances which in Bosnia's case are a significant manifestation of an active transnationalism, given that Bosnia since 1998 has consistently been one of the top receivers of remittances in the world relative to the size of its economy. Kalčić and Gombač describe the Bosnian organizations that have been established in Slovenia and that collaborate on projects with figures and associations from Bosnia. As was discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, as in the United States these diaspora organizations tend to be organized around ethnic identity. Thus 'Bosnian' organizations in Slovenia are either those operating in the cultural arena and that recognize the influence of Islam on the Bosnian Muslim identity but don't engage in religious content, or are religiously-based organizations such as Islamic community centers. Finally, in a study of Bosnian Croats in Sweden, Povrzanović Frykman highlights travel as a critical transnational practice that facilitates a connection with the homeland. She emphasizes the normality of these practices – of multiple attachments and multiple homelands – among similar individuals within the diaspora, and the positive effects they have on individuals' social and emotional well-being.

Finally, a few essays in Valenta and Ramet's volume address the context of departure of the Bosnian diaspora and how the circumstances surrounding their departure from their homeland may be playing out in various forms in the host society. These essays thus take conflict-produced displacement as a starting point to study how religious, ethnic or national identities are negotiated and expressed in migration. For example, Kalčić and Gombač's study of the Bosnian diaspora in Slovenia indicates a correlation between the conflict and increased awareness of one's religious identity, with the war inciting the development of a Bosniak identity and Islam gaining importance in the construction of that identity. Other essays on the other hand question the very salience of religious and ethnic identities following migration. They argue that

there is an over-privileging of ethnicity in studies of Bosnian identity at the expense of other, more important identities. Slavnić for example finds that the conflicts among Bosnians of different ethnicities living in a Swedish town in the late 1990s that have occurred – while not many – were usually not animated by ethnic antagonisms brought from the homeland. Moreover, while Bosnians of different ethnicities 'other' one another based on ethnicity, they also express unity when 'othering' different immigrant groups. Povrzanović Frykman argues that in studies of Bosnian diaspora identity there needs to be a greater consideration of place-based identity, because "absence can intensify the relationship between people and place and provoke a pronounced feeling of self being fused with the sense of place" (p. 254).[2] While one's place-based identity may overlap with ethnicity, it doesn't mean that it is an outcome of ethnic awareness; this is why, she argues, "the role of ethnicity should – in every research project anew – be turned into an empirical question" (p. 256).

Valenta and Ramet's volume was important in shaping the third hypothesis for this dissertation. Specifically, in focusing on integration into host societies – whether in Norway, the United States, or Serbia – the book led me to consider more deeply the factors that may condition the desire to *remain* in the place of resettlement. In other words, while various economic, social and political challenges in Bosnia are often blamed for refugees' unwillingness to return 'home,' this book re-framed my thinking to consider what kinds of factors in the place of resettlement function as a reason to want to remain. Successful integration, as demonstrated by finding a job, buying a house, completing a degree, starting a business, or developing relationships in the community may all serve as reasons to stay, because as Coughlan puts it in his chapter on the

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[2] One of the three books I focus on in the literature review, Hariz Halilovich's *Places of Pain* explores this question of place-based identity in much more detail.

Bosnian diaspora in the United States, these developments and successes represent "that life had been restored to normal" (p.109). There may be other, even more powerful reasons to stay however. Raduški found that Bosnian Serb refugees in Serbia largely resettled to parts of Serbia that had the highest concentrations of migrants from Bosnia prior to the war; in other words, they resettled in places where they had relatives, friends and connections, which also meant that most didn't have to live in refugee camps or collective centers. Importantly, she notes that among Bosnian refugees in Serbia, "the desire for integration rises with eight or more years spent in Serbia" (p. 136). This finding influenced the formation of my hypothesis that diaspora members' expanding family network in the place of resettlement function as a primary reason to stay and in this way reinforce the notion of the place of resettlement as home. This dissertation tests this hypothesis through fieldwork with my respondents.

Valenta and Ramet's volume was also important in developing arguments within this dissertation in several contributions' emphasis on the link between apparently successful integration and transnationalism. For example, Valenta and Strabac argue that their study of Bosnian refugees in Norway suggests that refugees' successful integration into mainstream Norwegian society "is not only reconcilable, but even facilitates the rich transnational engagements on individual level" (p.102). Similarly, Povrzanović Frykman's study of the transnationalism of Bosnian Croats in Sweden, which they regard as one of their multiple 'homes' and places of attachment, suggests that incorporation into the host society does not discourage but may actually encourage transnational links. At the same time, Coughlan argues that it is important not to generalize about ethnic groups and their transnationalism; his study of different segments of Bosnian Muslims shows that different experiences and contexts of departure can influence feelings towards Bosnia and thus transnationalism that is oriented

towards Bosnia. Taken together, these studies convey that resettling into a new society, and successfully integrating within it, can create the possibility for transnational connections and activities. Rather than causing a loss of a connection with the original homeland through physical displacement, resettlement and integration can provide the means to maintain connections to the original homeland through various types of transnational activity. My dissertation takes this argument further to explore how resettlement and integration redefines not only the original homeland as 'home,' but how the transnationalism they facilitate endows the place of resettlement with meanings of home as well. In other words, place matters not only in terms of where conflict and violence occur and change the notion of a place as 'home,' but it also in terms of where resettlement happens, and the conditions it creates for the displaced to reconceptualize it as 'home.'

Hariz Halilovich's *Places of Pain: Forced Displacement, Popular Memory and Trans-Local Identities in Bosnian War-Torn Communities* (2013)

It was in Halilovich's book that the concept of how displacement and resettlement may reshape places as 'home' began to crystallize as a theory for this dissertation. Within the nexus of the research on migration, identity and transnationalism, scholarly literature more broadly as well as on the Bosnian diaspora has prioritized state-to-state activities and transactions. Halilovich's study of global displaced populations of Bosnians is a crucial critique of such theoretical frameworks on transnationalism and migrant identity. He frames his examination around the concept of 'trans-localism,' an extension of the term transnationalism that is meant to capture processes of identification that 'transnationalism' doesn't. He argues that the Bosnian diasporic communities found in several countries, which often have the characteristics of a miniature Sarajevo, Prijedor or Mostar reconstructed and reimagined in a new environment,

illustrate that the predominant transnational framework underemphasizes local identities.

According to Halilovich, before the outbreak of conflict in Bosnia, place-based identity was a greater source of belonging than religion, nation or ethnicity for many Bosnians. Halilovich calls this place-based identity *zavičaj* in Bosnian, which may be translated to 'local homeland' and defined in the following way:

> *Zavičaj* goes beyond both the strictly private domain and the public sphere of identification with group categories like family, kin, religion or ethnicity. With its use of toponyms and nicknames it unites landscape and people. With its emphasis on shared local dialect, cultural practices and social networks, it encourages the accommodation of difference that can attach to religion and ethnicity. In this way *zavičaj* both reflected and contributed to the multicultural and multi-ethnic pattern of life that was so characteristic of Bosnia right up to the 1990s (p.11).

Zavičaj is thus not a place but a coalescence of place with social and cultural relations, a sense of collective intimacy and belonging. Through the use of several personal narratives of displaced Bosnians living in diverse locales around the world, Halilovich demonstrates that this place-based identity is mobile however, and that it can continue to operate even in a state of displacement and deterritorialization. He depicts this for example in a community of Bosnians from Brčko living in Melbourne who have established an organization around their belonging to Brčko and who eschew other more ethnically-oriented diaspora organizations. For Halilovich, this performance of translocal identities in the diaspora "act as factors of cohesion in making a distinct 'social world' in the form of de-territorialized and re-territorialized translocal communities" (p. 137).

Halilovich's study raises a question about the relationship between translocalism and the reconceptualization of home. He cites Hage's (1997) argument that attachment to an old home is not a constraint on creating a new home in resettlement. Instead, nostalgia or attachment to an old home provides refugees with 'a sense of possibility' to create a new home that is constructed

on a desire to promote the feeling of being there, here. In other words, nostalgia or attachment to an old home is not a rejection of the new environment but rather a method to recreate the homely feelings associated with an old 'home' in a new place. This dissertation aligns with Halilovich's notion of translocalism *in place*; meaning that rather than emphasizing concepts of mobility, it instead emphasizes practices and a consciousness, of being here and there - even if that means physically never leaving 'here' or never going back 'there' again. It is, as I argue, a way of being and of living as a Bosnian in America.

Maja Korac's *Remaking Home: Reconstructing Life, Place and Identity in Rome and Amsterdam* (2009)

The work whose goals are closest to the research question I examine in this dissertation is Korac's (2009) study of the 'remaking' of home among refugees in Rome and Amsterdam. Though Korac describes her respondents as refugees from the former Yugoslav successor states, she later clarifies that a majority of her respondents were Bosnian Muslims or persons of mixed ethnicity, which mirrors my own respondent sample. Korac explains that her goal is to convey how refugees are social actors with aspirations and life-projects, and who embark on a process of remaking home by creating opportunities with resources available to them even in the difficult situations and predicaments in which they find themselves. Aligning herself with refugee scholars such as Liisa Malkki, Korac pushes back on commonplace discourse about 'the refugee experience' by highlighting the elements of choice and decision-making that are involved at multiple stages within the process of fleeing the place of origin. In other words, she demonstrates the various ways along the trajectory from the initial migration to their settlement in Rome and Amsterdam that her respondents tried to regain control of their life. For example, she argues that her respondents' individual experiences show that "their decision to leave their place of origin or

to undertake secondary migration were for the most part based on their own perceptions of security issues and/or the prospects of regaining control over their lives at the places where they lived" (p. 53). She also frames the settlement in Rome or Amsterdam as a "choice" that respondents made, with Italy for example being nearby and easy to reach while a small minority of those that settled in the Netherlands pursued the destination because they had family already living there. A significant section of Korac's book addresses the context of reception that her respondents faced in Italy and the Netherlands, particularly the models of assistance provided to refugees in each country. In making these comparisons of state policies and assistance, Korac's analysis "acknowledges the role of dominant institutional structures in determining one's rights to establish a home" (p. 2). She argues that the contexts and structures of each place of settlement "led to different ways in which people were regaining control over their lives" and the kind of agency they encouraged, as refugees reconstructed their lives and 'home' in the new environment (p.11.)

Korac's effort to shed light on the agency of refugees at the detriment of a discourse that pathologizes them is laudable and is important in developing better, more critical approaches to refugees and their experiences. At the same time, her interpretation of the reasons for flight in the first place as examples of 'choice' within constrained circumstances may take the argument a step further than is necessary. Though throughout her book Korac repeatedly refers to the initial migration as forcible, involuntary or coerced – she then takes away from the significance of the violence of displacement by writing, for example:

> Reasons for making specific migratory decisions about where to go may appear far removed from the initial 'pushing' force to migrate […] On closer examination, however, it becomes clear that they are inseparable from the original motivation to flee, which is not simply to preserve life, but to regain control over its continuity in a meaningful way. In this sense, it can be argued that forced migration always entails at least some degree of choice and should be regarded as proactive. (p. 57).

Korac's reasoning here may be the outcome of being trapped in a discursive binary of choice/nonchoice about what refugees do and why. I believe that in taking this view, Korac is once again inspired and thus constrained by Malkki (1995), whose writings similarly communicate a bias towards thinking in binaries about refugees. For example, Malkki argues that one of the signals of the functionalism inherent in much of refugee studies is the tendency to study displacement from a psychological perspective. She writes:

> Clearly, many people who have become (or have been) refugee suffer profoundly from having been tortured, raped, terrorized, spied upon, militarily attacked, separated from friends and families, and often, from having been left alive to witness death […] If these experiences did not have spiritual or psychological effects on people, that would be something to be explained. Thus, although many refugees have survived violence and loss that are literally beyond the imagination of most people, we mustn't assume that refugee status in and of itself constitutes a recognizable, generalizable psychological condition. (p. 510).

There is thus a problematic transition from what seems to be a genuine appreciation of the profound experiences that refugees have faced, to a claim that studying these experiences among refugee populations somehow equates to believing that there is a generalizable psychological condition applicable to those in refugee status.

This is a primary way that the approach to studying how refugees remake home in Korac's study is different from the one taken in this dissertation. In trying to underscore refugees' resourcefulness and elements of agency, Korac's approach perhaps goes too far in underemphasizing the importance of the experiences associated with the genealogy and 'classical' diasporas in shaping the identity of those forcibly displaced. Recognizing those experiences does not box refugees into a certain narrative, but instead exposes the complexity of their circumstances and the different ways they are navigated. Similarly, studying the different ways the experiences of forced displacement may impact individuals and their identity

negotiations is not an implication that refugee populations are victims of certain conditions or pathologies. In other words, this dissertation doesn't impose a binary structure or framing in studying the effects of violence and displacement on the Bosnian diaspora. Instead, it seeks to recognize, value and assess the profundity of these experiences and their effects on different aspects of one's life, as part of a broader, more complex transformation occurring in migration, ultimately reformulating conceptualizations of 'home' and identity.

While Korac's book is the longest analysis of the notion of remaking 'home' among the Bosnian diaspora, there are other, shorter studies that have also valuably advanced this literature and are worth reviewing here. For example, Huttunen's (2005) work is based on life-stories written by two Bosnian refugees living in Finland and exemplifies a cognizance of the critical experience of war in shaping displaced persons' identities. She frames the central question within her essay with this awareness, asking: "where is home, or what is home, in a situation where one's home is shattered by a violent war and one is forced into exile?" (p. 177). Her essay pays special attention to how ethnicity, or ethnic division, figures in her respondents' conceptions of home, not because Huttunen herself privileges ethnic identity in Bosnians' self-identification processes but because ethnicity was the oversimplified lens through which the conflict in Yugoslavia was popularly expressed and which during and after the conflict became a very politicized issue.

Huttunen's findings reinforce the point made in the analysis of Korac's work earlier that researchers on forced migration and refugees must be careful not to underemphasize the importance of violent war experience on refugees' identification processes post-displacement. While some argue that there is a potential homogenizing and psychologizing trap awaiting researchers in recognizing the effects of these experiences, for others it is an empirical issue. In

the life stories written by both of Huttunen's respondents for example, "the war in Bosnia is the central organizing element" (p. 180). Importantly, the way home is conceptualized before the conflict in these stories combines physical notions of space with social relations that don't reference ethnic or national belonging. However, the outbreak of war and brutal ethnically-based violence is a turning point in both life histories, causing the respondents to question memories of the harmony of social relations in the pre-war home as real or illusory. These violent events change home from places of safety and familiarity to places of fear and danger:

> When home becomes politicized in ethnic or nationalistic terms, it also becomes seriously problematized as a home. It turns into a home which does not really feel like home anymore. The essential characteristics of 'home' are lost, especially feelings of security and togetherness. (p. 185).

Huttunen's work is important to this study as it provides a starting point to consider the way ethnically-based violence can rupture conceptualizations of a place as home. As Jansen and Lofving (2008) state, "nationalist violence may have as its very objective the irreversible structuring of people's notions of belonging in both territorial and social terms" (p.8). Violence thus shatters the image of a place as home based on its multiethnic social character and relations.

The works of social anthropologist Stef Jansen where he focuses on how returnees to Bosnia remake 'home' are also notable. His studies include those that were displaced and then voluntarily returned as well as those that returned through some form of coercion as part of repatriation programs by host countries. He examines specifically the incongruities between what international policymakers framed as a return to homes of displaced Bosnians in their repatriation programs and the realities on the ground for those returning. Jansen (2007a) takes apart returnee figures to show that even though by 2005 the return of one million out of the more than two million displaced was being celebrated, a majority of the displaced did not actually return to their pre-war place of residence. Instead, at least half of those repatriated actually

relocated internally within Bosnia to areas where their own ethnic group was in the majority. Jansen uses this nuance in the return statistics to illustrate the difference between home and homeland:

> The repatriation of refugees, for example, cannot be equated with return 'home', unless one conceptualized the entire state territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina as 'home' – a problematic suggestion after years of violent attempts to territorialise different national homelands. (p. 181).

In other words, most repatriates may have returned to their country, but they didn't return home.

Even those that did return home returned only to a certain degree. In large part this has been due to the policies and propaganda of nationalist politicians, which created doubts about not only safety and security but also economic and job opportunities in areas where one would be a minority returnee. Returnees, especially younger ones with children, weighed these factors and the risks and opportunities involved in a search for 'cool ground,' a term Jansen (2007b) borrows from Allen and Turton (1996), or the "practicalities of making 'home' for their households" (p. 26). These practicalities included straddling official categories and employing various "household strategies" – forms of agency, in other words – to make "the return process theirs" (p. 23-25). For example, minority returnees would strategically apply for reconstruction assistance but would remain oriented to the entity where they were an ethnic majority for health, employment, education and administrative services; or they would arrange rental agreements for their property with someone from a different ethnic group as a form of income while living in 'their' entity.

Jansen (2007a) notes that despite the great financial and political investments made by Foreign Intervention Agencies - representatives of foreign countries and non-governmental organizations in Bosnia - in ensuring the safe return of minority returnees given the obstructive

practices of nationalist authorities, minority returnee numbers were lower than desired. A key

framing that Jansen uses to explain why this was the case (2007a, 2007b) is the simple but

powerful term 'normal life.' Jansen explains that 'normal life' goes beyond the concern of safety.

It also encompasses socio-economic security, infrastructure, healthcare and education. Without

these constitutive aspects, one feels like their life is in limbo. The sense of limbo was extreme

within post-war Bosnia itself, where the combination of structures imposed by the Dayton Peace

Agreement, contradictory rhetoric by nationalist leaders and Foreign Intervention Agencies,

among others, created the sense that "'normality' had been suspended until further notice"

(2007a, p. 184). The absence of normality as a result of the conflict was something that both the

displaced and those that remained in Bosnia shared and "served as the basis for a wider sense of

loss of 'home'" (p. 184.) Going back to the question of why more displaced persons did not

return to Bosnia – or why Bosnians began leaving Bosnia after the end of the conflict – Jansen's

underlying argument is that home in the spatial, social, physical and emotional sense had been

lost as a result of conflict (p. 195). But, Jansen's framing of 'normal life' has a dual purpose: it is

not just an element in a potential loss of home but also in the creation of a new one. This

aspirational and pragmatic notion is captured in the expansion of the term to 'yearning for

normal life': "The 'normality' of the life they so ardently yearned for was less a matter of

financial gain than a feeling of socially-embedded security, worth and recognition" (2007a, p.

194). Within this pursuit of 'normal life,' a critical motivation is providing better opportunities

for the next generation, which as Jansen argues, explains how emigration has become a central

strategy in attaining 'normal life.' My dissertation builds on Jansen's point about the role of

children by arguing that not only is the continuing orientation among parents in the Bosnian

diaspora a better life for their children, but the expansion of the family network via the children

solidifies this orientation. This is particularly the case as the first generation of migrant refugees from Bosnia age and their children begin having children of their own.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Hypotheses

In the previous chapters, I outlined the theoretical underpinnings of the primary research question that this dissertation tries to answer, which is: how do conflict and displacement impact conceptualizations of home and identity among the Bosnian diaspora? As part of that discussion, I noted three hypotheses that the theoretical literature suggests may be relevant to the Bosnian diaspora case. These may be considered as 'sub-questions' to the primary research question, addressing individual dimensions that constitute it. The three hypotheses or sub-questions are as follows:

i)   Sheffer (2003) argues that ethnonational diasporas have distinct identification processes that are in many ways different from other diasporas. In other words, transnationalism as a phenomenon is not a sufficient framework through which their experiences and identification processes can be analyzed. How does the case of the Bosnian diaspora fit in with Sheffer's argument? And what role does the shared narrative of suffering play?

ii)   Conflict is an "experience in places," changing the identity of a place and one's feelings towards it once violence has occurred. How does the place where conflict and displacement occurred matter in re-conceptualizing home and identity? What are some observed differences?

iii)   Their children and their children's future is the primary reason diaspora members say they remain in the place of resettlement. In what ways does the expanding family network reinforce this desire to stay?

I now turn to the methodology used in this dissertation to study the above questions in the context of the Bosnian diaspora in the United States.

Methodology

In their essay Beyond Identity, Brubaker and Cooper (2000) issue a warning to social science researchers: in studying identity and identification processes, it is important not to presume the existence of 'groupness' among individuals. They argue that instead, the role of the critical researcher is to understand how feelings of 'groupness' or 'commonalty' can 'crystallize' or 'happen' at certain moments and in certain settings among individuals. This does not mean that feelings of 'groupness,' if and where they exist, will even be in national or ethnic terms.

This guidance is particularly relevant to researchers undertaking social analysis among diaspora populations. Bureaucratic and legal terms determine and ascribe 'groupness' to diaspora populations as a matter of practice, the category 'refugee' being a prime example. It is the role of social science researchers to interrogate such generalized terms and disentangle from them the varied experiences and identities of the individuals they seek to describe. In doing so, researchers must be careful about presuming 'groupness' along two dimensions in particular. First, because the term 'diaspora' is predicated on the notion of dispersal from a geographic location, a study of the individuals comprising that diaspora holds an inherent risk of uncritically categorizing those individuals as a group who shares a common national identity. Presuming 'groupness' around a shared national identification is an easy slippage in the study of diasporas, therefore. Second, a similar presumption of 'groupness' can occur around the very experience of dispersal. That is,

because a diaspora experienced a particular form of dispersal such as forced migration, there may be an assumption that their 'groupness' is premised on that common, shared experience. Both kinds of slippage overlook and undermine important heterogeneities among individuals fleeing a country on both the question of national identification and particular experiences of conflict and migration, which in themselves may be sources of 'commonalty' among smaller segments of individuals.

How to study diasporas

In their ability to provide information on the 'human' side of a research question, qualitative techniques are the preferred methodology of scholars who seek to understand personal and contextual issues related to diasporas. In the literature review chapter of this dissertation, I noted how some of the assessments of the Bosnian diaspora's level of integration into host societies were conducted using a quantitative analysis of their socioeconomic success, which facilitated comparisons to other diaspora groups. However, when it comes to matters of personal beliefs, motivations or rationales, quantitative techniques that function though pre-determined options and categories fall short. As Weiss (1994) argues, "quantitative studies pay a price for their standardized precision […] the information they obtain from any one person is fragmentary, made of bits and pieces of attitudes and observations and appraisals" (p. 2). Identity for example is always in construction and transforming; quantitative techniques do not allow for the *process* of identification to be studied; they do not expose an individual's internal negotiations and struggles over this question, which indicate the very contingency of identity. Ethnography on the other hand is defined by an ability to gain access to respondents' personal thoughts and experiences and describe them to an external audience with an insider's perspective. As Adler and Adler (2003) write, "a successful ethnography captures readers'

fancies, bringing them closer to the lives of others, and, like a good movie or book, offers insight into people's ordinary worlds" (p. 42). The literature on diasporas worldwide is a rich collection of ethnographies, many of which evoke the notion of the 'double consciousness' from Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993). For example, a notable diaspora ethnography is Copeland-Carson's (2004) book *Creating Africa in America*, an homage to her grandmother who introduced her to the existential condition of "living betwixt and between."

Embedded in the anthropological tradition, ethnography refers to the study of a particular cultural grouping or phenomenon. It involves often times intensive fieldwork, the process of recording and documenting individuals' beliefs or practices from their own perspective. The most common examples of ethnographic fieldwork are participant observation, interviews, and focus groups, all of which contain some element of participation by the researcher. For ethnographic studies on diaspora and particularly diaspora identity, personal interviews are a very effective method. This is because while there are many interview styles, the focus in personal interviews is on allowing the person being interviewed the time and space to express themselves and answer without being constrained by pre-determined choices. This is also why personal interviews, even though they are more time-consuming, are generally preferable to focus groups for discussions of personal and possibly sensitive topics. Since they involve multiple respondents being interviewed concurrently, focus groups do not allow the time for the researcher to build trust and rapport with the respondent to the extent that personal interviews do. They also don't allow for the privacy and confidentiality that may be preferred by an individual discussing possibly painful memories and experiences related to migration and forced migration, for instance.

Even at the level of personal interviews, how the interview is structured can have significant impact on the kind and quality of information collected by the researcher. Leech (2002) contrasts unstructured, structured and semi-structured interviews, arguing that unstructured interviews are more suitable for when a researcher has limited knowledge on a topic or wants an insider perspective. They can be somewhat free-wheeling however, which makes them not entirely reliable as a source of comparative data. Structured interviews, where the researcher asks respondents closed-ended questions, are frequently used in opinion surveys but rarely provide enough substantive content. For Leech (2002), semi-structured interviews are the best of both worlds, as they can provide "detail, depth, and an insider's perspective, while at the same time allowing hypothesis testing and the quantitative analysis of interview responses" (p.665). Another important advantage of semi-structured interviews, particularly when studying identity issues, is that they minimize the risk of presuming 'groupness' as Brubaker and Cooper (2000) warned when studying diaspora populations. This is because semi-structured interviews, where respondents are prompted by an initial question but that may then lead into more of a broader narrative, allow the respondent to speak and reflect freely on matters of personal significance (Mishler 1986, Riessman 2002). The researcher intervenes minimally, allowing them to observe and analyze what terms respondents use in their self-descriptions and what issues they choose to highlight.

Methodological challenges

Nevertheless, a primary criticism of ethnography relates to intentional or unintentional intervention by the researcher into the study. According to Adler and Adler (2003), a common charge against ethnography is that "it is anecdotal, careless, and casual, depending too much on researchers' subjectivity. Poor ethnography may result when researchers are biased by their own

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opinions or history, or when they carry preconceived attitudes, either personal or professional, and cannot transcend them" (p. 44). Being a wholly dispassionate observer in ethnography is a rarity: research topics and areas of study are of course, often shaped and influenced by researchers' own background, personal and professional identities, and life experiences. These realities are seen as, and certainly can be, a threat against the objectivity of research conducted and of the integrity of methodology used, if they are not mitigated to the fullest extent possible.

The literature on ethnography offers a few strategies for doing so and preserving research as scientific and reliable. Lincoln and Guba (2000) succinctly capture these concerns when they raise the following question:

> How do we know when we have specific social inquiries that are faithful enough to some human construction that we may feel safe in acting on them, or more important, that members of the community in which the research is conducted may act on them? (p. 180).

To ensure the validity of research, one strategy that Lincoln and Guba (2000) suggest is including the voices of a diverse range of participants, including those harder to reach. Specifically, researchers should make an effort to reach respondents with views dissimilar to their own. The fairness of this approach minimizes the perception that personal beliefs seeped into biases about respondent samples. A second strategy to mitigate against perceived researcher bias is to reflectively acknowledge one's subjectivity and positionality as part of methodological considerations. As Charlotte Aull Davies argues in her book *Reflexive Ethnography*, "all researchers are to some degree connected to, or part of, the object of their research" (2008, p.3). Ideally, acknowledgement should be supplemented with information on some ways potential problems related to subjectivity and positionality were addressed or overcome.

In the context of this study, my interest in studying how conflict, violence and displacement have affected the Bosnian diaspora's conceptualization of home and identity grew

out of my own journey to becoming a member of the Bosnian diaspora in the United States. Because of family circumstances at the time of the war, I was fortunate enough to never have directly experienced conflict or violence myself. The house I grew up in was not destroyed, is still in my family's possession and is in a part of Bosnia that was always under Bosnian army control and did not suffer as extensive damage as other communities. I am able to and do return to my hometown every summer. I lost a close cousin to a shell in Sarajevo, but no one else among my family or relatives were hurt or perished. This is my personal history of and interaction with the conflict, as it played out in the place where I grew up. But this is only one history among countless others, experienced in varied homes across Bosnia. In fact, my own story of migration from Bosnia is even an outlier, particularly in communities such as St. Louis where I now live, where the great majority of my fellow Bosnian diaspora members have drastically different stories and experiences. The more people I met in the diaspora, the more I became aware of this and just how much what happened back 'home' has affected them and altered their lives. Some have dreams about Bosnia on a regular basis, about returning to their pre-war home and the area they are from. Some don't ever want to step foot in Bosnia again; the memories are too painful, or they just want to detach themselves, for various reasons. Some would return, but there is nowhere for them to physically do so – it's been destroyed. And many who would return can't bear it emotionally, because it would mean being separated from the younger and new generations within their family, who have grown up in the United States and for whom it is the only home and homeland they've ever known. The Bosnian diaspora in the United States (and worldwide) is thus a complex, heterogeneous mix of stories, experiences and perspectives. But they are, specifically, conflict-shaped stories, experiences and perspectives, given that the majority of the diaspora arrived as refugees. I decided to pursue this topic because

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I wanted to understand how the diversities in experience of conflict, violence and displacement across Bosnia have shaped conceptualizations of home and identity among them. The study is thus structured around individuals and their experiences. And even though those interviewed have similar refugee trajectories to the United States, this study seeks to emphasize the plurality of experiences within those trajectories, not to mention the way they were felt, interpreted as well as managed. As Braziel and Mannur (2003) argue, shared experience should not be confounded with shared identity, as it presumes homogenization within a community and suppresses the existence of differences.

This study offers an in-depth insight into the influences of the conflict on one part of the global Bosnian diaspora. It is not representative of all of the members of the Bosnian diaspora. However, there are recurring themes among respondents across the three sites of research that enclose links between conflict, conceptualizations of home, and identity. The presence of these recurrent themes suggests some areas of overlap among diverse members of the diaspora and thus larger points of convergence and shared feeling. These themes, while arising out of the study of a case of the Bosnian diaspora, are also not specific to the Bosnian diaspora. As was discussed in the Preface, the Syrian and Bosnian diasporas share many similarities, so that the themes recurrent among the Bosnian diaspora may re-emerge among Syrian or other refugees.

How this study was conducted

Following permission from the Institutional Review Board, I conducted interviews with 54 members of the Bosnian diaspora over the course of several months in early 2014. The interviews were conducted in St. Louis, MO; Chicago, IL; and Utica, NY. All respondents were over the age of 35 at the time of the interview, a criterion I set to ensure that they were relatively

mature when the conflict occurred (i.e. they were 15 or older in 1992.) The tables below

illustrate specific sociodemographic data about the respondents in all three localities.

Table 2. Number of respondents interviewed, by gender.

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
St. LOUIS	5	15	20
CHICAGO	9	10	19
UTICA	14	1	15
TOTAL	**28**	**26**	**54**

Table 3. Number of respondents interviewed, by geographic (regional) origin.

	HOMETOWNS OF RESPONDENTS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
NORTHWEST	Prijedor, Velika Kladuša	21
CENTRAL	Sarajevo & suburbs	12
EASTERN	Zvornik, Srebrenica	11
OTHER	Bosanski Brod, Banja Luka, Teslić	10
TOTAL		**54**

Table 4. Number of respondents interviewed, by urban/rural origin.

	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
VERY URBAN	19
SEMI-URBAN/SEMI-RURAL	29
RURAL	6
TOTAL	**54**

Ethnically, 40 of the 54 respondents explicitly defined themselves as Bosnian Muslim/Bosniak, 2 as Bosnian Croat, and 2 as being of mixed ethnic heritage. The others did not express an ethnic identification. No one in my sample explicitly identified as Bosnian Serb (though some may indeed have been able to claim such an identity); additional respondents may also have been able to claim a Bosnian Croat identity. The sample of respondents also includes a mix of education level attained. A small majority had completed primary education. Of the remainder, 8 respondents had a university degree, while the others had completed high school or a technical degree.

St. Louis, Chicago and Utica were chosen as interview sites because while they all have significant populations of Bosnian diaspora, they are at the same time quite distinct communities. As already mentioned, St. Louis has arguably the largest population of Bosnians in the United States, yet there were very few if no Bosnians in St. Louis prior to the war; in other words, it is almost entirely a post-war, refugee and Muslim population. Chicago also has a large Bosnian diaspora population, but it is more multiethnic than St. Louis'; Chicago is also unique due to the existence of a prior (pre-war), albeit small, Bosnian diaspora as well as historic Croatian and Serbian communities. Finally, Utica was chosen as a site as it is exemplary of the typical Bosnian diaspora community in the United States. It is a small community (numbering at about 8,000) that has made an impact on its host town through the establishment of small businesses and cultural organizations. It also has a large western Bosnia contingent in the population, a complicated internal fault line during the conflict that will be discussed later in this study.

Respondents were selected using snowball sampling techniques. Initial respondents were selected through the researcher's own contacts, who also often served as key informants, identifying other potential respondents, with the emphasis that natives of Bosnia that self-

identify in diverse ways are highly desired. In other words, there was an effort to select individuals based on being native to Bosnia rather than through an ascription of Bosnian *identity*.

The reasons for this approach are both practical and theoretical. First, given the level of ethnicized violence that occurred in Bosnia, self-identification and particularly national self-identification has become a controversial and politicized question. Since the population of Bosnian natives in the United States is somewhat ethnically diverse, I wanted to heed Brubaker and Cooper's (2000) warning to be careful not to ascribe identity to individuals by virtue of ancestry and instead empirically study individuals' self-identification. Practically, this meant that during interviews, I thought it was critical to communicate that I did not presume that my respondents self-identified as 'Bosnian.' Instead, I asked them how they would self-identify, and not only provided a range of options (Bosnian, Bosniak[3], Bosnian Muslim, Bosnian Serb, Bosnian Croat, Serb, Croat, Yugoslav, Bosnian-American, American, Other, etc.) but also emphasized that a respondent could self-identify as something completely different or choose not to self-identify at all. For this dissertation, this framing means that while I use the terminology 'members of the Bosnian diaspora' throughout, its usage does not presuppose that respondents identify in this way; it is simply a method of ascribing geographic origins.

Second, the goal of trying to recruit individuals that self-identify in diverse ways was to be able to contrast how different experiences in the conflict and in displacement may have influenced the development of diverse identities. To diversify the sample therefore, in every community where I planned on conducting interviews, I asked key informants to identify potential respondents that didn't fit the profile of the majority of the Bosnian diaspora (i.e. Bosnian Muslim.) I contacted the individuals whose names I was given, and also called, left

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[3] Bosniak is a common substitute for Bosnian Muslim.

voicemails, and sent email messages to Serbian and Croatian churches and cultural centers sharing information about my research and asking for their assistance in identifying potential respondents. As a result of these efforts my sample does include some diversity of identification, though it is not along the lines anticipated. For example, a significant number insisted on self-identifying as 'Bosniak' as opposed to 'Bosnian,' while a few others used other terms, such as 'Bosnian American' or 'Yugoslav.' And even though my sample includes several non-Muslims, no respondent self-identified as Serb or Croat, though one respondent did reject an association to the Balkans entirely and said he considered himself American. In Chicago in particular, I contacted several Bosnian natives who I had been told referred to themselves 'Croats,' but repeated voicemails went unreturned. A Croatian church in Chicago told me that none of their members were born in Bosnia, which is somewhat difficult to believe. Finally, some were openly antagonistic to my efforts to recruit them. My key informant in St. Louis reached out to an American friend who attends the Serbian Holy Trinity Church there. The American friend asked Fr. Ljubomir, the priest – and who is from Bosnia's capital Sarajevo himself – if he or someone in his congregation would be willing to participate in my study. In response, Fr. Ljubomir wrote:

> "…honestly I don't think that any of our people would be interested to be interviewed by some Muslim lady. With all due respect to the lady. She has plenty of Muslims in St. Louis to work with.
>
> God bless
> Fr. Ljubomir"

All of the interviews were conducted face-to-face by me, speaking in Bosnian. In most cases I interviewed respondents at their home, where I was also able to interact with other members of their family and gain a more in-depth understanding of their social situation. As my own life and identity as a member of the Bosnian diaspora in the United States informed and influenced the direction of this study, I consciously addressed this issue at the beginning of each

interview. Some of my personal background was obvious to the respondents from my name and the fact that I was communicating in Bosnian. Abell, Locke et al (2006) argue that self-disclosure by the interviewer may build rapport between interviewer and respondent and minimize power inequalities. Indeed, the fact that we came from the same country, spoke the same language and shared in the experience of living outside the homeland created a proximity and trust that was extremely important in being able to access respondents' often emotional recollections of their experiences in conflict and displacement. To avoid presumptions about my own views and bias about the research question based on an ascribed identity however, in place of providing personal background information – or as minimally as possible – I emphasized my academic research role and interests.

The interviews were audiotaped, except for a few cases where the respondent expressed a wish otherwise due to information about the extent of their participation in the conflict. In these instances I took handwritten notes during the interview as well as 'notes to self' immediately following the interview in order to record particular impressions. I transcribed and translated the audiotaped interviews as soon as possible after each interview. I then began cataloguing parts of my notes and the interview transcripts for the themes at the heart of this study: the way respondents talked about their experiences in the conflict, violence, displacement, and finally, their identity in the present. A standard set of interview questions guided every interview I conducted; they are enclosed in appendix A. However, the interviews were semi-structured, meaning that in many cases I asked a respondent additional or follow-up questions if the conversation suggested they may reveal helpful details.

Chapter Four: Violence, Trauma, and Displacement in Place

Introduction

> The full scale war that has been raging in Bosnia-Hercegovina since early April has been marked by extreme violations of international humanitarian law, also known as the laws of war. Indeed, violations of the rules of war are being committed with increasing frequency and brutality throughout the country. The extent of the violence inflicted on the civilian population by all parties is appalling. Mistreatment in detention, the taking of hostages and the pillaging of civilian property is widespread throughout Bosnia-Hercegovina. The most basic safeguards intended to protect civilians and medical establishments have been flagrantly ignored. The indiscriminate use of force by Serbian troops has caused excessive collateral damage and loss of civilian life. A policy of 'ethnic cleansing' has resulted in the summary execution, disappearance, arbitrary detention, deportation and forcible displacement of hundreds of thousands of people on the basis of their religion or nationality. In sum, the extent of the violence raises the question of whether genocide is taking place (Nizich, 1992, p.1).

Representatives from Helsinki Watch, a division of the organization Human Rights Watch, traveled to Bosnia in March-April and May-June 1992 in order to investigate violations of human rights.[4] Their report, with its introduction cited above, was published only five months into an intense conflict that would rage for another three years. Having witnessed the suffering

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[4] Ivana Nizich authored the Helsinki Watch reports on human rights violations in Bosnia, but in her role at Human Rights Watch she also investigated violations in Croatia, Kosovo and Serbia. She later worked in the Office of the Prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. She is currently a trial attorney in the Criminal Division of the US Department of Justice, where she has prosecuted several war crimes cases against individuals from the Balkans who resettled in the United States.

on the ground and with the horrific nature of what was happening being clear to them, the

authors did not hold anything back in their recommendation to the United Nations (UN) Security

Council:

> Helsinki Watch calls on the Security Council of the United Nations to exercise its
> authority under the 1951 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of
> Genocide to intervene in Bosnia-Hercegovina to prevent and suppress genocide (Nizich,
> 1992, p.1.)

As is now well-known, the international community's response to what was occurring in

Bosnia and to appeals such as the above was to remain noncommittal. In Gow's (1997) view

"bad timing, bad judgment, an absence of unity and, underpinning everything else, the lack of

political will" were a combination that constituted "the essential characteristics of diplomatic

dereliction" (p. 2). For Bosnia's defenders, the implications of that dereliction were catastrophic,

as European governments (and later US President Clinton, reversing his previous stance) refused

to lift the 1991 UN arms embargo against Bosnian Muslims and Croats. This essentially tipped

the weaponry balance in favor of the *Vojska Republike Srpske* (Army of the Republika Srpska),

or VRS, for the duration of the conflict, as they had inherited weapons stockpiles from the

Yugoslav National Army. The policy facilitated a relentless assault on the country and its

citizens by preventing the Bosnians from effectively fighting back. In April 1993, Helsinki

Watch issued an updated report. The list of 'patterns of abuse' in the table of contents reads like

a nightmare: summary executions; abuse in detention; rape; mutilation; hostage-holding; forced

displacement; pillage and destruction of villages and cultural objects; the list goes on (Nizich

1993.) But there was more than just inaction by the international community – they also actively

participated in the country's destruction. As Hoare (2007) documents, throughout the conflict

representatives and mediators from the UN and the European Union (EU) pressured the Bosnian government to accept a partition of the country, and attempted to diminish the suffering of its people on the international stage. Though Hoare is particularly critical of Britain, France and the UN, he accuses the broader international community of "collusion" in Bosnia's dismemberment, because: "The international community's policy consisted at all times of preventing a Serbian defeat while negotiating a compromise solution that would permit Serb forces to retain control over large areas of Bosnia-Hercegovina and Croatia" (p. 376).

The conflict left no one in Bosnia unscathed; it impacted every citizen in some way, directly or indirectly. Wherever one's life was going when the conflict began, whatever one's personal or professional hopes and goals were – all that was replaced by purely survivalist concerns. Will I get shot if I go outside? Where is my brother and is he still alive? How will we survive the winter without heat or electricity? What will I feed my children if there is nothing to eat? These were basic and realist questions about life and death, perhaps common in every conflict, that reflect the essential 'security dilemma' as conceptualized by Posen (1993) when one must suddenly think about their own security and protection and what to do about potential threats.

What made the Bosnian and the other Yugoslav conflicts so riveting to scholars of ethnicity and nationalism however was how ethnicized and violent they became, given that, as Gagnon (2004) writes, "indicators on the ground, within specific communities, showed no signs of inevitable violence" (p. xiv.) He and other scholars have pushed back on the explanation of the conflict as the product of 'ancient ethnic hatreds' which was promulgated widely among Western journalists, academic and policymakers, instead studying the process of ethnicization

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much more critically in order to explain what occurred and why. For Gagnon, violence along ethnic lines was a policy pursued by certain Yugoslav elites towards a specific goal:

> To motivate someone, it is necessary to tap into relationships, into relational senses of identity and self, or into environmental factors that do so. The violence of ethnic conflicts is thus not meant to mobilize people by appealing to ethnicity – that is, it does not tap into these relational processes. Rather, its goal is to fundamentally alter or destroy these social realities. Indeed, given the rootedness of such realities in peoples' everyday lives, the only way to destroy them and to impose homogeneity onto existing, heterogeneous social spaces is through massive violence (p. 8.)

Home is an omnipresent theme in this study for the very reason that the sheer violence and brutality of this ethnicized conflict came to Bosnians' homes in a variety of ways and impacted these social realities. In towns and villages throughout the country, as if overnight, neighbors ceased to be neighbors and became perpetrators of war crimes. This deterioration of social relations in ethnically mixed communities is seen in the documentary "We are all neighbours" (1993) by anthropologist Tone Bringa, illustrating the development of mistrust and fear among individuals previously peacefully sharing space and place in a conflict imposed from outside. The safety and security of homes were transgressed as VRS militia and police forcibly entered and arrested 'suspects' or committed other heinous crimes while family members had no choice but to stand aside. Buildings and cultural symbols associated with a particular ethnic group were severely shelled and damaged, and homes themselves were set ablaze, many burned down to just the foundations. Home, or whatever was left of it, is what Bosnian refugees left behind, as they fled from an anticipated attack or were expelled and forced to hand over keys and sign over ownership of their property. And this home – marked by all those events and experiences – is what once the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed, European policymakers framed their discourse around as they initiated programs of repatriation for the hundreds of thousands of refugees that had sought shelter in their countries.

One of the most destructive aspects of violence, scholars argue, is the nature and longevity of its effects. Bergholz (2016) argues that violence is a 'generative force,' which has "forged new communities, new forms and configurations of power, and new practices of nationalism" (p.6). Rather than ethnicity generating violence, violence is the generating force of ethnicity, creating new perceptions "of oneself, of supposed 'brothers,' and those perceived as 'others'" (p.6). Similarly, Bar-Tal (2002) argues that conflicts that include physical violence heighten the emotional involvement of all involved in the conflict, contributing to the formation, dissemination and maintenance of beliefs about the causes of the conflict, the de-legitimacy of the opponent, the victimization of one's own group and patriotism. All of these may become 'enduring products' in culture and ultimately, one's personal repertoire. In all of this, Finney (2002) points out, memory and identity are

> intertwined: 'the core meaning of any individual or group identity, namely a sense of sameness over time and space, is sustained by remembering, and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity'. Yet, these processes are complex, since neither memory nor identity can be regarded as natural facts; rather, they are social processes and political constructs: 'highly selective, inscriptive rather than descriptive, serving particular interests and ideological positions.' (p. 5.)

To better understand how the experiences of conflict, violence and displacement – and the trauma they engender as they upend individuals' social lived realities – are formative shapers of diaspora members' identity and conceptualizations of home, there must be a deeper appreciation of these experiences. In this chapter, I depict how conflict and violence came to the places my respondents lived, and how these events impacted the sense of home that has been connected to these places. I describe these processes in four different places in Bosnia, focusing on those where a large number of my respondents are from: Sarajevo, Velika Kladuša, Prijedor and Srebrenica. I narrate what respondents told me their lives were like in these places before the

conflict, how the conflict arrived, and the specificities of the way it unfolded there, with impacts

on their family, their community, and their memories of home as a shared, multiethnic space.

One reason I take this place-based approach in recounting how Bosnian members of the

diaspora encountered the violence and displacement of the conflict is to communicate the

differentiated lived experiences of the conflict through one possible prism. While there is a broad

collective experience of war-related violence, trauma and displacement in the Bosnian diaspora,

there are also important place-based disparities in those experiences. For example, some places

undoubtedly stand out for the intense death and suffering that occurred there. There are also

places where the 'enemy' was a much more complicated notion than the lines drawn in the

broader war in the country. Examining these distinctions provides a fuller, more nuanced account

of how the conflict transpired across different parts of Bosnia and what the people living there

sustained. Furthermore, as illustrated by Hariz Halilovich's *Places of Pain* (2013), there may be

a tendency among Bosnian diasporic communities to converge around the place they left behind

– a 'translocalism' – as opposed to converging around fixed ethno-national lines. Finally, I take a

place-based approach to depicting the conflict, violence and displacement that occurred in order

to emphasize that these events breached what my respondents called home. The breach was not

just of a home defined by a physical place, but all the feelings, relationships and memories that it

encompasses, in the sense of Fullilove (1996), who writes: "'home' represents the accumulation

of many relationships and much history" (p. 1519.)

Sarajevo

As the capital of Bosnia and the seat of the republic's government, Sarajevo was an

obvious target. But the city also held a special significance that made it even more tempting for

the broader Serb nationalist project in the country. More than any other place in Bosnia, Sarajevo

was the embodiment of the country's multicultural past and traditions, a mixture of religions, peoples and influences that developed under centuries of rule by the Ottoman and then Austro-Hungarian empires. According to a census done in 1991, 50% of the city's population of approximately 360,000 identified as Bosnian Muslim, 25% as Serb, 13% as Yugoslav, 7% as Croat and 4% as other (Bosnia and Herzegovina Census, 1991.) Furthermore, while the rate of interethnic marriage was about the same as in the other republics of the former Yugoslavia and remained relatively stable over several decades, data suggests that Bosnian Muslims in Sarajevo in particular were more open to interethnic marriage (Botev, 1994, p. 475). In *Sarajevo: A Biography* (2006), the historian Robert Donia underlines that what existed in Sarajevo was not just multi-ethnic or multi-cultural, but a 'common life': "Common life is neighborliness writ large. It embodies those values, experiences, institutions, and aspirations shared by Sarajevo's people of different identities, and it has been treasured by most Sarajevans since the city's founding" (p. 4).

The demographics of the respondents from Sarajevo that I interviewed very much reflect the ethnic diversity for which the city has historically been known. Half of my 8 respondents from Sarajevo were non-Muslims, two were married to a Bosnian of a different ethnicity, while another two were married to non-Bosnians. All of them emphatically echoed Donia's views about the special spirit of the city, perceiving it as the cultural center of Bosnia, more urbanized and civilized than the more rural rest of the republic.[5] It is one of the aspects that made them more comfortable there than anywhere else. DD left her birthplace of Livno for Sarajevo when it was time to attend college:

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[5] Gagnon (2004) notes that this sense of superiority of Sarajevo persisted after the war as well, as refugees from rural regions flooded the city and Sarajevans bitterly complained about the city's destruction by these 'hicks' (p. 4.)

I personally had a good life there [Livno.] Still, there weren't some opportunities – not much in terms of culture, no theater, no literary evenings, and so on. Maybe there were some but not to the extent in Sarajevo. What I want to say is that there was a difference between Sarajevo and other towns, not to mention the really small places.

Indeed, all my respondents recalled having very good and happy lives in pre-war Sarajevo. For example, BV told me:

It was not a rich life, but it was a nice life. We all loved that life and we all miss that life. The soul was full, somehow, that's how I would describe it. There was a lot of socializing, a lot of freedom. At least we thought we were free.

For BV and a few other respondents, reminiscing about this pre-war time turned out to be the most emotional part of the interview. Part of that was perhaps due to their, like many other Sarajevans', refusal to believe that war could actually break out in Sarajevo itself, even though political tensions had been building for almost a year beforehand and Serb paramilitary groups had already overrun the eastern town of Bijeljina (Silber and Little, 1997, p. 226). My respondent DD remembers being incredulous that people were abandoning their homes and Sarajevo, but now recognizes it as naivete:

When the war started, in 1992, I was at the top of the world. We'd just had our second child. We had an apartment. I had a job. My husband had a great job. My husband took really good care of me and treated me like a queen. We could go on vacation, to visit friends, go out. I could not believe a war would happen. If I thought it could, I probably would have left earlier. I would sit on my balcony with my child and watch people leave and I thought they were crazy, leaving their homes. There will be no war. Until it started getting bad. If we had been smarter…

Less than ten years after hosting the Winter Olympics in 1984, Sarajevo was unrecognizable. It saw the longest siege of a capital city in modern warfare, the suffering of its citizens splayed daily on televisions and newspapers across the world.

The attacks on Sarajevo – and many other places in Bosnia – were intended to destroy all aspects of normal life. The VRS first ethnically cleansed the city's suburbs by murdering, imprisoning or expelling non-Serbs. Having gained control of the perimeter, they then tormented

the city's center in relentless shelling by tank, artillery and mortar fire from the surrounding hills. Common targets included the hospital, the radio and television center, mosques, any institution associated with common life in the city or Bosnia's cultural history, and civilians themselves – in a bread line, on a tram, while burying a loved one that had already perished. Residents were forced to shelter underground for long periods of time; but as DD told me, even in basements the traditions of common life persisted:

> Part of the war that we spent in Bosnia, we spent without my husband, in the basement. I am so thankful for our neighbors, they were so lovely and helped take care of us. When I would go out for water, they would take care of the kids. But most of the time we spent hidden, and saw all sorts of things. A person doesn't even want to talk about that. We went out sometimes, when it was summer we would take the kids out into the sun, even though, you know, it wasn't exactly clean or anything out there.

Death was always around the corner. If it didn't come from a shell or a sniper, it came from deprivation from the essential resources for life. Sarajevans faced persistent shortages of food, water and gas for heat. BV sums up his experience in the war in two words:

> Sad and hungry […] that was 3 years of the war for us. We were foraging, going out to fields, digging up roots to eat. We didn't have any cooking oil, maybe an ounce for an entire month. We didn't eat meat or eggs for months. We ate yeast for breakfast.

SD, a respondent in Utica who held a senior position in the force defending Sarajevo, returned home to his apartment one day to find his wife crying:

> She said our son […] had not been home all day. He had such a personality; he was very lively, always running around, near UNPROFOR and so on. I waited a bit and he still wasn't there. I went down to look for him. By the time I came back, he had returned, and they were both crying. I asked him where he had been. He said he was out on a field in front of a tall building, just nearby. Doing what, I asked? He said there was a man there, selling bananas, and he was watching him. I asked him why he didn't come home to go and buy some. He said 'I knew you didn't have the money.'

> Beyond food and water, the siege put a severe strain on medical supplies and facilities

across the city, often resulting in death for those already vulnerable and the elderly. BV told me that both his in-laws died from "stupid things," and that they would have lived longer if access to

a hospital or treatment for an infection had been possible. SH, now living in Chicago, was on a medical evacuation list from the beginning of the war due to her son's rare liver condition. They went to the airport and had to turn back around seven times before finally being able to board a Doctors without Borders plane on their eighth attempt, a year and a half later. Their personal story of escaping the siege was covered by ABC News in the United States. Unfortunately, the conflict had done its part in delaying treatment; SH's son passed away not long after arriving in the United States.

For many, the pressure of living under siege just became too much and they began looking for any way to get themselves or a loved one out of Sarajevo. BV had been a car mechanic before the war but once the conflict began he fought in the Bosnian army, rotating between the frontline and home every couple of days. Though he had sponsors outside the country who could have helped him leave earlier, BV said that he and his family had been adamant to stay because as non-Muslims they were committed to preserving what made Sarajevo 'home' for them: its, and Bosnia's, diverse character. But they buckled under the immense stress, and in February 1995 – in the last year of the war – they agreed that he would escape from the army, as there was no other way out. While he was out in the field, his wife and kids managed to join a convoy to Croatia. He joined them two months later.

> For 2 months I tried to escape, I made 8 efforts, and my eighth was successful. […] Maybe I shouldn't say that, but I ended up paying Bosnia's regular police, because they were the only ones able to control that stuff. We traveled over Igman to get to Kiseljak and there I found people willing to create Croat papers for me. I used those papers to get a ticket to Osijek. I lost about 30 pounds in those 2 months thanks to stress. I think I weighed 55 kilos when I got to Osijek, I looked like I came from Africa. There were other things too…all the kids were jaundiced, including mine. They kept saying the kids need to eat healthy, but there's nothing to eat. To get medicine, it was 20 marks, and we had no money…yet I was in the army. What were we fighting for, you start to ask yourself.

Others that sought to leave Sarajevo had simply finally given in as the ethnicization of the conflict could not but strain inter-ethnic relations of its residents to some extent. SD recounted what happened in the unit of city defenders that he commanded in his neighborhood:

> Let me tell you this. 20% of my unit was Orthodox. At some point some of my soldiers threw a bomb on a Serb house, and the sons from that house were both on the front. So there were excesses, on the side of the army of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well, but those excesses tended to be at moments when someone is killed. […] The father came to me, and asked to speak to me. I told him that I didn't know what I could do – I could not have the unit protect individual houses. He asked me if he could leave, because he thought he would lose his life there. So, he picked up his family and left for the other side, even though he didn't want to.

Velika Kladuša

Located in far northwestern Bosnia on the border with Croatia, the municipality of Velika Kladuša was during the conflict the seat of the self-declared 'Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia.' The movement was led by Fikret Abdić, a politician and businessman who had risen to prominence in the 1980s by turning his company Agrokomerc into one of the largest in the Yugoslav federation and bringing relative wealth to a formerly poor peasant area. Abdić's company provided employment and livelihoods to thousands in the region, adorning him with cult status – his followers affectionately called him "Babo" (Daddy.) In the 1990 elections in Bosnia, Abdić ran for president and was elected alongside his future rival Alija Izetbegović as one of the two Bosniak members of the presidency. Members of the presidency then elected a president of the presidency who acted as its head, and though Abdić received more votes than Izetbegović, he didn't assume office. The already evident differences between Abdić and Izetbegović erupted in 1993, when Abdić challenged the central Bosnian government by announcing his mini-state and terminating ties with Sarajevo. The brigades that deserted the Fifth

Corps[6] of the Bosnian army were from Velika Kladuša and nearby Cazin, composed of workers at Agrokomerc and their children (Christia 2008.) To the supporters of the central Bosnian government, Abdić and his followers were traitors – at a time when massive atrocities were being carried out against their fellow Bosnian Muslims in other areas of Bosnia, Abdić's forces were not only fighting against the Bosnian army, but also cooperating with Serb and Croat forces. The region around Velika Kladuša changed hands several times during the conflict, as the central Bosnian government tried to regain control. And though fighting between Bosnian Muslims and the VRS certainly occurred in and around Velika Kladuša, most of the fighting was due to the internal Bosnian Muslim conflict, which resulted in almost twice the number of battleground deaths as the conflict with Serbs in the area (Christia 2008.)

For the inhabitants of the region around Velika Kladuša, the implications of Abdić's politics and the internal battle he was fighting with the central Bosnian government were threefold. First, they found themselves in a war within a war, adding a layer of complexity to the definition of who the enemy was in more traditional understandings of the Bosnian conflict. As Ramet (2002) writes, "the war eventually became a four-sided conflict, with Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, Bosnian forces loyal to the elected government of Alija Izetbegović, and forces loyal to Fikret Abdić, […], variously fighting or collaborating with each other" (p. 573-574). And as much as Abdić was beloved by the local population for the economic progress his business had brought, 4 out of my 8 respondents from the region indicated that participation in his army was not a matter of conviction but rather necessity. As ZS told me, "it's difficult to explain that to someone 50km away who is not in your situation." That 'situation' was that not

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[6] The Fifth Corps was one of seven corps in the Bosnian army. Its role was to protect the Bihać pocket from surrounding forces of the VRS. Once Abdić declared his mini-state, the Fifth Corps also had to fight the secessionist forces loyal to him.

choosing sides was not an option for inhabitants who wanted to remain where their home was. As SK told me of her husband's joining Abdić's forces, "but you know you cannot go against where you live, it was just like that. But he wouldn't have gone if he hadn't had to."

At the outset of the war, before the creation of Abdić's separatist army, several of my respondents' husbands fought the VRS as members of the Bosnian government army. The husband of my respondent IM was even captured by the VRS and imprisoned for three years. However, the shift to Abdić's army, whether that was because of necessity or actual conviction, meant that the primary enemy became the Bosnian government army. Consequently, when the government army began an offensive on the region in an effort to reassert control, the husband of my respondent VL went into hiding. She was pregnant at the time, and ended up giving birth to the couple's youngest child while he was still in hiding. The Bosnian government army eventually tracked him down and he was imprisoned for five months. Upon his release and return home, he was expected to rejoin Abdić's forces; when he tried to evade, he was imprisoned for another two months. "Twice by his own people…such was the war, such was the army," VL said, in summing up the complexities of the internal conflict. Other than one mention by my respondent IM of her father-in-law being beaten by Bosnian government forces when they entered their house one night, none of my other respondents from the area of Velika Kladuša mentioned such abuse or torture of their family members at the hands of government soldiers. However, Coughlan (2006) documents the existence of some such practices through his own interviews with refugees from the region around Velika Kladuša, experiences which he finds impact the feelings one has towards Bosnia as well as the Bosnian community in the United States. Such stories do not fit into the general narrative about what occurred in Bosnia, meaning the larger Bosnian Muslim/Serb/Croat conflict. Outside of the region around Velika Kladuša or

beyond diasporic communities of individuals from there, their particular experiences – their particular narrative – are also generally rejected. The claims and rationales of people such as my respondents caught 'in the middle,' as it were, are dismissed as self-serving and unpatriotic. The dissonance between the experiences of the people of the region around Velika Kladuša and the rest of Bosnia thus raises the question of whether and how the dissonance is manifested in the feelings one has towards Bosnia and conceptualizations of 'home.' This is an issue I will return to in chapter five.

A second reality of the particularities of the violence around Velika Kladuša was how personal the internal conflict became. As much support as there was for Abdić, it was not unanimous, and the divisions permeated within homes and families. This meant that in some cases – "and there were such cases, many cases," as my respondent AH told me, relatives fought on opposing sides of the conflict and inflicted violence on each other. For example, ZS told me that her husband and his brother were on opposite sides, and were even injured around the same time. Despite what happened in the war, there is no conflict between the two brothers today, though not all stories have as good of an ending. For example, my respondent SK told me that her own husband was with Abdić's forces while her sister's husband was a soldier in the Bosnian government army. Her husband survived, but her sister's husband was killed. The internal conflict and violence was unsurprisingly the most difficult for SK to deal with:

> People shooting at one another, you don't know anymore. And that had a big effect more than anything else, that worrying, stress, that family and relatives started to hate one another – some went to one side while some went to the other. And they're battling against each other. One side of the hill is the Fifth Corps, on the other the Autonomous Army. And you don't know who is going to kill who. So there is a lot of stress and lack of sleep about that.

A third reality of the internal conflict in the region of Velika Kladuša was that regardless of the reasons its people took the side they did during the conflict, they also became displaced

and suffered related hardships. Inhabitants fled the incoming Bosnian government army twice, once in August 1994 and then in May 1995 again, after they had barely been back in their homes less than a year. And in fleeing, they left behind homes, property and livestock hurriedly, not knowing if and when they would be able to come back and what the condition of those possessions would be upon return. Returning to the story of my respondent VL, the attempt by the Bosnian government to take back Velika Kladuša spurred the town's population to flee across the border to Croatia. With her husband already imprisoned by Bosnian government forces, VL fled with a newborn and two other children:

> The first time we had to run, my child was not even 40 days old. 30,000 people ran from that area, leaving behind farms, livestock, hens. When they came back, everything was empty. You could come back and lay down on the concrete floor. I didn't have anything to change my child into. And not to mention giving him something to eat.

Coughlan (2006) estimates that by the time the Bosnian government army defeated Abdić's forces in August 1995, about 27,000 of his supporters were expelled from northwest Bosnia. And the places they were going to, for the most part refugee camps in Croatia, were no cleaner, less crowded or miserable than a Bosnian refugee camp anywhere else. My respondent AH told me that after their escape in August 1995, he and his family spent the whole winter in the Kupljensko camp across the border, trying to stay warm and find something to eat for the two children:

> It was just tents, by the side of the road. When we got there, some people grabbed houses or garages or whatever was empty, and 5 or 6 families would settle there. Everybody was trying to figure something out for themselves.

Prijedor

Before the war, Prijedor was one of the municipalities in Bosnia that due to significant urbanization was quite mixed ethnically (Toal and Dahlman, 2011, p. 73). Its population of

112,000 was about evenly divided between Serbs and Muslims, with a smaller population of

Croats and others, living with each other in good inter communal relations (Hoare, 2007, p. 357.)

By the end of the war however, only a couple of thousand Muslims and a couple of thousand

Croats remained. As an OSCE human rights officer assigned to the Prijedor region concludes,

"this means that approximately 50,000 persons were expelled from the municipality and a few

thousands more had been killed" (Moratti, 2004).

Indeed, data from the Sarajevo-based Research and Documentation Center indicates that

Prijedor had among one of the highest concentrations of deaths in the country (Toal and

Dahlman, 2011, p. 136). Civilians were killed in armed attacks and heavy shelling, such as

occurred in the predominantly Muslim village of Kozarac, which was completely leveled and

hundreds of civilians executed.[7] Non-Serbs in and around Prijedor that survived were forced to

sign papers handing over their property and all belongings. Thousands, mostly men separated

from their families but also some women and children, were then taken to camps at Omarska,

Keraterm and Trnopolje, which the VRS initially tried to claim were "collection centers" for

refugees. The reality of what was happening inside these camps was gruesome, however. Some

of the most haunting images from the entire Bosnian conflict are of the camps' detainees when

reporters Ed Vullliamy and Roy Gutman confirmed the camps' long-rumored existence in

August 1992. In all three camps but particularly at Omarska and Keraterm, "victims were killed,

tortured and raped in a manner calculated totally to divide the Serbs and Muslims for all time"

(Hoare, 2007, p. 357).

St. Louis has one of the largest populations of refugees from Prijedor, and it was there

that I met AB, who was married and living in Kozarac with the couple's two children when the

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[7] Sebina Sevic-Bryant's 2016 book *Re-Making Kozarac* focuses on the destruction that occurred in this town specifically and its re-establishment through a repatriation of its displaced residents.

war broke out. She had studied in Sarajevo and moved back to Kozarac to work at a veterinary clinic. They had a 'normal' life in which interethnic mixing and togetherness was part of one's everyday existence.

> It was part of my life. And that was one thing I had a big issue after. People were trying to tell us that we have to live a multicultural life and I would try to tell them – you will never live a multicultural life the way I lived it before the war. Because…people here live next to each other. There we lived with each other. And that was the difference. And really, it was. Like I said, I know the customs, I know what to say, what to do, what to cook, I know how to serve…and that doesn't mean we were trying to be somebody else. We had very strong family rules and traditions that we held on to while really participating in someone else's traditions.

The VRS took control of Prijedor on the night of 29 April 1992; the takeover was quick, as it had been planned for months in advance (Cigar, 1995, p. 48). In the weeks that followed, AB and her family watched as all the property they owned was physically destroyed or taken from them. Her father's home was burned very quickly after the conflict began; her own home was gutted in the attack on Kozarac: "just walls are left." Her mother was forced to sign over an apartment in Prijedor. The family was then separated: AB and her two children were taken to the camp at Trnopolje, while her husband was taken to the camp at Keraterm, then Omarska, and then finally to Manjača, where the VRS was transferring prisoners as the revelation of the other camps' existence forced their shutdown. After weeks in the Trnopolje camp, AB and her children were put on a bus and driven, along with others, to a point called Korićanske Stijene on the mountain of Vlašić. Now refugees, they were dropped off and made to walk through no man's land between the two front lines to reach Travnik, which was under the control of the Bosnian army. The VRS sent multiple convoys like this to Vlašić over those few months. The reporter Ed Vulliamy decided to join one of the convoys and make with them the journey through what he referred to as "the back door" from Prijedor:

> As it turned out, every camp survivor, every bereaved widow or mother, every terrified child expelled, would come to know that road – it was the artery, the mountain highway of 'ethnic cleansing' from the Prijedor region […] And to have known and survived that road would be a badge of survival for those who made it alive from around Prijedor – the road, and its horrors, became like a tattoo of belonging to life after Omarska and Trnopolje (2012, p. 12).

AB and her children made it to Travnik, from where they went to Croatia, and then Germany. Her husband joined them 6 months later with the help of the Red Cross. Both AB and her husband served as witnesses at the War Crimes Tribunal at The Hague; she preferred to keep the details of that portion of her experience private.

In Chicago I met MK, also from Kozarac. Like AB above, she recalls a happy life before the war. It was home: she knew and trusted the people around her; she felt safe. That began to change in the fall of 1991, as soon as she started her last year of school. There was intense pressure and discrimination:

> My best friend was Željka. But the school year started in September and by October it was already an issue. However, right before the war, they knew who we were, [names.] And the media was talking. Then things started in Sarajevo, and the watches started. The bags are packed, there is shooting there, they are setting things on fire, killing. So the pressure from that as well as what was happening in school was mentally impossible. If someone told me to do it again, for just a month, I couldn't. I couldn't psychologically, physically. It was mental torture. The school year was ending at the end of May but I had stopped going to school during the first week of May. We didn't dare go anymore. They said they would imprison people and my parents said I wasn't going anymore.

Even though going to school had become too dangerous, her family wanted to remain in Kozarac, and was willing to comply with the house checks that the VRS had demanded of non-Serbs. They changed their mind however, when they saw surrounding villages being burned. A local leader led them and other Muslims to retreat into the woods.

> So our whole town went into the woods above, and stayed there for 2 nights. Even though it was May, it was cold. These are rocks, the woods, it's cold. Then they said we need to surrender. We can't hide, there's many of us here. So we got white sheets and came down from the woods. We were met by some of our own, our army. And we all, collectively, ended up in the camp.

MK's entire family – including a sister suffering from cerebral palsy – were taken to the Trnopolje concentration camp. They remained there for 3 weeks – not long, MK says, when one thinks of the people of Sarajevo and the conditions they lived in for much longer periods of time. Nevertheless, she acknowledges that she saw "a lot-dead, injured and all sorts of stuff" in those three weeks. She had two younger sisters who she felt she needed to protect, as the eldest sister. She laughs as she compares herself to women that age now: "They know nothing […] it pushed us to age earlier, to understand things we didn't need to understand."

Srebrenica

Over a few short days in the summer of 1995, 8,372 mostly (Muslim) men and boys were brutally executed in Srebrenica, located in far eastern Bosnia close to the border with Serbia. In 2004, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia unanimously ruled that the massacre constituted genocide, a ruling upheld in 2007 by the International Court of Justice. For Nettelfield and Wagner in their book *Srebrenica in the Aftermath of Genocide* (2014), what happened in Srebrenica was a "culmination" of a Bosnian Serb and Serbian effort to overtake the region and in the process remove non-Serbs. They succeeded, leaving a crime that "overshadowed all other crimes in scale and intensity" (p. 10.) I interviewed several individuals who were in Srebrenica when it was attacked and the genocide occurred. They all witnessed and experienced different aspects of the crime but also suffered from multiple traumatic incidents that are nothing short of horrific.

Take the story of SG, whom I interviewed in Utica, NY. SG is from the eastern Bosnian town of Rogatica, and has been in the US with his wife and two daughters since 2000. Just as the war was beginning in Bosnia in early 1992, he and his pregnant wife were visiting relatives in Srebrenica. During their visit, bus lines were suspended and the Yugoslav National Army took

control of roads and began to block traffic. It became very unsafe to travel, so SG decided that

instead of trying to return to Rogatica, he and his wife would remain in Srebrenica for another

few days. Those few days turned into a few years – indeed, they stayed in Srebrenica until the

end of the war. SG's mother, father and sister remained in Rogatica. When the VRS attacked

their town, SG lost both his father and sister on the same day. His father's remains were found in

2007 by the side of a road. A neighbor tipped of the family, who identified SG's father through

DNA technology and were finally able to give him a proper burial. SG's sister's remains have

not been found yet. In the meantime, in Srebrenica things were only getting worse. As the VRS

forces swept the Muslims from most of eastern Bosnia in a rampage of ethnic cleansing, tens of

thousands of refugees crowded into the communities of Srebrenica, Goražde and Žepa,

particularly as the UN had labeled them 'safe areas.' In Srebrenica it was a very difficult

existence in desperate circumstances, as SG recalls:

> All of the surrounding towns – Zvornik, Vlasenica, small places – they were evacuated
> and those people were in Srebrenica. There were maybe 40 to 50 thousand refugees –
> women, children, people. They named it a safe zone, as in protected by UNPROFOR.
> Humanitarian aid would come every once in a while, but even that, Serbs would take
> what they needed. They let a little food through and other stuff that they had to let
> through, but whatever was good they took, in Bratunac or wherever it was coming from.
> So it was a huge crisis of hunger, hygiene…nonexistent conditions for life. People had
> already started dying.

Nor was the community safe, by any means. As Nettelfield and Wagner write, "the implicit

promise of UN Security Council Resolution 819 declaring Srebrenica a 'safe area' was violated

not just when the enclave fell, but every day from its creation, as Srebrenica's residents lived in

fear and without adequate resources" (2014, p. 15.)

When the infamous attack on Srebrenica began in July 1995, SG's wife and now two

children – one only 8 months old at the time – sought help at the UNPROFOR base in town, as

so many other women and children did. The males, the vast majority of them civilians, attempted

to escape capture and certain death by making their way to Tuzla, which the Bosnian government army controlled. SG recounted to me the details of the group's journey through the forest without missing a single detail – it was obvious that he had retraced that journey countless times in his mind. He spoke of the fear of the men during the night as the Serbs began shelling the group and they were forced to break their single file line, losing track of direction and whom to follow. Some in the group were able to cross a key highway during the night, but many, including him, did not manage to cross and had to remain in hiding in the forest. It is the night he was closest to death and one he will never forget:

> That night in that forest, four of us stayed alive because we were in a tree. Under us, in that circle, they probably killed around 50 people. Not far from us, there was a group of people injured, no one could carry them. Later, when they came across them, they killed them immediately. Whoever they found in the forest, they killed. So the four of us stayed alive because they didn't see us in the tree. But just 20 meters from us, a man that was also hiding in a tree, they saw him and told him to come down – as soon as he did, they killed him. Some people hid in the tall grass, they found and killed them too. They went through the forest with just a few feet between themselves, a frontal attack. So like that they could feel any movement close by. It was night, leaves on the ground, you could hear footsteps. They would tell the person to surrender, saying they wouldn't hurt them. But we were lucky. Under us they passed us on both sides but didn't see us. In the morning, before dawn, we came off the tree. Those people that had been injured and that they had left, you heard them calling during the night, wailing, asking for help, water. But after 2 or 3 in the morning, you couldn't hear anyone's voice anymore.

SG's journey to safety did not end quickly; in fact, he and a few others decided that getting to Tuzla was futile and instead returned back through Srebrenica and headed towards another UN-declared safe area, Žepa. But Žepa fell to the VRS soon after as well, and SG along with several others returned to the villages and forests around Srebrenica seeking refuge and constantly moving around until they finally found safe passage to the area around Tuzla. It was only at that point that SG could begin to look for his wife and children; he had no idea what happened to them after they were separated that first day of the attack on Srebrenica.

The story of MA was also very graphic. Born in Srebrenica, she was injured during VRS shelling of the town. Doctors were able to remove only part of the shell from her back. Though MA still suffers from pain in her spine, she has for the most part physically recovered from the injury. Her emotional recovery however has been much harder. MA has had significant personal problems since moving to the United States; her husband, an alcoholic, was deported after he killed another Bosnian in a bar fight, leaving her alone with two young sons. She has also had trouble paying bills – at one point the utility company switched off their electricity. Despite these weighty issues, MA told me that her emotional troubles mostly stem from her experience during the war: "I have seen them murder. So even though I try to have a nice life, you have that with you. You always have that picture. That's why I don't even like talking about it." Several of MA's relatives were killed in Srebrenica, but most painfully, also her father. A civilian, her father was separated by the Serbs from MA, her sister and her mother, and then executed. MA does not know the exact details of her father's death, but it has left her in constant fear.

> MA: […] Now how his death was, I don't know. Normally you try to relax, but you always have that fear. That's the worst.
>
> AK: You have fear now?
>
> MA: For it not to repeat here, for someone to kill my child. Nonstop questions. It is not great anywhere. You constantly hear about how this person was killed or that person was killed. That's how it is in Bosnia now too. And everywhere. You just turn on the news and you hear about how someone killed someone, raped someone, kidnapped a child, always something. So when you think about it, it's worse than war. So I am in fear all the time.
>
> AK: And how do your sons deal with the fear you have?
>
> MA: They don't understand it yet. They are like kids.

Home no longer

This chapter frames violence as a powerful force whose effects endure in people's memories and in the images that they form of people, places and events. The experiences of my respondents are not meant to be a comprehensive review of what happened in the conflict. Nor are they just stories about people and what they suffered. Instead, they catalogue the breakdown of society and life as my respondents knew it in different places in Bosnia, each one with its own particularities. And for the individuals that saw and experienced this breakdown, the cumulative effects of fear of death from a sniper or shell, the mounting human losses, torture in a concentration camp, hunger and deprivation, and erosion of all forms of social and civil society have altered how they see and remember their home and homeland.

This loss of home as a consequence of conflict and violence is accentuated by respondents in a variety of ways. For some, the association with death in physical space permanently changed the perception of their physical home, as DD from Sarajevo described in recalling how her husband reacted to her suggestion that they return to Sarajevo: "When we had spoken once before and I talked about returning, he sent me a photo with a cemetery in front of our building, and asked if that was where I wanted to return, if I wanted to bring my kids back there." For other respondents, particularly individuals of mixed ethnic heritage or who are in mixed marriages, the mistrust that the conflict generated among different ethnicities created a social discomfort that didn't used to exist before the war, and that became too difficult to live with on a daily basis. My respondent BV described this sense of no longer feeling at home in Bosnia because of the ethnicization of all social relations as a loss of 'Bosnian' identity:

> My whole life I expected to be Bosnian, but then I saw that I will never be that. There are no Bosnians in Bosnia, as you know. They belong in the same category as Chinese in Bosnia, according to the census.

The sense of loss of home is particularly acute among respondents who prior to the war lived in communities that were ethnically cleansed of non-Serbs during the conflict and that now

fall within the boundaries of Bosnia's entity *Republika Srpska*. Not only have many had their physical homes and property utterly destroyed, but the places they used to call home have been transformed into others' ethnic homelands through the re-naming of streets and schools for example, as well as the marking of public spaces through monuments and memorials that honor the very perpetrators of ethnic cleansing in those communities. These actions are meant to sow fear and division and discourage non-Serbs from returning to their old home, as is the case with my respondent SD from Kozarac:

> [I return] every year, every other year, it depends. Of course now I am from an area that is in Republika Srpska, which I have a very hard time with. Some tell me, oh people live there too normally, there are nice houses and stuff, but I don't feel comfortable there. Why? Not just because I am scared, but where are other people if it is Republika Srpska? Images return to me, of my family, of my friends…I know they are not there anymore because they were killed. A person can never forget that, get over that. How we lived and the people we lived with then, the feelings we had, that no longer exists. That must be erased from the mind somehow. Everything still stands, but how we lived no longer does. And I cannot miss that if it is no longer there.

Conclusion

Many Bosnian natives in the diaspora directly experienced the tumult and violence described in this chapter. They have lost loved ones, been injured themselves, were imprisoned in concentration camps where they underwent physical and mental abuse, suffered severe deprivation from the basic essentials of life, and lost their homes and livelihoods. To realize their nationalist projects and "remake Bosnia" in Toal and Dahlman's (2011) precise term into a new ethno-homeland, the architects of the Bosnian conflict had to take the conflict beyond front lines and battlefields and to towns, villages and communities – the places people called home. To create something new, they had to destroy notions of what it was, using intense violence as their weapon.

The catastrophic events in their homeland propelled waves of displaced people across Bosnia's borders and into neighboring countries. Whether they knew it at the time or not, hundreds of thousands of them would never return to Bosnia. The outbreak of conflict had been one critical juncture in their lives. But so was displacement. As a problem that needed some form of resolution, it represented a key period in life course during which refugees were forced to examine their circumstances, limitations and possibilities. The management of this process and the negotiation of decisions that were involved have been vital factors in the shaping of identity and in the conceptualization of what home is, as they led to the reformulation of life needs and direction. In the next chapter, I turn to this moment in Bosnian diaspora members' stories, discussing how they negotiated the primary issue they faced in displacement, its resolution.

Chapter Five: A Durable Solution to Displacement – Resettlement in the United States

Introduction

The VRS' ethnic cleansing campaign in Bosnia, as detailed spatially in the previous chapter, instigated unprecedented migration outflows from the country. In addition to the one million inhabitants that became internally displaced, another million dispersed as refugees for various countries around the world. The first wave of migration occurred in 1992, the first year of the war; the second in 1993-1994; and the last following the attack on Srebrenica in July 1995. The outflows continued even after the end of the war, due to harsh economic, political and social conditions.

In the early years of the war, neighboring countries such as Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia and EU countries such as Germany, Austria and Sweden were the destination for most of Bosnia's refugees (Valenta and Ramet 2011). These countries kept their borders open to refugees for a longer time than other European countries, and had existing communities of Bosnians, Croats and Serbs that would attract refugees as well as help them in the migration process (Valenta and Strabac 2013). Figure 1 below shows the geographic distribution of refugees displaced by the Bosnian war as well as by the other Yugoslav-related conflicts in Croatia and Kosovo.
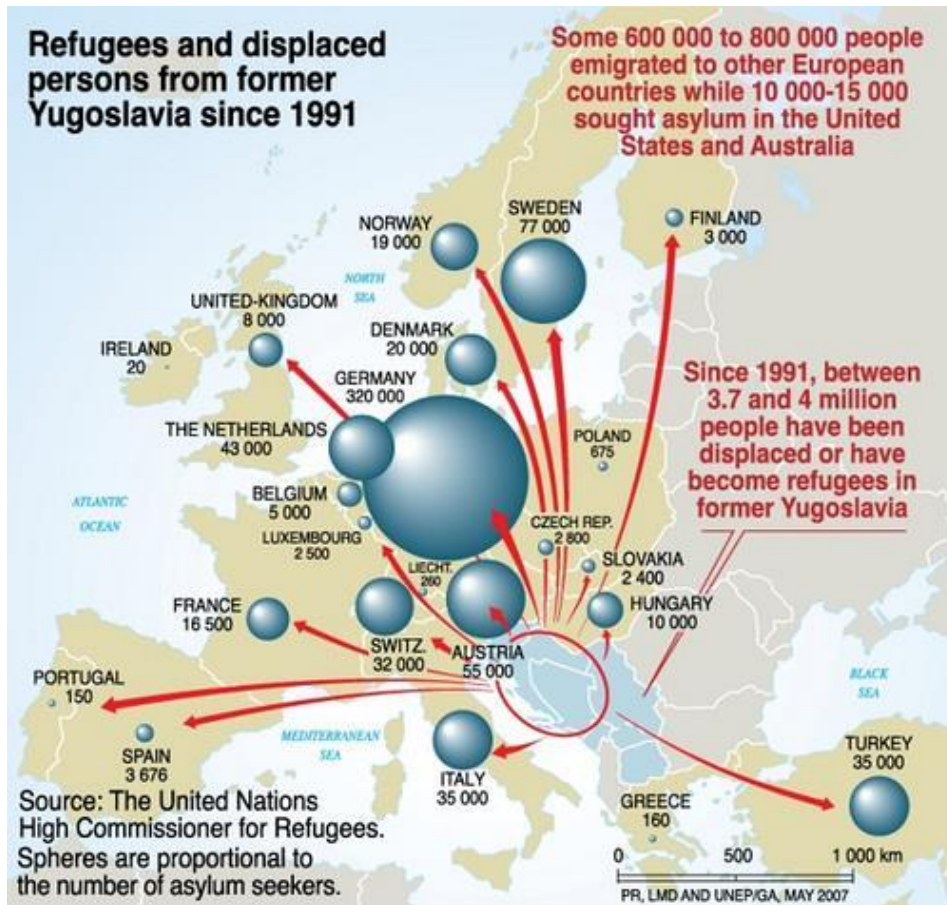
Figure 1. Refugee migrations from the former Yugoslavia. Source: Valenta, Marko and Zan Strabac. (2013). The dynamics of Bosnian refugee migrations in the 1990s, current migration trends and future prospects. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 32 (3), 1-22.

Figure 1 does not capture the magnitude of migration to the United States primarily because, as will be addressed in this chapter, much of the Bosnian migration to the United States occurred from European countries of 'transition' after the Dayton Peace Accords were signed in late 1995. In fact, according to Bosnian authorities' figures, the majority of the Bosnian diaspora – 390,000 – live in the United States (Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2009).

In this chapter, I focus on how Bosnian natives fleeing the war in their homeland came to be resettled in the United States – and in such significant numbers – and how they negotiated this process of resettlement. While every individual's journey is unique in some sense, there are nevertheless common trajectories and experiences. I examine these through the narratives of two

sets of my respondents – one set being those that lived in a transitional European country for a period of time before resettlement, and the other being those that migrated directly from Bosnia for resettlement – discussing how respondents in each case approached the options and decisions before them. For both groups, navigating the decision and process of resettlement was a critical juncture in their lives. It was a moment of agency when they made choices about their life and family and took steps to further those choices. What my respondents were looking for and trying to establish in these decision-making processes, I argue, is some 'cool ground' (Allen and Turton 1996), something that could offer them what at that point were the luxuries of a 'normal life' – predictability, stability and particularly, opportunities for their children (Jansen 2006).

From western Europe to the United States: Living in transition

Bosnian refugees and temporary protection systems

In the early 1990s in Europe, the specter of refugee inflows from the former Yugoslavia incited many western European countries to begin shifting policy away from resettlement and political asylum and more towards temporary protection and repatriation as solutions to refugee crises (Aleinikoff 1995). When refugees from the former Yugoslavia thus began arriving at their borders, host governments in western Europe chose to avoid granting durable protection or asylum to those fleeing and instead provide temporary safe haven, the idea being that when safe haven was deemed to no longer be necessary, the displaced would need to return to their homeland. Temporary protection was not a new concept, having been codified in a 1969 African refugee convention as well as discussed as a policy option for those fleeing both southeast Asia and central American civil wars in the 70s and 80s (Fitzpatrick 2000). But in the early 1990s, UNHCR affirmed and recommended the use of temporary protection to its member states as a strategy to increase the overall safety of people at risk, given that western European

governments, alongside promoting temporary protection for refugees, were at the same time increasing barriers to entry for those from the former Yugoslavia and tightening asylum procedures (Fitzpatrick 2000).

Austria was one of the first countries in western Europe to feel the effects of the Bosnian refugee outflow in early 1992. In reaction, its Ministry of Interior developed a Residence Law that was enacted in 1993 and according to which, though Bosnian refugees could be granted temporary residence, they were required to have valid travel documents, adequate financial means and by 1995, even a visa. Though they did have the right to apply for full refugee status in Austria – meaning to be recognized as such under the 1951 UN Geneva Convention – statistics show that most Bosnian refugees' applications were rejected. Franz (2003) notes:

> The Federal Asylum Office rejected the vast majority of the asylum claims of Bosnian refugees, holding that the applicants had failed to establish a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion in the sense of Article 1 of the 1951 Convention. The Federal Asylum Office also rejected claims of applicants who had been raped by paramilitary forces. (p.9).

Though some of the details differed, most western European countries adopted a version of the policy of temporary protection for Bosnian refugees. Indeed, as Fitzpatrick (2000) argues, not only were many European countries not overwhelmed by refugee inflows from the former Yugoslavia as was argued in rationalizing temporary protection (Austria and Germany perhaps being the only exceptions), the application of temporary protection appeared to be a way to circumvent recognition under the 1951 Geneva Convention, threatening the Convention itself (p. 280-286). Kibreab (1999) refers to this harmonization and coordination of refugee policies across territories as 'Fortress Europe,' which calls into question the validity of increasing claims in post-modernist literature that globalization has led to a deterritorialization of identity as a

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consequence of which we are all becoming citizens of a deterritorialized global world. Instead, "the globalization process has been accompanied by restrictive immigration and refugee policies," as countries not only tighten their borders but also adopt restrictive reception policies that discourage integration into the new society (Kibreab, 1999, p. 388-390).

Displaced Bosnians and their families were faced with these restrictive measures upon fleeing to western European countries. There was no consistent set of rights for those under temporary protection, but the rights that did exist were certainly fewer and more limited than what was available to refugees recognized as such under the 1951 Geneva Convention (UNHCR 2001). For example, according to a report by the Humanitarian Issues Working Group (1995) examining countries' responses to the humanitarian crisis in the former Yugoslavia, the comparison of standards accorded to recognized refugees and those under temporary protection in Austria is described as follows: "Unlike persons formally granted asylum, beneficiaries of temporary protection do not, in principle, have the right to integration assistance, e.g. language and vocational training, accommodation allowances and other financial support, refugee travel documents and work without work permits" (Chapter "Austria"). Austria removed some of these restrictions on displaced Bosnians in the later phase of its temporary protection system, but in other countries the policy remained quite strict. On this same question of comparison of standards accorded to recognized refugees and asylum seekers in Germany, the report is quite blunt: "None of the categories of persons enjoying a form of temporary protection has the same rights as recognized refugees in Germany" (Chapter "Germany").

Specifically, those under temporary protection in Germany were denied access to the labor market and education (Valenta and Strabac 2013). In Switzerland, one category of people under the temporary protection system were not given access to social care, the labor market or

education (Humanitarian Issues Working Group 1995). Through these restrictions, these host

countries' policies pushed Bosnian refugees to seek other options for improving their personal

situations. Many joined the informal labor market for example; according to Franz (2003),

Viennese authorities' figures suggest that about 40 percent of Bosnian refugees, mostly women,

were working in the informal sector in 1994. Because more unskilled jobs that were traditionally

seen as female occupations were available, the labor market restrictions impacted gender roles in

Bosnian families, as women became the main income provider for the family. However, this

reflects Korac's (2009) argument that while displacement may disempower refugees, it can also

be an empowering process, in that

> It can be experienced as freedom from the preestablished sociocultural norms of the
> native society and country that often constrain individual behaviour and actions. For
> many women, for example, exile opens up their gender space by providing new
> opportunities linked to the process of reshaping gender roles within and outside the
> household. (p. 7).

In causing a shift in gender roles to adjust to the structural circumstances of surviving in

displacement, forced displacement may thus also have unintended effects on understandings and

views of gender identity among both the men and women implicated in these changes.

Temporary protection as repatriation

Given that the finite nature of the temporary protection policy was one of its key

presumptions, when the Dayton Peace Accords were signed in late 1995, most western European

host countries launched repatriation programs to have refugees return to Bosnia. Underpinning

host countries' shared objective to repatriate were two factors, according to scholars. First,

offering resettlement or a permanent status to the displaced would have appeared as an

acceptance of the ethnic cleansing and genocide project in Bosnia. Resisting or reversing the

results of ethnic cleansing and genocide was clearly a goal of the architects of the Dayton

Agreement and specifically its Annex 7, which outlined the right of refugees and displaced persons to return to their pre-war homes. As Toal and Dahlman (2011) write:

> while ending the war was the priority, a more ambitious demographic restoration was imagined because it was politically and morally affirming […] the GFA [General Framework Agreement] created the possibility that the human displacement consequences of ethnic cleansing could be reversed. (p. 162-163).

Second, repatriation was also in line with what Malkki (1995) calls the sedentarist bias that exists in much of the field of refugee studies and among policymakers. According to this bias, "to become uprooted and removed from a national community is automatically to lose one's identity, traditions and culture" (p. 508). Displacement upsets what is a normal state of being, expelling the refugee from the place he belongs. This inherent bias about the natural and inseparable link between people and place inevitably spills over into the realm of policymaking, privileging for example the concept of state sovereignty in refugee matters, whether that refers to controlling borders or managing the refugee as a 'problem' through internal policies (Malkki, 1995, p.511-512). It also justifies and rationalizes repatriation: "Repatriation, then, is more than a practical question of reducing an economic burden: it is also a process of restoring the natural order" (Black, 2002, p. 126). Of course, during the Cold War, western political interests had trumped other concerns. During that period, resettlement of refugees had been the preferred policy, as western countries used the resettlement of political defectors from the Soviet Union as a slight against the bloc. Besides that, Cold War refugees were few in number and relatively skilled and educated (Toft 2007). The end of the Cold War changed the dynamics and demographics of refugee flows however: many successor states of the Soviet Union were failing and producing masses of refugees that impacted powerful states who thus turned to repatriation, both voluntary and forced, as solutions to refugee crises. They rationalized these policies with discourse on the natural link between people, place and identity.

Western European host countries exercised varying degrees of coercion in the returns policy of Bosnian refugees and offered varying levels of assistance to promote return (Valenta and Strabac 2013). At the same time, most also gradually changed the status of individuals that did not return and allowed them to remain permanently (Valenta and Ramet 2011). Besides Switzerland, Turkey, Croatia and Slovenia which were on the more activist end of ensuring refugees returned to Bosnia, Germany was notable in that it was the only country that didn't gradually transform its temporary protection system into one of more permanent protection (Valenta and Strabac 2013). Germany had one of the largest populations of Bosnian refugees, estimated to be up to 400,000 at its peak. This was partly a consequence of the government's initial generous welfare offerings to refugees as well as a ban on deportations. However, as the high cost of maintaining the refugee system became more evident and as the war ended in Bosnia, the German government lifted the ban on deportations and began to repatriate Bosnian refugees in phases, with childless couples as well as refugees with criminal records being sent back first.

> Many Bosnian refugees tried to convince host countries that the preconditions for a sustainable return were not in place. In Germany, many also struggled to convince the authorities that they were entitled to humanitarian protection. […] More than 20,000 Bosnian refugees succeeded in convincing German authorities that they were entitled to refugee status or humanitarian protection, and settled permanently in the host country. Nevertheless, since the war ended, German authorities returned hundreds of thousands of Bosnians by force or by using a combination of coercion and extensive pay-to-go schemes. (Valenta and Strabac 2013, p. 11).

Select countries' active efforts to repatriate Bosnian refugees have been criticized as not only premature and a case of mistaken priority (see Koser et al 1998, Black 2001), but also "inhumane" in the case of Germany which was conducting involuntary repatriations even though the benchmarks which the UNHCR had set out to be fulfilled before repatriation was to commence were far from fulfilled. Germany was the only EU country that contrary to UNHCR

guidelines was already in 1997 repatriating people to areas in Bosnia where they would be considered an ethnic minority (Koser and Black 1999). Studies of the mental health of those repatriated involuntarily, and where they were returned to their home country and not necessarily to where they used to live, show increases in depression and symptoms of PTSD (von Lersner, Elbert and Neuner 2008.)

For my respondents, a confluence of factors described above set off the process of searching for alternative options and durable solutions. With limited rights under the temporary protection system, they were living in limbo in the country of transition, yet they were also fearful of being repatriated against their will back to Bosnia and unsustainable conditions there. One option was to seek resettlement in a country accepting applications from refugees for permanent protection, such as the United States was doing at the time. In the next section, I explain how the US refugee system and resettlement program works, before describing how my respondents approached the decision and process of seeking resettlement.

A brief overview of the US refugee system

The US refugee program has three main components: the asylum system, the resettlement program, and overseas assistance (Newland 1995, pp. 17–18). Though the resettlement program is the most visible and active component, it is important to note the difference between it and the asylum system. Asylum applications are based on a mechanism historically available under the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, specifically Section 208. To receive this status, an applicant must already be in the United States under a different status and must provide evidence of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a social group and/or political opinion. There is a process of adjudication before an asylum officer or immigration judge.

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Recipients of this status have the right to work, to apply for permanent residency, and to petition for a spouse or unmarried children to join them in the United States.

The resettlement program is based on the Refugee Act of 1980 and grants refugee status to applicants outside the United States who meet the definition of the 1951 Refugee Convention. To begin the application process, one must first register with the UNHCR in the country to which they have fled from their home country. UNHCR determines whether an applicant qualifies as a refugee, and then works towards "the best possible durable solution for each refugee: safe return to the home country, local integration, or third-country resettlement" (U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, para. 2).

If UNHCR determines that the best possible durable solution for an applicant is resettlement and refers them to the United States, one of the several Resettlement Support Centers (RSCs) located around the world takes over the case. The RSCs are funded and managed by the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration but are generally operated by international non-governmental organizations. It is possible to skip the referral from the UNHCR and begin working directly with the RSC if an applicant is a close relative of an asylee or refugee already in the United States. The RSC collects biographic and other information from the applicant to prepare for an adjudication interview and security screening. The application is then reviewed by the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), which conducts an in-person interview with each applicant to verify the information provided and collect any further information. At this stage, USCIS may approve or reject an application for resettlement.[8] If the application is approved, the applicant

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[8] Since the September 11 2001 attacks in the United States, some of the administrative structures involved in refugee processing have changed. For example, the Department of Homeland Security was formed after the attacks and given a primary oversight role over matters of immigration, border and customs issues. Despite these changes, the steps involved in applying for resettlement remain largely the same.

attends a health screening to identify medical needs and rule out contagious diseases such as tuberculosis. Assuming no issues arise during the health screening, the resettlement process transitions from one of obtaining permission to enter the United States into one of integrating into American society.

Bosnians in the US refugee system

In the early years of the war, the United States still had relatively few refugees from Bosnia. Those that were already in the country under different immigration status when the war was beginning were able to apply for asylum. Bosnians that found themselves in the United States before 10 August 1992 were also able to apply for Temporary Protected Status, which was created by the US Congress in 1990 to uniformly grant protection to people from designated countries deemed unsafe for return due to a political or environmental disaster. Recipients of this status may work and are granted a reprieve from deportation, but the status does not confer permanent residency or citizenship. Once the temporary protected status ends, its holders return to previous immigration status (Messick and Bergeron 2014). For Bosnians, the temporary protected status ended on 10 February 2001.

Though some Bosnians received protection from the United States through the mechanisms above, the great majority instead arrived through the resettlement program. Though the program only began in late 1993, more than a year after the outbreak of war and after western European countries had already launched their own programs, it became widely accessible for displaced Bosnians (Franz 2003). The statistics indicate that most Bosnians arrived in the late 1990s, after the Dayton Peace Agreement had been signed and western European countries' repatriation schemes had begun. For example, according to US Census data, 37,000 Bosnian refugees and asylum seekers obtained legal permanent resident status between 1992 and 2000

(Valenta and Ramet 2011). At the same time, between 1996 and 1999 alone, 30,000 Bosnian refugees were recorded to have migrated from Germany to the United States (Valenta and Strabac 2013). The numbers continued to increase; 81,000 Bosnian refugees and asylum seekers obtained legal permanent resident status between 2001 and 2008 (Valenta and Ramet 2011). Especially in the late 1990s, tens of thousands were able to enter through the family reunification aspect of the resettlement program, which allows immediate family members to petition for reunification, the 'immediate family member' definition extending to a child under 21, a parent, or a spouse (Franz 2003).

Negotiating the future: the search for 'cool ground' and 'normal life'

The above overview of the US refugee system makes clear that there are rules and processes governing the system, and to gain permission to enter the country, one must adhere to them. Applying for resettlement consists of several chronological steps and actions. Though the process begins with the initial decision to apply, pursuing this decision means committing to providing significant personal information and completing paperwork, submitting to screenings and interviews, and a medical test. There is a waiting period of weeks, sometimes months, between the steps involved. In that sense, each step in the process is a repeat of the initial decision, which if successful results in the approval of the application and eventually, moving one's life, family and possessions to the United States. In other words, applying for resettlement in the United States is very much a definitive action that requires the agency of the refugee. As Korac (2009) writes:

> The recognition and *creation* of opportunities, however limited they may be within the
> context of forced migration, and the capacity to make individual decisions in specific
> situations, locations, and points in time, are all related to refugee agency. The focus on
> agency in approaching refugees enables us to perceive them as people like us, who have

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agency, sound judgment and reason for actions embedded in their past, politics, experiences of flight, and life away from home. (p. 8).

The decisions and choices before Bosnian refugees cannot however be separated from the social and political environment. Given that policies in European countries where Bosnian refugees were living were the impetus for many to confront the question of their displacement in a more permanent way, agency was conditioned and influenced by social and political factors in addition to refugees' own needs and aspirations. Application for resettlement to the United States was also conditioned by the rules inherent within the US refugee processing system. This is why, according to Long (as cited in Korac 2009), in considering agency one must take into account that it is always "embodied" in a variety of social and institutional factors and relations (p. 9).

Of the 54 members of the Bosnian diaspora that I interviewed, 33 had lived in at least one country of transition before being resettled in the United States. By far the most common countries were Croatia and Germany, often in combination; a refugee would live temporarily in a Croatian refugee camp and then move on to Germany. A smaller number of respondents lived in Austria or Slovenia for a time before being resettled. Many of my respondents described their sense of disorientation and lack of control over what was happening as they left Bosnia for one of these countries. They were not thinking about their lives beyond that moment, only about how to survive. ED, from a village near Prijedor, told me:

> Once Posavina fell it was chaos. Everyone was everywhere. […] I called some friends in Slovenia to see if I can get a refugee card. But it was not possible…But one of my friends came with his car and he gave me an old passport, an old Yugoslav one, and he said let's try to get across the border. And somehow we did, we made it over the border. […] That was an interesting time. You aren't fully aware of what is going on around you.

MK, from Kozarac, captured the unpredictability of refugees' fate at that moment: "Nothing was planned, it was all spontaneous. Who knew that Croatia would take us at all, that we would make it there alive, who knew that Germany and all those countries would welcome us." There was

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nevertheless an element of choice by refugees in these strenuous circumstances. Among my respondents there were cases of both legal and illegal migration to European countries, and in either case, as the quote above illustrates, the entry was usually facilitated by someone else, often loosely related to those fleeing. Identifying and connecting with such individuals and making plans for a risky endeavor – in a time of war nonetheless – signifies an ability to think and act quickly about how to mobilize available resources, however limiting the environment may be.

Once they had reached their destination outside of Bosnia, my respondents' primal concerns about survival were assuaged, as they no longer thought about their physical safety on a daily basis. But their new environment came with its own challenges and questions of survival, illustrating what Korac (2009) calls refugees' active engagement with liminality, where liminality is

> The phase 'betwixt and between,' a state between separation from one social situation or group and reincorporation. As such, it is characterized by uncertainty and improvised existence based upon ad-hoc short-term strategies at best, or day-to-day survival at worst. (p. 9).

As discussed earlier, most host countries had restrictions on employment for those in temporary protected status. This was a significant constraint that my respondents addressed in different ways in order survive and provide what was needed for the family. Some were able to rely on the goodwill and assistance of relatives, friends and acquaintances already living in the country of transition, but that was only a short-term solution to a longer-term problem. And in the instance of AL from Hadžići for example, it was a problem that couldn't be resolved, forcing decisions with far-reaching personal consequences. Even though she and her husband had two daughters in Austria, after three months there they decided to apply for resettlement in the United States. Austria's restrictions on employment had made them feel like a constant burden on their daughters:

So we went to Austria and there we weren't able to see our kids, we weren't able to get work visas. And I didn't want to live with my kids, not working, sitting, doing nothing…I couldn't be on my kids' back.

Others tried to alleviate the pressure by working on the black market, often in multiple, low-paying service industry jobs. Though they acknowledged the hardships associated with such work, many of my respondents told me how much it meant to them to be able to provide for themselves.

> AK: So what did you do? You said you couldn't get a job.
> MV: I worked in the kitchen. In 2 years I advanced to chef, I didn't feel like washing dishes. My wife cleaned rooms. Some of that was illegal. So that's how we made it through.
> AK: But at least you weren't in the camp, you had your own space.
> MV: Yes. Most people were in those heims [camps.] I was free from that, from that assistance. I earned on my own."

Though they were restrictive to different degrees, Germany and other countries' temporary protection policies permitted refugees to regain some footing following the turmoil they had escaped from in Bosnia. However, the announcement of plans to begin repatriation brought the question of a durable solution to their displacement into primary focus. It was a tough pill to swallow for some, who had just adjusted to the new life they were living, only for their fate and future to become obscure again. As SD from Kozarac told me,

> In Germany we learned enough German to be able to live there, through work, we never went to school. But we worked and were able to communicate normally. And then we had to leave. We had stabilized ourselves financially, enough not to worry about what we were going to do and how we were going to do it. And normally we had adjusted a little, and then we had no choice but to leave.

The repatriation announcement was the trigger that forced refugees to begin thinking about what to do long term, about what was best for them and their families. The possibility of involuntary repatriation was particularly worrisome, reinforcing the sense of liminality by creating a feeling

of insecurity about one's rights and legal status (Korac, 2009, p.9). As my respondent SD told

me,

> They simply showed up at night, got you, and sent you back. Return to our area was absolutely not possible. It's only recently that people have started going to Kozarac. So, what if they had picked us up, with small kids? Where to go? And no one asks you anything, if you have money in an account that you need to withdraw or something. Nothing – they just show up at night and pick you up.

For Dimova (2007), this fear and uncertainty created trauma directly linked to *duldung* or

temporary protection status for Bosnian refugees in Germany; it was a trauma on top of pre-

existing traumas from the war, because the strict policy meant that

> the safest way of obtaining a residence permit […] proved to be by demonstrating severe traumatization. Hence, these people have been torn between required (and often exaggerated) remembering of their past war experiences, and the contemporary, real, but unrecognised trauma of feared detainment and deportation. This more contemporary trauma has become a dominant structuring force of their current lives. ("Conclusion" section, para. 5).

European governments' repatriation plans and schedule were the reason that Bosnian

refugees began thinking through the different potential solutions to their displacement, and as

such conditioned the timing, and direction of their agency. The imminence of repatriation

compelled them to consider thoroughly the options before them and to decide what option to

pursue. In reality, these 'options' were very limited. Given that remaining in the country of

transition was clearly not possible, refugees could return to Bosnia, to the area they were from

with the specific post-war circumstances it entailed, or elsewhere in the country. Or, they could

seek to be resettled in a third country. Survival would thus require movement, akin to movement

as a survival tactic among the Mursi people who are permanently "in search of cool ground"

(Allen and Turton, 1996, p.11).

But movement to where? And according to what criteria was the destination of

movement to be considered 'cool ground'? These were the questions that my respondents asked

themselves as they considered the imminent end of their status in transitional countries in western Europe. For some of my respondents, returning to Bosnia was simply not possible. Several had lost their homes completely and had nothing left there. Even if their home hadn't been destroyed, it was in a locality that had been ethnically cleansed of its previous population and at the moment in time that repatriation programs were being implemented – shortly after the end of the conflict – still presented security risks. In addition, throughout Bosnia other displaced families had moved into empty homes, so re-possessing their property involved legal interventions. For respondents who faced one of these situations, Bosnia was not 'cool ground.' It may not have been home anymore, either. As Malkki (1995) writes, "but if 'home' is where one feels most safe and at ease, instead of some essentialized point on the map, then it is far from clear that returning where one fled from is the same thing as 'going home'" (p. 509). The absence of these defining characteristics around the old home where return was being considered thus divested it of its 'homely' properties.

In this scenario, the option with greatest promise appeared to be resettlement in a third country. At a moment of ambiguity, it offered displaced Bosnians the chance at a new 'normal life' as conceptualized by Jansen (2015), a form of progress characterized by predictability and stability. And under the Dayton Peace Agreement, the option not to return was one that they legally had alongside the right to return, even though the international community in Bosnia had begun prioritizing return over local integration with the Sintra Declaration in 1997. This right not to return reaffirmed a long-standing principle in international refugee law, enshrined in the 1951 Refugee Convention. Not returning meant re-settling somewhere else, but that couldn't be anywhere – it had to be in a country accepting applications for resettlement from Bosnian

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refugees. At the time, the United States, Australia and Canada were all doing so. My respondent

SD explained why applying for resettlement in the United States seemed like the best option:

> In a way we didn't have a choice. The situation was such that I hadn't been in any
> concentration camp, I wasn't a political refugee, I wasn't anything, neither of us. So there
> was no choice but to either return to Bosnia or go to a third country. And trying to get a
> lawyer to fight it was very risky, as the chances were very small, they were looking for
> every possible way to repatriate.

While the application for resettlement was in a sense done out of desperation, there was

nevertheless an element of control exercised by SD. This was because in sorting through the

options of what would come next for him and his family, SD learned that repatriation could be

postponed if there was a pending application for resettlement. SD submitted his family's

application for resettlement in the United States with this in mind, hoping that some way to stay

in Germany would be worked out in the meantime. They prolonged their stay in Germany for a

year in this manner, and while the strategy didn't pan out in the end, it indicates the

resourcefulness and resolve of refugees who were willing to push the limits of policies in the

search for a durable solution.

In some cases, my respondents simply had no desire to return to Bosnia, even if none of

the above impediments existed. I found that to be the case particularly among those who were

active in the war or had spent time in one of the concentration camps run by the VRS. They

could not fathom returning to a place where they had experienced such horrible things. DD's

husband fought for the Bosnian army in the war and was severely injured at one point, requiring

reconstructive surgery on his jaw. In the meantime, DD and their two children were living in a

refugee camp in the Czech Republic. Following the surgery, they weren't able to remain in the

Czech Republic, as DD's husband couldn't obtain documentation for employment. She described

why they began pursuing resettlement as opposed to returning to their hometown of Sarajevo, despite the pleasant life they led there prior to the war:

> He had seen lots of things. He didn't see any future for the kids, for us. He didn't see us there. He had spent four and a half years there. And he had told his brother when leaving that he wouldn't be returning, that if he was able to get to the West, he would, even if he had to dig ditches. He had just been through and seen a lot. He had been on Igman for a long time…and he'd just had enough.

In deciding to apply for resettlement, DD and her husband didn't only consider the United States. In fact, they tried to maximize their chances by applying for Canada and Australia as well, knowing that one or more could fall through. The strategy worked, as resettlement in Canada proved to be an expensive and complicated process. In the end, they were able to choose between resettlement in Australia or the United States: "I told my husband to choose which one. He said let's go to the US – it's bigger and there are likely more jobs for me. So, that's how we decided…hopefully we made the right decision."

Some respondents did seriously explore the option of return to Bosnia, of course. These tended to be individuals who had lived in Sarajevo before the war and still had a home to which they could return, in an area with relatively low security risks. When the repatriation schemes were announced, these respondents began readying for return, buying what they anticipated would be in short supply back home. They also made advance trips to Bosnia, to repair any damage to their homes and to reconnect with former employers, friends and neighbors. But these preparatory trips were ultimately very disappointing. Their houses were reparable, but the economic environment was very tough. SD from Sarajevo had run a successful business in Bosnia before the war, and planned to start a new one upon his return. He described how his hopes shifted however once he visited Bosnia and began scoping out possibilities:

And since we are workers, us Bosnians, but also we as a family, I managed to attain some financial security in those 4 years in Germany. So I was thinking again about starting my own company, to start a driving school, to buy 4 or 5 VW Golfs – they didn't need to be new, 2 or 3 years old. But I saw that anarchy and roguery were starting to rule, so a person was never sure about his investments, that someone won't destroy it, that what he had earned won't fall through, that someone won't come to his door, that someone won't rob him, right on the street…So basically I called my wife and told her to submit the paperwork for the US.

The damage done to the social and professional links they had prior to the war were greater than expected, as some of my respondents also found. Home didn't feel like home anymore, as the nexus between place and identity was broken. They felt unwelcome during these advance trips, rejected by former friends and colleagues who resented them for leaving while others remained. They were also stung by the false impressions of the wealth they had acquired living outside of Bosnia, given that they had left as refugees and if they were working at all, it was in jobs far below their skills and education. The experience of DB, whose family left Sarajevo during the war with a daughter needing medical care not available there, summarizes well this sense of disappointment:

So my wife went, to see the situation a bit, to see what needs to be fixed, done and so on. And of course I go to my old job to see how things are, to say we are returning and all that. But they said what? Where's your money, aren't you going to open a business? You came here to look for a job? They said there were no jobs, and there were people who had been in Sarajevo the whole time and weren't working. I tried to return to the company I worked for before the war, but there was no chance. Everyone was closing their doors. And my wife had some unfortunate conversations with friends as well. All women, talking to each other, and they all know what our daughter had. At one moment in the conversation, just like that, they said she had run off and implied she hadn't had any hardship. It was clear that no one understood.

Giving up on return to Bosnia was quite painful for DB; in Germany he had become the president of the union of refugees and was facilitating returns to Bosnia. The repatriation announcement wouldn't have affected them as quickly as it would others, but since he had always assumed he and his family would return anyway, he was prepared.

Others were saying they were going to the US and Canada, but there was no way I was helping others return and then not doing that myself. So we were getting ready, but we never thought about not having a job.

Following their disappointing advance trips to Bosnia – where they got "no green light for survival," as his wife put it – DB's family found themselves at a crossroads about what to do next. They also examined and pursued several options simultaneously, hoping that one would lead to a durable solution. While they had hoped for resettlement in Sweden or Australia as they had family there, for different reasons those efforts did not work out, and they ended up coming to the United States.

Post-war resettlement: Bosnians arriving in the United States directly from Bosnia

In the previous section I discussed how refugees who had been living in countries of transition negotiated the process of obtaining permission to resettle in the United States. A smaller number of respondents in my interview sample, 12 out of the 54 interviewed, came to the United States directly from Bosnia, and only after the war had ended in late 1995. For these individuals, the decision to seek resettlement was also a critical moment in their life course, as they assessed the circumstances they were living in in postwar Bosnia and tried to take control over their future. It is important to note that even though they may not have been living in a country of transition at the time of resettlement to the United States, on a broader level within the diaspora many of those arriving directly from Bosnia were nevertheless still refugees, as they had been internally displaced by the war and weren't able to return to their pre-war homes. This includes 7 out of the 12 respondents in my sample that didn't resettle until after the war had ended.

How did those that spent the entire war in Bosnia and saw its end arrive at the decision to pursue resettlement in the United States? What were the leading issues of concern for them, and how did they debate internally about leaving their homeland? For my respondents, there was not one single or overarching reason for wanting to leave Bosnia. Instead, there were multiple reasons, which overlapped and reinforced one another. Being internally displaced and unable to return to one's home obviously colored all aspects of life during and after the war. For all respondents however, regardless of whether they were internally displaced and what part of Bosnia they were living in after the end of the war, it was the postwar conditions in Bosnia that made them so pessimistic about staying. They were apprehensive about the stagnating economy and the lack of jobs in the shorter term, and the kind of future their children would have in such an environment in the longer term.

Perhaps it is because they spent the entire war in Bosnia and had seen everything they needed to see and fully understood the conditions for life there that in some of my interviews with individuals who left Bosnia after the war, their decision-making process appeared quite matter-of-fact and pragmatic. Such standpoints were likely also a function of age and family circumstances, with younger generations generally being more likely to leave Bosnia in the post-war period. The way these respondents describe the reasons for their pursuit of resettlement reinforces the framing of the 'yearning for normal lives' by Jansen (2015). Bosnia could not offer them the necessary economic opportunities and they would go where those were available to them, as ZM from Zvornik told me:

> ZM: I got married in 1997. And some of my cousins were the first to come here. They told us it would be better, you'll get a job, it will be better than it is there. So my parents came here in 1998. I was married and I stayed in Bosnia with my husband. My parents arrived, started working, and then sent us paperwork as well. A year or so later, we came as well. We decided to come because we thought it would be better than there. […]
> AK: And when you came, did you think it was permanent or something more temporary?

ZM: We weren't really thinking about that – we were just going after something better. Now we can choose. Though I don't think anyone will go back, since there isn't anything better.

For those with children, there was an even stronger imperative to seek something better. SK, a respondent from Velika Kladuša, recounted an experience she had at a hospital with her sick toddler. Even though she still had her home, the experience was a turning point in her willingness to put up with the abnormality of life and institutions in Bosnia following the war:

I sat in the hospital the whole night. She was screaming. No one cared. My child was 3.5 years old, they were operating on other people, and left her to die. I asked myself why I should stay there. I knew how to work, I had learned how to work. But there was nowhere to work. Why should I keep my kids there? So I decided that I wanted to give my kids a chance at a better life. I would look at others' kids – how could I watch that one kid had something that mine didn't? So I decided to go.

For EK from Srebrenica, it was also an incident regarding his child that precipitated his sense of frustration with the situation in Bosnia, after trying to make a life there for four years after the war had ended. His son was supposed to go on a school excursion to Croatia, but because he was born in the part of Yugoslavia that was now Serbia, getting a passport for him was extremely complicated. EK decided he'd had enough and that Bosnia was not a place his family could thrive; he applied for and received permission to resettle in the United States.

For a few of my respondents, the experience of the war and the difficult economic and social conditions that followed manifested themselves as accumulated psychological stresses. They saw leaving Bosnia as an opportunity to reduce or rid themselves of these burdens, as a new start in a sense. One respondent who was a young woman during the war narrowly missed being killed by a shell in the center of one of Bosnia's larger towns, Tuzla. Scores of others were killed, and the experience of witnessing the massacre and having dead bodies on top of her put her in a state of shock. She refused to leave the house for months afterwards, even after the war

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had ended. Her family realized the strain she was under and found a way for her to resettle in Chicago. "Everybody breathed a sigh of relief when I left," she told me. The words of another respondent, LO from Foča, summarize well this sense of accumulated psychological burden and the mental relief that resettlement offered: "I just decided I needed civilization. I decided I had had enough of traumas and that it was easier to watch what was happening on paper than be in the middle of it. I could handle it more easily." At the same time, leaving was by no means psychologically easy. Just as having spent the war in Bosnia and seen its consequences made the decision to leave quite straightforward for some, in LO's case – he had been a soldier in the war – it made him quite emotional:

> The hardest thing for me was leaving Bosnia – I gave my blood for my country. I was there during very difficult moments, the hardest moments, with my people. So making the decision to leave was not easy. Coming to a new place is very hard.

Conclusion

> I was sorry I was leaving behind my whole family, my parents. But Bosnia itself…there's nothing, it's not worth anything to you. It's not worth sitting when you have nothing – you have to create something for your children. (FM, from Zvornik).

For both refugees resettling from transition countries in Europe and those resettling directly from Bosnia, the move to the United States was a critical juncture in their lives. Conflict and displacement are certainly extremely disempowering processes that introduce external structures of control over one's life course in dramatic ways. The experiences of my respondents during displacement and as resettlement to the United States was negotiated however demonstrate that even though much of the sense of control by individuals dissolved in this period, in narrow areas of opportunity they nevertheless identified and mobilized resources and used various strategies to improve their and their family's personal situations. This was the case in both flight from Bosnia and in pursuing resettlement in the United States. In particular, the decision to pursue resettlement in the United States was an exercise of agency that reflected

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evolving definitions of needs after the traumas of war. Those needs were pragmatic and oriented towards economic and educational mobility for themselves and their children. This re-framing of needs and aspirations reflected an attempt to reassert control over the direction of their life, and find a space to live 'normal life.' It was central to the reconceptualization of home after the tumult, chaos and uncertainty of conflict and living in transition in countries of first asylum.

In the next chapter, I look at some of the specific ways that conflict and displacement have impacted questions of identity, and deepen the discussion of how home is being reconceptualized as a consequence.

Chapter Six: Negotiating Identity and 'Home' after Conflict and Displacement

> How I feel after the war is that nothing will ever be right again. It can never be put back again. I feel like there is a constant sense of instability, of catastrophe around the corner, that something will shatter. And I have to figure out life in this situation.
>
> (AH, from Sarajevo).

Introduction

With the war having ended 22 years ago, the re-settled Bosnian diaspora has been living in the United States for approximately 15 years now. Many have found livelihoods, bought homes, created connections to a community, developed friendships, and watched their children complete schooling and go on to have children of their own. As they have made steps forward in reconstituting their lives in the diaspora, their experiences of the past have been powerful factors that mediate the transformations in identity and sense of belonging that are invariably part of the migration process. Theories about conflict and forced migration have suggested that following such violent upheaval the impact on identity is not predictable or clear cut, and that such experiences also shape the relationship with the homeland through different forms of transnationalism. Conflict and violence can also impact conceptualizations of home – what it is, where it is, and in changing conditions, what constitutes it. In this chapter, I examine how the influence of conflict and displacement has been manifested in the negotiations of identity among my respondents in narratives on three recurring themes: national identification, home in the new country, and the effects of family scattering and dispersal in the post-war era. Each in their own way, these themes challenge respondents to consider questions about their own identity and culture and how they deal with pressures on those. They are often questions that respondents are still trying to answer, and where the answers themselves are fluid and in development, contingent on both internal deliberations as well as external processes and structures.

Conflict and displacement's effects on national identification

A key part of my interviews with members of the Bosnian diaspora concerned learning about how they understand themselves in national terms, and how they rationalize or explain those self-understandings. As discussed in the literature review, there is a debate within the literature on diaspora and conflict about whether conflict-generated diasporas fuel further conflict or whether they can lead to an abatement of conflict through more reconciliatory attitudes in the diaspora (Haider 2014). Given this point of contention in theory, I considered national identification an important theme to query in the context of studying how conflict, violence and displacement may shape identity. At the same time, as was discussed in the literature and methodology chapter, to be able to appreciate how different experiences of the conflict and of displacement may shape identities in different ways, I thought it was critical to frame the study in a way that did not presume that those that I interviewed self-identified as 'Bosnian.' I did not want to presume the existence of 'groupness' (Brubaker and Cooper 2000) among individuals that I was interviewing around subscription to a national identity.

A majority of my respondents – a little over two-thirds – expressed a national identification with Bosnia, self-identifying as either 'Bosnian' or 'Bosniak.' It should be noted that these terms have become rather contentious and politicized within Bosnia. 'Bosnian' refers to someone from Bosnia, regardless of ethnic origin. Historically, 'Bosniak' also denoted all inhabitants of Bosnia, regardless of faith. During the conflict in the 1990s however, the term was adopted by the Bosnian Muslim leadership as the name for the Bosnian Muslims as an ethnicity. Since then, Bosnian Muslim political parties in Bosnia have promoted citizens' identification with this term during the census in particular, in order to present a stronger counter front to the other main ethnic groups in the country, Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats. There has been pushback on these efforts particularly among youth and educated, urban classes in the Bosniak-

Croat Federation, who see the propagation of the term 'Bosniak' as an attempt to promote a

stronger Bosnian Muslim identity and thus further ethnic divisions in the country.

That most of my respondents self-identified as 'Bosnian' or 'Bosniak' is not a surprising

finding, as it supports the demographics of the forced migration from Bosnia. What is notable is

that a significant number answered my question in passionate, emotional and in some cases

nostalgic terms. Furthermore, they validated these strong feelings by calling attention to the

conflict and their experience of it:

> Truthfully though, a person is here on the surface; deep down, they're in Bosnia. Our generation, who lived in Bosnia, were educated there and worked there and experienced the war – no one can erase that, never. One can be here and live on the surface, in the momentary life – but deep down, like I said, they're in Bosnia. (LO, from Foca).

> Bosnia was a state for 1000 years and God willing, it will be for another 1000. All of what is happening now, what has happened and will happen in the future, those are historical currents…sometimes they are up and sometimes down. (FZ, from Bosanska Gradiška).

> I always say I am a Bosnian from Bosnia. I was born there, my kids were born there. There have been some unpleasant situations, it's from all the provocations from the war, everyone has their own story and tragedy, that needs to be understood too. So they say, huh, Bosnian (name.) But no one can take that away from me nor will I give it to anyone. (DD, from Sarajevo).

> I can give you a direct answer. Even before this unhappy war, I had much more self-awareness than my fellow Bosniaks, more than many other people. I have always been a Bosniak. The war did not make me so. But as a result of it I did some more reading, and have been surprised that – well there are details that any Bosnian ought not to know. And when I hear the things that people don't know, I am surprised. So I know that we have always been Bosniaks, that Bosnian is a new thing, that it is something forced upon us. (SZ, from Han Pijesak).

What is apparent from these explanations and rationalizations – and in line with research by

Vujcich (2007) and Al-Ali (2002) – is that the conflict served as a turning point for many

members of the diaspora in raising consciousness about identity. Because the conflict became

ethnicized, national and ethnic identities became more salient; however, it is important to

distinguish raising consciousness or awareness of identity from making people more nationalist. As my respondents' narratives above indicate, the conflict did both, depending on the individual. Furthermore, uncritically linking increased consciousness about identity following conflict to nationalist feelings overlooks other, important distinctions. For example, even among those that self-identify as 'Bosnian' or 'Bosniak,' there are internal differences that expose conflicting or contradictory attachments and which also shape one's sense of identity and belonging to Bosnia. One of these distinctions is related to the internal Bosnian Muslim conflict between supporters of secessionist leader Fikret Abdić and forces loyal to the Bosnian government. Though most of the respondents I interviewed from the area of western Bosnia where Abdić held power did self-identify as either 'Bosnian' or 'Bosniak,' their narratives also belied a continuing sense of antagonism towards Bosnia's central government rooted in the history and details of the internal conflict. The internal rifts brought about by Abdić's separatist ambitions persevered long after the war officially ended. As AH from Cazin told me, "there were still abuses, provocations, people throwing bombs, being pulled out of houses." The remnants of these divisions persist and permeate the complicated sense of belonging among members of the diaspora who experienced this internal war in addition to the broader Bosnian conflict:

> I gave my blood for my country. But I don't want to give my life. And if those that were killed – whether they were *shehids* or got caught in the crossfire – could raise from their graves now, they would ask what they gave their lives for. For politics, for lies. (ZS, from Cazin).

> I don't respect these people in power at all. It started with Alija and continued. His little one, his son, he is a thief. […] In Bosnia, people created so much conflict between themselves – not between religions but within one religion, us, Muslims – that if you don't think what he thinks, you're a chetnik or an ustasha. God help us. You don't have the right to use your own head. It is a time when reason is locked, quiet. There is no place for the intelligent man. He just needs to be quiet. As long as the current leadership stays, Bosnia is in trouble. (OR, from Cazin).

Also, despite the politicization of the term 'Bosniak' in Bosnia itself as was discussed above, my respondents' choice of one or other term did not for the majority reflect an engagement with the politics involved. In fact, save for a few instances, most of the respondents that identified as either 'Bosnian' or 'Bosniak' expressed confusion about the terms and their designations.

> I don't know. On some paperwork here it says Bosnian, some Bosniak. I don't know. I think they're the same thing. People just use different terms. But if we're both from Bosnia, I don't know why one says they're Bosnian and the other Bosniak. (ZS, from Cazin).

This suggests that some of the nationalist discourse that dominates news cycles in Bosnia is a much smaller flashpoint among the Bosnian diaspora, even though they often have access to the same media sources as their compatriots within Bosnia. On the other hand, one respondent who identified as 'Bosnian' of Orthodox faith pointed out that based on her work at a retirement home, in St. Louis at least nationalist discourse among the Bosnian diaspora seemed to be correlated with old age:

> They say, you can't say *dobar dan* (good day). I never heard that in my life. I don't know how to greet you any other way, that's not how I was raised. I don't greet you in any other religious way, but with *dobar dan*. And they don't want to answer me. And they don't want me to take care of them, they say I am Orthodox. So, I tell you, a lot of that I felt here, when I went to that retirement home, around old people. They're all crazy. They should all be sent back. They're not thankful for what they have. It would be different if those people were young, but you won't hear that stuff from the younger people. They don't care who's called what. I have a friend, called (Muslim name.) She is covered. We work together. She asked me for a favor, to help her, to drive her to work, since she doesn't have a car. So we talk about that stuff all the time, about *nacija* (nationness), and she talks to me about all her stuff. I like to hear that, because it's all the same. So, normal *narod* (people). But these old people? They're crazy. They provoke, harass. (BM, from Bosanski Brod).

That conflict can have diverging effects on identity and is thus not a predictable or generalizable catalyst of identity transformation is further illustrated among the remaining one-

third of my respondents who self-identified as something other than 'Bosnian' or 'Bosniak.' They gave a variety of responses, but importantly, even among them, it is the experience of conflict and resulting displacement that acts as a powerful factor shaping identification processes. For example, two respondents self-identified as 'Bosnian-American,' but rather than this choice representing a shift away from a Bosnian identity towards a more hybrid national identity, they explained that 'Bosnian-American' reflects the formation of the Bosnian part of their identity. For AH from Sarajevo, this occurred in the United States as a consequence of the conflict and migration: "Before the war, I would not have identified as Bosnian. I feel like I have become more fully Bosnian here." This statement is key for three distinct reasons. First, it is a direct acknowledgement of how in Bergholz's (2016) terms, violence can be a generative force. It is not necessarily a negative force, though it certainly can be; in this case, it generated awareness and salience of an identity that for the respondent didn't exist before the conflict. Second, this statement also reveals how migration can facilitate the awareness and adoption of previously unexperienced identities, which are often made possible by an environment where the existence of multiple identities is possible and even encouraged, such as the United States. Finally, this statement is important because it suggests that the truest sense of an identity may best be developed when one is away from the homeland. As Graham and Khosravi (1997) write, "creating a home in exile can be experienced by some as reconstructing a culture that is truer to the 'original' than the culture that now dominates in the homeland itself" (p.127-128).

Another respondent referred to himself as a 'Yugo-nostalgic,' once again ascribing this choice to what occurred during the conflict:

> I am a Yugo-nostalgic. Everything of mine is from Bosnia. I was born there, grew up there, by the Neretva. All the beautiful things that happened to me were there. I have my wife and kids here, but that was my youth. And that's why I still say I am a Yugo-nostalgic. But I

am aware that it doesn't exist anymore and that Bosnia and Herzegovina is my homeland. (NL, from Mostar).

Finally, for a few respondents, the conflict and the harsh education it provided on identity caused them to reject these issues and Bosnia-related ascriptions altogether:

> What we are doesn't exist anymore. I don't see the meaning of Bosnian, or Bosniak. […] To be honest, I never registered myself anywhere. I am American. (AH, from Velika Kladuša).

> Bosniak means nothing to me. I don't know…I feel surgically removed, isolated from that. (FG, from Zavidovići).

Though one of the quotations above is from a person from Velika Kladuša, which I referenced earlier in this dissertation was the locality of a narrative of conflict very different from the dominant narrative of the Bosnian conflict, I should note that I did not find among my respondents from this region a tendency to reject Bosnia as a homeland. AH above was an outlier in that respect. By and large, individuals from the region identified with Bosnia as a homeland and with the national categories 'Bosnian' or 'Bosniak.' What did set them apart however was their outspokenness on the corruption and inefficacies of the current Bosnian Muslim leadership in Bosnia.

Conflict and displacement's effects on 'home' in the new country

Though the end of the conflict in Bosnia meant that the international community began focusing on the return of refugees and displaced persons to their pre-war homes, the statistics on returns have been disappointing. Based on the numbers, the right *not* to return was apparently seen as a preferred option for many. In addition to the hundreds of thousands living abroad as described in the introduction, Human Rights Watch reported that "as of mid-2011, there were 113,188 registered IDPs (including about 7,000 in collective centers), according to UNHCR, with 48,583 in the Federation, 64,359 in Republika Srpska, and 246 in Brcko District" (Human

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Rights Watch, 2012, para. 9). Even those that did return were not permanent returnees; as Toal and Dahlman (2011) point out, the UNHCR – which announced in 2004 that one million refugees and displaced persons had returned to their prewar homes – admitted a few years later that rates of return were "considerably less" once it was taken into account that returnees did not stay in their place of return permanently, likely due to a combination of economic and political reasons. These facts are overwhelming evidence that despite the admirable goals of Annex 7 and the efforts of implementing organizations, the displacement of Bosnians and their families, both within and outside Bosnia, is a permanent and an irreversible consequence of the war.

My interviews with members of the diaspora in the United States gave me an insight into some of the possible reasons behind the disappointing levels of return by the displaced to Bosnia. In querying my respondents about their own plans or desires to return, many pointed to the economic and political challenges there as a result of the conflict, such as high levels of unemployment and widespread corruption in public administration and services. However, these impediments were not seen as insurmountable; in fact, several respondents indicated that they would be prepared to return to Bosnia once they were retired and had a predictable income. Even such a return was envisioned as only partial however; many described that their ideal situation would be living part-time in Bosnia and part-time in the United States. There appeared to be little desire among my respondents to return full-time to Bosnia. This reluctance is premised on other, more emotional impediments to return that are harder to overcome.

One of these impediments is the feeling of being out of place back home in Bosnia. When visiting, the initial excitement of returning to a place of one's origin is in a relatively short time replaced by a sense of disorientation. My respondent BP from Velika Kladuša is able to return to her pre-war home, unlike many others – she still has a house there. But as she told me, "it is just

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not the whole place it used to be." While there, she doesn't know what to do with herself; she has

no role, no purpose, and starts looking forward to returning to Utica, NY. DB from Sarajevo

echoed these feelings; he goes back to Sarajevo almost every year and he shared that every time,

that warm feeling of being home is short-lived:

> When I go to Sarajevo, I go because of my mother, my sister, family issues that I have. I
> go into town and I know no one. It is all new faces. Your heart is pounding, you are
> happy. It reminds you of your youth, where you walked. But after 3 days it all dissipates
> and I want to go home. Every time I go to Sarajevo, I return sick, tired, stressed.

DB's reference to the "new faces" in his hometown is a latent reference to another demographic

consequence of the conflict in Bosnia, in addition to the creation of ethnically homogeneous

territories through the ethnic cleansing of non-Serbs in communities around the country. The

conflict also precipitated an influx of rural dwellers into urban areas, adding different dimensions

to their character and culture that have often been lamented by long-time residents (see for

example Mesarič (2013) for issues raised by the wearing of the hijab and broader Islamic revival

in Sarajevo.)

Another impediment to return – possibly the strongest, given that I heard about it more

frequently than any other from my respondents – is one's children and the desire to provide them

with a 'normal' life. Many of my respondents told me that even though they long for the parents,

siblings and other family left behind, as well as the culture and all the familiarity that comes with

their place of origin, what keeps them in the United States is the desire to give their children a

better life than they would have in Bosnia, which is still very much in post-conflict mode. For

example, LO from Foča told me he would be willing to return, but there are no opportunities for

his children in Bosnia:

> I would. But I came mostly for my kids. My son is in college, studying electrical
> engineering. My daughter is finishing 11th grade. If I decided to go back, what would she

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do? Let them be healthy and everything is fine. The most important thing is to set them on the right path.

Similarly, MV from Velika Kladuša lauds the United States for providing him and his family with a chance at a kind of life that would be harder to come by elsewhere:

> My kids had a chance to get an education […] I had the chance to earn to help them and myself. I don't think that there is any country where you can more simply and freely start a business doing what you know how to do. In another country it would take a million steps to prove that you know what you're doing. Here it is open to anyone; if it works, it works, if not, try something else.

As ZS from Cazin most simply put it, "Of course it was hard to leave. But when I thought about it, if I could go anywhere else, I could work, I could live normally – not under stress and wondering where a shell would fall."

There is a notable practicality and forward-looking sensibility in the narratives of my respondents about how they think about return to their home country, and even more so, what constitutes home for them at this point in life. While they retain emotional attachments to their places of origin in Bosnia, their needs and aspirations are guiding their decision-making processes at this moment. Their lives in resettlement are characterized by a sense of opportunity and stability; working and living 'normally' involves predictable routines and expectations. The specifics of the needs and aspirations expressed by my respondents – following the upheaval of conflict, violence and displacement – correspond to Jansen's (2015) conceptualizations of 'yearnings for normal lives' among the residents of an apartment complex in Sarajevo for whom the quest for normalcy similarly represents a form of forward movement in the context of the abnormal and unstable conditions of post-war Bosnia. It is a paradoxical situation that the conflict has created for Bosnians in Bosnia and those in diaspora. Proceeding from the same reason, both parties are trying to re-build home in different contexts. Bosnians in Bosnia are rebuilding within the complicated structures and stagnation imposed by the Dayton Peace

Accords. Their counterparts in the diaspora on the other hand are rebuilding through a process of emplacement within the structures, institutions and social relations of a new country and society.

At the heart of these changing notions of where the best place to be is – at certain points in time and based on what circumstances – is an evolving notion of home and how to define it under ever-changing conditions and aspirations. As conflict, violence and displacement alter the definition of home, they impel a search for a new home whose definition and constitution are influenced by those experiences. For members of the Bosnian diaspora, the loss of home shaped aspirations of resettlement to the United States, which represented a type of 'cool ground' and chance at 'normal life.' Central to that search and yearning was providing opportunities for their children. As Jansen (2006) argues, children may have after all been the driving force behind the pursuit of resettlement and the various strategies to attain this goal:

> The overwhelming preoccupation with children's well-being and opportunities was central to this yearning and this is how we can understand how emigration had come to function as one of a series of central instruments in household attempts to get life trajectories on track again. (p. 194).

Within their new home though, many members of the Bosnian diaspora continue to maintain an attachment to their Bosnian home not only through transnationalism but specifically through translocalism. My interviews with respondents in St. Louis, Chicago and Utica correspond and confirm Halilovich's (2013) own findings that for many members of the Bosnian diaspora, place-based identity is a much more important marker than religion or ethnicity. My respondents were nostalgic for Bosnia and their life before the war, but they were also nostalgic for their hometowns and the lives they lived *there* before the war. One respondent of mixed ethnicity from Mostar explained why it was so difficult for him to leave the city:

> In Mostar, I was with my *raja* (friends). I was defending my city. But I had that child, and I wanted that child to have a father. Besides that, I saw that the war was becoming

worse, that it was becoming a big evil, and that it wasn't going to end quickly […] When I was leaving Mostar, I felt, I felt like a traitor. I was happy that I had a chance to survive, to meet my child, but I didn't feel good about leaving my friends there, in the situation that existed at the time.

I didn't doubt the genuine nature of the emotions this respondent expressed. There was proof all around me: on side tables and on top of the mantle of the fireplace at his house where we conducted the interview, small souvenirs from Mostar were reminders of his hometown.

Other respondents demonstrated a strong sense of place-based identity in the forms of hobbies or social activities in which they engaged in their free time. DD from Sarajevo for example told me she regularly goes online to read the city's newspaper *Oslobodjenje*. She also frequents websites where Sarajevans from all over the world gather and communicate with one another; on these websites, she says, "I see that it is that Sarajevan, Bosnian spirit that everyone misses." BV, also from Sarajevo, described how he and his wife avoid Bosnian community events in St. Louis because they tend to be connected to religion, which doesn't suit them, as they are in a mixed marriage. However, he said "but if it is connected to the *sebilj* project for example, then we are among the first to participate." As mentioned in the introduction, the *sebilj* is the 18th century fountain in the heart of the Ottoman section of Sarajevo, and of which a replica was constructed in St. Louis. In indicating he and his wife's distaste for ethnic or religious-based social activities in St. Louis but an enthusiasm for a project that re-creates defining characteristics of his hometown in his place of resettlement, BV demonstrates the endurance of place-based identity and the appeal of translocal activities that bridge there and here.

My respondents' narratives suggest that through various forms of translocalism, they are able to satisfy the emotional needs of being connected to place even while being physically outside of that place. Importantly however, as Hage (1997) has argued, this kind of nostalgia is

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not detrimental to the refugee or migrant in the new country. Attachment to an old 'home' or nostalgia, he says, "is assumed to be the exact opposite of home-building: a refusal to engage with the present, and a seeking of an imaginary homely past as a hiding place from the present time and space" (p. 5). On the contrary, nostalgia can be positive for building home in a new place, because it is a building block of feeling at home in the present: nostalgic feelings "guide home-building in the present because one seeks to foster the kind of homely feeling one knows" (p. 121). If translocalism is thus interpreted as a form of nostalgia, it can be argued that the structures and policies that facilitate its operation are also positively facilitating refugees' and migrants' process of rebuilding home in their new place of settlement.

In this sense then, the place of resettlement has an important role to play in being the space where translocal practices of its new community members are developed, and in some cases, supported. In Utica for example, city administrators sold a severely damaged Methodist church to the nascent Bosnian community for just $1,000 so that they could open a mosque. Though the deal was financially favorable to the city since razing the church would have been exponentially more expensive, it was also a symbolically important embrace of its mostly Muslim immigrants as part of Utica's changing identity. The mosque is a towering structure in downtown, next door to city hall. As discussed earlier, city officials in St. Louis have also provided permits for the construction of cultural and religious structures, so that Bosnian culture and tradition is increasingly becoming inscribed on its urban landscape. But there and in Chicago, there are many other, community-specific ways that translocality is being practiced; from local radio stations, to food trucks, to newspapers and dance groups. These differentiated practices have created distinct rather than uniform Bosnian communities throughout the United States, whereby the places Bosnian communities have flourished have become distinct 'homes'

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for those living there. In other words, beyond the durable solution of permanent resettlement that created the conditions for the United States as a new 'home,' the translocalism practiced by Bosnian diaspora communities, as mediated by them and the environment and structures where it occurs, allows for the development of new, place-based identities. Being Bosnian in St. Louis or Utica or Chicago thus generates its own meanings, connotations and identities, with each of these places conceived of as a distinct 'home.' A crucial factor contributing to this conceptualization is a growing family network in place, as will be discussed next.

Conflict and displacement's effects on family structures and unity

Another recurring theme that arose in my interviews is how the conflict and consequent displacement have affected families. Indeed, this was a very emotional topic for the majority of my respondents and as such clearly something that is unresolved and with which they continue to struggle. Moreover, the ways they interpret, process and respond to the changes the conflict has brought to their family structures and dynamics reveal how closely, in the context of living in diaspora, the concept of family is associated with the preservation of the home culture and identity.

In addition to being the primary social institution as in other societies, in Bosnia the family is also at the heart of what Hofstede termed a 'collectivist' culture. In such cultures, kinship, family and community are extremely important, and the needs of the group – which may include extended family and others – are prioritized over the needs of the individual. In describing their lives in Bosnia before the conflict, my respondents' narratives reflect the centrality of family in everyday life before the conflict. Living in close proximity to not only immediate family but also extended family was very common, and family members served as a core support network in the management of daily life. This mutual reliance for practical and

emotional needs allowed for a more social, fuller and happier life, helping make the place they lived a beloved home. As ZM from Zvornik told me, "We have everything here, but simply in your heart, your soul, you feel something else. All those relatives, that family…all that…believe me, if nothing had ever happened, I would much rather be there…meaning with my family, with everyone."

The extreme violence that characterized the conflict and obliterated homes and communities could not but have fragmentizing effects on families. In the rawest sense, it decimated them: it is estimated that 100,000 Bosnians were killed in the conflict. In extremely tragic cases, entire families or multiple members of the same family were killed, particularly around Srebrenica. But families also fragmented in simply trying to survive by fleeing the conflict in any way possible, which often meant leaving loved ones behind. Some of these separations were temporary; many others however have persisted in the longer term. In the United States for example, though the refugee resettlement program facilitated many family reunifications, it was limited to immediate family and even in those cases, the initial dispersal across Europe and other countries meant that individuals began reconstituting their lives in those places, making another migration harder. These factors have resulted in a wide geographic scattering of the Bosnian diaspora, the consequences of which family members experience in a variety of ways.

First, the scattering of the diaspora means that opportunities for family members to physically spend time together are infrequent and for many, too financially constraining. The longing for each other's presence and company is a source of sadness; some of my respondents described feelings of isolation and loneliness in diaspora, a notable contrast with how they remembered their pre-war lives in Bosnia. For example, my respondent AL, who is a 60-year old

divorcee in fairly good health, said she moved into a retirement home so she would have someone to talk to. Her sisters, brother and children all live in different countries, and her one wish is for her family to be in one place, "wherever it is, even if somewhere far away like Australia."

> If only it was like that! 5 years passed before we saw each other, and then another 5 years. So, in 2007, after my husband and I divorced and I received my pension, I went basically on a honeymoon on my own…I went to France, Germany, Austria, Bosnia…to see the kids, visit my brother. I spent my pension that I had earned, how I wanted, I saw my brother who I hadn't seen in 21 years, I stayed with him, with my sisters, with my kids. Now in February it will be 2 years since I was over there and saw my sister, and I don't know when I will go again.

Migration was not something unknown to Bosnians prior to the war; in the decades prior, labor migration to Germany in particular by the male head of the family was a fairly common occurrence. These movements necessarily involved family separations, sadness and longing. What distinguishes them however from the present separations among Bosnian families is that before, there always remained a central point for reassembly – the rest of the immediate family remained home back in Bosnia for example – but also that these separations were temporary, with an expectation of reunification at some date in the future. With family members resettled across geographies and having found livelihoods, and with many having lost their physical homes in Bosnia, neither circumstance exists in the present migration. There is a fundamental difference in the flow and structures of Bosnian family life before the war and after, in other words.

A second, related consequence of the scattering of family members across geographies is the attenuated link that younger generations have with their extended family and with their parents' homeland. More than just a matter of distance, these attenuated links also have much to do with language and cultural understanding. As families are dispersed in different countries and

see each other rarely, the children of refugees have fewer opportunities to hear and learn their

parents' native language. They also have fewer opportunities to observe and absorb Bosnian

cultural practices. For my respondents, the parents of these children, this particular consequence

of the scattering of families is something they try to counter, in a variety of ways. They try to

make up for the distance through technology, particularly applications such as Skype that are

affordable and accessible. AS from Zavidovići for example described how often she is in touch

with her parents who still live in Bosnia: "Almost every day. We talk by Skype, I have that now

on the computer. They got a computer here so we've resolved that issue, we can see each other."

They also continue to communicate to their children in Bosnian, even if it is not reciprocated:

"They speak in English to me, I answer in Bosnian. And when my son tries to speak in Bosnian,

nothing is connected. Just words thrown together" (BM, from Bosanski Brod). Finally, those

that are financially able to do take their children on holiday to Bosnia, as frequently as possible.

While in some cases these efforts have been more successful than others, there is a consciousness

and intent behind them; to my respondents, their children's lack of familiarity with their relatives

and a poor knowledge of Bosnian represent a tide that is slowly diluting their Bosnian heritage

and identity:

> JD: […] My daughter speaks Bosnian really poorly but she's trying. She understands well
> and can read as well, I can see when she reads my text messages. But when you talk to
> her, though she understands everything, she responds in English.
> AK: So what does that mean to you?
> JD: Simply that she doesn't forget. She already doesn't speak Bosnian well. So, in years
> – unless she speaks – she will forget it entirely. And when she gets married, obviously
> her kids won't know how to speak Bosnian, since their mother doesn't know either. So
> the roots are lost.

The concern with younger and future generations knowing their 'roots' is further

demonstrated in how members of the Bosnian diaspora respond to the possibility that their

children will marry outside the Bosnian culture. In Bringa's seminal work *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way* (1995), which was based on anthropological research with Bosnian Muslims in the late 1980s, the concept of the 'household' is prominent: how it is defined, who belongs to it, and critically, its importance as a Muslim identity sphere. Bringa devotes much attention to the household as it appears to be a key organizing and orienting principle for the villagers in her study. The household is not static however, and the key to its strength and the wellbeing of its members is its broadening, which brings a greater support network. Consequently, marriage is an occasion steeped in meaning and expectation. Bringa describes how the process of marriage is laden with customs to signify the expansion of the household, with affinal or in-law relationships being highly valued and cultivated. Doubt (2014) expands on this question further, demonstrating through survey research conducted in Bosnia in 2013 on marriage practices that cordial affinal relationships are actually a deep-seated *Bosnian* cultural value. In other words, the emphasis on developing affinal relationships – which bring more individuals within the intimate and support circle of the household – is as much a cultural custom of Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs as it is of Bosnian Muslims, on whom Bringa had focused. In the diaspora context therefore, characterized by a competing culture and customs, it would not be surprising that the milestone of marriage becomes even more elevated as a preserver of the home culture and identity. My interview questionnaire included several questions on respondents' children, primarily in order to understand to what extent children maintained connections to Bosnia and practiced Bosnian culture, such as speaking the language. One of the questions posed was how the respondent would feel if their children married someone different from them. I intentionally did not specify what 'different' entailed, as I was interested in what in-group/out-group boundaries my respondents would set on their own. These questions were one of the ways that I

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tried to gain an understanding of the strength of individual respondents' sense of Bosnian

identity, as a strong sense of identity would likely be associated with an effort to cultivate a

similar identity in their children.

My respondents' feelings on their children's potential marriage to someone 'different'

indicate the kinds of identity transformations occurring in diaspora, but at the same time, the

extent to which experiences of the conflict shape perspectives on such an intimate issue. A

couple of respondents exemplified the concept of cultural hybridity, such as FS who described

how his family has adjusted to having a son-in-law who is not only not Bosnian but also half

Jewish, half Catholic:

> His father is Catholic and his mother is Jewish. When there are Jewish holidays, we go to our in-laws'. She comes for Bajram. When it's Christmas, then everyone gathers at our house, since I have a big house. And we're about 20 people, but no one is Catholic! But we're all sitting together. Some are from Bosnia, some from elsewhere. But we exchange gifts, sit and talk.

MK from Prijedor expressed an openness of mind regarding her son's sexuality:

> It is not just about whether they will be Muslim or Bosnian, it's a question of whether they will be male or female. I always say he will be my son while he is alive or while I am alive. What he will choose – whether he will be choose to be gay – is up to him.

Most of my respondents did not express nearly as much cultural openness and flexibility as these

two respondents, but they nevertheless acknowledged that they were clear-eyed about what

raising their children outside of Bosnia likely meant for the partners their children would choose

in the future. As AB told me,

> I mean, it would be OK with me, as long as the person they're marrying is open minded and makes an honest effort to learn about us. By us I mean the background and heritage that my kid is coming with, as much as we know about their background, I mean we live here. But make an honest effort.

This acceptance, however reluctant, of the possibility of their children marrying outside

their culture is an important indicator of the identity shifts occurring among some members of

the Bosnian diaspora as they live their lives in the United States. They recognize that certain 'Bosnian' cultural values cannot persist in their new environment.

In an interesting duality however, even as some members of the Bosnian diaspora reluctantly move towards greater cultural flexibility and openness in terms of their children's marriages, that acceptance does not appear to extend to the marriage being with someone of Serb ethnicity. In other words, some members of the Bosnian diaspora expressed that they could see themselves accepting their child marrying someone non-Bosnian entirely, but they could not accept that it be someone of Serb ethnicity. Take my exchange with ZM, for example:

> AK: If your child marries someone that is different from you, how would you feel? ZM: Well, now how the situation is…I think...I mean you never know. Of course, everyone would like it to be normal, to be like us, to be ours. But if they decide on something else…I don't know what can happen. I wouldn't give up my child because of that. But I don't know what would happen. Of course I would like it to be our religion and so on…but who knows in life.
> AK: And if they choose someone from Bosnia who isn't the same religion…would that be harder than if it wasn't someone from Bosnia at all?
> ZM: The first would be harder. We know what we went through in Bosnia, and now for him, or for her, to again…That would probably be harder. After everything that happened.

Another example is AK, whose acquiescence to a mixed marriage for her child did not extend to someone of Serb ethnicity:

> I am not saying that without reason. My father, peace be upon him, would never allow me to have a Serb boyfriend. I could never understand that, at the time. But now, after so many years, after the war, now we are in the situation where my son says my parents will be ok with everything as long as I don't bring a Serb girl home. That means I transferred that to him. I told him I would not forgive him.

The above exchanges are by no means generalizations about the broader Bosnian diaspora. Instead, they are insights into the type of identity negotiations occurring, and the sensitivities that they reveal. In the case of my respondents ZM and AK, their rejection of an ethnic Serb as an in-

law is an indicator of how their identity has taken on more Bosnian nationalistic undertones as a consequence of the traumatic events of the war.

Children, family unity, and 'home'

The section above on the deep emotional impact of the separation and scattering of Bosnian families as a consequence of conflict and displacement is connected to one final aspect of the reconceptualization of 'home' that is occurring among this diaspora. The refugees that resettled in the United States were motivated by a search for 'cool ground' and a chance at a 'normal life,' particularly in terms of the opportunities for their children in a new place. The children of those refugees are now almost all adults, many of them having children of their own and expanding their family structures in the place they have resettled. They and their children may not know any other home or homeland than where they are now. For their parents on the other hand, the motivations they originally came with have been achieved – many have given their children a much better life than the one they would have had if they had returned or stayed in Bosnia after the conflict. Feasibly then, they now have the option of returning home or at least to Bosnia; the security risks that existed when they were making their initial decision have been alleviated. However, the passage of time and the broadening of the family in the place of resettlement have created a new reason to *stay*. When I asked my respondent BV if he thinks about returning to Bosnia, he told me:

> God no. I am happy to go visit and so on. But to live there, no way. What was there doesn't exist anymore. And what is there now, it won't get better for another 100 years. Plus I wouldn't leave my granddaughter for 6 Bosnia's. To tell you the truth, I am starting to feel less and less Bosnian and more American.

Similarly, OR told me that even though he harbors a deep nostalgia, he cannot fathom return now that he has grandchildren:

> I would have gone a long time ago if it wasn't for the kids. I go there, and I think, maybe I will stay. But then a month passes, and I miss the kids. I have 2 grandsons, both play soccer. One of them plays so well, I am sure he will play for the national team one day.

In his study of the Warlpiri in Australia and how the concept of home is understood among a nomadic people, Jackson (1995) highlighted the transgenerational, collective aspect of making a place home, writing that "a sense of home is grounded less in a place *per se* than in the activity that goes on in a place" (p. 148). In other words, home has little to do with place, but with its centralization of 'activity.' If this activity is presumed to encompass family and the exercise of family relationships, home then becomes wherever provides the possibility for the growth and development of those activities and relationships. For members of the Bosnian diaspora, for whom recovering family structures and unity after conflict is of huge significance, the United States provides the conditions of possibility to make it a new home.

Chapter Seven: Final Conclusions

> You also have people who have been lost to the otherness – in the otherness, people who cannot govern themselves well will be lost. In that case it is better to stay where they were born. In the otherness a person has to be serious and flexible. (LO, from Foca.)

The large-scale displacement of Bosnians from their homes as a consequence of the conflict in the 1990s created a new worldwide Bosnian diaspora. Bosnian refugees have resettled in many countries of the world, where they are, twenty years since the conflict ended, trying to remake home. The conflict and displacement that they experienced have powerfully impacted their process of remaking home, as life needs, concerns and priorities shifted and redefined what constitutes home after such trauma. As Jansen and Lofving (2008) argue, for those displaced by conflict and violence, "violence lives on, beyond memory, affecting moving people and their home-making efforts in ways that cannot be explained with mere recourse to the history of the war itself" (p.11). The emotional remnants of the war were obvious to me when I first began asking members of the diaspora I knew to tell me about their stories from the war. The precision with which they remembered details – the date one finally made it out of Sarajevo, the name of a fellow inmate at a concentration camp and a story he would always tell fellow prisoners – as well as the raw emotions that came to the surface when relating these experiences attested to how present the conflict still was in the minds of its survivors. Despite the cliché framing, for every member of the Bosnian diaspora that I met, the conflict had created a 'life before' and a 'life after.' That is, it had been a critical juncture following which life had little or no resemblance to life before the conflict. Not only did they personally experience suffering and violence and lose loved ones and property in a brutal manner, but they were also living thousands of miles away from what they had known as home and away from many of the people with whom they had spent most their lives. And, they were doing so in a different culture, speaking a different

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language, and working in a job probably unlike the one they held before the conflict. The massive dispersal of the Bosnian population that the conflict produced – and that for many, it has been permanent – therefore means that the influence of the conflict on identity encompasses the displacement that followed and all the experiences that constituted it.

This study has shown that for Bosnians who experienced conflict and displacement in the places they used to call home, violent ethnicized conflict fundamentally altered the identity of those places. Physical homes were destroyed, but so were long-existing social and community relationships. Douglas (1991) says that nineteenth century romantic enthusiasm created the mistaken belief that

> both home and community are supposed to be able to draw upon the same mysterious supply of loyal support […] thanks to a kind of mystic solidarity home and small local community are supposed to be able to overcome the forces of fission that tear larger groups apart (p. 288).

The Bosnian conflict – but also conflicts in Syria and other places that have propelled masses of people to leave a place that was a source of comfort and shelter – have now firmly dispelled with this notion to those living in diaspora. Instead, they have raised new questions and concerns, chief among them how those fleeing can sustain themselves and their family after such cataclysmic changes in their lives; how do they go about reconstituting family, identity and home after such difficulty; and how do they build projects for the future, for themselves and their children? Finally – particularly relevant to the current wave of refugees from Syria – how do they do all of this, while at the same time, negotiating a shifting political climate where those granted refugee status, especially from 'Islamic countries,' are subject to an intensified regime of securitization that is

based on the idea that the in-group should be protected no matter what, with little regard for what effect it might have on the other and without questioning why there is a distinction between 'us' and 'them' in the first place. (Jones 2016, p. 169).

This study has suggested that for the Bosnian diaspora, the enduring legacy of conflict and displacement are particularly discernible within the themes of national identification, the scattering and dispersal of families, and conceptualizations of home. As hypotheses about how conflict influences various aspects of identity, these themes require broader testing in order to generalize them to other diaspora populations. The findings however also warn against imprudent generalization. The narratives of those that I interviewed, particularly on the question of national identification, demonstrate that an ostensibly shared experience or history is actually made up of diverse versions of that experience, which may ultimately shape national identification in particularistic ways within what may seem on the outside as a fairly homogeneous group.

The research within this dissertation contributes to two sets of scholarly literatures: the broader literature on the nexus between migration and identity, as well as the more specific literature on Bosnia. Within the first set, how migration influences identity is an area that has been identified as needing further development (La Barbera, 2014). This study thus seeks to extend the current range of concrete case studies of how the forced migration experience interplays with identification processes. Though the migration literature acknowledges that forced migrants and their experiences must be distinguished from other types of migrants, and that they have particular experiences that affect their identity, there are few studies that examine this topic as the primary research question. Second, this study also enriches the literature on migration, identity and specifically refugees that seeks to de-center notions of refugees as helpless victims by demonstrating how in the case of the Bosnian diaspora, refugees found ways

to exercise agency even under strict refugee-targeted policies by host countries. Third, this dissertation reinforces the findings of studies such as Wahlbeck (1999) that argue that policies in the place of resettlement are a much more significant factor in the integration of diaspora communities than these communities' attachment to their place of origin. While Wahlbeck (1999) examined national-level policies, this study's findings about how translocalism in places such as St. Louis, Utica or Chicago has helped displaced Bosnian communities in reframing these places as distinct 'homes' demonstrates that further studies about how displaced communities can begin to re-orient themselves in place would be of great benefit. In other words, this study helps answer the important question of what enables an initial place of 'cool ground' to remain 'cool ground.' Whether such circumstances exist for Syrian refugees, allowing the conditions for recovery and establishment of a new home and identity, are questionable.

Within the literature on Bosnia, this study contributes to existing scholarly studies on the country's diaspora. While the diaspora is a growing area of focus within the literature, most studies have centered on the extent to which the diaspora has integrated structurally or socially into host societies, or is more medically and mental-health oriented in the examination of continuing trauma and stress from the conflict. This study is among the rare few that have begun to examine – against the background of trauma and stress from the conflict – what Bosnia is being re-created in the diaspora. Finally, on a practical level, this research has benefits for communities that have significant Bosnians or other displaced groups in their constituency and seek to understand them as members of the community, neighbors, colleagues or employees by having better, more critical knowledge about the experiences that shaped who they are today and how they see themselves.

This study suggests two directions for potential future research on the Bosnian diaspora. First, as the association between one's place of origin in Bosnia or Bosnia itself and the concept of home changes due to both conflict-linked conditions there as well as diaspora members' own quest for 'normal lives' and resulting emplacement in the new country of settlement, a new American Bosnian-ness is being created. Because the Bosnia they knew, lived in and left behind no longer exists, members of the diaspora re-create aspects of it in the safety zone outside of Bosnia. They engage in various forms of transnationalism that include but are not limited to maintaining relationships with other co-nationals and speaking the language, frequenting Bosnian-oriented businesses, attending Bosnian cultural events, and following news and events from Bosnia from the comfort of their couch through special cable boxes. Bosnia is also re-created in public spaces in the diaspora through for example, the construction of community centers and mosques, as well as cultural mementos. This notion of creating a home in exile where what is created is more 'original' than in the homeland is touched on in Graham and Khosravi (1997) and is the notion expressed by the respondent who indicated he only began to feel truly Bosnian in the diaspora. This why for Van Hear (2006), if transnationalism is something so commonly pursued in everyday life by the displaced, then within policy approaches "perhaps it is time to go one step further and acknowledge that transnationalism may in itself be a 'durable solution' for conditions of displacement – or at least an 'enduring' solution. This might mean the encouragement or promotion of transnationalism" (p.13). As a corollary, a regularization or institutionalization of transnationalism would be a formalization of long-distance nationalism as an accepted, routine practice of diasporas. At the same time, the sustenance of an active transnationalism or long-distance nationalism is dependent on the engagement and emotional investment of new generations, as discussed below.

Second, the narratives of my respondents suggest that the physical, social and economic safety they sought and found in the United States – in particular for their children – has cemented the permanence of their scattering and the impossibility of return to Bosnia. In other words, for their children to have better lives, those displaced by the war must accept long-term or permanent separation from their parents, siblings and extended family. They must accept that this choice implies that their children may not have the same close relationships they had with extended family due to distance and language barriers, as children grow up in the United States and call it home. Many diaspora children were either very young when they arrived in the United States or were born there, meaning that even in the best-case scenario where their parents maintain aspects of Bosnian culture within daily life and the family travels to Bosnia frequently, diaspora children cannot but develop hybrid cultural or even national identities. How are memory and trauma being passed on to the next generation by survivors? What is the sense of identification with Bosnia that these communicated – or not – memories produce? Given the self-sacrifices of the survivors of the conflict in Bosnia for their children, and the emphasis they put on their children's marriages as a source of continuity of Bosnian culture and identity, how the second generation of Bosnian diaspora responds to these familial pressures is a promising direction for further study.

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APPENDIX A Interview

Questionnaire

Thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed for my research. My name is Adna Karamehic-Oates, and I am a doctoral candidate at Virginia Tech University. I am originally from Visoko, Bosnia and Herzegovina. I came to the United States in the mid 1990s. Since then I have met many, many others who also came to the United States from Bosnia. They've come with a variety of experiences and have also had varied experiences in the United States. When I began my doctoral studies, I decided that I really wanted to focus on these individuals and write about what they are going through. What kind of lives did they have before the war in Bosnia? How was their life during the war? What about now, living in the United States? In doing this, it is very important to me to talk to as diverse a group as possible. It would be easy to only talk to one type of person or group, but that would only give me one perspective. The goal of my research is to obtain diverse perspectives and then try to understand what they're telling me. This is why your participation today is really valuable to me and my research, and I appreciate it.

If you have no questions for me about the research and are still willing to proceed with our conversation, perhaps we can begin? Please feel free to stop me at any point.
First, I have a few introductory questions - about you, your family and where you're from.

Introductory questions:
- What is your name?
- When and where were you born?
- Do you have any children?
- Where in Bosnia are you from/where in Bosnia did you live?
    - How would you describe where you lived, as a mostly urban or mostly rural environment?
    - What is the population of your town?
- What did you do for a living?
- Did you go to the local school? And then?

OK. Next I have a few questions related to the conflict in Bosnia. If there is anything you are uncomfortable discussing, please let me know and I will shift to a different question.

Questions on war experience:
- How would you describe your life in Bosnia before you left?
- When did you leave Bosnia?
- Can you describe for me what was happening in the country at the time you left?
- Can you describe for me your life at that point?
    - What was a typical day like?
    - What happened to your job/school?
    - Where was your family?
    - How did your neighborhood or community cope with what was happening?

- "I know that many people suffered losses during the war." [Latent question, asked only if the opportunity presents itself: "You don't have to tell me about any personal losses if you don't want to, but I would be interested in learning what happened."]
- Were you active in any part of the conflict?
    - If so, in what capacity?

Thank you for this background. I have a few more questions about the war, but they are more about your interpretation of events rather than your direct experience.

Folk knowledge and interpretation questions:
- What, in your opinion, was the cause of the conflict in Bosnia?
- What do you think could have prevented or stopped the conflict?
- Overall, how did the war impact your life? In what way did the war affect you?

Alright. Thank you for telling me about your life in Bosnia. I would like to now move on and talk about your life since you've left Bosnia.

Migration questions:
- What would you say was the main reason you left Bosnia?
    - Can you describe for me how you left - did you have family abroad or an organization that assisted you?
- Did you live anywhere else between your departure from Bosnia and your arrival in the United States?
    - If yes, where and why?
- Have you lived in (site) the whole time since arriving in the United States?
- Do you have any family members in (site)?
    - Do they live close by?
- Are there many individuals from Bosnia living in (site)?
- Did you know them before arriving, and how?
- What do you do in (site)?
    - Are you satisfied in this role?
    - How did you obtain your current position?
    - Does it require knowledge of English?
- Are you comfortable communicating in English?
    - How much, on a daily basis, do you communicate in English?
    - With whom, and in what contexts?
- How have your children adjusted to life in the United States?
- Have you had any significant problems or difficulties since coming to the United States?
- Do you feel welcome in the United States?
- Overall, how would you describe your life in the United States?
    - In what ways is it better or worse than your life in Bosnia?
- How do you think your life and experiences in the United States compare to the lives and experiences of your family, relatives and friends in Bosnia?

Connections and networks questions:
- Do you keep in touch with anyone in Bosnia?
    - With whom?
    - In what form and how often?
    - Do you send money to Bosnia?
- Do you follow news on Bosnia?
    - What is your method for keeping informed?
    - How up to date do you think are on political events in Bosnia?
    - Does your family or friends in the United States follow these issues?
    - Do you follow American politics?
- Are you active in any campaigns or movements related to Bosnia?
- Are you active in any campaigns or movements not related to Bosnia?
- How important is it to you to maintain contacts with family, friends or others in Bosnia?
- Do you maintain similar contacts in (site)?
    - In what ways and how frequently?

Finally, given all of what we've already discussed, I have some questions that will help me understand your sense of identity and belonging.

America vs Bosnia questions: Identity and Belonging
- There are many terms used to describe people native to Bosnia: Bosnian, Bosniak, Bosnian Croat, Bosnian Serb, Yugoslav, "Other."
    - Do you happen to prefer one of these terms more than the other?
    - Is there another term that is more suitable for how you feel about yourself?
    - What is your family's heritage?
    - Is the way that you consider yourself similar to or different from how your family, relatives and friends see themselves?
- In what ways do you feel (self-ascribed identity)?
    - What does being (self-ascribed identity) involve?
    - Would you say you identify strongly with those things?
    - Are there certain things you do or believe that make you (self-ascribed) identity?
- Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services, and which kind of services are they?
    - How important is religion in your life?
- Overall, do you think of yourself as a typical American, very different from a typical American, or something else?
- How comfortable would you be if a child of yours married someone outside your culture?
- Do you have a desire or plans to return to Bosnia? Why or why not?